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Nadia Terki

Perspective and Perception:

Terrorism Then and Now in Conrad, Chesterton, Hamid and Shamsie.

Abstract

*The aim of this thesis is to develop a perspectival and perceptual approach to terrorism through its literary representations. The understanding of terrorism is characterised by a unidirectional perspective that prevents inclusive and varied interpretation of the intricacies of terrorism. In the aim of achieving the intention of this study, four primary texts have been selected: *The Secret Agent: Simple Tale* (1907), *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare* (1908), *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and *Home Fire* (2017). The textual analysis of the novels is based on different aspects of perspective and perception that include pictorial metaphors structured around disguise, deceit and the changing insights that these suggest, as a way of mirroring the existing multidimensional aspect of terrorism. Sound as in narrative points of view, being an element that contributes to the formation of perception, is another analytical apparatus that serves to uncover the multifaceted character of terrorism. The primary texts, although not covering the period of colonial and postcolonial period, pave the way for the wider purpose of this study. They cover both representations of anarchist and contemporary violence. They are geographically diverse, which permits the exploration of the influence of geopolitics on the perception of terrorism. Moreover, the research analyses the representation of the terrorist from different contexts in the aim of revealing the different perceptions that can be associated with the choice of terrorism. This research aims at exploring the literary representation of all voices existing within terrorism but are absent from the mainstream terrorism discourse and perspective. It creates a literary grey space outside the unidirectional formulation of terrorism, that paints the images, the sounds and silence within terrorism to mimic the kaleidoscope effect of perspectives and perceptions through Conrad, Chesterton, Hamid and Shamsie.*

Perspective and Perception:
Terrorism Then and Now in Conrad, Chesterton, Hamid and Shamsie.

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Department of English Studies

Durham University

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to myself for having fought through the difficult times while working on this thesis.

To my mother for her strength and encouragement.

To my father for his trust.

To my sisters for cheering me up and making me feel home despite the distance.

To my beloved who always stood by me when I almost gave up.

St Augustine tells the story of the pirate captured by Alexander the Great, who asked him 'how he dares molest the sea' 'How dare you molest the whole world' the pirate replied. 'Because I do it with a little ship only, I am called a thief; you, doing it with a great navy, are called an emperor.'¹

¹ Quoted in Noam Chomsky, 'International Terrorism, Image and Reality Crime and Social Justice', *Contragate and Counterterrorism: A Global Perspective*, No. 27/28 (1987), pp. 172-200 (p. 1.)

Introduction

September 9th, 2001; later, to be known simply as 9/11, is one of the most important events of the turn of the century. It will go to impact the totality of the global economy, culture, lifestyle, security, warfare, critical theory, public opinion and literary production. We entered a paradigm within which there is a pre- and post- 9/11 reality. The significance of the 9/11 terrorist incident lies not only in the fact of being of an unprecedented lethality but most notably its impact on the understanding of terrorism² and the formulation of its meanings and implications. In fact, as Matthew Carr argues in the preface to *The Infernal Machine*

After the 9/11 attacks, terrorism was routinely described by western governments as a moral evil that was so destructive and contagious that even to suggest that it might have a context, causes and aims that could be rationally understood was sometimes viewed as a form of moral collusion.³

Terrorism is indeed the centre of multiple conceptual ambiguities. There is a critical problematic relating to the definitions of political violence as they tend to be highly exclusive and detrimental to the understanding of terrorism and the construction of a global perception of the phenomenon. The ambiguity that surrounds the definition of terrorism is significantly related to the lack of perspective and the unidirectional formulation of its meaning that is mainly based on the duality of Us vs Them and good vs evil. The reductive approach to terrorism and the assumption that it can only have one ultimate interpretation can hardly be sustained. Terrorism is based on the assumption that the terrorists are those aiming to harm the United States and the Western world in general. The dangerous consequence that results from this delimitation is that those governments and their people are declared to be the sole victim

² Please note that the terms terrorism and political violence are used interchangeably throughout this study.

³ Matthew Carr, *The Infernal machine: An Alternative History of Terrorism* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2011), Preface.

of political violence and consequently, they acquire the hero status and by extension the right and the justification for unprecedented retaliation. The legitimacy of terrorism is often related to its acclaimed protective qualities, in a way terrorism takes us ‘under *its* wings’ in the form of retaliation, peace keeping and democratization. Therefore, the terminology that surrounds the framing of terrorism has a ‘particular relevance to assessing the legitimacy of political authority.’⁴ The terrorism discourse that emerged after the attacks of 9/11 has been significantly centred on the American experience of terrorism, therefore the definition of terrorism is based on the American perspective and perception of what it could or should mean.

Bruce Hoffman argues that ‘most people have a vague idea or impression of what terrorism means but lack a more precise, concrete, and truly explanatory definition of the word.’⁵ Indeed the concept of terrorism is of a complexity that is difficult to overcome or deconstruct. The superficiality of its understanding among different audiences means that it does not signify the same thing or represent the same struggle. In the same direction, Brian Jenkins stresses the fact that ‘the term “terrorism” has no precise or widely accepted definition’⁶, he continues that ‘it [terrorism] has become a fad word used promiscuously and often applied to a variety of acts and violence which are not strictly terrorism by definition.’⁷ The term terrorism has attained a status of arbitrariness and shocking lack of clarity and precision that it becomes the very terminology to use to describe any kind of violence. This arbitrariness is what lends terrorism to easy and dangerous manipulations of its use and representation in the media and major political discourses, as Jenkins puts it ‘at some point in this expanding use of the term, terrorism can mean just what those who use the term (not the terrorist) want it to mean -almost any violent act by the opponent-.’⁸

In *Conceptualizing Terrorism*, Anthony Richard stresses the idea that:

⁴ Martha Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2007), p. 9.

⁵ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 1.

⁶ Brian M. Jenkins, *The Study of terrorism: Definitional Problem*. (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, November 1980), p. 1.

⁷ Jenkins,

⁸ Jenkins, p. 2.

since the events of September 2001, it [the term terrorism] has been employed even more broadly and carelessly in public and political discourse to the extent that there appears a wholesale disregard for any serious endeavour to treat terrorism as an analytical concept.⁹

Indeed 9/11 resulted in an enormous amount of usage of the term terrorism both within the public and the political spheres. The high utilisation of the term combined with the lack of concrete knowledge of the wider public, the vague definition and its random use by politicians and governments all worsened the understanding of terrorism and put it even further from a precise and useful definition of the term. Richards maintains that:

It is as if the greater exposure of terrorism since 9/11 has simply amplified its manipulation as a subjective label rather than prompting a serious re-focus or attempt at conceptual scrutiny of the term. While there has been little interest in understanding it, however, there has nevertheless been plenty of interest using it.¹⁰

Therefore, the lack of a useful definition of what terrorism means only becomes a problem if the common understanding of the public opinion does not serve the interest of the definers. To maintain the interests and the validity of the discourse of the power holders, the term terrorism acquires and loses connotations continuously and accordingly. The definitional problem of terrorism is not only related to its inherent complexities, but most importantly, it highly depends on political and ideological currents that are in constant shift and therefore hinder the stability of the meaning of terrorism. The latter:

has been shaped to serve the interests of the definers to the point that any common political will or purpose to address the problem of achieving a universally agreed definition has been overridden in favour of perspectives that seek to preserve and enhance those interests.¹¹

⁹ Anthony Richard, *Conceptualizing Terrorism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.2.

¹⁰ Richards, p. 3.

¹¹ Richards, p. 2.

The other significant issue that haunts the definition of terrorism is the lack of perspective due to the dominance of certain perspectives that is adopted by the general public. Indeed, ‘use of the term invites a moral judgement, and if one party can successfully attach the label “terrorist” to its opponents, then it has indirectly persuaded others to adopt its moral standpoint.’¹² The use and the definition of terrorism is extremely dependent on power relation and their influence on the widespread of a carefully crafted view of terrorism. Terrorism is, almost inevitably, viewed differently by different people, organisations and governments, the problematic however, rises when there is a specific agenda and definition that only serves specific interests is promoted. The qualification of an individual, organisation or a state is therefore highly subjective and does not rely on a precise set of criteria, the decision ‘becomes almost unavoidably subjective’.¹³ In line with this view, it is moreover noted that the definition of terrorism falls into a trap which is:

to closely associate terrorism with a particular ideology or world view, that is, to instigate terrorism with forgone -and mistaken- conclusion that could only be employed by a certain type of agent working towards a certain type of aim.¹⁴

The limitation of the definition of terrorism to a certain understanding that specifies who can be qualified as terrorist in accordance with the power holders, undermines the possibility of achieving a deep and clear definition of terrorism, especially considering that other perspectives are lost in a vacuum. Therefore,

the meaning and the usage of the word have changed overtime to accommodate the political vernacular and discourse of each successive era, terrorism has proved to be increasingly elusive in the face of attempts to construct one consistent definition.¹⁵

¹² Jenkins, p. 1.

¹³ Hoffman, p. 23.

¹⁴ *The Routledge History of Terrorism*, ed. by Randall. D. Law (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p: 5.

¹⁵ Hoffman, p. 22.

The lack of preciseness and clarity within the definition of terrorism and the manipulation that surrounds its use as well as the changing connotations that are attached to it has expanded after 9/11. Among the new meanings that terrorism acquired is the adoption of a new term to describe the lethality and uniqueness of the American experience of terrorism that doubly functions as justification for its War on Terror. ‘New Terrorism’ is the term that emerged after the attacks in New York.

As I have mentioned before, there is the persistent issue of wanting to fixate the conception of terrorism within certain frames that serve designated political agendas. What I mean by the wish to fixate terrorism is mostly related to the monopoly over knowledge about terrorism. The monopoly of the state over the definition and the use of violence engenders the extraordinary limitations that are imposed on the categorization of terrorism, resulting in uni-directional view that the media further propagates. The interpretation of terrorism depends on the body of authority that provides particular understanding of the phenomenon which falls within the system of justification and condemnation of that same body of authority that is usually a state or a government. The intricate functioning of the knowledge around terrorism leads to the perplexing conclusion that ‘it is not the absolute value in the acts itself that is condemned (as it should be) but rather the acts are relativized in value depending on who is judging the intent.’¹⁶

The ambiguity that surrounds the concept of terrorism means that its meaning can be shifted as desired to serve as justification for retaliation. Indeed, ‘the more confused the term is, the more it lends itself to opportunistic appropriation.’¹⁷ The appropriation of the term terrorism and its meaning after 9/11, has led to the appropriation of counterterrorism as well. The US War on Terror is justified under the assumption that the American experience of terrorism is unique and therefore requires a unique

¹⁶ Hoffman, p. 35.

¹⁷ Ben Paul, *Defining terrorism in International Law* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 3.

retaliation that in concrete terms is parallel to terrorism. Within this logic, ‘terrorists acts fall within the cannon only when conducted by official enemies. When the US and its clients are the agents, they are acts of retaliation and self-defence in the service of the democracy and human rights.’¹⁸

The absence of a clear, functioning definition of terrorism and delimitation means that the condemnation of acts of terrorism is done in accordance with political agendas rather than precise delimitation of what constitutes terrorism. Moreover, terrorism and counterterrorism ‘are often depicted as moral opposites, and any suggestion of symmetry between even the bloodiest acts of counterterrorism by states and its terrorist opponents is often dismissed by the accusation of moral equivalence.’¹⁹ There is clearly a strong double standard that is in place when defining terrorism which is at the heart of the binary formation of ‘Us vs Them’, it blocks the possibility of understanding terrorism from a different standpoint that would contribute to the understanding of the modes of operation of terrorism outside the perspective of the US after 9/11. Undeniably, after the attacks on the Twin Towers, ‘any violence directed against the state is unlawful and the concept of terrorism provides a convenient category of unaccepted violence.’²⁰ It provides a sort of generic and simplistic categorisation of terrorist violence that only serves the justification of counterterrorism and aggravates the state of the terrorism definition. Carr maintains that ‘governments presented the public with a “closed” version of terrorism which seemed designed to stifle and silence any further debates about its causes and possible solutions.’²¹ The presentation of specific versions of terrorism to global audiences means the presentation of a partial vision of what terrorism is, it is presenting the partial as the whole and obscuring other connotations that are present within political violence. It is condemning any other perceptions of terrorism because they are judged to be unenforceable.

The field of terrorism is therefore exposed to dangerous manipulations that obstruct

¹⁸ Alexander George, *Western State Terrorism* ([n.p.] Routledge, 1991), p. 34.

¹⁹ Carr, Preface.

²⁰ Carr, p. 7.

²¹ Carr, Preface.

even the contextualisation of terrorism because, according to the power holders' standards, it cannot have a valid justification even though it will not change the nature of the crime committed, it would only give a dimension that can help understand the patterns of terrorism. After 9/11, the power and authority of the US is used to shape the definition of terrorism exclusively in relation to the Twin Tower attack without serious consideration of other variants and perspectives. For that matter,

when people choose to call the actions of others “terrorist” or to label other terrorists, this choice often has a perspective policy relevance as well as a moral connotation. As a way of framing consciousness, the choice of framing terminology has a particular relevance to assessing the legitimacy of political authority.²²

Having the power to shape the understanding of a crucial term such as terrorism involves the power to also direct and monopolise its meaning and shift its connotation endlessly in accordance with political interests. The widespread connotation then becomes a sort of a given truth that is sustained through the media that further obscures the definition of terrorism. The selective terminology means that terrorism profiling is subject to filtration process that only let through convenient meanings. Indeed, ‘political language affects the perception of audiences and their expectations about how the problem thus evoked will be treated. That is by defining and identifying a problem, labels may also indicate a preferred solution.’²³ The terminology employed for the description of terrorism after 9/11 did not simply serve to provide and reinforce the US perspective in defining terrorism but also as a prior justification for the War on terror that followed.

The fundamental and most problematic aspect of political violence that is further amplified by the scholarly focus on the consequences of organizational and individual terrorism and the efficient ways to fight it as opposed to the significant marginalization of state terrorism as well as the causes and rationales of political violence. Certainly,

²² Crenshaw, p, 9.

²³ Crenshaw, p, 9.

within the context of political violence, ‘calling the adversaries “terrorist” is a way of depicting them as fanatics and irrational so as to foreclose the possibility of ‘compromise’²⁴ and therefore, strengthening the systems of justification that are already in place. The interpretation of terrorism depends on the body of authority that provides particular understanding of the phenomenon which falls within the system of justification and condemnation of that same body of authority, that is usually a state or a government. The intricate functioning of the knowledge around terrorism leads to the perplexing conclusion that ‘it is not the absolute value in the acts itself that is condemned (as it should be) but rather the acts are relativized in value depending on who is judging the intent.’²⁵

Lack of perspective in relation to terrorism, both in critical studies and literary studies provokes the instability that dominates the field. Furthermore, it creates and reinforces monopoly over knowledge about terrorism and its perception from the different concerned groups. The less perspective there is, the more monopoly and the more unjustified violence. It is therefore necessary to try and study and present political violence in an inclusive rather than exclusive paradigm, all parties that form the terrorism challenge need to be equally explored without the biased political agendas that mostly determine what should and should not be included. The binary victimization and demonization processes serve only global powers and function as the starting platform for the anti-terrorism policies and agendas. The War on Terror is an example of the sort of policies that are strengthened by the obsolete binary formulation of terrorism.

The myth of instituting democracies as part of the War On Terror is promoted to be the antidote that would stop terrorism at its source, here mainly referring to the regions where Al Qaeda and later on ISIS have trained and operated. However, this procedure has proved to have resulted in chaotic situations where the countries in question that are said to be both highly affected by terrorism and terrorism sponsors,

²⁴ Crenshaw.

²⁵ Crenshaw, p. 35.

have become the perfect hives for even more violence which makes the fight against it even more complicated and lengthy. In fact, as Aristotle describes it, it is ‘the ways in which such rulers, by their abuse of power and attacks on their subjects, create conspiracies that actually destroy them.’²⁶ The example of Iraq and Afghanistan clearly demonstrate that the notion of democracy as a cure to the terrorism problematic is not indeed straightforward or even remotely relevant. On the other hand, it engenders intricate and endless wars, both apparent and disguised. The War On Terror should not be idealised to the dangerous extent it is, as it triggers the vicious cycle of political violence and ironically, it reinforces it. Indeed, ‘the ambiguity surrounding the causes of terrorism, which makes devising an appropriate remedy so hard, could be ignored by assuming that hostile states were the real cause .’²⁷ Those who have power over the classification of knowledge about terrorism, use the emotional dimension of the attack to dictate the perspective to have about political violence and therefore the notion of state terrorism is kept off the records of terrorism studies, global politics and the audience. Furthermore, the War On Terror is in multiple ways related to terrorist activities, although the knowledge around it suggests a multifaceted reality that does not simply come down to it as being the ultimate solution to the challenges of terrorism. In fact, ‘employing violence in order to achieve justice becomes essentially a tactical weapon of self-defence in an amoral world.’²⁸ The silence and the spectrality of the framing of terrorism starting from the end of the Cold War till the present day, in addition to the mega boost that 9/11 provided, engendered serious manipulation and fluctuation in global power relations. The censorship around the realities behind the deep strategies of the War On Terror leads to numerous unjustified procedures like the war on Iraq for example. The perspective of the US and its allies vis-à-vis the definition of terrorism is problematic because it seeks to only take 9/11 as the ultimate reference when it comes the definition of terrorism as well as counterterrorism.

²⁶ Crenshaw, p. 29.

²⁷ Crenshaw, p. 10.

²⁸ Crenshaw, p. 35.

In sum, the definitional problem of terrorism is not limited to the fact that it contains numerous variants, it is also due to ideological influence that is almost inevitable. The influence of political authority of the powerful few means that political violence is shaped according to their perspective rather than through objective observations and conclusions. 9/11 and the US response has made the possibility of reaching an agreed upon definition even more difficult. The dominance of the perspective of the US and their perception of terrorism means that it is taken out of a wider context that inevitably involves other perceptions and perspectives. In fact,

Since 9/11, the War on Terror has been embedded as a powerful and ubiquitous narrative and discourse into the political- cultural- economy of American society, thereby transforming it into a durable social structure, that is, it has become a hegemonic discourse and a “regime of truth”. Once a set of beliefs and practices has become embedded in society as truth regime, it is extremely difficult to change even for a symbolically powerful actor like the president.²⁹

The claim for a ‘new terrorism’ wave is accompanied by a stream of literary production about terrorism that have, to a certain extent, adopted a uni-directional representation of political violence. There are two sides to the issue of the literary under-representation of terrorism. Firstly, literary productions are mostly and mainly focused on the contemporary versions of it, with a significant absence of reference to past experiences or draw possible parallels with past and present experiences to allow a wider and better understanding of terrorism. Secondly, the majority of the literature that emerged following 9/11, corresponded with the political agendas about the exceptionalism of the American experience of terrorism and have therefore focused mainly on the traumatic aftershock that the incident caused to the American citizens. It is indeed important and crucial to emphasize and represent the psychological implications and the suffering that are experienced by the Americans. However, the

²⁹ *Obama's Foreign Policy, Ending the War on Terror*, ed. by Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), p. 79-80.

danger lies in the singling out of that occurrence and its impact as being unique, inherently different and unprecedented that does lead to dangerous misconceptions and eventually further complicate the challenges of a true, objective and fair understanding of terrorism. One of the central issues with the absence of the perspectives –historical, political, cultural and social- is the limited and biased knowledge about the phenomenon.

The dominant political discourse reinforces the perspective of terrorism as a pure evil that solely targets western lifestyle and values and can in no circumstances have a context and complex background that is not simply pure evil. The literary representation of terrorism, for the majority of cases ‘has largely failed to realise its promise as a form of discursive resistance and has instead tended to reinforce the counterterrorism truth regime by reinforcing and maintaining the current terrorism mythography.’³⁰ After the 9/11 attacks, there was a resurgence of a vast amount of terrorism novels that depicted terrorism in very similar ways, they are reproductions of the dominant political perspective of Us vs them that spread in the aftermath of 9/11. ‘The political realities behind terrorist incidents are seldom expanded upon the novels, and when they are, the convictions of the terrorist are commonly belittled, parodied or rejected.’³¹ The literary representation of terrorism is , like the mythography established by political discourse, uni-directional and stereotypical as it reproduces the same notions presented to us through the media, it rarely offers novelty when it comes to the portrayal of the modes of operation of political violence. Appelbaum and Paknadel argue that:

the novels recruit us to the side of the victims, terrorising us along with them, and in so doing implicitly enlist us against the perpetrators, rendering illegitimate the terrorists’ political aims often even without stopping to say what they are.³²

³⁰ Richard Jackson, *Terrorism, Taboo and Discursive Resistance: The agonistic Potential of the Terrorism Novel*, p. 397.

³¹ Robert Appelbaum, Alexis Paknadel, ‘Terrorism and the Novel, 1970–2001.’ *Poetics Today* 1, 29, 3 (September 2008), pp. 387–436, [p. 418].

³² Appelbaum and Paknadel, p. 423.

The common direction for most terrorism novel then is to re-present the knowledge that is already spread through political discourse and the media about the illegitimacy of political violence regardless of any context, as well as portray the perspective of the West as the ultimate definition of what terrorism is, with total disregard of other perceptions and possibilities. Terrorism novels, with some exceptions that I will propose through this study, do not introduce new data and meaning to us.

it is not the meaning of terrorism for the terrorist that these novels elucidate for us. They prefer to dramatize, portentously, the threat of philosophy and psychology derangement rather than accounts for the real sources of terrorist violence in the world.³³

The perception of the terrorist and his voice are rarely echoed through the words of novelists and therefore they fail to complete the missing side of the image and instead strengthen the partial knowledge that is already established and reached a level of uncontested truth. Blessington in *Politics and the Terrorist Novel*, on the purpose of terrorism novel, maintains that ‘what we want from the terrorist novel is to know and experience why someone chooses terror. We want to be inside the mind of the terrorist.’³⁴

Literary representations of terrorism, although as mentioned above, most of them follow similar patterns of representation of mainstream political discourse, they do have a potential to offer us a different perception of what terrorism could mean within different contexts and from different viewpoints. They offer a wider spectrum for knowledge and understanding and act as ‘a means of discursive resistance to the dominant terrorism discourse.’³⁵ Although literary productions are, to a certain extent, tied to their immediate context, novels have the characteristic of being open to a

³³ Appelbaum and Paknadel, p. 426.

³⁴ Francis Blessington, “Politics and The Terrorist Novel” *The Sewanee Review*, 116, no. 1(2008): 116-24. (p. 117).

³⁵ Jackson, p. 400.

multitude of interpretations and go beyond the boundary of time and context. Therefore, I believe that having critical terrorism studies, politics and history as a background to my literary analysis for the phenomenon of political violence is a valid and necessary step. It enables me to offer a valuable contribution to both the literary domain as well as the more theoretical and critical knowledge of terrorism. Additionally, it would help assist the wider audience acquire a better understanding of the political world surrounding terrorism.

The current study explores the literary representation of the problematic of defining terrorism and the lack of perspectival knowledge. Moreover, it explores the different arrays of vision regarding the interpretation of political violence, as opposed to the dominance of the US perception that became the sole reference point when defining terrorism and dispersing knowledge about it. The analysis will be constructed around four selected texts from the early twentieth century and twenty first century, Gilbert Keith Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare* (1908), Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale* (1907), Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), and Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017). The reasoning behind the choice of the primary texts is related to the wide-ranging aim of the study to offer a multiplicity of perspectives and perceptions as to the meaning of terrorism within different contexts and from different standpoints.

The first chapter will explore the notion of covert plotting and delayed decoding in Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and how these concepts shed light on the definitional problem of terrorism. Through the covert mission of a Russian secret agent in London, we enter the mind of the secret agent and accompany him in his bomb plan. It is an opportunity to discover a different side of the terrorism dialogue outside the dominant perspectives. The second chapter will shed light on the modes of operation of political violence in light of its definitional problem, focusing on the spectrality and ambiguity of its core functioning through the disguises and double identities of the characters of G. K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare*. The third chapter will go into the details of the uncertainty that surrounds the formulation of the concept of

terrorism, especially in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, as represented in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The chapter will focus on the identity crisis of the main character and the way it relates to the instability of defining political violence. The fourth and last chapter will be a study of the different voices that exist within terrorism through Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, and the way the multiplicity of narrative voices are a resistance to the uni-directional interpretation of terrorism and the absence of crucial perspectives and perceptions from the discourse of terrorism. All four chapters' arguments will be developed relying on numerous terrorism scholars including Matthew Carr, Martha Crenshaw, Bruce Hoffman, Jean Baudrillard and others. Moreover, Nietzsche's concept of perspectivism will be part of the literary analysis in relation to the lack of perspective within political violence that constitutes a significant issue in the definition of terrorism.

*The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale: Covert Perspectives and The Spectrality of
Terrorism*

Michael C Frank writes that *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale* rapidly became relevant to the American experience of contemporary terrorism. He believes that it is partly due to the incomprehensible nature of the 9/11 bombing and the absence of closer parallel in American history,³⁶ making of literature, and specifically *The Secret Agent*, an alternative choice to understand the true nature of the event. *The Secret Agent*, with its terrorist cast and the plot to bomb the Greenwich Observatory is so suggestive of the post-Cold War era whose events accumulation ended up with 9/11.³⁷ Indeed, the narrative speaks to the contemporary conception of terrorism in various ways and through different techniques. *The Secret Agent*, in light of the contemporary terrorism, ‘seems today like a promising piece of prophecy’,³⁸ the narrative would-be terrorists and their plotting widely speak to Islamic Fundamentalism. The main point is not to claim that *The Secret Agent* is a novel on Islamic terrorism. Yet, through its narrative techniques, plot arrangement, language use and the social dimension of the characters of Verloc, Winnie and Stevie, there is a strong connection between the literary skeleton of the novel and the organization of Islamist political violence. Moreover, the themes of state terrorism and radicalization further confirm parallelisms between anarchism and Islamist terrorism and their modus operandi.

Indeed, terrorism and state terrorism do not function in a straightforward way. That is, for them to exist and ensure their continuity, they adopt deceptive and covert approaches that justify and legitimize their very existence. The novel is structured around different levels of connotations and an ambiguous ironical tone which in itself allows the level of complexity the novel reaches. The symbolism of the narrative in

³⁶ Michael C. Frank, ‘Terrorism for the Sake of Counterterrorism: Undercover policing and the Specter of the Agent Provocateur in Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*’, *Conradiana*, Vol. 46, No 3, (Fall 2014), pp. 151-177.

³⁷ *Conrad in the twenty-First Century: Contemporary Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. by Carola Kaplan, Peter Mallois, Andrea White (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 155.

³⁸ Judith Shulevitz, ‘Chasing After Conrad’s Secret Agent: It’s the archetypal novel about terrorists. And everyone’s getting it wrong’, *Slate* (September 27th, 2001):

relation to political violence in the late twentieth and twenty first centuries can be explored through multiple elements. The different component of *The Man Who Was Thursday* including the city of London, features of the characters, the language as well as many other symbolic representations in the context of terrorism all offer the possibility of placing the novel within the contemporary frame. The strong presence of *The Secret Agent* within the immediate media reactions to 9/11, allows the consideration of the narrative not only as timeless but also archetypal of terrorism within and without its context of publication.

In his 1920 Author's Note to *The Secret Agent*, Conrad writes that he felt 'reproved for having produced it',³⁹ contrary to the very high consideration that *The Secret Agent* acquired in the aftermath of 9/11, it did not receive many appreciations and was rather unpopular when it was published in 1907.⁴⁰ Although *The Secret Agent* was not received as a masterpiece when it was published, it came to be considered as one of the greatest masterpieces of Conrad and is considered a novel 'ahead of its time'.⁴¹ The deeply ironic tone central to its structure and plot resulted in an open and endless range of interpretations and framings not only within its immediate timeframe but also far beyond it. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the narrative, despite being published almost a century earlier, was considered to be the novel of the twenty first century's political violence.⁴² It reflects on the different structures and internal workings of terrorism including state terrorism, radicalisation and media influence. Its plot structure, language and story line make of it 'the perfect tragic anecdote' of both anarchism and contemporary terrorism.

In light of Conrad's *The Secret Agent* being the most referenced novel after 9/11⁴³,

³⁹ Joseph Conrad, 'Author's Note', *The Literature Network* (1920) < http://www.online-literature.com/conrad/secret_agent/0/>.

⁴⁰ Owen Knowles, Gene M. Moore, *Oxford Reader's Companion to Joseph Conrad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 334.

⁴¹ Knowles, p. 333.

⁴² Judith Shulevitz, 'Chasing After Conrad's Secret Agent: It's the archetypal novel about terrorists. And everyone's getting it wrong'. *Slate* (September 27, 2001).

⁴³ Shulevitz.

a number of articles have attempted to explore and explain its relevance to terrorism in its contemporary frame. Conrad was considered as a ‘literary Nostradamus’⁴⁴ in reference to the French physician Michel de Nostradame known for his prophecies. Conrad’s 1907 narrative was praised for being the prophecy of contemporary terrorism⁴⁵. In ‘The True Classic of Terrorism’, Tom Reiss maintains that the context contained in *The Secret Agent* about the Russian autocracy and the evil of state hegemony is manifesting itself in the contemporary times through ‘religious fanaticism’. He continues that *The Secret Agent* ‘shows us a world that is the direct ancestor of our own’.⁴⁶ John J. Miller made reference to the connection of Anarchism with Islamic Fundamentalism through raising the resemblance of the targets selected by the disguised Anarchists in *The Secret Agent* and contemporary terrorists. The symbolism of these targets suggests that the internal logic and reasoning behind both versions of political violence is, if not identical, very similar. ‘Conrad in the twenty first century’ suggests a similar idea however in somewhat a deeper degree. It explores the narrative techniques to emphasise that Conrad did not only represent a world that is restricted only to the 1900s, but rather transcends the limit of time to be relevant even in today’s terrorism that is not categorically different from the Anarchism of *The Secret Agent*. Kaplan goes even to suggest that 9/11 would have created a *deja-vu* effect on Conrad, had he witnessed it due to the familiar and cyclical nature of terrorism.

Carola Kaplan in *Conrad in the 21st Century* maintains that:

The Secret Agent use the ironic narrator and the implicit authorial irony of the other tales creates for Conrad a grounded distance from the internal perspectives of the characters inhabiting the fictional world, an autonomous aesthetic counter-space from which we can try to perceive truths that are not spoken but shown.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Shulevitz.

⁴⁵ Shulevitz.

⁴⁶ Tom Reiss, ‘The True Classic of Terrorism’, *New York Times* (September 11, 2005).

⁴⁷ Kaplan et al.

Kaplan's argument about the distance that is between the narrator and narrative point of view of the other characters allows the existence of a gap that can contain different elements that are not openly voiced through the main characters or narrator. It is an opportunity to develop a different perspective and vision of the events taking place within the novel. Therefore, the reference made to the possibility of uncovering other truths through reading between the different perceptions of the narrative opens up the prospect of exploring the novel through the notion of perspective and how it relates to the problem of defining terrorism and lack of perspective within terrorism discourse.

Tom Reiss in *The True Classic of Terrorism* argues that *The Secret Agent* is more about the evilness of counterterrorism than it is about terrorism itself. Reiss states that the narrative 'is essentially a satire of the British and European attitudes towards terrorism and counterterrorism.'⁴⁸ Indeed the narrative is centred around the plot of Verloc and his comrades to force counter violence procedures in Britain and although on the surface it seems like the narrative focuses on anarchist violence itself, it is but a cover for state terrorism and counterterrorism. More importantly, Reiss maintains that 'the real evil of the novel emerges from the exigencies of counterterrorism not the anarchist plotting itself.'⁴⁹ The significance of pointing out the focus of the novel on counterterrorism rather than terrorism suggests two essential ideas. First, counterterrorism as it is represented in *The Secret Agent* is highly similar to mainstream terrorism, there is not any significant difference in the strategies, the difference lies in the identity of the persecutors. Moreover, the use of terrorism as counterterrorism is not pursued openly, it is achieved through covert and disguised violence and more importantly accompanied by a powerful body of justification that is circulated through the media. Departing from Reiss argument about the wickedness of state terrorism and its ability to commit terrorism, as well as Conrad's representation of political violence as a spectral phenomenon, this chapter is concerned with the shadowy functioning of terrorism as strongly linked to its definitional problem and the lack of perspective,

⁴⁸ Reiss.

⁴⁹ Reiss.

making the covert modes of operation of terrorism indistinct.

In 'Terrorism for the Sake of Counterterrorism', Michael C. Frank asserts that Conrad's novel

implies that the true source of these effects is not the threat of terrorism per se, it is the way that threat undermines the status quo by eliciting new, formerly illegal measures in the name of counterterrorism. When the alleged protectors of social order begin to operate clandestinely, deliberately pushing the limits of legality, then their actions have more damaging consequences than any dynamite explosion.⁵⁰

The analysis of the narrative by Frank stresses that the main idea that the novel develops strongly relates to state terrorism that identifies itself as counterterrorism. He speaks about the shift of attention that Conrad invests throughout his novel. Instead of focusing on the mainstream understanding of terrorism as being the enemy over that is always rooted in some sort of political or religious radicalism, *The Secret Agent* explores another side of the terrorism discussion through the staged bomb plan on the Greenwich Observatory. Building on Frank's argument that *The Secret Agent* explores terrorism from a different angle, the following analysis aims at arguing that the narrative offers a fresh representation of terrorism away from the established understanding. Moreover, it challenges the definition of terrorism that is based on alien violence and the duality of Us, the victims vs Them, the forever criminals, without deeper exploration of the justification and rationales of these terrorists.

Departing from the above analysis, the following chapter is an attempt to explore the problematic of defining terrorism and the lack of perspectives regarding its understanding. The space that Conrad creates between his narrator and the internal mindset and perspective of the characters allows multiple interpretations that are not explicitly referred to. Moreover, Reiss and Frank's focus on the novel's different intake of the source of terrorism and its meaning and the manipulation that surrounds it, allow the analysis of the novel as offering a different perspective vis-à-vis the representation

⁵⁰ Frank.

of terrorism. Therefore, building on previous research, this study considers how *The Secret Agent* can be read in the light of the continuing problematic of an inclusive definition of political violence without disregarding opposing perspectives that are considered purely evil and devoid of a working logic. The proposed study will tackle the notion of covert plotting, delayed decoding as well as media influence in relation to defining and understanding terrorism and how these concepts help develop a deeper and clearer interpretation of political violence, away from the established dual formulation that mainly focuses on the Western experience of terrorism as being the ultimate victims. Moreover, it is an attempt to review this notion of victimhood and its use to justify counterterrorism.

The Secret Agent enables the exploration of contemporary terrorism through a different approach. It develops various entities related to political violence among which state terrorism, radicalisation and gender. Contrary to what the second part of its title suggests, *A Simple Tale*, the last thing that can be said about *The Secret Agent* is that it is simple. The complexity is built up at different levels. The plot structure follows a different pattern than the traditional plotline, it has no determined chronological order in the same way that *Home Fire*, a novel by the British-Pakistani novelist Kamila Shamsie published in 2017, which reflects similar levels of complexity and irony, does. *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale*, is not “simply” a tale about anarchist plotting in London.

The general atmosphere of the narrative superficially defies displacing it from its timely context of the 1900s however, the unique language use, the symbolic details, the physical description and the ironic tone that persists all along the novel allows the formation of two levels of the same story, what Cedric Watts refers to as ‘Overt and Covert’ plots. Of these covert plots there is the phenomenon of state sponsored terrorism that Conrad explores through the deep cover Russian secret agent in London. Conrad delves into the complexities of state terrorism through creating a narrative based on the Russian infiltration of the anarchist group in London in the aim of pressuring the British authorities to adopt severe immigration policies to pressure the anarchist movement

that threatens the supremacy and power of the Russian autocracy.

Bringing *The Secret Agent* into the contemporary frame of terrorism requires a contemporary setting that reflects similar characteristics to those referred to in the narrative. *The Secret Agent* surely reflects on the atmosphere of Anarchism that was dominant during the late years of the 1800s and the early years of the 1900s. “Propaganda by the deed” is one of the central conceptions that the narrative explores. It sheds light on how anarchist terror was not the end by itself but rather a tactic for other perceived aims. Indeed, the aim of Verloc and his followers from using his ‘infernal machine’⁵¹ was to engender a very specific political reaction from the part of the British government. It exposes the ‘harmony between deeds and words’ which, I believe, reflects much of the character of political violence in the pre- and post-9/11 periods. The anarchist propagandists of the deed were willing to sacrifice their lives as they considered it ‘an essential element in the inspirational message their assassinations were intended to convey’⁵² and therefore, their intended message would reach the widest audience possible. Indeed, even back then when the world was not living globalization in its contemporary sense, the availability and accessibility of information through newspapers, railway shipping networks, telephone and telegram permitted ‘propaganda by the deed’ to be highly efficient in reaching the international audience. The infernal machine combined with the ‘propaganda by the deed’ moto, aimed at creating the startling effect that Conrad recreates through *The Secret Agent*. Leila Khaled, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, hijacked the TWA flight from Los Angeles to Tel Aviv during its stop in Rome for refuelling. When asked as to why she took such action, her reply was that it was the only way for Palestinian question to reach the international audience and that starting from that event the world would start asking about them and their revendications. As Carr puts it, Khaled was the terrorist ‘whose actions heralded a new and unwelcome tactic.’⁵³ The

⁵¹ Carr, p. 46.

⁵² Carr, p. 62.

⁵³ Carr. p. 253.

tactic, is indeed new, however the principal reasoning behind it; is similar the Anarchists' 'propaganda by the deed' strategy, that Shamsie's *Home Fire* also exposes within the contemporary frame of political violence. By the end of the Cold War, some experts argued for a 'paradigm shift' within terrorism in that it became far more dangerous. Organizations such as Hezbollah started to surface. It has its own television and radio channels as well as an array of universities and school boards that allow it to defuse its agenda and political message.⁵⁴ The claim that terrorism has entered a new era was mainly fuelled by the notion of terror spectacles that aim at defusing political messages to global audiences. Yet that very element is what makes of Islamist Fundamentalism a movement that is traced back to Anarchism. *The Secret Agent* is one example that explores and exposes the underlying connection between the two. Conrad focused on the notion of the spectacle and its communicating function rather than its lethality. The pre 9/11 was marked by such spectacles that eventually led to 9/11 and that reflect the strategy that Verloc follows.

The communicative function of political violence requires a certain mode of operation that allows it fulfilment. Operating under cover and constructing multiple layers to the same plot does achieve the necessary platform for the desired message to be disseminated to international audiences. In the introduction to *The Deceptive Text*, Watts argues 'that every narrative has an overt plot; but some narratives contain, in addition to the overt plot, at least one covert plot: a concealed plot-sequence'.⁵⁵ The overt plot is the first set of meaning that a narrative conveys, it is at the surface level of the story. It is usually the part that we detect from the first reading of a narrative. The covert plot, however, is the hidden sequence that is only implied in different ways, it only becomes clear through deeply close reading. According to Watts, the embodiment of the events is a vital element for the covert plot, as it is only possible to have different levels of events and meanings through the positioning of different layers of the same

⁵⁴ Carr, p. 327.

⁵⁵ Cedric Watts, *The Deceptive Text: An Introduction to Covert Plots* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), p. 1.

story.⁵⁶ The ambiguous nature of *The Secret Agent*, the multiplicity of ‘heroes’, settings and stories are the means by which Conrad arranges the different layers of his narrative which allow the connotations about state terrorism in both time frames, the early, late 20th and 21st centuries.

There is no clear sequencing of the events as to say beginning, climax and denouement in *The Secret Agent*. The events are arranged in a way to convey two different stories, the overt and covert stories. Having said that, the overt plot is the surface meaning of the narrative, Conrad’s novel’s overt plot is about Verloc the Russian secret agent who infiltrates an anarchist network in London and attempts a terrorist attack on the Greenwich Observatory in London, during which his brother-in-law dies while tripping with the explosives. However, the surface story is not what matters the most for the current study, it is what is behind the story of Verloc and the way it is constructed that propels *The Secret Agent* to the contemporary frame of terrorism and its modus operandi.

Communism could no longer be considered the source of terrorist activity, however the motivations and the hostility remained and laid down the foundations for state terror for the coming years. It is essential to recognise the implications that come with the need to justify and validate state terror. The latter cannot be defensible if it adopts bare face terror, there is an existential need for camouflage and false flag danger. Covert plotting through secret agencies and disguised agents is one way of getting that necessary clandestine cover for state terror. Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* uncovers similar undercover policies that were characteristic of the pre and post 9/11. Verloc is the instrument deployed to reinforce the Russian absolutism by the means of anarchism. State terrorism takes the form of three interrelated practices: oppression, repression and terrorism. Conrad’s narrative presents to us the repressive and terrorist side of state terror. Two aspects that denote the recourse to threat, coercion and deliberate violence against enemies, potential or imagined. On overt and covert plots, Watts argues that ‘the

⁵⁶ Watts.

factor of concealment is what differentiates it [overt] from the sub-plot [covert]⁵⁷ and therefore the latter becomes hard to see or understand. It is that same structure that defines state terrorism, the difficulty to detect the connection between the raging violence and those accountable for it.

Literary texts all contain ‘modes of concealment’, the difference lies only at the level of intensity. *The Secret Agent* has a complex structure in that the concealed story is made up through multiple techniques. The affinities underlying *The Secret Agent* and CIA covert mission are not limited to the story that it carries; they extend to include the nature of the text and plot arrangement. About texts, Edward Said upholds that ‘they [texts] are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life and of course the historical moments in which they are located.’⁵⁸ This being considered, the text does not only reveal and present a world and a story that is limited to a certain period, the text, being worldly and part of social and historical circumstances, offers the opportunity to visualise and recreate past events and historical moments as well as understand and recognise present times. *The Secret Agent* foreshadows different perspective through the double narrative that is at work. The narrative then, allows the possibility of multiple and diverse readings in relation to varying circumstances and conditions.

To make the parallel between the covert plots as developed in *The Secret Agent* and their manifestation within modern state terrorism, Steve Coll’s *Ghost Wars* traces back the origins of Al Qaeda through exploring the modus operandi of state terrorism. The term ghost is used to connote the mode of operation of state terrorism that functions through a concealed and ‘covert’ status of the operations. State terrorism cannot be simply and openly acclaimed by states involved in it; it needs to be masked with a noble mission that justifies the use of terrorism. The justification involves a very specific definition of terrorism that reinforces a very specific perspective that presents terrorism

⁵⁷ Watts, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Said W. Edward, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 4.

as the ultimate enemy that is devoid of any logic and justification. The establishment of this notion as the dominant perspective is structured around overt and covert connotations. Therefore, there has always been ‘a vilification of terrorism and terrorist’⁵⁹ as part of the dominant definition.

Bearing in mind Watts’ conception of the covert plot as being a puzzling component of the novel, it is a sequence of the novel that is constructed by the author and hidden from the reader or else constructed by one character and ignored by the other characters. The surface plot serves as a validation for the dominant binary definition of terrorism of Us vs them. In *The Secret Agent*, Conrad uses the story of Verloc as a way of concealing his narrative about Russian state terrorism. The overt plot in *The Secret Agent* serves to eliminate a different interpretation of the actions that the different characters are involved with, the clarity and simplicity of the surface plot is meant to provide disguise to the covert about the divergent perception that it carries in relation to state violence. It is never directly stated that the central role of Verloc is that of an agent provocateur that would put pressure on the British authorities to undermine the movement of the real anarchists in London and therefore in Russia as well. Vladimir, Mr Verloc and the whole secret policing agency in London need stringent immigration policies only to prevent any terrorist conspiracy in a foreign country. They regard England as an absurd country with ‘sentimental regard for individual liberty.’⁶⁰

The plot of Verloc opens up more perspectives to consider the spectral atmosphere that dominated the post-Cold War period and the shift towards covert operating referred to as retaliation as a response to claims about the “new danger” of Islamist Fundamentalism. The pornography shop that Verloc owns functions as a covert occupation to his work as a secret agent. Conrad constructs a set of verities around the character of Verloc as a way of covering his plot about the bomb plan. The camouflage that surrounds his life projects a significantly divergent perspective from his actual mission. The sharpness of the plot serves as a shield that prevents other perception from

⁵⁹ Carr, p. xvi.

⁶⁰ Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale* (London: Penguin Group, 1984), p. 64.

emerging and threatening the Greenwich bomb plan. Moreover, the perspective that is served through the overt plot is the only truth we can access as long as the overt plot is in place. The chances of suspecting other scenarios with a different perception and therefore outcome, are significantly shallow due to the strong system of validation that supports it. The obscurity that comes with terrorism is an inherent feature of it which is a central undertone of Conrad's novel.

Mr. Vladimir orchestrates the explosion not as an end in itself but rather to incite the British authorities to 'to become more repressive, less hospitable to political refugees and more like those in autocratic Russia'.⁶¹ Therefore, the bomb is not the end in itself, it is meant to provoke a political reaction in favour of the Russian government. The violence shifts side from being used by revolutionaries to being used by official governments. Therefore, the act of violence is represented from another perspective, within the frame of counterterrorism, violence, of different levels, is deployed. Carr maintains that:

Death squads, massacres, the bombing of civilian populations, torture, assassination and extra-judicial execution- all [...] forms of violence have been adopted in the name of counterterrorism by states that presented themselves as virtuous crusaders in a campaign against the terrorist evil, while engaging in the most ruthless and amoral realpolitik.⁶²

Therefore, as Carr's statement suggests, political violence is used in various and often opposing contexts where terror becomes justifiable within different perspectives. The problematic that arises within the definition of political violence after 9/11 is that it does not include the perspective of the terrorist or other victims of terrorism like in the case of Stevie in *The Secret Agent*. Stevie dies during the bombing attempt on the Greenwich Observatory, he has very limited understanding of the mission he was embarked in therefore, he is to be considered as a victim of the terrorist plot of Verloc

⁶¹ Watts, p. 112.

⁶² Carr, p. xvi.

and his comrades. Carr speaks of demythologizing the concept of terrorism that is often viewed only from one perspective. In fact, there is also a need to reconsider the authority of the state that allows the monopolization of violence, its uses and condemnation. Verloc and the Russian secret agency in *The Secret Agent*, conceive their desired result from the use of violence and direct it for their own benefits to eliminate the anarchist threat abroad. Both Conrad and the CIA's intervention in Afghanistan follow the same modus operandi. They both create a surface situation that conceals the deep and complex state of affairs. The CIA directors claimed that their intervention in Afghanistan was in the aim of assisting the Afghan jihad halt the Russian expansion, while it was a cover to the real aims of preventing the USSR from expanding any further and therefore preserve its own power.⁶³

Conrad wrote *The Secret Agent* to reflect upon the anarchist violence of the time, yet 'a system of secret policing in which an endemic lack of transparency first allows the bombing to happen and then hampers the investigation'.⁶⁴ The bombing is planned by Verloc and the anarchist. The explosion is then used as a stimulus for the desired immigration policies that would limit the movement of anarchists abroad and therefore illuminate a potential enemy. The terrorist bombing organised in England by Vladimir and executed by Verloc aimed at 'defeating terrorism at home'.⁶⁵ The vicious cycle of using violence to fight violence, brings us back to Carr's argument about the manipulation of meaning of terrorism and limited perspectivism that is involved when defining terrorism that tends to neglect state-terrorism that is often considered self-defence.

The excessive descriptions of the characters and the city of London are not consistent on the contrary, they show a world of interconnectedness, not in a harmonious way, but in conflicting ways. The connectivity and the opposition of those different situation is what allows the formation of different layers to the same story.

⁶³ Cole, p. 147.

⁶⁴ Sara Wise, 'Joseph Conrad: *The Secret Agent*- 1907'. *London Fiction*, (July 2016).

⁶⁵ Wise.

When Verloc goes to the embassy to meet with Vladimir, the place is described as follows: ‘the polished knockers of the doors gleamed as far as the eye could reach, the windows shone with a dark opaque lustre. And all was still. But a milk cart rattled noisily across the distant perspective; a butcher boy.’⁶⁶ The passage above describes the same place; however, the description creates two opposing visions. On the one hand, there is the extreme neatness, shine and calmness which reflects the prestige of the place, the embassy. On the other hand, there is the distant noise that comes to break the stillness of the place to present a completely different image of the high-status place. The dominance of the beauty and prestige of the room and the noise that comes in to break the image of the place as this powerful representation the power of the embassy with the rattling of a milk cart offer a metaphor for voicing of marginalised perspectives and perceptions within the prevailing stature of the embassy. The whole scene is made up of the two opposing features that allow a deeper rendering of the situation. The rattling stands for the voice of missing perspectives that are to be part of the dialogue. The image of the embassy as Verloc sees it, embodies both the powerful and dominant perspective as well the ignored perspective of the terrorism discourse.

The concept of the covert and overt plot serves as a mode of operation that Verloc uses to execute his bomb plan. It is a strategy that creates the justification and legitimisation for the violence committed. It is also used as a tool for deceptiveness where terrorism is disguised as a justified and necessary procedure. *The Secret Agent* explores the manipulation that surrounds the understanding of political violence that takes on disguises and different layers of meaning to maintain the perspective of terrorism being a retaliation operation rather than political violence. By doing so, the narrative reimagines the functioning of terrorism that is based on the safeguarding of dominant perspectives through the use of covert implications that are guarded with the overt definitions of terrorism that confirm the dominant perspectives and demonise others.

The concept of delayed decoding is another narrative technique that is present in

⁶⁶ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 8.

The Secret Agent. As mentioned before, *The Secret Agent* does not follow a linear arrangement of events. The story starts with the presentation of Verloc's milieu, household and business. His work as a spy for the Russian authorities is only understood later in the narrative. Stevie is omni-present throughout the storyline, but it is until the end that we recognise his central role of being 'the suicide bomber'. Furthermore, there are different intertwined accounts, such as the relation between Verloc and Winnie and Verloc's role within the anarchist organisation that make sense only near the end of the novel. In other words, the different situations that make up the storyline are decoded only later in the story hence Watts' 'delayed decoding.' For instance, it is until late in the narrative that Verloc's true aim through infiltrating the anarchist group is made clear. Moreover, Verloc's sudden care about Stevie seemed very mysterious and it is only at the end that we come to know the reason behind it which is to use him as the suicide bomber despite being an intentional suicide operation.

The underlying causation between the CIA mission in Afghanistan during the 1980s and the 9/11 attacks was established in the aftermath of the attacks not any time before. Many publications establishing or referring to this connection started to emerge. *Ghost Wars*, *Road to 9/11: Wealth, Empire and the Future of America* and *America's War on Terror* are among the books that clearly stated that the US intervention in Afghanistan to assist the Afghan resistance was one of the early roots of 9/11 strikes. Yet the connection was not perceived or stated prior to 9/11. Therefore, it was deciphered after the culmination of several events and US policies in relation to terrorism.

At the meeting of Verloc with the privy Councillor Wurmt, the latter reflects on the situation in England vis-à-vis the anarchist movement and British policies regarding it. He considers the 'the absence of all repressive measures, [...] a scandal to Europe.'⁶⁷ The Councillor's vision about the necessity of repressive procedure in Britain alludes to a plan being made or is wished for to indeed force those repressive strategies into being through the bombing of the Greenwich Observatory, that is attempted later in the

⁶⁷ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 10.

novel. The bombing that Verloc and the Russian secret agency want to provoke is ironically described as a 'cure' to the undesired leniency of the British authorities. Conrad juxtaposes terror with cure to silently refer to state terrorism that is considered, by the perpetrating state, a legitimate practice and therefore, a cure. This ironical formation of terror speaks to the modern conceptions of state terrorism. In the post-9/11 period, the United States and its allies represented the War On Terror as 'a moral crusade against "evil"',⁶⁸ in this respect, War on Terror is the cure that the US and other countries have found to eradicate terrorism as it is understood in the main perspective of Us vs Them that defines terrorism as a danger that is exclusively alien to them and that can under no circumstance be justified. Carr formulates the 'cure finding process' in terms of 'opportunism' to achieve global hegemony, politically and economically.⁶⁹ Indeed, the level of the threat is amplified in the aim of extending the American military interventions and power especially in the regions that represent great economic interest. Most importantly, consolidating the notion that the War on Terror is the ultimate solution to defeat terrorism immediately establishes it as a dominant perspective that shapes the global understanding of terrorism and counterterrorism. In the course of promoting the War on Terror, it was described as an 'antidote' to the national decadence and a new mission to replace the Cold War. Both 'cure' and 'antidote' suggest the strategies behind justifying state violence as being a noble mission to destroy the enemies. However, at the centre of those strategies lies the supreme aim of the perpetrating governments to maintain and strengthen their authority, monopoly and vision of the world order. Moreover, the characterization of the War On Terror maintains mainstream perspective at the centre of terrorism understanding and discards other perspectives. Therefore, hindering them from emerging and being part of a global understanding of terrorism.

The enemy destruction myth is only the front face of the 'creative destruction'⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Carr, p. xiii.

⁶⁹ Carr, p. xiv.

⁷⁰ Carr, xii.

behind state violence. John Gray explains creative destruction as a strategy adopted by the Western world in order to overthrow existing governments and establish others that would serve their economic and political interests. He gives the model of Iraq on which this project was undertaken. In the context of the War On Terror and the Iraq war, US national security and elimination of the threat emanating from Iraq and its Weapons of Mass Destruction were used legitimate justification for the US coalition military intervention. The WMD⁷¹ threat coming from Iraq was never fully proved to be real, in fact, never was the Iraqi terrorist threat fully explained. Terrorism is often obscured and distorted as necessary and is reduced to mere conflict of ‘evil vs good’, a conception that George W. Bush used in his address to the congress in 2001. Because of the extremely exaggerated assumption made around the threat of terrorism on the US, ‘the elementary notions of legality, morality’ were completely ignored in the war against terror.

Vladimir, as a representative of the secret Russian agency in London, tells Verloc ‘we want to administer a tonic to the conference in Milan’⁷² in order to push forward the decisions about severe and restrictive immigration policies. The use of political violence is only implied through the expression ‘tonic’. The online Oxford dictionary explains the world tonic as a ‘medicinal substance taken to give feeling of vigour or well-being’⁷³ however, in the context of Vladimir’s conversation, the term refers to the secret “war” that the secret agents wish to provoke in London to destroy the anarchist threat on Russian power. Therefore, the terms are not used to convey their literal meaning, they are attributed new meanings to serve the covert plot about state terror. The use of terms like antidote, cure and tonic serves the purpose of shaping people’s mindsets and perceptions of the meaning of terrorism. The positive terminology that is used to denote the use of political violence inculcates the idea that is for the universal good and therefore other perception are disregarded either as unnecessary or unjustified

⁷¹ Weapons of Mass Destruction.

⁷² Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 18.

⁷³ The Online Oxford Dictionary, available from < <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/tonic>>.

enemy. Within that same conversation, Vladimir justifies the need for the ‘tonic’ as being the way to suppress political crime. Terrorism is both the ultimate good and the ultimate evil at one point, the difference is made when the dominant powers establish the dominant perspective of it in terms of binary understanding that hinders a wider perception of terrorism away from duality of good and evil. Developing an inclusive definition of terrorism would help reach a wider and sharper discernment and by extension a more effective response. Conrad juxtaposes two opposing notions, the remedy, which would be the Greenwich Observatory attempted bombing, and political crime. The irony though is that they are using that very same ‘political crime’ to fight. In addition to being referred to as ‘cure’ and ‘tonic’, Conrad continues his word manipulations to strengthen his connotation about state terrorism and at the same time reflect its nature. The secret mission of Verloc, the bombing of The Greenwich Observatory, is described by Vladimir as a ‘jolly good scare’, the strategic association of two opposing concepts allows the blurring of the lines that would separate terror from the state and therefore the latter manages ‘to impose, to legitimate, and indeed to legalise’ state involvement in political violence and, in the case of *The Secret Agent*, it validates the practices of the secret agency.

The obscuring of what terrorism implies is a deliberate strategy that allows freedom of operation within the spectrum of political violence. Derrida maintains that ‘the more confused the concept is the more it lends itself to an opportunistic appropriation’.⁷⁴ The definitional problem of terrorism and the difficulty of placing a clear and stable border between terrorism and counterterrorism, is the very aspect that Conrad reflects through his word game about anarchist violence and Russian state violence. Derrida also speaks of a ‘conceptual mutation, at once semantic, lexical and rhetorical’⁷⁵ which, in the context of the War on Terror, serves as one way to explain the way politicians use

⁷⁴ Goivanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogue With Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 103-104.

⁷⁵ Borradori, p. 105.

deceptive terminology ‘to gloss over the conflict between their words and deeds’.⁷⁶ Indeed, in addition to the already confusing concept of terrorism, the Western states’ leaders’ strategies surrounded by misleading statements and justifications allow the state to appropriate to itself ‘through threat’ the monopoly of violence. Therefore, the fight of terrorism mutates to become an excuse for the state to resort to violence as the last resort. *The Secret Agent* stages false flag terrorism orchestrated by a foreign state in Britain and on the wider spectrum of terrorism, it represents the problematic of defining terrorism and establishing a wider understanding of all concerned parties including terrorist organisations.

Baudrillard in ‘L’Esprit du Terrorisme’ argues that the 9/11 reached an incredible magnitude because of our complicity in making its symbolic dimension and purpose fully achieved.⁷⁷ The fall of the Twin Towers and the strike on the Pentagon engendered a drastic symbolic shock, not so much in relation to the casualties, but mostly because of the fear that the world’s superpower is vulnerable and not immune to terrorism. The ‘magnificence’ of 9/11 does not lie in the material and human damage but in the political emergency state it led to. The attack planned on The Greenwich Observatory in *The Secret Agent*, is similarly important due to its symbolic dimension. Vladimir insists that the outrage ‘need not be sanguinary [...] but they must be sufficiently startling, effective’.⁷⁸ The bombing itself is not the end, it is the symbolic aftereffects that are the real aim behind it. The stress is on the fact that the plan does not necessitate extreme violence but rather ‘intelligent’ violence that would influence the public opinion and therefore the authorities in favour of ‘universal repressive legislation’.⁷⁹

Baudrillard explains that the perpetrators of 9/11 ‘stopped committing suicide for

⁷⁶ Richard English, *Illusions of Terrorism and Counterterrorism*. The British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 95.

⁷⁷ Jean Baudrillard, ‘L’Esprit du Terrorisme’ *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101, N. 2 (Spring 2002), 403-415 (p. 404).

⁷⁸ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 19.

⁷⁹ Conrad.

nothing, by efficiently and offensively putting their own death into play.⁸⁰ That is to say that suicide bombing does not simply aim at physical damage, the true purpose is the destabilisation of a system that has been thought to have no breach. Therefore, he maintains that the most dangerous form of violence is symbolic, as its real aim is to inflict a violence that cannot be returned, that is humiliation. He argues that the attacks of 9/11 attained a state of global magnitude because it humiliated the global power and symbolically defeated it. Vladimir goes through all the possible targets and explains that their symbolic status is not enough to create the desired startling effect. He explains to Verloc that an attack on religion, royalty or public place will not be effective enough because its effect will fade quickly and might well be mistaken for social revenge outrage. For that reason, Baudrillard is convinced that 'a bomb outrage to have any influence on public opinion now must go beyond the intention of vengeance or terrorism'.⁸¹ There is, then, a clear focus on the priority of the symbolic function of terrorism over just the violent side of it.

The attack of 9/11 fulfilled all the criteria that Vladimir is explaining to Verloc, the fetishism, the startling effect, the effectiveness, and the symbolism. After the attacks, the US were completely shut down. The damage was not simply the billions of dollars or the 3000 deaths, most importantly, it was the atmosphere of fear, vulnerability and weakness that followed. The symbolic message and damage of the event was largely more significant. The parallelism between the version of Vladimir and 9/11 go beyond the symbolism of the target itself to include the message sent. The unexpectedness of the event, its place and time, contributed to the virtual effects it created. If the bombing on the Greenwich Observatory aimed at influencing the public opinion and the authorities, 9/11 caused very similar effects. It is a date that marks not only the actual Twin Tower fall but also the resort to extreme policies of militarisation, surveillance and endless military interventions. The purpose of both attacks slightly differs in nature,

⁸⁰ Jean Baudrillard, Michelle Valentin, 'L'Esprit du Terrorisme', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101, no 2 (2002), 403-415 (p. 408).

⁸¹ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 20.

yet outcome is very much similar.

Another aspect that is explored through Conrad's narrative is the role of the media in strengthen the dominant binary formulation of terrorism and marginalise the other aspects of terrorism such as the justification behind terrorist violence aside from the simplistic assumption that it is rooted in the hostility against the western lifestyle. Baudrillard maintains that 'terrorism would be nothing without the media.'⁸² The media plays a magnifying role at two levels. On the one hand, the media is used by the terrorists to achieve the desired symbolism of their violence by reaching global audiences, as is the case of the Greenwich observatory and the World Trade Centre. On the other hand, it validates the perspective that terrorist violence is unjustified and therefore is to be eradicated by mean of a supposedly justified violence that is represented as self-defence and retaliation. Therefore, the media serve to further deepen the gap within the definition of terrorism.

Vladimir seems to be perfectly aware of the centrality of the media in 'promoting' the attack he was planning. He insists that the event needs to be different from any preceding attacks, as the newspapers have 'ready-made phrases' to refer to those. Therefore, there is a need to innovate, for the newspaper coverage to create the necessary sensational effect. Because the Greenwich Observatory bombing is essentially targeting the public opinion, the media are an indispensable pawn in the game. After the bomb was accidently detonated and killed Stevie, Chief Commissioner Heat and his superior were discussing the perpetrator and the fact that they should have someone ready to present to the public if the latter would want to express its indignation. Chief Commissioner Heat stresses that a public outcry 'depend on the newspaper press'.⁸³

Conrad explores the importance of the media, mostly newspapers at the time, in making of political violence major events. In the opening scene, Verloc's shop is shown to be filled with newspapers in addition the constant presence of papers all along the

⁸² Baudrillard, Valentin, p. 414.

⁸³ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 71.

novel, ‘man of papers’, ‘batch of papers’, ‘daily papers’, ‘evening papers’, ‘afternoon papers’, reflect the centrality of the role that the media play in disseminating political violence coded messages. Although Ossipon says that ‘the condemned social order has not been built up on paper and ink, and I don’t fancy that a combination of paper and ink will ever out an end to it’,⁸⁴ their plan to eliminate anarchism from Britain relies mostly on the effect that the ink on the paper would have on the British authorities and the public. For that reason, Vladimir insists on the necessity of the novelty of the attack-to-be for it to be covered in the most sensational way and thus create a wider public reaction. Media coverage ‘becomes a cycle in which print media renders each new account of terrorism more sensational than the last, so that readers expect more terror each time.’⁸⁵ Although the media sphere in the 1900 was not of the same magnitude as in the contemporary times, it still played a central role in taking terrorist incidents to a different level. *The Secret Agent* satires the reciprocal relation between political violence and the media. The latter aims at satisfying the readership and the terrorist seeks the attention of the readers,⁸⁶ because the impact of their actions greatly depend on the reaction of the public opinion that can only be reached through media coverage. The media occupy a central place in defining terrorism and determining the public’s vision about it, in a way the media has a significant authority over the meaning of terrorism in public opinion, there is, indeed, a symbiotic relation between the two.⁸⁷ The media’s choice of the features of terrorist incidents to cover serve only a specific perspective rather than an objective reality of the events. At the beginning of the novel, we are presented with the business of Verloc, or the cover for his profession as a Russian secret agent. The business is apparently a newspaper and magazine shop that is described as an ‘ostensible business’, and for that matter, it is indeed a cover not only

⁸⁴ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. chapter 4.

⁸⁵ Jennifer Malia, ‘Media Sensationalism and Terrorism in “*The Secret Agent*”’ *The Conradian*, 38, no. 2 (2013), pp. 53-71 (p. 55).

⁸⁶ Malia.

⁸⁷ Alexander Spencer, ‘Lessons Learnt: Terrorism and the Media’ (Wiltshire: Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2012), p. 6.

for Verloc, but it also connotes media role in obscuring realities surrounding political violence. Shamsie's 2017 novel also explores the modes of operation of the media around terrorism and the significant impact they can have on public opinion and policy making the global understanding of terrorism as well. She does it through the media coverage of final scene of *Home Fire*.

Because, as discussed earlier, terrorism has a symbolic dimension, the media serve as the vehicle of that symbolism. Bruce Hoffman maintains that terrorism is an attention-seeking act of violence through which it acquires publicity and therefore communicate a message.⁸⁸ He continues to discuss the dependence of terrorism on the effect created by the media coverage without which the impact of the incident would be largely reduced to the immediate victims and witnesses. The power of the media extends to the definition of terrorism through its focus on the perspective of the certain powers and marginalising other perspectives. Vladimir understands the importance of the media perfectly, the reaction of the public to the Greenwich Observatory bombing depended on the level of coverage it gets from the newspaper, as it was 'impossible to say yet whether it [the public] would roar or not. That in the last instance, of course, depended on the newspaper press.'⁸⁹ The Russian secret agency wants to send a message to the British authorities, and they are perfectly aware of their need of media coverage to communicate their message, therefore the larger the audience the more chances to inflict the desired political change. During the pre-9/11 period, terrorist incidents were highly frequent, ranging from airliners hijacking, kidnapping and embassies bombing, accompanied by intensified media coverage. Hoffman gives multiple examples where the media have played a major role in taking those events to a global level. The 1985 hijacking of the TWA flight 847 is one example of a highly covered terrorist incident. The 17 days crisis was covered through 500 news segments broadcasted by three major US television networks, ABC, CBS and NBC.⁹⁰ Hoffman

⁸⁸ Hoffman, p. 174.

⁸⁹ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 71.

⁹⁰ Hoffman, p. 174.

describes the media coverage of the incident as ‘the most egregious perversion of news reporting’⁹¹ and adds that during that specific episode the “news presenters” rather than the “news makers” had become the story’.⁹² This statement stresses Vladimir’s vision about the necessity of generating startling newspaper press. The attack-to-be on the Greenwich Observatory central goal was not to cause large human losses or material damage. It was rather to initiate significant media coverage to influence the public opinion. The latter would then complete the mission by putting pressure on the British authorities to introduce more severe immigration policies. The news coverage of the 1985 hijacking played that very role that Vladimir wished for. The US television channels constant coverage of the families of the hostages, led the Reagan administration to press the Israeli government to release the Shi’a prisoners, as the hijackers requested. The episode validates the dependence of political violence on the media coverage. The 1985 hijacking and the planned bombing in *The Secret Agent* do reflect on the use of the media for political violence. Yet most significantly, the two cases also epitomise the one-sided coverage that brings forward one dimension of political violence and marginalises other possible perceptions and aspects of it.

The understanding of Radicalization in the contemporary context is mostly related to religious extremism. However, if we consider the process of radicalisation outside the religious context it has acquired in the late 20th and 21st centuries, it has been in place years before. Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*, even though not evident, does reflect on it through the character of Stevie. Stevie is the brother of Winnie, Verloc’s wife. He is not the most enthusiastic or resourceful child; his mother sees him as ‘a terrible encumbrance’.⁹³ Stevie’s nature of being and his relationship with Verloc was never very close or even apparent which made his sister want to establish that relation and strengthen it. A decision which later leads to a true disaster. Stevie ended up being used to carry on the bombing plan on the Greenwich Observatory. The way through which

⁹¹ Hoffman, p. 174.

⁹² Hoffman, p. 175.

⁹³ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 05.

Stevie ended up involved in the plan is very much similar to the radicalisation process that became a central subject especially after the events of 9/11 and 7/7. Radicalization, as terrorism, has multiple definitions considering different factors. It is explained in relation to the extremist ideologies among which Islamist fundamentalism. It is also considered as an individual process which involves a 'radicalizer' who would play the role of the driving extremist force.⁹⁴ In other words, the process of radicalization starts when a person, usually young, is drawn into a certain ideology until he is convinced to take violent action in the name of that ideology.

Radicalization is explained at two levels: ideological and behavioural. Ideological radicalization is the process through which an individual accepts an extremist ideology. The behavioural is the next stage of the radicalization during which that individual is convinced to adopt violent action.⁹⁵ The above consideration of radicalization is mostly very true. However, the unconsciousness and deceptiveness that accompanies it is not considered. Indeed, the person involved in the radicalization process is not always aware of what he is being involved in. This specific aspect is reflected in *The Secret Agent* and the recently published *Home Fire* where both novels reflect on the innocence and somehow naiveté of the 'victims.' The nature of the relation between Verloc and Stevie establish a fundamental parallel with the modern conception of the process of radicalization that adopts the notion of guidance and 'fatherly advice' rather than overtly expressed as being persuaded to join a terrorist organisation. Verloc, in the light of his secret mission within the Russian agency, leads Stevie through a dangerous route who ends up stumbling on the bomb and causing his own death. The case of Stevie is not in itself a case of radicalization in the contemporary sense; however, it does connote its functioning and the different involved components.

Radicalization can be described as 'a bunch of guys: a loose network of friends and

⁹⁴ Manni Crone, 'Radicalization Revisited: Violence, Politics and The Skills of the Body' *The Royal International Affairs* (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons, 2016), p. 589.

⁹⁵ Crone, p. 590.

family, with individuals passing in and out'.⁹⁶ Therefore, it does not necessarily mean that it involves professional terrorist, it could be manifested through family members and friends which makes the process even more effective. After the bombing occurred, when Winnie was asked where her brother was, she replies 'he's been way with-a friend-in the country',⁹⁷ that friend is Michaelis a member of the anarchist network that Verloc and his associates were trying to secretly destroy. Obviously Winnie refers to him as a friend because she was not aware of the reality of Michaelis, yet it also implies obscure circumstances. After the unfortunate and sudden death of Stevie, Verloc recalls the instruction he gave to him as to go to The Greenwich Observatory place the bomb and go back and re-join Verloc outside the precincts of the park. Verloc undertook very careful strategy to prepare Stevie for his mission, he has 'carefully indoctrinated him with the necessity of silence in the course of many walks',⁹⁸ the use of the term 'indoctrinate' has a strong connotation to what radicalization in its modern conception involves. Indeed, indoctrinating is a key element for that process and perfectly stands for the modern formulation as brainwashing. Verloc manages to infiltrate the mind of Stevie and reshape most of his opinions about the police and the state which Stevie followed with such 'blind devotion'⁹⁹ due to his admiration of Verloc.

In 'Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Towards Terrorism', it is argued that radicalization also involves personal connections. The nature of the relation involving 'comradely love' and fatherly feeling can be a very strong motive for the target to be persuaded to adopt an ideology or take a certain action.¹⁰⁰ Fatherly love and admiration are the aspects that define the relation between Verloc and Stevie and it is the only reason Verloc was certain of his ability to radicalize Stevie who, because of his

⁹⁶ Mark Sageman, *Understanding Terror-networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004) quoted in Manni Crone, 'Radicalization Revisited: Violence, Politics and The Skills of the Body' *The Royal International Affairs* (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons, 2016), p. 598.

⁹⁷ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 131.

⁹⁸ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 147.

⁹⁹ Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, p. 147.

¹⁰⁰ Clark McCauley, Sophia Moskalenko, 'Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Towards Terrorism' *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20.3 (2008), pp. 415-433 (p. 421).

devotion, did not have the least doubt about the implication of the operation. Within the modern frame of political violence, specifically Islamist terrorism, fatherly love and family relation tend to be exploited for political ends which Conrad brilliantly epitomises through his characters. An aspect that again, *Home Fire* reflects on through the connection of the young Parvaiz and his radicalizer who takes advantage of the loneliness of the young man.

The Secret Agent parodies modern terrorism not only through the storyline that reflects the similarities that are common to both the narrative and the reality behind the US involvement in Afghan resistance to the USSR. *The Secret Agent* narrative techniques validate the satire through the arrangement of the plot. The technique of the covert plot elucidates the modes of operation of state terrorism that usually create of covert argument and justification to conceal the reality that is almost always kept behind the scenes. Conrad through keeping the plot of the Russian authorities undisclosed, indirectly draws the similarities that are part of state terrorism and the way it operates, be it during late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries or during contemporary terrorism. The technique of delayed decoding does not simply make Conrad's narrative captivating and shadowy, but it also reflects upon the circumstances surrounding the definition of terrorism.

The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare: The Changing Faces of Perception

Scholarly productions about Chesterton's views and works have placed him within varying and often opposing contexts. There is a fascinating idiosyncrasy about his positions, he is controversial in the sense that it is near the impossible to place him within the limits of one literary movement, political agenda, or his works within a specific genre without facing different kinds of curious elements that defy the genre or adventurous aspects that resist categorisation attempts. Indeed, 'there are a lot of things by Chesterton that are indisputably moving yet not easily fitted into the usual critical categories.'¹⁰¹ Chesterton is praised for his exceptional imagination and creativity in his genius dealing with happenings around him. The main aspect that dominates his works is the constant presence of paradox resulting in the categorization resistance. There seems to be no stability within the different notions that he develops, not in the sense that there is no unity but rather in the sense that his works do not bear the limits of specific genre or established styles or indeed mainstream conceptions. He does not limit his works to one straightforward idea, instead he explores various itineraries that do not necessarily engage with the same notion. Chesterton's works have an inbuilt paradox that is nonetheless highly revelatory rather than purely confusing. The notion of mystery and partial knowledge is a characteristic of the modes of operation that dominate political violence. *The Man Who Was Thursday* having been written during a period of heightened scepticism, contains applicable elements of spectrality¹⁰² and ambiguities that serve the purpose of my argument about the vagueness of the definition of terrorism and the limited spectrum that is considered within that very definition,

¹⁰¹ Robert Royal, 'Our Curious contemporary, G. K. Chesterton.' *The Wilson Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1992), 92-102 (p. 99).

¹⁰² The term spectrality within this chapter refers to the uncertainties that accompany the experiences of the characters who go through multiple reality changes and unstable perceptions. It also connotes the absence of clarity within the terminology of terrorism and the resulting problematic of defining terrorism that is the focus of this chapter and thesis as a whole. The use of the terms spectral/spectrality denotes a characteristic that is present both within the novel and the concept of terrorism.

engendering lack of perspectives and confined perceptions of the phenomenon of terrorism. This chapter will focus on exploring how the shift of the characters from the role of anarchist to detective and the change of reality that surrounds them as a representation of the missing parties from the understanding of terrorism and the imposing of one perception of terrorism as it's the ultimate meaning.

Chesterton is in some cases referred to as a pessimist because of his criticism of society and human condition. He considered the period of the *Fin de siècle*¹⁰³ a phase of degeneration, not as a unique and unprecedented phenomenon but rather as recurring chapter in human history. His pessimism then is not a merely a feature that is attributed both to him and the tone of his works, therefore, his tone is only a reflection of what he considered verities that always reassert themselves in the end. These pessimist aspects are deeply rooted in his conviction that modernity and the questioning of the pillars of human being, mostly religious belief, is at the source of what he considers the disintegration of the human soul. In the sense that we should not question the core beliefs of the human being in order to fit in the constantly changing circumstances but rather question those very changes and adjust them to correspond to human nature and its intrinsic beliefs.

His commitment to his religious beliefs is an established truth, therefore, the modernity that stands against his traditional beliefs does not hold a favourable position. The novel standpoint is justified by the fact that these modern books have 'torn the soul of Christ into silly strips, labelled egoism and altruism.'¹⁰⁴ Modernity is a nuisance for society and a degeneration of Christianity according to Chesterton. The latter being a masterpiece in the life of a human being, in Chesterton's opinion, it is evident that he

¹⁰³ Several conceptions were formulated as to what *fin de siècle* means. In France, it indicated sophistication, modernity and fashion, but it also signified decadence, morbidity and cultural pessimism¹⁰³. The idea of *fin de siècle* is largely related to deep changes that occurred between the years of 1880 and 1915. The term first appeared in a play performed in Paris in 1888. Within the atmosphere of the play there is a clear discontent about decadent people, having the habitude of 'turning everything into a joke¹⁰³'. It reflects the increase of disbelief in the established institutions of the enlightenment period.

¹⁰⁴ Gilbert K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: John Lane Company, 1908), p. 80.

defied and rejected the new changes brought about by modernity and the period of the *Fin de Siècle*. The series of changes that were taking place during that very period meant that their effect could not be avoided. The multi-faceted representations and the different layers in Chesterton's works are therefore a reflection of the dominant confusion of that period. His works are a reflection of the scepticism of the *Fin de Siècle* and an uncovering of what he thinks to be the curse of the disbelief of the period through the confusion that he surrounds his characters and the readers' experience.

It has also emerged as an essential material for the study of the rise of terrorism as the main threat of the twenty first century. Indeed, the novel may invoke various and 'anti-ethical' interpretations because it is 'a muddled work' that does not follow conventional writing criteria of cohesion and coherence. Ralf. C. Wood explains that *The Man Who Was Thursday*, 'may violate conventional canons of the time and space, indeed that will have a phantasmagoric and hallucinating quality.'¹⁰⁵ The novel is indeed multi-faceted and allows multiple understandings and perceptions through the use of masking and multiple versions of what could be reality and truth. The hallucinatory quality of the narrative is related to the constant changes of context of the novel and the ambiguous circumstances that the different characters experience. As a matter fact, on the surface there is very little coherence within the characters' encounters. The ambiguity and the lack of apparent coherence within the novel serves as a central illustration for the changing patterns of perspective and perception that is at the centre of my argument. This research will explore the ambiguous and nightmarish structure of the characters' experiences through the novel and the reflectivity of their narrative dimension in relation to perception and perspective vis-à-vis the understanding of terrorism. The representation of authority and power relations offer an illuminating instance of the internal working of terrorism that are at play within political violence and how they impact the fabrication as well as the implementation of specific perceptions through the conditioning of perspective to fit within dominant political narratives. The following chapter illustrates the significance of the novel within the

¹⁰⁵ Chesterton: The Nightmare of Goodness of God. The nightmare mystery of divine action.

discourse of terrorism through offering a different alternative interpretation to the existing scholarship about both the author and the narrative by linking the ambiguities of the latter to the formulation of different. Reading *The Man Who Was Thursday* in the light of Nietzsche's notion of perspective aims at offering an original and useful insight a better way of interpreting political violence which is to develop a wider scope when defining terrorism through the inclusion of other perspectives like the terrorist's viewpoint. I believe the involving the voice of the criminal in addition to the one of the victims would create a deeper and clearer understanding of terrorism and therefore better countering measure. We cannot fully understand terrorism if the actual understanding of the main actors reasoning is not fully uncovered and is simply reduced to evil doing without any actual clarification going into such generalisation. The notion of needed inclusivity is where *The Man Who Was Thursday* comes into play. The novel's exploration of both perception of the anarchist and the police detective and the constant shift between the two by the means of masking is an eye-opening formulation for the exploration of what is involved within political violence. The current definition of terrorism carries a lot of uncertainties and ambiguities as well constrained justifications that are based on 'narrow premises and carried to absurdity.'¹⁰⁶

While the style of *The Man Who Was Thursday* is a striking element that the analysis of the novel emphasises, the message that it implies is another aspect that illuminates the subject matter of the narrative both within and beyond its immediate context.

Aside from the intricate style,¹⁰⁷ we are presented with the questioning of

¹⁰⁶ John D, Coates, *Chesterton and the Edwardian Cultural Crisis* ([n.p.] Hull University Press, 1984), p. 28.

¹⁰⁷ The novel does not have a straightforward plot wherein there is a beginning, climax and denouement, following which the all the questions and the enigmas of the story come to a clear resolution, we are instead left with the everlasting enigma of Sunday, who confirms towards the end the novel that the reality of who he is or what he represents will never be uncovered. Additionally, the disguises of the characters a central representation of their fundamental quest is totally dismantled with the revelation of the real identities behind the masks and we are therefore presented with another plot that is radically divergent from the initial story.

philosophical matters such as the juxtaposed role of the poet and the anarchist as both being the conveyers of a message despite the inherent difference of their means. At another level, there is the idea of the “mythical aspect of Anarchy and terrorism” that is illustrated through the high use of symbolism and satire as a way of linking art and politics. Demerci’s review of the novel stresses its role combining the artistic and political dimensions of life as well as the intricate relation between the criminal and the defender as a connotation for the ambiguities that dominate the larger discussion of terrorism and its various definitions and interpretations that obscure rather than illuminate and refine the meaning and the functioning of terrorism that is achieved through a combination of disguises and symbols and the narrative representation they fulfil.

The Man Who Was Thursday is also considered Chesterton’s ‘fictional rendering of his own philosophical nightmare, a literary exorcism of the incubus that virtually sucked the moral and the mental life out of him.’¹⁰⁸ It is both a personal and universal narrative which represents the questions that Chesterton was asking about the validity of the new movement in the rise as well the broader issues that political violence stands for and the ambiguities that it engenders in relation to the complexity of defining terrorism and setting its limits. The subtitle of the novel, a nightmare, suggests the situation of doubt and uncertainty that the characters and possibly Chesterton himself, are stranded in. Therefore, because of the novel’s constant changing pattern, different elements that keep appearing all along the narrative until the very end and most importantly, the continuous uncovering of secrets, the narrative symbolises the ongoing problematic of defining terrorism through the large set of uncertain truths and changing verities that are condemned by specific perspectives that hinder freedom of perception. There is therefore a link between the novel’s literary structure that relies on multiple viewpoints and the issues relating to the definition of terrorism that lack the inclusivity that is constructed through the character of *The Man Who Was Thursday*. This chapter’s

¹⁰⁸ Adrian Wisnicki, *Conspiracy, Revolution and Terrorism From Victorian Fiction to the Modern Novel* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 9.

analysis of the novel explores the way it substitutes the events for a world that is characterised by manipulation of perspective and at the same time the possibility of multiple perspective.

The Man Who Was Thursday is on some occasions studied as part of conspiracy theories to explain its modes of narration. Adrian Wisnicki defines conspiracy theory narratives as follows:

Conspiracy theory narratives depict a conspiracy that defies genre categorisation and spatial location because conspiracy is everywhere, because it has grown to the extent of being generalised, potentially indeterminate, and even beyond the conscious control or knowledge of its conspirators.¹⁰⁹

They are based on a logic that is formed within the combination of truth and fantasy. Conspiracy theories around us can become indoctrinated within the society that it is hardly discerned or understood. Conspiracy theory narratives have a villain that is ‘an omnipresent network’ that can be anyone. Moreover, they are marked by the presence of a hidden hand that seems to be controlling the lives of others ‘often unsuspecting’. *The Man Who Was Thursday* falls within this category because it is set out to tell the story of a group of detectives that are both the anarchists and police officers. The group of detectives and their disguises embody a substantial development in the conspiracy narrative tradition. Chesterton’s narrative can fall within the logic and the modes of conspiracy theory narratives because it is loaded with elements of disguise, altered reality and changing faces, but most importantly because of the varying components that construct the story and its paradoxical nature, giving it a formidable elasticity. Therefore, this aspect confirms the flexibility of the novel in that it does not fit within limited literary genres and offers a vast array of perspectives and readings.

John Coates in *Chesterton and the Edwardian Cultural Crisis, The Man Who Was Thursday* is described as a ‘complex, and in some ways a mystifying, book whose

¹⁰⁹ Adrian Wisnicki, *Conspiracy, Revolution and Terrorism From Victorian Fiction to the Modern Novel* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 9

allegorical meaning escapes neat paraphrase.’¹¹⁰ undeniably, the novel has various layers of meaning and contains numerous opposing connotations. From the one hand, it is a metaphor of the personal crisis that Chesterton had with his own time in relation to the moral decadence that he believed was caused by the fin-de-siecle period. From the other hand, it is a political novel because it opens the discussion of political violence and the dangers it poses. It is a novel which, thanks to its double layered plot, allows the exploration of the manipulation that surrounds revolutionary movements and political violence as well as the spreading of very specific perspectives that guarantee the continuous existence of certain perceptions over others. However, the highly metaphorical style of the novel and its reliance on disguise should not be read superficially to mean that evil is pure illusion but rather that it is disguised and manipulative.¹¹¹ The analysis of *The Man Who Was Thursday* provides an efficient general interpretation of its complex metaphorical structure and the connotations it carries both as a personal and a political novel.¹¹²

Knowledge and mystery are two other notions that are reviewed regarding how Chesterton’s narrative has explored them especially in relation to political violence and religion.

¹¹⁰ Coates, p. 214.

¹¹¹ Coates, p. 215.

¹¹² *The Man Who Was Thursday* is rich with ambiguities and dead ends that the characters experience throughout the novel. The latter is said to have a dominant pessimist stance because of the dark atmosphere and continuous struggle of the characters with the manipulation that surrounds them. However, that does not suggest that Chesterton is inherently pessimist despite his rejection of the changes that were taking place, he believed that his society entered an era of degeneration, therefore he could not adopt a positive stance within the surrounding decadence. Chesterton perceived society ‘as expressing itself through its literature rather than its political institutions.’¹¹² His novel needed to be a reflection of the society within which he is writing, the pessimism is a necessity imposed by his time. The phase of degeneration that the modes of pessimism stand for is a symbolism of the chaos and confusion that political violence causes. The pessimism that is associated with *The Man Who Was Thursday* is revelatory of the confusion and the ambiguities that operate within political violence and most importantly the lack of the definition of anarchism and political violence.

The Man Who Was Thursday is said to be ‘Chesterton’s finest novel and mystery story,’¹¹³ to have dealt with our knowledge, ignorance and perception of the mystery of life. It is the narrative representation of mystery and ambiguity through seven undercover detectives having the days of the week as code names who initially are in pursuit of an anarchist group in London. The narrative moves with six of the characters uncovering each other as being members of the same special police force for the fight against anarchism. The partial solving of the mystery only leads to a bigger and the more significant enigma of the character of Sunday who even at the end of the novel still stands for a supernatural character whose reality stays unknown despite his surface identity being uncovered. *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare* is confirmed as an unsolved mystery when Syme; aka Thursday; suddenly ‘finds himself walking happily with a friend; [Lucian Gregory],’¹¹⁴ with a feeling clarity in his mind¹¹⁵. The mystery of the novel is not only related to the disguises of the characters but more importantly to the metaphysical mystery that is related to our perception of reality and the extent to which we understand and know the world surrounding us. In other words; with changing perspectives and perceptions; we are condemned to live in an everlasting partial mystery. The central idea of my argument is therefore that the definitional problem of terrorism can be reflected upon in relation to perception and perspective and its narrative equivalent that is to be found in *The Man Who Was Thursday*. The selected reviews about *The Man Who Was Thursday*, although not exhaustive, clearly do not cover this specific aspect neither in relation to knowledge nor to the discussions about terrorism. Following the period of 9/11 and the concentration of research and scholarship around the subject of terrorism, the narrative has been broadly referred to, however, there is no extensive research, as far as I know, that has dealt with the interconnectedness of the understanding of political violence and the importance of considering different perspectives and perceptions that are dependent on various factors.

¹¹³ William L. Isley, ‘Knowledge and Mystery in Chesterton’s “*The Man Who Was Thursday*.”’ *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 42, no. 2 (1993), 279-94 (p. 283).

¹¹⁴ Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, p. 242.

¹¹⁵ Isley, p. 288.

Although Chesterton is said to have struggled with the ideas of the *Fin-de-siècle* because its principals ago against his orthodoxy, *The Man Who Was Thursday* wonderfully reflects the highly needed atmosphere of questioning as to what terrorism signifies as well as exposing the dangerously limited conceptualization of political violence both in relation to anarchism and contemporary terrorism. The literary characteristics of *The Man Who Was Thursday* being a ‘cacophony of authorial voices’ as well as its elaborate theatrical dimension both build its potential of embodying a narrative perspectival approach to the meaning of terrorism. The outstanding dimension of Chesterton’s novel is the dual realities that he creates for the characters through their double identities and their disguise which reveal different perceptions that undergo radical changes throughout the narrative. *The Man Who Was Thursday* does not necessarily offer a conceptual and definitional solution to the problem of defining terrorism but it offers alternative representations of the definitional problem to of political violence and the necessity of questioning the single vision understood terrorism that tends to focus on the good vs evil formulation rather than taking into consideration the evolving context that cannot be reduced to a such simplistic conception.

The representation of the different facets of reality in *The Man Who Was Thursday* can be explored through the idea of perspective, the different masks of the detectives fabricate distinct versions of a seemingly different reality. The various visions are not inherently different, it is the perception that differs due to the shift in the perspective. The idea of perspective and perspectival knowing was pioneered by Friedrich Nietzsche. However, before going into further details about the notion of perspective and how it relates to *The Man Who Was Thursday* and terrorism discussion, it necessary to acknowledge that the Chesterton/Nietzsche juxtaposition does not imply that this research is suggesting that the two authors share the same vision or philosophy of life. On the opposite, they have highly divergent perspectives especially regarding religious beliefs and the rise of disbelief and doubt. The difference between Chesterton and Nietzsche cannot be overlooked and the use of Nietzsche’s concept of perspectivism is

limited to the purpose of the study underway and does not extend beyond it. Chesterton criticised Nietzsche's idea of perspectival knowledge about all aspect of life because it goes against the religious certainty that is according to him necessary. He openly rejected Nietzsche's ideas about will and perspective. He declared that 'He who wills to reject nothing, wills the destruction of will, for will is not only the choice of something, but the rejection of almost everything.' The notion of not rejecting anything or indeed accepting everything goes against the principal of having an opinion about any matter in life. Chesterton in describing Nietzsche, asserts that 'the modern man, in revolt has become practically useless for all purposes of revolt. By rebelling against everything he has lost the right to rebel against anything.' Indeed, Chesterton strongly believed that there should be a limit to the flexibility of our visions of life. Although, as far as I know, there is no statements about whether Nietzsche directly disapproved of Chesterton's concepts and beliefs, the assumption that Nietzsche would disagree with the highly orthodox stance of Chesterton could be sustained using the same logic on which Chesterton's rejection of Nietzschean perspectivism. Both authors are indeed highly contradictory however, there is the double identities of *The Man Who Was Thursday* within the notion of perspectivism as a literary representation of the definitional problem of terrorism and the underlying lack of perspective and the uni-dimensional understanding within terrorism discussions.

Despite the divergence of Nietzsche's and Chesterton's principals Elmer Schenkel argues that 'there are various Nietzschean characters in Chesterton's stories and novels, [...] Chesterton translates ideas into visual and special terms.'¹¹⁶ Chesterton uses the ideas of Nietzsche such as the rebuttal of Christianity and European values and futurism as a way of proving and strengthening his own philosophy. Schenkel even goes to argue that Chesterton 'recognised parts of himself in Nietzscheanism',¹¹⁷ particularly his rejection of modernism. Despite the evident and critical differences between the

¹¹⁶ Elmar Schenkel, 'Paradoxical affinities, Chesterton and Nietzsche' in *The Novel in Anglo-German Context Cultural Cross-Currents and Affinities*, ed. by Susanne Stark (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 240-252 (p. 244).

¹¹⁷. Schenkel, p. 244.

philosophy of Nietzsche and the beliefs and ideas of Chesterton, there is still an opportunity to conduct a close reading of *The Man Who Was Thursday* in the light of Nietzsche's notion of perspectivism. The ideas of Nietzsche and Chesterton are, in a way, Chesterton's narrative inhibits the Nietzschean notion of the multiple perspective. It must be noted here that this connection is significantly confusing and complex due to the fact that Chesterton directly rejects this notion of diverse and unlimited perspectives when at the same time embodying this very idea through his novel by the means of the double reality that his characters experience. *The Man Who Was Thursday* has a narrative pattern that relies on dual personalities and a multiplicity of perspectives which recreates the modus operandi of political violence that are not necessarily present in the main conversation about the interpretation of political violence. There is a certain absolutism that is part of the current discourse about terrorism and as to what should and should not be considered as necessary part of that very discourse. *The Man Who Was Thursday* does not necessarily solve this problematic of limited conceptualisation but offers alternative representations. The detective/anarchist overlap and the constant shift from one personality to the other meant that we are presented with different versions and perceptions of the events. The disguise on the one hand and the real character behind it on the other reflect the spectral perspectives and create a double-edged spectacle as perceived by the anarchist and by the detective.

On the one hand, the characters' perspective varies depending on their position and the character they are personifying. On the other hand, their level of knowledge and ignorance impacts on their interpretations and perceptions. The character of Syme deeply experiences the state of uncertainty and within the confusing atmosphere that is dominated by the constant change of faces and the continuous discovery of disguised detectives meant that his perspective as the only member of the British police force gradually changes as he unveils more details about his fellow anarchists. Therefore, the focus in Chesterton's narrative is on a constant shift of perspective and the unstable perceptions that are due to human limitation as well as their varying focus. The narrative is essentially structured around the notion of 'real' as opposed to 'masked' identity

which are two divergent perspective that entail completely different perceptions that are however, embedded within the same characters.

The novel starts off with the introduction of an anarchist bureau within which seemingly every character is an anarchist except for Syme whom we are aware is a police detective from the very beginning. That being the image of reality at that moment of the novel, the projected perspective and the resulting perception is finite and precise, we are in the presence of a police detective infiltrating an anarchist group. Moving forward with the characters, the image starts to shift as we uncover that what is perceived at the beginning as a definite reality is but a mask that hides a completely different experience. The disguise of the police detectives as anarchists serves two main functions. First, it constructs a seemingly valid and justified perspective, that of the anarchists and their terrorist plan under the supervision of their leader Sunday. The second function is related the hidden reality of the anarchists as being police detectives on the hunt for revolutionaries in London. The mask is therefore a constructed reality that entails a specific perception that changes as soon as the masked characters realise, they are in a masquerade, thus resulting in a totally different perception. This complex connection between mask, reality and perception reflects two essential ideas. First, that the mask is a valid and undisputable reality within its justifying parameters, which include the anarchist council, the bomb plan as well as the logic that goes into the whole strategy. Second, the mask reveals another reality as soon as the validating parameters undergo annulment and that through the uncovering of the masquerade. The way the double identity of the characters, the masked and that which is behind the mask, is related to the problematic of defining terrorism is also double layered. The difficulty of defining terrorism is due to the multiple existing realities that cannot be simply reduced to the good and evil dichotomy that is at the heart of the present understanding of terrorism. therefore, it is not to be expected that terrorism can be perceived as a single undivided concept. For that reason, Chesterton's multi-reality novel, within this reading, suggest an absent element for the terrorism definition which is this very idea of multiple realities. The exclusion of the perception and the perspective of the terrorist and the

rational that goes into being a terrorist is an essential part of terrorism, in fact, the phenomenon itself is bound to the action of the terrorist. Therefore, it is highly confusing as to why the definition of terrorism does not involve these notions outside the condemnation arena. The way *The Man Who Was Thursday* uses the concept of masking to construct a double reality outlines the missing part from the definition of terrorism and the exclusion of the terrorist's perspective.

The novel's 'wood of witchery in which men's faces turned black and white by turns, in which their figures first swelled into sunlight and then faded into formless night',¹¹⁸ is a fictional enactment of the of the impossibility of achieving a unified vision of the world from every angle. We cannot all experience the world from the same perspective. Terrorism needs to be defined in as precise a manner as possible. Within the frame of the War on Terror, because of the lack of concrete and accurate definition of terrorism, it became a fight is against 'an abstract generic evil'¹¹⁹ those involved in the fight cannot provide an answer as to who the enemy is. The latter has spectral qualities that are reinforced by the lack of perspectives or a surface perspectivism that creates the illusion of inclusion and clarity by reinforcing the idea that terrorist violence is an outside enemy, an unjustified enemy and focusing on the experience of the direct victims of the terrorist attacks without considering those trapped under terrorist regimes, terrorist organisations or even deceived audiences by counterterrorism measures to state few a few examples. This focus results in our limited perceptions and understanding, giving Chesterton's novel a particular relevance within the contemporary discussion of terrorism as it represents a situation where double identities and their shift is revelatory of other perceptions. Moreover, an abstract evil entails a dangerous control over its conception as it does not stand for a concrete enemy that have a determined set of recognisable characteristics that are far reaching and inclusive of different perspectives that can fall within that same prospect. The dominant

¹¹⁸ Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*.

¹¹⁹ Alex Schmidt, 'Terrorism: The Definitional Problem.' *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, vol. 36, no. 2. (2004), 375-419, (p. 377).

conception that surrounds terrorism as being an abstract and indefinite enemy denies the inclusion or even a remote consideration of their relevance. The paradox that dominates *The Man Who Was Thursday* because of the constant shift within the personalities and the realities of the different characters does not aim to confuse the reader but to hint a missed reality, indeed 'a paradox might wake men up to a neglected truth.'¹²⁰ Therefore, the disguises of the characters are set to suggest a hidden reality rather than conceal it. While there are currently hundreds of definitions of terrorism, the level of inclusivity is however very low. The definitions focus mainly on the version of events as perceived by the victims of political violence, they are victim-oriented definitions focusing on the material and mental chaos that the violence engenders, which is a legitimate and necessary part that is crucial for the understanding of the phenomenon. However, the exclusivity of the victim's experience is again unidirectional and lacks depth and clarity. Terrorism is not only about the traditional victims of terrorism,¹²¹ and general demonisation of terrorists that became a strong social construct that is embedded into our daily lives and became a standard understanding.

With the lack of clarity within the definition of terrorism, the enemy has become abstract and is loaded with the connotations that obscures a more useful meaning of terrorism that does not only convey one vision through superficially inclusive designations, when in fact there is no concrete and objective inclusion of the divergent perspectives when defining terrorism such as the perspective. The imprecision of the definition of terrorism means that the concept is trapped within a continuous shifting pattern that does not nonetheless introduce other points of view. Although *The Man Who Was Thursday* does not invoke elements of the global aspect of political violence, the aspect of the double identity and multiple realities strongly applies to the global features of terrorism. The experience we have with understanding terrorism needs to be

¹²⁰ Chesterton, *The man who was Thursday*, p. 12.

¹²¹ Traditional victims in the sense of the those that are directly targeted by terrorist attacks, like the victims of 9/11 in New York, 7/7 in London and the November 2015 attacks in Paris to state a few examples.

global, rather than local. Terrorism, despite the definitional problem is essentially about 'power, the pursuit of power, the acquisition of power and the use of power to achieve political change',¹²² it is a core notion that revokes the focus on a one-dimensional perspective that the enemy is 'over there', hence excluding the inside edge of terrorism. *The Man Who Was Thursday* stages a world of uncertainty, a representation of how people's perception functions. It shows us that the world is not simply what we think it is, rather it is full of hidden ambiguities that have blurring effects on our perceptions. The secret of the world

is that we have only known the back of the world. We see everything from behind and it looks brutal. That is not a tree, but the back of tree. That is not a cloud, but the back of a cloud. Cannot you see that everything is stooping a face? If we could get around in the front.¹²³

Adam Gopnik reflects on this notion of double vision of the world, he argues that the novel could be:

that the demon-terrorists are largely a projection of the policeman's mind. Or is it, perhaps, that the anarchists, who are really policemen, secretly wish to be anarchists? This double vision, where the appetite for romantic violence is imagined as the flip side of the desire for absolute order, gives the book its permanence. It ends with a powerful and strange image of reality itself as double sided.¹²⁴

In line with Syme's reflection about our awareness of the reality of the world and Gopnik's comments that the narrative recreates the image of the world as double sided confirm the relevance of the novel. The latter offers a corrective guide for the problem of defining terrorism that is unidirectional and therefore focuses on one side terrorist violence and neglects the side the terrorists themselves. More importantly, the focus on the idea of double reality validates my argument for the need of more perspectives with

¹²² Hoffman, p. 2.

¹²³ Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, 102.

¹²⁴ Adam Gopnik, 'The Back of the World: The Troubled Genius of G. K. Chesterton.' *The New Yorker* (June 30, 2008).

regards to political violence because within the complexities of the phenomenon, the reductive definitions limit our understanding and by extension our response to it. Moreover, if the worlds of the terrorist and police detective overlap, then why aren't both spectrums considered when defining terrorism. The contribution *The Man Was Thursday* is done through presenting the possibility of having two divergent perspectives as part of one framework. The secret of the world is that it cannot be viewed from the same perspective as there is always a hidden side, a hidden perspective. There is no complete vision of the world surrounding us, our perception depends on the perspective through which we are looking. The one possible way of changing given perception is by changing the perspective. To get around to the front entails change of perception and therefore we have a better conception and understanding of the world surrounding us. There are always elements that escape our perception however the wider it gets the more understanding we have despite the recurrent ambiguities.

Perspective means that we see the surrounding world from a particular angle. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche argues that 'there are many kinds of eyes. Even the sphinx has eyes- and consequently there are many kinds of "truths",'¹²⁵ The claim points out two central notions, first that there is no single and universal perception of truth because we are all viewing the world through different eyes and perspectives. Second, that our vision is limited to a specific perspective at a time, we can change it only if we direct our eyes to a different direction. Therefore, there is a clear and inevitable limitation on our vision, not only in relation to the physical objects surrounding us but most importantly in relation to our knowledge about abstract conceptions such as political violence. The present reading of *The Man Who Was Thursday* does not aim at uncovering the reality of political violence or define the limits of good and evil, the hero and the criminal, but to explore the novel's theatrical conception of different extensions to reality as we think of it and not necessarily what think of it to be. The use of masking and changing reality is an insightful literary reference that elucidates the

¹²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (Vintage Books: New York, 1968) p. 291.

complexities that surround terrorism and its different connotations as opposed to the unidirectional definitions that have and are being continuously formulated.¹²⁶ The different masks are therefore a representation of different perspectives leading to different perceptions and have a narrative quality that projects the gaps within the terrorism conversation, they are in no case fundamental realities. The masks are therefore revelatory rather than concealing. They reveal that they are only one part of the character, they do not represent its integrity, ‘for these disguises did not disguise, but reveal.’¹²⁷

The beginning of *The Man Who Was Thursday* is structured on a sense of clarity and distinctiveness that suggest a stable truth about the proceedings of the novel and the identities of the characters, wherein the characters are detectives in disguise having for a mission to fight anarchist violence. Therefore, we claim knowledge about the nature of the events, a claim that is devoid of any doubt. The characters themselves assume that the world, the people and the scenario presented to them are real and stand for an undisputable truth. It is only later in the novel, when the masks started to fade, that came the realisation that the characters’ realities and our perceptions of them were but a ‘mummery’¹²⁸ at play. There is a deep confusion that arises afterwards, when Sunday reveals that he is the ‘man in the dark room,’¹²⁹ as a reference to also being the chief detective who recruited all the other detectives in disguise. Following this revelation, Thursday asks a fundamental question about the perception he had, ‘if you were from the first our father and our friend, why were you also our greatest enemy?’¹³⁰ there is indeed a fundamental change in his perception of the truth because

¹²⁶ It is important not to confuse the wide range of existing definitions of terrorism with the problem of defining it, because the fact that there are multiple definitions does not solve the problematic as those are often formulated within the dominant perspective of the dichotomy of good and evil or the hero and the criminal, there are no or very little attempts to define terrorism introducing new perspective apart from the dominant one.

¹²⁷ Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, p 105.

¹²⁸ Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, p 105.

¹²⁹ Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, p. 108.

¹³⁰ Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, p 108.

he shifted his perspectival viewing point. The realities and therefore the perception of Thursday and the other detectives in disguise are dependent on their perspective that is under the influence of Sunday as he is the one pulling the different strings of the story and controlling the direction of their awareness and perception. The operation of reality and truth for the characters is not entirely under the control of their own judgement and perception, it is under high concentration of influence from an alien authority -alien as in different from their own, that defies the possibility of personal perception or at least a partially objective perception.

Nietzsche considers that one's knowledge, perception and thinking are always related to and conditioned by a particular perspective, 'not just a spatial viewpoint, but also a particular concept of surrounding impressions, influences and ideas'.¹³¹ There is in fact no perception that is free of perspective, 'God's eye view' as Nietzsche puts it. The two first characters meet in the seemingly beautiful and peaceful suburb community garden which then leads us to the anarchist council bureau that represent a contrasting image of the peacefulness of the outside world. The two views present two divergent narratives suggesting the inevitable change of perception. Knowledge of one place is indeed very different, as soon as we go underneath the bright images of the garden, our perspective and interpretation changes and therefore our perception. The suburb garden community which from the outside seems innocent, safe and in a way, real, in fact conceals the 'ranks and ranks of riffles and revolvers.'¹³² This framing though does not entail that the outside view is now dismissed or no longer valid, it is truthful within the outside perspective. Nietzsche's idea of perspectival truth involves the notion that 'statements, if true, are true from, or in, some perspective, but are untrue from another, or in, another perspective.'¹³³ Statements being untrue from or in other perspectives is a reflection of the absolutism that reigns current definitions of terrorism as a unidirectional movement rather than a multifaceted dynamic that necessitates a

¹³¹ The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche, (195).

¹³² Chesterton, *The man who was Thursday*, p. 13.

¹³³ Steven D. Hales and Robert C. Welshon, 'Truth, Paradox and Nietzschean Perspectivism.' *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1994), 101-19, (p. 106).

global perspective. The perceptions of the characters in the novel change not only because of each individual's different perspective but also their perspective as a group, 'the group's identity alters with each narrative', there is a significant transformation from being a group of anarchists with a bomb plan to an assembly of undercover police detectives spying on each other without any sense of clear purpose apart from uncovering the real face behind Sunday. Their sense of truth is uncovered as a group in pursuit of truth behind the mask and their fake detective mission. Their collective perception grows clearer as they assemble their individual experiences, inevitably the collective perception is both deeper and firmer. The novel develops around double identities that represent dual realities that are in fact two different modes of knowing that shift in accordance with the array of vision of characters. There is no validating of one perception over the other, because they are perspectival seeing, as far as the surrounding context is valid, the knowledge that accompanies it is therefore justified. The narrative that accompanies political violence functions with a noticeably similar notion of perspectival knowledge.

In a study of the symbolism of the key in Chesterton's works, Christiane d'Haussy argues that 'the artist is in a privileged position to understand transcendental truths and to enter to the divine mystery, lifting veil after veil, creating in this way an authentic epiphany.'¹³⁴ *The Man Who Was Thursday* explores the unexpected quest for a truth that is entirely different from the images that are perceived at the beginning of the novel. The novel focuses on the possibility of having multiple perceptions of the same events when we visualise them differently. There is a dramatic change of perspective which highly impacts on the perceived reality both for the reader and the characters themselves. The essence of Chesterton's narrative is that 'we are suddenly confronted with a truth which we have never suspected and yet can see to be true.'¹³⁵ The notion of an unexpected new truth reflects not the emergence of a new truth as such but the change

¹³⁴ Christiane d'Haussy 'The Symbolism of the Key on Chesterton's Works.' *VII: Journal of the Marion E Wade Centre*, vol. 4 (1983), 33-44, (p. 40).

¹³⁵ Anya Morlan, Walter Raubichuck. *Christianity and the Detective Story*. (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013). p. XI.

of perspective that results in a different perception rather than 'a new truth'. The change of our perception is also related to the obscurity of knowledge and the limited access to it. Indeed 'there are many kinds of "truths"',¹³⁶ the characters of *The Man Who Was Thursday* have diverse version of the truth about their mission as disguised detectives, their leader as well as the purpose of their adventure, as Syme wonders later in the novel 'was there anything that was apart from what it seemed?'¹³⁷ After the dramatic shift in the nature of the events and the discovery of the people behind the masks, Syme is left at a cross road between the world of reality and the realm of nightmares. The divergence of meaning between the beginning and the end of the novel is indeed a reflection of the deeper and stronger forces with which our realisation of reality lies. Moreover, although the anarchist threat proves to be a delusion, its metaphor about perspectival perception of terrorism cannot be dismissed. The constant change in perspective is an inherent characteristic to the discourse of terrorism, however there is a tendency to reinforce certain version over others depending on the political agendas and the interest of the powerful.

Sunday, the main mystery of the narrative, and the image of power and authority, stands for the symbolic conflict between knowledge and mystery and its power to manipulate the perception of truth. The change of context from chief detective to chief of the anarchist council entails a change of perception and knowledge. The nature of knowledge that the narrative allows us to see is a 'patent knowledge over which a veil has been drawn and the first page that cannot extend beyond it',¹³⁸ therefore, the version of the events that we are presented with at the beginning were true because we assumed they were true and only according to the perspective we had, that all the characters apart from Syme- aka Thursday, are anarchists. The amount of knowledge that is available to the detectives in disguise and that is provided to them by Sunday does not go beyond

¹³⁶ Quoted in Steven D. Hales, 'Nietzsche's Epistemic Perspectivism' in *Knowledge from a Human Point of View*, ed. by Ana Maria Cretu and Michela Massumi, ([n.p.] Springer, 2020), p. 26.

¹³⁷ Chesterton, *The man who was Thursday*, p. 80.

¹³⁸ Isley, p. 284.

the limit of his narrative. Therefore we are confined to view the world through his eyes and perspective, indeed 'it is unlikely that our 'knowledge' extends farther than is exactly necessary for our self-preservation.'¹³⁹ The knowledge that is available to us about political violence, especially within the binary opposition of good vs evil, is very much reliant on the single perspective that is adopted within that discourse, allowing very little inclusion of other modes of perception because they do not serve the main ideological discourse of power relations. The knowledge, the perspective and the general perception of the audience need to fit within the narrative that is wanted to be preserved.

Sunday, being both the chief detective and anarchist, is in a position where his power allows him to control the positioning of authority and determine the knowledge that is accessed by the other detectives in disguise. Moreover, the idea of reality that we apprehend at the beginning and the knowledge of Thursday about the surrounding circumstances are completely dependent on the conception of Sunday. The latter through the covert mission that he designs for his detectives confines us to his perspective of reality and conditioned subjectivity. The disguises that the characters put on represent the very problem of the multiple and vague realities that become further complicated because of the limitations that are imposed on them. In the sense that although they are multiple realities, they are still limited to one perspective. Nietzsche maintains that 'there is no independent existing reality',¹⁴⁰ that is the existence of a totally objective and neutral reality that is free from subjective rendering is near the impossible.¹⁴¹ That being the case, the disguised detectives pursuing each other under the assumption that every member is the only detective, and the others are anarchist is the truth under that existing perspective. Moreover, the masked detectives start

¹³⁹ Christian J. Emden, 'Nietzsche's Will to Power: Biology, Naturalism, and Normativity'. *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1 (11 March 2016), 30–60 (p.20).

¹⁴⁰ David J. Simpson, 'Truth, Truthfulness and Philosophy in Plato and Nietzsche.' *British Journal of History of Philosophy*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2007), 339-360 (p. 353).

¹⁴¹ Near the impossible because within the formulation of perspectival truth, Nietzsche does not deny that there are statements that are true in all perspectives, 'cross-perspectival truth.'

diverging from their original perception when the conditions of their initial conception begin to change. Their disguise and the reality that accompanies it, is only a selection from the total scene. The grotesque masks that the novel develops mirror the functioning of truth and the different visions on the conception of what truth is or could be in relation to the functioning of perspective.

The partiality of knowledge that is dependent on perspective is a conditioned reality, if the cover or the condition are removed, the perception changes. The view of terrorism in terms of good and evil, disease and antidote are conditioned realities and not absolute truths. The modus operandi of terrorism is subjected to strong perspectival settings that fit within fixed political agendas that guarantee the survival of those ideas. Therefore, the definition of terrorism after 9/11 is formulated with a knowledge and a perspective that assures its self-preservation as the eternal enemy. Both the connotation and denotation of terrorism are determined by and adjusted in accordance with the required justification for the maintenance of geopolitical power. Within the present formulation of terrorism and in fact that of Anarchism, perspective is only allowed as far as it serves the purpose of preserving power. Diverging perspectives that threaten existing power relations are therefore not present. Within the current understanding of political violence, and despite the recurrent mention that ‘someone’s terrorist is someone else’s freedom fighter’, there is little attempt from the part of the media and politicians to comprehensibly extend the understanding of terrorism to include the position of those referred to as terrorist. The latter’s perspective is absent because it does not fit within the dominant perspective. Through the double identities of Chesterton’s novel, we can see the image is never fully understood without including a variety of visions and exploring the different arrays of the experiences of the characters both as anarchists and police detectives, all narratives are necessary for the overall grasp of the novel. It is a rule that applies to terrorism because if we consider that terrorist intend to send messages and propose a narrative, then that is a distinct perspective that is an essential part of the problem of political violence exactly because it is a divergent perspective that needs to figure within the definition of terrorism in a precise and comprehensive

way what construct the real motivation, the goals ¹⁴² as well as any historical, political and cultural factors that could exert an influence on it. The inclusion of different perspective does not suggest the promotion of dangerous understanding but rather the rendering of a realistic image and use of terrorism that naturally differs from one perspective to the other.¹⁴³ The disguises of the characters in *The Man Who Was Thursday* are a performative narrative of the notion that reality mutates to different forms depending on the specific context that surrounds it. *The Man Who Was Thursday* perfectly illustrates the mutation of reality through the disguised detectives who take on completely opposing personalities in relation to their own. The characters lose the sense of distinction between the aggressor and the defender as they are forced to change perception when their standpoint is dramatically reformed from that of detectives infiltrating anarchist group to that of an empty cycle of disguised detectives pursuing each other. There is therefore a complete change of the image of truth.

The events are given a facade that is both radically divergent from the initial storyline and at the same time serves to validate the set forth perspective. The disguises and their function fabricate a social reality that is directed towards precise perception. The characters themselves do not change, only their array of vision that is directed towards a different target by the means of their masks, therefore, the alteration is not fundamental but perspectival. Terrorism as a phenomenon does not progress in such a way as to change at its source but, it does so by following a reactionary pattern that carries around variants that are imposed by either the technological advancement or specific political and historical events. The definitional problem of terrorism is not only related to the exclusion of ‘alien’ or dangerous perspectives, for being divergent, but

¹⁴² Apart from the generalized assumption that is included in the current definitions of terrorism, that is to pursue of a political goal or agendas without further clarification about the background of these goals.

¹⁴³ It is the perspective, and perception and the maneuvering of political violence that differs, it must not be confused with the core constituents of it as being divergent from one perspective to the other.

also its use in political rhetoric in a manner that does not necessarily relate to actual acts of violence. Subsequently, the term acquires prominent level of elasticity that gives the illusion of inclusion of opposite perspectives. Yet, the acquired elasticity only serves to reinforce the dominant existing perspective. If we imagine that the latter is an image that captures a specific scene, an equivalent of Chesterton's characters masks and their initial perception, and project stronger light onto it, the result will be the same scene with more depth, more details, and a different intensity of colour. However, if we do not change the direction of the vision, the scene will be equivalent to the initial scene. The perception of the characters dramatically changes because they looked beyond their masked identities, they changed their standpoint.

When Lucian Gregory was looking for a proper disguise, he wanted something that 'will hide [him] from the world [...] as safe disguise [...] which will guarantee [him] harmless, a dress in which no one would ever look for a bomb.'¹⁴⁴ The main feature of Gregory's disguise is ephemerality and its fitting within the accepted social, cultural, and political movements. It is essential that his disguise appears to fit within the dominant perspective. The process of masking entails 'the adoption of a role and a particular voice in a particular context.'¹⁴⁵ If the mask is noticeably divergent, it will not fulfil its designed purpose of deceit vis-à-vis the audience and the political agendas of the concerned context. The mask is an alteration of a certain reality, both of which cannot be separated because they appear to belong to the same settings. They function according to Sunday's version of the events, therefore, their reality fits within his perspective. The sense of truth is relative and not universal and common to everyone. It is adjusted in accordance with the perception and perspective of those who acquire the power to shape it.¹⁴⁶ Nietzsche's idea of perspectivism is occasionally explained with reference to his use of multiple masks. In *Nietzsche: Imagery and Thought*, Malcolm Pasley discusses Nietzsche's use of the mask as 'one of the most puzzling and

¹⁴⁴ Chesterton, *The Man Who Thursday*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁵ Nietzsche: imagery and thought.

¹⁴⁶ Emden, p. 21.

fascinating characteristics of his works'.¹⁴⁷ The notion of the mask as used by Nietzsche refers his writings never having only a surface meaning but rather he tells his readers that 'his writing is never to be taken at face value, that is consciously addressing an audience and adopting a particular *persona*, which will continually vary.'¹⁴⁸ Nietzsche's use of the mask is therefore a way of stimulating the uncovering of what lies behind the mask, to go beyond the surface perspective and discover a different truth. The use of these masks and the constant shift between them is his way of encouraging discussion about the subject underway.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, and again despite the differences and Chesterton's open criticism of Nietzsche's concepts, the affinities are well presented through the disguises used both within *The Man Who Was Thursday* and Nietzsche's works have for aim to stimulate the quest for the truth behind the masks rather than conceal it, for 'every philosophy also conceals a philosophy'.¹⁵⁰ The disguises do indeed have a façade that conceals a world, a notion and indeed a philosophy, therefore, they produce perspective that is forced upon the audience.

The grotesque masks that the novel develops mirror the functioning of truth and the different visions on the conception what truth is or could be. The physical traits that are attributed to Lucian Gregory, the only actual anarchist of the novel, are grotesque, 'his face projected suddenly broad and brutal, the chin carried forward with the look of cockney contempt. This combination at once tickled and terrified the nerves of a neurotic population. He seemed like a walking blasphemy, a blend of the angel and the ape.'¹⁵¹ The representation of Lucian both as an angel and ape connotes order and chaos, angel being order and ape being chaos, and the lurid connection of the two. The image of the angel and the ape are two different modes of perception that project two perspectives, both of which can be true when the surrounding legitimization is conditioned to confirm its validity and eliminate the other perspective and its validating

¹⁴⁷ 'Perception: A one Hundred Year Perspective', Nietzsche: Imagery and Thought. P8.

¹⁴⁸ Pasley, p. 83.

¹⁴⁹ Pasley, p. 83.

¹⁵⁰ Pasley, p. 86

¹⁵¹ Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, p. 2.

conditions. The mask of the angel allows multiple perspectives, it stands for state violence disguised as retaliation and self-defence. It stands for the invisible enemy that is, in many cases, the state itself. Moreover, it also connotes the angelic representation of state violence by the media. In fact, the mask that allows the spectral operation of political violence allows a deeper understanding of terrorism.

The Man Who Was Thursday offers a necessary reconsideration of the meaning of terrorism and the problem the dominant exclusive rather than inclusive definitions of political violence that tend to be limited either in time, space, context and political agendas. The novel's double layered plot and the dual reality of the character enhances its capacity to offer different perceptions of the same story. It is this very characteristic that makes the novel relevant to the anarchist context as well as the contemporary context. *The Man Who Was Thursday* contains a variety of narrative voices that project the different visions and points of view of the different characters, each voice reflects a character's side of the narrative. We are left with a variety of versions of reality that has its own validating condition. The perceptions of the different characters are illustrations that one narrative cannot be viewed in the same way from every angle or have the same interpretation from every perspective. This feature is applicable to the way political violence needs to be interpreted.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist: Terrorism Perception at a Crossroad

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is strikingly reflective of the many intricate and complex power relations that govern the concept of terrorism. The novel offers a tangible vision of the atmosphere that surrounds the global world and the implication of media, nationalism, nation state, the local and the global and the way terrorism operates within a multiplicity of conceptual intricacies. Political violence is a global phenomenon and therefore its impact cannot be reduced to the material damage that is inflicted to a specific geographical area. The attack of 9/11 is a global incident that had major impact on the world's economy, politics, security and surveillance strategies. Yet it has also deepened the idea of nationalism and nation state as opposed to the notion of the global village and reinforced the unidirectional understanding of terrorism and the uniqueness of the American experience of political violence. The World Trade Centre attack was perceived by the American administration of the time as an attack genuinely directed against American soil and citizens. It was, and still is viewed as an attack that targeted the American values and lifestyle. In fact, 'terrorist actors do not just intent to threaten a certain category of people and menace the "the other side". They also try to deliver a message to their own side, to potential allies, or to the governments that might support, even sponsor their actions.'¹⁵² Therefore, this side of the narrative is a significant part of the understanding of terrorism and should figure within the current discourse. The reaction to 9/11 was marked by the tendency to adopt a single vision and a one-directional interpretation of events involving acts of violence, especially 9/11, disregarding the narrative of the terrorists as well as its victims that are not the direct target.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist, Mohsin Hamid's second novel, offers interesting alternatives to the single vision through which terrorism tends to be interpreted. Hamid through his dramatic monologue attempts to mirror the

¹⁵² Martha Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania: 1995), p.599.

manipulation surrounding the interpretation of terrorism. Moreover, the narrative also satires the devious use of media in the creation of certain political agendas in need of legitimization and justification. Similar to Shamsie's *Home Fire*'s representation of the dangerously manipulative and influential role that the media plays in the shaping of the case of Aneeka and her brother Parvaiz. Hamid's narrative, through its narrative structure mainly based on one narrative point of view and the character conception, parodies the inadequacies and ambiguities relating to the conception of terrorism. Moreover, the narrative integrates the heightened dialogue about nationalism and nation which was strongly reinforced after 9/11. Cultural transformation from the local to the global as opposed to the revival of the American nationalism, is among the main notions that the character of Changez emphasizes through his reluctance vis-à-vis the appropriate reaction to have in relation to 9/11. He studied in the US and is employed by an outstanding firm. The US is certainly an integral part of the construction of his identity, it made of him a global citizen. But on the other hand, he also belongs to Pakistan his home country that is also part of his global identity.

Joseph Darda, in his analysis of the novel argues that:

it was, as Changez tells his interlocutor, the idea of the American "difference" that became a rationale for war making, for bringing "justice to our enemies." Whereas tarrying in one's precariousness might foster a greater understanding of others' lives, emphasizing one's difference ends to further restrict the norms recognisability.¹⁵³

The notion of the American exceptionalism that Darda explores is significantly reflective of the American attitude after the 9/11 attack and their interpretation of terrorism is solely a unique experience that has no precedent. The acclaimed uniqueness and difference of both the attack and the experience of violence implies a distinctive reaction that centred only around the American understanding of terrorism, regardless of any shared experience that involves a global rather than a local attitude to the incident. Darda most importantly stresses the futility of such unidirectional approach as it only

¹⁵³ Joseph Darda, 'Precarious World: Rethinking Global Fiction in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.' *Mosaic: Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 3. (2014), 107-22 (p. 120).

worsens both the understanding of terrorism as well as counterterrorism due to the missing perspective of other victims as well as the terrorists themselves. Darda analysis suggests a significant point that Hamid tackles through *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* which is the absence of other perspectives and perceptions and the focus on the American perception of 9/11 and terrorism. It is my intention to bring further analysis into how the identity crisis that Changez experiences in relation to his Americanness reflects on the problem of defining and the limited understanding terrorism.

In “‘The Rules of the Game Have Changed’”: Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Post 9/11 Fiction’ Peter Morey explores the ways in which Hamid’s novel does not fit within the mainstream 9/11 fiction but can be understood as ‘an intervention that destabilises the dominant categories of the post 9/11 novel.’¹⁵⁴ The narrative therefore, does not feature the victim centred sentiment wherein the focus is solely placed on the traumatic American experience of 9/11. The narrative shifts its interest from the American context to a global context through the character of Changez. Morey argues that ‘Hamid’s use the dramatic monologue enables us to see the world form Changez’s point of view. But it prevents us from finding out about his American interlocutor.’¹⁵⁵ The analysis points out the silence of the American interlocutor fulfils two functions. It interchanges the focus of discourse about terrorism from local to global. It also offers space for the reader to develop their own interpretation and perception on the matter of terrorism. Building on Morey’s argument about the silence of the American interlocutor and the resistance of the novel to the dominant categories of 9/11 fiction, I aim at exploring the role the silence offers space for different perspectives. Moreover, the chapter will shed light on the way the focus on Changez’s point of view shifts the understanding of terrorism from being exclusively American or western to being global with special focus on the other victims of terrorism.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Morey, “‘The Rules of the Game Have Changed’”: Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the post-9/11 fiction’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. Vol. 47, No. 2 (May 2011), pp. 135-146 (p. 136)

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 139.

Harleen Singh maintains that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a 'restructuring of contemporary, political hierarchy, the Pakistani speaks and the American is silent.'¹⁵⁶ Again, there is a reference to the divergence of Hamid's novel from the mainstream 9/11 novel through the shift of attention from the American context to a global, Pakistani context which serves to point direction at the unidirectional discourse of terrorism that is centred around the American experience and disregards the rest of the world perspective. Singh continues to stress that 'Hamid's novel intervenes in the debates surrounding the cultural and literary products by posing the important questions of duality and affect for the Pakistani protagonist.'¹⁵⁷ The importance of the novel therefore also lies in the fact that it challenges the established formulations about the meaning of terrorism and the biased terrorism discourse that leads to exclusive rather than inclusive definition of terrorism that tends to focus on the uniqueness of the American experience as well and the victimhood of the American people as opposed to the idea that there are numerous perception a perspectives that can contribute to a deeper and clearer understanding political violence like the perspective of Changez who is both a victim and an attacker due to his dual identity. Building on Singh's argument as well as that of Morey and Dard, the focus of this chapter will be on the identity crisis that Changez experiences following 9/11 and how it affects the wider understanding of political violence. Moreover, it will tackle the function of the monologue to shed light on the unidirectional formulations within terrorism discourse and the necessity of shifting the dialogue to be more inclusive of other experiences of terrorism.

Hamid focuses on the transformation of national identity in a global world and the impact of mediatized world on the changing of identity patterns. The novel explores a world of ambivalence between the local and the global, and the national and universal citizenship¹⁵⁸ and the impact it has on the perception of terrorism. The novel is a

¹⁵⁶ Harleen Singh, 'Insurgent Metaphors: Decentering 9/11 in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*.' p. 26.

¹⁵⁷ Singh, p. 27.

¹⁵⁸ Quratulain Shirazi, 'Ambivalent Identities and Liminal Spaces: Reconfiguration of National and Diasporic Identity in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*' Routledge, *South Asian Diaspora*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2018), pp 15-29, (p. 15.).

reminder that borders are not a stable entity. One of the most salient problems that surround the concept of terrorism is the monopoly that dominates its conceptualization and the dominance of the perspective of the powerful few in the shaping of meanings of terrorism, 'once concepts are endowed with meaning, they take on a certain autonomy, especially when they are adopted by the new media, disseminated to the public and integrated into a general context of norms and values.'¹⁵⁹ Hamid through his novel is not only disturbing the meaning of global and national boundaries, there is an attempt to uncover the challenges of understanding political violence within a global world when the emphasis is put on one perspective that only reflects one side of political violence. The national/local and global frames represent the destabilization of the black and white categories of the hero vs the enemy that were maintained and further reinforced after 9/11. Changez, the global citizen of the novel, represents the fragility of the boundaries established to separate local from global frames of the conception of terrorism and the unlimited connotations that political violence carries. The changing visions of Changez in relation to his identity and the different components that contribute to its shaping is suggestive of the multiplicity of perspective that surround the understanding of terrorism. In fact, the narrative is suggestive of a multitude of perspectives and possibilities. The title itself suggests the presence of the numerous perceptions that the main character is torn between and is therefore reluctant vis-à-vis his role within a system that tries to regulate every aspect of life within the global village.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist parodies the functioning of the interpretation of political violence and its use through the monologue of Changez and the absent voice of the American interlocutor. There is a need to 'expand and defamiliarize our own imaginative territory and, for writers, to find a space between conflicting interests and positions.'¹⁶⁰ Instead of describing the devastated emotional state of the Americans and the solely victim based understanding of terrorism as well as concentrate on 9/11 as genuinely an attack on the US, Hamid exposes the ambiguities and the confusions of

¹⁵⁹ Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁰ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 138.

the modes of operation of terrorism through questioning nationality and nation state . There is certainly an element of exaggeration and dramatization related to 9/11 that Hamid wants to avoid in order to reach a more inclusive and diverse exploration of political violence. He therefore chooses to voice the experience of a foreigner within the US and build up a totally different perception of terrorism that is meat with the difficulty of choosing a side when you are victim in both contexts. The whole atmosphere of the American exceptionalism did not exclude the reception of the World Trade Centre attack which was and still is used to justify the counterterrorism strategies around the world. The use of every political violence related incident as an opportunity to implement reinforce monopoly is parodied by an American reaction to a candle wax burn that would lead to a whole litigation as to the danger and unsafety of the product while it would be tackled simply as a wax burn by others. The aim of the narrative is not to set lines and borders on the different concepts that are developed, but rather to be a theatre that plays out misconceptions, hidden stories and covert notions in relation to political violence, its legitimacy and the right to use it. It presents different perspectives through the juxtaposition of Changez's constant comparison of different aspects of life in New York, US and Lahore, Pakistan.

Changez compares life in the US to that in Pakistan, the culture, the lifestyle, people's attitudes and all sorts of other situations. The comparisons do not necessarily reflect which is better, they stage the different perspectives that are present regardless of the cultural difference. He compares Chris's painting that was in Erica's house to miniature paintings that are found in museums in Lahore. He then goes to compare drinking alcohol in Pakistan to consuming marijuana as in they are both illegal yet practiced. He compares the sin of drinking of Muslims to 'coveting thy neighbour's wife'¹⁶¹ for Christians, and the juxtaposition continues to include the weather, the breeze and the cooing of meat. Changez uses an intriguing yet very illustrative comparison between him, his interlocutor and bats to explore the notion of being invisible hunters that 'no matter how close they come to these buildings, they are never

¹⁶¹ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 62.

involved in a collision.¹⁶² The ability of bats to hover so close without collision is a connotation of the unforeseen functioning of terrorism and its underlying deceptive patterns; because of the single perspective that dictates the meaning of terrorism and therefore decides who is the terrorist and who is the hero without a thorough and clear inclusion of the other perceptions. The reference to the bats also suggests their use of echolocation which could be another mode of perception. The result of the single perspective definition of terrorism allows the unitisation of political violence as a counterterrorism strategy because it does not figure within the dominant perspective of explaining terrorism. Indeed, terrorism is never an openly acclaimed strategy, it is disguised under multiple layers of justifications and persuasive strategies that allow both the state and terrorist organizations to operate as bats that hover in our skies without the risk of condemnation for terrorism.

Jim's statement about his lack of belonging and the way Changez compares to him in that aspect, has left the latter at a crossroad as to how such a statement should be answered. Changez admits that 'a confession that implicates its audience is [...] a devilishly difficult ball to accept to play. Reject it and slight the confessor; accept it and you admit your own guilt.'¹⁶³ The situation of Changez is indeed rather complex in the fact that it is a matter of taking one side and choosing to belong somewhere or the other, each decision implies a sort of either complicity or rebellion. Changez finds himself trapped into choosing one side of his identity either to reject Pakistan or the US or reject the statement of Jim. Being at a crossroad vis-à-vis his identity after 9/11 reflects on the implication of choosing on side of the narrative when it is incomplete and restricting. On the one hand, if Changez agrees that he does not belong there, he is in a way rejecting his position and his American dream. On the other hand, if he argues that his feelings of belonging are indeed greater than those of feeling out of space, there is the implication that he denies his Pakistani origins. The narrative points out to the 'issue of

¹⁶² Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 72.

¹⁶³ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, 80.

“sides”, and the necessity of making a choice after the 9/11 attacks.’¹⁶⁴ The crisis of belonging that Changez experiences, he either belongs to one place or the other is parallel to the imposition of one narrative of terrorism that only reflects one mode of perception and eliminates the other possibilities. Therefore, Hamid explores the crisis within the definition of terrorism through the personal identity crisis of Changez and the way he is trapped into choosing one side due to the limited interpretation of 9/11. One of the major issues of political violence is the so-called necessity of choosing to be with the ultimate good –the War on Terror- or the ultimate evil –terrorism in the way it is contained in the current definition. The notion of belonging and the illusion of the critical need to choose one side reflects the widespread tendencies of imposing certain meanings of terrorism and eliminating others. Therefore, the binary understanding of terrorism hinders an objective and inclusive exploration of the phenomenon. The confused feeling of Changez summarizes the dilemma of national borders and the nation state and the deep implications it has in relation to terrorism discourse and the attempts to place stringent limitations on what political violence should mean, the violence that must be condemned and what violence is supposedly necessary and legitimate.

Contrary to what the title suggests, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is not about religious fundamentalism, in fact ‘Changez is never a religious fundamentalist.’¹⁶⁵ It is rather reflective of the fundamentalist perspective that was mostly adopted in relation to the interpretation of terrorism. Changez’s hesitation is therefore reflective of the reluctance towards the manipulation of 9/11 and its use to enhance the gap between the diverse meanings of terrorism and its binary conception of disease and cure. The reluctance of Changez is reflected through the unknown interlocutor who is only introduced as an American. His secret identity is a mirror to the secret and ambiguous practices that are undertaken under the justification of peace keeping as well as the absent voices and perspectives from the paradigm of political violence. Hamid focuses

¹⁶⁴ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

¹⁶⁵ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 139.

his novel on the character of Changez and purposefully omits the point of view of the person he relates his story to, 'it prevents us from the finding out about his American interlocutor'.¹⁶⁶ Who he is and his aim from meeting with Changez is kept unknown, there is no contribution to the discussion, his opinion is therefore completely removed from the events despite the fact that most of Changez's story is centred on his experience of the United States. It is a strong reflection of the state of a world dominated by terrorism in which the other part of the conversation is kept covered and any aims at uncovering the hidden side is met with denial and accusation of conspiracy. An attempt at the exploration of the different phases and perspectives of terrorism is viewed as a threat to the concepts of nation and nation state. In our present day, efforts to reconsider the understanding of terrorism as uni-directional is interpreted as an attempt to justify acts of political violence, it is unacceptable to consider another interpretation that might question that version or threaten the discourse and the narrative that has been put in place to safeguard the authority of certain world powers.

My first chapters discussed Conrad's and Shamsie's indirect exploration of the dangers of having a fixed description of terrorism. Hamid uses silence and elision as literary strategies to reflect a contested and condemned reality behind political violence apart from the recurrent argument that reduces terrorism to pure acts of violence without complex underlying justifications. He challenges the notion that governments and states are the only respondents and defenders that react to terrorism. Therefore, he questions the notion that terrorism solely originates from the oppositions that are considered the exclusive initiators of terrorist violence. The monologue structure, inspired by Albert Camus' *The Plague (La Peste)*, of the novel and the dominant first opinion point of view serves as a condemnation and a denouncing of the absence of dialogue and perspective in relation to terrorism and the direction of the condemnation pattern that goes in one direction and not the other. The narrative denounces the lack of a wider exploration of terrorism. There needs to be an extension to the definition and

¹⁶⁶ Peter Morey, p. 139.

understanding of terrorism to include state terrorism as a major and essential part in understanding the functioning of terrorism.

The interlocutor is almost unknown to the reader; we don't know whether his encounter with Changez is a simple coincidence or rather a perfectly executed CIA operation. The dominant atmosphere of vagueness suggests 'lack of knowledge [that] translates into lack of power'.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, because of the limited information we have about the person Changez is conversing with, the possibility to understand and fully capture the reality of his experiences is reduced and condemned by his version of the story. A significant part of Changez's story is hidden and covert. Watts explains that a covert plot or a connoted message within a narrative is one way of searching for reality and therefore is a 'training in the searching of reality by encouraging us to search itself.'¹⁶⁸ *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is fulfilling that very role of inciting us to look for a wider reality about political violence and its functioning within different political atmospheres.

Although the entire narrative is essentially focused on the experiences of Changez, there seems to be no 'true confession'¹⁶⁹ about his real intentions. His identity is at a crossroad until the very end of the novel. The political implication of the novel is unquestionable, however, the way it is showcased is not as direct. There is a constant shifting between the context of the US and Pakistan as a way of abolishing the borders of national identity and establish the global aspect of it. Changez is weathering between his Pakistani heritage that he, in a way, celebrates and his acquired American values. His American lifestyle did not represent any kind of identity issues that clash with his Pakistani culture. However, after 9/11, the renewed suspicion and the resurgence of nationalism led to the rising discomfort with his Americanism.¹⁷⁰ He therefore, sought more interest in his south Asian identity. The rising sense of nationalism within the American society and notion that the US has become a direct target of terrorism resulted

¹⁶⁷ Morey, p. 141.

¹⁶⁸ Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Morey, p. 140.

¹⁷⁰ Morey, p. 143.

in the assumption that all that is foreigner is dangerous. As a result, his global identity was threatened not because of him suddenly wanting to be more Pakistani, but rather because the American experience of 9/11 as an exclusive threat to American values marginalised other narratives. The elements that formed his global identity underwent changes and challenges. Hamid juxtaposes one of the most significant issues of the contemporary period that makes the perfect environment for the spreading of terrorism and its misconceptions.

The 'Us vs Them' phrase suggests the reinstatement of the cultural borders that are accompanied by degrading rather than celebrating connotations. Hamid through *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* aims at challenging these conceptions and mirror the manipulation that lies behind the attempts to re-establish the need to choose between Us and Them rather than considering terrorism as global threat that needs to be fought at the global level. Moreover, this conception of identity and terrorism during the contemporary period imposed the illusion of the necessity to choose between two sides.

The structure of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* reflects on the reality of the discussion on terrorism and the extraordinary limitations placed on it, including that necessity to make a choice, however it is also a motivation to search for the lacking part of the story. The other part of the narrative is left untold and the American interlocutor is silenced to stimulate the readers own interpretations. The monologic dialogue serves to 'dialogise the speech and imply the possibility of other perspectives that the one we are offered by the speaker.'¹⁷¹ This is a strong reflection on the actual state of worldwide discussion about terrorism and the attempts to its understanding. This perspective is strengthened by the attitude of the White House, the latter's spokesman Karl Rove in his speech on the 22nd of June 2005 denounced the Liberals attempts to understand the attacks of 9/11.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in 'Focusing on Fundamentalism: The Triumph of Ambivalences in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*'. P. 2.

Liberals saw the savagery of the 9/11 attacks and wanted to prepare indictments and offer therapy and understanding for our attackers. In the wake of 9/11 conservatives believed that it was time to unleash the might and power of the United States military against Taliban.¹⁷²

Mr Rove's comments on the attempts to include the other side of the terrorism discussion reveal the attitude and the strategies that were planned by the US government. Any possible consideration of a more reasonable and inclusive reaction was, and is still met, with accusations of lenience and mockery vis-à-vis the sufferance of the American people. Therefore, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, through being an open-ended narrative exhibiting only the other side the picture, rather than the American side, allows us to glimpse at another narrative other than the usual victim based perception, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* offers the reader a space to reflect on various possible perspectives that could complete the missing part of the story. Hamid's narrative does not fit within the mainstream post 9/11 novel that focuses on terrorism solely in relation Islamist Fundamentalism, it creates space for the other Muslims who also experience terrorism and are also victims. Moreover, it deals with terrorism as a message rather than purely acts of violence. The silence of the American interlocutor communicates important notions about the global reaction to terrorism. The need to explore terrorism from the terrorist's perspectives, not in the aim of justifying it, but rather in the aim of discerning a clearer image of its functioning and therefore improve world's reaction to terrorist incidents. Furthermore, although 9/11 attack targeted New York, it had a global impact and therefore the US should not be the sole point of reference when it comes to its explanation, peacekeeping processes and military operations. There is a tendency to mistake attempts to understand terrorism and terrorists' narrative with sympathy and justification. There is an urgent need to separate the overly loaded emotional American reaction to terrorism and to stop making of it a personal matter rather than a global issue. Terrorism cannot be reduced to 9/11 or the American experience of terrorism, hence

¹⁷² Karl Rove, (Speech to the New York Conservative Party), June 22, 2005.

Hamid narrative that diverts attention from the American interlocutor and focuses on Changez and his version of the story. He is the voice of the silenced perspectives.

The definitional problem of the terrorism is taken a step further after 9/11 with the limited exploration of state terrorism and understanding of organizational terrorism and the absence of an agreed upon international definition. The latter is tailored and designed to fit very specific political agendas, mainly the justification of the War on Terror. The exclusive use of this specific definition serves the American interest in keeping terrorism under conceptual monopoly. The reliance on this definition engenders considerable limitations and exclusions.

Terrorism, in fact, is a complex and multivariate phenomenon. It appears in many different forms in many parts of the world in pursuit of many different objectives. It occurs in democracies autocracies and transitional states and in developed, underdeveloped, and developing economies. It is practiced by adherents of many religions and by adherents of none.¹⁷³

Hamid is therefore moving away from the sort of literature that reinforces the exceptionalism of the US that peaked after 9/11 to stress the need of reconsidering the conception of terrorism that is currently only related to certain groups with the exclusion of state terrorism that has in fact caused more deaths than all other terrorist attacks. He ‘thinks beyond the fixed identities’¹⁷⁴ and develops Changez’s personality both as a Pakistani national and a global citizen. One might argue that the return of Changez to Pakistan at the end of the novel and the fact of joining a movement against the US exceptionalism is an indication of his rejection of his global identity. However, Changez’s return to Pakistan suggests his rejection of the American reaction to the September attacks and the feeling of suddenly being singled out in his country of residence that is also part of his identity. The American identity, besides the character of Changez, is represented through the character of Erica who is lost after the death of

¹⁷³ Louis Richardson, ‘The Roots of Terrorism: An overview’, in *The Roots of Terrorism*, ed. By Louis Richardson (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp.1-13 (p. 2).

¹⁷⁴ Quratulain Shirazi, ‘Ambivalent Identities and Liminal Spaces: Reconfiguration of National and Diasporic Identity in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*’, *South Asian Diaspora*, Vol. 10, No. 1. pp. 15-29 (p. 16).

her partner. Her identity and sense of being is significantly weakened and is lost to some sort of traumatic loss of an ideal that ceased to exist. The character of Erica, the woman Changez falls in love with, is considered to represent America and his attitude towards her is suggestive of his approach to his life in the US. He mentions a lot of the issues he has in relation to dealing with her and the right way of approaching her,

I did not know where I stood on so many issues of consequence; I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belonged -in New York, Lahore, in both, in neither- and for this reason, when she reached out to me for help, I had nothing of substance to give her. Probably this was why I had been willing to try and take on the persona of Chris, because my own identity was so fragile. But by so doing –and by being unable to offer her an alternative to the chronic nostalgia inside her –I might have pushed Erica deeper into her own confusion.¹⁷⁵

The excerpt above is an indirect reference to the ambivalence that Changez has towards his life in the US. There is the feeling of helplessness that submerges his daily life which is resulted from the exclusion he suddenly feels and the lack of sense of belonging that he loses upon the rise of distrust in Muslims in the US. He trying to take on the identity of Chris is suggestive of his attempts to adopt the American values and lifestyle that have been deeply affected by the World Trade Centre attack in the aim of better fitting in within the new narrative of the US. However, there is realisation that despite his efforts to be like Chris and therefore make Erica feel happy again, he fails. The fragility of his identity is, for him, related to the fact that he cannot reassemble Chris. The lack of feeling of belonging within Changez reflects the ‘the fractured sense of self due to the experiences of exclusion’.¹⁷⁶ After 9/11, the national imagination of the United States was changed forever and rising sense of national and local rather than global dimension of citizenship dominated the overall atmosphere of the daily life of the American people and the foreigners. This sense of exceptionalism leads to dangerous assumptions that legitimize the exaggerated American reaction and fragmentary understanding of the terrorism. There is a significant problematic relating

¹⁷⁵ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 168.

¹⁷⁶ Shirazi, p.16.

to the contradictions that lay the heart of Changez's personal and professional life. They converge to a state of confusion and correlation. The fragility of the identity of Changez after 9/11 mirrors the fragility and the instability of the definition of political violence because of the limited narratives it covers. The journey of Changez from Pakistan to the US and back in the pre and post 9/11 period aims to replicate the sudden change in the dynamics of identity formation within the global world and the influence of political violence at the level of social and political discourse. Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and Shamsie's *Home Fire* stage the way state terrorism operates within the surrounding context. The secret agency of Verloc mirrors the Russian state staged terror threat in London with the aim of eliminating what it considered a threat to its authority. Shamsie, on her turn tackles the question radicalisation of young people and gender as a way of staging the current state of affairs vis-à-vis attitudes to those issues and the manner in which they are used to create local and global approaches and justification for counterterrorism. Conrad and Shamsie's narratives reflect on the spectral functioning of political violence through covert plotting and exaggeration of certain political contexts in the aim of justifying their strategies and agendas and the impact these strategies have on the understanding of terrorism. Moreover, they explore the lack of perspectives within the definition of terrorism. Hamid tackles the problematic around the manipulation of political violence and the single vision that is adopted when defining terrorism through voicing the silenced side of the terrorism discussion, by focusing on the perspective of Changez and marginalising that of his American interlocutor.

The storyline that unfolded post-9/11 created and reinforced the gap between the global and the local dimensions of identity. The changes that occur throughout the novel reveal the result of manipulation that dominates terrorism and its use as justification for certain policies. At the very beginning, when Changez encounters his American interlocutor, he tries to identify his nationality through his skin colour, his clothing style, hair style and physical appearance. He then explains that those are not necessarily characteristically American. On his built body Changez says, 'sportsmen

and soldiers of all nationalities tend to look alike.¹⁷⁷ The statement does not necessarily mean that every nationality is alike, however it suggests the globalized dimension of identity. The comparison of the physical appearance of different people does not aim at the establishment or reinforcing of the differences but rather at the abolishment of the shallow categorisation of people that are not necessarily key to the operating of the concept of global identity. The rejection of the labelling of people extends to the rigid categories of the terrorist and hero that dominate the definition of terrorism without a space in between for other perceptions. Changez continues to mention that it is the behaviour, ‘your [his American interlocutor] bearing’¹⁷⁸ that enabled him to recognize that he was American. Although Changez mostly refers to the physical appearance of his interlocutor, it still suggests the non-uniqueness of specifically being American in a global world. Being a citizen in a global world reinforces the idea of global identity with shared interests and conceptions as opposed to national identities that provides opportunity for claims of uniqueness and superiority and which are later used to manipulate and adjust the understanding of terrorism. Derrida through his argument about the deconstruction of terrorism discusses the idea of limits and boundaries that he relates to the transformation of identity as a ‘homogenous and self-contained totality.’¹⁷⁹ He continues to say that identity is not fully homogenous because it contains ‘traces of it explicitly excludes.’¹⁸⁰ When Changez refers to his belonging he says ‘I am both a native of this city and a speaker of your language,’¹⁸¹ suggesting the combination of his Pakistani heritage and acquired American lifestyle. At the start of the novel, Changez does not feel the need to exclusively identify only with one of the two, he prefers to go by as a global citizen without the obligation to choose one side over the other. He later on feels the need to stress his Pakistani belonging as a result of the American reaction the 9/11 attacks that changes the nature of the dialogue concerning the conception of global citizenship. Hamid frames the identity of Changez at the global

¹⁷⁷ Hamid. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ Barradori, p. 147.

¹⁸⁰ Barradori, p. 147.

¹⁸¹ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 1.

level, in the sense that he shares the values of different parts of the world and therefore he does not view the world through a single perspective, the different experiences he has help shape a varied perception. It is this very notion of developing a plural understanding that puts him at a crossroad when he faces the sudden need to choose. His heterogenous understanding of his experiences' clash with the unidirectional understanding of terrorism exclusively based on the duality of 'Us vs them'.

The framing of the War on Terror in matters of 'Us vs Them' and the assumed necessity of choosing a side has equally influenced the understanding of terrorism. Derrida, when explaining the reason behind referring to the World Trade Centre as 9/11, exposes the making of it a major and unprecedented event that the media turned into a cluster of impressions imposed on the global audience and hence, making of it a significant propaganda tool.¹⁸² With that being said, the mediatisation of 9/11 as a major event has hindered all perspectivism about terrorism and its understanding from different standpoints. The absence of numerous visions from the terrorism discussion echoes the sudden transformation of the American society from a vibrant melting pot into an overly nationalist country in the mid of the global village. Changez expresses his frustration in relation the transformation of New York from a 'culturally vibrant and cosmopolitan city that absorbed immigrants and people with diverse cultural affiliations and ethnicities',¹⁸³ to being engulfed in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. It is at that moment that his reluctance accumulates and his conception of home start fluctuating. As I have mentioned before, he openly expresses his passion about the United States and up to a certain point, he equally considers it home. Hamid does not construct different homes but rather different layers and dimensions to the feeling of home. He stresses the need to develop multiple understandings to the concepts of identity and home. By doing so, he mirrors the reality of both the social and the political orthodoxy of adhering to one view. His main character is therefore 'stranded between the dual

¹⁸² Carr, p. 149.

¹⁸³ Shirazi, p. 20.

belonging to Pakistan as well as to America [...]'.¹⁸⁴ The exclusive perspective as represented in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* mimics the central problem of defining terrorism. State terrorism is significantly missing both from the definition of terrorism and the strategies of counterterrorism. The widespread perspective of the victim has in place reinforcing qualities that develop multiple plots that justify counterterrorism policies, mainly through biased media coverage and the use of threat and victimhood as a propaganda tool that targets international audiences. There is clearly a manipulation of the knowledge and the conceptions of political violence that are justified as opposed to others that are deemed irrelevant and unnecessary for the fight against terrorism like the perspective of the terrorists themselves or other victims of terrorism that are within the territories of terrorist organisations. Therefore, the image cannot be complete without all the sections of the terrorism narrative. The half-narrated dialogue between Changez and his American interlocutor is ambiguous and lacks clarity, the perspective of the other character is totally absent, resulting a single sided perception for the reader.

The United States, in its role as the greatest technoscientific, capitalist, and military power, symbolizes the world order, the legitimacy of the international law and diplomacy and the power and the media. The world order, said Derrida, is based on the solidity, reliability, and credibility of American power.¹⁸⁵

Hamid's narrative goes against the process of maintaining that power and myth of the exceptionalism of American nationalism and American experience of terrorism by shifting the attention from the American interlocutor to Changez as a way of exploring different perspectives and perform a different set of conceptions surrounding terrorism. By invoking the cultural belonging of Changez, Hamid is not prioritizing it over his other experiences of the United States, but rather the process of assimilation that was aborted as a result of the mega mediatisation of 9/11. The transition from an extremely international and global community to a suspicious and closed society has led Changez to his feeling of reluctance and ambivalence regarding his experience of America. 9/11

¹⁸⁴ Shirazi, p. 22.

¹⁸⁵ Borradori, p. 150.

is always said to have aimed at spreading terror which is certainly true due to the violence it involves; however, it has also impacted on the structure of the American society and its attitude towards the outside world. The ambivalent and shifting reaction of both the American people and American administration towards the September 11 attack is mirrored through the indecisiveness of Changez and the mixed feelings he has vis-à-vis his experience of the American lifestyle. This sentimental reaction has been pursued since the incident took place twenty-one years ago. The language that surrounds it serves the reinforcement of 9/11 as unique and unprecedented, and so is the American experience of terrorism. Henceforth, the choice to refer to certain actions as terrorist has a 'perspective relevance policy',¹⁸⁶ meaning that the way an event is formulated and framed gives an idea about the desired, but not necessarily the most appropriate solutions.¹⁸⁷

Homi Bhabha in his lecture *Writing Rights and Responsibilities*, discusses how the use of language of metaphoricity allows 'to establish ideology and hegemony [...] it carries the change of affect'¹⁸⁸ he carries on to say that 'it is the way people feel persuaded rationally and emotionally.'¹⁸⁹ Indeed the discourse that accompanies political violence aims at creating an illusion of reality that is rationally constructed and therefore engenders a strong mechanism of justification. The latter triggers a certain approach that determines the state of mind of the audience. 9/11 and the body of metaphors and language that surrounds it triggers the highly nationalist attitude of the Americans as opposed to a global mind set concerning the consequences of that same incident. The metaphorical discourse that surrounds the attack leads to Changez's feeling of alienation 'that is forced upon him due to his racial identity and religio-cultural positioning.'¹⁹⁰ Bhabha suggest a state of transition that marks the period past 9/11 towards some sort of global rather than local understanding of the

¹⁸⁶ Crenshaw, p. 9.

¹⁸⁷ Crenshaw, p. 9.

¹⁸⁸ Homi Bhabha, *Writing Rights and Responsibilities*, University of California Television (January 31st, 2008) available from <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yER4QwiSl14>>

¹⁸⁹ Bhabha.

¹⁹⁰ Shirazi, p. 26.

economic, social, cultural and most importantly ideological impact of the event. There is a rather powerful ambivalence surrounding terrorism not only in relation the previously mentioned definitional problem but also in relation to its framing. Indeed, ‘contemporary governments and oppositions reject the label “terrorist” due to the negative connotation that the term carries’,¹⁹¹ because of the scale of fear that 9/11 brought about, any remote suggestion of a danger coming from the region where Al Qaeda operates blocks any attempt to rationally discuss the reality of that danger. The recurrent notion of spectrality is not only manifested in acts of political violence but also in the literature representing them. When Changez and his interlocutor are having tea in the streets of Karachi, Changez notices that his interlocutor is looking at another person, he tells him that the other man ‘was merely staring at something he found intriguing, as much as you are, but in your case, of course, with considerably more discretion.’¹⁹² Changez stresses the fact his interlocutor is more inconspicuous in his little investigation about the other man. The expression ‘of course’ serves, to characterise the American way of proceeding, that is through indirect and covert strategies. The War on Terror is mostly intricate because of the high concentration of secret policies. It is indeed ‘desirable to appear elegant and distinguished in order to deal with the decisive blow, or in a motion some engine of hell concealed beforehand in some good hiding place.’¹⁹³ The notion of elegance itself connotes a certain disguise that is used to conceal the reality behind the strategies that are employed within the context of terrorism and counterterrorism.

There is this recurrent need to rely on a cloak or concealment measures within political violence, be it state or organizational terrorism. The logic behind the elegant appearance of terrorism is the justification that accompanies it. The blurred difference between terrorism and counterterrorism is reflected through the metaphor that Changez establishes for his American interlocutor describing him as stranded between being the

¹⁹¹ Crenshaw, p. 8.

¹⁹² Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 25.

¹⁹³ Crenshaw, p. 35.

aggressor or the aggressed noticeably reflects the operational processes that are in place and that allow the justification of the atrocities committed under the umbrella term of peace keeping. At a certain moment during his discussion with his interlocutor, Changez notices that the American seemed stressed and very vigilant of the surroundings. Changez then compares him to an agitated animal which 'is now, in unfamiliar surroundings, uncertain whether it is predator or prey.'¹⁹⁴ The juxtaposing of predator and prey in this context suggests the use of the public opinion that is given the illusion that they are the decision makers when, in reality, governments use their own people as a prey to become international predators. There is a strongly established double standard that in fact reinforces the confusion between, terrorism and retaliation, victim and perpetrator and defender and aggressor. Thus, bringing us back to Chesterton's notion of the mask and disguise and the difficulty of discerning reality from fiction. *The Man Who Was Thursday* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* have very different structures at the level of the plot however, they intersect in dealing with the silencing of a part of their stories and disguising their characters' personalities. The structure that both novels follow is reflective of the functioning structure of political violence. Moreover, 'actors who use terrorism excuse or even manipulate what they recognise to be its unacceptability as a political or military method by referring to shared values.'¹⁹⁵ Therefore, despite the immense similarity of the methods of terrorism and counterterrorism, because of the confusing and spectral justification, the two phenomena are not perceived in similar manners. Hence, Changez's notion of the predator and the prey which largely applies to terrorism discourse and the War On Terror specifically.

The discourse of terrorism is structured around the notion of silencing one side of the truth as a way of promoting a certain truth and obscuring the diverging reality that does not flow in the same directions as the power politics of terrorism. The latter is hard to determine and is often contradictory. There is a necessity to identify the

¹⁹⁴ Crenshaw, p. 35.

¹⁹⁵ Crenshaw, p. 15.

structures of oppression for power hierarchy to be dismantled. In one of his meetings with Jim, the later tells Changez that he is a ‘watchful guy’¹⁹⁶ he continues to say that it comes from him feeling ‘out of place.’¹⁹⁷ Indeed, the feeling of being out of place engenders the feeling of insecurity and therefore leads to action that would theoretically provide a sense of security. Being out of place does not necessarily refer to the fact of being in an estranged place but rather being in an estranged context. Moreover, ‘fact is fiction, fiction is fact, war is peace and peace is war’ and that is where the dangers of discourse lie, its consistency threatens reality and truth and therefore, the latter are lost or compromised.

Hamid offers an ironical reproduction of the reality that surrounds terrorism discourse and its intricacies. Reality is like ‘something broken [...] like a tiny crack that becomes visible only when viewed through a magnifying lens; normally it is hidden by the brilliance of the stone’. Indeed because of the idealistic vision that is circulated about either the War on Terror, or religious extremism, to their respective target audiences, the crack, the marginalised perspectives are not visible to the general audience. When I asked Hamid as to why he has chosen to structure his narrative around Changez’s monologue and silence his American interlocutor, he maintained that he thought it was the best way to mirror the reality of the state of media coverage, discourse, policy making and more generally the dialogue about 9/11 and the political agendas that followed for years. That is, to keep *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* exclusively focused on Changez’s version of the events and his attitudes towards the US before and after the World Trade Centre attack reflects the general atmosphere that dominates the reaction to the same incident that is unidirectional and restricted. The monologic dialogue of the narrative stresses the unidirectional formulation of terrorism, focusing on the direct victims’ experience of terrorism and disregards the perspective of other victims of terrorism as is the case of Changez whose life is highly impacted by the outcome of 9/11. Hamid’s strategy also reflects on his attempt to generate scepticism

¹⁹⁶ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 48.

¹⁹⁷ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 48.

and eventually awareness about the deceptiveness of counterterrorism discourse, the absent side of the dialogue leaves ‘space for your [our] thoughts to echo.’¹⁹⁸ The silenced part of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the space that Erica leaves in her novella fulfils two functions. First, it exposes the lack of accurate and comprehensive information surrounding terrorism and counterterrorism and the line that separates the two. Secondly, it incites readers and audiences to look deeper into the terrorism dialogue and discourse and therefore acquire a deeper understanding of the deceiving functions of that same discourse.

Hamid, through the dual identity of Changez ironically voices the absence of perspective in relation to the discussion on terrorism and the political strategies that follow. He emphasises the attitude of Changez towards his Pakistani heritage at the beginning of his career and his feeling that he was, in a way, more comfortable when that part of his identity does not stand out of the crowd, that he felt like the rest of his American colleagues. His identity crisis reflects the issues that are recurrent within terrorism discourse. Changez says, ‘I was the only non-American in our group, but I suspected my Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expatriate account, and- most of all- by my companions.’¹⁹⁹ The new ambiance that surrounds his daily life, the practices and the nature of his job all do but hinder the appearance of the other side of his identity and belonging. There is that pattern of adopting a certain ideal that has a deeply inculcated notion of illusion. Changez, after 9/11, feels like the Janissaries fighting against their own identity. He is confused and disturbed at the same time regarding his reaction to the World Trade Centre attack which consisted in a smile and sort of relief. He does not understand why he has a feeling of relief at the chaos of a country of which he is partly a product of.

[Changez] was the product of an American university, I was earning a lucrative American salary; I was infatuated with an American woman. So why did part of me desire to see America harmed? I did not know,

¹⁹⁸ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 58.

¹⁹⁹ , Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 82.

then I knew merely that my feelings would be unacceptable to my colleagues, and I undertook to hide them as well as I could.²⁰⁰

There is strong confusion that haunts the thoughts of Changez as to his very first reaction, it demonstrates his reluctance in relation to the American fundamentals. Although it was endorsed in him, the attack in New York created an unusual atmosphere, henceforth, that feeling of comfort and advantage was disrupted, leading to that strange sentiment of relief. The need to hide his bizarrely joyful spirits following the tragic attack reflects the heavily strained atmosphere that dominates the studies and discourse relating to the War on Terror and terrorism in general. The notion of choosing the ‘right’ side puts a major limitation on the level of freedom and objectivity that is necessary for useful and transparent tackling of political violence away from all power relations and political agendas of any given superpower. This notion of having dual feelings towards terrorist incidents engenders ‘immigrants like Changez, who have dual loyalties to the homeland and the host land, *experiencing* a hegemonic pressure on them.’²⁰¹ There is a major dilemma relating to the rejection or the difficulty of having different opinions and adopting multiple perspectives within the discourse of political violence. In fact, Changez’s struggle with his globalised identity is resulted in the stringent political, cultural and social discourses that do not allow perspectivism. Being a global citizen brings about suspicion instead of celebration and global support. The atmosphere of suspicion and constant threat is what fuels the War On Terror and maintains the discourse of the danger coming from certain regions in the world. There is a focus on the spaces of belonging ‘between home, abroad, local and foreign.’²⁰² These aspects of global identity are influenced by terrorism discourse and vice versa. It seems it is no longer possible to belong to different countries, cultures and ideas without the accompanying suspicion that we are not choosing the ‘good’ side of the equation. In that sense, Changez says ‘I flew to New York uncomfortable in my own face: I was

²⁰⁰ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 84.

²⁰¹ Shirazi, p. 27.

²⁰² Shirazi, p. 21.

aware of being under suspicion, I felt guilty; I tried therefore to be as nonchalant as possible; this naturally led to you becoming stiff and self-conscious.’²⁰³

Terrorism brings about confusion as to what it signifies, what it involves and the different implications it carries. One of the most complex and challenging aspects is the double standards that accompany its explanation, use and justification. Terrorism is a complex concept not only due to the absence of one unified definition, but also because it englobes a large set of concepts that when considered in relation to terrorism become equally more challenging. Gender, heroism and media are examples of such concepts. Identity goes through a similar process of impediment when explored in relations to terrorism. Changez ends up resisting the very notion of global identity because in a way that conception becomes a threat to his Pakistani heritage, ‘he resists the demands of cultural hegemony and assimilation.’²⁰⁴ The conception of identity as a global rather than a local entity has been dramatically reshaped after the 9/11 attacks which resulted in the sudden re-emergence of American nationalism and the rejection of the global identity to which the American identity belonged.

Changez recalls the staggering manifestation of the celebration of America after 9/11 and describes it as a sort of national event where America’s flag ‘invaded New York after the attacks [...] they seemed to proclaim: *We are America _not New York_ [...] the mightiest civilization the world has ever known; you have slighted us; beware our wrath* [italics original].’²⁰⁵ This idea of the mighty US and their vengeful attitude towards those who have attacked its soil represents the way 9/11 was considered an attack that is exclusively directed towards the US and therefore shapes the politics of violence and what it signifies for the years to follow. There is a persistent tone of the American experience of terrorism and 9/11 that is portrayed as the ultimate experience of it and which has no similar occurrence in the history of terrorism. While this is true for certain aspects of the attack, which I have mentioned before, it did not necessarily

²⁰³ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 85.

²⁰⁴ Shirazi, p. 22.

²⁰⁵ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 90.

have a different working pattern in comparison to previous terrorist incidents. Hamid makes an interesting use of the relation between Chris and Erica to represent the shift of focus from a global to a solely local, American identity. Chris and Erica's love 'had been an unusual love, with such a degree of commingling of identities.'²⁰⁶ The death of Chris is a connotation of the changes that occurred after 9/11 and the feeling of loss that dominates Erica and that eventually leads to her death. Erica felt there was no life after the death of Chris, she could not imagine living without him and even when she met Changez and even though he showed his interest in her and the deep affection he felt for her, it was still impossible for her to accept that and start over. She rejects the possibility of a new different life. The only perception of life she has was with Chris and after his death there was no other possible perspectives. Similarly, after 9/11, Changez witnessed a US that was looking back instead of looking forward.²⁰⁷ There is a dominant atmosphere of nostalgia about a past life that is hindering future perspectives. Changez describes his experience of living in New York after 9/11 'like living in a film about the Second World War; I, a foreigner, found myself staring out at a set that ought to be viewed not in Technicolor but in grainy black and white',²⁰⁸ instead of opening new paradigms of understanding terrorism, it placed more restrictions on the numerous connotations it carries that are all equally essential for a more efficient definition and reaction. After 9/11 a no-perspective perspective is adopted which eliminates any attempt to explain political violence in relation to any other aspect other than that of attacking western and specifically American values and freedoms that arguably go against the believes of the attackers.

After the September 2001 attacks, the conception of terrorism was highly influenced by the American vision of it, 'calling actions terrorism may dictate a military, not a political, response and justify exceptional measures. The crisis becomes the sort of aggression that is dangerous to appease.'²⁰⁹ Considering the position of the United

²⁰⁶ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 104.

²⁰⁷ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 131.

²⁰⁸ Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 131.

²⁰⁹ Crenshaw, p. 11.

States as a world power that operates at all levels of the global system, its influence on the framing of terrorism and the Global War on Terror reaches a dangerous scale. The field of terrorism studies, self-defence and military strategies have been heavily influenced by the American limited interpretation of terrorism. One of the dangers of such restrictions lay also in the ability to shift the interpretations of terrorism as necessary. As a fact:

when the military units engage in actions that we might refer to as terrorism, they are called “unconditional or special operations.²¹⁰” Although the accuracy of terrorism interpretation after 9/11 cannot be fully valid, it still has a strong influence on power politics and counterterrorism strategies. Indeed, in history [...] it is the thrust of one’s narrative that counts, not the accuracy of one’s details.²¹¹

the sentimental interpretation of 9/11 hinders a thorough and multidimensional enquiry into the different implications and components that are part of political violence. The long American history of being one of the most powerful states in the world plays a salient role in the way 9/11 was and is still interpreted. Ground Zero memorial is not simply a reminder of the lost lives but most importantly is it reminder that the ‘ruins proclaim the building was beautiful.’²¹² The beauty of the buildings does not only refer to the actual building but also to an America that was glorious and invincible. Changez realizes that he did not want to follow the fundamentals anymore, the fundamentals of his work as well as those of trying to fit his identity to the surrounding circumstances that made him feel, after 9/11, rather unwelcome. Therefore, after he decides to quit his job and go back to Pakistan, he felt as if his ‘blindness were coming off, and [he] was dazzled and rendered immobile by the sudden broadening of [his] arch of vision.’²¹³ following the fundamentals as he was instructed when he started his job at Underwood Samson was not an ideal value for him because it put fundamental; limits on his vision of life, success, identity and sense of belonging. Hamid, through the fundamentals that Changez had to follow at the heart of his company, explores the similar issue that have

²¹⁰ Crenshaw, p. 15.

²¹¹ Crenshaw, p 135.

²¹² Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, p. 163.

²¹³ Ibid, p. 165.

been dominating the field of terrorism studies in the post-Cold War era, especially after 9/11. Indeed, the blinders that came off Changez vision that allowed his vision to be broader are still in place when it comes to the study of contemporary terrorism. The fundamentals of studying political violence are prescribed exclusively in relation to the American experience with little or no consideration to historical predecessors and historical occurrences of terrorism.

Home Fire: The Other Voices of Terrorism

Home Fire is a captivating novel based on Sophocles *Antigone*.²¹⁴ Shamsie excels in conveying the complexity of political violence through the structure of social relations and how family structures and social relations are deeply reflective of the workings of political violence and at the same time the impact that the latter can have on our social and cultural experiences. *Home Fire* was published in 2017, Shamsie received the Women's Prize for Fiction (2018) for it. The novel adopts an ancient play into the contemporary times and context and reflects the structure of terrorism in its contemporary phase, with special focus on the ambiguities related to the meaning of terrorism and Fundamentalism as well as lack of perspectives regarding terrorism and radicalisation within the British Society and the global context.

Home Fire with its multiplicity of narrative points of view and complex intertwinement between state, family, violence, love and duty –either towards the loved ones or the country referred to as home, offers an opportunity to indeed visualise the multi-dimensionality of terrorism and the necessity of listening to the different voices and narratives that are necessary for the understanding of the larger discourse about terrorism. *Home Fire* goes beyond the frame of *Antigone* and offers an enactment of the problematic of the limited understanding of the terrorism and the narrow perception that is often adopted by politicians and individuals alike. Despite the numerous differences between the Chesterton's and Shamsie's novels that are related to structure and as well as to content,²¹⁵ they both explore the problem of the limited understanding of terrorism and explore the different possible alternatives that could be part of a wider and more efficient definition of terrorism. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* that explored the lack of perspective within the understanding of terrorism through the masked characters and the double identities while Shamsie's *Home Fire* offers a

²¹⁴ Written in or before 441 BC.

²¹⁵ *The Man Who Was Thursday* is structured around the two different layers of narrative based on the double identity of the characters being both the anarchists and the detectives. *Home Fire* is structured around five points of view through which we are able to explore different perceptions of terrorism.

rendering of the problematic through her five-act narrative that presents the voices and perceptions of her five main characters. Therefore, the following chapter is concerned with Shamsie's combining of voice, narrative and sound as the embodiment of the multi-layered problematic of terrorism and essential task of moving away from the single-vision narrative and the simplistic dealing with terrorism that is trapped within the binary opposition of good and evil, hero and enemy, as well as cure and disease. It will focus on the necessity of listening and hearing the different voices within terrorism and not only the dominant perspective, to focus on developing multiple perspectivity through the narrative voices of *Home Fire*.

Shamsie's narrative has and still generates multiple reviews and analysis on the diverse composition of the novel. Newspapers have praised Shamsie's success in adopting an ancient story line to the contemporary political atmosphere. *The Guardian's* review of *Home Fire* praises Shamsie for her artistic and sophisticated exploration of the clash between society, family and religious faith. The review stresses the strong bond that joins those elements to almost make that very same bond invisible. It is a story about a family that gets separated because of terrorism, but at the same time it reflects on the importance of issues such as national belonging, citizenship and the hard choice between duty towards one's family and towards the country you call home.²¹⁶ *Home Fire*, although based on an old story, still offers a very accurate account of the contemporary atmosphere in the light of Islamic Fundamentalism, an element that *The Guardian's* review emphasises. This review, although general, sets out the main points that Shamsie aims at exploring including the visions of her characters and their own understanding of their circumstances. Therefore, the review does point out the focal points that are to be explored in the following chapter.

The difficulty of being a Muslim in the present day especially in a Western country is an element that Shamsie tries to uncover through the relation of the three siblings to each other and their jihadi father. The impact of an absent father and his implication in

²¹⁶ Nathalie Hagnes, 'Home Fire a Review: A Contemporary Revoking of Sophocles' *The Guardian* (10 August 2017).

terrorism confronts the young Parvaiz with Farooq, an agent recruiting for ISIS, who uses the vulnerability of Parvaiz and his lack of the sense of belonging to convince him of the legitimacy of ISIS fight for an Islamic Caliphate. The recruiter focuses on promoting justice, honour and especially offering him, supposedly, an alternative home where he would regain the feeling of belonging and agency by being part of the media division of ISIS.²¹⁷ The role played by Farooq is highly influential as he represents the sort of attention that Parvaiz lacks within his family, a listener, someone who would give importance to his opinions and feelings. These ideas were stressed throughout the *Financial Times* review of the novel. The review also focuses on the attempt of the novel to uncover the prejudices and misconceptions that possibly surround radicalisation.²¹⁸ Therefore, *Financial Times* aims at reviewing the political connotations that Shamsie carefully encrypted through her characters, settings and themes. These features, although not fully pinned down in the review, are essential ideas that are to be dealt with in more details within this study.

‘An “Antigone” for a Time of Terror’ is the title that *The New York Times* chose for its review of *Home Fire* which, I believe, is very reflective of the actual content and context of the novel. The love triangle that we are presented with at the beginning is in fact the structure of a complex ‘political entanglement’ that implicates various parties and characters. The review underlines the centrality of belonging and the issue of citizenship. Emphasis is put on the characters being dragged into an infinite conflict between family, faith and nation. Furthermore, the review refers to the novel’s tackling of terrorism and British citizenship and the way the two are constantly separated in such a way as to never directly link Britishness to terrorism, reflecting on the fluctuating nationality that Shamsie aimed at exploring through the story of immigrants at the centre of the Western world. The review points to the characters struggle between the social and the political duty and the desire to belong. The link between terrorism and

²¹⁷ Parvaiz comes to learn later on that the media section he is recruited for used not just to promote a non-existent idealistic community but rather to record the atrocities committed by the ISIS members against both the local communities and foreigners.

²¹⁸ Rahul Jacob, ‘Home Fire BY Kamila Shamsie, Family on the Edge’ *Financial Times* (15 September 2017).

citizenship is a notion that plays a significant role in the understanding of terrorism in the sense of the measures and justification which could be created in the aim of protecting a particular citizenship and create barriers to shield it from being associated with terrorism. *The New York Times* review is useful in this context as it sets out one of the main issues that the novel explores and that has a direct link to problematic of defining terrorism.

Clair Chambers in 'Home Fire, Sound and Fury' makes direct links between sound and text. The established link suggests the important question about the ability of the oppressor to listen to the other?'²¹⁹ Chambers analysis of *Home Fire* argues that Shamsie gives space to those marginalised voices and listens to the radicalised subjects that are not necessarily present or represented within the dominant perspective of terrorism discourse. She continues to stress the importance of the sound as well as listening to the sound. The review stresses the main point of the novel as being the lack of listening at various levels which led to the rather easy radicalisation of Parvaiz. The latter is not listened to by his sisters, added to that, a dead father and mother meant that his voice was lost in a vacuum. Therefore, when Farooq, the recruiter for ISIS, offers a listening ear and provides a sympathetic but superficial understanding, Pervaiz is easy to persuade that the Islamic State is a safe heaven. The problematic of the absent listening, Chambers maintains, extends to the broader sense to include those wishing to return to the UK after previously joining ISIS as well as their families. She states that they are neither given a second chance nor listened to. Therefore, the study asks a fundamental question as to who should speak and who should listen 'more carefully',²²⁰ the misalignment between the two has, according to Chambers, to 'a fury that fans the flames of hatred and violence that we witness in the second decade of the twenty-first century.'²²¹

In 'Tragic Form in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*', Naomi Weiss focuses on the

²¹⁹ Chambers Claire, "Sound And Fury: Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire", *The Massachusetts Review*, 59 (2018), pp. 202-219, p. 204.

²²⁰ Chambers, p 218.

²²¹ Chambers, p. 218.

novel's adaptation of *Antigone*'s tragic forms such as dialogue, the chorus, and the agon. Moreover, it emphasizes the novel's polyphonic qualities and 'its presentation of multiple voices for audiences to hear, critiques to put against their own.'²²² Going into further detail in relation to the first element of tragedy, that is dialogue, Weiss refers to Shamsie's positioning of the characters who 'Even with each character having a distinct 'act' or testimony, there is from the start a strong sense of interaction between them [...] and a sense of contrast, each character speaking with distinctive voice.'²²³ Furthermore, the study stresses the multivocal quality that continues throughout the entire novel, a quality that gives the novel its capacity to encompass a variety of subjects and contribute to the different political discourses that dominate Britain and the rest of the world. Among these are the revocation of the British citizenship in relation to ISIS, as well as the complexity of living in a world dominated by terrorism, especially with a background that is directly related to it, as is the case of Adil Pasha the father of Parvaiz. Besides Shamsie's voicing of the different perspectives through adopting the tragedy structure of *Antigone* and the five acts play into the contemporary period, Weiss stresses the function of the silence at the end of the novel as an end that Shamsie aimed for the audience as a space to express themselves and think beyond the limits of the ending.²²⁴ The different elements of the tragedy, specifically the agon and chorus help create different perspectives. The agon which Weiss explains as 'a set of opposing speeches, typically divided by a few lines spoken by the chorus',²²⁵ in the case of *Home Fire* the opposing voice of Aneeka, Karamat Lone, Isma and Eamonn, suggests that we are presented with different perceptions that are associated with the different understandings of the characters. The Chorus, although Shamsie does not integrate it in the same way as it appears in *Antigone*, adopts it in the form of television, newspapers and social media content as a way of including additional opinions outside the circle of her main characters and therefore engage with a larger spectrum and more perspectives.

²²² Weiss Naomi, "Tragic Form In Kamila Shamsie'S Home Fire", *Academia.Edu*, 2022.

²²³ Weiss, p. 249.

²²⁴ Weiss, p256.

²²⁵ Weiss, p. 251.

Ursula Rutkowska's study of *Home Fire*, although it also refers to the novel's combination of literature and politics, sheds light on how *Home Fire* somehow predicts the case of Shamima Begum,²²⁶ whose British citizenship was revoked following her joining ISIS. The study puts special emphasis on the novel's dealing with the questions of citizenship in the age of terror, and the possibility of individuals being made "unBritish". The idea behind it is the weaponization of citizenship for the benefit of the measures of countering terrorism and containing the threat of political violence. There is however a significant problematic within such understanding, indeed homegrown terrorism is not a perspective that is considered when similar measures are adopted. Rutkowski argues that the 'contemporary novel is a form of imaginative discourse that is already engaging with the world as we see it today.'²²⁷ She continues that Shamsie stresses the significance of the role that us as the readers can play, interacting, understanding and shaping our perception of the world. Therefore, the review puts forward the interface of the novel both with the world as well as its audience through the different characters and the exposure of the problematic of citizenship and terrorism. It does that in relation to the Islamophobic atmosphere and the narrow vision that surrounds it which inevitably impact on defining terrorism.²²⁸

²²⁶ The 15 year old teenager who travelled to Syria in 2015 to join ISIS, however, Ms Begum, after the weakening of the control of ISIS, wished to return to the UK four years later. The British government took the decision to revoke her citizenship on the basis of her Bangladeshi background, meaning that she would not be left stateless. However, Bangladesh declined Ms Begum's entitlement to a Bangladeshi citizenship.

²²⁷ Rutkowska Urszula, "The Political Novel In Our Still-Evolving Reality: Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* And The Shamima Begum Case, Textual Practice", *Taylor And Francis Online*, (2020)

²²⁸ Other reviews of *Home Fire*, including Vogue, The Spectator, The Irish Times, Financial Times and London Fiction and others, explore the way an ancient tragedy, when adopted to the contemporary atmosphere of terrorism, is significantly reflective. The feeling of duty and obligation towards family and country leads to clashing thoughts and actions as it is the case with Ismene and Aneeka, both characters are torn between their love for their sibling Pervaiz who joined ISIS and their fear to lose their sense of belonging and their Britishness. Aneeka's struggle to bring her dead brother's body back to the UK, after he was trapped to join ISIS, represents the relation between the state and its citizens and the political implication that a quest for belonging could bring about. Therefore, the social and the political cannot be separated. Shamsie's narrative emphasizes the intertwinement of politics, specifically political violence, with social and personal condition. The discussions of *Home Fire* tackle Shamsie's exploration of radicalization and its impact on identity and nationality. Furthermore, the reviews stress the extended impact that the jihadi father had years later, on the three siblings' integration within their society and how his absence leads to social and political chaos. Even in the process of recruiting Pervaiz, family paradise, imagined social ideals and sense of accomplishment and belonging were used to persuade the young Pervaiz to join ISIS. References to identity, integration issues and belonging and the weaponization of citizenship for the profit of politics and counterterrorism are the elements that those discussions stress the most.

The above reviews and the scholarly analysis are selected in a way to best reflect the intentions of this chapter and they are in no way extensive. It is important to point out the significant role of previous work on Shamsie's *Home Fire* in establishing it as an intricate novel that combined the social, the personal and the political spheres. The references to identity, loyalty, duty towards family and country open up the scope for a deeper exploration as to how these concepts are narratively rendered through Shamsie's novel and the way in which they are relevant to the contemporary world and the domination of political violence. The works cited above explore the functioning of family, nation and radicalisation around terrorism, the drawing of the first threads towards their exploration increases the relevance of the novel within political violence. Furthermore, the emphasis on the creative and pragmatic adaptation of *Antigone* that kept the meanings that the original plot served and at the same time adopted them to a contemporary context, suggests the scarcity of historical borders and time limits concerning political violence and its different implications within the social and the identity spheres. It is also an indication of the ability of narrative form to be adaptable to different contexts within the same sphere of conception. The novelization of the play strongly suggests that there is not one single way of perceiving the evolving world around us. The destruction of family links, disillusioned teenagers with the country they call home, radicalization, the implication of the state in political violence and the nature of Fundamentalism are the features of Shamsie's version of *Antigone* as a contemporary tragedy of political violence that are pointed out by the works cited above, therefore, I will be building on their ideas.

The novel's analysis by Rutkowska, Weiss and Chambers are particularly interesting for their varied but similar tackling of the polyphonic quality of *Home Fire* and Shamsie's excellent work in setting in motion the necessary thinking that is highly essential for understanding the current circumstances shaped by terrorism and the detrimental unidirectional perspective and by extension perception that we have about terrorism and the different notions that are annexed to it such as the terrorists themselves, radicalisation, homegrown terrorists and counterterrorism, all of which are vital and

decisive mechanisms for a better understanding of terrorism. The three studies reflect on the necessity of readdressing the question of who can participate in the discussions about terrorism as opposed to who must speak. The ability to speak and voice an opinion is however not enough if the other side of the conversation is not willing to listen. Therefore, there is a strong reference to matters of perspective and voice especially in relation to the structure of the novel that disseminates the perspective of each of the main characters, in the sense that it presents to us different interpretations of the events occurring in the novel and by doing so, the narrative spreads awareness about multiple perspectives that can be found within terrorism discourse and invites us to adopt a wider sense of understanding the paradigms of Islamism and radicalisation. The points of view of the five main characters draw the attention to the different voices that should be part of the understanding of terrorism. The strong reference to the necessity to listen to all voices involved within terrorism and the way *Home Fire*'s is relevant to the fundamental problematic of defining terrorism the lack of perspectives that engenders constricted perception and understanding of the complexities of terrorism that are not part of the current understanding. Therefore, building on the previous references to the novel's multi-voice quality and its inclusion of various narratives as viewed by the different characters, I will be principally focusing on *Home Fire*'s polyphonic qualities and its narrative representation of the different voices involved within the circle of terrorism including the state, the radicalised teenager, and the family of the radicalised young British man as a literary enactment of the different perspectives and perceptions that inherently exist within terrorism but are not involved in the existing discourse and definition of terrorism.

The narrative is multidimensional as it is positioned so that it carefully uses the tragic elements built around family and politics of the origin work *Antigone* and adapts them to manifest the contemporary complexities of terrorism and the difficulty of pinning down the limits of its definition and at the same time including a variety of perceptions and perspectives. but also, because it represents fundamental aspects of political violence that are characteristic of fundamentalism but also of Anarchism

during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Radicalisation, state terrorism, suicide bombing, and gender are among the foundations that Shamsie aimed at visualising through her narrative and their functioning in a world dominated by surveillance and terror. *Home Fire* invites us to have a deep sceptical vision of the implication of political violence within family and national frames. One of the questions that *Home Fire* reflects on is the role of women in political violence. Women within the sphere of terrorism is not an exclusive feature of Islamism it has been part of the process for as long as political violence has existed, in different forms and degrees, females have always played a role within terrorism one way or the other. Indeed, Conrad's *The Secret Agent* explores the role of women within political violence, not in a direct way but rather evocatively through the character of Winnie who at the end of the novel revenges the death of her brother Stevie. Shamsie's Aneeka is the female character who stands for the voice of women in political violence. It must be made clear that Aneeka does not commit any terrorist attack and is not involved with any terrorist organisation, the reason she comes to be labelled as a terrorist is directly linked to her support for her brother and her wish to repatriate him. The British authorities and people judged that her support to Parvaiz, who is equally profile as a terrorist, therefore, following the logic of 'either you are with us or you are with the terrorist', Aneeka supporting so called terrorist is by extension a terrorist too. she *Home Fire* replicates an atmosphere that stimulates female terrorism. The notion Gender and terrorism is not at the centre of the terrorism discussion as a whole, and despite the existence of considerable scholarship exploring the presence of women in different movement of political violence, studies on women and terrorism tend to focus efforts on explaining the reasons behind the presence of women in revolutionary movement such as Islamism and Anarchism. Different links are drawn between the emotional capacities of women and their action within the sphere of political violence, yet there is a significant lack of consideration to the rational and the context of women's participation in terrorism.

One of the most marking moments of the novel is the one set in the park where Aneeka is reunited with the body of her brother. It is a major moment where all the

fragments of the novel come together, due the live streaming of the theatrical atmosphere that represents the voice of Pervaiz as a victim of terrorism. Shamsie succeeds in introducing power to the narrative voice of Aneeka and stresses the agency that her position gave her. The live airing at the park weaponized the voice of Aneeka and laid her perception bare in front of the audience, it allows us to experience her feelings and have a virtual look at her perception, free of the bias and influence of the media and politics. Because ‘before the word comes the image and [...] before we describe we must be willing to look. We must stare, then verbalise then reclaim.’²²⁹ The voice of Aneeka through the tv screens, therefore, forces the viewers to look and stare, to hear her voice, to consider her perspective and to comprehend her perception before they proclaim their condemnations. Karamat Lone and his colleagues, Isma and Eamonn are all watching Aneeka mourn her brother in front of the cameras when she then moves to addressing Lone, in what I think reflects one of the central problematic of unidirectional image of terrorism and the lack multiple perceptions. To the Home Secretary Aneeka says:

In the stories of wicked tyrant men and women are punished with exile, bodies of are kept from their families – their heads impaled on spikes, their corpses thrown into unmarked graves. All these things happen according to the law, but not according to justice. I am here to ask for justice. I appeal to the Prime Minister: let me take my brother home.²³⁰

‘she was just a silly girl’,²³¹ such is the reaction of Karamat Lone, exaggerated and certainly undermining of Aneeka’s struggle, sorrow and agency as a female fighting for the right to bury her brother in the country he belongs to. To consider Aneeka’s mission as some silly business reduces the significance of her voice and silences her perspective in an attempt to align it with the dominant perspective. A voice could be oppressed for it has power to propose a different perspective. Furthermore, to listen to a voice is primarily to take on other scenarios. The address of Aneeka proves the existence of other voices other than the voice of condemnation; it is evidence for ‘the existence of

²²⁹ Mengiste Maaza, "Unheard-Of Things", *The Massachusetts Review*, 57 (2016), 88-90, p. 90.

²³⁰ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, 224-225.

²³¹ Shamsie, p. 225.

voices other than the voice of the dominator'.²³² The narrative voice of Aneeka serves as a medium that transports different perceptions that are worth consideration as they have the power to significantly change the way terrorism and counterterrorism are being represented and understood.

The Home Secretary qualifies Aneeka of silliness, “madness”, newspapers use the terms “evil”, “slag”, “terrorist-spawn” and “enemy of Britain” to describe her and her decision to try and bring back the body of her brother. Framing Aneeka as mad revokes all her decisions and actions from the moment she comes to know that her brother wants to be back to the UK. Furthermore, it questions her moral abilities to make rational decisions and most importantly denies the existence of her voice and the validity of her perspective. The voice of the silly girl, the enemy of Britain is stripped of her power to present an opposing perspective to that of the Home Secretary and by extension the dominant perspective. The voice of females within the discourse of terrorism is suppressed on basis of their lack of understanding and narrow perception. Assumptions in collective narratives about female radicals as being ‘not thinking objects with their own political motivations and interests.’²³³ further suppresses their agency. There is the recurrent problematic of imprisoning females within limited social and cultural frames that negates their existence as independent and rational individuals with the ability of exercising their agency within the different frames of society.

Aneeka is indeed not interested in being a suicide bomber or even an active female radical, it's only her devotion and love to her twin brother that motivated her to stand up to ‘a powerful government ... that has very bad PR in relation to Muslims,’²³⁴ although her motivation may seem to be putting her back into the social and cultural assumptions about female role, it only reveals the overlap between the social and the political spheres within political violence. Shamsie, through the character of Aneeka, sheds light on the social and the human side behind violent movements, not in the aim of legitimizing them but to deepen and enhance our understanding of the different

²³² Shamsie, p. 95.

²³³ Julie, p. 177.

²³⁴ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 228.

paradigms surrounding them. She aims at reshaping the unidirectional framing of terrorism.

Home fire offers a pervasive perspective about women's engagement in political violence. Her determination is not weakened even after Pervaiz death and she insists on burying him next to their mother. She stands against the British government despite the attempts of her sister to prevent her. The Pakistan High Commissioner compares Aneeka's love to Pervaiz to the Pakistani folktale of Laila and Majnu which is about the grief of the lover upon the loss of his beloved who wanders in the desert in madness. In *Home Fire* the Story is however reversed, it is Aneeka who 'runs grief-crazed through the desert in search of her love.'²³⁵ The reversed roles serve the rehabilitation of women's agencies. Again, the struggle of Aneeka is read within the limits of brotherly love, however, her experience stands for the larger involvement of women in political violence as a result of personal conviction and believe in their mission regardless of the cultural and social stigmatization surrounding them. Aneeka is only the shell part of the story; the more significant part lies in what is inside the shell. Aneeka offers an opportunity to reflect on women's role within political violence regardless of the social and cultural limitation. The character on Aneeka speaks to personalities that defy the traditional conception of women's agency. Shamsie, through Aneeka speaks about those women who sacrifice their lives and defy the traditional social construction that surrounds the agency of women that is supposedly limited to nurturing and caring for their children and homes. *Home Fire* does not simply tell the story of the brother victim whose sister attempted to save, it contains a deeper sense of the political agency of women and the motivations behind it. Aneeka, through her journey to repatriate the body of her brother, managed to position herself at the centre of the world's attention and placed the Home Secretary in a complicated and embarrassing situation.

Eamonn, the son of the Home Secretary and Aneeka's "fiancé", rehabilitates her and offers a profound vision about her struggle and the reason she left the UK for her

²³⁵ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 228.

brother's body. He says:

The woman you've been watching on your TV screens is a woman who has endured terrible trials, whose country, whose government, and whose fiancé turned away from her at a moment of profound personal loss. She has been abused for the crime of daring to love while covering her head, vilified for believing that she had the right to want a life with someone whose history is at odds with hers, denounced for wanting to bury her brother beside her mother, reviled for her completely legal protests against a decision by the Home that suggests personal animus. Is Britain really a nation that turns people into figures of hate because they love unconditionally? Unconditionally but not uncritically. While her brother was alive, that love was turned towards convincing him to return home; now he's dead it's turned to convincing the government to return his body home.²³⁶

Eamonn exposes the internal sufferings that Aneeka has endured that motivated her actions. It is the covert situation that the Home Secretary and the media coverage refuse to consider her expressions of her personal grief and instead they spread an incomplete image that blurs the reality that surrounds the case of Pervaiz and Aneeka and at the same time strengthens the dominant voice of Karamat Lone and the dominance of his perspective. Therefore, Shamsie through Aneeka's voice and her narrative is 'asking the reader to pay attention to the grievances that lie beneath radicalisation.'²³⁷ Karamat Lone reduces Aneeka to a "silly girl" therefore depriving her action of any significance and sense of being. The Home Secretary planned to make the story about Pervaiz 'the British citizen who had turned his back on his nation in favour of a place of crucifixion, beheadings, floggings, heads on spikes, child soldiers, slavery and rape.'²³⁸ instead of making it about his sister who fights against the odds of the British government and Home Secretary for a grave for her brother.

The novel enacts the strength of perspective when it is voiced through the powerful and the marginalised, determining the way audiences shape their attitudes toward radicalisation and terrorism through the voice of Karamat, who stands for a

²³⁶ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p.191.

²³⁷ Rutkowska.

²³⁸ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 249.

powerful political body, as opposed to that of a girl whose status is reduced to madness, 'a sad child [...] raised to [an] enemy'.²³⁹ Indeed Aneeka, contrary to how the media portrayed her, and her brother, as traitor of her country, is a symbol of courage and resolution in the midst of national disapproval and condemnation. Although, her voice and perspective have not achieved neither her determination to save him nor her wish to repatriate his body after his death, it contributes to the wider questions about the definition of terrorism and the numerous absent voices from the discussion. What the voice of Aneeka and Parvaiz does is introduce the voice of the marginalised and demonised victims of radicalisation and their families into the discussions about terrorism and Islamic Fundamentalism. Therefore, despite the oppressed voice of Aneeka, its merely existence and identification as the voice of the other, of the victims of radicalisation and their families introduces other perspective from the dominant binary understanding of the modes of operation of terrorism.

The voice of Aneeka becomes more striking in the final section of the novel. Her howl and address to Karamat through the media gives her voice power to spread her perception and justify her actions. Media coverage proliferates political violence and gives it another understanding through exposing it to other possible interpretations. *Home Fire* excels in exposing the centrality of media coverage within terrorism. The culmination of the storyline is reached within the televised message of Aneeka to the Home Secretary and the recorded message of Eamonn to his father. Both messages being covered by different media brought all the characters together. Aneeka and Eamonn messages were both addressed to the British government and the global audience to expose the different realities behind their actions. The narrative openly voicing the last messages of Eamonn and Aneeka offers an opportunity to develop a different but most importantly a comprehensive view of it. The novel is indeed inciting the reader 'to listen to the other as if it were a self, neither to punish nor to acquit.'²⁴⁰

Terrorism follows the development of the media, beginning from the widespread

²³⁹ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, 253.

²⁴⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Terror: A Speech After 9-11", *Boundary 2*, 31 (2004), pp. 81-111 p. 83.

of newspapers to wider televised events, and adopts its tactics and targets accordingly.²⁴¹ Indeed the Russian Anarchists adopted a new strategy that they referred to as “propaganda of the deed” stressing the centrality of a stream of actions that would attract the attention of the media as would provide the necessary coverage and publicity and therefore propel their message and give it a global scope. The pre- and post-9/11 periods were also marked by movement towards creating media spectacles that aim for a global scale of attention, mainly through the hijacking of aircrafts. The relation between the media and terrorism is ‘symbiotic’²⁴² in that the media provide the publicity that terrorism requires and the latter provide the spectacles that the media aim to cover. Derrida describes 9/11 as ‘an archaic theatre of violence destined to strike the imagination.’²⁴³ Indeed it was an unprecedented media spectacle in that its coverage reached a global scale within hours. *Home Fire*, being a novel of the contemporary frame of terrorism, has indeed exposed the centrality of the media in amplifying the voice of the powerful, yet Aneeka uses the same strategy to strip the oppressor’s voice of its authority and breaks her silence.

Shamsie reflects on the media and their role in shaping political agendas and audience’s vision. Derrida argues that terror consisted more of its media exploitation and exploration than the act of terror in itself.²⁴⁴ Within that cycle of manoeuvre, the actors who have control over the material covered have control over the reaction of the audience and therefore shape their mind-set.²⁴⁵ The strategic use of the media and the influence it has either on political agendas or social and cultural attitudes is replicated in *Home Fire* as being what Aneeka aimed for, to influence the public opinion and the Home Secretary in the favour of repatriating the body of her brother to the UK. Throughout the novel, it is made clear that Aneeka has nothing of a terrorist, her actions were driven by outrage and anger towards her country for its absolutist perspective of radicalisation and for not accepting Pervaiz back. The media coverage of the event went

²⁴¹ Peter R. Newman, *Old And New Terrorism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011) p. 136.

²⁴² Newman, p. 136.

²⁴³ Borradori, p xiii.

²⁴⁴ Borradori, p 108.

²⁴⁵ Terrorism and the media, 16.

international, different television channels focused their coverage on the story of Aneeka providing it with the necessary attention that it requires to achieve the level of the spectacular. The image of Aneeka and the body of her brother and the mise-en-scene is the image that stays in the minds of the audience and indeed the image, in some sort, is combined with reality. Aneeka transcends from being a character in the novel to being a hero that carries a voice that represents a marginalised and unheard voice. Aneeka's voice is therefore a reminder that there is a fundamental problematic within the general perception of terrorism that is totally dependent on the binary position of Us vs Them and the notion that the enemy is always over there. Because of this conception, there is no space for other perceptions and perspective that will not fit within it, such as the victims of terrorism that are not included within the mainstream idea. The idea is not to stop condemning the criminal, when necessary, but rather to reconsider the way these situations are formulated, where the possible victim of radicalisation is fast to be condemned. *Home Fire* is therefore concerned 'with which voices we are willing to listen to, asking who can be heard?'²⁴⁶

The reunification of Aneeka and Pervaiz has, as the Home Secretary puts it, 'nothing accidental in any of it', indeed, the power of the media is fully invested to deliver the iconography of suffering that she has been through. Media spectacle as a medium of communication contains numerous subordinate symbols that convey the suffering of loss and the feelings of anger and disappointment towards the British government. On the significance of the image in reflecting an existing reality or event, Derrida maintains that 'the role of the image is highly ambiguous. For at the same time, they exalt the event, they also take it hostage. They serve to multiply it to infinity and, at the same time, they are a diversion and a neutralization.'²⁴⁷ The image of Aneeka and her dead brother and the surrounding scenery is multiplied to infinity through the live airing, however, it is also confined by the news coverage in Britain and the comments of the British government, specifically the Home Secretary that keep tracing back their

²⁴⁶ Rutkowska, p. 12.

²⁴⁷ Baudrillard, Jean, Chris Turner, *The Spirit Of Terrorism*, new edition, trans by Chris Turner, p. 27.

father's background as a terrorist. The spectacle watched through the tv transports the voice of Aneeka to a worldwide audience, it spoke louder and reached more people and yet the outcome did not change in the end, Pervaiz was not repatriated, and Aneeka and Eamon died. Numerous are the voices that are ignored and went unheard because they carried different perspectives that did not fit within the 'us vs them' dichotomy of terrorism. Shamsie reminds us through the spectacle 'of our own passive viewing of terror.'²⁴⁸ The blood red petals against the white head cover, the park railings looking like prison railings against the open space of the park, the silence of Aneeka against her howling, the ice against the sun, all these symbols are part of the spectacle that convey the multidimensional character of the Pasha story. They are trapped between two perspectives; their voice is desperate to destroy the fundamental and monologic conceptions of terrorism which use the media for the promotion and creation of virtual realities.

After the message of Eamonn to his father and that of Aneeka to the Home Secretary, all the media and the public opinion turned to the story of the Pashas. The video-taped message and the live broadcasted address both aimed at presenting the other image behind the 'Pasha terrorist family'. Therefore, their voice succeeded in stirring the discussion about the identity of Pervaiz and his family. Eamonn through his message that was widely shared through social media, aimed at accrediting the actions of Aneeka not as the accomplice sister of a terrorist trying to bring him back to the UK, but as the loving angry sister who wants to bury her brother next to their mother. In that case, the media, including social media, are used to influence the public opinion. Similarly, Karamat Lone used his influence to keep his son's message from being accessed by media companies. Having the ability to filter media coverage and the power to influence media content is compared to having bullets which you must learn to fire. The Home Secretary on his way to the summit of British Politics 'thought he had mastered the art of directing the fire.'²⁴⁹ The media are a double-bladed knife that can

²⁴⁸ Wiess, p. 258.

²⁴⁹ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 215.

cut on both sides. During the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the media were ‘part of the deadly game of contemporary politics’,²⁵⁰ it was used by Al Qaeda, and later other terrorist organisations, to create terror mega spectacles that would attract global attention to certain causes and therefore convey and achieve their political objectives. The control over the media and their use determines the meaning of terrorism and its spreading to global audiences and the voices that rise as opposed to those that are silenced. In our contemporary world, the media are the carrier of voices, it is their echoing instrument but also the annihilating enemy of minor voices.

Contrary to the voice of Aneeka and Pervaiz that are minority voices and therefore have less impact, the Home Secretary has a potent voice and a strong political authority. He uses the influence of his authority to direct the media agenda and stress the messages his voice carries to deter that the Pasha twins. The news media are indeed the principal conduit of information,²⁵¹ therefore it is used to impress and solicit the audience to virtually take part in the act,²⁵² a strategy that Karamat Lone has invested throughout interviews he had with news companies. He ensures to keep the notion of Pervaiz as ‘the enemy of Britain’ on the surface and within the main headlines as a way of gaining the support of his audience and at the same time justify his decision to reject the repatriation of Pervaiz and stripping Aneeka of her British citizenship. Moreover, by doing so, he establishes a parallel between the virtual and the real that become one englobing entity rather than two different perceptions of the same reality. Because reports that are kept at the top of media news have more influence and therefore are more likely to affect the public opinion, Karamat Lone aims to establish the Pasha family as the enemy of Britain by referring to the father, the son and the daughter as terrorists who turned their back to Britain. His voice becomes an instrument of authority which fulfils its purpose ‘only when what it says corresponds to what the masses feel, then they accept it, take it, rely on it to further their cause.’²⁵³ Karamat does simply and

²⁵⁰ Kellner, p. 43.

²⁵¹ Hoffman, p. 174.

²⁵² Hoffman, p. 173

²⁵³ Fanon, p. 7.

exactly that, he disseminates a voice that corresponds to the British audience and the dominant perspective.

The narrative contains what looks like newspaper articles that represent different viewpoints concerning the reaction of Aneeka to the death of her brother. The headlines in the order presented in the narrative read the following “**SHATTERED AND HORRIFIED’: SISTER OF PERVAIZ PASHA SPEAKS**”, “**HOW MANY PASHAS WILL IT TAKE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO WAKE UP**” and last “**HOJABI! PERVY PASHA’S TWIN SISTER ENGINEERED SEX TRYSTS WITH HOME SECRETARY’S SON**”. The inclusion of news articles excerpts and tweets represents different positions vis-s-vis Aneeka’s reaction and the background of the family in relation to Islamic Fundamentalism. The use of tweets and hashtags is aimed at diversifying and widening the spectrum of understanding of radicalisation and Islamism. The excerpts also serve as a way of showing the different directions and possibilities that surround terrorism. Yet the titles provide a single sided perception that goes hand in hand with Karamat’s strategy to demonise Aneeka and her brother. Among the main issues with media coverage, although it is now more difficult to maintain with the widespread of social media, is the censorship and filtration of the news before they reach the audience. The Home Secretary was aware that Pervaiz was trying to return to the UK after he was disillusioned with the so-called Islamic Caliphate. Aneeka did transfer the information however, none of that was included in the news, there is always an obscured side of the story. The use of media to achieve specific goals fulfils the propagandist function of terrorism. Chomsky maintains that propagandist approach to terrorism makes of the latter ‘a weapon to be exploited in the service of some system of power.’²⁵⁴ Karamat Lone concentrates his efforts on ensuring the media coverage of the Pasha family portrays them as the enemies of Britain. In Eamonn’s recorded message, he voiced the struggle of Aneeka, her loss, and her anger as well as Pervaiz’s attempt to escape ISIS which obviously goes against the propaganda started by the media and Karamat. His comment ‘oh don’t, son, don’t make him out to be a hero, they

²⁵⁴ Alexander George, *Western State Terrorism* (Cambridge: Polity Pr., 1991) p. 12.

will never forgive you that²⁵⁵ reflects his realisation that the message does not work in favour of his political career as Home Secretary. Moreover, it does not fit the desired perspective of keeping the Pasha's within the image of the terrorists. In fact, *Home Fire*'s final scene 'mimics the way most of us engage with terror, we tend to see acts of terrorism or "the war on terror" at as distance mediated by a screen or a photograph.'²⁵⁶ Our dependence on the photograph to determine our perception is already a compromised situation as the voices we hear and the images we see are only a reflection of the dominant perspective. Karamat is therefore, afraid of the 'the threat of the good example,'²⁵⁷ that is, he was anxious about the effect that the contradiction between his condemnation and the attempt of his son to approve the action of Aneeka and the innocence of Parvaiz. Undoubtedly, profiling Pervaiz and Aneeka as terrorist, be it true or not, assures the maintenance of his political position, the satisfaction of his supporters and the neutralization of his opponents, and that's when terrorism becomes a weapon that serves the safeguarding of power relations and legitimization of political agendas and the survival of overriding perspectives.

As I have mentioned before media is a double-edged weapon, it is used to condemn acts of violence and to disseminate them as well. The promotion of terrorism serves the interests of governments as it provides them with the necessary justification for their own acts of violence that they refer to as "retaliation" or "defence". From the position of terrorist organizations, in the traditional sense, media coverage is vital to support their agendas and attract young people to their causes. Therefore, there is a 'public linkage between terrorist attacks and a seemingly noble cause served to spin the violence favourably and thereby justify it.'²⁵⁸ The media are used to construct an enemy of the nation that threatens national culture and identity in the aim of gaining the support of people through calling at unification under one perspective. In the process of creating an evil enemy, political and media agendas focus on radicalization and its effects.

²⁵⁵ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 244.

²⁵⁶ Weiss, p. 258.

²⁵⁷ The culture of terrorism, p. 217

²⁵⁸ Martin, Gus, *Understanding terrorism: Challenges, perspectives, and issues*. (Sage Publication, 2006) p.380.

However, as it is the case with terrorism is general, the fire burns only on one side, the element of ambiguity is essential for the promotion of the evil and alien character of the “terrorist”. Radicalization is commonly interpreted as the process of adopting extremist ideas that may lead to violent attacks. The term was ‘appropriated by the media and politicians as a descriptive term to explain how and why Muslims participated in violence against the West, ostensibly in the name of their religion’,²⁵⁹ there is nonetheless a central problematic to this conception which lies in the absence of consideration of the different conditions that accompany the process of radicalization. Rutkowska argues that ‘Shamsie is asking the reader to pay attention to the grievances that lie beneath radicalisation.’²⁶⁰ After 9/11, radicalization dominated headlines and the dangers of home-grown terrorist were at the centre of concerns of policy makers. Al Qaeda ideology was the inspiring element and, with the easily accessed material through the internet and overseas personal and family ties, the threat grows more significant. Radicalization, like media manipulation, is an intricate and deceptive process which aims at promoting certain agendas. As is the case with terrorism, radicalization is promoted by both terrorist organization and official governments which develop anti-radicalization procedures. Shamsie’s *Home Fire* offers an exploration of the functioning of radicalization through the character of Pervaiz and how he was convinced and deceived to join ISIS and the influence of family ties in his recruitment.

Pervaiz joins ISIS in Raqqa, Syria after his recruiter Farooq has played on the cord of fatherly pride and sense of belonging. After Isma decided to go the United States to study a PhD, and Aneeka wanting to pursue her degree in Law and have a life of her own, Pervaiz suddenly felt left out and realised ‘it was time for all three of them to leave their home.’²⁶¹ The home fire had either to be burned down or let to burn the whole house. And that is when the misery and tragedy of the Pasha family took another turn

²⁵⁹ Jonathan Githens-Mazer, *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de science politique*, Vol. 33, No. 5 (November, 2012), pp. 556-567, p 557.

²⁶⁰ Rutkowska, p.

²⁶¹ Shamsie, *Home fire*, p 116.

after the affair of their father. Radicalisation has a stable agenda, that of recruiting militants for extremist actions, ‘it tends to involve a combination behavioural traits, structural grievances, politicised by a unifying ideology or a rallying cause that encourages a process of “de-pluralisation”.’²⁶² The process of radicalisation indeed adopts strategies that are subject specific that is, the way the prospect militants are approached is designed according to their unique psychological state and the level of their social integrity within their social environment as well as their personal background. On another level, the recruitment process also follows the larger, political and social frames that may or may not affect the radicalisation process. The European Institute of Peace notes the importance of the motivational factors that facilitate radicalization. Mia Bloom lists diverse motivations that are directly linked to suicide terrorism but are also facilitators of radicalisation. Among these are personal significance and social duty. Indeed, radicals who undertake the recruitment do consider the possible backgrounds of their subjects and the kind of motivation that would facilitate their process the most. Farooq, the recruiter in Shamsie’s narrative is from the same neighbourhood as Pervaiz and had gathered information about him and his family. He uses that background, and specifically his vulnerable family background, and acts upon it.

Home Fire voices a failed kinship that results in radicalisation, ‘Pervaiz is not listened to by his two sisters and instead Farooq lends a sympathetic ear outside the family.’²⁶³ Naturally Pervaiz is attracted to the one who listens and recognises the existence of his voice. Right from the first encounter between Farooq and Pervaiz, the image of the protector is being constructed as the former removes the splinter from Pervaiz’s hand. The conversation that followed between the two already sets off Pervaiz in a spiral of questions about who he is and what Farooq’s expression ‘he didn’t realise who you were’²⁶⁴ meant. The expression establishes personal quest and self-realization

²⁶² Understanding radicalization, European Institute of Peace, Available from <http://www.eip.org/en/news-events/eip-explainer-understanding-radicalisation>.

²⁶³ Chambers, p. 16.

²⁶⁴ Shamsie, *Home fire*, 123.

as the motivation of Pervaiz as well as the strategy that Farooq is to use to attract and convince him to join the media section of ISIS. The interrelation of radicalization with self-realization lies as the motivation behind the fascination of Pervaiz with his recruiter. The very simple fact of having a secret he could keep from his sisters gave him the satisfaction of being independent and most importantly having a voice that did not matter before. At the psychological level, self-esteem and self-actualization is one of the most significant quests of human beings.²⁶⁵ Therefore, in the course of achieving that ultimate aim, undertaking an important job is one way of realising the self. After numerous conversations with Farooq, Pervaiz realizes that the only way for him to become a man of courage is to undertake a similar path to that of his father.

Sageman asserts that motivation behind becoming a jihadi tends to be more psychological and personal than religious.²⁶⁶ Farooq focuses mostly on constructing the image of the father hero to attract Pervaiz' attention rather than using religious argument. Pervaiz would listen to 'those stories of his father [...] not a footloose boy or feckless husband, but a man of courage who fought injustice, saw beyond the national boundaries, kept his comrades' spirits up through times of darkness [...] The father every son wishes he had,'²⁶⁷ all of which were fascinating stories that he would love to shout to the rest of the world, to his sisters that have told him to always say 'I never knew my father'²⁶⁸ but yet he kept it as his 'little beautiful secret'.²⁶⁹ Although he did say to Farooq that he never had him as a father, he was still, in a way, proud of that image of his father. The echoing voice of Farooq and the image it creates of his father produce an imaginary bond between the father and the son. The profile of the father as a man of great actions is part of Farooq's discourse and lesson on how to be a man. A discourse that aims at getting Pervaiz to go to Raqqa and take part within the media section of ISIS. Farooq is clearly aware of the vulnerabilities of Pervaiz and preys on

²⁶⁵ Kruglanski, A. W., Chen, X., Dechesne, M., Fishman, S. and Orehek, E. (2009), 'Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers' Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance' *Political Psychology*, 30: pp. 331-357.

²⁶⁶ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2011),

²⁶⁷ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 128.

²⁶⁸ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, 125.

²⁶⁹ Shamsie, *Home Fire* 126.

them through persuasion and manipulation. He is well aware that Pervaiz lacks confidence and self-esteem. Moreover, he understands that his voice is lost in the vacuum of his home, therefore he uses it to his advantage by concentrating on creating a feeling of masculinity, power and independence. He therefore starts to alienate him from his sisters who ‘tried to keep [...] [him] a child’.²⁷⁰ A strategy which, without a doubt, had a strong impact on the thinking of Pervaiz who liked the idea of being the man of the house.

Home Fire, develops the idea of personal significance in relation to the sense of belonging to a home. With Isma moving to the US, the twins Pervaiz and Aneeka will move out of their house to live with their aunt, he felt as if he lost the only place he belongs to. There is a remarkable use of the meaning of ‘home’, from the one side there is the family home that is being shattered, and from the other side comes brother Farooq who offers his house as an alternative place that provides the feeling of a home. The expression ‘make yourself at home. You are at home.’²⁷¹ creates a feeling that comes to replace the lost feeling of belonging and therefore personal significance. The feeling of home that Parvaiz feels with his recruiter rises in parallel with the feeling of the burning down of his house. The novel’s title *Home Fire* resonates with the Parvaiz’s feeling of estrangement both in relation to his family and country. As a result of his recruitment for ISIS. Radicalising Pervaiz was carried structured around the feeling of belonging, sense of achievement and most importantly, personal significance. All of which are motivations related to his father. Pervaiz felt it was an obligation because he belongs to his father, there was a need for him to act in a way that suits the heroic image that his recruiter created for him. By doing so, his life would be significant and it would not be ‘a nightmare ending up as “a speck of insignificant dust in an uncaring universe”’.²⁷² The changes that occurred in the life of Pervaiz created a feeling that the small voice he had was condemned to be unheard and go wasted. Farooq has saved his voice from

²⁷⁰ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 130.

²⁷¹ Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 134.

²⁷² Kruglanski, A. W., Chen, X., Dechesne, M., Fishman, S. and Orehek, E. (2009), Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers' Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance. *Political Psychology*, 30: 331-357. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00698.x.

being forgotten.

Because Pervaiz has always lived with his sisters and more importantly, his twin, he has always had the feeling of security because they belonged with each other. But now the home fire is burning down, he had the sensation that Aneeka ‘was unlinking the chains that held them together casting him into the darkness without the accompanying sound of her heartbeat for the first time.’²⁷³ The terror and fear of separation was haunting him, everything around him seemed to be a sign of separation and self-loss, even the sound of a ring on a metal handrail reminded him of unlinking chains. The silence that came with the absence of his sisters’ voices scared him. It made him feel even more alone, less heard, his voiced disappeared within the silence, he was left behind. The silence has taken him straight to the hand of his recruiter, he felt closer to that stranger that he felt more and more estranged the further he got from Farooq’s flat. The latter has managed to make him feel more at home away from his sisters by targeting his deepest fears, that of alienation, sense of loss and failure in being the man his father was, or at least the image of his father as described by Farooq. Not being heard is a dangerous condition as it keeps perceptions ambiguous, because there are aspects that are absent from the conversation of understanding terrorism and therefore engenders lack of clarity and unknown perspectives. The condemnation of Pervaiz and Aneeka as terrorist without consideration of the underlying circumstances engenders limited understanding of that part of terrorism. Eliminating elements that are a fundamental part of terrorism because they do not fit within the dominant perspective of the definition of terrorism does not in any case cancel their reality. Every voice, no matter how unfitting it is, should be taken into account. The dichotomy that has been framed in *Antigone*, ‘whoever isn’t for us/ is against us’²⁷⁴ echoes with G. W. Bushe’s famous statement that has defined the way we understand terrorism ‘you’re either with us or you’re with the terrorist.’ This statement jeopardises the many voices that do not fit within the binary categorisation of the terrorism like Aneeka’s and Pervaiz’s voices

²⁷³ Shamsie, *Home fire*, p. 139.

²⁷⁴ Seamus Heaney, *The Burial of Thebes*, version of *Antigone*.

and positions. Shamsie's *Home Fire* with its silent ending, with no interpretation or explanations, incites us to look beyond the dominant perspective. Because 'they [authors] would be no more than mere voices, unintelligible words carried through empty space, if we, all of us, did not take part in their protest against the silence and read.'²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ Mengiste, p. 90.

Conclusion

Hoffman maintains that:

terrorism in its original context was first popularised during the French Revolution. In contrast to its contemporary usage, at that time, terrorism has a decidedly positive connotations [...] was closely associated with the ideals of virtue and democracy [...] the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, inevitable redefined terrorism yet again.²⁷⁶

The meaning of terrorism has changed throughout the years, it certainly does not carry around the exact same connotations. However, the other important phenomenon to note is the perspectival approach that is considered when exploring the meanings of terrorism in the different contexts and the power relations that are in place and that play a significant role in determining the meanings of terrorism. The power and authority systems that were and still are in place today, have certainly played a dramatic role in the current understanding of terrorism, Therefore, although 9/11 did indeed impact the understanding and definitions of terrorism, it did not alter its core modes of operation as much as the power holders have manipulated its definition using the fear that resulted from the Twin Towers attacks.

The definition of terrorism and connotation change because the explanatory perspective that is adopted is totally different. After 9/11 terrorism was marked by a significant focus on the binary formulation of Us vs them and good vs evil, in the sense that, only the perception of the immediate victims is taken into consideration as the pillar of the definition of terrorism. Other perspectives are marginalised because they do not serve the authority and monopoly of the US, that used 9/11 to shape the world's understanding of terrorism according to its political agendas and ideological standpoint. Therefore, the definitions of terrorism that are in circulation at the present time have as their core formulation the duality of us the victims and them the eternal criminals, regardless of any possible context or underlying reasoning.

²⁷⁶ Hoffman, p. 39.

Hoffman continues the argue that ‘terrorism is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotation that is regularly applied to once enemy and opponents,’²⁷⁷ the term terrorism then is appropriated for a specific purpose and is loaded with a wide range of negative implications that follows a determined perspective and that does not include divergent or opposing possible meanings. Jenkins asserts that ‘some governments are prone to label as terrorism all violent acts committed by their political opponents, while anti-government extremists frequently claim to be the victims of government terror.’²⁷⁸ Clearly, the definition of terrorism cannot rely on one perspective as it does not represent all the parties and the perceptions that exist within the paradigm of terrorism. The latter is perceived differently from every standpoint, therefore, if we are willing to at least try to reach a unifying definition, inclusion and multiple perspectives are indispensable.

In fact, ‘terrorism suffers from “borders” and “membership” problems. Where does terrorism stop and other forms of political violence begin.’²⁷⁹ Due to the absence of a clear and functional definition, terrorism is target to all sorts of manipulation that makes of a justification for even more violence and terror under the moto of retaliation and self-defence. The purpose of the study has been to attempt to explore and analyse the way literary production could play a role in elucidating the ambiguities that dominate terrorism definition through exploring multiple perspectives and perception in their literary form. The four selected texts have different approaches to the subject of terrorism and therefore offer a wide range of perceptions within varying contexts.

Chapter one focused on the study of terrorism as represented in Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*, through the concepts of covert and overt plotting as a way of elucidating the multiple layers that are inherent to terrorism and the complexities that surround its modes of operations. The double layered narrative illustrates that the meaning of terrorism shifts when we discover the reality of the bomb plan, being an operation of state terrorism rather than revolutionary violence, which brings us to the next notion of

²⁷⁷ Hoffman, p. 89.

²⁷⁸ Jenkins, p. 1.

²⁷⁹ Weinberg, p. 779.

delayed decoding. The latter suggests that other meanings and connotation can be associated with terrorism when new ways of thinking and material are introduced to the scene of political violence. The role played by the media in creating terror spectacles is stressed as a medium of directing the audience's perception of acts of violence. *The Secret Agent* is rich with suggestions and layers that form different connotation to the concept of terrorism.

The second chapter has focused on exploring the notions of disguise and double identities as a representation of the changing faces of terrorism due to the different viewpoints through which we observe the 'terrorist'. As soon as a mask is put on, a new identity appears and comes with it a new vision that totally divergent. The masks speak to the wider complications within the definition of terrorism and the lack of perspectives. Chesterton, through the characters of *The Man Who Was Thursday*, draws a picture that looks different from every standpoint, the perception we get, either a detective in disguise or an anarchist, depends on the perspective we face. Chesterton narrative reveals that different faces hide different persons, what we see depends on what is shown to us. Defining terrorism fails because not every face is considered or at least recognised. The 9/11 context means that we have very limited perspectives to choose from, it is either Us or them.

Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* dives into the complex dilemma of being both the criminal on the victim or in fact none. Changez experiences an identity crisis that is triggered but the 9/11 attacks. He moves from being a global citizen whose choices are unlimited to being trapped within a society that sees his as a suspect terrorist. The shift of the paradigm from a global context to an extremely nationalist one is accompanied by a dramatic change of perception on both sides, Changez does not feel at home in the US anymore, and the US citizens do not recognise him as one of them. Changez's confusion as to how to react to 9/11 suggests the ambiguity of the meaning of terrorism. The definition of terrorism in fact does not consider the cases that are outside of the binary formulation of good vs evil, what if you are at a crossroad between the two, a space where the perceptions are different and justified.

The final chapter has been about exploring the lost voices of terrorism and the dominant powers that shape our perception of political violence and what it should mean. Shamsie, through the five main narrative voices of *Home Fire* resists the duality that is at the heart of the terrorism definition. The narrative voices the different perceptions that are marginalised and doomed evil without actual consideration of what they stand for. Home Fire illustrates the power of politics over the meaning of terrorism but most importantly its ability to influence the public opinion and direct their perception of political violence and align it with the mainstream and dominant definition of what terrorism always is.

The problematic of defining terrorism has significantly amplified since 9/11, it is trapped within the paradigm brought about by the atmosphere of fear and manipulation of the term to fulfil political agendas and preserve political interests. The unidirectional formulation of Us vs them only deepens the ambiguities of terrorism and make the achievement of a useful definition even more difficult. Terrorism as a concept is inherently complex because it is intertwined with notions of gender, nation-state, identity, self-defence, radicalisation and peace, it cannot be reduced to a binary formulation that condemns other voices only because they do not fit within the dominant perspective.

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