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Politics is (Almost) Personal: Writing in the War on Terror

by

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Politics is (Almost) Personal: Writing in the War on Terror
By Stuart Jones

Abstract:

This dissertation contributes to an ongoing debate about the use of the personal and politics in post-9/11 fiction. Using the "Gray-Rothberg exchange" (Morley, 720) as a premise for its investigation, this research establishes that three narratives from post-9/11-War on Terror fiction, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Sunjeev Sahota's *Ours are the Streets* (2011) and Chris Morris' comedy film *Four Lions* (2010) have reworked the inevitability of "the personal", "emotional entanglements" of the narrative protagonist to make political critiques. These writers reverse literary focus and pay narrative attention to the personal account of a politically dehumanized figure. Discussing narrative form in Chapter 1, personal political awakening in Chapter 2 and an empathic discursive context to political discussions in Chapter 3, this work determines that the inevitability of the personal in literature can be used for constructive political treatment, but that that treatment remains in the realm of discourse as it engages with the media representations of terrorist rather than the political specifics of the ongoing global campaigns.

Introduction: The 'Retreat' from Politics

Post-9/11 fiction has become a controversial area of American literature. Collective experiences of trauma have throughout history generated some of the most creative innovations in the arts. To the dismay of some critics however, 9/11, with its hyper-mediated global resonance, "simply did not mark the great shift [...] so many thought it would" (Morley, 731). In response, some critics have prescribed trajectories that they feel writers ought to be taking. Literary scholars Richard Gray (2009) and Michael Rothberg (2009) form the vanguard of these prescriptions. Clearly portraying their disappointment for the field, both critics call for more political engagement and historical awareness in the literary depictions of 9/11 and its aftermath. One of Gray and Rothberg's particular concerns with 9/11 narratives is the role and purpose of the personal and the domestic. Lamenting the choices made by writers, Gray and Rothberg posit these themes as nothing more than a crutch for writers struggling to narrativize the events of 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror. For Gray and Rothberg, domesticity and the personal are convenient tools for writers looking to circumvent or retreat from a direct confrontation with the 'larger' geopolitical issues and conditions from which terrorism emerges. Richard Gray, in his essay 'Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis' (2009), states that writers have merely tried to dwell upon the "emotional entanglements" of the protagonists rather than the impact of Western foreign policy or ground resistance in the Middle East (134).

These are of course contested viewpoints. Other critics have expressed concern

about the narrow prescriptiveness of this 'personal-as-retreat' perspective. Catherine Morley's article "'How Do We Write about This?' The Domestic and the Global in the Post-9/11 Novel' (2011), acknowledges that 9/11 fiction is indeed preoccupied with the personal and the domestic, but contests Gray and Rothberg's assumption that this is a negative association, or anything original or peculiar to this era of American literature. The American state-of-the-nation novel "has always taken *e pluribus unum* as its structural mechanism, pinning the story of the evolving nation to the small-scale dramas of individuals and families. And in the twenty-first century, as in centuries past, that seems unlikely to change" (731). Morley states that despite the prescriptive desires of Gray and Rothberg, writers are "simply not interested in writing angry polemic tracts about the roots of our modern discontents" (722), but are more interested in attempting "to salvage the small, fragmentary human stories which alone can illuminate the wider picture" (724). Morley suggests the constraints of the personal are an inevitability of literary narratives and that possibly Gray and Rothberg are asking too much of writers. This dissertation will coincide with Morley's analysis but aims to demonstrate how later writers of post-9/11 fiction are beginning to rework those inevitabilities to make, or move towards making, the kind of political critiques Gray and Rothberg are hoping for.

Where the previous literary critics, Gray, Rothberg and Morley, have predominantly considered narratives with civilian subjects about the immediate trauma of 9/11 for an American perspective- Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006), Ken Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to a Country* (2006), amongst others- this paper will focus on narratives of prospective suicide bombers in the subsequent War on

Terror. In the years since 9/11, the global political world has been constrained by the Western powers' policy of the War on Terror. It is assumed writers have developed their literary attentions alongside this large contextual political change and refocused their narrative treatment on the perpetual figure of the Other. This is an attempt to move literary discussions on from the immediate trauma of 9/11 and begin to intimate a political consciousness by critiquing the discursive image that western societies project onto their enemies. The narratives that will be used for this discussion are Mohsin Hamid's novella *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2006), Sunjeev Sahota's novel *Ours are the Streets* (2011), and Christopher Morris' comedy film *Four Lions* (2010). Hamid's text *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has achieved significant world-wide popularity and was posited by Rothberg himself as an example of the kind of literary progression academic critics were hoping to see. *Four Lions* and *Ours are the Streets* were chosen to continue this investigation. Marc Sageman (2008) suggests that the newest wave of jihadist terrorism is "primarily, though by no means exclusively, a European phenomenon" (Cottee, 733). Because of this, *Four Lions* and *Ours are the Streets*, both narratives from British writers, were included first because of their focus on European terrorist groups and second because of their focus on terrorist friendship. This attention to the terrorists' friendships is a key aspect of the writers' empathetic context and normalising of the terrorist enemy, and thus a prime example of the attempt to use the personal "emotional entanglements" to interrogate the political. The relative success of these attempts will be discussed herein.

This dissertation will argue that these new writers of what we can call 'war on

terror' fiction, have had some success in their attempts to rework/reemploy the inevitability of the personal in literature, but that they all have their own limitations in completely satiating the demands inferred by the "Gray-Rothberg exchange" (Morley, 720). Each chapter will analyse a different aspect of these three narratives. For instance, chapter 1, discusses how Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Sunjeev Sahota's *Ours are the Streets* use a personalised literary form - an interpersonal frame and dramatic monologue - to critique domestic and international political discourse. They also use a symbolic (inter)national love story to represent the relationship between a Pakistani migrant - Hamid's protagonist a first-generation immigrant to the US, Sahota's protagonist a second-generation migrant in Britain - and their respective western nations. These narrative devices expose the biases that are entrenched in a dominant narrative position by subverting norms of debate using ironic reversal. These elements combine to create a stable foundation for the writer's personal-as-political philosophy. However, they both rely heavily on a citizen/readership complicity to complete the narrative creation, which almost becomes an ideological cop-out as readers must comply with the problematic narrative forms. By the end of the narratives, the over-determined symbolism has caused their attempt to foreground a national image appear underwhelming despite being relevant to the continuing public political discussion. Furthermore, Sahota returns to tropes of insanity and mental illness in *Ours are the Streets* that despite having been reworked to be a point of empathy still allows the author to circumvent the terror-political assessment it is suggested (by Gray and Rothberg) he should be undertaking.

Reading *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Ours are the Streets* again, Chapter 2 discusses the role of personal investment in protagonists' political awakening. This chapter argues that the writers explore degrees of personal investment across their narratives and suggests that when political interactions occur, the more personally relevant they are to the protagonist, the more provocative they become. These writers are now attempting to confront politics directly through use of the personal, and suggest that without this personal investment, the political awakening would not occur; personal investment is posited as a fundamental facilitator to political awareness. In *Ours are the Streets* there is even a risk of too much personal investment. The protagonist's personal insecurity causes the confrontations with political and economic disparity to become a catalyst for a destabilising and existentially-motivated mental illness. The added investment of personal insecurity causes the protagonist to internalise his shame rather than engage openly with political ideology. From this comparative analysis, this dissertation argues that writers posit personal investment as having various causal results for an individual's political awakening (either they progress on to a coherent political activism or they descend into mental illness) but it is always positioned as the fundamental, intimate catalyst in the process of an individual's political engagement.

Reading *Ours are the Streets* and *Four Lions*, Chapter 3 discusses how Sahota and Morris critique political discourses of terrorism by creating a context of empathy for public approaches to the terrorist individual. This context of empathy is achieved via a short sequence of narrative devices namely, humour, friendship/camaraderie, and personal tragedy. Humour, broken down into ridicule and banter, reduces the level of

hysteria that surrounds the terrorist figure and normalises the friendships of these terrorist individuals. Morris and Sahota show how friendship and camaraderie can resolve conflicts over ideology and military strategy, and provide a means of satisfying the individual's existential desires. These four narrative devices create a context through which audiences/readers may eventually learn to empathise with these terrorist individuals, even if they do not agree or sympathise with them. The personal is cited as the foundation upon which these political entities can begin to comprehend each other; a baseline of humanity that is lost in hyper-mediated political discourse and the fundamental premise that can resolve the mediated illusions of difference. Despite Morris' inspiration coming from real life, (there are various cases he cites as the basis for his narrative (CBSNews)), the presentation of an incompetent terrorist figure runs the risk of denying a coherent ideology to the home-grown terrorists. Morris and Sahota reinvent the terrorist as a familiar comic figure, but possibly dismiss the actual mechanics of radicalisation in favour of an overt attack on public discourse.

These three chapters establish how the political can be espoused through the personal in literature, but that that espousal is predominantly attuned to political discourse, i.e. interpretative repertoires (Wetherell and Potter, 94), rather than the specifics of political policy or the ongoing political campaigns. This research hopes to demonstrate that despite the fact the narratives lack the political particularities that Gray and Rothberg demand, these narratives are still engaging with the political climate in a constructive and critical manner. They use personal small-scale dramas of individuals to humanise a politically dehumanised figure upon which governments justify equally

horrific acts of ideologically motivated violence. Furthermore, they posit personal relevance as the likely lens of anyone's political interpretation and the site at which human beings can realise their mutual and collective relationship with the ever-globalising world. This all shows that the personal is utilised as something distinctly different from a retreat from the political, even if there is a distinct barrier that does emerge in these narratives' attempt to engage with the political world; there emerges a plateau above which these narratives at least do not manage to climb. When the attention to the personal emotional entanglements are used to humanise a politically dehumanised figure, especially one that has been used to legitimise acts of state terror, then that use of small-scale drama becomes a political endeavour as it tries to influence the discourse which ultimately accepts or rejects these legitimising political characterisations. Short of writing about specific events with an entire myriad of characters to highlight any given complexities, it seems impossible to represent the political conditions of the aftermath of 9/11 in greater detail. Any attempt to do so would surely hinder the narrative experience and end up simplistic and awkward.¹

Any more than this discursive interaction it appears is a goal yet to be accomplished.

¹ Even a relatively successful attempt at crossing these aspects of the terrorist phenomenon has its own flaws of plausibility; for instance take John Updike's novel *Terrorist* (2006), where it is convenient that the school-teacher capable of reconverting the radicalised Ahmed is the brother-in-law of a prominent homeland security agent, who manages to tip him off in time so he can walk by in the street and by chance intercept the terrorist Ahmed before he detonates his explosive device.

Chapter 1: Politically Romantic, Linguistically Unaware:
Interpersonal Frames, Dramatic Monologues, and Romantic
Symbolism in The Reluctant Fundamentalist and Ours are the Streets

Stuart Jones

The first chapter of this dissertation reads Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and Sunjeev Sahota's *Ours are the Streets* (2011). The chapter isolates three aspects of literary form - interpersonal frames/dramatic monologue and symbolic (inter)national love story - and exposes how they are utilised not only to ground the narratives in a personal context, but also to make political critiques. The production of texts which articulate political themes in and through use of the 'personal' suggests later writers to those in the corpus of Gray and Rothberg are making inroads into solving political/literary problems, possibly answering the Gray-Rothberg call, within the confines of their "inevitable" (Morley, 721) constraints. However, this research argues that there is a literary cost for this political treatment which does present problems for writers aiming to seamlessly integrate a personal-as-political narrative. What this research will show, by analysing the interpersonal frames, dramatic monologue form and romantic symbolism, is that writers have made steps towards solving the proposed problems of integrating the personal and the political, however much they fall short of satisfying them completely.

Both interpersonal framings of the texts, Hamid's a confessional conversation, Sahota's a diary-journal, have a strong sense of intimacy which secures the discursive socio-political exploration to "the small fragmentary human stories" (Morley, 724) and private experiences of individuals, i.e. a personal platform. Both attempt to normalise

the terrorist 'Other' by providing confessional detail in an interpersonal frame. This is the first effort to utilise the 'personal' to make political critiques.

The *Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Ours are the Streets* also both use a form of dramatic monologue in their narratives to make further critiques of current political discourse. By figuring the prospective suicide bomber as the protagonist of these narrative monologues, Hamid and Sahota have contested media presuppositions and given the Islamic 'Other' the authorial power over their Western counterpart in these exchanges. Furthermore, the silenced addressee provokes a reader-response, which subverts and critiques the citizen's power and responsibility as a political narrative authenticator, i.e. the component that legitimises a political discourse by accepting it.

The symbolic international love stories provide an emotional context to political themes of (inter)national relations. Hamid's novella is a love story between a Pakistani male and the allegorically named (Am)Erica; well established in literary theory (Hartnell, Ilott, Morey), Erica's psychological dilemmas represent the American national mood during and after the events of 9/11. Sahota's novel is a love story between a British-Pakistani man named Imtiaz and his British wife Rebekah. This chapter argues that Rebekah, who exhibits typical features of ancient dwellers of the British Isles, "dark red hair" and "tight with freckles" (Sahota, 3), can likewise be interpreted as a symbolic "correlative of her country" (Morey, 140). Imtiaz often refers to Rebekah by using the affectionate title B. This is usually accompanied by what Mikhail Bakhtin terms "a hybrid construction", an "utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it

two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two "languages," two semantic and axiological belief systems" (Bakhtin, 211). These structures in the narrative speak to both the marital personification and the more abstract national identity of B(ritain) as a whole. The turbulent and failing marriage between Imtiaz and Rebekah can represent an extreme example of the political relations between Britain and an existentially-confused and easily-radicalised, second-generation immigrant to the West. Both writers use the unofficial labels, Britain and America, for these national analogies because they connote the cultural image and influence of these two countries. Britain rings of the old Empire, whilst Hamid's use of America rather than the US speaks to that country's cultural monopolisation of the continental terminology.² All three of these analytical concepts - interpersonal frames, dramatic monologue and (inter)national romance - will be discussed in turn throughout the course of this chapter.

The *Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) is a one-sided transcript of a conversation between presumed Islamic terrorist Changez and his interlocutor, the silenced and unidentified American man who may himself have links to the CIA. This narrative conversation charts Changez's transformation from a successful career-minded business evaluator in New York to a university lecturer and anti-American activist in Lahore. The confessional conversation takes place in Lahore over a shared meal in one of Changez's "favourite [...] establishments", a tea shop/restaurant in his beloved "district of Old Anarkali" (Hamid, 2). The admission by Changez that this is his favourite restaurant

² though that is used elsewhere in the novel

adds a further layer to the personal context of this interaction. Changez's familiarity with the restaurant when scrutinised in the ambiguity of Changez's terrorist affiliations means the staff can be called into question as well, thus Changez's assurance that the American is safe carries ambivalent undertones. In the conversation which ensues, Changez gives the American a very personal account of his "four and a half years" (Hamid, 3) in the US. Whilst the interlocutors are strangers and the discussion does take place in public, the intimate nature of Changez's confession takes this conversation out of the realms of simple small-talk and public courtesy. Changez speaks on such private topics as career ambition, romantic involvement, family history and personal shame, some of which he talks of in graphic detail; for example, Changez discusses openly the details of his romantic, sexual relationship with his American lover, Erica (Hamid, 102-3).

The personal narrative interaction between an American and a Pakistani, each with potentially questionable motives, has inspired many scholars and critics (Hartnell etc.) to read the characters as national allegories. The possible reading of sinister intent, in a time of political violence and global terror, adds plausibility to this political allegorical reading. The vague description of the American, "it was your bearing that allowed me to identify you" (Hamid, 2), illustrates the abstract concepts of reference intrinsic in collective ideas of national identity. The fact the American is nameless, silenced and "typical of a certain type of American" (Hamid, 2), hands control to the reader of which stereotypical national or cultural representation is elicited. The ambiguity of either Changez's commitment to a violent jihad, or the American's employment with the CIA,

provokes a critical response from the reader as they must complete the narrative. This in turn causes them to reflect on their reliance on gap-filling and stereotype.

This same ambiguity makes the interaction between the two national allegories a tense navigation of either side's political fears. There is no confirmation of whether the American is a CIA operative intending Changez harm, or if Changez himself is a terrorist militant intending the American harm. One, the other, both, or neither of these readings are entirely plausible. In this context, slight and normally inconsequential movements or actions of either the American or Changez come across as suspicious indicators of potentially lethal behaviour: consider the waiter's apparent connection to Changez, "what a coincidence; it is our waiter; he has offered me a nod of recognition" (Hamid, 208). This can be seen as either commonly expected if one remembers Changez is a frequenter of the establishment, or eerily calculated if one suspects an illicit agenda. This second reading is further supported when Changez admits that, "yes, the expression on [his] face [...] is rather grim" (Hamid, 208). Changez's host-like reassurances can also seem either welcoming or dubiously insincere: "I observe, sir, that there continues to be something about our waiter that puts you ill at ease [...] if you should sense that he has taken a disliking to you, I would ask you to be so kind as to ignore it" (Hamid, 123). Likewise the American's unusual telephone may be an anomaly of fashion and commercial technology, or it might be a secret military device "capable of communicating via satellite when no ground coverage is available" (Hamid, 34), via which "the company is checking up on [him]" (Hamid, 131). Indeed, the bulge that "manifests itself through the lightweight fabric of [the American's] suit" (Hamid, 158)

may be a sidearm or a travel wallet. In all these instances, the narrative confirms nothing, leaving the reader to interpret these details and their ultimate meaning.

What remains throughout any of these interpretations is the tone of personal confession and ambivalent intimacy. If neither of these characters harbours ill intent, the conversation is a quirky and slightly paranoid personal exchange between strangers, who ruminate on current political dynamics. If either one of these interlocutors intends harm, then the contextual allusions to the War on Terror classify the threatened violence as an enactment of ideology; Changez's personal confession in this reading becomes either a pre-emptive defiant stand before becoming a victim of political violence or an explanatory justification of his perpetration of political violence. The ambiguity in all of these interpretations ensures that nothing is knowable for certain and that any conclusion is a determination that only the reader can make based upon her own personal narrative preferences and ideological presuppositions.

By focusing on the personal in all instances, ranging from Changez's intimate and self-exploratory history to a personified interaction between allegorical nation-states, Hamid seems to be suggesting that from micro to macro, and in either *Love or Hate*, one is locked in a close relationship with an 'Other'. The novella suggests, via the interpersonal frames and ambiguity, even at the level of nations, interactants respond to events and each other in personal terms and with recourse to their stereotypical cultural preconceptions. Secondly, the attention to the reader's own personal investment in legitimising literary narratives emphasises the reader's/citizen's narrative responsibility in completing 'official' or dominant political discourses. This reader-response highlights

the need to acknowledge the partiality individuals bring to these interpretations.

Ours are the Streets uses a similar frame of interpersonal confession: the narrative is a collection of personal, cathartic diary entries from the protagonist, Imtiaz Raina. The diary primarily addresses his English wife, and mother of his child, Rebekah, often affectionately referred to as "B" (Sahota, 3). In these writings, Imtiaz confesses details about his transformation from non-practising British 'lad' - "I used to hang out with my mates and wear their clothes and be part of their drift towards nothing" (Sahota, 3) - to radicalised Wahabbi/Salafi jihadist and prospective suicide bomber.

Radicalised in Pakistan, where he has travelled to bury his Abba [Father], Imtiaz joins an aspiring local jihadist cell and travels north to Afghanistan in "search of the fight back against the Americans" (Sahota, 170). He is eventually recruited for an attack against Great Britain, to which he returns with his "freshie" (Sahota, 111) cousin, Charag. Once home in Britain and plotting his violent self-sacrifice, Imtiaz begins his diary confession to his family: "I wanted to leave something behind for you all" (Sahota, 1). It is this diary confession that Sahota has made us privy to. The fact that Imtiaz's political radicalisation begins with the death of his father, again foregrounds the personal context to this socio-political confession. It roots the causes of the political arc in the personal experiences of a domestic loss.

Sahota's diary form is entrenched in intimacy, and not only because it is primarily addressed to his wife and family. The entire premise of a personal diary of events and associated feelings is easily associated with issues of domestic privacy and familial trust. The diary format is a private affair predominantly conducted and preserved in the

domestic sphere; one could say that a diary is interpreted as an intrapersonal activity, i.e. that it is a process of self-reflection and self-communication, rather than communication with an external entity. These writings, however, as stated above, do have an addressee and as such skewer this presupposed dynamic. Sahota conflates ideas of public communication and private confession as Imtiaz opens the diary frame to an external readership. The fact that Sahota's addressee is also his romantic national symbol speaks to Arendt's view of nation-building, where: "the society of the nation in the modern world is that curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance" (Bhabha, 2). By framing the narrative of a political terrorist as a private activity conducted in a domestic sphere, and at the same time exploiting a dichotomy between private messages and open familial communication, Sahota has cemented his political narrative in a personal context.

Whilst Hamid provokes his reader-response through Changez's ambiguous classification as a terrorist, Sahota's reader-response is generated through a scrutiny of the emotional account and mental stability of this confirmed terrorist. Sahota's choice of diary form allows him to explore the emotional state of the suicide bomber, inviting readers to consider a thicker description of the political terrorist 'Other'. By giving the reader the diary of a prospective suicide bomber, Sahota has radically shifted the focus of the Western 'eye'. Presenting the traumas of Imtiaz Raina, for example the witnessing of his friend's violent death, a sacrificial attack on an American medical truck (Sahota, 244-250), Sahota has confronted what Fritz Breithaupt describes as "the taboo of September 11" (cited in Hartnell, 345). Sahota has given voice to what is usually

silenced in Western discourse: the acknowledgement, acceptance and grief attributed to the experiences of trauma and the human understanding of loss in the known figure of the enemy.

Sahota uses the diary frame to ground the narrative in confessional tone, but he has also isolated Imtiaz's melodramatic reasoning. Imtiaz addresses a character to whom he is emotionally invested, as opposed to Changez's conversation with a stranger. Imtiaz explores his terrorist experience privately whereas Changez wards off a hostile assessment as a terrorist in a public setting. The reader is thus positioned explicitly as an objective intruder to Imtiaz's confessions with his wife, a far more intimate confrontation with the demonised political Other. Both Sahota and Hamid are navigating this undisclosed space where writers would normally try to avoid "empathizing with the hijackers [terrorists]" (Hartnell, 345), but Sahota has brought this scrutiny into the domestic sphere. Hamid and Sahota generate empathy through these personal frames and provoke reflection on the presupposed nature of readers' political reactions: Hamid on the classification of the Muslim Other as a terrorist, and Sahota on the emotional fragility of the confirmed enemy.

An accompanying feature of these interpersonal frames is the dramatic monologue form, which too provides political insight. The dramatic monologue, traditionally a poetic form, descends from the Victorian "monodramas" (Culler, 369). It consists of a narrator telling a story, usually his/her own story, to an audience without the support of other characters or narrative perspectives. However, the dramatic monologue differs

from simply being a "one-man play" (Yaqin, 45) in that, rather than addressing an audience directly, it addresses a fictional third-party interlocutor. The interlocutor is denied agency in the narration and the audience is left with what appears to be a one-sided conversation. Hamid and Sahota use the dramatic monologue form to expose the mechanics of authorial control, showing how a chronicler of events shapes the recorded narrative of others based on his/her own subjective complaints.

A distinct feature of the dramatic monologue form is that the western addressee is silenced, not excised. The usually dominant interactants (US and GB) are still present but bound by the dramatic monologue form only to listen. The unnamed American's words are never recorded in Hamid's conversation and his utterances are only ever intimated through discursive manoeuvres from Changez. We learn the few details about the American through narrative bridging such as "Where are you staying? The Pearl Continental, you say?" (Hamid, 191). Similarly, Imtiaz's addressee, Rebekah, is absent from his confessional exchange. B's words are only ever reported via Imtiaz's scrawling accounts. Throughout the novel he asks his wife for a clarity which readers never receive, e.g. "We were both very different back then weren't we, B?" (Sahota, 3). The absence of B's responses is obviously more easily accounted for in a diary format but the fact they are denied from entering the reader's purview still provides ideological insight.

In either narrative, to omit the Western voice is an intentional ironic reversal of the 'dominant speaker' positions in contemporary international relations. With the political, economic, cultural and linguistic dominance that the process of globalisation has

afforded America and Britain, it can be assumed that the Westerner would usually have the louder narrative 'voice' in an exchange intended for Western readers. Certainly, that appears to be the case in commercial global media. Changez/Hamid and Imtiaz/Sahota have "silenced the American [or the Brit] in order to give voice to that side of the story the West rarely hears, or refuses to hear" (Dijk, 35 cited in Žindžiuviene, 152). This is an intentional effort to expose the tendency for discursive bias in political rhetoric by reversing the norms of public focus.

The different choice that each of these writers have made with their interpersonal frames has an effect on how their dramatic monologue critique is realised. Hamid's novella, a one-sided conversational transcript, shows the hegemonic dominance that one speaker can enact over another. Hamid's decision to frame his narrative as an interpersonal conversation necessitates an immediate interlocutor however Changez dominates the narrative and incorporates the American's words into his own dialogue. Whilst Changez often recounts "flashbulb memories" (Žindžiuviene, 148) of his time in the US, the overall narrative of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is directly sequenced with interactions between Changez and the American. Decisions on seating, drinks, the choice of food and the time of departure are ultimately mediated through consultation between the two characters, though the American's voice is never recorded. Changez offers him chances to speak but the dramatic monologue form allows Changez/Hamid to bridge these locutionary gaps, i.e. the utterances themselves. For example, consider how Changez orders their food: "perhaps it would be better if I selected a number of delicacies for us to share. You will grant me that honour? Thank you. There it is done,

and off he [the waiter] goes" (Hamid, 124). The bridging of locutionary gaps demonstrates the (authorial) power of narrative dominance. In the context of the national allegories, it highlights the extent to which the dominant speaker in an international conversation can manipulate, or flavour, the discourse. Changez is ordering food for a stranger, who may be out to kill him, yet he perceives the chance to do so as an 'honour'. We get nothing from the American about his feelings of support or denial that such a service should be considered an 'honour'; indeed this sense of subservience which speaks to the privilege Changez enjoys rather than pleasure could even be ironic. The sentiment is all from Changez; the voice of the subordinate is not required for the story to continue. For Hamid, the refusal to record the American's words is a chance to expose political and cultural silences that are glossed over with narrative signposting. Hamid hopes to illustrate the political might that is attached to narrative discourse creation and draw attention through ironic reversal to the West's usual dominance in that regard.

Ours are the Streets conversely is critical of the historical record. Whilst Changez must very much be alive at the time of speaking, the written frame that Sahota uses leaves open the distinct possibility that we may be reading Imtiaz's words posthumously and without permission. As a result, Sahota's critique of the political bias is attuned toward how events and consequences are remembered in the permanent record and crucially how the human story is edited by perspective. Sahota achieves this by offering one-sided accounts of domestic arguments and social disputes in a diary that is intended to be read after his death. Imtiaz records his perspective of the many grievances he has

with the individuals in his life, leaving those concerned little opportunity to retort or correct the posthumous account. Again, ironic reversal plays a huge part in facilitating this ideological assessment which suggests that once a historical account is created, it cannot be separated from its author's subjective perspective.

In Imtiaz's account of his marital breakdown with the symbolically named B(ritain), Rebekah's words are reported, but these interactions are bound by Imtiaz's own personal perspective. Given that the option to have Rebekah interpret the meaning of her words as Imtiaz does has been categorically denied by Sahota's narrative frame, we are left solely with the private accounts in Imtiaz's desperate writings. This uncertainty calls into question Imtiaz's credibility as a source overall, but it also centralises the role of emotional interpretation in event reporting. When Imtiaz writes "You know, B, you can be really ungrateful sometimes" (Sahota, 16) we cannot verify the truth of the statement, which implies a continuing trend of behaviour; without objective comparisons, these not forthcoming, the written account by an emotionally invested character is the only lasting evidence. B is described as ungrateful, which speaks to Imtiaz's emotional belief of having been slighted by her. There is nothing to contrast or qualify Imtiaz's judgements, and therefore his opinion is left as the only viable historical truth.

A second feature of the dramatic monologue form is the "unique [...] relationship created with the reader" (Ilott, 574). The one-sidedness of the interactions described above creates a tension between the reader and the silenced addressee; the presence of second-person pronouns "uncomfortably conflates the singular "you" (the American) with the plural "you"" (Ilott, 574). It leads the audience to feel as though they are being

addressed directly and that the narration is a provocation to respond; the direct use of the second person pronoun 'you', "seems to be directed beyond the pages" (Ilott, 572). However, the presence of a fictional addressee makes this interaction awkward and uncertain. It labels this addressee an American or a Brit, directly including the western readers' personal identity whilst remaining vague enough to allow the reader to consent to the narrative alignment. The reader could before criticise Western media outlets as biased and skewed but now they are asked to include themselves in this critique. The tension between being provoked into discussion whilst simultaneously being denied the chance to speak is a poignant aspect of the ironic reversal mentioned above. The dramatic monologue drags readers inside the narrative, forcing them to take cognizance of their own complicity as the ironically-reversed and symbolically-discursive subordinate rather than remaining an objective observer, but it disallows their voice any narrative representation.

The ambiguity of the American's identity allows Hamid's text to be interpreted as an intentional communicative endeavour with the wider American population: "Your country's ambassador was in town" (Hamid, 203); "I see I have alarmed you" (Hamid, 1). Equally, Rebekah's affectionate title makes confessions like, "But I know I loved being aware of your eyes on me, B" (Sahota, 6) seem to transcend the immediate romantic/marital relationship and speak to a national audience. When Imtiaz states "we were all of us unafraid, remember that B" (Sahota, 2), the reader is uncertain if he is talking reassuringly to his wife or provocatively to a nation state. The use of language which addresses two narrative concepts can be interpreted as an example of a "hybrid

construction" (Bakhtin). Bakhtin states further about the dual semantic nature of such a construction that:

There is no formal - compositional and syntactic - boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems; the division of voices and languages takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole, often within the limits of a simple sentence. It frequently happens that even one and the same word will belong simultaneously to two languages, two belief systems that intersect in a hybrid construction - and, consequently, the word has two contradictory meanings, two accents (Bakhtin, 211).

Sahota relies on the potential of double meaning in these hybrid constructions to allude to a national discourse that is rarely able to occur intimately between a violent jihadist and its intended target.

This interpolation of the reader with the subordinate interlocutor "construct[s] the reader's positionality", while the ambiguity calls upon readers to "make active decisions" (Ilott, 572) in the narratives. In Hamid's novella, readers must decide on Changez's classification as either a manipulative terrorist or a genuine and passionate, yet non-violent, political activist. In Sahota's novel, readers judge Imtiaz's representation and performance as a terrorist, along with their own refusal to acknowledge the humanity of their confirmed enemy. The extent of the ambiguity the reader has to digest and "[t]he diversity of possible conclusions to be drawn [...] ensure that historical, political and personal factors cannot easily be reduced to a linear,

contingent and self-explanatory sequence of events" (Ilott, 572). The narratives resist the temptation to put forward or interpret an absolute truth. In doing this, the texts emphasise the role of the narrative audience. At every turn, the books posit "the reader as the shaper of meaning" (Ilott, 574). This interpolation of the reader with the narrative 'creator' has parallels with the passive interactants of political discourse. Hamid and Sahota suggest that just like the reader must complete the narrative in Hamid's and Sahota's works, citizens, as the political narrative consumers, are regularly called upon to create and legitimise often stereotypical, schema-based fictions about global events. This narrative decision to emphasise the subordinate's responsibility in this exchange, as Ilott (2014) suggests, critiques the notion that citizens are unable to effect change on a daily basis. The texts remove the reader from "the state of passive victimhood" (Ilott, 574) and try to demonstrate how they are often the active agent in narrative construction.

To emphasise the reader's responsibility in accepting or rejecting the proposed truth, both protagonists acknowledge their potential to paraphrase. When seemingly questioned by the American over the veracity of his 'testimony', Changez, in defence of his account, states: "surely it is the gist that matters; I am, after all, telling you a history and in history, as I suspect you - an American - will agree, it is the thrust of one's narrative that counts, not the accuracy of one's details" (Hamid, 135). With this, Hamid draws comparison with the tendency of Western global media and historical accounts to fixate on larger, broad narratives rather than be bogged down in the smaller yet more challenging task of knowing if any of them are true.

Likewise, Sahota emphasises this reader-responsibility when Imtiaz begins to pre-empt the discrepancies that others may have with his diary record, "I know you'll probably say that that didn't happen then and that this wasn't that way round [...] but I've got the basics right, haven't I?" (Sahota, 13). Hamid toys with the notion that public opinion is swayed more convincingly by captivating rhetoric than fact, whilst Sahota emphasises the concept of minimally required narrative benchmarks. Both narratives suggest that just like the protagonists avoid unsavoury details, nations and organisations the world over also paraphrase facts and details that would implicate mutual responsibility and legal accountability. In all walks of life propagandists aim to hang their narrative vision on a few literary hooks.

Ultimately, the interpolation of the reader is "a reflection of how the experience of (and the responsibility for) terrorism cannot be captured by the perspective of either perpetrators or victims alone, but instead distributes itself, like a spectrum of different wavelengths, across both groups, as well as bystanders" (Kacou, 1). Hamid and Sahota suggest that all of us are active agents in the creation and maintenance of current political discourses, which in turn helps to create and maintain political hegemony, which in turn helps to perpetuate terrorism too.

The final arm of this chapter's personal-as-political analysis is the shared attention to romance and the (inter)national love story. This domestic "small-scale drama" (Morley, 731) is utilised in the texts to indicate the protagonist's intercultural sense of national affiliation. The term 'nation' "refers both to the modern nation-state and to

something more ancient and nebulous - the 'natio' - a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging" (Brennan, 45). The international romance derives from the national love story forms used previously to make patriotic critiques of a country and its internal political trajectory. Doris Sommer states about "Latin American romances" that they are "inevitably stories of star-crossed lovers who represent particular regions, races, parties or economic interests which should naturally come together" (75). There is an "interconnectedness of personal (erotic) and political desire", where "romance is similarly employed to raise political questions" (Ilott, 578). Both Hamid's and Sahota's protagonists are Pakistani, one a native of Lahore, the other a second-generation emigrant to Britain and they both have romantic relationships with suggestively-named women, (Am)Erica and Rebekah, often referred to as B(ritain). The traditional Hebrew codification of what would alternatively be 'Rebecca' seems to imply Sahota is trying to allude to the shared root history of the monotheistic Abrahamic religions, a reminder of their common ideological ancestors. These narratives' national love stories, with the "natural and familial grounding [...] provides a model for apparently non-violent national consolidation during periods of internecine conflict" (Sommer, 76). Despite the previous use to intimate a burgeoning relationship, Hamid and Sahota utilise it to emphasise the potential of connection yet the actualisation of failure. The interaction between two nation-states helps to clarify the protagonist's own perceived codes of national identity, as they attempt and fail to live up to another's.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist revolves around Changez's romantic relationship

with a "stunningly regal" (Hamid, 19) American woman named, Erica. Travelling as part of a larger group of friends celebrating university graduation, Changez meets Erica for the first time on a beach in Greece. Her hair "piled up on her head like a tiara" (Hamid, 19), Erica is a central beacon of pleasure and social success for their friendship circle. Like Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty, Erica "attracted people to her; she had presence, an uncommon magnetism" (Hamid, 24). Like many others caught by "the gravity she exerted on [their] group" (Hamid, 65), Changez tries to win Erica's affection and build a life for himself at her side, though he soon realises he does not have the "field to [him]self" (Hamid, 20); a string of "monosyllabically monikered" (Hamid, 20) men also try to seduce her. This insistence on monosyllables is intended to generate American names in the reader's mind, e.g. Chuck, Ben, Hank, and highlights that in the erotic or national competition for acceptance, Changez is pitted against white Americans. Setting up from the start that he must adhere to, or contend with, American standards of masculinity if he hopes to be accepted by (Am)Erica.

Erica's social presence can be read as an allegory for America's political and cultural position in the global sphere, her physical beauty serving as a metaphor for America's world-wide appeal. Erica's seductive power, sunbathing "topless" (Hamid, 26) on a beach in Greece, can translate as an alluring image of America's enticing liberal political foundations. Note the fact that these two allegorical cultural entities of America and Pakistan meet on a beach in Greece. Greco-Roman philosophy often being seen as the foundations of western cultures, it is poignant that these two characters meet there; both Pakistan and Greece have been labelled 'Cradles of Civilisation' (Wright, 2010).

The fact that Erica and Changez meet as representatives of two halves of the birth of civilisation adds further layers to this symbolism of an interaction between 'East' and 'West'.

As the narrative progresses, it soon becomes evident according to Changez's account that Erica is less the idealised centre than she outwardly appears. One "got the sense that she existed internally at a degree of remove from those around her [...] that some part of her [...] was out of reach, lost in thoughts unsaid" (Hamid, 24-5). Once Changez begins a relationship with her, he sees there is "something broken behind [her eyes], like a tiny crack in a diamond [...] normally hidden by the brilliance of the stone" (Hamid, 59); a flaw at the heart of this American dream (Hartnell, 343). Erica confesses she is immured by grief, mourning the death of her lifetime boyfriend Chris, an athletic American boy a year deceased from lung cancer at the time of her encounter with Changez. Shrouding herself in the memory of her previous lover, Erica wears "a gentlemen's shirt [...] blue and fraying at the tips of the collar" (Hamid, 29). Anna Hartnell (2010), Peter Morey (2011), Delphine Munos (2012), and Sarah Ilott (2014) have suggested that "Chris" should be interpreted as an allegory for Jesus Christ, the focal point of America's predominant cultural belief system, and/or Christopher Columbus, the now treasured "symbol of America's colonization" (Ilott, 579).

There are three main pieces of evidence for the Chris-Europe connection, and for reading "the novel's [historical] love story as an allegory of the relationship between America and Europe" (Hartnell, 337).³ Firstly, Chris is pictured as "a good-looking boy

³ The first "old world" is from Hartnell and Ilott, whilst the subsequent two, the "drawing" and the "blue collar", are my own.

with what [Erica] described as an Old World appeal" (Hamid, 30). In a nation where almost all of its residents are descended from immigrants, the notion of the 'Old World' is a fundamental aspect of American identity. For white Americans, such as Erica and Chris, this almost certainly means Europe (Hartnell, Ilott). Secondly, (and now offering my own research) Chris "had a collection of European comic books with which [he and Erica] were obsessed. They used to spend hours reading them and making their own" (Hamid, 32). Changez notices an illustration that Chris had drawn in Erica's room inspired by one of these comics. This image is symbolic of the methods by which America founded itself as a cultural and political entity. As America has its roots in European ideology and culture, and accounts to have improved upon them, so Chris and Erica draw their inspiration from European ideas, synthesising them to create their own "beautiful" (Hamid, 60) images upon which the foundations of (Am)Erica's identity is built; a constitution by which millions world-wide can be "fascinated by the intricacy of the pencil-work" (Hamid, 60).

Finally, the frayed blue collar of Chris's shirt, which Erica still keeps with her, reminds the reader of the industrial backbone of the last century's United States. The blue collar contrasts with Changez's 'White-collar' financial-sector career. Erica's change in relationship economically, can be read as an allusion to the Western world's transition from a manufacturing-based economy to a services-based economy. Erica's devotion to Chris, demonstrated via her wearing of his blue-collar shirt, again emphasises Erica's cultural 'Old World' nostalgic preoccupation.

Erica and Chris's relationship was based on such a "commingling of identities"

(Hamid, 104) that Changez "felt in the strength of her ongoing attachment to Chris the presence of a rival - albeit a dead one- with whom [he] feared [he] could not compete" (Hamid, 93). The handy correlative with the two boyfriend's names, in that they both begin with 'Ch', is another effective yet slightly clunky narrative device to emphasise (Am)Erica's desire to replace this lost lover. When Changez and Erica try to make love for the first time, "seemingly despite herself- [Erica's] body [...] reject[s] [him]" (Hamid, 103). She says her "sexuality [...] had been mostly dormant since [Chris'] death" (Hamid, 103). In a "desperate [attempt] to extricate her from her psychosis" (Hamid, 119), Changez suggests that "perhaps [he take] on the persona" (Hamid, 121) of Chris at their next love-making attempt; he asks Erica to "pretend I am him" (Hamid, 120). When Erica agrees, Changez is "overcome" as "her body denied [his] no longer" (Hamid, 120). They are "transported to a world where [Changez] was Chris and [Erica] was with Chris, and [they] made love with a physical intimacy that Erica and [Changez] had never enjoyed" (Hamid, 120). This episode has been read as an exemplar of (Am)Erica's need for new immigrants to supplant her "lost ideal of whiteness" (Munos, 404), suggesting only if Changez/new immigrants concede to the conditions of complete 'whiteness' can he/they be truly welcomed into the bosom of the United States. Erica's refusal to move on from the death of her previous lover with whom she has constructed her identity suggests she is bound by a "determination to look back" (Hamid, 131), transfixed with a history that denies her the chance to accept/receive Changez into her present; America's political landscape is locked in "a nostalgic embrace with Europe" (Ilott, 579).

In the midst of this relationship, when Changez is working abroad in Manila, the WTC is attacked. When he returns, duly concerned for Erica's physical welfare, Changez is greeted with a more emotionally disturbed Erica, who feels "like [she's] been thrown back a year" (Hamid, 92); the "attacks churned up old thoughts in [her] head" (Hamid, 91). (Am)Erica, consumed by her emotional (national) turmoil, retreats further into herself. The personification of America's cultural beauty disappears after this combined national/romantic trauma, leaving Changez alone in a colder and more hostile American context. Changez later discovers that Erica has been committed to a "sort of clinic [...] an institution where people can recover themselves" (Hamid, 150). He is told by her nurse that (Am)Erica "felt better in a place like this, separated from the rest of us, where people could live in their minds without feeling bad about it" (Hamid, 151). Changez must admit to himself that this was a state "from which only [(Am)Erica] could choose whether or not to return" (Hamid, 129). In both the personal (erotic) and the political, (Am)Erica's response to 9/11 is to disappear further "into a powerful nostalgia" (Hamid, 129), looking for security in images of the past. As a result, Changez becomes hardened and reluctantly "leave[s] behind [his] love" (Hamid, 18) for both the country and its female personification, and possibly turns to a radical fundamentalism. Erica eventually mysteriously disappears from the institution, presumably a victim of desperate suicide: "one day she had walked out and not come back. Her clothes had been found on a rocky bluff overlooking the Hudson, neatly folded in a pile" (Hamid, 185). With this, the chance America had to choose to return from the state of melancholic psycho-cultural nostalgia is significantly reduced and America's cultural

beauty can only be presumed lost; "technically she's a missing person. But she'd been saying goodbye to everyone" (Hamid, 185). As Changez stands at the "beautiful spot", he "could not imagine Erica's pale, naked body following that arc" (Hamid, 185). Hamid maintains some hope and positivity for the return of America's idyllic significance. Later Changez states that his very public activism is in some way a means of calling out to Erica in case she is watching. This suggests potential terror has worsened since America retracted into herself.

In *Ours are the Streets*, Imtiaz's relationship with the pale-skinned and redheaded Rebekah begins on their first date at a club in their hometown of Sheffield. Rebekah greets Imtiaz wearing "a short white dress [...] with big green lotus flowers printed down the front" (Sahota, 3). There are several interpretations that can be drawn from this lotus flower image. Firstly, the lotus flower grows on bog waters and swamps and can be interpreted as a budding symbol of beauty naturally produced from a resource generally considered to be unpleasant. This horticultural analogy may refer to the mixed outcomes of colonial history and multiculturalism, whereby the violent history of the European colonial projects is the unfortunate seedbed to a hugely profitable cultural milieu of artistic and technological exchange. In this vein, the fact that Rebekah quite literally wears the cloth of other cultures, and a Hindu motif besides, could symbolise Britain's previous colonial empire in India. In the Punjab regions lotus flowers are depicted in art as the seats of gods, and although it is a Hindu image rather than an Islamic one, its use could symbolise a tense international (romantic) history between Britain and Imtiaz's homeland regions. A third connotation of the green lotus flower is

that it is at times considered a suitable symbolic gift for someone embarking on a new journey; a hope for new opportunity and/or life. The lotus flower, often used as an image of tranquillity and poise, could indicate a calming or unifying potential to Imtiaz and Rebekah's romantic connection. In all of these interpretations, B(ritain) has a conflicted or nuanced symbolic identity, entrenched in historical action and contemporary consequences: "a nation is a spiritual principle, the outcome of profound complications of history" (Renan, 18), and it is this nuanced character with which Imtiaz begins a romantic relationship.

Before long, and prompted by an unexpected pregnancy, Imtiaz and B are newly married as a young Muslim couple and living in a house in Sheffield. Rebekah's willingness to convert to Islam, so that Imtiaz's parents can reconcile his unplanned child with a white woman, could suggest B(ritain) has a natural predisposition for tolerance and religious accommodation, though she remains an infrequent practitioner of her faith. Their child is named Noor, which is the Urdu spelling of a common name in the Middle East meaning 'light'. This image of radiance has obvious symbolic implications for the fruit that can be produced from their intercultural reproduction.

When Imtiaz returns from Pakistan intent on his violent self-sacrifice, Rebekah's patience becomes strained and their relationship takes a turn for the worst. Imtiaz's commitment to terrorism and his silence about his intent to murder creates a tension that underpins Rebekah and Imtiaz's turbulent relationship. The symbolic romance ultimately succumbs to uncertainty, when Rebekah leaves Imtiaz to live with her mother, "exhausted" (Sahota, 124) by Imtiaz's reclusive behaviour. Imtiaz's existential crisis,

which when he returns to Britain develops into a full-blown psychosis, is worsened by his inability to discuss his mission with anyone other than his terrorist partner, Charag. B(ritain) is not aware of Imtiaz's changed political ideology, only that he has embraced a "traditional" (Sahota, 68) Pakistani heritage. Imtiaz emphasises the need for reasoned communication in the relationship: "B, we just seem to be talking past each other the whole time" (Sahota, 52), despite the truth that it is he that makes communication impossible. Imtiaz's plea to Rebekah, "it might seem like I've abandoned you, but if you reached out and touched me you'd see that I'm really not that far" (Sahota, 99-100), can be interpreted as an appeal or instruction to empathy; a suggestion that to meet hate with love, to reach out rather than confront, could offset the incoming tragedy. However, this potential of resolution through communication is curtailed by Imtiaz's own refusal to speak. B's desperate attempts to understand Imtiaz's crisis, "Did something happen to you over there?" (Sahota, 287) are met with cold demands for silence "Look how many times? [...] Go to bed" (Sahota, 288). Sahota suggests this strained relationship and domestic tension is caused by the protagonist's stubbornness and refusal to constructively engage in a diplomatic process. The marital dispute can represent the socio-political strains that emerge when governments use direct confrontation to try to crack down on terrorism.

In the months that follow, B begins to distance herself from Imtiaz and return to a previous version of herself; Imtiaz recalls: "you're not wearing your headscarf [...] you've changed your hair [...] Looks nice. Like how it were at uni" (Sahota, 233). This return to an older pre-married identity and embrace of Western attire can be viewed as a

rejection of the now radicalised immigrant. Due to only having Imtiaz account we can only speculate as to what her suspicions may be however, in this context, B(ritain)'s embrace of her own (national) identity can be viewed as a defensive manoeuvre, an assertion of self in the face of relational threat and uncertainty. This can connote the national bolstering that inevitably accompanies a climate of fear following terrorist activity.

Charag, Imtiaz's cousin who joins him from Pakistan, provides the conclusion to Sahota's symbolic international love story. Having arrived from Pakistan under the guise of the violent jihad, Imtiaz soon discovers that Charag adores Western culture. Charag buys himself new designer clothes and a slick new haircut as he enjoys the task of assimilating into British life. Charag finds a job and a mysterious girlfriend, appearing to be quite happy. Imtiaz begins to suspect Charag's change of heart, but does not confirm this until the narrative's end. At the same time, in his increasingly paranoid state, Imtiaz begins to suspect Rebekah and Charag of continuing their own private romantic relationship. The idea of this betrayal by his previous lover and comrade-in-arms, Rebekah and Charag, becomes for Imtiaz a melodramatic symbol of what he is losing by maintaining his devotion to the jihadist cause. Charag turns away from the Wahabbi/Salafi jihad and is welcomed into the heart/bosom of the national allegory, whereas Imtiaz's rejection of the West causes him to destroy his romantic connection. Imtiaz's subsequent psychological collapse suggests that without the romantic or social connection to the West, the individual terrorist is lost. Sahota suggest that "home-made" terrorists are fundamentally people who feel betrayed by Britain: "we were meant to

become part of these streets. They were meant to be ours as much as anyone's" (Sahota, 70). This use of mental illness to dispose of the narrative's romantic-political treatment again rings of clichés about terrorist insanity and excuses Sahota from articulating an explicit political ideology for Imtiaz. However, it does suggest, as would be popular to western audiences, that those who reject the West are doomed to psychological turmoil, plagued by an inherent love and desire for the West which is frankly limited in plausibility.

The contrast in these two narratives' use of the (inter)national love story is their cause and effect occurrence. For instance, Changez's prospective radicalisation is precipitated by his romantic breakdown, his feelings of disassociation from America comes as a result of his romantic collapse with Erica. Conversely, Imtiaz's radicalisation precipitates his romantic demise. Imtiaz's rejection of the West and his embrace of the violent jihad cause irreparable damage to their romantic union. The lovers separate because of the emotional turmoil a radical political view engenders in their relationship. Whilst these symbolic depictions are at odds in this sense, what they both intimate is an inherent connection between the political world and the personal (erotic) self. People view all their relationships with a level of personal investment. Far from being a "retreat" from politics, this romantic symbolism reminds readers that to imagine the two aspects of the human condition, societal structure and domestic life as unconnected issues is to misunderstand our fundamental relationship to each other.

Contrary to Gray's and Rothberg's expectations, the episodes of 'the personal' in this chapter have explored various political themes. The narratives have critiqued popular

political discourses, the preoccupations of the historical record, and the individual citizen's role as a discourse authenticator. Through use of the romantic symbolism, these writers have explored interpretations of the Old World and its memories of colonialism, positing a deep-seated nostalgia in American national culture. They offer an analysis of the entangled and nuanced relationships with both international and domestic political interactions. This links these romantic relations through hybrid constructions and narrative symbolism, to the political appeals and personal investments of public discourse. It uses the emotive ploys of national identity to scrutinise the breakdowns of these international and intercultural relations.

However, this overt political symbolism has come at the literary cost of a fluid narrative. The decisions to emphasise particular politicised aspects of the individual terrorist and use ironic reversal, silenced interlocutors and national allegories to tease out connections between the personal and the political, cause disruptions in the actual telling of the story. For instance, when highlighting the manipulative aspects of discourse, Hamid's denial of the American's voice causes the narrative to jolt its way forward, via the episodes of narrative sequencing, in a way that niggles at its plausibility. While it is significant to silence the American, the fact Changez must utter such a clunky phrase as "the Pearl Continental, you say?" shows there is a level of seamlessness that is still needed to be reached in this personal-as-political approach to the War on Terror. Similarly, whilst Sahota has managed to avoid the issues that Hamid encounters, his addressee's silence is explained via the diary frame and the scattered passages can function as meta-commentary on the structural integrity of written

evidence, his attention to the emotional account of Imtiaz's heartfelt diary risks the character coming across as whiny, unsympathetic and even contemptible. Furthermore, in his apparent reluctance to draw explicit conclusions about terrorism, Sahota ends up relying on clichés and an emotional telling of events, which sidesteps a political ideology and the suggestion that Imtiaz will perform an act of terrorism by retreating behind his descent into madness. This mention of mental illness to draw close to the narrative could be seen as subverting the dominant media cliché that all terrorists are insane however it also conveniently excuses the author of overt political responsibility. Likewise in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, when Erica must retire to recover in a kind of institute, it appears writers discard narrative creations to mental illness once they have served their political purpose, lest readers should assume too much political engagement itself is a facilitator of mental illness. Overall, unfortunately, these texts are marred by clunky narrative strategies (RF), ideological "cop-outs" (OS) and by their over-determined and simplistic symbolism, which make these allegorical readings rather unexciting and a bit pedestrian even.

Readers may well overlook these faults for the sake of the narratives' insight however that insight is often rather cliché and elects to shift narrative and analytical responsibility back to the individual reader. Undoubtedly, an emphasis on individual agency, autonomy and collective culpability is poignant and relevant to ongoing political discourse, but in terms of the political desires of literature that Gray and Rothberg posited, there is still work for writers to do in closing the gap between the inevitable personal narrator that protagonists must be and the explicit political analyst

that Gray and Rothberg expect them to be.

Chapter 2: A Personal Precarious Life: "I ignored as best I could" (Hamid, 107)

Stuart Jones

For chapter two, this dissertation continues to focus on Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and Sunjeev Sahota's *Ours are the Streets* (2011). It draws on Darda's (2014) research and extends his proposed arc of awakening to precarity to include an analysis of the role of personal investment. Darda traces an arc of political awakening based on Judith Butler's theory of the precarious life. This chapter will scrutinise both texts' attention to precarity in terms of this dissertation's personal-as-political thesis, and argue that writers remind their readership, as the protagonists confront precarity and engage with the frames that restrict recognisability, that personal investment is the key facilitator of political awakening.

As defined by Butler (2009), 'precarity' "designates that politically-induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death" (cited in Darda, 110). All life is precarious, says Butler, as dictated by an inevitable death. However, some communities experience higher levels of danger and threat, particularly due to geopolitical conditions. A fundamental feature of Butler's theory of 'precarity' is "the grievable life". Butler uses the concept of obituaries to demonstrate the discrimination in a culture's ability, or choice, to recognise certain lives as grievable and others as not. The extent to which a life is considered grievable is indicative of the extent to which that life is valued within a certain system or culture. Essentially, value

in this sense becomes the extent to which that life is considered a life at all.

This can be seen at all levels of discourse. For instance, a television personality is publically grieved more than the countless homeless who die on the streets of London and other major cities around Europe. Further than this, comparing the reaction to terrorist attacks on Western soil with the continuous examples in the Middle East, the disparities are clear. There was a huge campaign on social media to get people to change their profile pictures to a translucent French flag in the wake of the Paris attacks (13/11/15). David Cameron "hoisted the Belgian flag above Downing Street" (Ayton, 2016) for the attack in Brussels (22/3/16). For the attacks in Turkey (28/06/16), or in Lebanon (26/06/16) or Iraq (02/07/16), there has been no corporately condoned and orchestrated campaign or any significant political demonstration. Clearly, there is a distinction between how these events are perceived by the Western/British public eye. Butler's research suggests that this is due to the fact that those in the Turkish and Middle Eastern states fall outside of the European frame of recognition for what constitutes, and is valued as, a grievable life.

Darda's four-point narrative arc of Changez's political awakening begins in Manila. Darda discusses this episode in detail before analysing Changez's return to Lahore, the India/Pakistan conflict in the midst of the War on Terror, and concluding briefly with Changez's professional appointment in Chile. This chapter will build on Darda's proposed arc by demonstrating the role of personal investment in this political awakening and adding critical discussion to some points that he has overlooked. Furthermore, it will discuss the dichotomy between creative writing vs. neoliberal

capitalism that is created in Hamid's text, which is significant in facilitating this geopolitical awakening.

The personal confrontations with 'precarity' are shown in this chapter to provoke self-reflection on the part of the protagonist and expose the "frames restricting recognizability" (Darda) as one of the mechanisms by which the current geopolitical conditions are maintained. The protagonists in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Ours are the Streets*, when confronted with stark disparities in the value of human life, are led to feelings of shame or guilt over their presupposed subscription to a repressive political paradigm. As a result, both characters renounce their affiliation to the West, a development motivated by feelings of personal culpability and guilt, which becomes a key catalyst for their prospective radicalisation. Exposure to this system of precarity is posited as having influence over the individual's existential identity, enough to drive some towards embracing a radical alternative ideology. This chapter argues that these authors are attempting to emphasise a geopolitical context in which the consequences of precarity are most impactful when they are personal. This chapter will read *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Ours are the Streets*, tracing an arc of personal confrontation with precarity, arguing that it is this personal investment which instigates the existential crisis in the protagonist.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Hamid's narrative arc begins when Changez first arrives in the US as an optimistic student at Princeton University. Having long desired to travel to the US, Changez is in awe when he sees its "beautiful campus"; it was like

"a dream come true" (Hamid, 3). Changez is excited by the "happy" prospect to "contribute [his] talents to [American] society" (Hamid, 4), and join his "fellow students [...] philosopher-kings in the making" (Hamid, 3). His initial lust for American life can be inferred through the "feminized sexualization of American society [...] expressed through the wanton personification of Princeton" (Iltott, 578): "Every fall, Princeton raised her skirt [...] and showed [the prospective students] some skin" (Hamid, 5). Changez's years at Princeton are highly successful ones. He graduates as one of the "best candidates at the best schools in the country" (Hamid, 39), internalising American values of individualism, and pursuing personal success with ferocious intensity; he "knew in [his] senior year that [he] was something special" (Hamid, 5). Changez seeks the financial affluence of a corporate career and joins the meritocracy of Underwood Samson upon his graduation, striving to succeed in its world of materialism and relentless commitment to potential profits and expected revenues. Gaining a reputation for "continuing and noteworthy success" (Hamid, 108) in his role at Underwood Samson, Changez is then sent to various places around the world to evaluate some low-skilled and often failing businesses. It is on these travels that Changez is exposed to precarity from a position of direct advantage.

At first, Changez revels in "these outings", feeling "enormously powerful [...] knowing [his] team was shaping the future" (Hamid, 76). Enjoying "eighty thousand a year, [...] exceptional review[s]" (Hamid, 108), and status as the boss's "fair-haired boy" (Hamid, 108), an ironic sentiment intimating his attempts to prescribe to white ideals of Americanness, Changez initially only briefly ponders the consequences to those whose

lives' trajectory he "indirectly of course, would help decide" (Hamid, 76). Unaware that he is directly profiting from others' economic misfortune, Changez naively expects to find some affinity with the people in the places he visits, perceiving a shared non-western identity. After a series of interactions with people whom his career affects however, Changez becomes increasingly conscious of his complicity in a highly exploitative economic system.

This personal awakening begins in Manila on Changez's first assignment for the company. Out with colleagues, "riding in a limousine", and taking his first impressions of Manila, Changez is suddenly struck by the "undisguised hostility" (Hamid, 76) of a total stranger. Changez becomes "disorientated" (Hamid, 76) as he tries to comprehend the Filipino's disdain, the "dislike [being] so obvious, so intimate, that it got under [his] skin" (Hamid, 76). Trying to understand why the Filipino "acted as he did", Changez "remained preoccupied with this matter far longer than [he] should have". Changez is unable to find an explanation for the man's contempt within his current frame of understanding, as all of the perceived possibilities have a naive and "unconscious starting point- that [the Filipino] and [Changez] shared a sort of Third World sensibility" (Hamid, 77).

As he turns back to his American colleagues, Changez is disturbed with how "foreign" (Hamid, 77) they now appear, a vision of them he had not held before this interaction with the Filipino. Sufficiently "unsettled by this peculiar series of events - or impressions" (Hamid, 77), Changez suddenly feels as though he was "play-acting" in his corporate role. Changez's self-perceived Third-World sensibility makes him feel

closer to the driver on the street than his fellow Underwood Samson employees. Changez interprets the Filipino's disdain as an indictment of betrayal, and determines that he has sacrificed his 'true' self for personal financial success: "in reality [he] ought to be making [his] way home, like the people on the street outside" (Hamid, 77). The fact that the Filipino's disdain is described as 'intimate' marks the pivotal role of personal emotive responses; an impartial Changez may have ignored this passive aggressive stranger, but the personal resonance that the Filipino's dislike has with Changez facilitates this first disturbance to his political tranquillity. This episode raises the question of readiness or willingness to perceive economic disparity. Changez being the only one of his colleagues that is struck by this incident, his presumption of a shared affinity with the victims of his career is the personal investment which facilitates the confrontation. Hamid suggests Changez has a personal predisposition to perceive precarity, which allows him to view the incident as such rather than the personal confrontation itself being so poignant that it awakens individuals from a reverie of contented ignorance.

As the division emerges between Changez's identity as a financial protégé and as a non-American (non-western) citizen of the developing world, it establishes "a dialectic conflict":

Changez's colleague is a professional valuator - he can identify and calculate all of the risks and rewards involved in running a business - and yet he is entirely unable to do the same for a life that is unrecognisable according to American norms. Finance sees all of the

factors that sustain or endanger a business, whereas a theory of precarious life sees all of the factors that sustain or endanger a life. In his awakening to the precarity of others, Changez begins to realize that the former's aims do not align with and even directly contradict those of the latter. (Darda, 113)

This instance in Manila, and the dialectic conflict that it engenders, ignites an existential crisis and starts the long process of self-development as Changez's ideological position breaks from his once-loved principles of American-styled opulence.

During his time in Manila, whilst Changez is busy with the "intensity of [their] assignment" (Hamid, 77), the World Trade Center in New York is attacked. Watching the news from a hotel room in the Philippines, Changez is genuinely shocked to discover that his first reaction to viewing the carnage in downtown New York is to smile: "Yes, as despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased" (Hamid, 83). Watching the event through a media broadcast, Changez is distanced from "the victims of the attack" (Hamid, 83) and "caught up in the symbolism of it all" (Hamid, 83); captivated by "the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees" (Hamid, 83). A crucial point that Darda makes in his article is that by having Changez's confrontations with precarity begin before the events of 9/11, creating space for Changez's conflicted reactions, Hamid "makes clear" that the precarity Changez witnesses thereafter "is not an outcome of the War on Terror alone but an enduring feature of the globalizing world". Changez's political awakening "does not begin on September 11, 2001 but in a pre-9/11 Manila traffic jam" (Darda, 113). Hamid ensures

that a wider image of American political hegemony is distinguished with this decision; 9/11 does not instigate the forces of precarity, it only exacerbates them, creating a context where Changez's awareness of the political hegemony can become more acute. Hamid's decision defies a simple causal reading in which 9/11 could be seen as the catalyst event for the conditions of precarity. It ensures the impossibility to posit/encourage an understanding of precarity which typifies the people of the rest of world as the inadvertent instigators of a global and disparate economic system. Instead it points to a more endemic behaviour in America's global economic model - more a cultural trait, and thus much harder to excise - than a simple and manageable narrative of isolated events; precarity existed long before the War on Terror.

Once back in the US, and despite the personal inconveniences and harassments he must endure upon re-entry,⁴ Changez throws himself back into American life and his career in financial evaluation, putting behind him his confrontation with the Filipino and the burgeoning political awareness it inspires. Still unable or unwilling to acknowledge the unpleasant undercurrent of the domestic political landscape, Changez does his best to ignore "the rumours [he] overheard at the Pak-Punjab Deli: 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" (Hamid, 107). Clad in "armour of denial", Changez "reasoned that these stories were mostly untrue, the few with some basis in fact were almost certainly being exaggerated" (Hamid, 107). Demonstrating the naivety of his

⁴ Changez is separated from his colleagues when they return from Manila and interrogated about the "purpose of his trip to the United States" (Hamid, 86).

previously espoused sensibility, Changez takes comfort in the fact that "such things invariably happened, in America as in all countries, to the hapless poor, not to Princeton graduates earning eighty thousand dollars a year" (Hamid, 108). With this rationale, which Changez uses to justify his personal security, Hamid puts forward the suggestion that political threats only have an impact on the life of the individual when they are perceived to be personal. Changez's status as a middle-class business valuator removes him, or so he thinks, from the dangers his fellow Pakistani immigrants face. Not a member of what he later terms America's "serf class" (Hamid, 178), Changez's expectation of precarity is lower than that of the cabdrivers and deli owners. Furthermore, the fact that these accounts of America's serf class are only rumours means they lack the personification that the confrontation in Manila has. There are no personal investments with any individuals for Changez and thus the experience does not move him like the experience with the Filipino; the cabdrivers and unfortunate victims of the FBI remain anonymous (impersonal) collateral damage. As the political threats do begin to encroach on Changez's personal world however, they become a destabilising force for existential concern.

One evening, Changez "chanced upon a newscast with ghostly night-vision images of American troops dropping into Afghanistan" (Hamid, 114). He recalls: "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 [American] countrymen caused me to tremble with fury" (Hamid, 113-4). Changez feels his sense of identity attacked by this political manoeuvre. Countries for which he

feels an affiliation are being invaded and his Islamic faith is now a target; the political threat has become distinctly more personal. When cabdrivers were disappearing, Changez felt little compulsion to pay attention as in New York the cabdrivers and Changez are divided along lines of class. Although they were Pakistanis, his position in society protects personal safety. Now, the Americans were indirectly threatening an abstract personal identity associated with the nation-state and religious belief. The fact that this is what catapults Changez into an unexpected "fury" rather than the plight of the poor Muslim cabdrivers in America, suggests personal investment is the predominant instigator for the political awakening to precarity. Geographic proximity to the disparities themselves appears to be of little consequence as Changez feels more emotion for a national construct thousands of miles away than he does for Pakistanis living in the same city. This despite the physical threat being unsubstantial, it is the personal investment in the idea of threat that causes him to become politically aware. This is a demonstrable example of the frames of recognition that Darda overlooks. Prescribed to an American frame of reference, Changez views humanity in terms of a hierarchy and can render, through the frames of social class, the cabdrivers as un-grievable. It is the personal investment in his own national/religious identity, which a class system in New York cannot protect, that causes him to react where the rumours about anonymous cabdrivers do not.

The next morning, still trying his best to ignore the turmoil inside and outside America, Changez looks to distract himself with his job and the ironically codified work-ethic of Underwood Samson, "focus on the fundamentals" (Hamid, 112). Intuiting

the fragility of his American financial identity, Changez's work becomes a form of escapism for him as he devotes himself to "analyzing data as though [his] life depended on it" (Hamid, 132). The lexical chunk "as though his life depended on it" is telling, as indeed his financial career and life in America are entirely dependent upon his ability to ignore the world of increasing political violence. The survival of Changez's 'valuator gaze' is very much in jeopardy as the confrontations with differentially-experienced precarity begin to escalate the above-stated dialectic conflict.

As the War on Terror heats up and the unstable political conditions worsen a military stand-off between India and Pakistan, Changez becomes concerned for his family's safety. He immerses himself in the international news coming out of the region "about the ongoing deterioration of affairs" (Hamid, 149). Changez begins to feel guilty for not sharing with his family in the experience of precarity they suffer. This feeling of guilt is compounded by it being experienced at the hands of a country for which he works so fervently. Once again, like in Manila and unlike in New York, the intimate perception of personal betrayal precipitates the development of Changez's existential crisis. Changez feels that his continued employment with America and dedication of his intellectual skills has "made [him] a kind of coward in [his] own eyes, a traitor. What sort of man abandons his people in such circumstances?" (Hamid, 145). Changez's despair is augmented when America, despite the assistance Pakistan may have given the US in Afghanistan, refused to "inform India that an attack on Pakistan would be treated as an attack on any American ally" (Hamid, 162-3). Moving the cause of Changez's distress from his national identity to thoughts of his family's safety is a progression of

this personal instigation of political awareness; the confrontations become increasingly more personal.

The penultimate jolt to Changez's American frame of reference occurs when he returns home for the first time since leaving for the US. When Changez returns and sees his family home again, he is "struck at first by how shabby [the] house appeared" (Hamid, 140-1). Focusing on the "cracks", "paint flaking off" and "furniture [...] in urgent need of reupholstery and repair", Changez determines the house could not be worth much in its current condition. His subscription to a financial frame of recognition causes him to be "more than saddened [...] shamed" by the "smack[s] of lowliness" (Hamid, 141). It is only when nostalgia hits him and he reflects on the personal history embedded in the place that he notices "its enduring grandeur, its unmistakable personality and idiosyncratic charm"; that it is in fact "rich with history" (Hamid, 142) and sentimental worth; a progression from the concept of a house to that of Changez's home. In this moment, Changez realises that his existential confusion is rooted in his personal subscription to an American frame of recognition:

As I reacclimatized and my surroundings once again became familiar, it occurred to me that the house had not changed in my absence. I had changed; I was looking about me with the eyes of foreigner, and not just any foreigner, but that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of your country's elite (Hamid, 141).

As Darda (2014) points out, in this moment Changez slides dramatically from the

valuator's gaze, which assesses threats and danger to finance and business, to a gaze informed by precarity, which assesses threat and danger to human lives. To build on Darda's thesis, I argue once again that the consequences of precarity are most impactful when they are personal. Particularly, in this case, it is the site of the universal domestic model, the family home, and one step closer to Changez's personal world, which facilitates this perceptive transition. Changez is "angered" by the continuing realisation that he has betrayed his family culture for an American financial outlook that cherishes only profit margins and cosmetic value. Again, the sense of personal betrayal emboldens his existential crisis, making him doubt his understanding of himself: "I was disturbed by what this implied about myself: that I was a man lacking in substance [...] I did not know where I stood on so many issues of consequence; I lacked a stable core" (Hamid, 142, 168). Thus provoked by this uncertainty of self, and the anger and shame that it engenders, Changez finally "resolved to exorcise the unwelcome [American] sensibility by which [he] had become possessed" (Hamid, 141). Now willing to critique the valuator's gaze and its global implications, Changez begins to broaden his understanding of the factors that facilitate and legitimise America's global economic and political hegemony. He starts to "wonder how it was that America was able to wreak such havoc in the world [...] with so few apparent consequences at home [the US]" (Hamid, 149), considering geopolitical conditions in a new way.

The final tipping-point in Changez's personal, political awakening arrives on his last mission abroad for Underwood Samson and with an introduction to Juan-Bautista. Often read as an allegory for John the Baptist (Ghosh, 2013; Ilott, 2014; Braz, 2015),

Juan-Bautista serves as a pivotal educational figure for Changez, "add[ing] considerable momentum to [his] inflective journey" (Hamid, 166). Changez and an aspiring colleague are sent to Chile to value a small publishing company in Valparaiso: Juan-Bautista is the resistant long-time employee-manager, who is "not pleased to have [them] there" (Hamid, 161). Changez tries to keep his head down and focus on the work. However, already discontent with the principles of his employment, Changez has trouble maintaining enthusiasm; absolute devotion to Underwood Samson's fundamentals no longer provides the comfort it once had. Watching the aspiring vice-presidential valuator struggling with a workload significantly worsened by his own reluctance to "pull it together" (Hamid, 164), Changez grows contemptuous and is forced to acknowledge that he "could not respect [...] the structures of his professional micro-verse" (Hamid, 165) any longer, and could not pretend as he had before.

With the introduction of Juan-Bautista, Hamid creates a dichotomy between creative expression and the valuator's world of finance. Hamid sets up this distinction at Changez and Juan-Bautista's first meeting. Juan asks Changez's boss, Jim, if he knows anything about books. When Jim responds that he has valued several publishers in the past, Juan gruffly retorts "That is finance!" This distinction is then built on when Juan's interest in Changez is piqued by Changez's admission that his "father's uncle was a poet" (Hamid, 161). Juan-Bautista researches Changez's claim and is pleased to find his father's uncle's name "in an anthology available in Spanish translation" (Hamid, 165). For Juan-Bautista, Changez's connection to the literary world is a signal of his capacity to recognise precarity. After Changez awkwardly expresses an interest in Valparaiso as a

city, Juan-Bautista suggests he visit "the house of Pablo Neruda" (Hamid, 166).

Changez, bemused by Juan-Bautista's interest in him, decides to do so.

The visit to "the house of Pablo Neruda" (Hamid, 166) can be interpreted as a pilgrimage to a symbolic site of almost absolute precarity. Pablo Neruda is the pen-name of Chilean poet and communist politician, Ricardo Eliécer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto. A prominent figure in Chilean politics for many years, Pablo Neruda is one case in history where a literary voice has concurrently existed as a tangible political activist as well. Pablo Neruda thus takes on symbolic traits in Hamid's narrative. Betrayed by his political allies, Neruda hid in the basement of the house in Valparaíso from Chilean authorities for about two years after communism was outlawed in 1948 by then president Gabriel González Videla. Neruda's symbolism as a literary voice and anti-capitalist political activist stands against the extreme fundamentals of neoliberal business and geopolitical precarity. The house that Changez visits, where this political voice was forced into hiding, becomes a site of extreme symbolic precarity for Changez, where the act of standing ideologically opposed to rampant neoliberal capitalism was itself criminalised and under threat. Changez, "lingering on the terrace" (Hamid, 168) of Neruda's "beautiful" boat-like house, hears someone below "playing guitar; it was a delicate melody, a song with no words" (Hamid, 168). The image of a blank song can serve as an allusion for the unwritten page of Changez political resistance. With this motif, Hamid completes his creative writing vs. political precarity dichotomy. Hamid offers the unwritten potential of the "song with no words" as a hopeful solution to at least Changez's own sense of shame, if not the conditions of precarity themselves,

intimating a path of personal restoration through political objection.

With this, Changez "was clearly on the threshold of great change; only the final catalyst was now required"; in Changez's "case, that catalyst took the form of lunch" (Hamid, 170) with Juan-Bautista. In the conversation which ensues, Juan decides to directly challenge what is left of Changez's financial frame of reference. He emphasises the human consequences of Underwood Samson's business practices when he asks: "Does it trouble you [...] to make your living by disrupting the lives of others?" (Hamid, 171). When Changez responds with rehearsed platitudes, "we just value [...] we do not decide whether to buy or sell", Juan-Bautista offers Changez a historical analogy:

"Have you ever heard of the janissaries?" "No," [Changez] said. "They were Christian boys." [Juan] explained, "captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim Army, at that time that 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." (Hamid, 171-2)

This provocative analogy is the final nudge that Changez requires. The analogy articulately resonates with Changez's existential confusion. When Juan-Bautista adds "The janissaries were always taken in childhood [...] it would have been far more difficult to devote themselves to their adopted empire [...] if they had memories they could not forget." (Hamid, 172), Changez's battered and dishevelled "armour of denial" (Hamid, 107) collapses. He can no longer ignore the ramifications of his actions in complying with Underwood Samson's exploitative business practices, serving a foreign

economic power in its effort to diminish the wealth of those with whom he once felt he should share a "Third World sensibility".

There really could be no doubt: I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with kinship to mine. Of course I was 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 [...] Juan-Bautista's words plunged me into a deep bout of introspection. I spent that night considering what I had become (Hamid, 173).

In this moment, Changez has finally achieved an acceptance of life as socio-politically conditioned and differentially experienced. Seeing his career in a new context, Changez can start to understand his previous frustrations with American foreign policy: "I reflected that I had always resented the manner in which America conducted itself in the world; your country's constant interference in the affairs of others was insufferable" (Hamid, 177). Furthermore, the level of Changez's culpability, the extent to which he has participated in this culture of exploitation, becomes clear to him as he realises from his own personal "experience [...] that finance was a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power" (Hamid, 177). In a flurry of remorse, Changez immediately tells the already encumbered vice-president "that [he] refused to work any further" (Hamid, 173). Though occasionally racked with doubt, Changez concludes that

it was "right for [him] to refuse to participate any longer in facilitating this project of domination" (Hamid, 177); His "days of focussing on fundamentals [of American business] were done" (Hamid, 175).

Now able to interpret confidently the frames that constrict recognisability, and unburdened by his attempts at denial, Changez begins to consider a more comprehensive analysis of American societal structure: "I resolved to look about me with an ex-janissary's gaze [...] the analytical eyes of a product of Princeton and Underwood Samson, but unconstrained by the academic's and the professional's various compulsions to focus primarily on parts" (Hamid, 178). Changez determines that America is indeed structured like a traditional empire, with its "armed sentries" and "charioteer[s] who belonged to a serf class" (Hamid, 178). Moreover, Changez understands that this American empire is indeed manipulating global affairs and engaging in colonial campaigns in the modern era through the use of political pressure, militarism and economic disparity.

Changez later becomes a university lecturer, and the face of the anti-American resistance in Lahore, mentoring "politically minded youths" (Hamid, 204) in his macro-vision of global politics. This philosophical effort garners him attention from global media outlets and an accusation of potential terrorist affiliation. Whether Changez is one of those teachers "in cahoots with young criminals" (Hamid, 205) remains undetermined, but certainly his self-purported "mission on campus [was] to advocate a disengagement from [America] by [Pakistan]" (Hamid, 203). With this disavowal of his once-loved American culture, Changez's transformation is complete.

Darda observes that with this arc of awakening, Hamid suggests that "understanding life as always precarious-as sustained or endangered by social conditions-can, as Changez comes to see in Chile, break these frames that create and mask precarity" (Darda, 118-9). What this chapter's reading of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has determined is that the role of 'the personal' is posited as crucial in all of the above examples. Changez's path to enlightenment is only facilitated when the forces of precarity manifest circumstances that Changez can experience personally. Changez would not recognise that "a common strand appeared to unite these [global] conflicts" (Hamid, 202) had he not had these personal interactions with the Filipino, the news broadcast of the American invasion of Afghanistan, the houses of his family and Pablo Neruda, and his meeting with Juan-Bautista. Not only does Hamid chart an arc of political awakening, he also maps this against Changez's personal comprehension.

Sunjeev Sahota charts a similar tract of personal awakening to politically-conditioned precarity in *Ours are the Streets*. Though Sahota's treatment of precarity and Imtiaz's transformation may not be as explicit as in Hamid's narrative (unlike Changez Imtiaz does not fully comprehend the frames of recognition at the end), *Ours are the Streets* still traces a similar trajectory of personal confrontation. It likewise uses this arc to facilitate its protagonist's socio-political change from advocate of the West to its antagonist. However, Sahota gives readers an alternative case study, where the confrontations with precarity create an existential crisis that is not resolved; where the deep personal turmoil causes the protagonist to descend into paranoia and mental

illness rather than transcend into a coherent political activist. Sahota explores a different degree of personal investment, where the protagonist is vastly more insecure. Due to this added level of personal investment in every confrontation with precarity, Imtiaz misses his opportunities to awaken to the conditions of geopolitics, too consumed by his performance and acceptance as a legitimate Pakistani.

Both protagonists renounce the west, but where Changez can resolve his existential crisis by becoming a university lecturer and preaching anti-American rhetoric, rooting himself in his childhood national identity, Imtiaz is unable to do this. Born in the West, Imtiaz lacks the cultural reference points that Changez uses to stabilise his sense of shame and inform his geopolitical analysis. Changez acknowledges his reliance on a familial history when he tells his American interlocutor of the importance of a culture's self-image in the face of extreme outside criticism: "in the stories we tell of ourselves we were not the crazed and destitute radicals you see on your television channels but rather saints and poets and-yes-conquering kings" (Hamid, 116). During his time in America, Changez often contemplates the disparities in wealth and political power based upon his awareness of this history:

Four thousand years ago, we, the people of the Indus River basin, had cities that were laid out on grids and boasted underground sewers, while the ancestors of those who would invade and colonize America were illiterate barbarians. Now our cities were largely unsanitary affairs, and America had universities with individual endowments greater than our national budget for education. (Hamid, 38)

Imtiaz, however, does not have this cultural awareness and sense of foundation. His disillusionment is entirely rooted in his perception of dislocation in both Britain and Pakistan. Whilst Britain, his childhood residence and the place where he has built his own family ties, leaves him ostracised and conflicted, Pakistan, his family's home nation, he feels is not truly his own; he doesn't "really know what [he's] about" (Sahota, 137). His subsequent turn to a terrorist ideology is precipitated by this existential crisis and his personal confrontations with precarity.

Imtiaz's non-native status in Pakistan becomes a visceral instigator of shame for him. When he first arrives, Imtiaz is labelled by the young men of the village, namely his eventual terrorist leader Aaqil, a 'valetiya', "that means foreigner, B" (Sahota, 105). Intended initially as a compliment,⁵ this term, which demarcates a separation of Imtiaz from his family, causes him great turmoil as he tries to shake off the burden of being not only culturally different, but of a western culture where he enjoys a first-world privilege: "I hated being called that" (Sahota, 105). Like Changez's, Imtiaz's existential crisis is initiated by his personal interactions with people and places in the Third World. Though he may not become explicitly aware of the frames of recognition, his confrontations with precarity are still the causes of his inner turmoil and motivation for radicalisation. Although Imtiaz's confrontations are, like Changez's, instigated by his first-world status, Sahota has not given Imtiaz the self-perception of being able to 'return'. Changez can rationalise that he is play-acting as an American valuator whereas Imtiaz believes, because he has been raised in the West, that this is who he is meant to be. This added

⁵ "it is no insult [...] You are lucky, no?" (Sahota, 108)

circumstance means Imtiaz cannot perceive himself as a traitor like Changez does, but as an outsider who does not belong. The added personal investment of an attack by countrymen and family as opposed to Changez's first interaction with a stranger means Imtiaz internalises this shame and focuses on his own status as a valetiya rather than fully awaken to the conditions of global politics. The desire to quench this existential crisis and prove himself worthy of a place amongst his Muslim brothers is what drives him towards an extremist ideological network and the cause of anti-Western jihad. When the resolution to his existential crisis dissipates on his return to Great Britain, Imtiaz, having dwelled on his insecurities, misses the opportunity to awaken to precarity and falls into a social despair and develops social anxiety, paranoia and mental illness.

Sahota's novel begins in Britain with the history of Imtiaz's marriage and the birth of his child, Noor. Imtiaz is at first a relatively relaxed practising Muslim, who only attends the mosque at weekends out of obligation and/or guilt, because he has got "the Friday feeling" (Sahota, 9); Imtiaz reasons later that he used to be at this time a typical British 'lad', part of what he interprets as the cultural "drift towards nothing" (Sahota, 3). Imtiaz's arc of exposure to precarity begins when he travels to Pakistan to bury his father. Family grief being the reason Imtiaz travels to Pakistan once again emphasises the personal contextual connection to this arc of confrontation.

When his father's body is presented to the extended family for the first time, Imtiaz is overwhelmed by the significant crowd gathered there to greet them. Having subscribed to a western frame that does not recognise the lives of those outside the West, to be confronted with such a large familial group of people initiates the first disturbance

to Imtiaz's Western frame of recognition. That it is his family's identity he overlooks provides the personal investment Imtiaz requires that makes his realisation possible. Imtiaz recalls: "I felt this confused, guilty thing land on my heart, because I'd never in all my life given any of these people gathered here to meet me a moment's thought" (Sahota, 95). Having cried throughout, when the funeral concludes and "the final prayers are being said", Imtiaz for the first time, "with all these people gathered behind [him]", experiences a strange sensation of feeling "really solid, rooted to [his] earth [...] magnificent" (Sahota, 98).

Imtiaz's joy at having been introduced to his family is short-lived however. Once he has settled somewhat into his family's village life, and begun to be labelled a valetiya, the sense that he has not shared in the experiences of his family, necessary to make him truly one of them, begins to grow. Imtiaz's cousin Charag, a native of the village and the dependable workhorse of the family's crop fields, introduces Imtiaz to their rural existence. Imtiaz, eager to immerse himself in the experiences of his family, accompanies Charag on a series of errands for their farmstead, one of which is to attend to the harvest in the hot Lahori sun. Taken along as more of a tourist than a co-worker, Imtiaz at first only watches his cousin working. He is fascinated by Charag's mechanical movements and rural physical conditioning: "It all just sempt so easy for him. Cutting and piling, cutting and piling. Like his limbs were just a simple extension of this land" (Sahota, 121). Upon comparing this to himself, Imtiaz feels a deep sense of inadequacy: "I looked to my own arms and legs. Useless things. They didn't know the first thing about how to handle earth" (Sahota, 121). This perception of Charag as being 'at one

with the Earth' is a cliché from an exotic perspective of the rural existence. It can be excused as Imtiaz's poor imagination in attempting to articulate this disparity. However, it also indicates that in Sahota's attempts to centralise the personal in this political endeavour, writers are inevitably tied to platitudinous metaphors when they attempt to convey abstract political disparities. This again highlights a 'missing of the mark' in terms of the Gray and Rothberg demands for informative and explicit political thesis.

Looking to redeem himself for his physical misgivings, Imtiaz grabs a bundle of harvest and begins to help his cousin; Charag "stared, wondering what the hell I was doing" (Sahota, 121). Sahota articulates a disparity in expectation, between Imtiaz as a 'valetiya' and Charag as a native-born Pakistani, when he has Charag declare to Imtiaz, "But you're not meant to work" (Sahota, 121). This further separation of Imtiaz from his family could be seen as a simple term of etiquette in that the guest should not be expected to work. However, with his self-resentment as a first-world citizen, for Imtiaz this demarcation adds to his feeling of isolation and "just made [him] more determined" (Sahota, 121) to shed his "ferengi" identity.

Imtiaz tries to articulate this burgeoning confusion to his uncle a few nights later, expressing the problems of the migrant experience and his own conflicting loyalties: "'You don't get how hard it is for the kids. Growing up in England.' [...] We don't really know what we're about, I guess. Who we are, what we're here for.' [...] 'I mean, we're the ones stuck in the middle of everything. Like we're not sure whose side we're meant to be on, you know?'" (Sahota, 137-8). His uncle's contemptuous response disarms Imtiaz's self-centred exclamations and exposes Imtiaz's facile understanding of the geopolitical

conditions:

Tauji made a scoffing noise. 'It must be very difficult for you. So difficult that you are having the luxury to sit around and be thinking such high-high- thoughts.' He were looking at me as if to say what the fuck did I know about anything, like I had disgusted him. Going on like that when here in front of me were a man whose ribs I could see pressing out of his skin. (Sahota, 138)

This confrontation with precarity facilitates Imtiaz's first (missed) understanding of the frames of recognition. Personal investment in his insecurities concerning identity needs means that Imtiaz does not recognise his uncle's malnutrition until his personal embarrassment makes it visible to him. Imtiaz's life in Britain is so far removed from his uncle's experiences of physical survival on the farm that Tauji's words make Imtiaz consider the relative comfort he has enjoyed for the first time. Once he realises the audacity of his complaints, Imtiaz can only look back with a visceral sense of shame at his own ignorance: "the longer Tauji [his uncle] looked at me, the more ashamed I felt" (Sahota, 138).

Later that night, Imtiaz gets a practical example of his family's conditions of precarity when the electricity cuts out and Charag and Tauji must get up and operate the motors by hand for the night to prevent the crops from failing. Imtiaz offers to help but is dismissed by his uncle, "You stay. You have all your working out who you are to do" (Sahota, 140). This jibe adds to the accumulated discomfort that Imtiaz has already begun to take to heart: "I knew [his uncle] were just ribbing [him], having a joke, and

that he didn't mean it hurtfully, but still..." (Sahota, 140). When Aaqil begins to talk of heading north to Kashmir to "learn about [their] history in some of the places where it happened", Imtiaz signs up for the "sort of field trip" (Sahota, 153) without hesitation.

Once they arrive at their new camp, Imtiaz is again shown up for his valetiya status at the water pump. Queuing with his fellow travellers, he notices there "were a system in place, where whoever were in the queue behind you would work the pump while you crouched down at the pipe". Trying not to embarrass himself again, he "watched how the men in front did it, how they crouched, washed, how long they took". Imtiaz is so focussed on fitting in with his group that when his turn comes to pump the water for the man in front, he is shocked when no water comes out. He realises there "must've been a knack to it". Hearing the "sniggers in the queue, people saying what more could you expect from a foreigner", Imtiaz compounds his embarrassment by walking away. More concerned with his performance as a Pakistani rather than with the practicality of obtaining fresh water, Imtiaz once again demonstrates his attention to a removed set of identity needs. Imtiaz focuses on the cultural factors of this domestic obstacle rather than the practical mechanics: he'd "been so busy watching how the men washed themselves, [he'd] not even looked at the ones pumping the water" (Sahota, 154-5). The lesson is all the more poignant for being ironic, caused by his desire not to look foolish that in result makes him look a fool. This personal effort not to look stupid is rendered redundant making his embarrassment in this unfamiliar context, another lesson in precarity. Later that night, Imtiaz "practised and practised" and resolved that he would not "let that happen again" (Sahota, 154). His continued attention to performance shows

he has missed the opportunity to reflect on the wider issues, namely the economic disparity which causes the possession of clean and treated water in every home a first-world privilege. Sahota demonstrates how the personal can in fact override the political judgement of the individual and not facilitate but cloud their capability to perceive precarity. The confrontation with an economic disparity is tempered by his personal insecurity meaning Imtiaz never looks past himself to gain the political insight the experience can offer him.

The next jarring to Imtiaz's existential stability occurs when he visits a local fort that their Ustaad has mentioned in the morning lessons. Stirred up by Ustaadji's tale of "the great Badshah Akbar, the Shadow of God" (Sahota, 158), Imtiaz decides to visit the fort alone, leaving his disinterested comrades behind. When he gets there and climbs to the top of the only remaining intact tower, he begins to daydream of the old historical tales he has been learning: "I could see the emperors in all the years past stood where I were now, fighting off the Christians, the Sikhs, the Turks. Arrows arcing across the sky to meet their enemy" (Sahota, 162). Soon Imtiaz is envisioning himself in one of these great battles, "I could hear them firing, could hear the great noise of it all as we tried to defend ourselves. They were all around me. Soldiers in red turbans scrambling around for gunpowder. My archers were reaching over their shoulders for another arrow [...] I was there, with them all, leading the fight. 'Fire!' I shouted" (Sahota, 162). The fantasy is an expression of Imtiaz's romantic desire to be part of the fight for Muslim freedom and the narrative of his family's culture; to become one with a history he feels he is lacking as a valetiya. Imtiaz is woken from his reverie and brought back to his

insecurities by the laughing gestures of some passing women. He takes his make-believe "telescope" from his eye and "smiled at the women, feeling like a total tit" (Sahota, 163).

The adjacent tower of this fort is in complete disarray: "it still hadn't been repaired from the earthquake and the side facing the river were just a spreading tree of rubble" (Sahota, 163). On the way down, Imtiaz notices "there were a couple of large sandy bricks at [his] feet. [He] bent to lift them up, and as [he] placed them back on the wall, [he] had this feeling [he'd] been there before" (Sahota, 163). This moment begins a sequence of transformation in which the gesture of rebuilding becomes hugely symbolic for Imtiaz.

On the way back to the village, Imtiaz discovers men operating on the river as a ferry service. Stranded on the opposite side of the river, Imtiaz hires the only boatman who speaks Panjabi, a man "naked but for his dhoti" and with "the only gondola"; the "rest of the river men had motorboats" (Sahota, 164). This boatman is the only one operating an antiquated form of transportation and thus can be seen as a more extreme example of precarity; his lesser means of travel risks his business survival against the high competition. This boatman functions in Ours are the Streets like Juan-Bautista does in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and facilitates the conversation that precipitates the conclusion of Imtiaz's transformation. A small-time businessman selling an outdated service, the boatman provides the perspective of wise experience to an existentially-confused, yet financially secure, protagonist; he offers the most clarity on the frames of recognition. The boatman does not attack Imtiaz's position directly like

Juan does with Changez, he merely talks to Imtiaz of his experiences on the river. Having convinced the boatman he is Lahori, Imtiaz takes in this lesson passively. The boatman talks to Imtiaz of his distrust and dislike of "ferengis [...] especially the Britishers" (Sahota, 165), and explains that "the ferengis, they look but do not see" (Sahota, 165). The boatman exposes the frames of recognition when he recounts, "[t]hey are looking at me all the time, wanting to take a picture with me, but they do not see me, you understand? They are a blind people" (Sahota, 165). This personal anecdote is a direct manifestation of the frames of recognition in action. Blindness is the boatman's analogy for the "ferengis" inability to recognise the grievability of all human lives, for the West's tendency to differentiate between those in the West and those in the rest of the world. To his customers, "especially the Britishers", the boatman is less a human being i.e. an equal and dignified citizen of the world, and more a living exotic feature of their all-inclusive holiday experience.

Although Imtiaz is not immediately struck by an epiphany that resolves his existential crisis, from this confrontation with an invisible man of the river, Imtiaz learns about the Britishers' wilful ignorance, i.e. blindness, to the realities they experience. Via the boatman, Sahota has put words to Imtiaz's own behaviour (blindness to precarity) in front of his uncle Tauji. In order to highlight the conflicting loyalties Imtiaz experiences, Sahota again has Imtiaz react in a melodramatic fashion and furthers his personal self-loathing: "I hated him for attacking my home, I hated myself for not defending it, but more for feeling that I should. Everything at that moment, the pot-holed road under my feet, the laughing moon in the sky, they were all against me,

because none of them would let me be theirs" (Sahota, 166). Again, the sense of personal investment precipitates the existential crisis. Imtiaz's insecurity makes him internalise this shame rather than consider the boatman's words in a geopolitical context, for instance, in terms of the international tourism industry and its skewed favour to first-world exoticism. Once again, Imtiaz has missed the opportunity to awaken to the precarity he is exposed to.

Later when Aaqil arrives with a terrorist propaganda video, which depicts Americans torturing Muslim men and dropping bombs in the Middle East, Imtiaz once again invests too much in the confrontation and his emotional pretence collapses. Imtiaz feels associated with the Americans and ostracises himself from the group, believing that "in their eyes the American cunt were speaking for [him]" (Sahota, 176). During his self-deprecating sulk, Imtiaz notices "a beggar with a useless left leg". At this moment, Imtiaz's personal turmoil forces him to comprehend of wider concept of passive citizen complicity in geopolitical violence, although once again it is melodramatic in fashion: Imtiaz "watched [the beggar] and knew [he'd] played [his] part in that violence" (Sahota, 177). Whether or not the beggar's injury has been caused by the war on terror or some other form of political violence is unknown, and yet Imtiaz interprets it as so. His personal insecurities hijack the political potential of his rationalisation. Imtiaz can interpret an understanding of collective complicity in a system of corruption, he has passively helped to sustain violence that underpins it by benefitting from it but it is only used to further his self deprecating emotional crisis.

When Imtiaz's despair is noticed and his social status confronted, his friends assure

him his fears are unwarranted: "no one here thinks of you as any different. You're not a valetiya anymore, you understand? You're an apna. You're ours" (Sahota, 178). Imtiaz is overjoyed at this social reassurance; "I think I beamed then. I weren't being left out. I hadn't disappointed [them]" (Sahota, 177). Imtiaz immediately wishes he could find the old beggar again and "prove to [him]self that now [he] could look him in the face without feeling ashamed. That [he] were beginning to be forgiven" (Sahota, 178). Here, Imtiaz is unconsciously aware of the power of the frames of recognition. He wants to test his new gaze now that the beggar is no longer an indictment of betrayal but a fellow Muslim brother who deserves his empathy and defensive service. Slowly and subconsciously, Imtiaz's awareness is growing as he begins to understand that the framing of the beggar will affect his interpretative meaning, though he still only uses this to quench his insecurities.

Unable to find the old man, Imtiaz returns to the fort before going home and is pleased to discover "the two bricks [he'd] laid the other day were still there, loose but still standing, which felt like an achievement, or a reward" (Sahota, 179). In a dramatic expression of his personal rebuilding, Imtiaz "bunched the sleeves of [his] kurta up past [his] elbow and squatted down beside the rubble" (Sahota, 179). Motivated by the personal absolution and his social acceptance brings, he "picked up a big dusty yellow brick and fixed it on the wall next to the previous two" (Sahota, 179). He continued "returning to the rubble and digging out a brick [...] and placing it back where it belonged" for hours, until "across the town the night were starting to lighten" (Sahota, 179). Imtiaz symbolically rebuilds his Pakistani identity with this effort. Returning to

his previous exoticism cliché, Imtiaz reasons that "it felt good to be doing that", the way "the muscles in [his] arms tightened with the weight of each brick [...] as if [they] were being asked to work for the first time in [their] life" (Sahota, 179). The fact that his metaphorical project is a defensive structure also speaks to Imtiaz's desire to protect his family's heritage and ultimately reinstate their historical legacy. Imtiaz is investing some of his own work into their old building, earning a place amongst his people with his sweat and physical labour; he "felt like [he] was paying [his] dues" (Sahota, 179).

When his friends confirm his "apna" status and he gains a self-acceptance through this physical, symbolic sacrifice, Imtiaz's transformation is complete. In response to the propaganda video, Imtiaz joins with Aaqil and the others as they move further north to learn how to fight and convert their field trip into a terrorist cell in training. Imtiaz renounces the West and begins to offer strategy on the "fight-back [...] against the Americans" (Sahota, 170); "when I got up my courage and spoke about the role of Muslims in the West, no one laughed. No one called me ridiculous. They just ran with my point, expanded on it, and afterwards Aaqil clasped my shoulder and said I should speak up more in future" (Sahota, 211-212). With this social approval, Imtiaz finally contends that he had "found [his] people" (Sahota, 203) and vows to defend/further their political interests with his own violent self-sacrifice. However, unlike Changez's, Imtiaz's resolve is an unstable companion, facilitated by the need for social approval rather than an overt political insight. When Imtiaz returns to Britain intent on mass murder, his resolve crumbles without his new radical Muslim brothers around him. Imtiaz's social stability and emotional pretence now collapse into complete mental

illness, tormented by his loneliness in Britain and his estrangement from those new brothers who confirmed his apna status. He begins to hallucinate of a strange Pakistani man in Sheffield named Tarun that Imtiaz swears he met last summer in Lahore. This paranoid manifestation of Tarun could be interpreted as a psychological attempt to bring some part of those Pakistani brothers back with him to Britain. Imtiaz's cousin's defection from the jihad whilst in England compounds Imtiaz's loneliness, driving further the need to create an alternative social companion; one who shares knowledge of Imtiaz's intention to murder. The role of social camaraderie as a terrorist motivator and as Imtiaz's personal resolution to an existential crisis instigated by this arc of awakening to precarity will be discussed further in Chapter 3. What has been established here is that like Changez, Imtiaz's experiences are their own personal arc of (un)awakening to precarity and likewise they are more provocative when they are personal. Sahota has explored an insecure personal investment and concluded that it can have a detrimental effect on an individual's capacity to perceive precarity. The personal desire to belong pitched against the public embarrassment of social awkwardness is shown to cloud the individual's judgement. The confrontations with precarity manifest in both narratives via episodes of the personal. Where these writers differ is in their approach to the political hegemony and their characters' reaction to it. For Hamid, Changez has an emotional reaction to the forces of precarity but makes an intellectual decision to join/form an anti-American political movement with ties presumably to a prospective terrorist network. In contrast, for Sahota, Imtiaz has an emotional reaction and makes an emotional decision. This suggests that the personal confrontations with precarity can

provoke various reactions. The individual can either utilise the confrontation to gain political insight through personal comprehension, metaphor and intimate interactions, progressing onto a coherent and stable political activism, or alternatively the individual can invest too much, miss their opportunity for political awakening and descend into an obsessive social desire. When Changez or Imtiaz do not perceive the precarity as personal, they do not react, neither constructively nor self-deprecatingly. This plants the personal comprehension of complex issues i.e. being able to see the personal ramifications or immediate threat of something, as being fundamental to political understanding.

Sahota's choice to make his protagonist a melodramatic narrator with self-esteem issues could speculate that the recruitment of foreign-born jihadists relies on this self-perceived sense of inferiority at having benefitted from the West. Imtiaz's personal self-image is posited as the cause and motivator of his radicalisation. Sahota's choice to focus on the second generation immigrant can be viewed as a move to address the progression of western political rhetoric from targeting and debilitating foreign-born jihadists, as possibly in Changez's case, to ruminating on fears of a home-grown terrorist within our migrant communities. However, Imtiaz's obsession with belonging also denies the representative western-born jihadist the possibility of a coherent ideology and conflates aspects of the migrant experience with radicalisation. Sahota's reliance on his protagonist's insecurity and subsequent (melodramatic) collapse into mental illness may be an effort to ensure that readers do not sympathise with the terrorist figure, but it also conveniently avoids having to articulate a legitimate

anti-western political thesis.

In both narratives the authors have been successful with entrenching their confrontations with precarity in a personal context and have shown that personal investment is fundamental in an individual's reaction to precarity. They intimate how personal awareness of the conditions of global precarity can contribute a political understanding, establishing a strong link between the personal and the political. However, they fall short of establishing a third link from their personal-political exploration to include an extensive and useful interpretation of the politics of terrorism. This is again the political detail and didactic thesis that Gray and Rothberg are wanting. The narratives work hard to close the gap between the inevitable personal perspective in literature and overt political analysis but again end up remaining firmly in the realms of discourse analysing our public approach to a terrorist rather than political or economic policy.

Chapter 3: They May Come for Political Ideology, but They Stay for Social
Camaraderie: the Role of Humour and Social Desire in the Motivations of Terrorist
Groups

Stuart Jones

Chapter 3 discusses Chris Morris's comedy film *Four Lions* (2010) and Sunjeev Sahota's novel *Ours are the Streets* (2011), analysing the role of humour, personal friendship and social camaraderie in creating a context of empathy for discursive approaches to terrorism. This chapter argues that these narratives posit 'the personal' as a site where audiences and readers can come to understand the intermingled identities of all the citizens of a globalised world. *Four Lions* and *Ours are the Streets* have been chosen for this analysis as they are both narratives which feature a group of terrorist jihadists, and as such, foreground the personal relationships between terrorists as a primary function. In *Four Lions*, the protagonist Omar is the leader of a group of five jihadist friends from northern England, whilst in *Ours are the Streets* Imtiaz is a British-born subordinate in a group of four jihadists friends based in a village outside Lahore.

A narrative focus on groups of terrorists ensures that no one character becomes allegorical: "internal conflict and contradiction assures that [...] Muslim characters are not taken as representative, meaning that Islam cannot be homogenised and fixed as Other" (Ilott, 5). The narrative attention to groups of jihadists, and "their internal nexus of relationships" (Ilott, 6), allows Morris and Sahota to toy with an audience that has come to expect solitary and archetypal images of suicide terrorism, through political

discourses and media-generated "interpretative repertoires" (Wetherell and Potter, 94). Media discourses exacerbate hysteria (Fowler, 148) around these one-dimensional figures, haunting the public perspective with sensationalised "folk-daemons" (Pickering, 2001). In contrast to Changez, the protagonist of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Imtiaz and Omar are both confirmed jihadist terrorists from the outset. For this reason, the ambiguity that surrounds Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* about whether he is or is not a terrorist, which Hamid uses to critique the discourse assumptions in western media, is unavailable to Morris and Sahota. Instead they have utilised the group format in order to achieve their discursive critique via another means. Hamid's reliance on character ambiguity is tailored towards critiquing the aesthetic or ideological indicators that ultimately assess and classify an Islamic terrorist in the mind of the western citizen. Sahota and Morris on the other hand focus on the homogeneity that is perceived within the terrorist group once that classification has been made. In this, Morris and Sahota have identified an area of terrorist discourse that has been under-scrutinised: "people don't think about that, do they? That there are different types of soldiers" (Sahota, 236).

In the absence of Hamid's character ambiguity, humour, personal friendship and social camaraderie are utilised to combat what Foucault terms a "regime of truth" about suicide terrorists; the idea, propagated by media outlets and politicians alike, of terrorists "as maliciously intelligent, meticulously organised, highly calculated, well trained, extremely dangerous [and] blindly faithful to their radical doctrines and irrational ideologies" (Labidi, 2011, 411). Sageman likewise in his text *Leaderless Jihad*

(2008) proposes three explanatory frames that form the "conventional wisdom" about terrorism, i.e. perpetrators are a) driven by poverty, b) pathological or mentally deficient and c) victims of sustained ideological indoctrination. All three of the principles analysed in this chapter - humour, friendship and camaraderie - interact throughout the narrative, influencing one another to create an alternative contextual view of the terrorist figure that not only contradicts the prescribed 'conventional wisdom' and 'regime of truth', but invites the audience/readership to empathise with this political enemy.

This movement to empathy is focussed upon highlighting the terrorists' humanity: their hope, desires, fears, loves, losses and failures. The narratives in this chapter cite the 'personal' as an arena in which readers and audiences can come to understand the intermingled identities of all citizens of globalisation and recognise that it is against these geopolitical systems for good or ill that we are all reacting, including terrorists. This notion of a collective yet heterogeneous reaction to the advancement of geopolitics is best articulated academically in a short essay entitled 'The Spirit of Terrorism' (2002) by Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard states that the current global crisis of Islamist, or new, globalised/symbolic terrorism is not a global war of East against West or Islam against atheism/Christianity, but is rather an unintended side-effect of globalisation itself. He insists that all geopolitical tensions are a result of the ever-marching progress of American-led globalisation. Specifically, he states that terrorism is an inevitable backlash of this kind of political and economic hegemony: "the increase in the power of power heightens the will to destroy it" (Baudrillard, 7). Whenever disparities in the

experiences of geopolitical hegemony occur, Baudrillard suggests that terrorism, as a weapon or military tactic of the less powerful, will inevitably emerge to contest it. Furthermore, and almost more crucially, Baudrillard states that no matter which national or political entity has hegemonic dominance on a global scale, be it America, Islam, or any other example, the less powerful in the relationship will always find means to contest the status quo: "for it is the world, the globe itself, that resists globalisation" (Baudrillard, 12).

Baudrillard suggests that only by comprehending a collective and complicit relationship with globalisation, coupled with a recognition of the flaws and social-economic failings, can we as a species begin to temper the likelihood of these terror-political campaigns. This chapter argues that the narratives under analysis appear to be intimating a similar philosophy to Baudrillard and offering 'the personal' as a realm in which these connections can be made. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez, as an intellectual protagonist, articulates this sentiment explicitly towards the end of his political awakening. In an assessment of a "missed opportunity" by America after 9/11, Changez states to his American interlocutor:

As a society, you were unwilling to reflect upon the shared pain that united you with those who attacked you. You retreated into 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 (Hamid, 190).

This analysis from Changez focuses on mutual experiences between the victim and the perpetrator. He implores a country to rise above reactionary backlashes of political violence, such as the policy of the War on Terror, and unify along lines of humanity and shared grief with those who so openly flout them. Effectively, Changez's analysis intimates an ideological philosophy that suggests that, despite his potential terrorist affiliations, only by valuing all human life and rejecting the "myths of our own difference", can we combat an extremist ideology that desires division and hatred.

Morris and Sahota in contrast cannot have a character articulate this sentiment directly; their need for humour and ridicule, i.e. requiring the character to be a fool, negates the possibility of an intellectual protagonist. Instead, they employ Baudrillard's philosophical outlook in a more demonstrable sense. Rather than engage the audience/reader intellectually as Hamid does, these two writers of jihadist groups engage with them emotionally, and encourage the audience/reader to relate to the very people who show them this hostility. Not that we do not empathise with Changez, only that our relationship with him is different; what we empathise with in Changez's case has little to do directly with terrorism. We empathise with Changez's romantic pain, his personal shame, his experiences of discrimination, not, as this chapter will show with *Four Lions* and *Ours are the Streets*, his efforts and ultimate failure to enact terrorist activity against a Western power. The reader does not observe or hear of Changez's involvement in any definitive examples of terrorist behaviour. Omar and Imtiaz, on the other hand, definitely are Islamic jihadist extremists and the narrative plots centre on the protagonists' logistic and mental preparation for an act of intended violent self-sacrifice.

It is directly in the face of this extremist behaviour, which is absent from *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, that Morris and Sahota lead their audience/reader to empathise with these confirmed terrorists.

Morris and Sahota achieve their context of empathy by first using ridicule to destabilise a culture of fear that surrounds the terrorist figure in western discourse. The terrorists in the narratives are shown to be mostly incompetent and unable to enact the kind of existential damage to western society that might be intimated by the conventional wisdom of the 'regime of truth'. Sarah Ilott (2013) discusses this narrative tactic in Morris's *Four Lions* and surmises that it "contribut[es] to the deflation of heavily-mediated cultural fears through the outlet of laughter" (Ilott, 2). She argues that Morris subverts publicly-held stereotypes of Islamic terrorists by "fleshing them out" and creating "rounded and complex characters" (Ilott, 3). In the case of this ridicule, the writers emphasise the characters' inadequacies, and ask a rarely considered question in this time of hysteria: "why would human frailty take a polite sidestep around a jihadist cell?" (Morris on CBSNews). As part of this unifying theory of universal human frailty, Morris' ridicule is bilateral and critiques western security services as well. Ilott (2013) says; "as [a] white director, Morris [...is] entirely unconcerned with challenging or offending white audiences" (4) and does not hesitate to confront western entities with the same ridicule as the terrorists.

Second, the writers then use episodes of personal friendship and banter to normalise the terrorist figure itself. The writers highlight these normative aspects of friendship and

social life in order to mirror that of the audience/reader's and propose the similarities upon which a shared identity can be built. They present a collection of rounded, human characters in the midst of a political discourse that treats terrorists as mythical beings incapable of mistakes and devoted entirely to extremist beliefs. These writers aim to cast a normalising light on a highly stigmatised figure through the narratives' emphasis on friendship.

Morris and Sahota then offer alternative motivations for the terrorists' participation in violent self-sacrifice. *Four Lions* and *Ours are the Streets*, argue for an alternative understanding of violent jihadist terrorism, one which recognises that devotion to the intense friendships the individuals possess within the group are themselves more important, to some suicide terrorists, than the ideological intent of the group's overall agenda. This notion is underpinned by Cottee and Hayward's 'Terrorist (E)motives' (2011) article, which conducted research into the possibility of alternative motivation for terrorist activists. Cottee and Hayward argue that existential desires for Excitement, Glory and Ultimate Meaning are at least partially influential over an individual's desire/decision to join, and once join remain part of, a terrorist unit: "terrorism, for those who practice and embrace it, can be profoundly thrilling, empowering and spiritually intoxicating, and that this particular aspect of it may inform, along with other key motivations no doubt, the decision to engage in it" (Cottee et al, 965). Along with the individual's desires for thrilling entertainment and a personal understanding of their own glory narratives, Cottee and Hayward posit a sense of intense camaraderie in the concept of ultimate meaning. It is described as the extreme sense of love that emerges

between those who fight and risk dying together: "the deep emotional ties among the soldiers in the fighting units themselves" (973). It is more than a desire for survival; these fighters defend each other with their lives. Cottee and Hayward suggest that this often becomes the primary reason why individuals continue to fight for things that they may not truly, or simply have ceased to, believe in. Particularly, Cottee and Hayward state that once the conflicts and state of war are over, these individuals struggle without that intense social bond that the state of conflict has produced. Both of these narratives use internal group conflict to demonstrate this social camaraderie motivation. Disputes over logistics or religious/ideological interpretation are swept aside by both sets of protagonists for the sake of the groups' camaraderie. It soon becomes clear that the agenda of both groups is to continue their missions for the sake of staying together. The dilution of their political intentions is overlooked for the group harmony. By foregrounding the social camaraderie motivations, these writers critique the assumptions of the regime of truth and argue for a wider conceptualisation of terrorist motivation. Morris and Sahota suggest that to continue to articulate that terrorists are solely motivated by politics or religion is not helpful; to really make ground in this counter-terrorism endeavour, the public as well as professionals need to put aside political assumptions and to begin to conceive of wider social motivations.

By using the three narrative devices analysed in this chapter, humour, friendship and social camaraderie, the writers create a context through which their narrative plots can provoke empathy in the audience/reader. Through the protagonists' personal tragedy, *Four Lions* and *Ours are the Streets* allow audiences/readers to understand (though not

agree with) the terrorists' motivations, and register (though not mourn) their individual loss and/or personal failure. Readers are called to empathise rather than sympathise with this political enemy. It is crucial to note that these narratives do not articulate a link between terrorism and globalisation explicitly. However, their effort to humanise the political 'Other' and create a context of understanding through empathy, breaking down lines of division and misunderstanding with even those that might be popularly thought of as the most extreme examples of human callousness, does work towards a solution as intimated in Baudrillard's and Cottee and Hayward's observations. Baudrillard states that: "the prodigious success of such an attack [extreme symbolic violence, e.g. 9/11] presents a problem, and if we are to gain some understanding of it, we have to slough off our Western perspective to see what goes on in the terrorists' organization, and in their heads" (Baudrillard, 21). This intimate understanding of the enemy is posited as vital. Likewise, Cottee and Hayward state: "terrorists, however morally despicable their actions, are inescapably human agents, with all-too-human dreams and passions and desires. Addressing these is, ought to be, one of the central tasks of terrorism studies" (Cottee and Hayward, 980). Asking western audiences to relate to terrorists as human beings is a way of combating the perpetuation of hateful forces and promote this kind of empathetic understanding from a public sphere.

Performance has become an intrinsic part of new terrorist behaviour, and not just in the execution of a terrorist act but in the intimidation and influence generated in terrorist propaganda. The ridicule in these narratives is embedded in the expectation that

terrorists will always 'perform' terrorism or execute terrorist campaigns without fault and the protagonists' failure to do so. The contradictions in these narratives to the regime of truth's schematic understanding are intended to force audiences to begin once more in bottom-up processing, i.e. drawing hypotheses from an analysis of available evidence rather than speculating on the grounds of various assumptions previously deemed reliable. The terrorist characters in these narratives possess the potential for great harm; for instance, they have access to explosives and an intention to murder. However, they lack the cognitive wherewithal to attain it. This is the root of the comic effect and the fundamental facilitation of the suspension of fear. The humour intends to highlight for the audience/reader that their previous conceptions of the terrorist figure, and the fears these conceptions underpin, are based on stereotype and hysteria. In her treatment of Morris' work, Ilott states that to simply recognise that stereotypes exist and "dismiss [them] as outdated and untrue is not enough"; writers must "lay bare their workings" and leave them thwarted, redundant and "robbed of their power". She suggests that by exploring the structures of these stereotypes, and rendering them ridiculous and incompetent, Morris - and I will argue Sahota too - have aimed to sully the effectiveness of these stereotypes and usurp their supremacy.

Confession videos claiming credit for terrorist acts have become a large part of modern terrorism. Terrorists have utilised global technologies to disseminate either fear or fundamentalist ideologies to a larger group of people. Morris's opening scene in which Omar and his terrorist cell are attempting to record one such video is the first example of this wrestling with performance. The cinematic mechanics of the jihadist

video are exposed to the audience in this scene to remind them that jihadist videos, like all propaganda, are edited fictions. As the audience watches these terrorists bicker and bumble through their attempts to be intimidating, the notion that terrorists are always meticulously organised and maliciously intelligent is significantly undermined. The scene opens with Waj, Omar's simple-minded sidekick and most devoted follower, recording his message to the non-believers: "Hey up you unbelieving Kuffar bastards". Equipped with a ½ size replica AK-47, Waj struggles to articulate his anti-western message. When he is informed of the terrible image that a man with a small weapon creates, Waj justifies himself by explaining that he has "big hands" and suggests that if he moves closer to the camera "that'll bigger it" (Morris). This behaviour from Waj clearly demonstrates his incomprehension of the cinematic tools he hopes to exploit, as well as drives home the emasculating motif of thwarted performance. Waj hopes to appear fierce and commanding but rather establishes immediately that he is disorganised and unprepared; there is no script and he does not consider the importance of his props. Similarly, when it becomes Faisal's turn to record, he does so with a box on his head, because he "can't show his face, a face is an image, and an image is haram" (Morris).

This notion of a proud Muslim warrior, who must hide his face (which alone may not be unwise) in such a childish manner again makes his efforts to be intimidating ironic. Faisal, like Waj, exhibits a gross misunderstanding of the medium he intends to utilise in the performance of terrorism as well as the theological etiquette he is trying to espouse; as another of the jihadist characters states: "you can't do a jihadi video with a

box on your head". Morris ends the scene with a camera slide to Omar's home, where Omar is editing the clips, which he now admits to his wife are "all bloopers". Both sides of this scene, the footage and Omar's watching of it, emphasise the 'back of house' perspective of the jihadist video phenomenon. Jihadist videos have been a hugely powerful tool for modern terrorism, and by focusing on the other side of this performance, the video shoot and the editing process, rather than the polished and released propaganda, Morris draws away the mysterious veil that surrounds terrorism and highlights the edited nature of their broadcast image.

The ridicule continues throughout the narrative. As well as misunderstanding the tools of propaganda, Waj also has a childlike understanding of Islam. When Omar and Waj travel to Pakistan for "special training", Waj reveals his child's copy of the "The Camel that went to Mosque" and a stuffed teddy bear he calls his "prayer bear", which he delightfully reports "does me prayers". Moreover, the incentive for joining the violent jihad, and the willingness to die for it, even killing each other, is rationalised to Waj via a theme park analogy, in which suicide in the service of Islam is akin to skipping the queues at Alton Towers. Waj excitedly consents to this line of thinking, explaining that "Rubber Dingy Rapids" was his favourite. This euphemism for paradise becomes a mantra by which Omar maintains Waj's devotion to the jihad: "Rubber dingy rapids, bro!" (Morris). This immature comprehension of death and Wahabbi/Salafi jihadist dogma ensures for the audience that these terrorists are not masterminds of violence and colonial assault, but a group of individuals with varying grasps on their supposed holy mission.

Similarly, the others in Omar's cell are treated with the same derision. Barry, the highly confrontational and insecure Caucasian convert, is a prime example. His logic is puerile and vindictive, punishing others in the group for his own losses of face. He conceives of geopolitics in achingly simplistic terms, condemning Faisal's father as a Zionist for having "once or twice" bought a Terry's chocolate orange. Barry is denied the chance to join with Omar and Waj on the trip to Pakistan on the grounds that he is a "liability and a loose cannon" (Morris). His examples of inconspicuousness include "baking a Twin Towers cake and leaving it outside the synagogue on 9/11" and "trying to set up the Islamic state of Tinsley", moves he defends with the conspiratorial refrain, "hiding in plain sight, you mug!". If there is any doubt left of Barry's contorted logic, his incompetence as a military strategist is displayed in his suggestion to bomb the local mosque. He envisions a false-flag operation which will ignite the final jihad: "we bomb the mosque, the Ummah thinks it's the Kuffar, and all the Muslims rise up and take over" (Morris). When Omar likens this plot to being in a fight and punching yourself in the face, Barry, driven by stubbornness to prove his point, concedes to demonstrating his logic via Omar's analogy; he labels the blood that runs from his nose the moderate Muslims amply radicalised for the final war. Barry later compounds his stupidity when he tries to make a confession video taking credit for the false-flag plot, completely thwarting his own strategic intent.

Faisal, equally as incompetent, buys hundreds of bottles of bleach from the same local shop, twelve at a time, believing his "different voices" will suffice to disguise his suspicious behaviour. His repertoire includes "an IRA voice" and "a woman's voice";

when performing this feminine disguise, he covers his beard with his hands to ensure the authenticity and anonymity. Finally, Hassan, the last of the incompetent lions and Barry's rogue recruitment to the group, is the foolish clown who thinks pulling a prank at a community meeting, in which he lets off some party poppers rigged up like a bomber's jacket, is "jihad of the mind" (Morris). He also risks the cover of the entire group by letting an outsider into the safe-house. All of the characters' of Morris's jihadist cell are examples of terrorist figures which thwart the expected conventional wisdom of the regime of truth. Morris's treatment provides an equally extreme/absurd opposite to this prescribed set of assumptions. It does not deny the possibility of capable terrorists, the group format ensures against an archetypal, homogenous terrorist, but this display of absurdist incompetence defies the equally extreme projections of absolute efficiency. From all of these instances of thwarted performance, the contextual perception for the audience in which the terrorist is analysed is eased as their fears begin to alleviate.

Though not primarily a comedy, *Ours are the Streets* also exhibits aspects of ridicule which are utilised in the narrative to the same effect. While audiences witness Omar and his band of fools struggle with the tasks of a jihadist cell in *Four Lions*, readers learn about Imtiaz's experiences of terrorist training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan from Sahota's diary format. The experiences of training that Imtiaz reports are largely unsophisticated measures which only expose the characters as floundering, amateur militiamen. For instance, when they reach Afghanistan, the characters set up a primitive rifle range in their garden using outdated and illicitly-sourced firearms. The

attention to the characters' shooting performance plays the same role as Morris's very overt ridicule, undermining the regime of truth's notion of a "well trained and extremely dangerous" terrorist operative.

The main focus of this ridicule lands on the youngster amongst them, a young man also named Faisal, who Imtiaz discovers being taunted by their new instructor Abu Bhai when he arrives: "Stop! Abu Bhai said. 'Again, are you trying to shoot the sky?'" (Sahota, 216). Faisal's shot, after him having been "manhandl[ed ...] into place" (Sahota, 216), still only disturbed "some of the rubble [...] that was about it. A low laugh went through the crowd" (Sahota, 217). Faisal's poor performance is a source of amusement for those in the camp, and they treat him with affectionate derision. They often send Faisal to retrieve the glass because he "had a way of running, kind of jumping from side to side [...] that made us crease up. When he turned to come back, we'd have our guns trained on him, and he'd freeze" (Sahota, 224). Sahota's attention to the childish games of this group of friends, along with their poor equipment and abysmal skills as riflemen, emphasises for readers an image of the terrorist that is not only not a threat, but a laughable example of guerrilla warfare. Despite the derision reserved for Faisal, none of the others in the narrative are much better when it comes to the 'performance' of terrorism. When Imtiaz meets the members of the terrorist network, he notices a "rifle swinging across [the jihadist's] back and felt a short sharp mad thrill" (Sahota, 195-6). This can be interpreted as an example of what Cottee and Hayward would term an existential desire for excitement. When Imtiaz's turn comes to test his skills as a would-be sniper, he has an immature reaction to his first time holding a gun. Marvelling

at the power he holds in his hands, Imtiaz begins to daydream of a feeble sense of empowerment and undirected violence:

I felt how commanding my position were. It were like I were ripping free, like my skin were tearing apart to reveal a new and stronger man. The thought flashed into my mind that if I wanted to I could just suddenly turn around and shoot them all dead. Every single one of them. I had a horrible feeling I were going to smile. (Sahota, 217)

Sahota's cliché of a new man tearing free is another poor narrative analogy but serves to entrench a mood of immaturity and inexperience in this interaction with the jihadist training network. Imtiaz is not focussed upon learning the skills needed for fighting a constructive campaign, only the immature sense of empowerment it brings him.

A particular example of Imtiaz failing to perform as the intimidating terrorist is his interactions with the American military personnel on patrol in Afghanistan. In both instances, Sahota gives readers a terrorist figure barely able to contend with the difficulties of guerrilla-military espionage. The first time this happens, the group travel into town to get supplies. Caught staring too long at the Americans, Imtiaz tries to cover himself by buying a comb from a near-standing street seller. When the American approaches and establishes that Imtiaz is a foreigner, he probes for information about the family Imtiaz has claimed he is visiting. A wreck under interrogation, Imtiaz is only saved when Abu Bhai arrives and offers him a false name: "He is Ahmed Dustoor Khan, son of Akbar Dustoor Khan, grandson of late Mahsood Dustoor Khan" (Sahota, 210). The fact that Imtiaz and the terrorist network have not previously established alibis only

serves to highlight their inexperience and limited effectiveness. Later, when the American arrives at their camp having had reports of gunfire, Imtiaz fumbles to maintain their cover story. Having since checked Imtiaz's alibi, the American soldier presses him on the fact that there was "no mention of an Ahmed Dustoor Khan entering Afghanistan from Great Britain. Can you think of why that might be?" (Sahota, 226). Imtiaz quickly lies that "[he] did stop off in Peshawar for a night" (Sahota, 226) giving the American the name of a hotel; he hoped "like mad [he'd] done enough" (Sahota, 226). As the American pushes further, pointing to the guns as evidence for his concern, Imtiaz begins to panic: "But you can take the guns! We don't want them. We were only messing about. I'm just here to see my family. God knows I might not get another chance" (Sahota, 227). To cover Imtiaz's faltering resolve, the terrorist group allow the American patrol to confiscate their unsophisticated weapons, assuring them they were only for recreational use. In both instances, it is only by the grace of luck that the jihadists avoid detection and escape arrest. The characters' immature and floundering performance of terrorism across both of these narratives critiques the suggestion that all terrorists operate in a sophisticated political enterprise with intellectual concerns by presenting terrorists that are the stark opposite to this presupposed conception.

It is worth noting that the ridicule in Morris's film is bilateral, i.e. the Western characters also come under the same incompetent scope. As Labidi (2011) points out, *Four Lions* critiques not only the terrorists' capacity for performing terrorism, but also "the competence of those operating surveillance technology in the UK [and] police brutality of Western democracies" (412). For instance, the police raid the home of

Omar's peaceful but traditionally-garbed brother instead of the terrorist cell. This provides a possible satirising of British anti-terror police intelligence tactics which led to the mistaken 2 June 2006 Forest Gate raid. The security services, in the film, also cause the death of a citizen in the final act due to a bungled sniper attempt, again enacted on inaccurate information and the police snipers' inability to identify whether or not "a wookie is a bear" (Morris). This is another possible satire of police tactics that led to the death of Jean Charles de Menezes in July 2006, after he was wrongfully identified as a terrorist fugitive. Likewise, the crisis negotiator appointed to handle Waj's eventual hostage situation in the final scene is equally incompetent. He fails abysmally to establish a rapport with Waj, who for the first time appears the socially dominant of the two interactants. The negotiator ultimately resorts to begging Waj to talk to him about girls, "please Waj?" (Morris), as a way of keeping him on the phone. The plan backfires when he inadvertently calls Waj a homosexual: "you're an arseman, aren't you Waj?" (Morris). Morris assures that his satirical critique of the political world in which terrorism exists is bilateral when the MP Malcolm Storge later states about the accidental killing of the marathon runner: "Let me make this clear. The police shot the right man, but the wrong man exploded. Is that understood?" (Morris).

Furthermore, consider Omar's colleague Matt, who falls for the ruse that the group's strange "smooth but fast, fast but smooth" running to prevent the explosives they are secretly carrying from combusting is really an athletic training technique called "squat jogs" (Morris). Matt also believes Omar's floundering cover stories of a "shotgun wedding" (Morris) for his trip to Pakistan and an "MI5" connection for his presence at

the crime scene of their final attack. Matt maintains these beliefs on camera even after witnessing Omar's very public death as a suicide bomber. This characterisation of the western citizen in Matt comically alludes to the naivety of some parts of the citizenry to presuppose facts and entertain ill-informed conspiracy theories and alternative explanations to tragic public events: "did you know he was MI5, he told me himself before he died" (Morris). It also ensures that the ridicule is not simply a 'feel good' tactic for Westerners to laugh at jihadists. Morris's ethos is to demonstrate that we are all plagued by human frailty, not just our enemies. This is part of the unifying force of Morris's narrative, a universal connection built around human foolishness.

A final aspect of Morris's destabilisation of fear through use of humour refers to the Pakistani fighters Omar and Waj travel to meet in the first act. Morris's focus on the British discourses uses a slight but noticeable separation between the home-grown and what could be considered the 'legitimate' terrorists to emphasise a sense of seclusion and disconnect between the overall decentralised network of Islamic terrorism. This does not position the legitimate network as clever and ominous but again thwarts the notion that this is a sophisticated global enterprise. Uncle Imran and the militia leaders in Pakistan are the only ones excluded from this strict derisive treatment. When it comes to Imran and the militia leaders, the root of the humour is always their bemused or angry reaction to the idiocy of Omar and Waj. This action positively separates these characters from our tragic pride of British-born lions. Omar and Waj do not comprehend the militia's agenda, Waj cannot even grasp that they have flown over Mecca and must now pray to the West. The British lions blow the legitimate network's cover continually, and

eventually cause the inadvertent death of Osama Bin Laden by misfiring an RPG at the secret meeting they had been denied from attending. The members of the militia appear from start to finish as nothing but victims of these blundering fools. This slight distinction in the root of the humour allows for the possibility of an alternative, coherent political ideology to that of Omar and Waj's incoherent ramblings. Similar to his approach to religion and scripture, Morris "encourag[es] laughter at the faithful rather than the faith" (Ilott, 9), he also mocks the political not the politics; the anti-colonialists, not anti-colonialism; the anti-globalists, not anti-globalism. Just as Morris does not attack scripture by having the humour derive from the social relationships and their overall inefficiency as religious terrorist operatives, this same humour does not attack, nor endorse, the ideological agenda of the 'legitimate' terrorist network, only the home-grown terrorists' lack of comprehension of it; Morris highlights and draws humour from the political inefficiency and fumbling camaraderie in this group of violent activists and separates the British cells from their overseas equivalent to contest the fears of a well-functioning and cohesive omnipresent terror network.

The second narrative tool analysed in this chapter, banter, is utilised in these narratives to establish rapport between the individuals in the group and build a context of personal friendship for the reader/audience. These personal friendships work to normalise the terrorist cell, presenting a mirror of the audience's own friendship group-role relationships. The characters engage in banter and humorous antics which serve to show them as a typical group of male friends. The characters' cognitive

capacities are below that which could be considered average, and this is necessary for the disarming of fear mentioned above. However, the relationships between them as individuals and the use of humour as a developmental force within these relationships is intended to be familiar to the audience and even quite 'normal'. The acts themselves may be extreme and the morality misguided, but the behavioural patterns and personal motivations of the terrorist individuals at their core are largely the same as those of the wider population; a "general class of behaviour in which all of us engage" (Wintrobe, 2).

The purpose of Morris's and Sahota's humour appears to have root in issues of class. Noticeable in their linguistic register, Omar and Imtiaz can be separated from Hamid's protagonist, Changez, along this issue. Hamid vs. Morris/Sahota explore different aspects of the terrorist phenomenon with their relative decisions. Changez's university education and rich economic background means he is distinguished from his northern British working-class counterparts. Marc Sageman posits three 'waves' of Salafi Jihadists in his text, *Leaderless Jihad* (2008) and as if reading a description of Hamid's characterisation, describes the second-wave as consisting of "mostly of elite expatriates from the Middle East who went to the West to attend universities. The separation from family, friends and culture led many to feel homesick and marginalized, sentiments that hardened into the seeds of their radicalization" (Sageman, 48-50). Changez, as a Princeton graduate, who returns to Lahore to found a potential terrorist organisation due to feeling of guilt and betrayal over the war on terror, easily garners himself a categorisation as a member of Sageman's second wave Salafi Jihadists.

Imtiaz and Omar conversely can be read as examples of the third-wave of Salafi jihadists. Imtiaz and Omar are both working class individuals from the north of England and second-generation sons of Pakistani immigrants. They both seek out terrorist organisations and hope to become affiliated. Sageman describes the third wave as mostly "would-be terrorists, who, angered by the invasion of Iraq, aspire to join the movement and the men they hail as heroes" (Sageman, 48-50). Second-generation immigrants to Western countries, their abridged cultural identity leads them to feelings of nostalgia for their parent's heritage and a heightened attention to attacks upon it. Simon Cottee (2011) summarising this argument states, "Ideologically, [the third-wave] are inspired by Al-Qaeda [... but their] connection to Al-Qaeda [Central] is imaginary, not real. ...They act in its name or adopt its "brand," but they are not accredited members of the organization" (733). Omar and Waj fly to Pakistan to become "proper soldiers in the Mujahideen" (Four Lions, 6:32), but their rampant incompetence causes them to be exiled. Similarly, Imtiaz adopts the violent jihad because of his first-world insecurities and to satisfy an idolisation of his late father's home culture.

Hamid's use of an intellectual protagonist means readers can engage with a prospective terrorist on the grounds of his intellectual argument. With Omar and Imtiaz this is not possible. Their threats of violence are more terrifying as they lack an ideology that can be reasoned with. Along with being British-born and therefore 'amongst us', Imtiaz and Omar present extra levels of irrationality by having an unreasoned ideology. Morris and Sahota use humour against these third-wave jihadists as a means of combating this ideological ambiguity, which may render them potentially more

dangerous. Ridicule becomes the only means of puncturing the hysteria around threats of non-specific and ideologically uncertain symbolic violence. This normalising of the terrorist critiques the scale of public hysteria around terrorism. Ridicule disables the audience's fear of the terrorist, presenting the terrorists as stupid, whereas banter comments on the socio-discursive capacity to make men into monsters and mythical beings out of political enemies, i.e. what discourse analyst Pickering refers to as "folk daemon" figures. The social humour reminds us that these terrorists are not only stupid and inefficient they are also just human beings.

In *Four Lions* at the bomb-preparation safe-house, when some of the group are waiting for Omar to return, they use the resources at hand to create entertainment for themselves. The scene opens on Waj, Hassan and Faisal, the latter filming as Waj fills an empty metal tea-candle case with a small amount of white powder. Waj places the metal tray on Hassan's outstretched palm and leans in with a cooking lighter, saying, "This one's gonna leave a mark". Grinning excitedly, he ignites the small amount of explosives and the blast is enough to send them into fits of laughter. In addition to emphasising the terrorist incompetence, this episode is reminiscent of stereotypical mischievous 'school-boy' antics, in as much as misusing combustible materials for humorous effect is a pastime sometimes found amongst bored and somewhat unruly adolescents. This school-boy connection reframes this hysteria-driven phenomenon as childish antics. It is an ironic twist on the good pupil, which connotes public institutions of education, empire, and even recreational cultural clubs/associations e.g. boy scouts. These terrorists are recast as the rebellious and possibly "un-loved" outcasts, who will

hopefully 'grow out of it'.

This emphasis on banter and rapport occurs in other instances as well. Waj and Omar in Pakistan are called to decide if they are capable of killing one another for the cause. Omar and Waj use humorous dramatic role-play to rationalise the prospect, amuse themselves and reassure each other of their friendship. As well as demonstrating their childish relationship with their mission, when they joke about stabbing each other "with the thing, and then.. run you over wit' tractor" (Morris), they show the playful nature of their friendship, their imaginative play and humorous one-upmanship. The figures that dominate hysterical public perceptions are in these narratives simply men with a reliance on humour for social rapport.

Sahota similarly uses social humour in his novel and likewise includes it as an effort to establish the relationships between the characters and their differences in personality. For instance, when Imtiaz and his mates are not practising their riflery or plotting the jihad, they often go up to the caves for a cool place to relax. This time is spent "doing the usual things: listening to our echoes, dodging the stones we launched at each other, then counting out the seconds until the pebbles hit bottom". These moments are cherished by Imtiaz - "I loved those afternoons" (Sahota, 215) - and Sahota uses the social humour to reframe the terrorists as young lads passing the time. Readers learn of Faisal's cautiousness and Aaqil's "need [to] always [go] further down" than the rest of them, "as if to prove some sort of point" (Sahota, 214). Through Imtiaz, Sahota has made explicit the recasting of these terrorist figures: "the whole time we were messing about in the caves we weren't soldiers or fighters. Not chosen, not responsible, not

anything. Just a few friends laughing the day on" (Sahota, 215). The reader is exposed to the humanity of these folk devils as the scene strips away the usual political classifications to reveal the men beneath. Attention to the social humour in these friendships is a direct attempt to normalise the terrorist figure and make it relatable in some way to a western audience. By viewing the terrorist protagonists first as a group of activists plagued by incompetence and then as a normalised group of male friends, Morris and Sahota critique the regime of truth's political potential to exaggerate threats and exacerbate irrational approaches to fear. Whilst ridicule critiques the terrorists' capacity for extreme violence, banter interrogates the level of hysteria a society can attach to the terrorist image in political discourse by presenting scenes in which the characters appear profoundly more mundane. Black humour in war narratives often creates a separation of citizen (reader) and the soldier (protagonist). Conversely, here humour is used quite differently; the slapstick humour brings these distinctly opposing parties together. The mundane treatment of the protagonists, which usually is used to puncture our perspective of soldiers as heroes, is used here to puncture our perception of these terrorists as master villains.

Having established these terrorist groups as pockets of friendship, Morris and Sahota then go on to demonstrate how these friendships, and the social camaraderie they engender, are in fact the primary sustaining motivation for these terrorist groups. This again contradicts the regime of truth, contesting a notion that terrorist cells are exclusively motivated by politics or religion. In fact, in both narratives, politics and religion can actually be the points of contention. The moments of conflict that do occur

are often ideological, when individuals debate either a political strategy or a religious interpretation. When this conflict arises, camaraderie for the cause, not political or religious belief in the cause itself, is the resolution to the ideologically motivated dispute.

The relationship between Omar and Waj is a poignant example of two terrorists for whom social belonging and camaraderie are more highly valued than a devotion to political ideology. Omar continually guides Waj, doing his best to channel his energy and temper his stupidity. Over the course of the narrative, Omar regularly sacrifices his ideological mission for the sake of their personal friendship. The first example occurs when Waj and Omar are in Pakistan. Waj becomes an immediate liability for Omar, jeopardizing his chance to meet the Emir and become an authentic member of the Mujahideen; Waj is caught recording a video of himself at their secret hideout, firing a genuine AK-47 in the air. Omar does not, as would be expected of a meticulously organised and (maliciously) dedicated terrorist operative, sacrifice this encumbering companion for the sake of his political agenda. He suffers his misgivings, is exiled from the camp and even lies to the others when they return to Britain for the sake of their personal friendship. When the group splits due to the ideological disillusionment caused by Faisal's death, Waj and Omar's friendship is what eventually trumps the concerns over logistics and existential purpose, drawing Omar back to the group. In another instance of derisive humour, Faisal in true absurdist, slapstick style falls to his death by tripping over a sheep whilst carrying explosives. During the introspective interim, Omar talks to his wife Sofia about his friend's death and his struggle to manage a team he

cannot get to "stir a cup of tea without smashing a window" (Morris). Sofia insists that Omar should return to the group, using the language of religion to articulate a primary motivation based on social camaraderie. As Omar is ready to give up entirely on their mission, Sofia tells him "it must be God's plan [...] it can't be God's plan to leave the lads with Barry" (Morris). This social obligation is posited as more relevant to Omar's personal agenda than truly following what he believes is best for the global Ummah. Swayed by this rhetorical reasoning, Omar is once again inspired by the Wahabbi/Salafi jihad and seeks out the others for resolution and reunion. When he discovers Barry's bizarre initiation rituals implemented in his absence, Omar makes the binding and conciliatory promise to his friends: "I may ask you to blow yourself up, but I will never ask you to piss in your own mouth" (Morris). With a group hug and the proclamation that they are "four lions", fighting for a cause undetermined but fighting together, the group set aside their grievances and political uncertainties to rejoice in their social reward. Barry is even called to set aside his damaged ego at having lost his brief hold on the group's leadership and join in their merriment of social rapport.

Similarly in *Ours are the Streets*, the characters in the terrorist cell encounter conflict over their historical, religious and tactical interpretations. Again, Imtiaz always follows his friendships and puts this consideration above his ideological commitments. Consider his friendship with Aaqil. Imtiaz looks up to Aaqil when he meets him, is impressed by his Bullet motorcycle and his carefree attitude: "I didn't have a problem. Just because he weren't like them. Just because he has the guts to do his own thing" (Sahota, 127). Aaqil is a socially dominant person and his presence meant that everyone

"laughed loudest whenever Aaqil laughed too" (Sahota, 159). At their first training camp in Pakistan, Aaqil has a fiery disagreement with their Ustaad over the use of history in their morning lessons. Aaqil, angry at the devastation done to Muslims around the world in the present, feels Ustaadji is wasting their time teaching them the history of their culture's great, yet ancient, militarism: "You are so busy gazing up at the stars you cannot see how they are trampling all over our flowers". Even going as far as to question their God's approval: "Allah would be proud" (Sahota, 172). Aaqil feels that readings of the Quran and basic military training are all that this aspiring jihadist cell needs: "What is this? School? Who cares what happened three thousand years ago? [...] Are we here to learn to fight or not?" (Sahota, 160). This demonstrates a clear disconnect between historical awareness and the impulsive anger felt by jihadist cells. It suggests that the modern phenomenon of terrorism is propagated by the personal ego of the individual rather than a well-informed and historically conscious understanding. However, it also demonstrates Imtiaz's primary social motivation. Though Imtiaz actually enjoys the lessons and feels Aaqil may be wrong to dismiss their Ustaadji's teachings,⁶ he cheers when Aaqil challenges the Ustaad and follows him when he deserts the camp. Before they leave, Ustaad talks with Imtiaz, trying to understand why he is "insisting on walking down that road" (Sahota, 182). Like Morris, Sahota has articulated this social camaraderie motivation in the language of religion. Concerned about the more violent route Aaqil wants to take them, Ustaadji questions whether Imtiaz is "going for the right reasons [...] is it because you are being called by Allah [...]"

⁶ For example he leaves the others to investigate the ruins of a fort Ustaadji has mentioned in their morning lessons (See chapter 2)

or because you feel you are owing your brothers and sisters something?" (Sahota, 181). Imtiaz, freshly inducted into the new-formed militia, "thought of what Aaqil had said about me being one of them" and determines it is "the same thing. Me feeling this way is just Allah's way of calling me" (Sahota, 181-2). These narratives have their protagonists interpret their social camaraderie motivation through the lens of religious dogma and suggest that the protagonists manipulate their religious ideology to suit their social motivation. Convinced of his sense of social purpose, and the wider cosmic meaning he interprets: "the feeling that one is an active participant in a cosmic battle to defend the sacred" (973), Imtiaz becomes enthused with collective euphoria. Standing on "the crest of that hill", Imtiaz felt as if: a "magic were spilling over me. The whole world were on fire, trembling with the force of us all [...] at that moment I know no one would be able to beat us. No one could beat a force this straight and bright" (Sahota, 183). Imtiaz realises that "one's whole purpose is to defend, by force of arms and to the death if necessary, the cause and one's comrades" (Cottee and Hayward, 973); or more accurately, the cause of one's comrades.

By understanding that these terrorists' motivations are primarily a desire for social preservation and camaraderie, the audience can begin to empathise when things go wrong. The audience/reader no longer views the terrorist as the strict and intimidating figure they once did. Once ridicule has made them ridiculous, disarming their discursive control over fear, and banter has then normalised the terrorist as human beings, the audience/reader is then led to empathy by witnessing the failure and personal tragedy of

a character they have come to understand. In Omar's case it is directly his failure to bring about a meaningful attack in the Wahabbi/Salafi jihad that causes this narrative reaction. With Imtiaz it is his failure to sustain a resolve to his existential crisis and desire for ultimate meaning that provokes this personal understanding between reader and protagonist.

Four Lions centres on Omar's efforts to organise, legitimise and orchestrate a successful and meaningful attack in the extremist Islamic jihad: "what we do has got to go down in history, echo through the ages" (Morris). The audience essentially watches a 'man with a plan' struggle to achieve his personal ambition, failing at every turn, due to the incompetence around him. When it reaches its conclusion, the result engenders an audience recognition of the terrorists' personal tragedy. As one critic notes, the character interaction between Omar and his friends, "more often recalls older comedy shows such as Father Ted or Black Adder with one scheming underachiever relying on a small cast of fools to achieve his ill-defined and ultimately self-interested goals" (Jacques, 56). This endearing character format that western audience will undoubtedly recognise adds further layer of familiarity to this contextual representation. Morris sets up his provocation to empathy when Omar categorically rejects Faisal's suggestion that they should "blow up Boots" because they "sell johnnies that make you wanna bang white girls" (Morris). Omar states clearly his intent to create a meaningful legacy for himself when he says "I'm not blowing me guts out over a bunch of tampons and cotton buds [...] we need to think bigger" (Morris). This motif of a meaningless death in a general pharmacy forms the first of two threads that strings this line of empathy together. A

second thread appears when Omar tries to explain violent self-sacrifice in the name of jihad to his infant son. Omar uses 'The Lion King' as symbolic of the global jihad, casting Simba as the suicide bomber fighting the evil, oppressive system of Scar. When he later concludes his modified version of 'The Lion King', Omar suggests "even if Simba gets blown to bits, he's going to die smiling" (Morris) as he sacrifices himself for the sake of his people and their usurped heritage; these two motifs - the fear of a meaningless death and the will to die smiling - knit together to create the groundwork for Morris's provocation to empathy. Later when his plan to blow up the London Marathon has been completely thwarted, Hassan having lost his nerve and confessed to a passing policeman, "I've got a bomb, but I'm not a bomber! [...] I've switched" (Morris), Omar is faced with a personal crisis. In a wild attempt to protect them, Barry calls and therefore triggers Hassan's explosive device. In the chaos that ensues, the terrorist cell scatters and must find individual targets. Omar manages to keep with Barry and challenges him for murdering Hassan, "you took away his choice! You de-martyred him!" (Morris). Barry returns the accusation, positing Omar's shepherding of Waj as coercion. Omar, horrified to realise the truth of this allegation, immediately feels remorse for the grave injustice he has done to his friend.

Failing to chase down Waj, Omar bumps into his colleague Matt who is running the event for charity. Using his colleague's phone, Omar tries to reach Waj in a desperate attempt to talk him out of committing mass murder; in his incompetence, Waj has only managed to take hostage the owner of a halal kebab house. The telephone conversation with Omar is interrupted by the security services raiding the kebab shop and once again

shooting the wrong man. Waj manages to say "I'm sorry lads, I don't know what I'm doing" (Morris), before the device explodes. Upon this confirmation of his friend's death, Omar becomes resolved in his failure to achieve neither his goal of a meaningful death nor his hope to undo his mistake of coercing Waj. Aware of the circling police officers, Omar decides upon his fate. Handing the telephone back to his colleague, Omar asks him: "tell them I was smiling [...] a smile on my face might be important" (Morris); Matt replies: "is there though?" (Morris). Through grief and dejection, Omar forces a smile and heads towards to a high street pharmacy to meet his meaningless and foreshadowed end amongst the tampons and cotton buds. With this meaningless sacrifice, Morris has enabled the audience to address the human loss and personal failure in the figure of the terrorist enemy. In the end audiences empathise with Omar's attempt and failure to achieve something, even if they disagree with that achievement. Audiences may not sympathise with this political enemy but they can certainly empathise with his personal failure. Omar's realisation that it is all underpinned with misinterpretation i.e. the legitimacy of the martyr, assures the effort has been entirely fruitless and his death's lack of meaning is enshrined. Having watched him struggle to achieve his goal, the audience can view this personal tragedy for Omar as a site at which they may recognise that we are all human beings with hopes and ambitions, despite how twisted their realities may be. Morris suggests that to empathise with terrorists regardless of their obvious immorality, is a key first step in moving on from the often binary discourse which insists on the inhumanity of these terrorist individuals.

Sahota's provocation to empathy is somewhat different. He has his protagonist meet

his end not in violent self-sacrifice but in a psychological collapse into mental illness. Imtiaz's personal tragedy consists of a loss of his social camaraderie i.e. his sense of ultimate meaning. Cottee and Hayward suggest that ultimate meaning when unsatisfied can manifest as a deep personal loss: "not only do they miss the adrenaline highs" but also "the profound bonds of love they shared with their comrades" (974). Having gained acceptance as an "apna" by his brothers in Pakistan, Imtiaz devotes himself to their political agenda. He joins with his Jihadist brothers because he has: "learned that I weren't a lone man in this world. We were all of us here together" (Sahota, 178). He feels obliged to defend them and is rewarded with a self-assurance he had not previously experienced. However, when Imtiaz returns to the UK, no longer surrounded by his comrades and expected to fight the jihad alone with his cousin Charag, his existential resolve crumbles as he struggles emotionally under paranoia and seclusion: "They're lying to me, They're all lying" (Sahota, 202). This is worsened by Charag's defection from the jihad. No longer able to confer with anyone and support his social motivation, Imtiaz begins to have hallucinations of a strange Pakistan man named Tarun. As stated in Chapter 2, Tarun can be viewed as Imtiaz's desperate attempt to bring something of his brothers back to Britain from Pakistan, though the mental projection is marred by his paranoia. A security guard at the shopping centre Imtiaz intends to attack, Tarun appears throughout the narrative to torment Imtiaz with knowledge of his intentions: "I know everything. I even know what you're going to do here" (Sahota, 293). As the reader comes to understand that Imtiaz's motivations for joining the jihad are primarily a social desire for acceptance and camaraderie, they can begin to contextualise

his psychological descent. Having lost communication with his Muslim brothers, Imtiaz starts to confide in Tarun, despite resenting his intrusion. This personal turmoil persists, exacerbated by everyone else's unawareness, as Tarun becomes more present in Imtiaz's life; even turning up at his home. Imtiaz becomes more and more concerned that Tarun is part of a plot against him. The novel culminates in the final diary entry, where Imtiaz's writing resembles the scrawls of a man distraught and unhinged. In these final words, after his life has unravelled, Imtiaz returns to images of his late father. Sahota closes the novel with Imtiaz begging his father's spirit for comfort:

If you can do this for me, Abba, then just come upstairs into my old room and sit next to me. You don't have to touch me or hold me if you don't want to but just sit next to me. And then just let me lie on my old bed. But don't go, okay? Just stay sitting there. Right next to me on my old bed. And don't go. Just please don't leave my side till you're sure I've gone to sleep (Sahota, 312).

His father's death being the instigator of this journey of self-discovery and self-destruction, this return to the paternal loss re-plants the personal tragedy as the intrinsic instigator of his existential crisis. It once again centralises the personal "emotional entanglements" in this political phenomenon. As Imtiaz's mental stability collapses, the reader is forced to recognise the psychological fragility of this human figure. Though they may not sympathise with this emotional pain, they must at least acknowledge its occurrence and effect on the human individual.

Over the course of the narratives, Morris and Sahota have utilised a narrative

emphasis on humour, friendship and social camaraderie to make political critiques of terrorist behaviour, western security service performance, and the political discourse that surrounds the phenomenon in public media. This three-pronged approach works concurrently to destabilise the conventional wisdom of the regime of truth and its influence over the public and political conception of the terrorist Other. However, the political contributions stop at the boundaries of this representative media interpretation. There is no comment on the legitimacy of the ideologies that underpin these political sides, just a critique of how political discourses should approach them. This attention again falls short of the explicit political commentary Gray and Rothberg demand. However, it is an approach that certainly works toward that objective. Satire and subversion have an innate ability "to catch an audience's attention in a world flooded with discourse, to engage an audience in thoughtful interpretation, to enable a new way of looking at a familiar situation, and to reward the time spent with amusement and possibly new perspectives" (Fife, 332). Critics can construe that Morris and Sahota may evade the topic of radicalisation altogether by presenting them as ridiculous. However, to understand the human subject of radicalisation, though it is not the radicalisation process itself, is a key first piece of preparation for that endeavour. This distinction is ultimately another indicator of the wall that emerges between engaging in political policy and with political discourse, and thus the larger literary struggle my thesis addresses. Despite these limitations, the texts' provocations to empathy can have larger political applications. Essentially, it is the charm of the friendships which neutralises the stigma around the terrorist figures: "the murderous schemes of laughably fallible

humans, the [narratives] suggests, are no less tragic for being absurd" (Walter, 60). Morris's and Sahota's empathetic readings of the terrorist suggest that the very antithesis to an extremist ideology that desires division and hatred is the valuing and recognition of all human lives. This attention to the vital role of deep "friendship and kinship ties" is worthwhile and relevant, even though it still falls short of anything that can be claimed as a victory in this ongoing literary-political struggle.

Conclusion: Almost

This dissertation has shown over the course of its three chapters that the personal "emotional entanglements" can and have been used to make political critiques of the war on terror in the post-9/11 fiction. However, these critiques have been limited in nature and remain firmly in the realms of media representation and discourse rather than an outright attack on the political entities at play in the current geopolitical crisis. These narratives have humanized the terrorist and cited the personal as a common unifier of political entities and/or enemies, focusing on the collective human loss in the struggle for and against globalisation. The limits of this discourse critique and the border of political policy however seems to be where this narrative political critique dissipates. In terms of definitive examples of political action, Hamid and Morris have the best attempts: Hamid in articulating the notion of the damaging arm of American-led globalisation through his intellectual protagonist's political awakening (see Chapter 2), and Morris with his allusions to UK's bungled police tactics (see Chapter 3, pages 15-6). However, again Hamid's is a symbolic approach to geopolitics rather than the factual political analysis Gray and Rothberg seem to imply they desire. Morris's critiques focus on the anomalies of police tactics, similarly missing an overall analysis of the structure of policing or anti-terrorism strategies in the UK and abroad. Sahota makes an attempt at historical awareness with the allusion to the creation of the Middle Eastern states in Imtiaz's interaction with the boatman. The boatman states: "I know what those Shaitaans did. Set brother against brother, carved us up. It all started with them" (Sahota, 166). This comment can be viewed as referring to events at the end of World War 1 when the

powers of Europe, namely Britain and France, drew lines through Mesopotamia, creating zones of proposed influence with the Sykes-Picot agreement (Townshend, 2011). However, this instance of political specificity remains a peripheral element and one that Imtiaz does not pick up on nor embellish. It is this (Gray and Rothberg) demand for centre focus that the narratives haven't managed to achieve. The narratives critique how discourses view, discuss and remember terrorist individuals but they do not offer any political strategies, any ideological resolves or any constructive solutions to the actual phenomenon of terrorism itself; they only critique the public/political perception of that phenomenon.

Possibly readers need to look further afield for more specific and informed political analysis in literary fictions, as writers who create, and are read, from a western perspective are predisposed to that cultural lens. Seemingly, a critique of that lens is the most that writers inside the bubble can, or want to, accomplish. This notion supports Rothberg's claim that the path forward for post-9/11 fiction is "cognitive maps" which create a "centrifugal literature of extraterritoriality" (Rothberg, 158). Rothberg, furthering Gray's ideas of national deterritorialisation, calls for narratives which explore political contexts outside of the US. Potentially, literature that can explore the western cultural lens from outside, may be able to use the inevitabilities of the personal to further the discursive debate, if not provide a more concrete analysis of American-led socio-economic and military campaigns in the Middle East and elsewhere.

As a final thought, another area of analysis I wanted to explore but time and word-count would not allow, was the role of the charismatic leader and guised coercion.

In these terrorist-as-protagonist narratives, there is the issue raised about the legitimacy of martyrdom. Omar, Aaqil (Imtiaz's leader) and Changez all motivate others to renounce western belief systems and embrace an anti-globalist agenda through use of their charismatic leadership. An analysis across various novels of the role of guised coercion, i.e. the notion of charming someone into making 'their own' decision to sacrifice themselves, would, I believe, bear some fruit in this ongoing struggle to understand and articulate a literary depiction of the mechanics of radicalisation and is worthy of continued research.

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