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The Two Opposite Perspectives on 9/11: A Study of Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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Abstract:

The 9/11 terror strikes on the US is a phenomenal event and its consequences have been undoubtedly most significant and a turning point in international politics. The event had rendered America vulnerable and had shattered her deeply seated sense of domestic security and the integrity of the sovereign state. The event has been of great importance for the world's development in the last fifteen years and affected people in their everyday life. Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, both being post-11 novels, tackle issues of geopolitics, identity and difference in a quite realistic way but with different perspectives. If DeLillo in his narrative adopts seemingly Orientalist approach representing Muslims as fundamentalists, global terrorists and Islam as ever threatening Global Enemy; on the contrary, Hamid adopts a counterterrorist and a counter fundamentalist approach against American Imperialism. In both the novels 9/11 has amplified social tensions and racial hatred.

Keywords: Muslim, fundamentalism, orientalist, terrorism, imperialism, geopolitics, hegemony.

Introduction:

The terrorists attack of September 11, 2001, undoubtedly the most significant and a turning point in international politics. It is a defining event in the history and the United States suffered an unprecedented loss on the day. The oceans separating the North American continent from the tumultuous Middle East no longer seemed such a protective barrier. The attack shattered the United States' firm belief that such things cannot happen to us and rendered it highly vulnerable in the face of terrorism. The attacks were directed not just at physical targets but at representations of power. The twin towers of the World Trade Centre was an ultimate symbol of the neoliberal economic world order and no building symbolizes the military might of the United States better than the Pentagon. The White House, the target for a failed third attack, would have been the perfect representation of political power. As a result, it shattered both a deeply seated sense of domestic security and the integrity of the sovereign state. However, the 9/11 event uncovered the nation's weaknesses in border security and law enforcement. Perhaps, most importantly, September 11 highlighted the centuries-old clash between religious establishments and cultures.

On the basis of data mainly gathered from professional association surveys and government agencies, it was found that the United States and many other countries of the world have been significantly affected by the events and aftermath of that morning's events. As a result of the 9/11 there were significant changes in the U.S. polity, economy and society that led to international consequences. Undeniably the 9/11 event attacked the U.S. as super power at her deepest and represented a clear cut in world history. The event have been of great importance for the world's development in the last fifteen years and affected people in their everyday life.

The 9/11 and its aftermath: geo-political developments:

The 11 September attacks have affected public interest in terrorism and security, contemporary global geopolitics, Middle Eastern studies, and Islam. The transnational nature of the event created complex responses like controversial US-led 'War on Terror' which included many countries. Although protest against subsequent military action, especially in Iraq, occurred across the U.S., on 1May 2003 President George Bush announced victory and marked the end of a major phase in the crisis that was initiated on the 9/11. The transnational threat of terrorism has also caused changes in visa procedures, airport security, the adoption of the USA Patriot Act (October 2001), which limited civil liberties and endowed police and FBI forces with unprecedented powers of control over aliens, immigrants and all American citizens etc... left the common people in bewilderment, confusion and absurd condition; creating heightened sense of boundaries between developed countries, mostly from Europe and America, and those associated with the image of terrorism in the post-9/11 world, namely Muslims, Arabs, and people resembling Middle Easterners.

Many scholars, Commentators and editorials have offered various geopolitical explanations for the 11 September attacks. Among numerous reasons mention may be made of some common theoretical categories such as imperialism, 'blowback', state decline, Islamism, and 'the clash of civilizations' etc. As Steven Salaita points out, Rudy Giuliani, George W. Bush and media personalities recommended not to engage in acts of racial violence towards Arab Americans immediately after the attacks. American political leaders repeated sentences such as "They are Americans, too"; "They also love this country" and so the expectation was to make "Arab neighbors feel safe and welcome" at home without discrimination, in a tradition of "imperative patriotism" (151). Yet, contrarily to what it preached, the administration soon adopted the USA Patriot Act on October 2001, which curtailed civil liberties and endowed police and FBI forces with unprecedented powers of control over aliens, immigrants and all American citizens. It is observed that in practice the laws have impacted most severely on members of ethnic minorities. It is accepted that ethnic profiling has become widespread at airports and the interviewing of ethnic Arabs by the FBI who lacks US citizen status became rampant. Arab Americans were feared for their looks and were put in a position where their "Arabness" ended up overcoming their "Americanness". While the Administration invited openness, it launched a war campaign, ultimately endorsing feelings of hate, suspicion in the public opinion.

In the US and in the West in general, the fear of international terrorists as the enemies within has however transformed the foreign and ethnic others into terror suspects and reinforced their sense of unbelonging, ironically rendered their home and the world

unhomely. The number of racist attacks perpetrated by violent white citizens on Muslim, Middle Eastern, and South Asian immigrants, has also increased drastically after the terrorist attacks. For instance, as Kessler and Solomon have reported from CNN, on August 24, 2010, Ahmed H. Sharif, a practicing Muslim man who works as a taxi driver in New York, was allegedly stabbed in the throat, arms and hand by 21-year-old Michael Enright after Sharif answered questions about his religion. Bobby Ghosh writes that the attack arises in an atmosphere of heated animosity towards Muslims in New York after the proposal of constructing a mosque and an Islamic cultural centre two blocks from the World Trade Centre Site (14). Another writer Gibbs reports that the proposal, known as Park51, has sparked protests where signs were displayed reading “All I Need to Know About Islam, I Learned on 9/11” (14) and “Don’t glorify murders of 3,000; no 9/11 victory mosque” (48). Almost fifteen years after the 9/11 attacks, the atmosphere of Islamophobia and the view of the World Trade Centre Site as “sacred” (14) still endure.

When the news broke out that the military successfully neutralized the most wanted terrorists since the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, there was a wave of excitement, thrill, tears and patriotic riots in front of the White House. The Washington Post reports several thousands of young Americans rushing to the fence of the White House, in a spontaneous display of jubilation, dancing and cheering. Not long passed before there were T-Shirts celebrating Bin Laden's death being sold. President Obama addressed the nation, claiming that justice has been served. Relief flooded through the American world, even in the ecstatic moment, as if they have been searching for some crumb of comfort, or partial closure ever since that awful morning of the 9/11. Although America has succeeded in assassinating the prime terrorist Osama Bin Laden, the event has left the common people in bewilderment, confusion and absurd condition; creating heightened sense of boundaries between developed countries, mostly from Europe and America, and those associated with the image of terrorism in the post-9/11 world, namely Muslims, Arabs, and people resembling Middle Easterners.

From the above geopolitical context this paper discusses Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* (2007) and Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) which offers two opposite perspectives on 9/11.

As the event of 9/11 is transatlantic in nature, the cultural memory of the event clearly emerges from an overlap of local and global discourses. After all, as a means of representation, unlike the media that witnessed and reported live on the terrorist attacks, literature on 9/11 only started to emerge years after the attacks and have taken longer time to reflect. Even though novels had to wait a couple of years, approximately above 150 novels, dealing directly or indirectly with 9/11, have been published or distributed so far in the US and across the world.

Both DeLillo and Hamid in their post-11 novels tackle issues of geopolitics, identity and difference in a quite realistic way but with different perspectives. If DeLillo adopts seemingly Orientalist approach representing Muslims as fundamentalists, global terrorists and Islam as ever threatening Enemy; on the contrary, Hamid adopts a counterterrorist and a counter fundamentalist approach against American Imperialism. He positions the US as “fundamentalist” in relation to national myths of economic and political domination. In both the novels 9/11 has amplified social tensions and racial hatred: on the one hand, mainstream

white America appears self-absorbed and depressed, unable to open up fully to the unfit or the different; on the other, racialized individuals are depicted in an ambivalent light and are in the end doomed or withdrawn because of their blind and staunch faith, regardless whether it is labelled on Islam or the American dream.

DeLillo's *Falling Man* directly deals with the 9/11 terrorist attacks and is credited with being one of the most genuine responses to the event. On one side the novel deals with intimate stories of human reactions to the 9/11, focusing on a survivor of the attacks, Keith Neudecker, his estranged wife Lianne and their son Justin, who unsuccessfully try to rebuild their family after the 9/11; on the other the writer tells the story of a group of Muslims who blatantly conduct the terrorist attacks in an attempt to take revenge on the West for its unrestrained growth in the course of modernity. In the novel the author more conspicuously identifies terrorism with Islam. Even he has been criticized for adopting an Orientalist approach towards treatment of non-American characters. He seems to lay the blame on Islam as being incompatible with the West's history of civilization and western modernity.

Representation of Muslims as the Global Terrorists and Ever Threatening Enemy:

DeLillo introduces Muslims as violators of American style of life, highlighting the incompatibility of Islam with Western modernity. Describing the secret life the small group of terrorist Muslims in New York, the narrator says "every cabdriver ... [is] named Muhammad" (28), the narrator further says "they were in this country to pursue technical educations but in these rooms they spoke about the struggle" (79). The "rooms" generally refers to the prayer rooms in which Muslims gather to say their prayers and often share their memories and experiences. "The mosque," "the portable prayer room at the university" (80), "the apartment on Marienstrasse" (80), and "dar al-ansar" (83) are some examples the narrator describes such spaces. More pointedly, Muslims are represented as seeking refuge in enclosed spaces, especially urban, sheltering from what they consider as the corrupt West:

There was the feeling of lost history. They were too long in isolation. This is what they talked about, being crowded out by other cultures, other futures, the all-enfolding will of capital markets and foreign policies. (80)

From narrator's perspective, Muslims' fear of the place and their inability to come to terms with the other, the West is reflected in the sentence: "they needed space of their own" (80). Thus, since Muslims find themselves imprisoned in the Western societies, suppress their racial intolerance (xenophobia), and finally turning into global "parasites," decide to destroy their host community.

Richard Grey also touches upon the issue of Islam as the Other of America's post-Cold War. He maintains that "with the collapse of Communism," America lost its oppositional identity, and, as such, needed to reconstruct a new Other that would enable it fashion a new globalized identity (135). Gray observes that in the multicultural society of America, the boundaries between "center" and "margin" have been violated (129) and that makes America vulnerable to the constant threat of cultural clashes. The idea that Muslim

identities are taking benefit from the fluidity of the boundaries in American society is very well reflected in the following passage in *Falling Man*:

The men went to Internet cafés and learned about flight schools in the United States. Nobody knocked down their door in the middle of the night and nobody stopped them in the street to turn their pockets inside out and grope their bodies for weapons. But they knew that Islam was under attack. (82)

Readers can notice, in this short passage, how aptly DeLillo foreshadows the plane attacks of the 9/11 by Muslim terrorists, who had learnt about flight in American schools, and more importantly answers the question of the motivation behind their terrorism; defending Islam against Western culture. From the narrator's perspective, there is a strong "struggle" between Islam and "the enemy, near enemy and far, Jews first, for all things unjust and hateful, and then the Americans" (80). Here "struggle," implies the clash between Western and Islamic cultures. In another passage, it is said that, to the young Muslims, everything seemed to be "corrupt of mind and body, determined to shiver Islam down to bread crumbs for birds" (79). In these lines DeLillo seems to represent Muslims' hatred and resentment towards Westerners.

Islamism through Orientalist Lens:

As many scholars have opined the shaping of spontaneous popular fears by rhetorical practices and political choices contributed towards misunderstanding and confusing the already misleading geopolitical dichotomy between "us and them." In *Falling Man* such conflict is repeatedly represented from the points of views of Lianne, her mother, and her mother's ex-friend Martin respectively, who argue about the causes of terrorism. Lianne's mother says that "It's sheer panic. They attack out of panic ... there are no goals they can hope to achieve. They're not liberating a people or casting out a dictator. Kill the innocent, only that" (46). Martin, who is "unflinching in fact, and smart in his work" (46), points at American "vulnerability" when he suggests that what they achieve is "to show how a great power can be vulnerable. A power that interferes, that occupies"(46). And finally, Lianne's discourteous comment points to the heart of the Orientalist nature of the novel:

It's not the history of Western interference that pulls down these societies. It's their own history, their mentality. They live in a closed world, of choice, of necessity. They haven't advanced because they haven't wanted to or tried to. (47)

The above lines conspicuously represent DeLillo's intention and highlight his Orientalist nature and method of measuring the Orient with western modernity. This representation reflects that Islam has not been able to adjust itself to the West's modern developments indicates its inherent inferiority and consequently its inevitable dissolution.

The theme of cultural clash between Islam and the West pervades the novel. Apart from the Muslim terrorists, there are also other minor characters identified with Islam. One of them is Elena who lives in the same apartment building together with Keith and Lianne. She

is used to playing a kind of music which appears to Lianne as belonging to “another set of traditions, Middle Eastern, North African, Bedouin songs perhaps or Sufi dances, music located in Islamic tradition” (67). Trying to come to terms with the trauma of the 9/11, Lianne becomes “ultrasensitive” (120) to and suspicious of all values and beliefs. Things appear differently to her as though the whole world has changed its meaning. Elena’s alien music, which represents American multiculturalism, is of course no exception to this fact. To Keith, who is one of the survivors of the events, “it’s only music anyway” (68). Though he tries to persuade her not to fuss about it, she, however, “wanted to knock on door and say something to Elena. Ask her what the point is ... Ask her why she’s playing this particular music at this highly sensitive time” (68). Lianne’s thoughts at that point represent an Orientalist view: “They’re the ones who think alike, talk alike, eat the same food at the same time ... Say the same prayers, word for word, in the same prayer stance, day and night, following the arc of sun and moon” (68). Elena’s unsympathetic behavior towards the injured feelings of her American neighbors is also noteworthy. She is represented as being totally unaware of what had happened to the victims of terrorist attacks of 9/11. When finally Lianne asks her why she goes on playing the harsh music in “this particular time” and “under these circumstances,” Elena calmly answers: “there are no circumstances. It’s music ... It gives me peace” (119).

DeLillo’s direct reference to Iran in the novel seems to establish an effective and ideological relationship between the 9/11 terrorism and Iran as an Islamic nation. The story of the terrorists begins with Hammad’s listening to an “older man’s story” (77). The “older man” talks of his experiences in the war against Iran when he was “a rifleman in the Shatt al Arab, fifteen years ago ... a soldier in Saddam’s army” (77). The picture he draws of the war teams with the focus on Iranians, depicting them as “fanatical,” “violent,” “dull,” “irrational,” and “superstitious,” whose only motivation behind war was to avenge “the Shia defeat and the allegiance of the living to those who were dead and defeated” (78). Influenced by his compelling friend, Mohamed el- Amir el-Sayed Atta, he is initiated into the secret meetings of the group and finally turns out to be the terrorist. Reading Hammad’s distressed mind, the narrator speaks of the “strength” that the remembrance of the story of Iranians’ “suicide brigades” conveyed to Hammad, who is now similarly committing suicide. Thus, DeLillo seems to draw a parallel between Iranian “boys” and Hammad, both being Muslims and puts emphasis on the ideological impact that Iran might have had on these fundamentalist terrorists.

However, one of the fundamental criticisms levelled against DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, is his representation of the 9/11 terrorism from a restricted (hegemonic) point of view which consequently results in an incomplete single-sided view of reality.

Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a direct and clever response to American hegemony. Hamid adopts a counterterrorist and a counter fundamentalist approach against American Imperialism. The protagonist is caught in the multiracial global city on the one hand, and ultimately xenophobic national imperium on the other. In the novel the tension is located in the way the protagonist is represented in the post-9/11 world based on his appearance, how he is constructed as a potential terrorist figure by American media due to his political activism, and how he frames his understanding of American society as exclusionary

and fundamentalist. All of these factors impact on his self-understanding as he is torn between his loyalties to Pakistan and his life in the US.

Hamid's novel begins with an American who, wandering through the marketplace of Lahore, Pakistan, fatefully encounters a Pakistani man. Changez, the narrator-protagonist, is a Pakistani, immediately recognizing the American nationality, invites him to a cup of tea, confesses to having his own personal history in the US, and launches into a lengthy, increasingly ominous flashback narration of those years. The novel highlights geopolitical tension from the very first line of the novel: "Do not be frightened of my beard. I am a lover of America" (1). Changez is a Princeton graduate who lives in New York, and earns a job at a prestigious valuation firm called Underwood Samson. He excels at his job, and begins an affair with a troubled fellow Princeton graduate named Erica. The bulk of the narrative takes place in the US and the protagonist Changez struggles with the personal and social costs of immigration to America, as do characters in a certain tradition of American novels.

Changez's New York Before 9/11:

Changez initially sees New York as a place where he feels accepted and at home. He says: "I was, in four and a half years, never an American; I was *immediately* a New Yorker" (33). He says of wearing a kurta on a train in New York: "It was a testament to the open-mindedness and – that overused word – *cosmopolitan* nature of New York in those days that I felt completely comfortable on the subway in this attire" (48). This early identification with New York and the city's acceptance of the symbols of culture which Changez identifies which highlights the centrality of 9/11 in shaping American intolerance and boundaries in the novel, since his experience of the city changes dramatically after the attacks. For Changez, the boundary of tolerance seems to be uncovered in the 9/11.

New York is a freeing place for Changez, because there, he has exactly what it takes to climb to the top rung of the corporate ladder; he feels as though he is facing boundless possibility. Changez recalls of Underwood Samson:

Their offices were perched on the forty-first and forty-second floors of a building in Midtown—higher than any two structures here in Lahore would be if they were stacked atop the other—and while I had previously flown in airplanes and visited the Himalayas, nothing had prepared me for the drama, the *power* of the view from their lobby. This, I realized, was another world from Pakistan; supporting my feet were the achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known. (34)

Despite Changez's firm belief in Lahore's greatness for a time he believes New York to be not only great, but greater than the accomplishments of man and nature. In the last line of the quote, he uses the building as a metaphor for America's superiority in the world; "supporting my feet were the achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known." Having moved to New York City because of his new job, Changez feels very comfortable living in this multicultural city. So readers can observe before 9/11 Changez foreign outer appearance is not misemployed as a means of *othering* or exclusion by inferring a specific identity, but merely as a way to classify possible differing habits. However, as soon

as the WTC is destroyed by the attacks, his foreign outer appearance becomes a sign for “otherness”. The development of Changez self and social perception in relation to the events of the 9/11 undergoes drastic changes.

Changez’s New York After 9/11:

When Changez enters the world of the financial elite, he transforms from an awkward foreign student into a sophisticated New Yorker and valuer. After 9/11, Changez becomes disgusted with the changes that are occurring in America. Suddenly, he is able to see that he is complicit in the changes America is making so boldly; with flags at home and bombs abroad. His ideals of New York begin to unravel. He reflects on the crumbling of his American dream in direct relation to 9/11, the War on Terror and the possibility of war between India and Pakistan:

I wonder now, sir, whether I believed at all in the firmness of the foundations of the new life I was attempting to construct for myself in New York. Certainly I *wanted* to believe; at least I wanted not to disbelieve with such an intensity that I prevented myself as much as was possible from making the obvious connection between the crumbling of the world around me and the impending destruction of my personal American dream. (93)

Now, Changez sees New York as separate from America, because America has taken on a new meaning. After 9/11, the Pak-Punjab Deli becomes a source of underground information: “I ignored as best I could the rumors I heard: Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives; the FBI was raiding mosques, shops, and even people’s houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse” (94). It conveys the worsening state of affairs for Muslims, South Asians, Middle Easterners, and anyone resembling them in America.

Once Changez realizes that the American empire is like any other, he also understands that his supposed privileges: his job, his apartment, his expense account, is really the chains that bind him in service to America. When the terrorists attack the World Trade Centre, Changez is on a business trip to the Philippines and watches the news of the event on TV. At first perceiving the images as fictitious, Changez eventually reacts with a smile when realizing that the news are reality (72). As the narrator tells the reader, seeing these pictures, Changez “was caught up in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees” (73). It is hence the symbolic destruction of American meritocracy and of the centre of “global networks of commerce”, which left Changez smiling, who apparently is no longer torn between his Pakistani and American self. As just already hinted at, the events obviously represent the trigger for Changez to become more conscious of his personal identity and find an end to his identity crisis. From that point on and in the aftermath of September 11, he clearly identifies with his homeland Pakistan:

I chanced upon a newscast with ghostly night-vision images of American troops dropping into Afghanistan for what was described as a daring raid on a Taliban command post. My reaction caught me by surprise; Afghanistan was Pakistan’s

neighbor, our friend, and a fellow Muslim nation besides, and the sight of what I took to be the beginning of its invasion by your countrymen caused me to tremble with fury. (99-100)

Changez's feeling of his allegiance with the fellow Muslim / neighbouring countries of Pakistan nationality becomes suddenly more important for both him and his environment in New York city. Changez himself is no more torn between his social identities as Pakistani and trainee in the U.S. He now clearly identifies with his native country Pakistan. For other Americans, however, his foreign outer appearance becomes a means for associating his allegiance to terrorist cells.

For his fragile girlfriend, Erica, the attacks trigger an acute regression into a state of unrelieved depression. Erica represents America, specifically the part of America that is detached from reality and self-absorbed. She becomes institutionalized, never to return home. Therefore, Changez's relationship with her corresponds to his relationship with America as a nation. Just as Changez is incompatible with Erica, so is he at odds with America's insensible, self-serving foreign policy. If Underwood Samson symbolises America's forceful involvement in the world at large; in contrast, Erica embodies America's aloofness to the point of selfishness. Anna Hartnell explains how a similar problematic community is created in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*: "Erica's fixation on Chris and the European past that he apparently symbolizes seemingly stands in for a fantasy of the West: as Changez suspects, there is something fictitious about both America's post-9/11 nostalgia and Erica's past life with her former lover. In this way, I suggest that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* points to a non-identity between Europe and America, one that implies a bifurcation at the heart of what is so often portrayed as a unified 'West' " (Hartnell 344).

Changez's Insightful Encounters that Reframe His Identification:

The readers would encounter even more decisive predicament during his two business trips. Changez actually learns how to locate both the US and Pakistan on a properly cognitive world map. Changez's respective interactions with Filipino, a driver, in Manila and a literary bookseller in Valparaiso, both important sites of American imperial history, and recast its worldly meaning.

When Changez flies to Manila, he is symbolically returning home without actually going to Lahore. However, Changez finds Manila to be more similar to New York than to Lahore. It has slums, but it is also a "place of skyscrapers and superhighways" with a "glittering skyline and walled enclaves for the ultra-rich" that embodies infinitely more wealth than his home town of Lahore (64). Changez suddenly feels ashamed to be a Pakistani, as he initially feels ashamed of his childhood home when he returns to Lahore. When the Filipino driver glares at Changez, Changez suddenly realizes what a fake he is. Changez responds by doing something he has never done before: "I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an American. The Filipinos we worked with seemed to look up to my American colleagues, accepting them almost instinctively as members of the officer class of global business—and I wanted my share of that respect as well" (65). Manila makes Changez feel separate from America. Culturally, Americanness here signifies the tremendous power of global capital itself. Only days later, however, while

in a car with his colleagues, he accidentally meets the gaze of the Filipino “driver of a jeepney” whom he observes looking at him with “undisguised hostility” (66). Immediately perturbed, Changez ponders explanations for the man’s anger, each of which “assumed—as their unconscious starting point—that he and I shared a sort of Third World sensibility” (67). And as Changez turns to address one of his American colleagues, he sees his “fair hair and light eyes and, most of all, his oblivious immersion in the minutiae of our work—and thought, you are so foreign. I felt in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him; 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). After this interaction Changez begins to see himself as separate from his colleagues and from America. His reaction to the 9/11 attacks, which he sees on television in Manila, cements his status as a non-American. The Manila scenes project Changez’s inner conflict regarding what it means to work in corporate America. However, as soon as he encounters Filipino who expresses hatred for his American status, Changez’s identification quickly vacillates to the side of the apparent victims of the power he has come to embody. This sense of being either Pakistani or American represents one’s ambivalent affective relationship in the global economy.

During the final business trip to Valparaiso, Changez experiences an even more intense moment of triangulated reidentification. Valparaiso is the setting that helps Changez realize his loathing for America and his loyalty to Pakistan. Valparaiso reminds Changez, consciously or unconsciously, not only of Lahore but also of America’s interfering and destructive nature. This is the aspect of America he despises, so it is appropriate for him to renounce his loyalty to Underwood Samson, and to America, in Valparaiso. Soon after he visits Neruda’s house, Changez finds his “*core*,” or rather, Juan-Bautista makes him aware of the values he already holds. He baptizes Changez into an altogether new life with a single deft observation: he invites Changez to compare his work at Underwood Samson with that of the medieval Ottoman empire’s “janissaries,” Christian boys captured at a young age who were “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” (151).

Juan-Bautista leads Changez to realize that he is like Neruda; he may not be a communist, but he is rapidly becoming opposed to America’s brand of capitalistic imperialism. Bautista’s analogy triggers a blinding insight that entirely reframes for Changez his life in the US:

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)

By this point, Changez has become utterly alienated from Underwood Samson, as well as America. Now months after the September 11th attacks, Pakistan has entered a

terrifying state of crisis and heightened military alert. In the wake of the subsequent Parliament attack, India threatens to invade from the east, while the US bombing of Afghanistan has already commenced to the west. Trying to do his valuations job, Changez reports that “my blinders were coming off, and I was dazzled and rendered immobile by the sudden broadening of my arc of vision” (145).

When Changez deplanes after his flight from Valparaiso, he sees New York as an imperial city of old:

I was struck by how traditional your empire appeared. Armed sentries manned the check post at which I sought entry; being of a suspect race I was quarantined and subjected to additional inspection; once admitted I hired a charioteer who belonged to a serf class lacking the requisite permissions to abide legally and forced therefore to accept work at lower pay; I myself was a form of indentured servant whose right to remain was dependent upon the continued benevolence of my employer. (157)

Changez speaks of American power by the omnipresence of the American flag, a symbol which accompanies the rise in hostility towards himself and other outsiders who become associated with terrorism simply through their appearance. New York becomes America after 9/11, no longer providing him with the sense of acceptance and diversity which he experienced before. He explains:

Your country’s flag invaded New York after the attacks; it was everywhere. Small flags stuck on tooth picks featured in the shrines; stickers of flags adorned wind shields and windows; large flags fluttered from buildings. They all seemed to proclaim: *We are America* – not New York, which, in my opinion, means something quite different – *the mightiest civilization the world has ever known; you have slighted us; beware our wrath.* (79)

Changez begins to hint at a militant America, one which seeks to proclaim a national identity through violence, and the displaying of the American flag symbolises this commitment to national identity. Cultural symbols such as these serve to maintain the boundaries of national identity. Whereas 9/11 might suggest a disturbance of American power, the omnipresence of these symbols demonstrates, in Changez’s view, a flaunting (showing) of power in the face of terrorism.

Changez’s Fundamentalism:

After the 9/11 attacks, his view of American life and his identification with the national myths of the US begin to rapidly unravel, as he becomes increasingly marginalized within the post-9/11 American world. He positions the US as “fundamentalist” in relation to national myths of economic and political domination. This perception of American fundamentalism leads him to become disillusioned with his own American dream, and his clash with these fundamentals causes him to develop an envious distaste towards the world of wealth and power in which he now exists. The title of the novel is ironic, a deconstruction of

the concept of fundamentalism, since Changez's fundamentalism is not religious, cultural or political, as his opening comments about his beard might suggest, and also does not refer to the so-called anti-American sentiments of which he is accused and for which he is seemingly targeted by the mysterious American man. Instead, he views it as the fundamentals of Underwood Samson and of American society as a whole during his stay in New York, principles of economic domination which he hates and criticises.

Changez's Counterterrorism:

Similar to his deconstruction of the concept of fundamentalism, Changez repositions concepts and unsettles the distinction between terrorism and counterterrorism in the US-led War on Terror. He explains:

A common strand appeared to unite these conflicts, and that was the advancement of a small coterie's concept of American interests in the guise of the fight against terrorism, which was defined to refer only to the organized and politically motivated killing of civilians by killers *not* wearing the uniforms of soldiers. I recognized that if this was to be the single most important priority of our species, then the lives of those of us who lived in lands in which such killers also lived had no meaning except as collateral damage. This, I reasoned, was why America felt justified in bringing so many deaths to Afghanistan and Iraq, and why America felt justified in risking so many more deaths by tacitly using India to pressure Pakistan. (178)

By unsettling the boundaries of the definition of terrorism and by using the concept of fundamentalism against America, Changez demonstrates a retaliation against his own classification as a terrorist. He despises America for it is a leading terrorist state in the world. Chomsky charts out how official definitions would actually include the US as a "leading terrorist state" (38).

His engagement with American society and his eventual disillusionment with what he sees as American fundamentalism cause him to voice his disagreements with American society publically. Changez's demonstrations are framed by the media to construct him as an enemy to America:

I had in the meanwhile gotten a job as a university lecturer, and I made it my mission on campus to advocate a disengagement from your country by mine ... 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)

He expands on the power of the media in framing terrorism when he explains: "When the international television news networks came to our campus, I stated to them... that no country inflicts death so readily upon the inhabitants of other countries, frightens so many people so far away, as America. I was perhaps more forceful on this topic than I intended" (182). Again

Changez ironically asserts “but you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you American’s are all undercover assassins” (183). It becomes clear that Changez positions America as inhabiting the definition of terrorism. However, the above passages reveal Changez’s explicit presentation of American imperialism as an endlessly expansionist project.

However, DeLillo in his *Falling Man*, through his seemingly Orientalist approach consider Islamist terror an existential threat to the political order of the city and blames Islamism as being incompatible with the West’s history of civilization and western modernity. John Updike’s *Terrorist* is another 9/11 novel where readers would encounter similar post-9/11 American condition that highlights geopolitical and racial issues. On the contrary Hamid adopts counterterrorist or a deconstructive fundamentalism; a “symbolic” response to American hegemony and its single-minded pursuit of global financial and political power. Similarly Richard Flanagan’s *The Unknown Terrorist* is also a rational reaction of those most alienated from the projection of American, anglospheric imperialism or a deliberate fiction of the liberal democratic order to justify an assault upon human rights at home and weak states abroad.

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