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Reading Empire: (Counter)Narratives of 9/11

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READING EMPIRE: (COUNTER)NARRATIVES OF 9/11

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My dissertation aims to provide an analysis of how select American and Pakistani writers in their fiction, since the fateful day in September 2001, have taken to investigate and analyze the tragedy within the contemporary and historical backdrop of US's hegemonic and imperial role in world politics. Hence, the impulse is to contextualize the tragedy within the broader framework of history—a history that is largely ignored in the dominant discourses. The narratives, thus written, are resistant to the dominant ideologies and discourses of neoliberalism, and globalization which tend to erase the past and universalize the present. My dissertation argues for the need for a postcolonial framework to discuss the various social, economic, and political factors incumbent for a reading and an understanding of the September 11, 2001 tragedy and the subsequent events.

September 11 has been a landmark in not only US history but also world history and has, therefore, inspired a spate of fictional work. While the works of the writers from the heart of the empire draw out the confusion, the trauma and the profound sense of tragedy, only few have really contemplated larger issues. The American novels chosen in this study are two of the earliest responses to 9/11, and they stand apart from other 9/11 novels in that while articulating the trauma and the tragedy, they are able to move beyond a mere aestheticization of the event and are suggesting, if only in a limited way, an introspective and critical look into the happenings of September 11. Furthermore, these texts stand as representative works of post-9/11 fiction coming from within the United

States because of the critical acclaim they have won. In contrast, the Pakistani writers I select here hold a broader perspective. Living at the margins of the empire as they do, they are not only exposed to trauma and loss, but such tragedies are also an everyday reality for them. Their lives are affected by the events that take place not only locally but internationally as well. All the Pakistani writers in this selection have also spent a considerable time living either in the UK or the US. This allows them a unique insight into both the cultures and they are able to analyze the events of 9/11 within an international context, something which the critics lament, the American writers have not been able to do.

My project argues for the need to study 9/11 within the postcolonial context. 9/11 needs to be read, as the novels in my selection suggest, not as the cause of newer forms of violence but as a consequence of them. Finally, my study compares ways in which writers from both the centre and the outpost of empire are bound together by a similar impulse of resistance to the imperial practices and discourses.

The texts chosen for the study include Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), *Falling Man* (2007) by Don DeLillo, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, Faryal Ali Gohar's *No Space For Further Burials* (2007) and *Burnt Shadows* (2009) by Kamila Shamsie.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

To plunder, to slaughter, to steal, these things they misname empire; and where they make a wilderness, they call it peace.---Tacitus

My dissertation aims to provide an analysis of how select American and Pakistani writers in their fiction, since the fateful day in September 2001, have taken to investigate and analyze the tragedy within the contemporary and historical backdrop of US's hegemonic and imperial role in world politics. Hence, the impulse is to contextualize the tragedy within the broader framework of history—a history that is largely ignored in the dominant discourses. The narratives, thus written, are resistant to the dominant ideologies of neoliberalism which tend to erase the past and universalize the present. My dissertation argues for the need for a postcolonial framework to discuss the various social, economic and political factors incumbent for a reading and an understanding of the September 11, 2001 tragedy and the subsequent events.

The end of the Cold War has resulted in an increasingly unipolar world. Consequently, the power status enjoyed by the only superpower in the world, United States, and its increasingly hegemonic role in the world affairs, have given further credence to the idea of its imperialistic goals around the world. Much has been said and written over the years on US's imperial role as it conquered and annexed territories in the West, and subsequently around the world. The socio-political and economic discourses have been especially critical of this unstated agenda of "US empire". However, it was not until 9/11, and the subsequent wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, that the concept of the "US empire" gained a new immediacy and writers from both sides of the globe, North and South, are increasingly making it a subject of study. The concept of empire as it was

during the Roman and the British may no longer be applicable in its original form, yet the legacies these empires have left behind are being reinvented to achieve, maintain and sustain a new empire, albeit a 'shadow empire'. The conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer, representing the voice of many other commentators notes, "People are now coming out of the closet on the word empire" (qtd. in Kaplan 3).

Writers across the globe are increasingly engaging with the issue as there is an emerging consciousness of the need for resistance to empire and its machinations that are on the rise since 9/11. Any inquiry into a reading and understanding of the tragedy inevitably leads us to a reading of the US empire itself. Therefore, the dissertation aims to point out the various continuities of old colonial system found in the newer imperial practices, perhaps, with even more intensity.

September 11 has been a landmark in not only US history but also world history and has therefore, inspired a spate of fictional work. While the works of the writers writing from the heart of the empire draw out the confusion, the trauma and a profound sense of tragedy, only a few have really contemplated larger issues involved in it. American fiction and poetry in particular has quite understandably been marked by an existential angst. The works chosen in this study stand apart from others in that while articulating the trauma and the tragedy they are able to move beyond a mere aestheticization of the tragedy and are suggesting, if only in a limited way, an introspective and critical look into the happenings of September 11. Also, they are some of the earliest literary responses, and garnered immense popularity as soon as they came out. In contrast, the Pakistani writers I select here hold a broader perspective. Living at the margins of the empire as they do, they are not only exposed to trauma and loss, but

such tragedies are also an everyday reality for them. Their lives are affected by events that take place not only locally but internationally as well. All the Pakistani writers in this selection have also spent a considerable time living either in the UK or the US. This allows them a unique insight into both the cultures and they are able to analyze the events of 9/11 within an international context, something which the critics lament, the American writers have not been able to do.

Unlike the previous empires, United States has never claimed itself to be one, which is why its existence can be better understood in comparison with other empires. My dissertation maps this empire through the economic, historical and political implications of its neoliberal/capitalist/imperial agenda, its imperialistic interventions around the world and the implications of its hegemonic, capitalist power. The dissertation looks at how individual and collective subjectivities are formed and re-formed under imperial formations of the global capitalist system. It looks at how imperialism today is mainly responsible for a new wave of transnational violence and leads to events like September 11, 2001. This compels us to contextualizes the US empire within the broader framework of history, a history which is either ignored or simply repressed. The study, then, focuses on a new model of global governance, or in other words, on the contemporary imperial practices which have been on the rise since September 11, 2001. Finally, there is a need to reframe the study of 9/11within a postcolonial framework. 9/11 needs to be read not as the cause of newer forms of violence but as a consequence of them.

The global capitalist system is synonymous with imperialism. According to critics, such as Robert Young and Ania Loomba[1], imperialism is a capitalist colonialism. Whereas colonialism surely involves exploitation of the resources and labor of the colonized land, it is not an ideological settlement. On the other hand, imperialism entails both, the ideological basis and the manipulation of land, labor and resources of the subjugated land. Thus, Young rightly suggests that imperialism is the ideology and colonialism is its practice (25). The end of the Cold War and the fall of USSR have allowed the United States of America to emerge as the leader of the Western capitalist world. The capitalist system governed by the neoliberal ideology helps United States establish its hegemony over the rest of the world not only in economic but also in political and social spheres. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* especially explore this realm.

The two novels, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Falling Man* are interesting companion pieces for the study of how subjectivities are constituted under the global capitalist system. These very subjectivities are then reconstituted in trauma and through resistance to the neoliberal ideologies and practices. Hence, the "falling man" and "the reluctant fundamentalist". Through an exploration of inter- and intra-class relations of the characters in these novel, I will compare the personal and social crises brought about by 9/11. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* portrays the personal conflicts of Changez and Erica, the two main characters in the novel, that ensue after 9/11. Changez who is all the set on the path to great personal success in the corporate world is extremely disturbed by the changes in the socio-political scenario after 9/11 and finds it impossible to continue with

[1] See Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 1998.
Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Blackwell, 2001

his career as a "janissary" (152) of the capitalist system. Similarly, Erica with whom he is romantically involved but who is still in love with her dead lover Chris is overcome by a profound sense of nostalgia that makes it to difficult for her to stay focused in the present. As she tries to relive her relationship with Chris through Changez, she is struck by the impossibility of the task. These personal conflicts are exposed in the novel as connected to larger political and socio-economic forces of imperialism and capitalism. The characters' dilemmas and their relationship with each other are allegorical representations of geopolitical conflicts at this historical juncture of the capitalist-imperialist world-system.

Furthermore, it has been argued that the global capitalist system constantly needs to constructs its enemies in order to perpetuate itself and to justify its division of labor and exploitation of the resources. The two popular quotes from former president George W. Bush's address to the American nation on September 20, 2001, "Why do they hate us?" and "They hate our freedoms. . . ." (*Selected Speeches* 68) have become a part of American parlance and have regenerated the twin discourses of Orientalism and Occidentalism. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Falling Man* articulate the way these discourses are constructed and popularized. For example, Nina and her boyfriend Martin's conversations in *Falling Man*, show Nina's inability to see the logic of Martin's arguments that the economic factors, and not religious motivations, might be responsible for the attacks, show how she has been influenced by the ideologies and discourses of the empire which tend to present the world in terms of a Manichean allegory where the 'Other' always presents the dark side. History of empires proves that empires have always made use of such rhetoric in order to validate themselves. Also, DeLillo's

characterization of Hammad shows a similar lack of understanding of subjectivities formed under the violence stemming from imperialism, and DeLillo gives in to the popular stereotypes of the "Other".

Post-9/11 fiction is also marked by its persistent engagement with history and what Toni Morrison calls "rememory". The study focuses on how history and memory in the post-9/11 narratives serve as sites of resistance. One of the ways in which history is a site of resistance is the way in which public and private lives are shown to be tied up. Whereas, most critiques of post-9/11 writing tend to focus on the personal and largely ignore the political, this dissertation aims to resist this by bringing the political into focus. Also, history is a trope in these novels as it challenges the dominant narratives of the past. In doing so, it is reclaiming a past that has been denied representation. Representation of this alternative history is a bid to reclaim the right to re-politicize the history of the dispossessed. For example, as we read of Oskar Schell's grandparents who are survivors of Dresden bombing by the US and the UK during the Second World War in *Extremely Loud, Incredibly Close* and Hiroko, survivor of Hiroshima atomic bombing in *Burnt Shadows,* we become aware of how their lives have been altered by the interventions of the empire. Foregrounding the stories of these two characters, as other characters in the two novels try to come to terms with their losses in the wake of 9/11, is to suggest not only a parallel between these incidents, but is also to allude to the fact that the seeds of the tragedy of 9/11 perhaps have been sown much earlier than the dominant narratives would have us believe.

Engaging critically with history is also what Toni Morrison calls "rememory". Rememory as a literary trope acts counter-intuitively to the hegemonic narratives of the

past. Morrison uses the trope repeatedly in her novels but never theorizes it outside of them. Therefore, different writers have used the concept in their unique way. Rememory, therefore, may be defined as a process of resurrecting the past that privileges neglected and obscure perspectives. Rememory as a trope becomes an effective means of digging up history itself.

Oskar's grandfather, in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close,* traumatized by the loss of his fiancée, has lost his voice. In order to break his silence, to recover himself, and to negotiate a future, he needs to reclaim the repressed history. Allegorically, this silence is suggestive of silenced histories of oppression and violence. So just as it is important for Oskar's grandfather to 'rememory' his past, it is equally important for the nations to engage with their own histories. As the characters rememory the past, the histories of nations through the victims of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing are also represented. The parallel drawn between the victims of 9/11 and the victims of Dresden bombing as well of Hiroshima and Nagasaki emphasizes the multidirectional links of these tragedies. As Michael Rothberg in his seminal work *Multidirectional Memory* explains how Holocaust memories enable an understanding and voicing of other stories of oppression and abuse, similarly the events of 9/11, I contend, enable an articulation of occluded histories of US violence around the world .

The events subsequent to 9/11 have also given rise to a model of global governance that has been on the rise since the fateful day and to which Achille Mbembe refers to as "necropolitics" in his 2003 article of the same name. The article postulates that the ultimate expression of sovereignty lies in the power to dictate who may live and who may die (11). Drawing upon the Foucauldian notion of biopower, which he

summarizes as “that domain of life over which power has taken control” (12), Mbembe claims that the concept of biopower cannot adequately analyze the contemporary practices of political violence and warfare which aim specifically at the annihilation of the enemy (17). He equates politics with war and defines necropolitics as “contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death” (39). Elaborating it further he states, that necropolitics helps analyze the deployment of weapons of mass destruction, and the creation of what he calls the “death worlds” and the “living dead” (40).

Mbembe also argues that necropolitics “profoundly reconfigure[s] the relations among “resistance, sacrifice, and terror”(39). Thus, Mbembe’s notion of necropolitics is especially relevant to this study as it not only helps understand the various characteristics of necropolitical violence employed by the imperial power but also allows us newer perspectives into acts of resistance. Furthermore, I would like argue that Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics does not take into account the necropolitics of gendered bodies. Women and children are always the most vulnerable in the society, and even though necropolitics does not allow much agency to all in general, women and children are its most helpless victims.

Concomitant to necropolitics is the idea of “state of exception” for which Mbembe refers to Giorgio Agamben. According to Mbembe one of the ways in which sovereignty, as defined above, is ensured is through imposing a “state of exception” and a “state of siege”. This state of exception Agamben refers to is a condition in which civil rights, habeas corpus, and various other human rights are suspended as an exception owing to unusual circumstances, providing an excuse for their existence outside of law. Agamben notes that imposition of a state of exception has a long standing tradition in

Western political culture. State of exception, for Agamben, is an "inclusive exclusion" (21) as those on whom the state of exception has been imposed are at once within and outside of the juridical order. Agamben further outlines two things. First, he describes how and why state of exception discourses find validation and, second, how they are used to reduce life to 'bare life'. A "homo sacer" or "sacred human being" is one without any human agency at all.

Faryal Ali Gohar's short novel *No Space for Further Burials* is set in 2002 in Afghanistan, a year after the US invasion. The protagonist of the novel, an American medical technician, is taken prisoner in a mental asylum. The asylum represents Afghanistan in microcosm as a concentration camp site, a state under siege as their human rights have been suspended in order to validate and impose war on them. The Afghans are reduced to what Agamben calls 'bare life' or to what Mbembe refers to as the 'living dead'. The marginalized bodies of the Afghan people thus is a crucial site where sovereign power is exercised. Through a study of how the bare life is produced and to what purpose in *No Space for Further Burials*, I aim to look at the implications the global "War on Terror" has in the present world scenario, and how it reiterates the status of the US as an imperial power.

Literature Review

Novels responding to 9/11 tragedy have been in a twilight zone. It has been sixteen years since the tragedy and only a few have gone beyond a mere aestheticization of trauma. While most aestheticization of grief may serve a cathartic purpose, the sheer obsession with just the trauma, the grief and the horror has turned it into a kind of fetishism. This, however, does not in any way mean that I am denying and undermining

the tragedy or the loss. But, to this day, the way those images of planes hitting the twin towers are shown and watched repeatedly, has paralyzed the social imagination. Elleke Boehemer and Stephen Morton in their introduction to *Terror and the Postcolonial* write, "The vicarious experience of terrorism as a spectacle, which evokes shock and fear, has also preoccupied theorist such as Jean Baudrillard and Slavoj Zizek in their commentaries on "9/11", though in ways that are more involved with the aesthetics of such spectacles than otherwise (12)". They observe that Zizek's comparison of the Middle East, in his essay "Welcome to the Desert of the Real", to the desert of the Real in the film *Matrix* makes it more an aestheticization of terrorism than an examination of the determinants of terrorism as a discourse (12).

One of the possible reasons offered for such an obsession with the trauma arises from the impulse that a catastrophe, such as this, is somehow beyond representation. Hence, a rupture of history, a breakdown of language and a fascination with unspeakable grief are common themes in post-9/11 novels. But such an attitude imposes limitations on contemplating wider issues. In fact, one can argue that the ubiquity of grief and mourning often becomes complicit in suppressing the need for counter-narratives to the dominant discourses. Lucy Bond in her essay, "Compromised Critique: A Meta-critical Analysis of American Studies after 9/11" argues:

> An overreliance upon themes of trauma, and a failure to observe the means by which these discourses have been compromised by their mobilization in political rhetoric, has led to the development of an interpretative void unable to produce a much-needed counternarrative. Whilst the explicit politicization of 11 September has been widely criticized, far less remarked upon is the extent to which the

> tropes in which 9/11 is represented have been standardized across popular, political, critical and artistic narratives. Failure to challenge the basic terms of this movement has engendered a compromised interpretative field, in which frames of reference slip too easily between the public and the personal, simultaneously militarizing mourning and sentimentalizing politics. (734)

Film and literature in the first few post-9/11 years have commercialized and fetishized the memory and the trauma of 9/11. The electronically arrested moments and images of destruction, shock, fear and loss are turned into a spectacle that exerts control over the imagination, which can only evoke anger and grief but seldom introspection. Rachel Greenwald Smith finds a parallel between, neoliberalism and what she calls the "*affective hypothesis*, or the belief that literature is at its most meaningful when it represents and transmits the emotional specificity of personal experience"(1). Charting out the similarities between the two she writes:

> [The] subjective aspects of neoliberalism coincide startlingly with the assumptions underlying the affective hypothesis. While neoliberalism casts the individual as responsible for herself, the affective hypothesis casts feeling as necessarily owned and managed by individual authors, characters, and readers. Neoliberalism imagines the individual as an entrepreneur; the affective hypothesis imagines the act of reading as an opportunity for emotional investment and return. The neoliberal subject is envisioned as needing to be at all times strategically networking; feelings, according to the affective hypothesis, are indexes of emotional alliances. (2)

Although affective hypothesis is not a new phenomenon in literature, yet, Smith argues its widespread popularity in contemporary American literature owes itself to neoliberalism. Within this tradition, she identifies two modes of feeling that she calls "personal feelings" and "impersonal feelings". The ideal feat for a literary work is impersonal feelings, or feelings that challenge the neoliberal ideals. "Personal feelings" are those that she aligns with affective hypothesis and consequently with neoliberalism as they excessively focus on individual feelings. Employing the lexicon of the market she notes, "[F]eelings frequently become yet another material foundation for market-oriented behavior: emotions are acquired, invested, traded, and speculated upon" (6).

As mentioned earlier, American literature in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 tend to focus exclusively on the shock and trauma of the fateful day. Expressing her dissatisfaction with most of the novels of this period, Smith argues that they have failed to invent new ways to aesthetically portray the new, contemporary reality. Instead she finds these novels perpetuating continuity of existing values and conferring victimhood on the entire nation. They present life as being a well integrated whole before being rudely interrupted by the attacks.

Two important discourses which are inevitable corollaries of an event such as 9/11 are the political and the private discourses. Post-9/11 American fiction, however, seems to be seized forever, in that private moment where the personal as well as the national grief and trauma are synonymous and hence, eternalized. Pankaj Mishra in a highly critical article in *The Guardian* notes that:

> In succumbing to what Rahv termed the "cult of individual experience in American writing" the 9/11 writers couldn't be more different from Mann, Musil

> and many others in Europe for whom the first world war, though an unprecedented calamity, was the point of departure for an investigation of the ideologies, beliefs, and social and political structures of their societies. ("End of Innocence")

Mishra laments the engagement of American writers with what DeLillo refers to as the "narcissistic heart of the west" (qtd. in Mishra "End of Innocence"). The insular world that the Americans had lived in till September 2011 has suddenly been taken away from them and they have showed a remarkable lack of inability to cope with the reality with which the rest of the world deals with as an every day occurrence. Mishra notes the inability of these writers to look beyond surface realities into ideologies and the belief system of their and other societies.

Richard Gray's "Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis" and Michael Rothberg's rejoinder to it entitled," A Failure of the Imagination: Diagnosing the Post-9/11 Novel: A Response to Richard Gray" offer a fine evaluation of the American Literature since 9/11. Richard Gray in his insightful essay analyzes how the events of September 11 have shaped the contemporary American literature. He points out that "[o]ne possible way of interpreting these events is in terms of trauma: a recalibration of feeling so violent and radical that it resists and compels memory, generating stories that cannot, yet must, be told" (129). Keeping in view Freud's definition of trauma and subsequently Cathy Caruth's, Gray defines trauma as "an event the full horror of which is not and cannot be experienced at the time, but only belatedly" (129). He further suggests reconciliation with such an event happens only when it is transformed into what Cathy Caruth calls "narrative memory", and for that to happen it needs to be narrated to a

witness which in effect is the first stage of coping with trauma. Articulating his disappointment with the writings of the American novelists since the fateful day in September, 2001, Gray argues that the writers have not been able to go beyond this preliminary stage of trauma. He agrees with all the writers who claim that life post-9/11 is indeed a new beginning for them, yet the works of these writers do not depict that new sensibility. For Gray "some kind of alteration of imaginative structure is required to register the contemporary crisis," and "the ability and willingness imaginatively to act on that recognition" (134).

Gray also identifies how the fiction since 9/11 has "domesticated" the crisis created in the wake of 9/11. The impact and consequences of an event like 9/11 are gauged through their effect on the emotional crises of individuals. Furthermore, Gray believes that considering the cosmopolitan nature of the US culture, the writers have not been able to represent the perspective of the Others. He urges the writers to shift their focus to "the bigger picture" instead of writing in "familiar oppositions such as 'us vs. them'" (135). Following Felix and Guttari he recommends a "deterritorialization" of literature featuring immigrants' perspective to the events of 9/11.

If Gary's diagnosis of the state of American novel is perceptive and his proposed model effective, Rothberg's suggested model is even better. Michael Rothberg agrees with Richard Gary's diagnosis that Rothberg calls "the failure of imagination" and also adds to Gray's model for a corrective for this new literature to be born. He describes it as:

> His alternative—a "deterritorialized" grappling with otherness—is, I will argue, both necessary and not entirely sufficient. While Gray's model for the kind of deterritorialization of the novel he would like to see in the wake of 9/11 derives

> from recent immigrant fictions that open up and hybridize American culture, I call for a supplementary form of deterritorialization. In addition to Gray's model of critical multiculturalism, we need a fiction of international relations and extraterritorial citizenship. ("Failure"153)

Rothberg's alternative "a deterritorialized" America means, as he later on notes in his essay, is the need to understand America's "extraterritorial expansion"(158). He explains, "What we need from 9/11 novels are cognitive maps that imagine how US citizenship looks and feels beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, both for Americans and for others" ("Failure"158). It means that writers need to incorporate a more realistic sense of what he calls the US empire. He argues, "The most difficult thing for citizens of the US empire to grasp is not the internal difference of their motley multiculture, but the prosthetic reach of that empire into other worlds" ("Failure"153). Instead of a more multicultural approach at the home front, the writers need a fair evaluation and imaginative reworking of the present to help their readers negotiate with realities hitherto kept hidden from them.

Kamila Shamsie, in a 2014 interview with *The Guardian* asserts, "I am deeply critical of American writers for their total failure to engage with the American empire. It's a completely shocking failure, not of any individual writer . . . but it's the strangest thing to look around and say, 'Where is the American writer writing about America in Afghanistan, America in Pakistan?' At a deep level, there is a lack of reckoning" (Hanman). Earlier, in an essay she directly addresses the American writers and asks, "So why is it, please explain, that you're in our stories but we're not in yours?

("Storytellers"). To be considering Pakistani literature in a post 9/11 scenario suggests a deep entanglement of Pakistan with America.

Pakistan has served as a frontline state in the War on Terror for the past sixteen years. The US backed dictator General Pervez Musharraf once revealed that George W. Bush administration had warned Pakistan to cooperate or America would bomb Pakistan back to the stone age (qtd. in Mishra "After 9/11"). Whether it was a result of coercion or collusion, or a bit of both, Pakistan has paid a heavy price for its participation in the War on Terror. This participation in war has adversely affected its social, economic and political situation. Consequently, we see a rising consciousness in the people who question the corrupt ruling elite and military establishment's complicity in the War on Terror. While writers are critical of the increasing radicalism in the country, which is a consequence of the war itself, their writings have also become resistant to the hegemonic discourses of the empire and can be said to serve as the representative voices of the "majority world".

In the years since Zia-ul-Haq, the US backed military dictator, Pakistani writers have been trying to find a niche for themselves in English speaking world. However, there has been a great surge of writers, writing in English since 9/11. Easy access to the Internet and an independent media has further allowed space for dialogue which had hitherto been denied. This "boom", as it is often referred to, in Anglophone Pakistani writing, received official recognition when *Granta* magazine dedicated its 112th issue to Pakistani creative writing. While most common themes in the writing of this new boom centre around the sense of chaos and oppression that has been the fate of this nation, and advocacy of an introspective look, writers are also interested in placing these themes

within a larger global perspective. Madeline Amelia Clements notes that contemporary Pakistani Anglophone writing is at an important juncture and agrees after Amit Chaudri that Pakistani writers are "'implicated in both the unfolding and the unravelling of our age'. That is, the age of capitalist meltdown, supposed civilisational clash and the global 'war-on-terror'" ("Imagining Pakistan").

This second generation of Pakistani writers, writing mostly in the late twentieth century and early twenty first century focuses on diverse issues but is particularly concerned with Pakistan and its place in the world. Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization and propagation of Saudi brand of Islam, being a part of the US proxy wars, and subsequently the War on Terror have caused great damage to Pakistan and its image around the world. This has been further fuelled in the recent years by the anti-Muslim and Orientalist rhetoric that has been on the rise in the West. Consequently, one of the major pre-occupations of Pakistani writers is to break this myth. Their writing challenges Western assumptions about Islam, Muslims and Pakistanis and how Pakistanis view the West. For example, in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* Changez's opening lines are his declaration that he is a lover of America, subverting perhaps George W. Bush's proclamation that "They hate us for our freedoms"(*Selected Speeches* 68). And by the time the novel ends one cannot help but wonder if he loves America in spite of all that has happened to him. Lack of a clear cut answer provides the novel with its artistic tension.

According to Aroosa Kanwal writers such as Mohsin Hamid, Mohammed Hanif, Ali Sethi, H.M. Naqvi, Maha Khan Phillips and Feryal Gauhar are the representatives of this second generation of Anglophone writers as well as members of the newly formed category of Pakistani fiction in English. It is so on two grounds:

> Firstly, they foreground connections between the post-9/11 situation of Pakistan and Islamic reforms during the era of Zia's military dictatorship. Secondly, these writers, whilst taking 9/11 discourse in new directions, represent historical and political connections between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Middle East in the context of both the rise of religious extremism in these countries and the rise of Islamophobia discourses in the West. (19)

She further argues that Muslims are looked upon as a homogenous group in which identities of Muslims from various parts of the world conflate. Consequently, immigrant Pakistani communities in the US have faced a lot of backlash especially in the wake of 9/11, even though none of the terrorists was a Pakistani. An interesting phenomenon is that most of these writers, though not all, have either lived or studied in either the UK or the US for quite some time. Having had the advantage of exposure to both the cultures and points of view, they, it seems, have greater insight into the issues they take up in their writing.

Daniel O'Gorman in his book *Fictions of War on Terror* notes the recent increase in the Pakistani English language writing and argues how the novels, such as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist, Wasted Vigil* and *Burnt Shadows* are "consciously globalized: working within – while at the same time challenging – a lucrative global market for Anglophone fiction by South Asian authors, they 'vacillate' in their attitudes towards global media frames(112)". Gorman, too, observes that these novels do challenge the perception of Muslims as well as Pakistanis and become an important part of the discourse on War on Terror. Furthermore, he argues, that "Hamid, Aslam and Shamsie

work to shift dominant framings of the war on terror in the opposite direction, and in doing so challenge such narrow 'modes of recognition" (113).

Post-9/11 Pakistani writing in English challenges the American narrative constructions of Islam and Muslims i.e. it confronts Isamophobia. It also subverts the privileging of 9/11 as a unique and unprecedented historical event. Instead, the writers attempt to locate 9/11 within the wider historical, political and economic perspective. They resist an essentialized, and hegemonic characterization of Muslims and account for the various way in which Muslims identity is not a homogenous monolith. These writers also effectively highlight the narcissism of American exceptionalism as well as explode the myth of an all-inclusive American culture. Notice this short monologue from a short story Shamsie had published on the tenth anniversary of the 9/11:

> [T]he American story about the attacks: that they came 'from out of the blue'; as if Osama hadn't been on the FBI's Most Wanted List since 1988; as if the whole disgraceful nonsense around propping up jihadis against the Soviets in Afghanistan, and then leaving Afghanistan to descend into a swamp of civil war and Pakistani Interference hadn't got anything to do with anything; as if Islam hadn't already been identified as the next enemy; as if there was something singular –something exceptional – about suffering when it happened to Americans". ("Our Dead Your Dead")

Shamsie here dismantles the rhetoric built around 9/11 attacks. However, it is a reality of which the American public, at large, remains unaware, and one that does not surface especially in contemporary American fiction.

Contemporary Pakistani fiction in English is also self-consciously critical of its own inherent political and social problems and questions the wisdom of political decisions taken. Therefore, there is also a severe indictment of radicalization, terrorism, fundamentalism, lack of social and gender parity etc. Recently, Muhammad Hanif also takes up the issue of treatment of religious minorities. Similarly, honour killing and incorrect interpretation of religious inducts, have also found a place in literature, challenging a powerful clergy.

Reassuring the readers of its vitality, Aroosa Kanwal dismisses the idea that the boom in Pakistani literature is a mere fad, or a temporary phenomenon as many have claimed. She writes, "This new wave of Pakistani writing exemplifies a process of transition and a constantly evolving literary tradition, rather than what is often assumed by commentators to be a sudden boom in the aftermath of 9/11" (200).

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial studies in the contemporary global scenario is aided by a materialist and Marxist perspective which takes into account social, economic, historical and political perspectives. It analyses the nexus of global, political, economic and cultural threads and presents a powerful critique of capitalist agendas. It draws attention to the paradigms of colonization throughout the ages and adopts a more critical attitude towards what is being termed as neocolonialism. It provides a strong critique of the superstructures that are responsible for factors such as poverty, migration, global inequality, and economic isolation of the global South.

The end of the British empire, in the recent history, may have been the end of colonialism in which the physical occupation of a land was the major goal of the

colonizer but it was also the beginning of a newer form of colonialism. In the present global scenario, colonialism, which is a consequence of capitalism, has taken a different shape. It is a hegemonic rule, which does not need actual physical control of a land, but which nonetheless holds a stranglehold over the economies of the underdeveloped countries and hence have them under its power. Resistance to all such forms of oppression, including, racial, cultural, gender, economic and the political that support capitalist agendas becomes the core feature of postcolonial studies today as it counters what can be referred to as the dominant philosophy of neocolonialism—neoliberalism.

Hardt and Negri in their book *Empire* have argued that the age of imperialism is over and is replaced by what they call Empire i.e. a form of global rule and citizenship which exists beyond nation-states and national boundaries. Hence, there is no territorial centre. They argue, "United States does not, and indeed no nation-state can today, form the center of an imperialist project. Imperialism is over. No nation will be world leader in the way modern European states were" (xiii-xiv). However, I would contend that the recent history, especially history since 9/11, has proved the *Empire* to be a fallacy. If anything, the traditional model of empire as it existed under the Roman and to some extent under the British rule has been reinvented as a model of global governance today.

In my view, the need to reframe 9/11 and subsequent events within the frame of postcolonial studies is two fold. First, because the Cold War and the fall of USSR have allowed the United States to emerge as the leader of the Western capitalist world and second, with 9/11 and the subsequent events i.e. the increasingly disappearing civil liberties, the doctrine of pre-emptive attack, and the "War on Terror" the United States has re-appropriated the traditional model of empire contrary to Hardt and Negri's

reconceptualization of empire in the present times as a deterritorialized entity without a centre[2]. Neil Lazarus in an incisive essay "Postcolonial Studies after the Invasion of Iraq" notes that since the war on Iraq, US's ambition of dominating the world has become obvious:

> [T]he veil has slipped from the face of the juggernaut usually called 'globalisation' (whose champions had been wont to speak of it as the tide, irresistible but beneficial, that would raise all boats) to reveal the unmistakable, and unmistakably brutal, face of US globalism: the power of the American state, now frankly projected and bent on world domination. 'The world is beginning to speak with one voice', George W. Bush was quoted as saying two or three years ago, as he rushed to misinterpret events then unfolding in Lebanon - and he should know, for the voice is his own. Behind him, the roar of the United States military machine - manifestly the real weapons of mass destruction - rises to a crescendo. The cynics among us might then feel justified in suggesting that Nietzsche had been proved right after all: truth *is* just a lie backed up by an army. (11)

Lazarus further argues that globalization was never a deterritorialized and geopolitically anonymous creature that neoliberal ideology would have it portrayed, rather "it was from the outset a political project, a consciously framed strategy designed to restructure social relations world-wide in the interests of capital"(11). In such a scenario, the importance of postcolonial studies increases manifold. Ania Loomba et al. in the introduction to *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* sum up its importance thus, "In a context of rapidly

[2] See Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri, *Empire*. Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard UP, 2000.

proliferating defenses of empire (not simply de facto but de jure) by policy makers and intellectuals alike, the projects of making visible the long history of empire, of learning from those who have opposed it, and of it, and of identifying the contemporary sites of resistance and oppression that have defined postcolonial studies have, arguably, never been more urgent" (1).

Postcolonial studies make relevant the questions of class relations and modes of production, race relations, subjectivity and alterity, nation and nationalism, dominant narratives and the subaltern voices, colonial violence and anti-colonial struggles, to name a few, even though we are supposed to be living in a post-race and post-colonial age. I argue for this framework of study so that the American writers as well as the reading public could be sensitized to the very issues stated above for empire does not only take place away from home but at home as well. Amy Kaplan in her presidential address to the American Studies Association challenges the notion that empire takes place far away from home. According to her it exerts power at home too. This is manifest in the way state power is wielded at home in America. The threat to national security has turned the world policeman inwards as well. Anybody and everybody is a suspect until proven otherwise. Such suspects are shipped off to places like Guantanamo Bay, laws such as stated in the Patriot Act are enforced, suspending human rights and civil liberties. Furthermore, the never ending discourses of terrorists and terrorism in the print and electronic media tend to generate an unending fear in the American public that lays siege to people's imagination.

CHAPTER TWO

NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTS OF EMPIRE

Introduction

Neoliberalism as the governing philosophy of contemporary formations of global capitalism with its advocacy of free markets, deregulation and privatization promotes articulations of subjectivity that is atomized, privatized and isolated, utterly cut off from politics and history. The official discourses of empire, in the post-9/11 scenario re-contain this identity further both at home as well as in the outposts of empire. The two novels, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Falling Man* especially explore this realm. They are interesting companion pieces for the study of how subjectivities are constituted under a neoliberal empire. These very subjectivities are then reconstituted in trauma and through resistance to the global capitalist system. Hence, "the reluctant fundamentalist" and the "falling man".

This chapter analyzes the socio-psychological complexities and conflicts of characters in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the *"Falling Man"* in the post-9/11 world under a capitalist world system. Through an exploration of the characters in the novel, I will connect the personal and social crises brought about by 9/11. These personal conflicts and crises are exposed in the novels as connected to larger political and socio-economic forces of imperialism and capitalism. Situating subjectivity as a site of struggle, I argue how neoliberalism vacates empowerment from subjectivity reducing the subject to a mere homo economicus that is rational, self-centred, ahistorical, apolitical and focused on maximizing material gains, "an entrepreneur of himself" (*The Birth* 226), in Foucault's words. An empowered subjectivity emerges in a space of resistance and this

resistance is characterized by exercising political agency. I analyze how the characters in the two novels, exercise this agency. Finally, I argue that the two novels offer a counter-discourse to the US empire.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is set partly in Pakistan and America. It is the story of Changez Khan from Lahore, who goes to America, at the age of eighteen, to study at Princeton and having graduated from there wins a coveted position in a prestigious valuation firm Underwood Samson. The novel charts his journey as he transitions from being a high profile whiz kid in the corporate world in New York City to what the novel suggests a "reluctant fundamentalist". The two main characters in the novel, namely Erica and Changez, are profoundly altered by the events of 9/11. Changez whose privileged position owes itself to the value he can add to Underwood Samson, the ultimate capitalist, is happy to be a part of it till his loyalty to the idea of Muslim nationhood is challenged by the war in Afghanistan, and he is faced with the dual crises of identity and responsibility. Allegorically, he represents the struggle of a postcolonial subject in the age of a neoliberal empire against the continuing structures of oppression. Erica, Changez's girlfriend, on the other hand, is an aspiring novelist. Her inability to stay focused in the present in the post-9/11 scenario is symbolic of a collective neurosis that doesn't allow letting go of the US's exceptional mythology that disavows not only its genocidal violence against the native peoples, but also overlooks its long history of interventions around the world. The relationships of these characters illustrate the intricate global class, racial and gender relations, and effectively bring about the questions of subjectivity, agency, and responsibility in the age of late capitalism. So,

rejecting his high-class life style in the New York City in the aftermath of 9/11, Changez returns to Pakistan to teach in a public university and makes it his mission "on campus to advocate a disengagement" (179)" from America by Pakistan.

Subjectivity is a useful category of analysis of the ideological, socio-economic and political structures of a society. Generally speaking, subjectivity refers to psychological, social, political, cultural and ideological forces that shape a person within a society. It determines how a person thinks about herself and her position in the world and how that helps her decide how to act in it. In other words, subjectivity relies on identity and agency. Donald Hall defines subjectivity as:

> [O]ften used interchangeably with the term "identity," subjectivity more accurately denotes our social constructs and consciousness of identity. We commonly speak of identity as a flat, one-dimensional concept, but subjectivity is much broader and more multifaceted; it is social and personal being that exists in negotiation with broad cultural definitions and our own ideals. We may have numerous discrete identities, of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc., and a subjectivity that is comprised of all of those facets, as well as our own imperfect awareness of our selves. (134)

Subjectivity is not a fixed category, or an end product. Rather, it is always in the process of evolution owing to not only the socio-cultural, political and ideological forces but also due to self-consciousness and self-knowledge. A self-conscious subjectivity helps one understand the various forces that inform one's choices, biases, perception and experiences. In a postcolonial context, it is analyzed in terms of how a subject's identity is shaped by forces of oppression as well as resistance to them. In what follows, I will

argue that in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* there is a movement from an entrepreneurial, atomized neoliberal individuality to an embrace of a collective identity in defiance of the neoliberal values and imperial oppression. I will engage in a discussion of the emergence of Changez's political subjectivity through his resistance to the violence of imperialism and its attendant ideology, namely, neoliberalism.

But first, it is essential that the style of the novel be considered to situate my analysis. The novel is a dramatic monologue. A dramatic monologue[3] is a form traditionally used in lyric poetry and has a speaker, the "I", who is not necessarily the poet, and her interlocutor, the "You" who never says anything but whose reactions or dialogues are gauged from the responses of the speaker. Mohsin Hamid in all the three novels he has written has made use of this form one way or the other. In an essay in *The Guardian,* he explains that he fell in love with the second person-narrative after he read Albert Camus' *The Fall.* "I was amazed by the potential of the "you", of how much space it could open up in fiction", he writes. In the same essay, he explains that in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* he uses this form to:

> try to show, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, how feelings already present inside a reader – fear, anger, suspicion, loyalty – could colour a narrative so that the reader, as much as or even more than the writer, is deciding what is really going on. I wanted the novel to be a kind of mirror, to let readers see how they are reading, and, therefore, how they are living and how they are deciding their politics. (para. 7)

[3] Dramatic monologue as a poetic form was popularized during the Victorian literature and is especially associated with the poetry of Robert Browning.

The fictional space Hamid talks of in his essay is the space where the identities of the "You" and the reader conflate. Yet, the aesthetic distance allows the readers an introspective space where they can analyze their own assumptions and prejudices. By letting the "You" and the "I" take center stage, Hamid is clearly pitting the "Self" and the "Other" against each other. The very opening lines of the novel establish this:

> Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America. . . . How did I know you were American? . . . it was your bearing that allowed me to identify you, and I do not mean that as an insult, for I see your face has hardened, but merely as an observation.(1)

The "I" or the protagonist of the novel is Changez Khan and his interlocutor is an American, probably a CIA agent sent to kill him perhaps because he is known to be "anti-American" (178) or because of his possible involvement in the murder of a USAID worker in Pakistan. The intended "You" then is an average American who is incessantly exposed to the official discourses of, "Why do they hate us?" and, "They hate us for our freedoms . . ." (*Selected Speeches* 68) in the wake of 9/11.

The post-9/11 projections of Muslim identity construct them as either fundamentalists and/or terrorists. It has been argued that capitalism constantly needs to construct its enemies in order to perpetuate itself and to justify its division of labor and exploitation of resources. For the United States, the ultimate capitalist, first, this enemy was Communism, and since the end of the Cold War, it has been Islam and Muslims. So, "Islamic terrorism" is "offered as both description and explanation of the events of 9/11" (Mamdani 17-18). The post-9/11 American fiction, too, most commonly stereotypes the

Muslim "Other" as a fundamentalist and/or a terrorist. Use of the dramatic monologue in this novel flips the self-other binary in a way that allows the speaking voice only to the "Other", a voice that is otherwise denied in the popular media. This voice is counter-hegemonic and offers the readers a look at the story from the vantage point of the Other.

Since the novel is also a monologue, a first person narrative, it also foregrounds the question of the narrator's reliability. One of the debates that often surrounds a first person narrative is if the narrator is reliable i.e. if she can be trusted for the way she has perceived and interpreted the environment and events around her. Can the almost unconscious and automatic assumption one makes about the novel as soon as one reads the title *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* be surmounted? Can the reader rise above her own biases to accept that Changez is not a fundamentalist/terrorist? Can she be sure that there is no exaggeration or manipulation of the facts? In the event that Changez is indeed a religiously motivated terrorist, does it mean that the geo-political and social realities he has pointed out in the novel are untrue? Is the American really a CIA agent or is Changez simply imagining him to be one? The ambiguity indeed is what lends the novel its undeniable power and leaves the reader to make up her own mind and in doing so face her own prejudices.

The way the "I" is narrated and constructed in the novel reveals the ambivalence the protagonists feels regarding his identity. This identity can be mapped in two phases—pre-9/11 and post-9/11. Although not without its paradoxes and complexes, in the pre-9/11 phase Changez's identity is fluid, and he is able to go with the flow with the ease of a fish and is able to adapt to new environments, "I was *immediately* a New Yorker" (33),

he claims. His post-9/11 identity, however, is fraught with deeper conflicts and tensions. The complexity of these conflicts owes itself to various factors.

In order to understand Changez's conflicts, we need to understand the way neoliberalism reorganizes the socio-political and economic relations in a society and consequently affects individual and collective subjectivities. Wendy Brown in her essay "Neoliberalism and the end of Liberal Democracy" argues that neoliberalism is more than just a "bundle of economic policies with inadvertent political and social consequences" (38). Rather, it is a "*political rationality* that both organizes these policies and reaches beyond the market" (38). She further adds:

> [N]eoliberalism carries a social analysis that, when deployed as a form of governmentality, reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to practices of empire. Neoliberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; it involves *extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action*, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player. ("Neoliberalism" 40)

Neoliberalism then, is a form of control of societies, a govermentality in a Foucauldian sense, that permeates every aspect of individual life—economic, social, moral, political, and educational, and in doing so it moulds individual subjectivities in a way that renders them powerless. Brown explains:

> [N]eoliberalism normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life. It figures individuals as rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for "self-care"—the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own

> ambitions. In making the individual fully responsible for her- or himself, neoliberalism equates moral responsibility with rational action; it erases the discrepancy between economic and moral behavior by configuring morality entirely as a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits, and consequences. ("Neoliberalism" 42)

So it comes as no surprise that capitalist societies are highly individualistic societies where individuals are motivated by self interest, where personal growth and success is measured only in terms of economic prosperity and material possessions. The self-care, or the realization of personal economic goals, takes precedence over the social and the political.

One manifestation of this highly material culture is class. Although in the recent scholarship, consideration of class as a marker of identity has taken a back seat, yet its relevance cannot be ignored, especially in Postcolonial studies. In fact, Neil Lazarus in his book *The Postcolonial Unconscious* argues, "Postcolonial writing is centrally and vitally concerned with the representation of class: in broad terms, as a key determinant (or even *the* key determinant) of social relations, practices, and forms of identity; more narrowly, as a primary source, and site of social division and violence" (40). Analysis of social class helps understand the privilege, or lack of it, a subject enjoys in a society. It helps identify the social, psychological factors in the formation of a subject. It also determines how the subject is perceived in a society and how a knowledge of that perception also shapes and moulds the subject's sense of the self. As Changez narrates his intriguing story to the auditor, we get a glimpse of the impact of his social class on Changez's personality:

> I am not poor; far from it: my great-grandfather, for example, was a barrister with the means to endow a school for the Muslims of the Punjab. Like him, my grandfather and father both attended university in England. Our family home sits on an acre of land in the middle of Gulberg, one of the most expensive districts of this city. We employ several servants, including a driver and a gardener—which would, in America, imply that we were a family of great wealth. (10)

Although the dwindling landed aristocracy Changez seems to belong to has become effete and his family is no longer wealthy, yet this is something he takes pride in, " [W]e look with a mixture of disdain and envy upon the rising class of entrepreneurs—owners of businesses legal and illegal—who power through the streets in their BMW SUV" (10). Pakistani society—a curious mix of old world and neoliberal values is according to Changez's own admission a "traditional, class-conscious society" (10), that is going through a lot of changes owing to the capitalist world order. It is also a society which carries deep imprints of British imperialism in it, and at the same time it stands tainted by the newer structures of imperial domination. Like any in-transition society, there is a huge economic divide and inequality; with the rise of the bourgeoisie there is also the exploitation of the working class:

> The men and women—yes, the women, too—of my household are working people, professionals. And the half-century since my great- grandfather's death has not been a prosperous one for professionals in Pakistan. Salaries have not risen in line with inflation, the rupee has declined steadily against the dollar, and those of us who once had substantial family estates have seen them divided and subdivided by each—larger—subsequent generation. (10)

Changez's position of privilege in his own society is reversed in the United States. As a student on financial aid he feels at a disadvantage. In order to overcome his complex, we find him pretending and conducting himself "in public like a young prince, generous and carefree" (11). He doesn't like people to know that in order to keep up this façade he has to take up three on-campus jobs. He also gets irked when he sees his fellow Princetonians, belonging to the American elite, spending money without a thought when he was holidaying with them in Greece after being hired by Underwood Samson. Even Changez's relationship with Erica, whom he meets on this holiday in Greece and eventually falls in love with, becomes a passport for entry into the higher echelons of the American society, his "(white) lifeline to exclusive Manhattan" (Munos 398). Erica "vouched" for his "worthiness" and "breeding" (*Reluctant Fundamentalist* 85) as she introduces him in her social circle. His being a Princeton graduate and an employee of Underwood Samson further consolidates his image in the eyes of the 'who is who' of the society, or at least he thinks so. Reflecting on it he admits to his interlocutor, "Looking back now, I see there was a certain symmetry to the situation: I felt I was entering in New York the very same social class that my family was falling out of in Lahore. Perhaps this accounted for a good part of the comfort and satisfaction I found in my new environment" (85). Changez's fascination, and of those around him, with all that money could buy, brand names, elite clubs is something that suggests a society that is simply geared towards their achievement only, where individual gets priority over the collective, and where earning and spending money is the ultimate form of agency.

Intermittent with class are race relations. Although we don't see many overt signs of racism until after 9/11, there is nevertheless an awareness of race that is stated rather

subtly in the novel. On one occasion Changez mentions that he was well-liked as an "exotic acquaintance" (17) by fellow Americans. On another, he observes how his "skin would typically fall in the middle of the color spectrum" (33). He gets irritated when his girl friend Erica's father speaks of Pakistan with what he calls "typically American undercurrent of condescension" (55). Whether Changez deliberately does not mention any more incidents, and also perhaps downplays the ones he mentions, we cannot say with certainty. Delphine Munos, on the other hand asserts, that there is an "invisible racial subjugation" being exercised upon Changez by Jim and Erica, both of whom are his means of access to the power corridor of corporate world and elite American society, respectively. She further argues that the end of the twentieth century has brought in a newer form of the American Dream where America signifies not only "immigrant mobility and whiteness, but also multiculturalism" (396). According to Munos this model of American Dream is inherently racist as the multiculturalism is merely a façade while it holds on to whiteness as "ideal Americanness". This particular form of the American Dream ascribes to Asian-American communities a "model minority status", suggesting that a "relative whiteness could somehow be acquired by non-white minority groups" (396).

Changez is also the outsider who desperately wants to belong. Even though, he immediately settles down in New York once he joins Underwood Samson after graduation, yet he is conscious of the fact that he does not belong, "I was, in four and a half years, never an American . . ." (33). This feeling of alienation is further enhanced as he joins the firm. Jim, too, notices his discomfort on more than one occasion and attributes it to his feeling of being "out of place" (44). In spite of this Changez takes great

pride in being an Underwood Samson employee. On the first day, in the office he thinks of himself not as a Pakistani but as an "Underwood Samson trainee" (34) and refers to it as "my firm" (34). His training at the firm, the perks of the new job—credit card, expense account—all make him feel "empowered" (37). His sense of empowerment is directly related to his material success. Later, in a series of incidents on a business trip in Philippines, Changez notices his American colleagues are dealt with more deference than him. So, in order to belong not only to America but also to the "officer class of the global business" (65), he disavows his Pakistani identity and tries "to act and speak, as much as my [his] dignity would permit, more like an American" (65). He learns "to tell executives my [his] father's age, "I need it now"; I learned to cut to the front of lines with an extraterritorial smile; and I learned to answer, when asked where I was from, that I was from New York" (65). Changez acquires the language that he feels facilitates his transition from his being a Pakistani to being an American. This transition, however, also becomes a source of conflict between the traditional values of the culture of his origin and his surrogate culture. "Did these things trouble me, you ask? Certainly, sir; I was often ashamed. But outwardly I gave no sign of this" (65). This discordant chord within the self is indicative of the anxieties and insecurities that is a consequence of the new identification process and is fuelled further as he comes face to face with the fact of his otherness in the post-9/11 phase.

As Changez seemingly insulates himself within his new found identity a disturbing incident makes him realize the futility of the task. While in Manila, sitting in a limousine with his colleagues, he happens to look out of the window and is startled to discover a driver in another car looking at him with great hostility. He wonders if the man

is jealous of him or that perhaps he hates Americans. Changez's desire to identify himself as an American is so complete in that moment that he thinks of himself as an American. But then:

> I remained preoccupied with this matter far longer than I should have, pursuing several possibilities that all assumed—as their unconscious starting point—that he and I shared a sort of Third World sensibility. Then one of my colleagues asked me a question, and when I turned to answer him, something rather strange took place. I looked at him—at his fair hair and light eyes and, most of all, his oblivious immersion in the minutiae of our work—and thought, you are so foreign. (67)

The moment when his American colleague looks at Changez is a moment of self discovery for Changez. This moment can be best be understood through the Lacanian concepts of "desire" and "gaze". In Lacan's theory of desire "Objet petit a" refers to the object of a subject's desire, the one that the subject aspires to be or would like to emulate, but one that forever remains elusive. The gaze, on the other hand, in Lacan suggests the sense of being looked at by the "Objet petit a" which in turn evokes a feeling of lack in the subject as it reminds the subject that the object of her desire is unattainable:

> According to Lacan, at the heart of desire is a misrecognition of fullness where there is really nothing but a screen for our own narcissistic projections. It is that lack at the heart of desire that ensures we continue to desire; however, because the objet petit a (the object of our desire) is ultimately nothing but a screen for our own narcissistic projections, to come too close to it threatens to give us the experience precisely of the Lacanian Gaze, the realization that behind our desire

> is nothing but our lack: the materiality of the Real staring back at us. (Felluga 111)

The moment of recognition of "lack" for Changez highlights two co-ordinates of Changez's desire i.e. the color of the skin and the uncontested assimilation into the corporate culture. Changez, it seems, is trapped within the dichotomies of East and West, as well as of neoliberalism and tradition. While he repeatedly has to quell his conscious to be what he aspires to be and conduct Underwood Samson's business, the American colleagues, it seems, do not face that. The coherent, unified assimilation that Changez seems to crave is not possible, and he realizes that he has more in common with the Filipino, "I felt in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him; I felt I was play-acting when in reality I ought to be making my way home, like the people on the street outside" (67). As Changez contemplates this ambivalent relationship, 9/11 happens.

The events of September 11, 2001 ushered in a new era of a robust US imperialism. The capitalist system aided by the military muscle power has helped United States establish its hegemony over the rest of the world not only in economic but also in political and social spheres. The United States has a long history of invasions and interventions around the world. These interventions have sometimes been cloaked in Monroe Doctrine, and sometimes in humanitarian goals. Incidents of September 11, 2001 handed a carte blanche to the US to take on the world with impunity in breach of NATO and other United Nations' and Security Council accords. The discourse this time is that of "security" and "protection". Wars in the twenty first century, it is argued, are biopolitical wars carried out in the name of ensuring human security and protection. However, these interventions around the world have in fact been motivated by United States' geopolitical

and economic interests, and they bring to fore the imperial nature of these actions and foster and promote the idea of the US as an empire.

Violence is a structural feature of capitalist imperialism. The incident of 9/11 has not only unleashed a cycle of physical violence around the world but is also responsible for the permeation of various other forms of violence into the public discourse. In any colonial setting physical or direct violence is always legitimized through what Spivak calls the "epistemic violence of imperialism" (82). In an essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", she defines epistemic violence as "the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other. This project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity" (76). Spivak argues that during the heyday of European colonialism, Europe constructed its Other as "the Self's shadow" (75). This was done through an "epistemic overhaul" (76) in which "great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, could occupy (invest?)[sic] its itinerary – not only by ideological and scientific production, but also by the institution of the law" (75). We see a similar impulse in the discourses of the new empire, especially in the post-9/11 scenario. In this discursive production of the Other, under conditions of power and domination, the Other has no power over how she is represented and perceived. The Other is politicized, essentialised and through this is rendered powerless. This loss of control over one's identity ultimately leads to a stereotyping of the Other and this was exactly what happened after 9/11.

In the aftermath of 9/11 the twin discourses of terrorism and fundamentalism politicized the Muslim identity to meet the needs of empire. As discussed earlier, the

post-9/11 representations of Muslims reinvented the Orientalist discourse to present them as terrorist motivated by religious fundamentalism. This epistemic violence is vividly illustrated by the pain and loneliness felt by Changez after 9/11, through awkward, isolating experiences. As he returns from the business trip soon after the World Trade Centre attack, he is made to strip to his shorts at the airport for security check, though his American colleagues are able to get through without any trouble. This incident profoundly disturbs Changez. It is shocking for Changez not only because he is made to strip but also because he suddenly comes face to face with his Otherness. He is stripped off not only his clothes, dignity but also off his newly found identity. In the days that follow, there are disturbing news of Muslims being beaten, held in unknown detention centres, and mosques raided. Changez himself is treated frostily by other employees in the company. On one occasion he is also harassed in a parking lot by a couple of white Americans who think he is an Arab. Initially, he throws himself in work and is able to ignore all that is going on around him, but as the political situation worsens we find Changez deeply troubled.

Political Subjectivity and Resistance

My concept of political subjectivity is informed by the idea of "(re)claiming the right to politics" as expressed by Vivienne Jabri in her book *Postcolonial Subjectivity*. Jabri recounts two events in the post-9/11 scenario which are according to her, examples of "depoliticization" and "assertion of political subjectivity" (x), namely, the invasion of Iraq and the Arab Spring, respectively. While the first seeks to "depoliticize, and through such, to discipline and govern, the second [seeks] to assert political agency" (x). The Arab Spring, she argues in the book, is the moment of the emergence of the political

subject and founding of a political community. Jabri argues that in the present times, or late modernity, there is a revival of colonial rationality and practice that was exclusive to modernity. She differentiates between colonial and postcolonial resistance where colonial struggle is a" national struggle for self determination" and the postcolonial struggle is a consequence of "disillusionment and disenchantment with the enduring legacies of the colonial era and complicities of the postcolonial state in the continued domination of the postcolonial societies" (57). For Jabri the late modernity is characterized by continuation of the old colonial structures with modern technological means of control and regulation that include direct warfare, pedagogy, peace building, gender awareness, human rights etc. Jabri believes that resistance today must take place against both globally and locally articulated forms of power. Jabri, in my reading of her work, therefore suggests a recourse of enunciation, a declaration of independence, and praxis to assert and exercise political agency. Keeping in view Jabri's analytic in mind, I will now map Changez's change in several episodes, including his transformation through his solidarity with the Muslim nation. Furthermore, I will also look at how this newly formed revolutionary subjectivity will resist and reclaim his political right in these turbulent times, under the aegis of a capitalist empire.

If the constituent elements of Changez's subjectivity are his efforts at assimilation in the American social and corporate culture in the pre-9/11 phase, the post-9/11 phase is marked by his efforts at disavowal of this assimilation, and therefore an attempt at reconstituting his subjectivity. Changez is incredibly disturbed when America attacks Afghanistan in the hunt for the Al-Qaeda, responsible for the attack on the World Trade Centre. He finds the images of the invasion deeply troubling and the senseless killings

difficult to ignore. He is torn by a fellow feeling for the Afghans, Pakistan's neighbouring Muslim nation, and a sense of denial of America's role in the situation. He is also troubled by America's reluctance to support Pakistan in a stand-off with India around that time (2001-2002), even though, he feels, Pakistan is America's ally.

Chagez's moment of epiphany happens when he returns home on a visit amidst the threat of a possible war between India and Pakistan. As he returns home, he finds everything shabby and old. His instinctive reaction is a feeling of shame and inferiority followed by a strong sense of contrition over being ashamed of his origins. It is in that moment that he realizes he has become possessed of a sensibility that is typical of a "particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me [him] when I [he] encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of your [interlocutor's] country's elite" (124). So he decides to "exorcize the unwelcome sensibility" (124), he tells his American interlocutor.

Changez's first act of defiance or enunciation of disavowal, within a milieu where anti-Muslim sentiments are riding high, is to grow a beard, much to the consternation of his co-workers, as an assertion of his Muslim identity:

> It was, perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity. . . . I do not now recall my precise motivations. I know only that I did not wish to blend in with the army of clean-shaven youngsters who were my coworkers, and that inside me, for multiple reasons, I was deeply angry. (130)

The otherwise harmless beard on a Muslim's face thus becomes a symbol of his alterity, a verification of his supposed extremism, generating fear. Consequently, Changez finds himself a victim of odd stares, whispers and even verbal abuse. His colleague and friend

Wainright also suggests to him to shave off his beard. “This whole corporate collegiality veneer only goes so deep” (131), he warns Changez.

Changez feels his world falling apart all around him. His relationship with Erica, too, enters a decaying phase as her emotional health deteriorates in the wake of 9/11. Though Erica has tender feelings for Changez, yet she is unable to love him as she still loves her childhood sweet heart, Chris who had died of cancer a few years ago. The trauma of the events of 9/11 shatters her equilibrium, and she is sent to a clinic and Changez is advised not to meet her as his presence disturbs her further. Later on, we discover that she has disappeared and probably committed suicide. Delphine Munos identifies Erica’s malaise as racial melancholia that aspires for ideal whiteness through interracial relationships. Building on Ann Analin Cheng’s model of melancholy and race, Monus shows the way in which racial melancholia “ shapes both dominant white identity and the subjectivity of those who are presented as ‘racial others’” (397). Explicating Cheng’s model, Monus argues that this particular kind of melancholia constitutes “a covert strategy of interlocking possession and exclusion – an illusionary ego-reinforcing strategy which denies otherness and difference while feigning to embrace it” (399). In other words, it leaves one with the delusional idea of being non-discriminatory, while all the while holding on to it. Hence, Erica can only consummate her relationship with Changez when she pretends it is Chris who is with her.

It is also interesting to note that the narrative of the construction of Changez’s identity does not have much place for his relationship with Erica, even though she is the most important character in the novel after Changez, and the novel is as much a love story as it is Changez’s quest for his identity. It, therefore, gives credence to the idea of

critics who argue that Erica's function in the story is merely allegorical. Erica represents, suggests Peter Morey, "a symbolic correlative of her country – Am/Erica" (140). He further suggests, that Erica's deteriorating mental health in the weeks after 9/11 and her obsessing over dead Chris is representative of a nostalgic desire to return to the past: "Like her country, relying on the comforts of a military response and invoking the spirit of the Second World War in the weeks after 9/11, Erica disappears into a 'dangerous nostalgia'" (140). The shock of the events of 9/11 evoked responses that can broadly be categorized as of shock and trauma, and a valourization of a jingoistic agenda. Rather than treating 9/11 as a terrorist attack, the Bush administration immediately declared it be a "war" on America and the American way of life, therefore, legitimizing its own subsequent attacks, first on Afghanistan and then Iraq. There has been, since then, an unprecedented militarization of everyday life, both in the US and the around of the world. Erica's nostalgia ended up in her destruction, whereas America's desire for the golden past ended up in the destruction of two nations and the death of hundreds of thousands of people.

Amidst this emotional turmoil, Changez is sent to Chile to value a publishing firm. And it is there that Changez's is finally able to synthesize his feelings. His meeting with Juan-Bautista, the head of the publishing firm proves to be the catalyst he had been waiting for to make the transition. It is interesting to note that Chile is the place where Changez is finally able to identify his malaise. There is a sense of coming full circle as Chile is the first site of the implementation of the form of neoliberalism associated with Milton Friedman and the Chicago Boys School of Economics. It is a historically known fact that CIA helped organize a revolution to throw out the democratically elected

Communist government under Salvador Allende in 1973. The army general Augusto Pinochet took over the reins of power as the military dictator and ruled over Chile for the next seventeen years. Apart from the physical violence in which more than three thousand people were murdered and thousands tortured and held in detention, Pinochet was also responsible for the first violent imposition of neoliberalism. In this, he was of course assisted by the American economist Milton Friedman of the Chicago School of thought in Economics and an unabashed supporter and promoter of laissez faire economy. Naomi Klein in her book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* notes that Thomas Friedman who floated the idea of what he called the "economic 'shock treatment' " (7) had its first practical implementation in Chile. Friedman's concept is based on the idea of exploiting a situation of national crisis to implement controversial policies while citizens are emotionally and physically distracted to offer any active resistance. While the Chileans were still reeling from the shock of the coup and hyperinflation, "Friedman advised Pinochet to impose a rapid-fire transformation of the economy—tax cuts, free trade, privatized services, cuts to social spending and deregulation" (*The Shock Doctrine* 7).Therefore, it is only right that Changez should start retracing his step from this site of imperial/capitalist violence.

The textual world of fiction offers a solace that is absent in the real world. Changez pays homage to the world of letters and to the icon of literary resistance in Chile, Pablo Neruda by visiting his home in Valparaiso. It was Juan Bautista who advises him to visit the place. As he visits Pablo Neruda's house he feels an affinity between Valparaiso and Lahore:"[T]he home of Neruda did not feel as removed from Lahore as it actually was; geographically, of course, it was perhaps as remote a place as could be

found on the planet, but in spirit it seemed only an imaginary caravan ride away from my city, or a sail by night down the Ravi and Indus. (147). The conflation of Chile and Pakistan into one single space in spite of the geographical distance, alludes perhaps to an invisible bond of shared histories of exploitation and violence. Neil Lazarus in his book *The Postcolonial Unconscious* notes that "colonialism as an historical process" forcefully integrates the non-capitalists societies into a "capitalist world-system" (37). The invisible bond that ties these two cities together in Changez's imagination is the bond of a sharing such a similar history. Pakistan, too, has a long history of US supported military juntas ruling over the country, seeing to US's interest in South Asia. Thus, the spatial conflation of Valparaiso and Lahore takes on a new dimension through a temporal conflation of the histories of capitalist violence.

Changez's visit to Neruda's house is highly symbolic. It parallels the moment in literary epic tradition where the hero retreats from his journey to revive his flagging spirits before the final battle. In the epic tradition, he also meets his mentor, receives blessings or advice from him to fight against the enemy, and returns rejuvenated to continue with his adventure. Although the novel does not establish any previous preference for Neruda's poetry and political activism on Changez's part, yet the life and struggles of the 1971 Nobel laureate for literature are highly inspirational. "He stood at the forefront of the fight against fascism and imperialism and he battled relentlessly for social equality in his native Chile" (Bleiker 1129). A poet, diplomat, and a politician, Neruda was also a close associate of Salvador Allende. It is believed that he was murdered by a doctor who injected an unknown medicine in his stomach, at Pinochet's orders. The visit to Pablo Neruda's home helps clarify Changez's vision and by the time

Juan Bautista invites him to lunch, he is ready for change. Therefore, I would like to argue that in visiting Neruda's house in Valparaiso, Changez is reconnecting and renewing the incomplete project of Third World liberation and modernity. His struggle henceforth, is to create awareness and thereby uniting people on a platform to rise against the economic, cultural and political oppression of the poorer nations, and to dismantle the structures of oppression.

Vijay Prashad in his book *The Darker Nations* traces the genealogy of the Third World Project. Prashad writes, "The Third World was not a place. It was a project" (xv). Though never officially termed as a socio-political and economic ideology, the Third World, which comprised the newly independent states from the clutches of Western colonization since the eighteenth century rallied together at first in Brussels at The League Against Imperialism Conference in 1927, and later on at the platform of Bandung Conference in 1955 to share their aspirations for peace, development, unity and justice. It was in Bandung, Indonesia that the project was inaugurated. The Conference recognized colonialism and imperialism as the root causes of lack of or under development of the Third World and stressed upon the need for unity among the Third World nations, who had little in common except their abhorrence for colonialism and imperialism, to combat the very two. The Bandung Conference sought economic sovereignty, international justice, peace as well as transnational unity. It advocated cooperation rather than exploitation as the basis of international relations. It also pledged support to those countries that were still colonized. The idea of the Third World Project gained immense popularity "From Belgrade to Tokyo, from Cairo to Dar-es-Salaam, politicians and intellectuals began to speak of the 'Bandung spirit.' What they meant was simple: that the

colonized world had now emerged to claim its space in world affairs, not just as an adjunct of the First or Second Worlds, but as a player in its own right" (*Darker Nations* 45).

However, as Prashad argues, the Third World Project was "assassinated" (203) due to the internal weaknesses and conflicts and external forces which were against the project due to their own vested interests. United States with its capitalist machinery at work under IMF (International Monetary Fund) and World Bank was eventually able to create the debt crisis of the 1970s which eventually led to the end of the project. The internal forces, on the other hand, not only weakened the project due to corruption, greed especially for oil money, sectarianism, military coups etc. but also colluded with the external forces to bring about the end of the project.

The incessant soul searching also allows Changez to understand his own dilemma better, "I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belonged—in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither . . ." (148). Jaun-Bautista senses Changez's dilemma and asks him one day if it upsets him to disturb people's lives doing the work he undertakes as Underwood Samson's employee i.e. valuing business, so that they could be sold off. He helps Changez realize the warring nature of the capitalist system that disrupts lives to generate further capital and maintain its monopoly. He draws an interesting analogy: "Have you heard of the janissaries?" . . . "They were Christian boys," he explained, "captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim army, at that time the greatest army in the world. They were ferocious and utterly loyal: they had fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to" (152).

Implicitly, Changez is the janissary fighting for the new capitalist world order. Changez, too sees, the logic of Juan-Bautista's argument and recognizes his own complicity in the machinations of empire:

> I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war. Of course I was struggling! Of course I felt torn! I had thrown in my lot with the men of Underwood Samson, with the officers of the empire, when all along I was predisposed to feel compassion for those, like Juan-Bautista, whose lives the empire thought nothing of overturning for its own gain. (152)

Self actualization for Changez takes place within a colonized discourse. Hence, he is a 'fundamentalist', albeit a 'reluctant' one. The almost unconscious and automatic perception of the word fundamentalist in today's consciousness is a 'religious fanatic'. But as many critics have rightly pointed out we do not see Changez very religiously inclined. The fact that he is named after one of the pagan warlords Gengis Khan (Changez is the Urdu version of the name) is also an allusion to the fact. So one wonders what kind of a fundamentalist he is. "*Focus on the Fundamentals.* This was Underwood Samoson's guiding principle, drilled in to us since our first day at work (98)", says Changez. The implicit criticism, as has been discussed by almost all the critics, is that the only kind of fundamentalism one needs to be aware of is free market fundamentalism or fundamentals of the global capitalist economy. The predatory nature of this laissez faire economy and its agents is repeatedly alluded to either in terms of animals of prey or in war related images in the novel. For example, at the end of the training sessions, before

joining Underwood Samson, Jim informs Changez, "Your instructors say you've got a bit of the warrior in you" (44). At another occasion Jim compliments Changez's business acumen by calling him a "shark" (70). "The economy's an animal," (96) Jim explains to Changez. Changez also referred to his co-workers at the firm as "the army of clean-shaven youngsters" (130). The more predominant example of it comes from Changez's own description of himself as a janissary for the American empire. As Changez decides to resign, Jim tries to change his mind, "In wartime soldiers don't really fight for their flags, Changez. They fight for their friends, their buddies. Their team. Well, right now your team is asking you to stay" (153). But Changez would not be dissuaded, "All I knew was that my days of focusing on fundamentals were done" (153), he declares.

The term 'reluctant fundamentalist' evokes yet another meaning. Tariq Ali, in the introduction to his book *The Clash of Fundamentalisms* writes that "the most dangerous 'fundamentalism' today – the 'mother of all fundamentalisms' is American imperialism . . ."(xi). He further states, "Psychologically, the American empire has constructed a new enemy: Islamic terrorism. Its practitioners are evil, the threat is global and, for that reason, bombs have to be dropped wherever and whenever necessary. Politically, the United States decided early on to use the tragedy as a moral lever to re-map the world" (xi). United States of America, some apologists for the American empire argue, is a "reluctant empire". The word 'reluctant' suggests lack of intention and inevitability of the situation, making the whole process merely an accidental occurrence instead of a well thought out strategy or ideology .These apologists contend that America was forced into its imperial role as the only super power to ensure peace in the world. Another argument is that 9/11 happened precisely because there was no empire. They also invoke and

promote the image of America as a benevolent empire. United States is looked upon, sums up Doug Stokes, as an "imperial state overseeing a global empire which brings benefits to both other Western states and also the inhabitants of war-torn states and regions via the US empire's core mission of forcible humanitarian interventions, democracy promotion, and the elimination of global terrorism" (219-220).

The Reluctant Fundamentalist also offers an implicit critique of knowledge economy and the process of subjectivation through education under neoliberalism. Knowledge economy refers to economy whose development and growth rely on highly educated people instead of means of production. North American Universities, today, are structured to condition and produce neoliberal subjects. Competitions, excelling in sports, doing well in studies, and getting good grades are the hallmark of neoliberal education. The end of all education in neoliberalism is development of "human capital" and economic good. In fact, it is argued that all types of development, personal or public, are only possible through economic good. In neoliberal education humanities is sidelined; subjects such as philosophy, ethics, history, languages, are viewed as incurring unnecessary expenditure. Whereas, sciences, management and financial studies are promoted. There is also a big premium on these fields of education meant to empower one in the market place. Industries are linked directly with these departments, so that the students are directly picked up from their universities just as Underwood Samson selects students from Princeton. In short, education, under the guise of individual entrepreneurship, actually serves the interest of the capitalist class. Universities are also prime sites where discourses occur and subject are interpellated into the dominant ideology. In the wake of 9/11, there has also been a "militarization of education" to

"support American imperial ambitions (136), argue Jeffery R. DiLeo et. al. According to these writers, "The militarization of education encourages the rationalization of state-sanctioned violence as a social and political value and supports educational practices that validate this violence (136)".

Changez in his pre and post-9/11 phases refers to his university several times. He considers himself a "product of an American university" (73). Princeton for him is a symbol of prestige, a brand name. As he enters it for the first time, he is in awe of it. He, however, notices Princeton's masonry and realizes that the bricks have been made to look old through chemical treatments. This little nugget of information not only alerts us to question of appearance and reality, the truth and the semblance of truth but also foregrounds the issue of true and false knowledge, be it the knowledge labelling a people as pre-modern and barbaric or propagating the idea of true freedom in the entrepreneurial freedom. The continuing structures of subjugation under an imperial power are material as well as discursive. West as the locus of knowledge production disseminates it globally. In fact, pedagogy is one of the late modern technologies of control and governmentality. Therefore, it seems only right that one of the sites of resistance against the contemporary formations of imperialism should be a university.

Changez's reconnecting with and renewing the Third World Project entails an appropriation of the philosophy of the Third World Project. As discussed earlier, the core idea at the heart of this project was national and social liberation, international peace, and economic development. So, what power does Changez have to resist the contemporary structures of economic and political domination? Changez returns to Pakistan and joins a university as a lecturer. His pledge is simple:

> I made it my mission on campus to advocate a disengagement from your country by mine. I was popular among my students—perhaps because I was young, or perhaps because they could see the practical value of my ex-janissary's skills, which I imparted to them in my courses on finance—and it was not difficult to persuade them of the merits of participating in demonstrations for greater independence in Pakistan's domestic and international affairs, demonstrations that the foreign press would later, when our gatherings grew to newsworthy size, come to label anti-American. (179)

One of the developments in the recent decades has been that the people who are attracted to such egalitarian philosophies are no longer, the poor, semi-literate people looking for a way to empower themselves in the society. Rather it is the educated, like Changez himself, relatively affluent, urbane and intelligent people who disillusioned by the injustices prevailing in their societies, and the world at large have risen to action. This is exactly what Changez points out to the American:

> And lest you think that I am one of those instructors, in cahoots with young criminals who have no interest in education and who run their campus factions like marauding gangs, I should point out that the students I tend to attract are bright, idealistic scholars possessed of both civility and ambition. We call each other comrades—as, indeed, we do all those we consider like-minded—but I would not hesitate to use the term well-wishers instead. (179)

Decolonization of the third world countries that took place in the twentieth century was in many ways incomplete. The very structures that hold these countries together are the structures that perpetuate and promote imperial structures. The need

therefore, is to break away from those structures of enslavement, and that is what Changez hopes to create an awareness about which it seems, turns into a kind of movement in the novel. Changez points out that the growing crowds in his protests catch the attention of American agencies. Changez, as he talks to his interlocutor, very cleverly builds up a counter-discourse subverting the discourses of Orientalism, clash of civilizations and such other discourses. The novel offers a subversive analysis of colonialist assumptions and practices of the United States. Changez highlights the role of the global capitalist formations play in allowing US maintain its hegemony in the world, "finance [is] a primary means by which the American empire [exercises] its power" (156). This power permits US to intervene in world politics, dictate its own terms, and carry out its jingoistic agenda. He reminds his unnamed listener of the American wars and interventions in places like Vietnam, Korea, the straits of Taiwan, the Middle East and Afghanistan (156). Critics of American empire point out how United States has almost always been engaged in wars around the world since its founding. According to one estimate it has been at war for 222 years out 239 years of its existence ("America has been at war"). Since all of these wars have taken place away from home, the American public has never felt the impact a war can have on a people, that is until September 11, 2001. Changez is also critical of the reluctance of Americans to empathize with the lot of the people who are subjected to these wars:

> As a society, you were unwilling to reflect upon shared pain that united you with those who attacked you. You retreated into the myths of your own difference, assumptions of your own superiority. And you acted out these beliefs on the stage of the world, so that the entire planet was rocked by the repercussions of your

> tantrums . . .. Such an American had to be stopped in the interest of the rest of humanity. (168)

So what does Changez do to stop America? This remains one of the important questions that his auditor asks him and perhaps we, the readers, as well. We know that he raises consciousness with his fiery speeches against the global injustice, against American hegemony. But is it limited to speech or does he actually become a part of a militant network? Is he really the fundamentalist as we understand the term in the common parlance of the present times? Or, are we the readers playing Ichabod Crane to his Headless Horse-man? Changez brings up references to two literary characters Ichabod Crane of the "Legend of the Sleepy Hollow" and Kurtz from the *Heart of Darkness* (171). Ichabod is scared of a Headless Horsemen which does not exist in reality whereas Kurtz's excesses makes him descend into what Joseph Conrad calls "the heart of darkness". Changez, therefore, keeps us guessing as to the true nature of his transformation.

The Falling Man

I will now look at Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* written in 2007. Read together the *Falling Man* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* highlight the crisis of subjectivity, among other issues, both at the centre and margins of a neoliberal empire. The two novels also underscore the discourses that help shape the identity of Americans and their Muslim Others, especially in a post 9/11 scenario. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* trajectory of the movement is from personal to public whereas in the *Falling Man* it is from public to personal. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* we have characters whose personal relationships signify transnational and global relationships, whereas in *Falling Man* the

national crisis is reflected in the chaos of domestic drama. But whatever the trajectory of the movement, both the novels foreground the larger issues of capitalism and neoliberal imperialism.

Don DeLillo in his famous essay, “In the Ruins of the Future”, written soon after September 11, provides an aesthetic for the writing after an event like 9/11. He begins the essay by commenting on the social situation in the American society, and observes how multinational companies under the aegis of capitalism have “summoned us all to live permanently in the future, in the utopian glow of cyber-capital, because there is no memory there and this is where markets are uncontrolled and investment potential has no limit” (“ In the Ruins”). One consequence of such an overwhelming dominance is that it has transformed Americans into “consumer robots” with little room for exercising “self-determination” and “agency”. According to DeLillo, Americans trapped in this unending cycle of consumerism and a false sense of self worth till 9/11, were also devoid of social and political reflection. The events of 9/11 have forced them to change themselves. In the wake of 9/11 all the divisive discourses have outlived their lives: “Many things are over. The narrative ends in the rubble and it is left to us to create the counternarrative” (“ In the Ruins”).

DeLillo’s diagnosis of the American society alludes to the neoliberal, consumerist culture we have been discussing so far. The responsibility of the writer in such a situation, for DeLillo, is to create a counter-narrative, one that “take[s] the shock and horror as it is”. DeLillo in the same essay further argues the need for focusing on smaller, personal stories and through them giving meaning to the event on an individual level in the glare of a “totalizing” media coverage. He notes, “There are stories of

heroism and encounters with dread. There are stories that carry around their edges the luminous ring of coincidence, fate, or premonition. They take us beyond the hard numbers of dead and missing and give us a glimpse of elevated being" ("In the Ruins"). Argued thus, DeLillo's counternarrative not only addresses the neoliberal hegemony but also the narratives of fear and terror. His novel *Falling Man* coming after the essay, as it did, was highly anticipated as being that counternarrative.

The novel *Falling Man* is a direct response to the events of 9/11. It not only deals with the trauma but also explores some of the historical and socio-political dimensions, which led to the tragedy. The novel shares the grief of the individuals and at the same time is able to transcend the myopia of literature written soon after the tragedy of 9/11. It engages with the historical truth and counters discourses which tend to obscure history and politics and atrophy trauma. In what follows I will look at how the novel builds this counter-discourse to the dominant narratives of 9/11, that decontextualize historical events and reduce them to a clash of civilizations. I will also argue that the existential crisis of the American subject the novel depicts is a necessary condition of neoliberal societies. The events of September 11, 2001 simply accelerated the process and brought things to a head. The novel neither offers any ideal solution to the personal drama nor a revolutionary resolution of the national dilemma. What it does suggest is the need to engage with the historical and political forces and exercising political agency and praxis that neoliberal subjectivity disavows.

DeLillo's *Falling Man* is the story of Keith Neudecker, a lawyer who worked in the World Trade Centre, and his estranged wife Lianne, a textbook editor, as they try to come to terms with the national and personal traumas. The story begins in the hours

immediately after the fateful event of 9/11. Having survived the attack, injured and in a state of shock Keith goes back to Lianne and resumes living with her and their son Justin. Keith is traumatized by the experience and can only share his grief with another survivor of the tragedy, Florence, and later on enters in a relationship with her. Lianne is also affected by the events of 9/11 and she tries desperately to cling on to her relationship with Keith. Running parallel to Keith and Lianne's stories, is the narrative of Hammad and his companions as they plan and subsequently attack the World Trade Centre. Through conversations between Lianne's mother Nina, a retired arts professor and her boyfriend Martin, an art dealer, the writer brings in alternative view points to expose the wider impact of capitalism and imperialism and their complicity in bringing about the tragedy of 9/11.

The narrative style of the novel is a third person stream of consciousness, and focuses on the consciousness, as mentioned above, of the three central characters Keith, Lianne and Hammad. We see and understand them and their worlds through their eyes. DeLillo makes us privy to their thoughts and emotions, like all stream of consciousness narratives do, and is careful not to make any authorial comments and lets us make up our own minds. "Let the latent meanings turn and bend in the wind, free from authoritative comment" (12), Lianne seems to voice DeLillo's resolution as she ponders over the meaning of paintings in her mother's sitting room. Fragmentary language, short and abrupt sentences lend a staccato rhythm to the narration which reflects the fragmentary and traumatic state of the society. We repeatedly find Lianne's mother Nina and Nina's boyfriend Martin, engaged in a debate about the possible causes of 9/11. Pieced together,

these accounts demystify the dominant neoliberal discourses that serve the political ends of the empire.

The title of the novel *Falling Man* alludes to the photograph of the falling man who falls headways out of the North tower at the time the planes hit the World Trade Centre. The picture was taken by a photographer Richard Drew and was also published in the newspapers. In the novel, the falling man, David Janiak, is a performer who, in the days after 9/11, would hang headways from tall buildings in different parts of the New York City, and consciously or unconsciously, not only serves as a reminder of the fateful day but also evoke the trauma of falling out of the tower. Falling man is also the central metaphor of the novel. It holds the parallel narratives in the novel together, and is symbolic of the Fall of Man and presents the picture of a world after the Fall, "These are the days after. Everything now is measured by after" (138), Lianne muses at one point in the novel. *Falling Man* presents a picture of a society arrested in a state of shock and grief. Everything and everyone in the novel, it seems, is arrested in a state of *"Natura morta. . . .* [t]he Italian term for still life . . ." (12), like the two Giorgio Morandi paintings in Nina's sitting room. Martin claims he keeps seeing the two towers in one of the two paintings, even though it shows a collection of random kitchen objects. Lianne, too, sees them in that painting. This suggests how life seems to have come to a standstill after the tragedy not only for those who have lost loved ones but also for the whole nation. It is significant, then, that towards the end of the novel, Lianne returns these paintings to Martin, albeit reluctantly, after Nina's death, as they were a gift from him to Nina and Nina wanted those paintings returned to him, thereby suggesting the need to move forward.

Subjectivity cannot be uniform. According to Michel Foucault, there is no "sovereign founding subject, a universal form of subject that one might find everywhere". Rather, he argues, "[T]he subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, of freedom . . ." ("An Aesthetics" 452).The tragedy of 9/11 has put the American subject in crisis. The neoliberal notion of the self that is based upon an aggrandized notion of control and complete agency is shattered in the wake of the events of 9/11. The fall of the Twin Towers, an apparent symbol of American superiority, is a clear challenge to their conception of themselves and their place in the world. The characters in the novel are, unable to move on, in the post 9/11 world. There is shock, grief and rage at the way their lives have been shattered. The stable core from their world, it seems, has been taken away, and things have fallen apart.

The way the event of 9/11 has been turned into a spectacle is symptomatic of neoliberal societies. The spectacle, has a crippling effect on people's imagination and creates or exacerbates the crisis of subjectivity as it renders the subjects incapable of exercising their agency of a social, moral and political reflection. In *Society of the Spectacle,* published in 1967, Guy Debord argues the characteristic centrality of the spectacle under late capitalism: "In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation" (7). Debord calls spectacle an "inversion of life" in which "the images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream in which the unity of that life can no longer be recovered. Fragmented views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a separate pseudo-world that can

only be looked at" (7). Although written fifty years ago, the 221 theses the book offers that trace the development of a particular stage of capitalist society where, according to Debord, commodification has colonized everyday life (21), is still relevant today. "The Spectacle", says Debord, "is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (7). The attacks of September 11 were staged as a spectacle by the terrorists; their targets, the World Trade Centre, emblematic of the US capitalist power, and Pentagon's military headquarter, emblematic of the US military might. The message mediated through those images was that US was no more invincible. Similarly, the repetitive images of the attack helped intensify the shock and created a fear of vulnerability among the American people, and helped mould their opinion in favour of the subsequent War on Terror. Douglas Kellner observes that "the mainstream media in the United States privileged the 'clash of civilizations' model, established a binary dualism between Islamic terrorism and civilization, and largely circulated war fever and retaliatory feelings and discourses that called for and supported a form of military intervention" (4-5).

The existential crisis, and the inability of the people to move on is depicted through not only the characters in the novel but also through the circular movement of time. Although, the novel does move on to show a time lapse of three years after 9/11, it ends at the moment of planes crashing into the World Trade Centre as the terrorist Hammad's story comes to its end when he crashes the plane into the World Trade Centre, and as Keith regains and relives his memory of the incident when he sees his friend and poker buddy Rumsey die, and Keith himself is able to escape. The existential paralysis of

the characters is also relayed through the repetitive actions of the characters. Lianne is forever watching the moment of the planes crashing into the towers:

> Every time she saw a videotape of the planes she moved a finger toward the power button on the remote. Then she kept on watching. The second plane coming out of the ice blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin. She knew she never felt so close to someone, watching the planes cross the sky" (*Falling Man* 134).

Keith, a poker enthusiast, keeps on playing poker games. Ugo Panzani notes, "Keith becomes almost unable to sustain the weight of trauma and thus looks for oblivion, becoming a semi-professional poker player" (270), a thought which is lent further credence as Keith thinks about his reasons for playing poker:

> The money mattered but not so much. The game mattered, the touch of felt beneath the hands, the way the dealer burnt one card, dealt the next. He wasn't playing for the money. He was playing for the chips. The value of each chip had only hazy meaning. It was the disk itself that mattered, the color itself. There was the laughing man at the far end of the room. There was the fact that they would all be dead one day. He wanted to rake in chips and stack them. The game mattered, the stacking of chips, the eye count the play and dance of hand and eye. He was identical with these things. (228)

His inability to decide why he wanted to play poker suggests it to be more of a compulsion , a way to cope with the trauma. Also, as playing poker demands concentration and attention, therefore enabling an obliteration of real life events. He cannot have normal relationship with his wife, but can have an affair with Florence,

although Lianne is the one he turns to as he escapes from death. Keith is a remarkably self-absorbed character, who is not given to self-reflection or analysis. There is little change in him in the time before and after 9/11. Although, he goes back to Lianne after 9/11, yet practically nothing changes about their relationship. Nina warns Lianne but she does not listen to her warning, but towards the end of the novel she finally decides to break her ties with him.

Children, too, it seems are replicating a similar impulse. Justin, Lianane and Keith's son, along with his friends known as the "Siblings" devises a play in which they stand guard to the WTC towers, which in their imagination are still intact, forever looking at the sky with binoculars to keep an eye on the planes that might be sent by Bill Lawton, their devised name for Osama Bin Laden. Although the children were prevented from watching the television or news, yet it was explained to them what had transpired. Still it seems they might have overheard Osma Bin Laden's name and "developed the myth of Bill Lawton" (74). "Bill Lawton has a long beard. He wears a long robe," he said. "He flies jet planes and speaks thirteen languages but not English except to his wives. What else? He has the power to poison what we eat but only certain foods. They're working on the list" (74), Keith informs Lianne as he gets the story from Justin. In a way the children have created their own counter-reality. The sense of trauma that pervades the environment has had its effect on the children also.

Amidst the trials and trauma of Keith and Lianne's family life, as they attempt in vain to work on their failing relationship, we have a wider political perspective that emerges mainly through Nina and Martin's heated discussions over what led to the events of 9/11. Nina is idealistic but Martin is pragmatic and a realist. He points out to her," One

side has the capital, the labor, the technology, the armies, the agencies, the cities, the laws, the police and the prisons. The other side has a few men willing to die" (46). He further adds, "Forget God. These are matters of history. This is politics and economics. All the things that shape lives, millions of people, dispossessed, their lives, their consciousness" (46). Yet Nina naively insists, "It is not the history of the Western interference that pulls down these societies. It's their own history, their mentality. They live in a closed world, of choice, of necessity. They haven't advanced because they haven't wanted to or tried to" (46).

Nina's arguments are deeply entrenched within the official discourses of East versus West polemic and what Mahmood Mamdani calls the "Culture Talk" (17). According to Mamdani, "Culture Talk" assumes that every culture has a tangible essence that defines it, and it then explains politics as a consequence of that essence" (17). One view in this "Culture Talk" about Islam and Muslims, notes Mamdani, presents them as conforming to a pre-modern culture and suggesting Muslims to be bad. An alternative view does see an evolutionary growth in the culture but distinguishes Muslims as good and bad (17). The narrative about pre-modern culture, too, is divided into two views; one sees Muslims as "lagging behind" in modernity and encouraging philanthropic relations with them, whereas, the other view simply considers them to be "antimodern" eliciting "fear and preemptive police or military action" (Mamdani 18). Nina quite evidently believes Muslims to be anti-progress, and resistant to positive change.

Furthermore, she is not ready to listen to Martin's voice of reason who rightly points out that the continuing global, economic and political structures of domination as the underlying reason for this lack of progress: "Martin sat wrapped in argument, one

hand gripping the other, and he spoke about lost lands, failed states, foreign intervention, money, empire, oil, the narcissistic heart of the West" (113). Martin also points out to her that she is denying the existence of historical forces that lock people in conflict. For an academic, Nina is quite irrational. "We're talking about these people, here and now. It's a misplaced grievance. It's a viral infection. A virus reproduces itself outside history" (113).

Although Nina had travelled all across Europe and much of Middle East for in depth research into art history and languages, yet her knowledge of Islam and Muslims is anything but deep. She holds Islam responsible for the acts of a handful few. "How convenient it is to find a system of belief that justifies these feelings and these killings" (112). Again Martin tries to reason with her, "But the system doesn't justify this. Islam renounces this" (112). These misconception about Islam and Muslims are not something exclusive to post-9/11 times. According to the Deepa Kumar the construction of Muslims, first, as a threat to Europe dates back to eleventh century, and was done to serve political ends. Since then, it has been continually done, and finds its culmination in the twentieth century in the works of an Orientalist, Bernard Lewis and subsequently in Samuel P. Huntington's writing. Lewis proposed and promoted the idea of a clash of civilizations in his essay "The Roots of Muslim Rage". Deepa Kumar writes, "For Lewis, the relationship between the "Christian West" and "Muslim East" is primarily driven by conflict; this fundamental characteristic of the East-West encounter therefore necessarily persists into the late twentieth century" (3-4). Samuel P. Huntington, an American political scientist in 1991 wrote an essay "Clash of Civilizations" which he later turned into a book. In the book he writes, "underlying problem for the West is not Islamic

fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture, and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power" (qtd in Kumar 82). For Nina and others like her, Islam is intrinsically violent, consequently, its followers—Muslims, are prone to violence, too. Critiquing the theory of clash of civilizations, Qureshi and Sells argue:

> What is in question is the basic premise of the clash of civilizations theory: that such a clash is not the product of particular historical circumstances that can change but that the essence of Islam as a religion is antipathetic to the fundamental core values of the West; that Islam is inherently violent in nature; and that, therefore, violent attacks against the West are inevitable and are provoked not by any particular grievances or set of circumstances but by the very existence of Western civilization. (2)

The post-9/11 backlash defies a logical, historical and political analysis of the causes of this tragedy and is mired in grief, sentimentality, and racism. The way Lianne reacts when her neighbour plays the music, which Lianne thinks is either "Middle Eastern, North African, Bedouin" (67) is irrational. She herself knows this but acts in spite of the knowledge. She physically attacks Elena and tells her that she should not play this music loudly under the circumstances, whereas Elena argues, "There are no circumstances. It's music. . . . It gives me peace" (119), but her lack of familiarity with the music, perhaps, disturbs Lianne.

Martin, whose real name is Ernst Hechinger, can understand the driving force behind the attacks as he himself had been, perhaps, a terrorist, part of a German rebel group, called Kommune One. Kommune One was involved in organizing protest,

exploding bombs against the fascist German state in the late nineteen sixties. Nina tells all this to Lianne, though she is not sure how far involved Martin was in the Kommune's activities. Lianne who is irritated simply by the music playing downstairs is able to digest this without so much as blinking an eye. Later on, however, she is able to show remorse on the way she reacts to this knowledge, "Maybe he was a terrorist but he was one of ours, she thought, and the thought chilled her, shamed her—one of ours, which meant godless, Western, white" (195). At play here is a racialization of identity. What is condemnable in Others, is permissible for Martin. It is also interesting to note that several of the male characters in the novel sport beards; Martin, too, has an unkempt beard, which he does not wish to trim. Whereas Hammad, too, has an unkempt beard and would like to trim it but is not allowed to by his cronies. The word 'beard' appears nineteen times in the novel, yet it only becomes a marker of identity and hence menacing when used with regards to a Muslim identity.

Martin, it seems is not only able to understand what drives these terrorists but is also critical of America' s role and his comments become more incisive when he discusses America's role in the global politics at Nina's funeral with her University colleagues:

> "There is a word in German. *Gedankenübertragung.* This is the broadcasting of thoughts. We are all beginning to have this thought, of American irrelevance. It's a little like telepathy. Soon the day is coming when nobody has to think about America except for the danger it brings. It is losing the center. It becomes the center of its own shit. This is the only center it occupies." (191)

Whatever the worth of the claims of the statement, whether true or false, a non-Muslim, non-Asian character offering this analysis is definitely a subversive act that challenges the American assumptions of the self.

If Changez is a reluctant fundamentalist, Hammad is a reluctant terrorist. Like Changez, Hammad is not very religiously inclined. In fact, we find him struggling with the idea of growing a beard, putatively associated with being a devout Muslim. Later, we also discover him questioning the need for killing oneself and others in the terror plot. "But does a man have to kill himself in order to count for something, be someone, find the way?" (175), he thinks to himself. He also wonders, "Never mind the man who takes his own life in this situation. What about the lives of the others he takes with him?"(176) His reluctance, however, is dismissed by Amir, the chief planner and executor of the plan, "Amir said simply there are no others. The others exist only to the degree that they fill the role we have designed for them. This is their function as others. Those who will die have no claim to their lives outside the useful fact of their dying" (176). Amir exhibits a callous disregard for human life. He reverses the self-other binary; his logic emulates the logic of the empire that uses human beings as expendable beings. The two wars, in Afghanistan and Iraq, after 9/11 testifies to the attitude.

In spite of the fact that DeLillo is building up a counter-narrative to the dominant discourses of 9/11, his portrayal of the terrorists conforms to the Orientalist stereotypes, discussed earlier. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that Hammad's depiction in the novel is a failure of the writer's imagination. Although, DeLillo shows a tug of war in Hammad regarding his mission, yet his depiction of Islam and Muslims is largely informed by the stereotypes. He doesn't delve in to what makes these characters think or

act this way and when he does, it is simply repeating what is usually said in the electronic media. For example, Hammad, in the first of the three sections on him, "On Marienstrasse," a street in Hamburg, Germany, where a group of potential terrorists apparently is getting ready for the attacks, notes: "Everything here was twisted, hypocrite, the West corrupt of mind and body, determined to shiver Islam down to bread crumbs for birds" (99). He states that "Islam is the struggle against the enemy, near enemy and far, Jews first, for all things unjust and hateful, and then the Americans" (100). In another instance, he shows Amir quoting a verse from the Quran which is often offered as a proof to vilify Islam, claiming that it gives justification to Muslims to destroy other nations: "Never have We destroyed a nation whose term of life was not ordained beforehand"(173). DeLillo does not offer any explanation or context for it , but simply has a terrorist repeat it, and by implication, unintentional though it may be, affirming Western representation of Islam and the Muslims. Having his characters regurgitating the popular media rhetoric makes one wonder if he only has a facile understanding of issues at stake?

All the characters in the novel are isolated individuals, involved in their personal struggles, and it is this isolation that does not help them in the healing process. Healing, the novel seems to suggest, is only possible within a more communal setting. The only character who is involved in communal interaction is Lianne. She goes every week to do story writing sessions with Alzheimer's patients. She is particularly committed to the cause as her own father had the disease too, and before it could overtake him completely, he had killed himself. Alzheimer's disease is a powerful metaphor for the erasure of

history in the novel. Lianne is scared of losing her memory and encourages the patients to write their stories, before their memories are completely wiped out.

Lianne is able to find some resolution to her problems, in the novel it seems as we notice another important change in Lianne is that she is finally seen participating in a march against the War in Iraq, although she tells herself that it is for her son that she is participating in it. She is also willing, it seems, to learn more about Islam.

As Lianne contemplates philosophy and literature, she is particularly troubled by two terms: "objective correlative" and "cognitive dissonance". She tries to remember in vain what these two terms mean. These ostensibly random terms it seems leave the readers with two important questions about the novel itself. Objective correlative is a literary term used by T.S. Eliot in his essay on "Hamlet". According to Eliot, "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked"(qtd in Cuddon 485). T.S. Eliot considered *Hamlet* to be an artistic failure as he argued that emotions displayed by prince Hamlet were in excess of the reason provided for it in the play. On the other hand "cognitive dissonance" refers to two contradictory beliefs or impulses in a human being that are a cause of tension and friction within a human being. Whilst reading the novel one cannot help but question if DeLillo has been able to establish an objective correlative in the novel or what contradictory impulses caused the friction in the characters.

CHAPTER THREE

A COUNTER-HISTORY OF THE PRESENT IN

EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE AND *BURNT SHADOWS*

'There is a Party slogan dealing with the control of the past,' he said. 'Repeat it, if you please.'
'"Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past,"' repeated Winston obediently.
'"Who controls the present controls the past,"' said O'Brien, nodding his head with slow approval.
'Is it your opinion, Winston, that the past has real existence?'
---George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty Four*

Introduction

In a conversation with David Barsmian, Tariq Ali points out how the word "Imperialism is not a word often used in polite discourse in the United States" (14). One of the reasons for it, he argues, is that the word empire "challenges the self-image of the United States"(14). United States' image of itself is that of a nation that champions the cause of democracy and freedom not only within the United States but also around the world. In spite of a past in which millions of Native Americans were dispossessed of their lands and brutally massacred, in which African Americans were held captive in bondage and slavery, raped and killed with impunity, in which seventy five thousand Japanese became a victim to the atomic bomb, and in which nearly four million Vietnamese were killed, America's image of itself remains pristine in its own eyes. "How has the United States survived its terrible past and emerged smelling so sweet? asks Arundhati Roy. "Not by owning up to it, not by making reparations, not by apologizing not by changing its ways (it exports its cruelties now). Like most other countries, the United States has rewritten its history" (52), she answers the question herself. This obfuscation of history, and the reification of the untarnished image have made it difficult for the ordinary

American citizens to look beyond their dominant discourses and grand narratives that is, until September 11, 2001.

The tragedy of September 11 has compelled a scholarly engagement with history. Repression of knowledge, occlusion and erasure of history, have become important fields of inquiry for understanding the past, as well as the present. This chapter focuses on how memory mediates history in fiction through what Toni Morrison refers to as "rememory". The two novels discussed here, namely, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close(2005)* and *Burnt Shadows(2007)* attempt to recuperate a history which has been repressed by the dominant narratives shaped by the ideological and cultural assumptions of neoliberalism and American exceptionalism. Such a repression defies a historical analysis of the current geopolitical scenario that resulted in the incidents of September 11, 2001 and subsequently another war, "The War on Terror".

The two novels use 'rememory' as a trope to help recover the occluded history of America's own wars of terror, it has waged around the world. Both the novels in this sense write back to the US empire and challenge America's self-image of itself. The retelling of the American imperial history serves as being counter-intuitive to the dominant discourse, and is an important way of resisting imperialism. During the process of rememory, the characters finally face the trauma of their own memories and break their silence, and in doing so, the two novels offer a revisionist historiography of the American history. In exploring the gaps between the official history and private memories the novels invite us to rethink our relationship with history and how it affects and shapes our present. Finally, using Michael Rothberg's concepts of multidirectional

memory and the implicated subject, I would look at how these narratives then serve as sites of resistance to empire.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on how ideological and cultural assumptions cultivate and promote a culture of historical amnesia in the US. The second section analyses how this historical amnesia is challenged and resisted through the texts of *Extremely Loud* and *Burnt Shadows.*

1. Historical Amnesia as Organized Forgetting

Zhilla Einstien in the preface to her book *Sexual Decoys* complains of how in "the US there is more and more control of everything – even our memory, or lack of it" (xvii). Although what she is referring to is a result of militarization of everyday life in the aftermath of September 11 attacks, yet scholars have also attributed it to more covert forms of control. They refer to it as a form of social control that is exercised in society by exercising control over collective memory, civil rights, undermining democracy and discouraging dissent. Henry A. Giroux makes a similar observation when he says that "historical memory is not simply being rewritten but is disappearing". He argues how the unsavoury history of US's atrocities of wars is being whitewashed with "patriotic platitudes and decontextualized isolated facts". Giroux states, "History has not only become a site of collective amnesia but has also been appropriated so as to transform 'the past into a container full of colorful or colorless, appetizing or insipid bits, all floating with the same specific gravity'"("Remembering Hiroshima"). Elsewhere, he refers to this process of "disremember[ing]" as Toni Morrison calls it, a consequence of the "violence of organized forgetting". He attributes this historical amnesia, or "organized forgetting" to neoliberal discourses, pedagogy, culture of spectacle and commodification of everyday

life and argues how all these forces are complicit in depoliticizing citizenship and undermining democracy (*The Violence*). A similar indictment comes from Ann McClintock who refers to this historical amnesia as "administered forgetting" and "imperial ghosting". Making a call for the need to look at September 11 attacks within a broader perspective, McClintock asks:

> Can we understand the connection between imperial violence and what I call the administration of forgetting (the calculated and often brutal amnesias by which a state contrives to erase its own atrocities) if we don't confront the foundational violence of United States history, whose phantasms haunt the post-9-11era? For the hinge that connects the stolen time of native histories, the time zero of the atomic attacks, and the permanently ticking paranoid time of the war on terror is invisible. (820)

She questions the historical expediency of "sacralizing [of] one national calamity (the 9-11 attack) as a world- historic tragedy"(819), while swathing the violence committed in the name of doctrines of "Manifest Destiny" and "American Exceptionalism" as a "naturalized" or "necessary tragedy"(821).

The neoliberal cultural and political ethos in the United States discourages and defies a historical analysis of the events of 9/11. The almost morbid fascination with the repeated images of the two planes striking the twin towers has led to a symptomatic neoliberal reification of not only the past but of memory as well. Neoliberalism as a political project restructures the society in a way that promotes and fosters the idea of a depoliticized citizenship. It changes the way we relate to each other at the personal, social, economic and political level. Market rationality dominates all aspects of public

and private lives. Promoting an eternal present that locks up the homo economicus in a relentless pursuit of material gains and instant gratification, it makes the present the only palpable reality. History, thus, is made but an empty signifier. According to Wendy Brown:

> "Depoliticization involves removing a political phenomenon from comprehension of its historical emergence and from a recognition of the powers that produce and contour it. No matter its particular form and mechanics, depoliticization always eschews power and history in the representation of its subject" (*Regulating Aversion* 15).

There has been an excessive focus on tragedy, trauma, feelings of betrayal and the memory of the trauma in both print and electronic media since 9/11 which has generated an existential crisis. There is very little attempt to understand the contemporary geopolitical and economic realities. Instead the focus is on building up an image of victimhood of wanton disregard for human values and human lives. In fact, any such attempt has been actively discouraged in the wake of 9/11. Dissent is considered unpatriotic and anti-American. Commenting on the intolerance regarding an alternative point of view to the official discourse, the English novelist John Le Carre observes:

> Does anyone remember anymore the outcry against the perceived economic colonialism of the G8? Against the plundering of the Third World by uncontrollable multinational companies? Prague, Seattle and Genoa presented us with disturbing scenes of broken heads, broken glass, mob violence and police brutality. Tony Blair was deeply shocked. Yet the debate was a valid one, until it

> was drowned in a wave of patriotic sentiment, deftly exploited by corporate America.
>
> Drag up Kyoto these days and you risk the charge of being anti-American. It's as if we have entered a new, Orwellian world where our personal reliability as comrades in the struggle is measured by the degree to which we invoke the past to explain the present. Suggesting there is a historical context for the recent atrocities is by implication to make excuses for them. Anyone who is with us doesn't do that. Anyone who does, is against us. (paras. 10,11)

Although John Le Carre's indictment of the economic exploitation of the Third World points out the complicity of the European nations as well, he uses this opportunity to point out how US considers itself above international laws also. Its refusal to sign the Kyoto protocol and exerting power over third world nations through a management of their economies via international monetary organizations reveal the privileges of American exceptionalism. Thus, the intolerance for dissent stems not only from the widespread acceptability of the neoliberal, official discourse of America as an innocent victim but also from a narcissistic notion of American exceptionalism.

American exceptionalism is an integral part of American national identity. It is rooted in the belief of America's superiority over other nations in terms of its history and development, social, political and economic institutions, and the special role, it is believed, America is destined to play in the world championing freedom and liberty. The core idea of American exceptionalism that America has a religious/ethical responsibility to promote the higher ideals of democracy, liberty and freedom around the world even through violence if necessary, invokes the idea of a Manichean conflict. The Manichean

conflict, represents the archetypal struggle between good and evil, between the Self and its Other. Within the mythology of American exceptionalism, it is the American "Self " versus the enemy "Other". In the wake of 9/11, the Other is the Muslim Other. Another subtext that is intrinsic to the Self—Other binary, is racism. Typically all binary oppositions, by virtue of their nature, are unequal, and demonstrate the dominance of one over the other. In a typical American Self—Other binary opposition, it is the American Self, meaning, white Caucasian male, that is dominant. The Other is inferior, not only on the basis of an inferior culture, as pointed out by Mahmood Mamdani and discussed in the previous chapter, but also owing to the colour of her skin, and is therefore dispensable.

The term American exceptionalism is attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville who used it for the first time in 1831 when he described America as an exceptional country owing to, for what he considered, its unique history (of diverse immigrants), egalitarian culture and exceptional socio-political institutions. Seymour Lipset– referring to Tocqueville – names five basic features of what he calls the American creed i.e. American exceptionalism: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire (19).

Although Tocqueville's description came in 1831, the history of the American exceptionalism can be traced as far back as 1630. According to Howard Zinn:

> The notion of American exceptionalism—that the United States alone has the right, whether by divine sanction or moral obligation, to bring civilization, or democracy, or liberty to the rest of the world, by violence if necessary—is not new. It started as early as 1630 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony when Governor

> John Winthrop uttered the words that centuries later would be quoted by Ronald Reagan. Winthrop called the Massachusetts Bay Colony a "city upon a hill." Reagan embellished a little, calling it a "shining city on a hill." ("The Power and the Glory")

Zinn, here, traces not only the origin of the concept but also reflects on its essential character. He points out the inherent violence that is encoded within the idea of American exceptionalism. Today, many critics of American imperialism argue that US has strayed away from the ideals of American exceptionalism in the way it intervenes and imposes war around the world. Zinn's explication of the term not only falsifies the notion but also points towards the inherent violent and imperialist impulse of the idea. The use of violence, that Zinn mentions here, is usually underplayed as unavoidable and inconsequential, considering the greater cause it is employed for.

The idea of neoliberalism or American exceptionalism as a dominant ideology that erases the past in favour of an eternalized present can be best understood through Roland Barthes' idea of mythology. In his book *Mythologies* Barthes demystifies how dominant ideologies are naturalized within a culture. He suggests that this is done through reappropriating cultural symbols and giving them new meaning. Myth, he argues, is able to hide the "ideological abuse"(10) that exists in society. According to Barthes myth is a "mode of signification" and a "system of communication", oral, written or visual, whose ultimate goal is to deliver a message in a particular way (107).

Barthes explains that cultural myths are usually presented as a timeless and natural phenomena. Whereas the reality is that myths are in fact reflective of historically rooted ideologies and world views at a given time. Using semiology as a point of

reference, he explains that myths are constructed in what he calls the "second-order semioligical system" (113), which means that an already established sign or an image is stripped of its meaning and history and instead is made to represent something different. Barthes cites the example of a magazine cover that carries a black French soldier saluting the French flag. According to the first level of semiological system the picture denotes a soldier saluting a flag. But at the second semiological or mythical level this picture promotes the idea of France as an all-embracing, non-discriminatory empire. According to Barthes, the conversion of the black soldier into an object appropriated by myth deprives him of his context and history (116-117).

The idea of American exceptionalism permeates all periods of US history. The mythology of American exceptionalism finds its manifestation in different doctrines throughout US history depending upon the historical contingency. From the idea of "City on the hill" to all the subsequent doctrines adopted to suit US's different geopolitical goals in different periods in history, such as, "Manifest Destiny", "Pax Americana", "Indispensible nation", "Bush Doctrine", have all been based on the idea of American exceptionalism, and the discourse behind "The War on Terror" is no exception. It is also interesting to note here that the phrase "City on the hill" comes from a religious sermon, hence the conception that American exceptionalism has a religious base that stressed on America's role in this "civilizing mission" as divinely ordained. Over centuries, however, the concept adopted a more secular approach and found its validation in the ethical discourse. So, from a religious duty it became America's moral duty to save the world from itself.

According to Barthes myth is a "depoliticized speech" (142). Stripped of its "historical intention", a myth is given a "natural justification" and its exigency is eternalized (142). The rhetoric of War on Terror is also grounded in the exceptionalism myth, Marc Barnett notes. He argues that the "combination of American Exceptionalism and the 'War on Terror' led to a depoliticization of terrorism . . . " (3). Instead of addressing the geo-political issues that led to the tragedy, the official discourses declared it to be the abiding war between good and evil, and a clash of civilizations between a Muslim East and a secular West. Andrew Bacevich writes, "[D]efining the adversary as "terror" made it easier to deflect public attention from evidence suggesting that it was America's quasi-imperial role that was provoking resistance—and would continue to do so" (*American Empire* 241). Elsewhere, Bacevich argues:

> Seeing themselves as a peaceful people, Americans remain wedded to the conviction that the conflicts in which they find themselves embroiled are not of their own making. The global War on Terror is no exception. Certain of our own benign intentions, we reflexively assign responsibility for war to others, typically malignant Hitler-like figures inexplicably bent on denying us the peace that is our fondest wish. (*The Limits of Power* 4)

2. Rememory: Defying Historical Absence and Negation

Engaging with memories through what Morrison refers to as "rememory" responds to a desire to counter the historical amnesia imposed through the dominant discourses of social control. Lucy Bond argues, "the empathic connections sought in the ethical study and practice of memory are urgently needed in a divisive and violent geopolitical climate" (6). The two novels in this chapter namely, *Extremely Loud and*

Incredibly Close and *Burnt Shadows*, recapture and reclaim the occluded history of the US imperialism in the twentieth and twenty first century. Both the novels privilege the use of memory for this recovery. As the characters remember the past, the histories of nations through the victims of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing are also narrated. The parallel drawn between these victims and victims of 9/11 is not only of the human resilience or lack of it in times of trauma but also of the burden of a history of an imperial past.

"Rememory" is a concept, a trope, Toni Morrison uses repeatedly in her novels but never theorizes it outside of them. Sethe in *Beloved* describes her concept of rememory to Denver:

> "I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened. . . . Someday you will be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to someone else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole

> farm—every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there—you who was never there—if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you" (35–36).

Morrison refers to "rememory" both as a verb as well as a noun here; it is a phenomenon —"[a] thought picture", as well as a process. The way Seth explains it to Denver suggests a certain exteriority to what is being rememorized. In other words, what is being rememorized is not limited to one person's memory, rather it can be accessed by anybody who wants to. It is a haunting presence just like Beloved is. It exists in the collective conscious though seldom engaged with. The process of rememory creates the space and time for that engagement. The fictional world is, then, the ideal place for the process of rememory.

Since Morrison has not theorized it, critics have explained and used it in different ways. Jason J. Campbell in his essay "Scarification and Collective Sympathy: An Analysis of Rememory in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" explains the concept of rememory by distinguishing between memory and rememory on two grounds. First, rememory is distinct from memory based on what he calls 'facticity', and second its intersubjectivity. By facticity, he means that the existence of an event cannot be denied, just as dropping the bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki cannot be denied, i.e. the event exists independent of the stories of the fictional characters. Second, history is a shared or "intersubjective" experience. The individuals may have their own memories of it but intersubjectivity of rememory "allows the characters to share in the other's suffering" (1). In short, "rememory", as Campbell defines it, is "the interrelation of shared experiences,

independent to one's recollection of the experience" (2). Campbell, here, seems to be alluding to the creative process behind texts that "rememory" a memory. So, while memory may be an event that is abstracted of its context, the process of rememory reclaims the context by imaginatively engaging with it.

Susan Comfort describes rememory as a process of recovering history, a history that is unrepresented/unnarrated because it has been suppressed through a repression and silencing of cultural memory. In a discussion of Morrison's *Beloved* she argues, that "the recovery, or the 'rememory', of history can be considered a process of mourning that engages an oppositional practice of counter-memory". "Mourning", she argues, " is not passive but . . . actively engages with history" (122). If the first two definitions describe the compositional aspects of rememory, Comfort's definition describes the purpose it is employed for. It highlights the politics of repression as well as the process of recovery and redemption that is inherent in "rememory".

Keeping in view the concepts presented in the first two definitions as well as borrowing from Susan Comfort's description of rememory as a counter-intuitive discourse, I would like to argue that "rememory" is a retelling of history through a resurrection of memory, a counter-discourse that challenges the grand narratives, such as history, dominant discourses and cultural assumptions. It is a resurrection because otherwise memory is a haunting presence of the past in the present, and in that it is a negative presence. Any exorcism is only possible through a process of resurrecting or retelling it. The two novels in this chapter namely, *Extremely Loud Close* and *Burnt Shadows*, recapture and reclaim the obscured history of the US imperialism in the twentieth and twenty first century. As the characters remember the past, the histories of

nations through the victims of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing are also narrated. The parallel drawn between these victims and victims of 9/11 is not only of the human resilience or lack of it in times of trauma but also of the burden of a history of an imperial past. The relevance of the stories of imperial violence may not have any straightforward place in the narratives of post-9/11 scenario except through rememory as it resurrects the imperial past to reflect on the present as well as the future.

Extremely Loud And Incredibly Close: Demythologizing the Past

Extremely Loud is the story of a nine year old boy Oskar Schell who loses his father in the World Trade Centre bombing on September 11, 2001. Overwhelmed with grief, Oskar tries to stay close to the memory of his father by assigning himself the task of finding the lock for the key he finds in an envelope with the word "Black" written on it from his father's belongings. Unbeknown to his mother, Oskar goes around New York City in search of Mr. or Ms. "Black" in the hope to find out the lock to the key, which he feels has some big significance attached to it. Although equally important, Oskar's story serves as a narrative frame to the story of his grandmother and grandfather. Oskar is close to his grandmother, but he has never known his grandfather. His grandfather had left his grandmother even before his father was born. He only comes back in their lives, once he finds out that he has lost his son in the World Trade Centre tragedy. What ties all of them together is not only the familial bond but also their overwhelming grief. While Oskar mourns his father, his grandparents' grief is spread over a period of more than fifty years. All of them are arrested, frozen in time due to the power of their respective griefs. Oskar's plight on the one hand bears testimony to the events of the fateful day and its emotional toll on the people, and on the other it provides an opportunity to his

grandparents to deal with their traumatic past, albeit, in a limited way, a past that remains silently suppressed until it is pitted against yet another trauma. The novel is innovative and experimental in form and more subtle in approach regarding history than *Burnt Shadows*.

Oskar is a precocious boy who invents things, has vocabulary beyond his years, and who likes to solve mysteries in mock reconnaissance missions his father would set up for him every Sunday. His hero is Stephen Hawking to whom he often writes letters in the hope that Hawking would accept him as his protégée. The central image of the novel is that of a little boy with his tambourine, which Oskar likes to play, especially when he is afraid or when he is wearing his "heavy boots", a metaphor he uses repeatedly as he refers to his grief. Oskar is not only grief stricken, but he feels extremely guilty, too. On September 11, 2001 he comes home early from school, and he hears his father, trapped in one of the two towers, recording the last of the five messages on the answering machine, talking to them for the last time. Shocked and frightened he is unable to pick up the phone and talk to his father. Later, he changes the phone to spare his mother the grief, although he himself is traumatized as well as guilt ridden for not picking up the last call and not talking to his father, and for not letting his mother know about the phone calls. It is a secret which he has not shared with anyone and that in itself adds to his torment. Overwhelmed with grief, Oskar often inflicts bruises on his body. This image of grief stricken son is further re-inforced through repeated references to Shakespeare's Hamlet. Oskar is playing Yorick, the skull of the court jester, in the Fall play at school. On the one hand, the play is an allusion to a son's love for his father and on the other, Yorick the skull, is a symbol of human mortality. The strong father-son bond is juxtaposed with

another father-son relationship i.e. of Oskar's father and grandfather. As the narrative unfolds, we discover the story of another immobilizing grief which rendered void the possibility of a normal relationship between a father son duo—Oskar's father and grandfather.

The novel is a mix of various forms and has been described variously, as a bildungsroman, a quest novel, epistolary and picaresque. The novel, is all this and more. It is a bildungsroman as it charts the journey of consciousness of a grief stricken, traumatized young boy to one who not only learns to deal with grief and over come it but is also able to understand life better. It is a quest novel as Oskar's journey of self-realization is set in a quest mode. It is an epistolary novel as two of the three narrators narrate their stories through letters. The novel is also in line with the picaresque tradition for it is a series of loosely connected episodes during the course of Oskar's quest for Mr./Ms. Black, in which he meets different people and finds out about their stories of grief, which ultimately help him reconcile with his own loss. It is also a graphic novel as the writer has used various visual elements in it, such as photographs, sketches, circles with red ink around the words to add another layer of meaning, to foreground the subtext behind the text.

The sequence of the narrative in *Extremely Loud* is confusing and complex. The narrative keeps shifting between Oskar's narrative, Grandpa's letters, first to his unborn child, and later to his son Thomas Schell Jr., and Grandma's letter to Oskar. The chapters on Grandpa are all entitled "Why I am not where you are" in which he relates his story to his son Thomas Schell Jr. The identifying marker on them is the date on the letters. These letters, are a few chosen ones from the thousands of letters written to Oskar's father

Thomas Schell Jr. over a period of forty years. Thomas Schell Sr. had left after discovering his wife was pregnant with his child, and had written letters to the child everyday during the course of forty years. However, he only posted the envelopes but never the letters. Grandma whose chapters are entitled "My Feelings", meticulously collected and kept them in a suitcase. Grandma's chapters are parts of a long letter written to Oskar on September 12, 2003 in which she tries to explain to Oskar why she has left her home to be with Grandpa. It is her side of the story of the story of her life before and with Grandpa. The chapters on Oskar are details of his feelings and search for the lock and Mr./Ms. Black spread over the course of a year. Interspersed between these chapters are photographs, drawings, newspaper cuttings etc. They are probably from Oskar's journal entitled "All the Stuff that Happened to Me".

The novel came out in 2005. Though appreciated for capturing the trauma of the tragedy, it has also been much criticized for the same reason as well. In fact, the American literature that was published in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 is now severely criticized for its parochial approach to this tragedy. There is now a general consensus among critics that American literature in general, and novel in particular, that came in the early years after 9/11 has failed to capture the new reality that has since emerged. The reification of tragedy, trauma, feelings of betrayal and the memory of the trauma all add to the historical amnesia. There is very little attempt to understand the contemporary geopolitical and economic realities. Furthermore, as pointed out earlier, it is an attempt which is actively discouraged at the official level. Expressing her dissatisfaction with most of the novels of this period, Rachel Greenwald Smith argues that the novels in this era have failed to invent new ways to aesthetically portray the new,

contemporary reality. Instead, she finds these novels perpetuating continuity of existing values and conferring victimhood on the entire nation. They present life as being a well integrated whole before the attacks which was rudely interrupted by the attacks. *Extremely Loud* is a case in point. Smith argues:

> Our present moment is . . . characterized by a surprising intimacy between seemingly world-changing catastrophes and the expansion of existing political policies. This historical condition runs parallel to the intimacy we see in Foer's work between seemingly innovative formal experimentation and the creation of sentiments that support the emotional and political status quo. (67)

Rachel Sykes makes a similar assessment of what she refers to as the "key texts" (5) of 9/11 literature. Placing these key texts "within a longer history of noise in the American novel", she contends that the novels of 'the political "now"' are "ideologically inflected narratives that emphasize the noise of contemporary culture, associating the present with the singular noise of "9/11" and thus limiting how novelists write a history of their contemporary moment"(1). Sykes' assessment of *Extremely Loud* is perhaps even more reductive than Smith's. She contends that "*Extremely Loud* examines how the barrage of loud sounds associated with trauma is hard for the individual to process quietly" (10).

Richard Gray, one of the first critics to express disappointment with post-9/11 literature contends that "[n]ew events generate new forms of consciousness requiring new structures of . . . imagination to assimilate and express them" (*After the Fall* 29), yet the novels written in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 though acknowledge a change, their form does not reflect it. Furthermore, these novels attempt at normalization by assuring

the readers that nothing has essentially changed. "The conventions that familiarize the unfamiliar, and so suppress its urgency and disguise its strangeness, are those traditionally associated with the domestic romance" (51). Talking in particular of *Extremely Loud*, he finds a similar process of familiarization in the novel. Although, he concedes that the novel does employ a striking recuperative strategy, yet he does not find it to be very profound (52).

Foer's novel is so much more nuanced than he is given credit for. There are minute details, and subtle references that cannot be dismissed as merely incidental. Granted that the novel does not offer a very robust critique or an indictment like perhaps *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* or *Burnt Shadows* does, yet to dismiss it as just another novel fetishizing trauma and suffering is to do gross injustice to the work. In what follows I will offer a reading of *Extremely Loud* to argue how the juxtaposition of the victims of two catastrophic events, namely, the events of September 11, 2001 and the firebombing of Dresden in Word War II, as well as the testimony presented through the interview of Atomic bomb victims that Oskar uses in his presentation at school, provide the readers in the novel with a counter-history of the present to confront and critically examine a past that is mostly ignored in the official history and dominant discourses.

Three Characters in Search of History

Pierre Nora, one the most famous scholars of memory studies makes an important distinction between history and memory:

> Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear . . . to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering

> and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic-responsive. (8)

This comprehensive definition of memory and history points out how history is a construct, fixed in meaning and subject to evaluation and criticism. Memory on the other hand is a constantly evolving phenomenon dependent on socio-temporal positioning of the subject, whose meaning is always provisional (Keightley 177). While Nora's definition suggests a disconnection between memory and history, other scholars have argued against this tendency of strict disjunction between history and memory, and have instead pointed out their interdependence on each. According to Jay Winters, "Memory is a process distinct from history, though not isolated from it. . . . History and memory overlap, infuse each other, and create vigorous and occasionally fruitful incompatibilities" (5-6). He further argues, "In virtually all acts of remembrance, history and memory are braided together in the public domain, jointly informing our shifting and contested understandings of the past" (6). Building on the idea of how memory informs history, I would now analyze how *Extremely Loud* fills the gap between the official history and collective memory.

Just before his death, Oskar's father Thomas Schell Jr. assigns him, for his game Reconnaissance Expedition, the task of proving the existence of the sixth borough of New York City, which Oskar's father tells him, was an island just like Manhattan, separated from it by a thin body of water, so thin that people used to jump from Manhattan to the sixth borough. However, with the passage of time the island started moving away, and even though the engineers tried to make it stay by putting up chains, it broke free. All they could do was salvage a part of it now known as the Central Park. It was in the heart of the sixth borough but the people of New York pulled it off from the island, like people would pull off a carpet, leaving a hole in its place. He tells Oskar that there is no written record and the only way to prove its existence is through digging up evidence from Central Park. In assigning this mission to Oskar, his father perhaps is drawing an archeological analogy for excavating history itself—history that is rendered invisible and silent through various means of social control:

> 'Well, you won't read about it in any of the history books, because there's nothing—save for the circumstantial evidence in Central Park—to prove that it was there at all. Which makes its existence very easy to dismiss. But even though most people will say they have no time for or reason to believe in the Sixth Borough, and don't believe in the Sixth Borough, they will still use the word 'believe.' (217)

The use of the word 'believe' suggests a rejection of an outright denial of its existence. It suggests an idea of familiarity with the notion of the sixth borough's existence, perhaps through transgenerational memory, in spite of the fact that there is no recorded history. Digging up, therefore, is an important metaphor for dealing with history in the novel.

The novel is remarkable in the way the public history and private histories are interwoven. While Oscar's tale focuses on coming to terms with the trauma of his father's death, it is his grandparents who need to rememory their past. What is common in both the incidents is not only the trauma of personal loss but a larger landscape of counterintuitive public history—a history that challenges the violence of organized forgetting. The novel opens a year after September 11 tragedy. We find Oskar mired in grief and guilt. His way of dealing with this grief is to put some meaning to it, hence the quest for the lock. We find him planning and systematically going through all the names in the phone book in search of Mr./Ms. Black, calling them up and meeting them in person. Oskar is sometimes accompanied by an old neighbour and later on by the mysterious "renter" of his grandmother.

Oskar's search for the lock to the key is his way of staying connected with his father. But it is not only the death of his father that devastates Oskar; the fact that he does not know how exactly his father had died also torments him. He imagines his father to be one of the men who jumped out of the tower windows. He also imagines that his search is somehow taking him closer to his father, "I became a little lighter, because I was getting closer to Dad" (52). At the same time, he is also aware that it is taking him away from his mother. In a true Hamlet fashion, he is angry with his mother for being able to move on, "I also became a little heavier, because I was getting farther away from Mom" (52). At one point he cruelly tells her, he would have preferred to lose her than his father, "If I could have chosen, I would have chosen you" (171)!

Oskar's grief is heightened by his inability to communicate his grief. In fact, one of the main themes of the novel is the break down of communication, and the ensuing

silence. Foer employs various strategies in the novel to show how the attempts to communicate are repeatedly thwarted and frustrated owing to the trauma the characters have had to face. The scholarship on memory studies argues that traumatic memories or narratives of traumatic memories have to be shared for the commemorative and subsequently the healing process to be effective. Jenna Baddeley and Jefferson A. Singer call this "unspoken memory" where "the withholding of socially sharing autobiographical memories about the loss and the departed family member" is a way to either conserve an existing narrative identity or assert a new narrative identity. Traumatized by his past, Thomas Schell Sr., Oskar's Grandpa slowly loses his voice or perhaps the will to speak. Thomas Schell recalls: "I was the last word I was able to speak aloud" (17), and then "silence overtook me like a cancer" (16). In order to communicate he has two words tattooed on his hands, "Yes" on the left, and "No" on the right.

"Rememory", as described earlier," is the continued presence of that which has disappeared or been forgotten" (Morrison 61). The emergence of memory in the novel, through the process of rememory becomes a metahistorical category which bridges the gap between past and present, public and personal, silence and sound. Embedded within Oskar's story and running parallel to it, is the story of Oskar's paternal grandparents who are survivors of Dresden Bombing during the World War II. Foer's novel dramatizes the process of their rememory. This is done through the letters Grandpa writes to Oskar's father, and the one Grandma writes to Oscar. As we read through their letters, we are gradually able to piece together the story of their lives. In Germany, Grandpa was an aspiring sculptor, engaged to be married to Anna, Grandma's sister. In 1945, United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) and the British Royal Air Force (RAF) carpet bombed

the beautiful German City of Dresden to cinders. During the course of three days, between 13—15 February four raids were conducted by the Allied forces killing approximately twenty five thousand people. Grandpa and Grandma were the only survivors from their respective families. Seven years later, he meets Grandma again in a bakery in New York City and Grandma who is on the brink of committing suicide proposes to him. Their loneliness helps them decide to get married to each other. Their marriage, however, has little chance of surviving as the past has a crippling hold on their present. According to Kristiaan Versluys:

> The marriage of Grandpa and Grandma is an enactment of the unsuccessful attempt of the protagonists to release themselves from the burden of an onerous and unusable past. . . . The present consists of a series of failed attempts to drown the past in the trivialities of the everyday. Beyond that, husband and wife cooperate in a conspiracy of silence. (84)

What Versluys calls a "conspiracy of silence" soon extends into the invention of "Nothing Places" and "Something Places" in the apartment. **"**'Nothing Places,' in which one could be assured of complete privacy, we agreed that we never would look at the marked-off zones, that they would be nonexistent territories in the apartment in which as one could temporarily cease to exist" (110). This desire for ceasing to exist suggests the inability of the characters to cope with their present and is reflective of their need to exist in the past, although as a rule, both husband and wife never talk about the past. The "Nothing Places" soon overtake the whole apartment, and eventually when Grandma announces that she is pregnant, the break up is inevitable for Grandpa had agreed to

marry Grandma on the condition that they would never have children. Grandpa returns to Dresden where he could 'cease to exist' in the present—the place of his loss.

The process of rememory that the novel dramatizes remains incomplete, as the letters Grandpa writes are never sent. Similarly, when during their brief marriage Grandma types the story of her life on the typewriter given to her by Grandpa, nothing gets typed as Grandpa forgets to replace its ribbon, and Grandma claims she cannot read because her "eyes are crummy"(119). Therefore, all she had to show for herself after months of typing, are thousands of empty pages. Later on in her own letter to Oskar, Grandma describes this as, "My life story was spaces" (176).

Silence, at the personal level, is also a metaphor for "silencing" at the public level. As the characters 'rememory' the past, the histories of nations through the victims of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing are also represented. The parallel drawn between these victims and victims of 9/11 is not only of the human resilience or lack of it in times of trauma but also of the burden of a history of an imperial past. The relevance of the stories of US' imperial violence may not have any straightforward place in the narratives of post-9/11 scenario except through rememory as it resurrects the imperial past to reflect on the present.

Extremely Loud apart from other issues it highlights, is an artistic response to the official amnesia or what Giroux calls the "violence of organized forgetting" and McClintock refers to as "administered forgetting" of the US's imperial past. The attack on Dresden is one of the most controversial attacks during WWII. Dresden was not a military city; it did not have any military installations and only a few anti-aircraft guns. It was however, an industrial and cultural hub and one of the most beautiful cities in Europe

at the time. It is argued that the bombing on Dresden was totally unnecessary as the city had no military significance for one, and secondly, it was done at a time when Germany's ceding defeat was imminent. Furthermore, the target of carpet bombing, were civilians. The bombing was so brutal and vicious that the event is remembered as the "Hiroshima of Europe". According to a conservative estimate about 25000 people were killed. However, unofficial sources quote a much higher toll. Grandpa remembers the night of the Dresden attack. "At 9:30 that night, the air-raid sirens sounded, everyone went to the shelters, but no one hurried, we were used to the alarms, we assumed they were false, why would anyone want to bomb Dresden" (208) ? The rhetoric following the attack argued that it was a necessity of war. This doctrine of necessity is what McClintock severely criticizes in her article, "Indeed, the doctrine of American exceptionalism often finds its alibi for violence in the figure of naturalized tragedy" (821). She further states that "The naturalizing of tragedy can lead to political paralysis, melancholia, an unsettled malaise, and an exhaustion of political will" (827).

A little while before the attack, Anna, Grandpa's fiancée had told him that she was pregnant and Grandpa was over the moon. And then the attack happens. The writer does not dwell so much on the events of 9/11, per se, but more on the effects they have on the lives of individuals, and even when the novel does describe the events of 9/11, the writer does not go into graphic details. In comparison, when the focalization finally shifts to the night of Dresden bombing, when Grandpa and Grandma lose their families, Foer gives painstakingly vivid description of the horrors of the night. In this way, he is perhaps able to balance out the repeated visual effects of the events of September 11, 2001 and the forgotten events of February 1945.

Grandpa vividly describes the apocalyptic scene of the night of the firebombing in 1945—the night that for Grandpa "has no beginning or end" (208):

> [B]urning monkeys screamed from the trees, birds with their wings on fire sang from the telephone wires over which desperate calls traveled . . . there was a silver explosion, all of us tried to leave the cellar at once, dead and dying people were trampled, I walked over an old man, I walked over children, everyone was losing everyone, the bombs were like a waterfall . . . I saw a woman whose blond hair green dress were on fire, running with a silent baby in her arms, I saw humans melted into thick pools of liquid, three or four feet deep in places, I saw bodies crackling like embers, laughing, and the remains of masses of people who had tried to escape the firestorm by jumping head first into the lakes and ponds, the parts of their bodies that were submerged in the water were still intact, while the parts that protruded above water were charred beyond recognition, the bombs kept falling, purple, orange and white, I kept running, my hands kept bleeding, through the sounds of collapsing buildings I heard the roar of that baby's silence. (210-211)

The long run-on sentence conveys a sense of immediacy and the shock of the night that is still palpable in Grandpa's memory. It is as if the writer just cannot pause to take a breath, and his eye is the eye of the camera that swiftly telecasts the scene in whichever direction it swings. This excluded history, or the lost memory of the victims of Dresden bombing is a path for questioning the American exceptionalism values and leads further towards a cognitive process of identifying the oppressor.

When Oskar eventually finds out that the key belonged to a man from whom his father had bought the vase in which he had found the key, at an auction, he is disappointed not only because his search did not deliver the results he had anticipated, but also because the search had come to an end, "I found it and now I can stop looking? found it and it had nothing to do with Dad? and now I'll wear heavy boots for the rest of my life? I wish I hadn't found it. . . . Looking for it let me stay close to him for a little while longer" (304). He discovers to his amazement that his mother had known it all along what he was doing and understands why he is doing it. He also finally shares his guilty secret with her—about his father's phone calls. He has told the story to strangers before but for example, to the "renter" (he does not know that the renter was his grandfather), Mr. Black to whom the key belonged but unburdening himself in front of his mother finally brings him relief.

In order to break their silence, to recover themselves, and to negotiate a future, the grandparents need to reclaim their repressed history. While it is true at a personal level, it is equally important at a national level as well to hold governments accountable. It is important for Oskar's grandparents to confront their past just as it is important for the reader not to neglect the context of Grandpa and Grandma's memory. Grandma is finally able to break out of that vicious silence as she writes her letter to Oskar. For Grandpa, there is no redemption though. In one of the letters he never sent to his son, he writes, "[I]f I could tell you what happened to me that night, I could leave that night behind me, maybe I could come home to you, but that night has no beginning or end, it started before I was born and it's still happening" (208).

Burnt Shadows: A Counter-History of the Present

In an essay that addresses the reasons behind writing this novel, Kamila Shamsie writes:

> [America] was a country I always looked at with one eye shut. With my left eye I saw the America of John Hersey; with my right eye I saw the America of the two atom bombs. This one-eyed seeing was easy enough from a distance. But then I came to America as an undergraduate and realized that with a few honorable exceptions, all of America looked at America with one eye shut. ("The Storytellers")

What Shamsie here is suggesting is not that American's look at America uncritically, rather she laments their parochial approach; the way they are always focused on the domestic. This in turn, also, contributes to the amnesia discussed earlier. Therefore, Shamsie counters this selective historical amnesia or neglect in a startling narrative that spans six countries and a period of more than sixty years. *Burnt Shadows* awakens its readers from their current ahistorical stupor into which they have been maneuvered and contests the imperialist discourses of neocolonial times. The novel, apart from making visible the history, foregrounds the continuities of the old colonial system in the age of new imperialism. Shamsie's narrative is at once direct and assertive. The protagonist Hiroko, a Japanese woman, in whom the various threads of the different stories in the novel meet, is the protagonist of the novel and a *hibakusha*, the Japanese word for atom bomb survivor. Hiroko lives through some defining moments in the recent history, the bombing of Nagasaki, Partition of India, Russia-Afghan War, 9/11 and finally the War on Terror, and through her we, too, become a witness to these events. Hiroko embodies the memories of the catastrophic day in Nagasaki in the form of bird-shaped scars that are

imprinted on her body from the kimono she was wearing at the time of the atom bomb explosion. The intense heat that was generated imprinted the birds from her kimono on to her back. Although Hiroko is able to share rememories with her husband and her close friend Ilse, she is unable to share them with Raza, her only son. If she had, she believes, her son might not have taken the course in his life, that he eventually does. Hiroko regrets her silence, "I wish now I'd told Raza. Told everyone. Written it down and put a copy in every school, every library, every public meeting place" (299).

In what follows I will discuss several incidents from the novel that challenge the US's image of itself and question the exceptionalism discourse it adopts to justify its wars and interventions around the world. Unlike *Extremely Loud* the novel is a severe indictment of the US foreign policy and imperial role around the world. I will also look at how those incidents help recover a counter-history of the present and in doing so, writes back to the empire.

The novel begins with a Prologue that shows Raza Konrad Ashraf being brought to what is very likely Guantanamo Bay and changing into its notorious "orange jump suit". We are given no other details, not even his name. The only question on his mind, "How did it all come to this[?]" (1). The novel that starts, rememories its way towards this moment. "How did it all come to this?" is a question, among others, that I am sure many Americans would have asked themselves after 9/11. This circular movement of the text, alludes to the historical connection joining the past with the present, with the events of September 11, 2001. The novel is divided in four sections. It starts in Nagasaki, then moves to Delhi at the time of partition of the Indian subcontinent. From Delhi it moves Karachi, and finally to Afghanistan and New York City.

The novel first takes us to Nagasaki, Japan in 1945, during World War II. It begins at an interesting juncture when the old imperialists Britain and Japan are dying and a new one, America, is burgeoning. Hiroko is a school teacher but has been made to work in a munitions factory as a punishment for her father's behaviour who, an iconoclastic painter, opposed to the emperor and the army's policies often speaks against them. He once disturbs the memorabilia for a Kamikaze pilot and as a punishment he is arrested and Hiroko is dismissed from her school job and made to work in the munitions factory. There is a sense of history repeating itself when years later on September 11, 2001, the modern day Kamikazes blow up the Twin Towers.

Hiroko is also referred to as the traitor's daughter. Her loyalties to Japan are suspect not only because of her father but also because of her mother who was German. Given the state of affairs of Japan with Germany at the time, she and every other German was suspect. They are hopeful, though, that things would change once the war is over. There is again a sense of déjà vu in the novel when Patriot Act is enforced in America owing to the threat to national security, when Muslim migrants' loyalties are held suspect owing to their faith.

Hiroko is in love with Konrad Weiss, a German, living in Japan. On the fateful day the bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Konrad proposes to her which Hiroko accepts. Konrad leaves for the Urakami Cathedral which was very close to the epicenter. Afterwards, all that Hiroko was able to find of him was a burnt shadow on a stone. The heat generated from the bomb was so much that even though quite away from the epicenter, and inside her home, her back started burning up, leaving a scarred imprint of the three cranes printed on the silk kimono. All those who were outdoors in the area, had

their skin melted off from their bodies. Hiroko's father was outside and before she passed out she saw her father in this state trying to reach her.

Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are two of the ugliest truths of the US history. Yet, they have been buried under the rhetoric of "necessity". In the weeks after the atom bomb attacks, all film footages and most photographs of the bombings and their aftermath in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were banned in the US. According to Greg Mitchell, "the American public only got to see the same black and white images: a mushroom cloud, battered buildings, a devastated landscape. The true human costs –a full airing of the bomb's effects on people – were kept hidden"(2). Instead, there was celebration of having won the war. Henry Giroux notes, "In the immediate aftermath, the incineration of mostly innocent civilians was buried in official government pronouncements about the victory of the bombings of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki" ("Remembering Hiroshima"). Quoting Mary McCarthy, the famous novelist, MacClintock, too, points out, "As Mary McCarthy observed, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki fell into "a hole in human history." Hiroshima was "taken out of the American conscience, eviscerated, extirpated" (367).

The atomic bomb was hailed and celebrated as being necessary for ending the war with Japan. Anne McClintock questions the veracity of the argument by the apologists of the bomb and locates the use of the atom bombs within the logic of American exceptionalism. She argues, "The nuclear attacks on Japan were . . . officially figured as necessary tragedies rather than as politically motivated atrocities"(821). Attributing politically motivated actions to a tragic destiny is to invoke historical amnesia and deny responsibility for it, she further adds (821). The vivid description of the scene

where Hiroko sees her father's melting flesh makes the horror of the atomic bomb a palpable reality:

> Hiroko looks down, sees a reptile crawling up the path towards her house. She understands now. The earth has already opened up, disgorged hell. Her neighbour's daughter is running towards the reptile with a bamboo spear in hand her grip incorrect. The reptile raises its head and the girl drops the spear, calls out Hiroko's father's name. Why does she expect him to help? Hiroko wonders, as the girl keeps chanting, 'Tanaka-san, Tanaka-san,' hands gripping the sides of her face as she stares at the reptile. (28-29)

Later when she tells Ilse of the terrible day, she says, "I don't know the words in any language . . . My father, Ilse. I saw him in the last seconds of his life, and I thought he was something unhuman. He was covered in scales. No skin, no hair, no clothes, just scales. No one, no one in the world should ever have to see their father covered in scales" (100).

The very title of the novel "Burnt Shadows" is a reference to what are referred to as "Nuclear Shadows". The thermal radiation that was emitted from the bomb reduced human beings to a mere imprint, a shadow on the earth. When Hiroko goes looking for Konrad, she sees a long shadow on a stone; she is sure it is him as "No one else in Nagasaki could cast such a long shadow" (30).

Hiroko though survives the bombing, she much detests the epithet *'hibakusha'*—the Japanese word for the survivors of the atomic bombing. Hiroko feels the "word 'hibakusha' start[ing] to consume her life," (50). So she first moves to Tokyo and later to

India to put as much distance between herself and the place of her loss. Maja Zehfuss notes that Hiroko's life is so affected by the memory of the tragic event that:

> Hiroko moves across the planet: from Nagasaki to Tokyo to Delhi to Istanbul to Karachi to Abbottabad and finally to New York. Only one of these moves is not precipitated by the loss of a loved one and also by Hiroko's memory of the bombing, by the place becoming intolerable in relation to this memory. (61)

Eighteen months later Hiroko travels to India to meet Konrad's sister Elizabeth Burton, or Ilse as she was called by family and friends, whose husband worked as a lawyer for British empire. Ilse invites Hiroko to stay with them and Hiroko finds a friend in her forever. It is with her that she stays when she finally goes to live in America, when Pakistan decides to do a nuclear explosion. While in India Hiroko falls in love with James' assistant Sajjad Ashraf and marries him and by a strange hand of fate find they themselves in Pakistan. Raza born to them after ten years of marriage become the focus of their lives. The focalization of the novel then shifts to Raza in the 1980s first in Karachi. This is the time when after Russian invasion of Kabul, America with the help of Pakistani intelligence agency was fighting a proxy war in Afghanistan. Raza befriends the children of the Mujahidin and in a silly bit of bravado and the need for adventure, decides to travel to Peshawar to explore the country without telling his parents. Raza shares the same gift of languages as his mother which helps him pretend to be one of the Afghans who aspires to be a mujahid one day. Under the pseudonym of Raza Hazara he ends up in a training camp for the mujahidin near the Pak-Afghan border. Meanwhile, his parents are frantically searching for him. In a mix-up, Sajjad gets killed by one of the ammunition dealers for CIA. When Raza reaches home, he is shattered and guilt ridden.

The next section of the book shows how Raza leaves home to run away from his guilt. He goes to Dubai to work over there and from there, through Harry, he starts working as a private military contractor. In the meanwhile, a piqued Hiroko leaves Pakistan for America in 1998 after it the tests its nuclear bomb. She feels she just cannot bear the madness. In the aftermath of 9/11 and the enforcement of Patriot Act, Raza is wrongly accused of Harry's murder, whom he adored and while trying to bail a friend out of Canada back to Afghanistan, he is caught and ends up in Guantanamo Bay.

Hiroko's identity in the time since the attacks is defined by the bomb. She is a hibakusha. She tells Ilse, "I don't want to hide these burns on my back, but I don't want people to judge me by them either. Hibakusha. I hate that word. It reduces you to the bomb. Every atom of you" (100). Naturally one does not want to be identified by the very thing that takes not only your loved ones away from you but is so destructive as to kill 75,000 people in a flash. Years later, her son Raza is told by the girl he wanted to marry that she cannot marry the son of a atom bomb survivor as he might be carrying the after effects of that radiation. She rememories the events of the fateful day, every day as the memories are inscribed on her body in the shape of the three cranes on her back, like the chokecherry tree on Seth's back in the *Beloved*. There is a strange irony in drawing a comparison between Seth and Hiroko. Both the incidents exemplify extreme form of racism. The schoolmaster wanted to see if Seth was human, and by deciding to explode the bomb over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese were evicted from the category of the human. Both the cases lay culpability at the same door.

Years later Harry's daughter Kim tells Hiroko how she sees her father's killer in every Afghan: "If I did look at him and see the man who killed my father, isn't that

understandable? I'm not saying it's OK, but you have to say you understand. Should I look at you and see Harry Truman?" (369), Hiroko asks Kim. Hiroko bitterly points out to her, "In the big picture of the Second World War, what was seventy-five thousand more Japanese dead? Acceptable, that's what it was. In the big picture of threats to America, what is one Afghan? Expendable", and further points out, "[B]ecause of you, I understand for the first time how nations can applaud when their governments drop a second nuclear bomb (370)". Abdullah, too, has a complaint of being exploited by America for its own war. He laments to Raza, "You hear them now all the time. Talking about how they won the Cold War, now they'll win this war. My brother died winning their Cold War. Now they say he makes heaven an abomination" (358). He tells Kim that Americans cannot understand the pain of war as "countries like yours they always fight wars, but always somewhere else. The disease always happens somewhere else. It's why you fight more wars than anyone else; because you understand war least of all. You need to understand it better" (350). It is highly ironical that years earlier Harry Truman should have used a similar argument in his August 9, 1945 "Radio Report to the American People on Potsdam Conference" should use a similar argument after he returned home from Germany:

> War has indeed come home to Germany and to the German people. It has come home in all the frightfulness with which the German leaders started and waged it. The German people are beginning to atone for the crimes of the gangsters whom they placed in power and whom they wholeheartedly approved and obediently followed. *(Public Papers)*

Amy Kaplan in her presidential address to the American Studies Association challenges the notion that empire takes place far away from home. According to her it exerts power at home too. This is manifest in the way state power is wielded at home in America. The threat to national security has turned the world policeman inwards as well. Anybody and everybody is a suspect until proven otherwise. Such suspects are shipped off to places like Guantanamo Bay, where the novel's opening image suggests Raza is in his orange jumpsuit. He is suspected of killing Harry, just because he bent to pick up the ball while playing cricket. When Kim suggests to Raza that Abdullah, the Afghan taxi driver, an illegal immigrant whom Raza wants to help in getting out of the US should stop running from INS and CIA who are holding him suspect just because he got scared and ran away when approached by them, should surrender himself and admit that he has made a mistake, Raza mocks her ignorance: Have you read the Patriot Act" (305)? Abdullah remembers his friend Kemal who was picked up by the CIA and was never seen again.

The wars in the 21st century, like everything else, have become privatized. The latter half of the novel, where focalization shifts to Raza, we see greater awareness as well and criticism of these private mercenary armies. According to Zinck Pascal:

> The increasing US reliance on mercenaries and TCNs to fight its controversial war further illustrates Mbembe's concepts of "necropolitics" and "necropower". One CIA commander dismisses Raza as "one of the grunts who know their positions can be filled by a million other desperate rats" (304). In its global war on terror – GWOT – the US uses free market ideology to privatise war, generate profits through unscrupulous labour practices, commit atrocities by proxy, and

> outsource death to foreign others, mostly Third World paupers. Thus, the hiring of foreign have-nots renders many of the deaths required for the war effort in Afghanistan invisible (Singer 2003, Avant 2005).

Unfortunately, the general American public is unaware of the way US conducts its wars around the world. In *Burnt Shadows*, two of the central characters, Harry and Raza are mercenaries, although the "line between working for the American military and working for a private military company contracted to the American military was so fine"(263).

Multidirectional Memory and the Implicated Subject

Michael Rothberg in his groundbreaking work *Multidirectional Memory* debates the widely supported concept of competitive memory in Memory studies. He argues against the idea that memories are a zero sum game—that one set of memories can either marginalize or reduce the importance of another set of memories. "Comparison, like memory, should be thought of as productive and not simply as reproducing already given entities that either are or are not 'like' other already given entities" (*Multidirectional* 18-19). Collective memories of seemingly distinct histories—such as those of slavery, Holocaust, or colonialism, Dresden bombing, Hiroshima and Nagasaki are implicated in each other and can becomes a vehicle for articulating other histories:

> Against the framework that understands collective memory as competitive memory—as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources—I suggest that we consider memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative. This interaction of different historical memories illustrates the productive, intercultural dynamic that I call multidirectional memory" (*Multidirectional* 3).

Rothberg points out that comparison can be productive as it can provide us with newer insights. Rothberg uses Freud's notion of 'screen memories' and explains that "the displacement that takes place in screen memory … functions as much to open up lines of communication with the past as to close them off" (*Multidirectional* 12). Rothberg shifts and applies this notion from the individual to the collective. The screen memory functions multidirectionally; it screens a traumatic memory but never completely erases it. On the contrary, it can give access to the obscured memory. It both hides and reveals that which has been suppressed. The absence of one memory, at first, may be obscured by the 'new' memory where the new memory directs attention to the presence of a forgotten one. Finally, Rothberg's model of multidirectional memory explores "what happens when the histories of extreme violence confront each other. What happens when different histories of extreme violence confront each other in the public sphere?" ("From Gaza to Warsaw" 259).

I will now look at the two novels under discussion in this chapter and explore as Michael Rothberg has suggested, what happens when distinctive memories of violence are juxtaposed. *Extremely Loud And Incredibly Close* (2005) and *Burnt Shadows* (2009) both have characters whose lives are altered by cataclysmic events, not once, but twice and in some cases more than twice. Through an intricate inter-mingling of distinctive histories the writers not only convey a sense of inevitability of loss but also point out the dangers of, as Rothberg has suggested, creating hierarchy of suffering (*Multidirectional 9)*. The fall out of such a moral and ethical loss is wars like the "War on Terror".

It is particularly important to foreground and analyze the two events for the role the United States played in both the events that resulted in the destruction, devastation

and the human tragedy they caused to a large number of human population. It is particularly significant to juxtapose them with 9/11 as it will lend an immediacy to the events of the past. Furthermore, analyzing histories of violence through a framework of analysis for 9/11 violence will undoubtedly lead to a greater understanding of these events. The authors of the two novels commemorate trauma and translate it into a counter history of 9/11.

The events of September 11, 2001 are a watershed in American history. The wars that America had been fighting all over the globe finally reached its shores. Shocked, aggrieved, bewildered and outraged, many declared it to be an apocalyptic event. In fact the events of 9/11 are upheld and privileged as unique and unprecedented events. Martin Amis emotionally declared, "all the writers on earth were reluctantly considering a change of occupation" (qtd. in Mishra "End"). For some it was "a traumatic event of global proportions"(Versluys 4). Lori Daub declared it to be an event outside the "bounds of language, outside the world we made it for ourselves" (qtd. in Versluys 2).
Less than a month later, on October 7, 2001 United States attacked Afghanistan. Today, sixteen years later, it is still there and the end to war and restoration of democracy, its avowed project, are far from being fulfilled. Two years after the invasion of Afghanistan, the War on Terror, also found its way to Iraq.

Not undermining the tragedy, one may take issue with the rather self-indulgent grief these remarks exhibit. Anne McClintock in her insightful essay questions such an attitude and asks: What constitutes a national tragedy in the first place? She further argues, "What are the consequences of sacralizing one national calamity (the 9-11 attack) as a world- historic tragedy while ghosting the other foundational violences of United

States history, which have returned to haunt the post-9-11 era as unspeakable premonitions and accusatory revenants?" (293). The two novels in this chapter counter this impulse by juxtaposing different histories of oppression in their response to the tragedy of 9/11. The purpose is not to show which one was a bigger tragedy but to express solidarity with those who are suffering, and as we observe, Oskar does learn to manage his own grief as he is exposed to the griefs of the people whom he meets in search of Mr./Ms. Black.

Michael Rothberg's analytic of multidirectional memory argues against the tendency to consider juxtaposing memories as a zero-sum logic. For example, the juxtaposition of the two catastrophic events, as well as the testimony presented through the interview of Atomic bomb victims that Oskar uses in his presentation at school, provide the readers in the novel the opportunities to confront and critically examine memories of a repressed past that is mostly ignored in the official memory and history.

Film, literature, TV in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, present it as a singularly catastrophic event in the recent history. However, by placing the violent histories together the novelists have challenged such a conception. Let's look at the heart wrenching testimony of the woman whose daughter dies in the Hiroshima bombing. Oskar, having developed a sensitivity to these issues, in the days after his father's death, gives a presentation at school and plays the tape of the testimony:

> It was just the two of us. I didn't know what to do. I was not a nurse. There were maggots in her wounds and a sticky yellow liquid. I tried to clean her up. But her skin was peeling off. The maggots were coming out all over. I couldn't wipe them off, or I would wipe off her skin and muscle. I had to pick them out. She

asked me what I was doing. I told her, 'Oh, Masako. It's nothing.' She nodded. Nine hours later, she died. (188-189)

The description of the night of Dresden bombing is equally harrowing: "the buildings were burning, the trees burning, the asphalt, I saw and heard humans trapped, I smelled them, standing in the molting, burning streets like living torches, screaming for help that was impossible to give, the air itself was burning. . ." (214).

Oskar is traumatized by his father's death as a result of 9/11 attacks. At the same, time Foer's novel portrays the trauma of his paternal grandparent who have survived Dresden bombing. Their malaise is their inability to express this grief. Later on, we see Oskar and Grandma able to break down the barriers but not Grandpa. The story of *Burnt Shadows*, too is bookended between the bombing of Nagasaki and 9/11. In Shamsie's novel the juxtaposition of New York 2001 with Nagasaki 1945 constitutes a form of resistance against the totalizing tendency where 9/11 becomes the ultimate tragedy and crime. The destruction of Urakami capital finds its parallel in the fall of the Twin Towers. Similarly, modern day terrorists remind one of the Japanese kamikazes pilots who flew on suicidal missions during World War II. By invoking the past the two novels not only make use of the frame work of 9/11 to articulate another tragedy but in doing so, they resist an erasure of history as well. History conflates in Foer's and Shamsie's texts to bring to the fore silenced histories of oppression and in doing so, it teaches people how to negotiate a better tomorrow. Furthermore, the multidirectional memories in both the novels demonstrate the need for the US to confront its own histories of violence. Both the novels do not offer any grand resolution for there are none available. Coincidently both the novels end in what are known as no-man's land. Grandpa and Grandma perhaps

cannot bear to be at the places of their loss. Hence, they end up living at the airport from where Grandma writes her letter to Oskar. Similarly, Raza is in Guantanamo Bay, and likely to remain there for he is accused of killing an American operative. There is no possibility of redemption and freedom for him.

Related to the incident of violence, there is always the question of responsibility. Who bears the responsibility for committing violence? Michael Rothberg recently promotes the idea of what he calls the "implicated subject". In an interview with Ann Rigney to NITIMES – Network in Transnational Memory Studies, Rothberg explains it as a term that is used to talk about the gap that lies between the victim and the perpetrator. According to Rothberg the victim—perpetrator binary cannot fully convey how violence works owing to its different forms. Violence could be economic, structural or even genocidal. In such cases it is sometimes difficult to affix the responsibility for it. At the same time there are those who are not directly involved in this violence but who are beneficiaries of that violence and exploitation in some indirect way. These, he refers to as the implicated subject. He uses this concept particularly to criticize capitalist globalization in which as consumption of products made through exploitation of labour from the Third World Countries, implicates people in the violence committed.

Similarly, the crimes committed in the name of "saving American lives" not only question the moral and ethical values being practised but also implicates those in whose name it is being done . Madeleine Albright, the former US secretary of state, in a TV programme " Sixty Minutes" makes a startling callous claim:

> Lesley Stahl (of CBS News): "We have heard that half a million children[Iraqi] have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?"
>
> Madeleine Albright: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price is worth it." (qtd. in Spagat)

Rothberg presents the "implicated subject" as moral and ethical category of analysis which can be employed diachronically as well as synchronically i.e one could also be held responsible for the historical legacy as well as for the events happening now. "Implicated subject links up with multidirectionality of memory", Rothberg argues for and suggests a recuperative recourse by showing solidarity across differences.

Rothberg's idea of implicated subject can be particularly useful in configuring different modes of resistance to the violence and oppression of empire. Rothberg, elsewhere argues that the concept of implicated subject can be useful in tackling political issues ("Trauma"). Not only can one show solidarity across differences, Rothberg points out, but it can also be effectively used for introspection in case one is the implicated subject. The twenty first century's imperial wars, preemptive or otherwise, to save "American lives" implicates American citizenry in the violence committed in its name. The onus of responsibility, then, is not entirely government's. Citizen subjects are also implicated in it and therefore require assertion of political subjectivity and resistance.

CHAPTER FOUR

NECROPOLITICS OF EMPIRE IN *NO SPACE FOR FURTHER BURIALS*

Introduction

Neoliberalism as the ideological, political and economic force behind the contemporary forms of imperialism seeks to ensure a form of global govermentality that has control over populations through neoliberal economy, and technologies of control and extermination. Gauging by its employment in various fields of study, especially in the study of globalization, neoliberal capitalism, war, gender and queer studies, migration studies, art and culture studies, Achille Mbembe's concept of Necropolitics emerges as an important concept in analyzing and understanding the totalitarian formations in the contemporary world. It is particularly illuminating in an analysis of how imperial powers operate in this era of neo-imperialism, and proves instrumental in reconfiguring the modes of resistance.

This chapter makes use of Achille Mbembe concept of necropolitics to offer a reading of *No Space For Further Burials* and discusses how this new imperialism inscribes war and uses it as a means of controlling the world population through militarization, and modern technologies of warfare, and extermination. In the process what is created are "death-worlds" and the "living-dead" (Mbembe 2003). Thus, a War on Terror is actually a war of terror. The chapter also explores this war at the cross roads of race and gender. I argue that Mbembe's theorization offers an incomplete assessment of these death zones as it fails to consider specifically the necropolitics of the gendered bodies. Necropolitics leaves little room for human agency and subjectivity except through death; writing as a subversive act also grants agency to human beings.

From Biopolitics to Necropolitics

Michele Foucault uses the term biopolitics to describe how modern states seek to control and discipline the entire populations, transforming them into "docile subjects"[4], by exerting control over the human body through what he calls the "technologies of power". In the twenty first century, however, these technologies of power are provided with much greater complexity. Of the many technologies of power, war is perhaps the ultimate technology of control and manipulation of a population that is available to a neoliberal empire. Achille Mbembe coins the term necropolitics and theorizes it to explore this complexity.

Achille Mbembe in an essay "Necropolitics" (2003) proposes necropolitics to be an important category of analysis of totalitarian power structures in the contemporary world. He postulates that in the contemporary world, the ultimate expression of sovereignty lies in the power to decide "who may live and who must die" (11). Drawing upon the Foucauldian notion of biopower, which marks the beginning of biopolitics during modernity, Mbembe defines it as "that domain of life over which power has taken control" (12). However, he argues that the concept of biopower is insufficient to account for politics in today's world owing to "the contemporary ways in which the political, under the guise of war, of resistance, or of the fight against terror, makes the murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective" (17). Equating politics with war as it empowers one with the right to kill i.e. "necropower", Mbembe explores how life and death are inscribed within the contemporary "order of power" (12). Where biopolitics has life as a category of power, necropolitics has death. So, Mbembe defines necropolitics as

[4] For a discussion of "docile subjects" and "technologies of power" see Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, 2011.

the "contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death" (39). Elaborating it further he states, that necropolitics "account[s] for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of "death-worlds", new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of "living dead" (40). Similarly, contemporary wars, Mbembe states, "aim to force the enemy into submission regardless of the immediate consequences, side effects, and "collateral damage" of the military actions" (21).

In order to explicate the concept of necropolitics further, Mbembe builds upon Foucault's description of biopolitics and explores its relationship with sovereignty and state of exception. According to Mbembe one of the ways in which sovereignty, as defined above, is ensured is by imposing a state of exception. He points out that the term "state of exception" has often been used in relation to Nazi concentration camps or death camps. Life in those extermination camp sites was of unparalleled violence and horror as those living there were denied their basic human rights and were reduced to what is known as "bare life". He quotes Hannah Arendt who explains that the horror of life in those camps "can never be fully embraced by the imagination for the very reason that it stands outside of life and death" (qtd. in Mbembe 12).

Mbembe borrows the idea of "state of exception" and "bare life" from Giorgio Agamben. Although, he does not explain it in the essay, but it is important for us to explore the terms here as Agamben explains them. At the heart of the idea of "state of exception" is the idea of "homo sacer" or the "scared human being" as explained by Agamben in his critically acclaimed book of the same name. According to Agamben the

ancient Greeks had no single word to describe life; rather, they ascribed two qualities to life namely, "bios" and "zoē" and described life through them. "Bios" for Greeks meant political life, qualified life or simply, good life. Life for the ancient Greeks meant life in society which was synonymous with political life or a juridical living. In comparison "zoē" was "bare life" or "animal life". It is important to note that the ancient Greeks considered women, children and the insane as "zoē" for it was believed that they did not have any contribution to the active political life. According to the ancient Greeks "bios" could also be reduced to "zoē", but only punitively. "Homo Sacer" was, then, somebody who was exiled from society or politically qualified life as a punishment for a crime he committed. Divested of any political rights, he was allowed to be killed by anyone with impunity, but was not considered fit to be sacrificed as an offering to gods as he was "sacred life" or "bare life". Sacred, as used in this sense, cannot be equated with the word "holy", as it is generally understood to mean, but is used more in the sense of an anomie. Such a situation, however, was not a norm but was considered an exception to the norm, hence the term "state of exception". State of exception is a spatial term and in Agamben's assessment the city in Greek tradition is replaced by the camp site in modernity as the state or space of exception. Furthermore, in the Greeks it was always only the king or the 'sovereign' who could invoke this "state of exception". Agamben therefore, offers Carl Schmit's definition of sovereignty as the right to invoke the state of exception (11). Agamben notes that the state of exception has been the norm of the Western political structure since the time of the ancient Greeks. Citing Foucault, he records that during modernity and with the arrival of biology as a field of study, "politics was turned into biopolitics"(*Homo Sacer* 5). Biology described life essentially in terms of "zoē", and was

responsible for the "bestialization of man achieved through the most sophisticated political techniques" (Foucault qtd. in *Homo Sacer* 5). The political subject, in the modern nation-state, is a combination of "zoē" and "bios"—a biological object with rights of the "bios" or citizenship. The state exercises control not only over the political life but on the human bodies as well. This, Foucault describes as biopolitics.

In ancient Greece, state of exception was not a law but an act beyond the law, and in being so, it was another paradox. Agamben explains, "He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable. It is literally impossible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order" (*Homo Sacer* 28). Agamben calls this an "inclusive exclusion" (21). In being excluded from political life, homo sacer becomes a site of application of the juridical law. At the same time its enforced exclusion, becomes a political inclusion into zoē. Hence, "inclusive exclusion". In comparison, modern democracies and nation-states are enabled by law to strip their subjects of the rights of citizenship. Agamben again quotes Foucault who, summarizes the process through which in the modern era human life is rendered worthless: "For millennia man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question" (qtd. in Agamben 3). This makes modern democratic states totalitarian in their very foundation for Agamben.

Offering Carl Schmit's definition of sovereignty, as having the power to invoke the state of exception (21), Mbembe argues that the exercise of sovereignty, and the state

of exception are best manifested in slavery and colonialism during modernity. Since slaves and colonial natives or the "savages" are viewed as lesser human and more animal, they are set outside the juridical law and therefore, could be killed with impunity. In the late modern colonial occupation, sovereignty and state of exception find their most aggressive manifestation in Apartheid Africa and in the occupation of Palestine (27) which he identifies as "the most accomplished form of necropower." (27). In his discussion of South Africa, Mbembe comes up with another interpretation of the idea of "sovereignty": "In this case, sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not (27)". He uses the example of Palestine to reflect upon the type of occupation and surveillance that characterizes the occupation of a territory in late modernity, namely, territorial fragmentation, vertical sovereignty, and splintering occupation. Mbembe, then, adds another condition—"the state of siege" to the analytic of necropolitics of an occupied territory in late modernity. State of siege "is itself a military institution. It allows a modality of killing that does not distinguish between the external and the internal enemy. Entire populations are the target of the sovereign" (30). The state of siege, in other words, is the militarization of every day life in which local institutions are willfully destroyed, where free movement is restricted, and the land is often left at the mercy of the local warlords.

Mbembe finds racism to be a predominant feature in the Western political thought and practice and finds it at work in necropolitics as well. He quotes Foucault who also finds racism inscribed within the biopolitical order. Mbembe argues that in Foucault's formulation dividing people into those who ought to live and those who must die "presupposes the distribution of human species into groups, the subdivision of the

population into subgroups, and the establishment of a biological caesura between the ones and the others" (17). This is what Foucault calls racism. For Mbembe racism and a relation of enmity are vital for the exercise of necropower (18). He also quotes Hannah Arendt who locates racism within the experience of otherness and suggests that "the politics of race is ultimately linked to the politics of death" (17).

Mbembe also discusses the contemporary wars of the globalization era and argues how they are so very different from the wars of previous ages. Owing to the scientific and technological advancement and weapons of mass killings as well as economic exploitation of a land through international monetary organizations, and with the help of war machines "made up of segments of armed men that split up or merge with one another depending on the tasks to be carried out and the circumstances" (32), those in power have condemned a people to a necropolitical govermentality where they are reduced to "bare life". These people have no agency and the only way they can express any agency is through death.

In what follows, I will discuss first how Afghanistan is subjected to necropolitical violence that is a structural feature of capitalist imperialism. The prolonged War on Terror allows for violence that is at once "exceptionalized" as well as normalized in this contemporary politics and management of death that Mbembe theorizes in his essay. Furthermore, I will look at how war is yet another form of patriarchal formation that delimits women's role in society and renders them even more vulnerable to violence and oppression. Finally, I will explore in-depth how the novel's style of first-person narration from a western perspective may be considered an act of resistance and how the novel raises anew the question of subaltern representation.

Necropolitical Violence, Capitalist Imperialism and *No Space for Further Burials*

Faryal Ali Gohar's short novel *No Space for Further Burials* (2007) is set in 2002 in Afghanistan, a year after the US invasion is reminiscent of an occupation that Mbembe mentions in his essay. It is a grim tale of sheer abjection and horror prevalent in a war ravaged Afghanistan. The protagonist of the novel, an American medical technician whose name we do not know but who is referred to as "Firangi", the word for a foreigner—a white male, by the inmates in the local language, is taken prisoner in a mental asylum called Tarasmun by the soldiers of a local warlord who fell into a disagreement with the US and NATO forces. He is being kept there by his captors for ransom for "a phenomenal amount" (31). It is through his diaries that we get to know of Firangi's plight and through him the plight of the people of Afghanistan. Bulbul, a boy with burnt and deformed feet and who looks like "he is on the edge of sanity" (11), is his self-appointed liaison officer and interpreter in the asylum. He speaks a mixture of various languages, Russian, English, German, French indicating various nationalities that have ruled the land. It is Bulbul who brings him food in his cell and tells him the stories of the people in the asylum. In order to preserve his sanity, the narrator requests Bulbul to get him paper and pen to write. As we move through the novel we get to hear the various stories of the inmates which bring into sharp relief the horror of the wars that have been inflicted on this land and its people. There is little hope for them as they live through each day suffering the hardships of weather, hunger, violence of the rebel soldiers and war. Nothing, notes Firangi, "is certain here except death" (61).There is very little progression in the narrator's own story, as the time seems to have been locked within a repetitive

continuum within the walls of the asylum. The only sense of progression we have is through his diaries, the entries for which are initially organized chronologically, but as the time passes, they too became undated. The sense of progression is also indicated through the stories of the people, through the changing of seasons and through the narrator's loosening grip on sanity. There is also an increasing sense of the shrinking of space as more and more people keep dying leaving no space for further burials.

The novel is a combination of epistolary form and the stream of consciousness. The novel begins as a diary but whenever the narrator is delirious, or dreaming, the stream of consciousness takes over. This is indicated graphologically in the novel as that section is printed in italics. Also, sometimes when a certain character in the novel takes centre-stage to relate his story in a first person narrative, that section, too, is printed in italics.

The novel *No Space for Further Burials* (2007) started off as a manuscript for a film but inspired by the devastating effects of the events in the region, Gauhar ended up writing a novel, and that too in a matter of weeks. According to Gauhar:

> The compulsion to write *No Space for Further Burials* came from a deep sense of anger and loss we, in South Asia, in the larger developing, de-colonized world, have suffered and are still suffering all kinds of violations against the human condition. I only write when I cannot bear to absorb the constant abuse and relentless suffering anymore. Writing is a balm which soothes that anguish. There was a specific moment when I felt I had to write the book, otherwise I would have imploded. The footage showing the discovery of Saddam Hussein, a despot created and supported by the United States and other western powers, and then

> destroyed by the same masters, was very disturbing. It was the image of this half-crazed man, once so powerful and drunk on unbridled power, crawling out of a hole in the ground, a virtual tomb for the half-dead that disturbed me. When the camera panned to the environs of his hide-out bunker, I saw the empty wrappers of Mars bars and other confectionary, and I just felt sickened at the irony of crass consumerism littering this man's last refuge the utter ordinariness of what he chose to subsist on, the utter waste of so many lives at his hands, in particular the million plus Iraqis and Iranians killed in the ten-year war with Iran, using weapons which had been provided by the great western powers which were now intent on destroying their own Frankenstein Monster. I was compelled to write the other story, the one that few have known, and which was based on real events which took place outside Kabul. (Slocum)

Gauhar, a trained political economist, has a profound understanding of the neoliberal, economy, and its stranglehold on the Third World as well as its politics of death. The governments in most of the Third World, and the Global South, are controlled by the United States and other Western powers owing to the power they exert on the economies of these countries through international financial and trade institutions in the mid twentieth century. The very desire to escape the clutches of yet newer forms of imperialism and economic domination in the mid twentieth century, was what prompted the newly independent nations of Asia and Africa to aspire for what is known as the Third World Project.

"Third World", argues Vijay Prashad in his book *Darker Nations*, and as discussed in chapter 2, was not a place but a political project which aimed at

decolonization and social development of the newly independent states. It provided these countries with a forum to share certain aspirations for social development, democracy, peace and solidarity, a kind of international nationalism. So these nations found themselves together on a platform to reform and develop themselves and emerge as an important power on the world map.

The Third World Project was essentially anti-imperialist and anti-hegemonic. Rahul Rao notes that the Third World project defied global hierarchical structures. It was a 'revolt against the West championing norms of self-determination, sovereign equality, and territorial integrity in a world that had been incompletely decolonized" (25). It pledged support to the wars of "national liberation" and promoted "new norms of racial equality, economic justice, and cultural liberation that presaged an end to their subordinate status" (25). However, according to Prashad, it was a project that has been "assassinated" due to internal and external forces. The external forces are US-led, capitalist First World, which subsequently turned into an IMF-led globalization. The internal forces, on the other hand, including the corrupt elite who sided with the West, racialism, religiosity, repression and persecution of the socialist parties and agendas, weakened and subsequently "killed" the Third World project. Consequently, they no longer have any political agency, or any institution with which to ward of the advancement of global capitalism (*The Darker Nations)*. Gauhar's criticism above, voices the outrage and anger shared by many in the Third World. Newer forms of imperial structures that the Third World feared did happen, especially through neoliberal economy and exposed the people of the Third World to the violence it brings in its wake. Her

essential concern remains the human tragedy that is a necessary fallout of violence and war of a capitalist world system.

Afghanistan has a long history of invasions and suffering. There are several references in the novel to its various invaders through the centuries that bespeak the tragic history of this land. However, the most persistent conflict in the Afghan history has been the one which was fought over it for almost a century and is referred to as "The Great Game" by the historians. The Great Game was the name given to the diplomatic and political standoff between the British empire and the Russian empire as each feared the other's burgeoning influence in a territory it prized for the resources it offered to the empire. Afghanistan was the gateway to both the territories. For Russia it was the Central Asia and the adjoining states that it feared Britain would take over if it came in Afghanistan, and for Britain the prized territory was the jewel in its crown—India, which it was scared of losing to Russia if it invaded Afghanistan. Britain attacked Afghanistan three times to ward off Russian influence between 1830 to 1895. After the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, Russia was no longer an empire and became the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922, but it still sustained its old rivalries. In 1979, USSR attacked Afghanistan and stayed there for nine years.

A new rival enters the scene. This time it is the United States of America. Since the end of World War II there were geopolitical tensions between US and its allies and the USSR and its allies. Consequently, there ensued a decades long Cold War between the USA and USSR. As USSR came to Afghanistan, United States started a decade long proxy war in Afghanistan with the help of Pakistan. Pakistan shares a 2430 km long porous border with Afghanistan consisting of a mountainous terrain. Therefore, it was

easy to train and infiltrate people into Afghanistan, and supply ammunition to them via Pakistan. There were also volunteers from the rest of the Muslim world to whom the proxy war was touted as "Jihad" to help a Muslim country in its hour of need. Apart from the various domestic issues, proxy war was also the undoing of the USSR and in 1991, and the union was dissolved and the USSR was divided in to various republics. The fall of the USSR was hailed as a great victory for the US not only against Russia but also against socialism—the arch enemy of capitalism.

Upon the withdrawal of the Russian forces Afghanistan was besieged by a civil war between varying groups of "mujahideen" that the United States had trained and armed in their fight against the socialist "infidels". A particular brand of very conservative religious culture which was deliberately cultivated by the US became a big hurdle in restoring peace and social justice in Afghanistan. Then, in 2001, following the September 11, 2000 attack on the World Trade Centre, United States demanded that the Taliban hand over Osama Bin Laden and other members of Al-Qaeda, who were hiding in Afghanistan, to the US. Taliban refused to do so until they were provided with the proof of Osama Bin Laden's involvement in 9/11 incidents. At this the US and the NATO forces attacked Afghanistan that created the deathscape the novel is alluding to.

Afghanistan, State of Exception and Bare Life

Situated on the hill near the city where the American army's base camp was, Tarasmun was a "dilapidated building clinging precariously to the peak of the hill" (14). It was the hole blasted in its wall that drew the narrator's attention and as he went to investigate it, he was taken prisoner by the men of the local warlord who had fallen into disagreement with the NATO forces. The local warlords with their private armies in

Afghanistan were initially employed by the Americans to fight against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and once the two were defeated, the warlords were engaged as subcontractors to aid the NATO forces. Their armies became mighty powerful after the destruction of the social structure and state institutions lost control of the place.

Tarasmun, as the narrator later find out, is a mental asylum that was run by the government before the madness of the war broke out. It is well and truly cut off from the rest of world, a place it seems out of history and time:

> [A]ll the ways out of here are blocked-the massive gate which protected this place collapsed and blocked the entrance in one of the earlier strikes, when the warlords used rocket launchers collected over years of warfare. The unexploded bomb sits in front of that gate like a treacherous guardian who will betray you the minute you approach. (107)

The big hole in the wall surrounding the compound of the asylum is the only way in and out of the asylum. Those inside cannot dream of going outside as there is never any guarantee that they would come back alive. They also dread all the looters, mainly rebel soldiers who often come through the hole in the wall to snatch away the already meager rations or to appease their sexual appetite targeting women and children. It is as if the whole place has be been laid into a siege. The asylum is like a detention camp, though it offers haven to the downtrodden, the maimed and the destitute, the mentally disturbed and the unwanted. It is a liminal space where the boundaries of inside and outside are constantly merging, sometimes through flashbacks of characters as they tell their tales to Firangi who writes them in his diary, and sometimes in the way the asylum is targeted through aerial bombardment by the NATO forces. Waris, the caretaker of the asylum tells

the narrator that the asylum houses forty people, some of whom live in the basement and others in the cells on the ground floor of the building. Every now and then we find some of those living in the basement surfacing out of their hell hole, like the dead rising from their graves, to tell their gory tales.

As pointed out by Carl Schmit and discussed earlier, a sovereign power manifests itself by declaring a state of exception and finding validation for this action through its "own particular narrative of history and identity" (Mbembe 27). The post-9/11 discourses claimed such an exception. The world was divided into two zones as President George W. Bush in his September 20, 2001 address to the joint session of the Congress declared, "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" (*Selected Speeches* 69). In other words those who did not support America's War on Terror were to be considered a natural ally of what President Bush referred elsewhere as an "axis of evil" (*Selected Speeches* 106). What is being invoked here is the Manichean binary that automatically turns all those who are not "with us", even though not necessarily against us, into evil and therefore expendable. As a self-proclaimed champion of freedom and democracy, a role that easily allows it to claim impunity and suspension of international laws, America attacked Afghanistan on 26 September 2001, fifteen days after the September 11 attacks. Mahmood Mamdani in his book *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* writes that Bush administration's "open disdain for the rule of law is unmatched in the history of Western imperialism". He also points out how international agreements and treaties were contemptuously disregarded by the US (202). America in the post-9/11 era, Mamdani argues, "has scuttled any possibility of an international rule of law and has claimed impunity for American power in the name of spreading democracy internationally" (203).

The death-world of Tarasmun with its living-dead represents Afghanistan in microcosm—an ultimate manifestation of exercise of violent necropolitical sovereignty. It is like a concentration camp site, a state under siege where people's rights have been suspended under rule of "state of exception" in order to validate the war imposed on them. The Afghans are reduced to what Agamben calls "bare life" or to what Mbembe refers to as the "living dead". The protagonist himself calls it the "valley of dead" (11). The sense of deathly existence is reinforced by the imagery of the novel. All the scarred, maimed people in the novel are images of a scarred and maimed Afghanistan. Sabir, the one legged man's face, describes the narrator, was "rutted and scarred, much like the landscape of this forsaken valley" (27). The description offered for the little boy who is raped by the soldiers could very well be a description of Afghanistan: "[T]here are sore encrusted all over his body, ravaged by disease, wasted by neglect" (29). Similarly, the description of Noor Jehan's face speaks of the potential of the land if only there is no war: "the war has ravaged her face, drawing deep lines across her forehead which is otherwise like a lush, fertile plain, full of promise" (32). When the novel opens we are told that the earth is "dry and hard" and the land is "desolate" (9) with the remains of the buried bodies resurfacing every now and then, reminding the narrator of somebody he might have known. The days are endless and torturously monotonous and the night descends on the asylum like a "shroud" (11). There is very little food and water. In winter, they are forced to melt snow to have water. The fact that the dog attacks the mule out of hunger and Bulbul eats the flesh of the dead mule portrays the horror of their bare existence. There is little hope, and no expectations as they go through each day. Most of the people have "lost even the memory of their own names" (11). It is as if they are

waiting to die, a thought that is often echoed by many of the inmates. The few able bodied men in the asylum, including the narrator, are very often assigned the job of digging graves. In fact, the narrator opens his account of his stay at Tarasmun with the very words, "We have begun to dig more graves in the shadow of the walls of this compound"(9). The fact that the novel has been named "*No Space for Further Burials"* suggests the prolonged tyranny and the tragedy this land has had to endure.

Necropolitics, according to Mbembe, in the late modern colonial occupation is also characterized by surveillance, seclusion and what he calls "splintering occupation" that increases the sites of violence (28). By splintering the occupation into various levels, air, ground and underground, maximum control is ensured. The novel repeatedly shows a display of the technologies of control and extermination that focuses on the occupying power of aerial bombardment that ensures maximum destruction of human life. The morning after the air raid, the protagonist finds an unexploded bomb in the rubble and notes, "It is a USAF JDAM, a smart bomb intended to destroy an entire village 2,000 pounds of deadly explosive packed into a cylinder…" (74). The narrator also cries in his sleep as he remembers the "villages of Denar Kheil, Kala Khan, and Qarabagh were bombed with 1,000-pound CBU-87 cluster bombs, each containing 202 BLU-97 bomblets" (119). "Each bomb", he writes, "kills anyone within a sixty yard radius, and severely injures a person within 100 yards" (119). The use of satellites or UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) is also very common, and contrary to the common perception they are far from precise in the attacks they make on their targets, resulting in a senseless loss of life. Gul Agha's story bears testimony to it. When Gul Agha and his family were migrating from the village abandoned and destroyed by war they get

attached by the US warplanes in which his wife and five children were killed. When Gul Agha reached the refugee camp, he was told that the US warplanes had killed a party of rebels the previous night killing all the people except its tall leader. Bulbul explains to Firangi, "Gul Agha is not a tall man, Firangi, you can see that. But that day he was carrying his young son on his shoulders and had covered him with his chaddar to keep him warm (131).

The novel also tells stories of people who are maimed either by bombs dropped from the air or who fall a prey to landmines. Bulbul's father who was a farmer lost both his legs and an arm when he accidently stepped on a landmine, reducing him to a little more than a corpse. Firangi recalls the story of the ten year old little girl Zarmina whose one leg was blown off and the other was so badly damaged that it had to be amputated. In one of his delirious states, Firangi dreams of a soda can that explodes in his hands turning them into stumps (167). This dream is a clear allusion to the CBU-87 cluster bombs that were dropped in Afghanistan, as mentioned above, on the village of Shaker Qala, near the city of Herat in western Afghanistan. These bomblets, which when fall unexploded are potential land mines that can kill instantly. Human Rights Watch in one of its reports on "Cluster Bombs in Afghanistan" notes "the similarity of the coloring of the yellow BLU-97/B cluster bomblets and the small yellow food aid parcels being airdropped in Afghanistan" and expresses concern over the fact that "people are being encouraged to pickup the food parcels, but that picking up a bomblet would be lethal".

Racism and Islamic Terrorism

Of the many imaginaries of sovereignty both in modernity and late modernity, argues Mbembe, is the idea of eliminating the threat that the existence of the Other poses

for the self. Mbembe writes, "the perception of the existence of the Other as an attempt on my life, as a mortal threat or absolute danger whose biophysical elimination would strengthen my potential to life and security" (18). Agamben's argument holds particular weight in the way the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive attack has been put into practice. The putative threat of violence to American lives in the wake of 9/11 was reified through essentializing the Other. The "Other" may be delineated by race, ethnicity, gender or religion, or a combination of these social relations. As discussed in chapter 2, in the case of the War on Terror, religion and race have combined to create an Other around the notion of "Islamic Terrorism" and the "Muslim Terrorist". The Other, in this case, is not only a subhuman, uncivilized species but also violent, a "terrorist", and a threat to not only the existence of American lives but also to the American way of life. American government and its war machinery sought public consensus for action through these racist discourses. However, the novel "articulate[s] a global voice. In the age of the constructed "Islamic Threat" the novel deftly attacks the myth. War, violence and suffering in Afghanistan have had little to do with Islam" (Rumi para 10).

As the narrative unfolds the novel helps the protagonist as well as the readers to see through the fallacy of this discourse. Like his countrymen he has no idea what life in such regions as this entails, and he admits it frankly:

> Most of us had no idea what to expect, rarely having stepped out of our homes in small towns across America. For many this was the first real adventure of their lives, hunting down the enemy, killing for sport. This was not boot camp, this was the real thing, the actual arena where all that we had trained for would unfold before us like the video games we played at the local arcade (14).

The war on Afghanistan was touted as one to pursue "liberty and democracy" (*No Space* 14). As his detention prolongs, the protagonist realizes the hollowness of the claims, "What nags me most are the things we were taught before we arrived in this land, the tenants of war, the rules of engagement. I keep going over them in my head, the people, the absolute necessity of enduring freedom" (61). It is highly ironical that due to "Operation Enduring Freedom", as the war on Afghanistan is called, nobody is free, neither the victims nor the perpetrator.

In the beginning, we notice disdain and censure in how the narrator voices his opinions that are shaped by imperialist ideology, although they are always countered in the novel, sometimes by subsequent events and sometimes by his own observations. For example when Noor Jehan, the caretaker's wife and the cook, saves the potato peels he notes, "I could see the peels of several potatoes swept into a corner. These people have no sense of sanitation—why must they let things just rot and lie around as if there's no way to dispose of them? (31). It was only later on that he realizes the folly of his assessment and writes, "Noor Jehan has served us gruel made from the potato peels I saw in a heap behind the kitchen door. She is saving the potatoes for the evening meal "(32).
There is a slow awakening of the narrator to the true ethos of empire and its war as well as a gradual appreciation of the Afghan people and their courage: "[N]o one will know about the lunacy of this war, and no one will care to learn about the courage of those who fought for their lives with nothing in their hands and only some kind of misconstrued hope in their hearts" (72).

When does the transformation from an outsider to insider take place in Firangi, is hard to pin point. As the raids by the rebel soldiers increase, Firangi is asked to help them

and in return he is let out of the cell. Although, the narrator notices the watchful eye of Waris, as they cannot afford to let him go for the fear of rebel soldiers. Slowly and gradually he becomes an essential part of what passes off for life at Tarasmun. He tends to the sick and injured, digs graves when they die, helps make bricks and secure the hole in the wall. Whenever there is bombardment, and the building is damaged, he helps clear the debris and rescue those buried underneath. Once he helps revive Anarguli's daughter after she stops breathing, he is revered like a magician or a god with many requesting him to cure their ills. When he falls sick, they all take care of him.

The world of Tarasmun, it seems has been abandoned, by the rest of the world. Apart from the young boy Bulbul nobody else thinks of a future. In fact when he first meets Firangi, he shows him a Sears catalogue and requests him to help him get the things he fancies the most, "a pair of suede hiking boots, fur-lined, an orange parka, down-filled, a pair of goggles, and a pair of yellow corduroys" (10). As his detention is prolonged, the narrator himself resigns to his fate. With his gradually diminishing grip on reality he also becomes one of the 'forsaken men' of this land (67). The dualistic construction of war discourse breaks down, as boundaries blur between soldier and civilian, us and them, inside and outside. His last words leave the reader with an enduring sense of hopelessness of the situation: "I felt my head becoming heavy with the thought that there were so many more now in this place, so many more whose graves I will have to dig, even if there is no space for further burials" (209).

Gendering Necropolitics[5]

The novel highlights the deeply patriarchal nature of Afghan culture. All the women in the asylum are victims of patriarchal, gender and social relations, deeply embedded in the traditional communities, and tribal feudalism. This is a situation that cannot be addressed owing to a weak central state, a consequence of prolonged wars, and a stronghold of the clerics in the country—a situation made worse by the presence and rule of Taliban starting from 1996, and American invasion in 2001. The lives of the women in the novel are jeopardized because of the tribal code of honor, and patriarchal control. A cursory glance over the history of Afghanistan reveals that women, especially, in the rural tribal setting have long been subjugated, used as pawns to settle scores in tribal or personal feuds, forced into marriages and not allowed to divorce or get education. Rulers like Amanullah who in the 1920s strove to bring reforms and liberate women, had to face severe criticism and nationwide protests, and an ultimate demise of his reign.

My use of the phrase 'gendering necropolitics' has a dual meaning. On the one hand, it refers to the politics of gender so vital to necropolitics, and, on the other, it indicates the necropower of patriarchy. In either case it is the female body that is subjected to violence and death. She is not only doubly marginalized but is also doubly exposed to necropower. In what follows, I will contextualize how the empire employs the politics of gender to justify its politics of death—necropolitics. I will also discuss how *No Space* foregrounds the structural violence of patriarchy, and makes visible the

[5] I borrow the phrase "gendering necropolitics" from Cihan Ahmetbeyzade's article: "Gendering Necropolitics: The Juridical-Political Sociality of Honor Killings in Turkey". Journal of Human Rights, 7:187-206, 2008

physical, psychological and economic exploitation of women in a traditional, and tribal society. Last, I will argue how women and children are the worst affected in wars.

Mbembe's theorization of necropolitics pays little attention to gendered violence and its relevance to necropolitics. In his essay, Mbembe talks of different forms of violence, but he curiously overlooks any discussion of gendered violence. Even during his discussion of colonialism and slavery, he never even alludes to it. Now, one may argue that since "bare life" is already stripped of all rights any such discussion is quite unnecessary. However, it is also an established fact that gendered violence especially during times of conflict, be it by the warring enemy or patriarchy, is more common and more intense. Melissa W. Wright points out the centrality of gendered violence to necropolitics and criticizes Mbembe's lack of attention to the issue in his discussion of it. Referencing a United Nations' report on violence against women published in 2006, she notes that there is an increase in violence against women around the world which is indicative of the "kind of violence that is constitutive of necropolitics" (710). Summarizing Cihan Ahmetbeyzade's argument in her essay "Gendering Necropolitics: The Juridical-Political Sociality of Honor Killings in Turkey", Wright also notes that "the antifemicide movement clearly demonstrates, however, the neglect of gender so prevalent in discussions such as Mbembe's limits the political possibilities for subverting the relations of power reproduced through gendered necropolitics . . ." (710). For Wright, too, necropolitics and gender are very closely connected. Gendering necropolitics, therefore, is at the heart of any imperial enterprise, and any discussion of necropolitics is incomplete without a discussion of gender-based violence.

In modern times, in this age of new imperialism, liberal democracies as opposed to monarchies, need to justify their actions to an ever-increasing cynical public. Discourses or official narratives of empires pave the way for this by moulding public opinion and co-opting them into their enterprise. Mohanty, Pratt and Riley in their introduction to the book *Feminism and War* discuss how the US "has gendered, racialized, and sexualized its practice of imperialist wars – that is, wars being waged through military and economic policy to advance and consolidate the profit-driven system of capitalism"(3). They argue that US has restructured its foreign and domestic policies during the last two centuries to meet its "military and corporate objectives" and have consequently militarized the lives of people both at home and around the world. They point out that the feminist analyses of these practices crystalize how they are deeply embedded within the colonial practices of the previous empires and employ similar narratives "of male superiority and white supremacy; of female vulnerability, inadequacy, and inferiority; and of the subjugation of oppressed masculinities of men of color"(3). In other words, these narratives are deeply embedded within the typical oriental, racial and gendered discourses. Apart from the issue of national security, the United States validated its war on Afghanistan through its purported claim of liberating women and to what Spivak refers to as "saving brown women from brown men" ("Can the Subaltern Speak" 93). Jennifer L. Fluri, through an analysis of US Congress documents reached the conclusion that:

> The trope of 'saving' Afghan women resonated within Congress and became an effective method for 'rallying public opinion' and congressional support for US confrontation with the Taliban, the Sunni Islamist and tribal Pashtun

> nationalist movement in Afghanistan, and the subsequent US military action in that country. (152)

Miriam Cooke points out that these are binarized, and clichéd gender tropes (15) that help construct, what she calls the "War Story" or an official narrative that "account[s] for its influence on the waging of war" (6).War Story, she argues, "justifies not changing the rules, laws, and strategies of engagement . . ."(15). The fact that the "War Story" makes use of clichéd and hence familiar material suggests that they would be easily normalized and accepted and detract attention from exploring the hidden motives behind the official narratives.

History tells us that earlier imperial adventures of the nineteenth and twentieth century had sought similar excuses. Britain and France had sent "civilizing missions" to the Global South; British premier in 1882 had declared the war on Egypt as a "just war, a holy war". Similarly, championing women's rights fulfilled the jus ad bellum principle for the attack on Afghanistan. Implicitly, this places the West and the rest of the world in a binary where the Western civilization enjoys a superior position as saviours of women around the world. Feminists are critical of such a stance as it not only undermines other civilizations but also trivializes women's struggle for equal rights in the West, too. Stabile and Kumar argue:

> The central framework employed to justify the US war was thoroughly Orientalist; it constructed the West as the beacon of civilization with an obligation to tame the Islamic world and liberate its women. This served to erase not only the political struggles of women in Afghanistan against both the Northern Alliance and the Taliban, but those of women in the West as well who, contrary to

> Orientalist claims about the eternal virtues of Western civilization, have had to organize and fight for what rights they enjoy today. (766)

Stabile and Kumar while ratifying Mohanty, Pratt and Riley's observations have added another dimension to this discussion here. They point out the inclusion of a discourse demonizing Islam which in turn is rooted in the discourse of clash of civilizations. Jasmine Zine observes:

> In the post 9/11 era, Muslim women navigate between both racialized and gendered politics that variously script the ways their bodies and identities are narrated, defined and regulated. Located within this dialectical dynamic, the rhetoric of Muslim women's liberation is all too often caught up in the vast undercurrents of ideological extremism on the one hand, and racism and Islamophobia on the other. (27)

The "War on Terror" thus is deeply entrenched within these three discourses of race, gender and religion. Deepa Kumar points out that the logic of saving Muslim women is based on the assumption that Islam is an exclusively sexist religion and Muslim women are "subjugated, oppressed, and a little more than slaves" (44). It was also assumed that these brown Muslim women needed rescuing from the tyranny of their despotic men. This narrative, Kumar argues, owes itself to European Orientalist scholars who in the mid nineteenth century had little access to women to verify these notions. Yet it was a narrative that gained popularity and was of service to the imperial enterprise of the time (44 - 46). Historicizing the spread of Islam as well as the discourse of Islamophobia, Kumar argues that contrary to the popular myths, Islam is not a monolithic religion, and adopted the culture of the land it went to. Consequently, a lot of the practices that it

adopted had their origin in Jewish and Christian practices. Furthermore, misunderstandings about the true meaning of certain passages in the Quran arose due to the conservatives' exegesis of the Quran.

Gendering necropolitics entails enforcing a state of exception or state of emergency, and, in doing so, it creates what Agamben calls an "inclusive exclusion" (21). It is an inclusion in the sense that women's rights are supposedly at the heart of the cause of war, yet at the same time the state of exception marginalizes them, and turns them into 'bare life' by divesting them of socio-political rights. Laura Bush, in a radio address in 2001, said:

> Fighting brutality against women and children is not the expression of a specific culture; it is the acceptance of our common humanity – a commitment shared by people of good will on every continent. Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan, women are no longer imprisoned in their homes. They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment. Yet the terrorists who helped rule that country now plot and plan in many countries. And they must be stopped. The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women.

However, the ground reality is different. The Afghan women may now have laws protecting their rights but in practice the situation is perhaps even worse than before. Shahnaz Khan in an essay "Afghan Women: The Limits of Colonial Rescue" notes that although laws have been made, yet, not everybody has access to them (162). Development, too, has been uneven and limited only to urban centres. Historicizing women's rights in Afghanistan, Khan observes that the misogyny of Afghan men may not

be the only factor adversely affecting women's lives in Afghanistan. In fact, the history of Afghanistan proves that the rights of Afghan women have always been inextricably connected with the politics of the local ruling groups as well as their international collaborators. Although the Afghan women were awarded the right to vote as early as in 1920—well before women in other Muslim states, and the Afghan legislation was considered the most liberal in the Muslim world, yet the women were not able to fully reap the benefits of such a legislation owing to various social, and political issues (45). Furthermore, the process of militarization of Afghan society through support by US military during proxy wars has destroyed conditions where gender justice might be possible. In addition, occupying forces usually focus more on their strategic interests than women's rights. Khan notes that "during the current occupation questions of women's rights continue to be peripheral to regional and international politics. NATO support for a corrupt regime will not help bring about social and gender justice within Afghanistan" (173). The stories of Anarguli, Hayat, and Noor Jehan effectively unveil how the war has further ensured their exclusion from the social and political realm of life.

The depiction of women in the novel also suggests their great capacity to bear hardship and adversity with great fortitude. The story of each woman in the novel depicts either the patriarchal norms or the social ills of Afghan tribal culture. Of the three women characters in the novel, Noor Jehan grew up with the consciousness of having a darker complexion, Anarguli is a survivor of honor killing attempt and Hayat—an immigrant is a victim of tribal culture and ignorance. One of the first women characters the novel introduces us to is Noor Jehan whose name means 'the light of the world', and she is indeed the light of that little world, rather the pillar on which Tarasmun stands. Her

resilience and untiring efforts to take care of the people in the asylum make visible the labour of women especially in war torn regions. She wakes up first and is always the last one to sleep, consoles those who are distressed and takes care of them when they are sick. She is as Firangi calls her the "mother of all mothers" (52).

Feryal Ali Gauhar, having served as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Population Fund and worked with the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan, is very well cognizant of the problems of the region, especially of the women. With each tale told, she delicately weaves in the strands of those issues to highlight them. Noor Jehan's tale raises the issue of infant mortality and how it is connected to cousin marriages common in this region. The cousin marriages double the risk of children being born with congenital and genetic disorders. Noor Jehan and Waris were cousins and lost many children probably due to something similar. Noor Jehan explains to Bulbul and Firangi, as she narrates her tale, "There was a teacher in our village who had been to the city to study, like Sabir Shah, and he told Waris that our children would not live because they were born of the same blood, the two of us being cousins" (154).Waris and Noor Jehan eventually adopted the mute and crippled boy Qasim. They had found Qasim lying among the dead bodies of the children of their village who had been murdered by some people, who had attacked their village for food, clothing and anything of value. Upon resistance, they killed the men and abducted the women. Waris and Noor Jehan had a lucky escape as they were not in the village.

The deeply rooted patriarchal structure of Afghan society sees women's bodies as sites of honor or properties to be passed on. Anarguli, whose name means the flower of the pomegranate tree, and with whom Bulbul is madly in love with, is a victim of an

attempted honour killing. Anarguli's own father tries to kill her for having ruined the honor of the family by marrying a man below her station. Similarly, Haji Meer's daughter Zarsanga's was killed because her father's code of honor was considered compromised as the little girl was abducted for ransom. Bulbul's own mother had to marry her brother-in-law after her husband's death. She was often beaten and forced to beg on the roads of the city.

One of the technologies of necropower is sexual violence as well. Rape has often been employed as war strategy to break the enemy psychologically. It is used to reinforce the already existing patriarchal values of honor that deem women the property of families and brothers. The protagonist of *No Space* in one of his hallucinatory states remembers an incident where an American sergeant raped, killed and burnt a girl, " What was that smell, sergeant, as you left quickly, discarding the bloodied shirt you wore when you put three bullets through her head, aiming between those dark eyes? Was that the stench of burning flesh, sir"(151). The inspiration for this story must has come from a similar incident that took place in Iraq during the American invasion in which Abeer Qassim Hamza al-Janabi, a fourteen year old girl was gang-raped by five American soldiers, murdered and set on fire.

Another victim of the sexual violence in Afghanistan are the children. This has been one of the long standing problems in Afghanistan. The novel shows young Bulbul, and the small, young boy in the asylum being raped. As depicted in the novel the perpetrators of this violence are often the local militias, warlords and their armies. These warlords, as mentioned earlier are subcontracted by the US to guard their interests and territories in Afghanistan. The US rules over Afghanistan mainly through these warlords,

so they cannot afford to offend them. Consequently, rather than apprehending the pedophiles, the soldiers deployed in Afghanistan are told to look the other way. A New York Times article reports the story of how these rapes are sometimes even conducted at the US bases. When the marines complain about it, they are told not to interfere in it because according to the US authorities it is a part of Afghan culture (Goldstein). In fact, the soldiers who do intervene are relieved of their duties.

Women's existence in most traditionalist societies always borders on the fringes in any case. The important question here, however, is whether militarization, occupation of a land, senseless killing of people can be justified in the name of liberating women. In fact, the novel suggests that far from liberating women, militarization and occupation make the lives of women much more oppressive. The novel also clearly alludes to the fact that given time and stability, changes would have happened. Haji Meer is grief stricken and repentant of his action of abandoning his daughter, and would do anything to be given a second chance to bring his daughter home. Bulbul's love for Anarguli and her daughter and the fact, that it is a daughter who has brought a ray of hope in this forsaken world of the living dead are encouraging signs.

Narrative as Resistance and the Question of "Subaltern" Representation

One of the major preoccupations of the novel is the very act of writing and telling stories. Writing and telling stories are acts of resistance and attempt at subverting the discourse of empire and giving access to an alternative reality. Unlike the stories of Iraq war, tales of atrocities in Afghanistan have not found much voice in the media. This is probably for two reasons. First, Iraq was a much developed and prosperous country before the attack in 2003. So, education and access to Internet and other resources have made it possible

for the tales to come out. Afghanistan, on the other hand, has been in a state of war for the past three decades. Consequently, abject poverty, lack of education and resources have virtually made it impossible for the people to come forward and tell their stories. Therefore, the only recourse left is writing and telling stories.

Firangi, the narrator of the novel, serves two important functions in the novel. Firstly, as discussed earlier, he helps show the gradual development of understanding of the tragedy of the Afghan people from the perspective of an outsider to that of an insider. It shows how the stark reality of war would transform even the soldiers who apart from being given hard physical training are also trained to be emotionally and psychologically strong for all situations. It also allows for an analysis of the discourses through which the American government and its war machinery sought public consensus for its actions.

Secondly, Firangi is also the official historian/chronicler of the people's stories. Initially, he starts writing the diary and chronicling his story and of those around him to guard himself from insanity. Later on, Bulbul brings him a golden tipped Mont Blanc pen with the name David Elisha engraved on it. The pen belonged to the Canadian doctor, David Elisha, who was in-charge of the asylum, before the rebel soldiers took away the nurses and killed the male staff. They also locked him up in the basement where he took his own life. The narrator writes, "Bulbul returned the pen to me, saying that it would be useful for me, for my writing, for the words I try to leave on scraps of paper so that I do not end up taking my life the way he has wanted to, so many futile times "(50). Sabir the one-legged man also requests that Firangi keep a record of all the people there in the asylum so that when they die there should be some record of those who lived and died there. Bulbul's giving the pen to Firangi is perhaps a symbolic gesture of the passing on

the mantle of the historian and the teller of tales to Firangi. Although, Bulbul, the narrator tells us, has "a tongue which weaves terrible stories" (37), yet, it is Firangi who records them for posterity. For a novel, that lays so much emphasis on names and their meaning, it does not seem like a coincidence that it was Elisha's mantle that was passed on to Firangi. Interestingly, the origin of the idiom "passing on the mantle" which means "to pass an office from mentor to student" (Evans para 2) is attributed to the Old Testament's story of Elijah and Elisha where Prophet Elijah passes on a robe or the cloak, which many believe to be a magical robe, to prophet Elisha. Elisha is a prophet greatly revered in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He was blessed with the power of healing the sick. Dr. David Elisha was no prophet, but he was certainly a dedicated healer. He also kept records of the patients and their ailments as well as a diary, though Firangi is only able to quickly scan a few of the records of the patients Elisha had written in his own hand writing. Firangi, on the other hand, is only a medical technician but what is really passed on to Firangi as Elisha's legacy is the pen. This of course, suggests greater power to the act of writing, be it for healing or resistance.

The choice of Firangi as the narrator also problematizes the question of representation and we cannot help but ask the question which Spivak puts forth in her essay of the same name, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" We are also forced to ask if the story of victimization needs the validation of a Western perspective? Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak in her classic essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" offers a critique of modes of representation available to the subaltern groups—or groups which have no means of upward mobility available to them. She argues that any attempt at empowering a subaltern group from the outside, by granting them a collective voice is likely to be

problematic on two grounds. Firstly, it will result in creating what she calls logocentric assumptions since whatever they say will be based on second-hand knowledge and not the real experience. Secondly, by allowing Western intellectuals to speak for them, a subaltern group is forced to position itself in relation to the dominant group in society. So far from gaining an identity of their own, free from essentialist, homogenized characterization, they end up reaffirming their subordinate positions in the society; always an object but never the subject. Therefore, to choose Firangi as the voice for the Afghans, is rather problematic.

Firangi, whose name we never find out in the novel, hails from a small town Tranquility in California. Born under a sequoia tree to a Wuckachi Indian man and a white woman, he inherited his mother's eyes and hair. Although by his own admission nobody would believe of him being the son of a Wuckachi Indian, yet his Wuckachi identity seems to have a strong imprint on him: "*No one really believed that any of us existed anymore, and I was always listening for the sounds of his stories even after he died, for he remembered how it happened, how the land was taken away, how people of many colors came to live in Tranquility*"(125). The passage quoted above is from one of Firangi's streams of consciousness and hence in italics. We repeatedly find Firangi remembering, hallucinating, about the Dust Bowl Migration to Tranquility, California. In fact, the scenes of hunger, displacement and violence in Afghanistan keep merging with the migration scenes in his semi-conscious state suggesting multidirectional similarity. The decade long crisis of the Dust Bowl tragedy is perhaps the only time in the recent history of USA, when a huge number of its population, approximately 2.5 million people, experienced, hunger, poverty and displacement. It is as if the novelist is trying to draw

out the parallels between the two man-made tragedies, requesting for temperance, patience and an understanding of human misery.

Firangi aspires to be a writer before he joins the US army as a medical technician. The reason the unnamed narrator joined the US army was partly financial, as he was a struggling student, and partly the notion of fighting for the country. There was also a desire to honour the memory of Carlos, his brother-in-law who was a helicopter pilot in the US army deployed in Afghanistan. In fact, it was Carlos' death in the line of duty that helped him make up his mind: "I did not intend to join this war until the day we buried Carlos Negrete. I had other plans. . . . I wanted to be a writer, but had never imagined that I would begin by writing on bits of paper salvaged from the wreckage of a place a million miles from anything I have ever known" (76). As he is taken a prisoner, he is better able to understand the pain and the suffering of these people. He is horrified at the abject poverty, disease and violence rampant there: "In training at San Joaquin Valley Central, we never learned about the kinds of injury and disease that can be expected among people who have lived with so little. At boot camp we never learned that in war the victims are always the poorest, the ones who have no choice, no power, no weapons with which to defend themselves" (63). He repeatedly questions the validity of reasons for which the war was started, and categorically announces it to be a war "I no longer believe in" (163). In the beginning, he can't wait to be away from the asylum: "I don't know if I can deal with this anymore, this place, this wilderness, the obvious desperation of a people driven to madness. How on God's good earth am I going to get out of here?" (49). By the end of the novel however, he is won over by these defenseless, courageous people:

> I do not want to dream anymore. I do not want to dream of a life I have lost forever. I know now that I will always be here, that I have become a part of the process of birth and death, that I have suffered and that my suffering has been acknowledged by strangers who have touched the center of my sorrow and not thought less of me for being an outsider, a stranger, Firangi Amreeki, American Stranger. (175)

The fact that Gauhar has chosen an American soldier to be the protagonist of her novel and speak against the lunacy of war subverts the stereotypical approach, in literature and films, taken especially in the earlier years after 9/11 where we see Afghanistan or Iraq or the rest of the Third World through the imperialist gaze, depicting Muslim men as radicalized fundamentalists and/or terrorists, and burqa clad helpless women who needed to be rescued from these men. *No Space* offers a fresh approach to the human tragedy that war and militarization have created. Firangi has actually lived, breathed and experienced the pain and the devastation of the people as well as his own in Tarasmun. The fact that he becomes "a part of the process of birth and death" (175), qualifies him to be the voice of these people. Furthermore, the consummate skill with which Firangi's identity has been established as being partly white and partly Native American, is remarkable. The long history of Native American suffering takes the edge off the privileges of the other half of Firangi's identity. In Firangi, we have the victim and the perpetrator combined, literally as well as metaphorically.

Mbembe at the end of his essay "Necropolitics" raises an ethical question when he discusses the phenomenon of the suicide bombers in Palestine. He asks: "What intrinsic difference is there between killing with a missile helicopter or a tank and killing

with one's own body? Does the distinction between the arms used to inflict death prevent the establishment of a system of general exchange between the manner of killing and the manner of dying" (26) ?

The novel is remarkable in the way that it is introspective. No one is spared. The rebel soldiers on whose orders the protagonist is being kept in Tarasmun who come to loot, rape and plunder are the local people. Lack of education, and deeply rooted patriarchal structures all come under scrutiny. Hence, it is not a resistance only to foreign occupation and discourse of empire but also to local prejudices and practices. The novel's strength lies in its portrayal of the abysmal situation that the years of war in the name of one thing or the other have brought upon a people. The popular accounts of Afghan war in the Western media with their self-complimentary and self-congratulatory accounts shed little light on the plight of the people of the land. In their bid to seize more control, and power around the world the biopolitics of the necropolitical forces have transformed a people into what Chomsky calls "unpeople".

CONCLUSION

AESTHETICIZATION OF TRAGEDY?

"For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to tamper, flows on south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth."
—W .H. Auden

Imperialism in the twenty first century requires newer forms of resistance. Wars being fought in this era are in the name of surveillance and security with the aim of a Foucauldian form of govermentality, comprising docile bodies and offering little resistance to the dominant ideologies and discourses. Such a govermentality proposes to restructure and reshape Other societies and to do so it racializes and even sub-humanizes Others. However, it is not only the control of the Other societies that is being sought, but empire takes place at home as well. The political project of neoliberalism fosters and imbibes depoliticization of subjectivity of its citizens at the centre, in order to exercise better control both at home and as well as at the margins of empire.

Although equipped with newer forms of technology and power, the neocolonial structures show a continuity of older, colonial forms of subjugation, oppression and dominance. An understanding of history and historical analysis thus become a necessary precondition of resistance to it. This dissertation explores forms of resistance to imperial ideology and oppression and has endeavored to make visible the older and newer forms of violence and oppression that are a structural feature of neoliberal capitalism in late modernity.

Exploring Pakistani and American writers' response to the fall out of 9/11 tragedy is necessary as Pakistan stands most affected by the War on Terror, apart from the countries that are directly invaded. According to Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs, Brown University's estimate more than 61,000 Pakistanis have lost their lives due to this war and over 40,000 have been wounded and about 1.4 million have been internally displaced ("Pakistani Civilians"). Pakistani writers, in the years since 9/11 have found wider audience in the US, and have emerged as making important contributions to national and transnational Anglophone literature.

The novels paired in the first chapter namely, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *The Falling Man* are direct responses to the events of the day and how it sets in motion a new chain of events. Changez not only deconstructs the stereotypes of Muslim Other but gives us an understanding of how wars can be counter-productive to the process of combating terrorism. It questions in a straightforward manner the US foreign policy and how it has resulted in the death and destruction of other people and countries. It is the ghosts of these invisible histories, to use Ann McClintock's term, that has come to haunt the present. Hamid's is one of the most popular novels as well as one of the most important literary works written in response to 9/11, and has invited innumerable critical papers in response. Its importance lies in the fact that it has successfully managed to break the stereotypes and challenged assumptions about Muslims and has subverted the discourse of terrorism and Islamophobia, if the critical responses expressed in the papers are anything to go by. Hamid and DeLillo's works are important companion pieces as of all the novels written in the wake of 9/11, these two especially question and place the events of the day within a history of economic, social and political exploitation of the

Third World. Cloaked within the rhetoric and discourses of religion, clash of civilizations, Muslim terrorist, is the drive to capture oil and other resources, located within the geographical boundaries of the Muslim world. It is the social and economic injustice and exploitation of the Third World which has resulted in cultivating anger against the US. Therefore, to lay it on the culture or civilization terrain is to deny the historical truth. Both the novels, highlight, though in varying degrees of emphasis, the need for a political praxis. Political praxis can simply be participating in a protest against war, as Lianne does at the end of the *Falling Man,* or starting a revolutionary movement, like Changez does, to dismantle the oppressive imperial structures and practices. Third world project, was, and may still be, if we ignore Prashad's proclamation of it being dead, the emancipation of the poor.

In the second chapter the attempt is not only to recover the histories of violence but to understand those histories through a newer framework of analysis. Rather than hierarchizing tragedies, it is more productive to juxtapose such histories in order to have a better understanding of the present. Confronting the ghosts of imperial atrocities, is one way to do so. I have deliberately stayed away from any detailed discussion of trauma, as the attempt is to contextualize the historic events within a political framework. Both the novels do not have any resolution to offer. They end in a no-man's land; Grandpa and Grandma are living at the airport. They are unable to go back or to move forward. Similarly, Raza is in Guantanamo Bay prison, and is likely to spend the rest of his life over there. The affirmative note or the form of resistance both the novels suggest is the need for a better engagement with history and resistance to the "presentism" of neoliberalism.

Finally, the third chapter looks at the contemporary forms of biopolitical govermentality, or what Mbembe refers to as Necropolitics. Necropolitics is a concept that has gathered immense popularity in the recent years, and has invited interest from various other fields of study. In spite of the fact, that the novel is based upon true stories of similar characters, and has received good reviews in literary circles, the novel has not been able to gain a wider audience. I was unable to find any critical response on it, save one, and that too was not focused exclusively on *No Space for Further Burials.* There are two probable reasons for it. Firstly, the novel is published by a publishing house that is not mainstream and that gives voice to writers who are ignored by the mainstream publishing houses. Secondly, the abject poverty, helplessness and utter desolation presented in the novel evokes a response that can be referred to as the guilt of what Michael Rothberg refers to as the implicated subject. For Rothberg, implicated subjects, are indirect beneficiaries of violence committed in their name. Furthermore, through my reading of the novel, I have tried to highlight how imperialism is always enacted at the cross-roads of race, religion and gender. Even though necropolitical govermentality leaves no room for exercising agency except through death, no one in the novel seriously contemplates suicide or suicidal revenge. The mode of resistance the novel suggests is what Bill Ashcroft et. al[6] refer to as writing back to empire.

During the course of the discussion of the novels, I have also tried to focus on the dissatisfaction of the critics with the contemporary American writers and modes of expression and the need to find newer models of writing to address the emerging realities. One severe indictment against the American writers is their parochialism. They need to

[6] See Tiffin, Helen. *Empire Writes Back*. Taylor Et Francis, 2002.

adopt, as Michael Rothberg suggests, a more centrifugal approach ("A Failure" 153) and place their writing in a transnational context.

One of the ways in which the modes of resistance contemplated in these literary works is different from previously contemplated modes of resistance is the use of non-violence. Although there is a constant tension in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as the writer keeps us guessing whether Changez has become a terrorist, it is more of an artistic tension that lends the novel its widely held appeal. What all the novels here seem to be suggesting is the need for raising awareness and political consciousness. The geopolitical realities suggest the need for negotiating newer forms of non-violent ways of combating the imperial violence. Violent forms of protest inevitably invite newer forms of violent govermentality and oppression. The only recourse left, as Firangi finds out is through writing, offering alternative discourses, countering hegemony and oppression.

The epitaph to this section is W.H.Auden's impassioned accusation of the inability of poetry, or art in general, to affect political change to the political scenario of his time. However, as my discussion of the novels indicates, that political change can be affected through art.

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