

If we don't understand what really goes on in the minds of terrorists, we will be forced to simply try to imagine it. We'll have to just guess at what they're thinking

Richard Jackson, 317



# **The Taboo of Terror**

The Limitations of Terrorist Representations in Sebastian Faulks' *A Week in December* and Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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## Introduction

Western portrayals of terrorism and terrorists have, since 9/11 2001, been limited due to the effects of trauma and the taboo of understanding the mind of a terrorist. Two novels that challenge these restrictions and give complex discussions of terrorism are Sebastian Faulks' *A Week in December* and Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. While both novels successfully illustrate possible motivations for anti-Western demonstrations, they also provide great insight into their potential 'terrorists'' thoughts and actions. However, both novels exclude any explicit depictions of terrorism and their 'anti-Western' characters are never proven to be actual terrorists. Faulks' and Hamid's novels are, like other contemporary literature after 9/11, not depicting a humanized terrorist. This limited portrayal is a frequent feature in post-9/11 terrorist fiction which can be explained by drawing on theories of trauma, terrorism and the psychology of a terrorist's mind.

Firstly, the trauma of 9/11 caused strong reactions not only in individuals, but also in Western culture and society as a whole. To accurately discuss trauma as a reason for Faulks' and Hamid's limited terrorist portrayals, it is therefore important to first examine how the trauma of 9/11 affected Western culture and literature in general. Trauma theory explains the complex process of trauma: how trauma may affect individuals and societies and how the process of trauma changes with time and distance. Western writers after 9/11 took part in this complicated process and literature consequently contained elements of trauma such as fragmentation and 'the unspeakable', which highlighted the indescribability of the terrorist attacks. While Western terrorism fiction in the first years after 2001 dealt with the trauma of the attacks through fragmented storylines and refrained from trying to explain the attacks, more recent literature show a greater distance from the restrictiveness of trauma. Both Faulks and Hamid discuss the complicated reasons for why terrorism exists, but they also refrain from giving a humanized terrorist depiction; and this exclusion demonstrates trauma's lingering effects on Western literature.

Secondly, terrorist portrayals are affected by people's understanding of the word "terrorism". Theories of terrorism in literature help explain how terrorism has been illustrated throughout history, and how these representations change together with society's idea of the term 'terrorism'. A Western understanding of the term consequently influences how terrorism is represented in fiction. As the West, and particularly America, reacted to the trauma of 9/11 with increased nationalism and a sense of moral superiority, the necessary and uniting 'evil' became the non-Western terrorist. Trauma together with the West's changed perspective on

terrorism explains the reactions of binary and limited terrorist portrayals after 9/11. This is to some degree also visible *A Week in December* and *The Reluctant Terrorist*, particularly in their depiction or exclusion of religion and its relevance to anti-Western movements.

Thirdly, Faulks' and Hamid's limited terrorist depictions are mostly due to their disinclination to portray an explicit and humanized terrorist. Both authors avoid depicting a human mind that actually performs violent acts of terror. Theories of a terrorist's psychology, therefore, add to the discussion of terrorism in *A Week in December* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as it allows for a deeper understanding of the novels' limitations. Why is it seemingly easier, or at least more common, to portray the complex reasons for terrorism than the individual performing them? The explanation for this lies partly in people's unwillingness to compare themselves to terrorists and partly in society's taboo in treating 'monsters' as humans. In acknowledging terrorists as human beings one accepts the possibility that anyone could become a terrorist and in trying to understand them one could be accused for justifying terrorist acts.

The 'human terrorist' is what both Faulks and Hamid exclude from their discussion of terrorism and what limits their 'terrorist' portrayals. However, they offer complex discussions of terrorism in a broader sense and give enjoyable and thought-provoking novels that could enhance the discourse of terrorism in today's political climate. They discuss terrorism's connection with politics, history, culture and religion, and how these aspects might contribute to an anti-Western perspective. Therefore, it might seem unnecessary to point out their lack of an explicit terrorist depiction. My argument for the contrary is that literature has the potential to create understanding and to broaden perspectives; and a limited terrorist portrayal would thereby also limit society's understanding and discussion of the subject of terrorism. Only by depicting the complexity and the humanity of a terrorist could one hope to see and comprehend a world view which encourages violent acts on the West. The taboo of explaining terrorism is, according to Richard Jackson, because of the belief that "it might lead to sympathy, understanding or even justification for [terrorists'] heinous behaviour" (Jackson 320). Addressing this issue in literature however, is important, not to justify terrorist acts, but to understand the reasoning and the people behind them. Only through understanding is it possible to withdraw from what Jackson refers to as a "veil of ignorance" (Jackson 318), an assumption that terrorists are simply evil and insane, and to view acts of terror as extreme actions made by sane people. Literature's power to create such an understanding is valuable to both traumatized victims as it might offer some explanation to what they have gone through and society in its attempt to create a counter-terrorism policy.

To explore the topic of terrorism in *A Week in December* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, I use trauma theory to explain the reasons for Western biased literary responses and consequently the lack of nuanced terrorist portrayal. Furthermore, I use terrorism theory to add to and support my claims concerning the portrayal of terrorism in Western fiction. Finally, I use a psychological perspective to analyze the potential ‘terrorists’ in the novels, and discuss the limitations in both Hamid’s and Faulks’ would-be terrorists. In analyzing the novels by Moshin Hamid and Sebastian Faulks, I explore how each author deals with the issue of terrorism and how their novels might be influenced by the traumatic events of 9/11. I examine the objectivity of the two novels and discuss the perspective in which they are written. As the role of the terrorist is easily predetermined as the antagonist, I explore whether Faulks and Hamid are capable of examining the nuances of morality. In using the thoughts of Professor Richard Jackson through his novel *Confessions of a Terrorist*, where Jackson pushes the boundaries of Western claimed moral high ground and perspectives, I compare Faulks’ and Hamid’s novels and discuss to what degree they accomplish a sense of objectiveness.

This thesis will thereby use theories of trauma and terrorism in literature to discuss how, in terrorist fiction, terrorism taboo, trauma reactions and Western bias limit Faulks’ and Hamid’s terrorist representation in their exclusion of a humanized terrorist.



## Chapter 1 – Trauma and Terrorism

To discuss how the traumatic attacks on the Twin Towers affected Western contemporary fiction, it is necessary to first examine how the traumatic events might have affected Western, and especially American, civilization. The term ‘trauma’ refers to the reaction to “an event so overwhelming and inassimilable that the self responds by absencing itself from direct experience of the event (Forster 71). Granofsky explains this reaction as a process that can be divided into three stages called “fragmentation,” “regression,” and “reunification” (Granofsky 107), where the individual either processes the trauma in fragments or regresses into a ‘safe space’ before possibly being able to reach the stage of reunification. Reunification is “the final stage in the literary depiction of the human response to trauma” (Granofsky 110) where the individual is able to live with the trauma by incorporating it into his or her world view. This is also the stage where it is possible to see a progressive response to trauma and consequently a more nuanced literary depiction. Whether or not the Faulks and Hamid went through these stages is difficult to prove, but what could be examined is whether this process is visible in their written work. By first examining the effects trauma can have on literature, it is possible to analyze each novel and discuss how they might have been affected by the trauma of 9/11.

### 1.1 Literary Responses to 9/11 – the Effects of Trauma and the “Unspeakable” Reaction

The first literary responses to 9/11 were eye-witness narrations. After this immediate response followed literature that attempted to ‘understand’ the meaning of 9/11; to find some meaning in what happened (Randall 4). According to Randall, one of the most central questions after 9/11 was, as the attacks already were so well documented and vividly ‘illustrated’, “how can a writer put into words what had already been watched by millions? What could language add to those images that they don’t already articulate? Indeed, *why* write at all given the staggering enormity of the visual symbolism?” (Randall 5) . According to trauma theory this notion of limitation of words is a common idea and one that Balaev refers to as “the unspeakable void” (1). According to a popular view of trauma theory, trauma was considered as inexplicable episodes where the atrocities were simply too horrible to vocalize. Instead

fiction resorted to fragmentation and limited perspectives in order to illustrate and reflect this sentiment; the inability to depict reality. As the events were too horrific to experience, they were too horrific to explain, and many novels sought to describe the feelings or distress caused by trauma rather than to explain the traumatic events themselves. This is noticeable in works such as *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer. These novels deal with the trauma of 9/11 as a collective trauma which is symbolized through individual experiences and fragmented storylines. The attacks are explained both explicitly and indirectly, but in both cases they create the setting for two individual first person narrations. *Falling Man* focuses on a man who worked in one of the towers on the day of the collapse. The novel consists of several storylines and has a fragmented back-and-forth style of narration which underlines the confused and traumatized state of the man, but also of his wife who experienced the attacks at a distance. The plot in Foer's book however is more coherent, but in this novel the author uses perspective to blur the events. The story is told through the eyes of a child who searches for his father who died in the attacks. As adult readers we understand the reality of the situation and the connection to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, but the limited perspective of the child illustrates the 'unspeakable' of the trauma and the inability to truly understand. Comparatively, both stories use the attacks more as a setting while the attacks themselves are not so much in focus as the disruptive effects they had on the people who experienced them. Their fragmented style of narration is then consistent with trauma theory as it reflects one of the first stages in processing trauma.

Faulks and Hamid are both beyond the early stages of trauma as they more clearly discuss and explain complicated motivations for terrorism. This is partly because of how trauma reactions depend on the individual, distance and time. Trauma is a subjective reaction which usually will diminish or be more successfully processed with time and distance. As over fifteen years have passed since the Twin Towers attacks, the initial strong restrictive effects of 9/11 might be diminishing. Also, the fact that neither Faulks nor Hamid were actual victims of the attacks and that they both were brought up outside the US explain how they both are able to show an objectivity and detachment from terrorism in their novels.

However, Faulks and Hamid show limitations in their portrayals and are thereby, to some degree, influenced by the ramifications of 9/11. This is partly explained by the fact that they were both subjected to "secondary traumatization" (Stampfl 21); which means that they were influenced not as victims of the attacks, but as witnesses. As Faulks and Hamid were not

directly traumatized, it is necessary to examine trauma on a greater scale, and see how 9/11 affected Western culture and society, and consequently its writers.

## **1.2 Trauma on a Collective Scale – the Exclusion and Unification of Cultural Trauma**

So far I have discussed how trauma might affect literature and authors on an individual level. More importantly, how did the *cultural trauma* of 9/11 influence Western society? Cultural trauma is a form of collective trauma that is, according to Alexander, “not the result of a group experiencing pain” but the intense discomfort that disturbs the core of a community’s sense of its own identity (Alexander 20). The results of such a trauma are, as Balaev notes, an experience of detachment and alienation (5). Furthermore, this type of collective trauma could damage any sense of collective unity (Erikson 187). However, the process of cultural trauma after 9/11 was also unifying. As the cultural trauma shook a nation’s identity, the recovering process required a reconstruction of national identity for what Alexander refers to as “carrier groups” (Alexander 20). As the attacks damaged American national identity, groups with the signifiers ‘American’, ‘patriotic and ‘white’ created a trauma narrative which established a unifying American ‘we’, with Americans as protagonists and the foreign terrorists as antagonists (Alexander 23). These carrier groups were thereby consolidating for those who belonged in the group, while they excluded those who did not. The division of ‘us’ and ‘them’ which was enhanced through political rhetoric (DiMaggio 19-20) divided Western society and lead to an alienation of people with non-Western backgrounds or connections. I will return to the implications of this division later on, but briefly explained did this rhetoric cause a public opinion which might have compelled writers to write novels that complied with the common belief of the West as moral superior and the terrorist as its evil enemy.

The complex process of cultural trauma after 9/11 also means that trauma theory’s notion of the ‘unspeakable’ is insufficient when trying to explain contemporary terrorist fiction. One critique of the ‘unspeakable’ in literature is that it is an oversimplification and a moralistic view of traumatic events (Stampfl 17). This is not to say that the ‘unspeakable’ is not a reaction to trauma, but that it would be simplistic to claim that Faulks’ and Hamid’s limited terrorist portrayal is only because of their inability to depict such incomprehensible acts. Instead, the ‘unspeakable’ could be explored on a larger scale in connection with the

effects of cultural trauma. The ‘unspeakable’, according to Forter, could be connected with a “historically-induced repression of silence” (Forter 77); meaning that regimes of power and public opinion could influence literary responses. In other words, trauma narratives created by carrier groups and forwarded by politic rhetoric, might have induced limited representations; and the Westerly biased ‘public opinion’ after 9/11 caused restrictions on what writers could question or challenge. The power of public opinion is also demonstrated by Dori Laub in her discussion of how a collective delusion would provoke silence. In her study she focuses on Holocaust victims after the release, but her point can also be made in other cases of collective trauma. After experiencing trauma there is often a sense of protection in staying within the masses and not to stand out alone. She compares it with the folk tale of the emperor’s new clothes where his delusion is shared collectively by his subjects who choose to follow his delusion rather than addressing the obvious (Laub 67-68). I would claim that the same could be said for the ‘main stream’ response that appeared after the Twin Towers attacks. There was a common notion that the attacks and victims should be treated with respect and that the terrorists and terrorism should be demonized. *A Week in December* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* both show perspectives that are less Westerly biased and demonstrate thereby a change in publicly accepted literature. Trauma’s dependence of time and distance could partly explain this change. As nearly sixteen years has passed, the initial restrictions might have subsided. Additionally, this change in literary responses could be explained through theories of terrorism that discuss a changing Western understanding of terrorism and the West’ hypocrisy in international politics.

### **1.3 How did the Trauma of 9/11 Influence Western Understanding of Terrorism?**

Another important aspect to consider, when dealing with terrorist fiction, is how the trauma of 9/11 might have affected Western society’s understanding of terrorism. The term ‘terrorism’ is often understood differently by both individuals and societies; which in turn affects how it is represented in literature. Terror’s sole purpose is, according to Young, to create effects that are chaotic and disturb people’s notion of the natural transition between causes and effect (Young 307). Terror is then by definition actions created to cause fear and confusion, which again could lead to the natural traumatic responses such as fragmentations and regression.



Still, the term 'terrorism' has changed connotations over the years. Although there is a common conception that we know what the word means, its usage has become both contradictory and confusing as its definition is subjectively interpreted. While terrorism and terrorists are both vilified and homogenized as a common enemy, the terms have also become strongly defined based on geography and nationality, rather than the actions themselves. For example, the US justified its 'War on Terror' by defining their war actions as something distinct from terrorism. Violent acts of war and loss of civilian lives outside the US are usually not considered terrorism from a Western perspective (Eaglestone 144). It is thereby difficult to define terrorism as the term is used so contradictorily and loosely. Previously the term could relate more to the idea of resistance rather than inexcusable acts of evil, as in Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist*. The depiction of terrorism after 9/11 looked quite differently, with Eastern or Middle Eastern terrorists representing the 'new evil'.

This definition of terrorism was created as a reaction to the trauma of 9/11 and victims' need for a common enemy, but more importantly as a reaction to terrorism's ability to create fear. The increase of terrorist attacks on Western soil and the increase in media coverage have led to an elevated fear of flying, personal liberties, the unknown, other ethnicities and personal security; a fear that also enhanced the division of 'us' and 'them' in public discourse (DiMaggio 19-20). In Joanna Bourke's book *Fear, a Cultural History*, she discusses 150 years of terror. She especially examines how fear and anxiety may explain 'Americans'' inclination to alienate certain groups after 9/11 and the changing connotations to the word terrorism. The modern terrorist has, according to Bourke, expanded and adopted a more "god-like power", similarly to previous conceptions of Satan or the 1950s communists (x). The terrorist as the 'new evil' has become Western's means of justifying the use of terrorism against others as in 'the War on Terror' and this terrorist perspective limited the objectivity and complexity of post-9/11 literary representations of terrorism.

Today, however, the term 'terrorism' is discussed and challenged in Faulks' and Hamid's novels. They criticize the West's hypocritical perspective on terror, an alternative reading of terror which allows for an examination of terrorism in a historical context rather than a study of the idea of terror as simply crude and irrational (Eaglestone 147). One reason for this change in perspective might be because of the recent publicized stories about Western 'acts of war', torturing prisoners and terrorizing civilians have become public, and the glorified Western reputation is now for many people tarnished. Specific episodes such as pictures of tortured prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison in 2004 or the publication of *Guantanamo Diary*, by imprisoned Mohamedou Ould Slahi, highlight the double standard of

Western perspective of terrorism (Bourke x). The hypocrisy of these actions diminishes the moral high ground made visible in Western society and culture and enhances the complexity of the tensions and conflicts that exist between East and West today. The West's moral decline might therefore explain a potential change in literary responses to terrorism. As the West's moral superiority has been challenged in the public sphere, literature's discussion of terrorism could correspondingly become more complex.

#### **1.4 Limitation in Terrorist Portrayals due a Western Perspective on Terrorism**

Contemporary fiction, according to Eaglestone, fails in its attempt to deal with terrorism and “to address precisely the concerns with terrorism that they set out to claim” (Eaglestone 361). Yet, this deficiency should not be left unexamined. It is, after all, the limitations of contemporary fiction that best demonstrate the limits of current Western understanding. Literature is one of the greatest resources to provide insight to terrorism as it has the ability to portray several perspectives, to both represent terror as well as explain it (Young 310). Limited literary portrayals of terrorism could therefore give awareness to a culture's lack of understanding. Also, as fear and prejudice grow, so does the need for a nuanced and informed perspective on terrorism. Eaglestone's severely critical view of Western incompetence is too strict for my novels of study. Eaglestone concludes with the argument that contemporary fiction is incapable of explaining terrorist acts, but instead tends to simply display them in connection to a “lack of communication and understanding of events and their context” (Eaglestone 365). There are novels that demonstrate this, like DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Updike's *The Terrorist*, both of which depict their terrorist, the latter in fuller detail, but fail to relinquish a Western binary perspective and give a biased, oversimplified and limited terrorist portrayal which exists in the Western pre-established structure of comprehending terrorism. They are both unable to give an actual shift in perspective, but try instead to bring the alienating acts of terror to a discourse they already know and understand (Eaglestone 367). Although I believe Eaglestone is right in his critique of Western understanding and limited literary responses, there are novels today that accomplish the perspective of ‘the Other’ better than the examples of DeLillo and Updike. In the novels *A Week in December* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* there are signs of the Western innate perspectives and limitations of

which Eaglestone is referring to, but these terrorist portrayals demonstrate a greater complexity in their discussion of terrorism on a greater scale.

Ultimately, the limitations of terrorist portrayals lie in Faulks' and Hamid's disinclination to depict a sane individual doing insane actions, such as acts of terror. Kraft uses psychology to explain individual terror where he points out the closeness between 'normal' and 'a monster' (Kraft 132), and that traumatic factors or insanity are not necessary for people who perform violent acts. The idea that a terrorist needs to be insane or traumatized indicate that people might rely too much on a person's disposition and not enough on environmental factors such as social, cultural or financial aspects. This is what Kraft refers to as "the fundamental attribution error" (Kraft 133). In reality therefore, there seem to be an explanation to how 'normal people' can perform gruesome deeds, and these environmental factors are included in both Hamid's and Faulks' novels. What they lack however, is the portrayal of an actual humanized terrorist. Trauma, according to trauma theory, usually causes reactions of regression, fragmentation and a need to set oneself as morally superior. Another reason for limited terrorist portrayals, specifically related to the understanding of the individual terrorist, is what Richard Jackson refers to as "a taboo against 'talking to terrorists' or trying to understand them at a human level" (Jackson 320). According to Jackson, the taboo exists because people are afraid to seem sympathetic to terrorism. Consequently, authors would find it difficult to humanize the terrorist in fear of seeming to try to justify terrorist actions. Both Faulks and Hamid give fairly human depictions of their would-be terrorists, but their portrayals are ultimately limited as neither offer insight into an actual terrorist's mind.



## Chapter 2 – *A Week in December*

*A Week in December* by Sebastian Faulks addresses themes of terrorism, religion and current Western society through nuanced depictions, shifts in perspective and a mosaic form of narration. The action of the novel takes place, as the title suggest, over one week in December – specifically December 2007, two and a half years after the 7<sup>th</sup> July bombings of the London Underground. While fiction written after 9/11 was criticized for being unable to relinquish innate Western ideas and beliefs (Eaglestone 365), Faulks’ novel achieves a more nuanced and critical picture of the tense situation between the East and West. Although *A Week in December* does not depict any acts of terror, it discusses how difficult it is to combine two very different cultures.

Firstly, the novel demonstrates a clearly critical view of ‘godless’ Western capitalism and sexualized society where superficiality rules and religious belief is disregarded. This is most clearly represented in the greedy and unfriendly character of John Veals who represents Western primitive desires and immoral behavior.

Secondly, the novel’s mosaic form and wide range of characters provide insight into a multicultural society constituted by different people of different backgrounds, classes and perspectives. Wealthy investors, struggling middle-class people and successful immigrants are all given a story and a voice which add to the complexity of the novel as a whole. Also, the many perspectives facilitate several attitudes towards literature and religion in a discussion of the rational compared with the irrational and the sane compared with the insane. One example is the different interpretations of the Koran by the novel’s intellectual, Gabriel, and the would-be terrorist, Hassan.

Lastly, the novel makes great attempts to offer a nuanced and reflective perspective of the ‘terrorist’ in the sections narrated from Hassan’s point of view. However, as Hassan in the end is unable to carry out any acts of violence and ‘comes to his senses’, he is not truly a terrorist. Even though Faulks successfully depicts *why* someone would adopt an opposing view of the West, he does not create a story where the Western perspective is detached. His critique of the West is at times almost caricatured through exaggerated characters, the discussion of the irrationality of religion becomes a little too binary, and the would-be terrorist follows the traditional Western pattern where Hassan becomes more of a hero as he ‘sees the light’ and comes to his senses, suggesting that there is no possible justification for terror, except perhaps madness or personal trauma.

## 2.1 Criticism of the West – Capitalism and Ungodliness

Eaglestone's criticism of post-9/11 fiction claimed that Western authors were unable to offer complexity when dealing with the issue of terrorism. Terrorist fiction gave, according to Eaglestone, oversimplified explanations and one-sided perspectives and translated the violent acts into a language they already knew and understood (Eaglestone 367). *A Week in December* struggles to relinquish a Western point of view, but the novel also gives a broadened perspective as it criticizes both Eastern extremisms *and* the negative impact of an immoral and hypocritical Western society. A more complex depiction of traumatic events indicates, as trauma theory predicts, that the impact from the 9/11 trauma's has evolved from the first stages of trauma response (regression and fragmentation) to a stage where the authors actually address 'the unspeakable' (Stampfl 17). Faulks clearly demonstrate a greater distance from 'the unspeakable' in his critique of Western society than novels such as *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *Falling Man*.

Faulks criticizes the current Western society through the character of John Veals, and the growth of Western capitalism is the element of Western culture that is most ruthlessly scrutinized. The characters that portray capitalistic characteristics are often depicted as unsympathetic, immoral and superficial creatures. Mr. Simon Porterfield, a 'charming' billionaire who made his fortune on reality shows that exploit people and John Veals, the unsmiling hedge-fund manager, both confuse people with objects and depend on money for happiness. These representations are unpleasant as they show indifference to other people while they gain financially from other people's misfortune. Porterfield's TV-show serves several purposes in the text. It demonstrates the great commercial wealth that lies in superficiality and misery, while it also foreshadows the theme of mental disorders (a point I will discuss later on). However, it is ultimately the unsympathetic character of John Veals who represents Western capitalism at its worst. Not only is his profession as a hedge fund manager directly connected with capitalism, but his persona is nearly inhuman. He is incapable of demonstrating joy, even by the idea of his own success. Only at the very end of the novel is Veals able to laugh, and even here is his human nature questionable.

But I have mastered this world, thought John Veals, passing his hand over his newly shaved chin. To me there is no mystery, no nuance and no complication; I am a man alive to the spirit of his time, the one who hears the whispers on the wind. A rare surge of feeling, of something like vindication, came from the pit of his belly and spread out

till it sang in his veins. As he stood with his hands in his pockets, staring out over the sleeping city, over its darkened wheels and spires and domes, Veals laughed. (Faulks 548)

Veals is not described as a man, but as a powerful and unearthly creature. His laugh is not one of joy, but a godlike or devilish expression of power. Veals is Mammon, an incarnation of the God of modern Western religion – that is, capitalism – and his inability to experience joy, one of the most natural and valuable of human emotions, reflects the inhumanity of the capitalist system. Money is Veals' religion, but it has no real God and no moral agenda. Veals' character is thereby an interesting combination of the modern man as well as the devilish creature of the capitalistic religion.

Faulks' critique of Western society is further developed in his depiction of Hassan's inability to adjust to a superficial and sexualized Western culture. Faulks uses Hassan's discontent both to discuss the degeneration of Western society and to reflect on the issue of morality and religion, and how these were viewed after 9/11. Post-9/11 fiction was, according to Martin Randall, unable to give a rational and critical discussion of religion. Literature that discussed strict religious beliefs adopted instead a strong opposite view that often created an excessive and binary response (Randall 6). Literary responses reflected the rhetoric of 'us against them' which occurred after 9/11 (DiMaggio 19-20) which trauma theory explains as a natural response, but which also limited the discussion. Faulks addresses this rhetoric (indirectly) through his depiction of Hassan who since childhood struggled to fit into a society that did not embrace other cultures. Growing up, Hassan felt out of place and developed resentment towards the world in which he lived.

He was astounded when a prematurely developed Scottish classmate punched him in the solar plexus at break time. As he lay gasping in the corridor, the pain that seeped from him seemed to crystallize into a small certainty. It was a moment he never forgot. The world was not fair, or reasonable, or loving. (Faulks 152)

Through Hassan's narrative Faulks further criticizes, or at least brings attention to, the difficulties young first or second generation immigrants experience when having to adjust to society's norms when they are categorized as 'the Other'. When growing up Hassan did not want "to be singled out and stared at" (Faulks 152) but blend in and be part of the community. This corresponds with Laubs' discussion of following the crowd; to choose to belong rather

than standing out, which indicates that Hassan's upbringing has had its own traumatic effect on him (Laub 67-68). Through interior monologue, we are introduced to Hassan's upbringing, personality and reasons for alienation. He fails to assimilate to the Western community which eventually explains his reasons for wanting to demonstrate against the Western society.

Hassan tried on different disguises. At fourteen he was all Scottish and atheistic: he exaggerated his interest in football and girls; he drank cider and beer from the off-licence and was sick in the park. He derided the women in hijab, calling out insults after them. (...) But for these boys, the swearing, the bravado and the sex talk was everything: the foul-mouthed emptiness was all they had. By the time he was seventeen, Hassan had come to despise these friends and was looking for another cloak to wear. (Faulks 153)

The alienation Hassan felt came from not having a way of devoting himself to his own culture and also the lack of substance in the culture he felt was forced upon him. Faulks' depiction of the Muslim way-of-life is not portrayed through rose-tinted glasses. In fact, in some cases he discusses strictly and critically against absolute religion and its traditions. However, the 'opponent', the Western culture and society, is not necessarily portrayed as superior. Sex, drugs and mindless entertainment are all central elements that take up people's time, but give no substance or meaning in return. As Brandtzæg points out, the "shallowness" and "ugly materialism" Hassan observes in his fellow countrymen add to his own sympathetic value and is the reason why he "never develops into a full-fledged antagonist" (Brandtzæg 194).

Hassan's increased sympathetic value adds to the complexity of Hassan as a character, but the fact that he never develops into an actual terrorist makes him more of a hero from a Western perspective, rather than including insight to a terrorist's mind.

The critique of aspects of Western society adds to the complexity of the novel's discussion, as it implies the West's partial responsibility in encouraging anti-Western movements. However, this criticism weakens due to the exaggerated nature of Veals and Hassan.. By making the character of John Veals exaggerated it is easy to discourage the argument of Western corruption by pointing out the implausibility of the character. Similarly, Hassan's anti-Western sentiments could perhaps too easily be explained by blaming teenage rebellion. Faulks' novel is not simply one-sided as he criticizes elements of both Western and Eastern cultures. Still, both of Faulks' critiques lack nuance within themselves. As writers demonstrated binary sentiments after 9/11 when they took the strongly opposing view of



absolute religions, Faulks' sentiment towards the immorality of capitalism is equally one-sided (Randall 6). Although Faulks shows nuance in including criticism on both the East and the West, his depictions might also be said to be exaggerated and thereby overly simplistic. Brandtzæg notes that some of the characters appear to be more like caricatures than realistic portrayals of people (Brandtzæg 193). Although John Veals is depicted in depth through both an omniscient narrator and internal monologue, he lacks complexity as he has no moral scruples regarding his own actions. Hassan, on the other hand, demonstrates a definite and absolute distaste and animosity towards Western society. While Veals is possible to compare with other, more sympathetic Western characters in the novel, thereby demonstrating the variety in Western society, Hassan lacks the same comparative component. Hassan is one of the characters that is described in greater detail as his past and present is narrated through inner monologue, and his motives for possible future terrorist acts are explained to create understanding and sympathy for the character. But Hassan is almost the only Eastern perspective in the novel, with exception of his father who reveals fairly little of his thoughts on Western society and Faulks discussion of the tension between East (meaning mostly the Middle East) and West becomes too one-sided to be regarded as an objective portrayal.

## **2.2 Discussions of Literature and Religion through a Multitude of Perspectives**

Hassan's planned terrorist attack is only one of many plots and themes in *A Week in December*. However, the novel's other storylines and characters give substance to the potential terrorist's actions and motives. Furthermore, they create a greater and more complex discussion of the themes of religion, rationality and cultural differences. These perspectives give depth to the narration of a society where terrorist actions are not simply 'unspeakable' and inconceivable acts performed by mad men, but complex consequences arising from tension in a multicultural world.

The characters provide different perspectives as they vary in background, gender and class. Some of the most fully developed characters in the story, in addition to John Veals and Hassan, are the struggling lawyer Gabriel Northwood, the successful chutney magnate Farooq al-Rashid, the callous and pretentious failed author R. Tranter and Veals' teenage son, Finn, who develops a schizophrenic disorder towards the end of the novel. I will focus on these characters as they all are involved in the development of a theme which adds to the

complexity of the terrorist portrayal: the discussion of science and literature versus belief and religion. Again I would claim that elements of Randall's critique of Western fiction after 9/11 still exist in literature dealing with the tensions between East and West. As many fiction writers felt obliged to write about the attacks, they also, as Randall puts it, "felt a strong sense of ethical and aesthetic difficulty in representing such massive trauma" (Randall 11). Faulks, as a British man, would perhaps not feel as strongly connected to the attacks of 9/11, as he would by the 7/7 London bombings, as well as the general tension which rose at the start of the new millennium. Still, Faulks' novel is undoubtedly affected by the current political climate and his novel demonstrates this in his discussion of the irrationality of the Koran and a strict religion like Islam. Additionally, Randall refers to Martin Amis, a British writer and critic, and his struggle to create a realistic and nuanced portrayal of terrorism after the 9/11 attacks. Amis criticizes the irrationality of religion and "establishes a clear binary between Belief and Literature" (Randall 6). Amis attacks what he perceives as 'anti-intellectualism' in society and argues for a literature in opposition to radical Islam (and by extension all religions).

To some degree, it is possible to see how *A Week in December* follows Amis' criticism, especially in the novel's discussion of the Koran, religion and reason. The novel clearly pairs belief and literature in opposition to each other, with literature and rationality more positively described. There are several instances where the Koran is referred to, either by Gabriel, the open-minded, but rational man who despite his efforts cannot help but be "scared" by the Koran's overall message of complete submission. Gabriel, perhaps the closest to the protagonist of the novel, is the quiet, honest, smart but financially struggling lawyer. He is also one of the few characters who has a quite open perspective of 'the East', as he reads the Koran and contemplates its significance. However, his inability to understand and sympathize with the scripture is also made evident, as he reflects several times on how violent and troubling he finds it.

What he's read in the Koran had also troubled him: the strange – yet to him naggingly familiar – violence of the assertions, and the lack of much else other than assertion. The widespread historical explanation, that this simply reflected the desperate social and commercial need of the Arabs of the Peninsula for a modern monotheistic god – and their relief at having found one – was appealing, but inadequate. (Faulks 442)

Gabriel, whose name refers to the angel Gabriel who has importance both in the Christian and the Muslim faith, recognizes some similarities between the two cultures, but his solution for current social issues is in the end to follow a Western model; which is for Gabriel, a more modern and peaceful way of life. Gabriel's thoughts of the Koran are expressed using a mix of quotations and free indirect discourse which gives a "raw, uncensored impression of one fictional character's reception of a text which, for millions around the world, is taken as a guidebook for real life" (Brandtzæg 195). He demonstrates a clear desire for scientific skepticism and because of Gabriel's intellect and moral backbone his opinion gets a normative value even though it is given by someone with a Western bias (Brandtzæg 195).

Gabriel's reading of the Koran also connects the theme of literature versus religion, with the rational compared with the insane. He compares the voice of Allah to

the mad, monotonic and aggressive ravings of his schizophrenic brother, whose only conversational topic is 'who was saved and who would burn, how power and the chance of salvation rained upon the world and how he alone was the channel of the truth. (Brandtzæg 195)

The theme of insanity is also repeated in the storyline of Veals' son Finn and the TV-show "It's Madness". The TV-show demonstrates (and exaggerates) how Western culture's need for entertainment has gone so far as to exploit the mentally ill. It also foreshadows Finn's own future fit of schizophrenia, and it connects Gabriel's view of religion as insanity as well as the devoted would-be terrorist Hassan, as his mission is to blow up the facility where Gabriel's schizophrenic brother lives. Although it is a bit strong to imply that Faulks believes literature to be a force against the idea of absolute religion, his portrayal of the Koran is undoubtedly quite critical. Gabriel explicitly demonstrates a rational Western skepticism to religious laws, but he is also eager to find reason and logic in the historic text.

He had wanted to know, for instance, how strict [the Koran] was on the alcohol question. How much of a problem anyway had liquor been in Medina and Mecca in AD 630? It seemed odd, also, that Jewish and Muslim dietary laws – pork, shellfish, milk – seemed to follow the logic of hygiene in a hot country, but on drink the religions so dramatically diverged, with Muslims going dry and Christians giving their Messiah the supply of top wine as his very first miracle, at Cana. (Faulks 122)

Gabriel treats the book from a Western perspective and views it as a historical artifact rather than a holy text. He thereby demonstrates his rationality when dealing with a holy scripture which represents the dispute between religion and science. Gabriel does not try to understand the Koran from a religious point of view but rather one that he can understand from a Western perspective, through science and rationality.

The Koran is also mentioned in other contexts, such as through the perspective of Hassan or his father, who naturally represent the opposition to Gabriel's rational discussion of the Koran. Farooq's perception of the Koran is that it is not the bedrock and justification for any political cause, but a book of faith. Faulks thereby offers another Islamic perspective of religion. However, Farooq's credibility is rapidly destroyed as his son Hassan says: "But you've never even read it" (Faulks 363). The reader, who knows that Farooq is illiterate, understands that his understanding of the Koran is based on tradition rather than study. His view of the scripture is thereby diminished and invalidated by his lack of education.

Finally, Farooq's son Hassan also gives a detailed discussion of the Koran, which is especially interesting given that this is the perspective of the novel's would-be terrorist. To Hassan, the Koran is a holy scripture that guides him through "the landscape of [his] life" (Faulks 234). Hassan focuses on one reading of the Koran and what he considers to be the central message "to devote oneself to Allah or risk hellfire in all eternity... Allah was the true and only God...and that if you did not believe in Allah and Islam then you would be tortured for all time after death (Faulks 235). While Hassan shares the same general view of the Koran as the one Gabriel criticizes, with the focus on the all-powerful Allah and the eternal damnation that awaited non-believers, he also manages to at least indicate the possible irrelevance the Koran has for fundamentalist and terrorist organizations. The anti-Western movement in *A Week in December* is, as Hassan points out, not so "scripturally-based" as he expected, which indicates that there are other reasons for terrorism than religion, a point I will return to later on. Still, Hassan as both an intellectual and devoted Muslim is not able to truly combine the two areas. Islam is portrayed as true 'because it is' and the literature he reads does not encourage a rational discussion of the scripture, but enhances his belief in a political Muslim cause.

### 2.3 The ‘Terrorist’ Hassan

In addition to *A Week in December*'s critique of Western culture and strict religious beliefs, the character of Hassan al-Rashid, his background, thoughts and actions, are central to the novel's discussion of terrorism. Hassan, as the novel's would-be terrorist, provides a first-person narrative of how and why people growing up in a Western culture might end up as anti-Western demonstrators or terrorists. Through the character of Hassan, Faulks portrays how a teenager's search for meaning and the clash of two cultures result in a place of unhappiness, where one is forced to choose one culture or be categorized as an outsider.

Through the detailed and complex portrayal of Hassan, Faulks challenges the idea that terrorism is solely motivated by fundamental religious views by focusing on how cultural differences might cause alienation and resentment. Hassan is depicted as a confused and searching teenager who has been through several phases, one being a shallow embrace of western 'values' involving sex, alcohol and a defiance of his parents' traditional way of life. Hassan inability to adapt to a Western culture is thereby accentuated as a significant reason for anti-Western sentiments. Because of this he has, in the present time of the novel, started on a different path, looking to distance himself from immorality and superficiality, and has instead been influenced by Islam and Muslim organizations. Faulks describes the social and religious environments Hassan joins in great detail, a technique which adds to the story's credibility. He describes both his attempt at fitting in among the streetwise, lower middle class of Scotland, a socially active socialist student group and finally the strict Muslim 'brotherhood' which guides him towards violent acts on Western society. Hassan is thereby given a story and a background which helps explain his involvement with the extreme anti-Western society. Hassan displays a young adult, "torn between the rhetoric of purity that came from the mosque and the subversive laughter that came from daily life in a self-mocking country" (Faulks 339). He is also described as a youth in constant search for belonging and the meaning of life. When he joins the Left Student Group (LSG) he describes the experience as

[i]t was a kind of joy. He no longer felt brown-skinned or alien or different; he felt enfranchised into a brotherhood of the wise... What he had found, he told himself, was identity, and an international one at that; what he had stumbled across was nothing less than himself – and such a discovery was sure to be exhilarating. (Faulks 160)

The issue of terrorism is also depicted through Hassan's meeting with other devoted and politically engaged Muslims who plan an attack on Western society. Hassan's encounter with the group helps create a more complex understanding of terrorism against the West, as he quickly discovers and questions the members' religious adherence. In his first meeting with the group "he quickly saw that he was among people who either hadn't read the book or who'd moved on from it. This surprised him. He'd expected the group to be scripturally-based" (Faulks 234). Through Hassan's observations, Faulks challenges the belief that terrorism is motivated solely by religion, and instead discusses the relevance of political and historical issues. Moreover, Faulks challenges stereotypes relating to the 'terrorist', not only through Hassan, but even more through the leader of the group, Salim. This character is portrayed as well spoken and educated and Hassan's impression of the situation mirrors the surprise of a prejudiced society. In the group he joins, the speakers are not displayed as uneducated, simple-minded brutes, but well spoken and trustworthy mentors.

Brothers... The message I would like you to take home is this. That life is simple". (...) "Hassan looked round and saw the surprise on the faces of the others. Presumably in Pakistan they had been lectured by frothing bigots and paramilitaries; they had not expected to encounter at this late stage someone who spoke in the cadences of a university lecturer. (Faulks 338)

Faulks here disproves Eaglestone's critique of writers' inability to illustrate a nuanced terrorist and terrorism from different perspectives. Not only does Faulks portray 'terrorists' who are educated and well-spoken, he also challenges Western prejudice directly. Hassan's observations mirror the expected surprise many Westerners might experience if meeting these kinds of terrorists. The 'Eastern perspective' is thereby demonstrated through the characters Hassan associates with. The only 'flaw' here is that none of these characters' backgrounds or inner thoughts are presented to the reader. We are only introduced to them through Hassan's eyes and observations. Faulks manages, through Hassan's narrative, to illustrate how two very different cultures struggle to coexist in modern Great Britain. Hassan's struggle is to find something meaningful to live for – a reason for his existence, and his belief in religion grants him this. However, the strictness of his belief is a poor match with his surroundings and his quest for utter devotion is hindered by a 'godless society'.

Still, even though Faulks is able to create a better understanding for why some would be tempted to join the anti-West movement, he remains limited as his 'terrorist' never lives up

to his potential destiny. He never completes any acts of terrorism. Instead he realizes at the last minute that he cannot complete such horrendous deeds, that they are not part of his identity. Although his beliefs are apparently strong, he cannot hurt innocent people and the sympathy for Hassan, especially from a Western perspective, grows. As Hassan never performs any terrorist actions he cannot really be labeled a terrorist.

However, Faulks' inclusion of other anti-Western characters might provide different perspectives on terrorism. The Islamic movement's leader Salim, perhaps the novel's actual terrorist, is the one to plan the attack and recruit people for their cause. Salim's reasons for terrorism are shown to be founded in religion as he says:

Islam is not a religion like Judaism or Christianity. It is the sublime, single and transcendent truth. To compare it to the other two religions is like comparing a decision to lower your hand to the immutable law of gravity... Islam is the one truth, revealed by God himself to the Prophet. (Faulks 341)

Salim and others in the group demonstrate in great detail their reasons for wanting to attack the West, among others in a speech over 6 pages long which proclaims the glory of Islam and the ignorance of other religions. However, their intentions are also justified with political reasons, as well as a very strict religious view. As one of the speakers, Ali, explains the reason for jihad is to create a proper Muslim country.

The fact that a country calls itself "Muslim", Ali says, "doesn't mean that it is shaped in God's will. A so-called "Muslim" country can be as *jahili* as an atheist or Western one... We are here to liberate the world: to bring to human beings the wonderful news that their lives do have meaning, purpose, beauty and immortality. (Faulks 343-44)

Ali's justification for 'terrorism' is embedded in this, an absolute religious conviction that there is only one way of life and those who disagree are not worthy of it. To be sure, Faulks spend enough time and pages on explanations and discussions of Islamic expansion and consequential terrorism. However, this view again lacks a rational discussion. The basic foundation and justification lie in the superiority of Allah and the Islamic faith and end any further discussion. Furthermore, these characters, the 'proper terrorists', are only displayed through the perspective of Hassan. The reader is never fully introduced to the person behind the speeches and Faulks is thereby still unable to enter the mind of the terrorist.

Faulks, although able to demonstrate a nuanced description of modern anti-Western ‘terrorists’, is also unable to disconnect from a Western point of view. This is most obvious in the ending where Hassan experiences a sudden change of heart. In this scene he is portrayed as increasingly disoriented and confused, which could symbolize his orientation in belief as well as geographical confusion. “He didn’t know whether to go on or turn back; he had no way of orientating himself... Where now was Westminster Bridge? Had that gone too? Or maybe the Thames took a sudden turn and ran north-south at this point, in which case he should be going... East” (Faulks 532-33). The final focus on the word East is most likely not a coincidence. Hassan has throughout his life struggled to choose between East and West, and is, in this crucial moment, more conflicted than ever. While he tries to find help, Faulks either intentionally or not, makes a point of modern Western’s culture of unavailability. “Someone was coming towards him on the footpath of the bridge and Hassan decided to ask the way. But as he came closer, it was clear that the man was plugged into loud music from his earpiece and couldn’t be distracted” (Faulks 533). The same thing happens with a woman on her mobile phone, and Hassan is, due to modern technology, unable to get a connection or help from anyone to guide him on the right path. As Hassan notes, “[t]hey were talking to the air. All were listening to voices, talking back, but there were no people. His was the only real voice on the bridge, but the only one to whom no one would listen” (Faulks 533-34). In the final moment, the moment where Hassan finally makes up his mind, the word “voice” is again echoed, this time referring to the voice of God.

Where was it? Where was the voice, the voice of God that the Prophet had heard in the desert? This was the voice of the truth, the world’s salvation. This was what he must die for. What he must kill for. For that disembodied voice only and not for any other, he must go to the station, go to the hospital and kill. It was all so fantastically, so risibly, improbable. (Faulks 534)

This comparison between the invisible voice of mobile phones and Hassan’s search for God’s voice, demonstrate the similarity between the two cultures. They are both ruled by an invisible voice – one materialistic and one religious. In the end, reason triumphs over religious conviction. Hassan abandons his mission and terrorism can thereby be defeated through reason.



## 2.4 Culture, Politics and History as Motivations for Terrorism

Faulks uses many of the different plots in the novel to address the issue of political history and the tensions between the East and West. For instance, in the first encounter between the author Tranter and Farooq, Tranter's immediate impression is thoroughly described:

As he watched Knocker's thick black eyebrows (...) Tranter, for no reason, found himself suddenly thinking of where this man and his ancestors had come from – an agricultural valley in Pakistan, he presumed. He had an involuntary picture of bloody British partition; of religion and greed and the violence, over centuries; and of millions of the rural poor like the al-Rashids – bullied by Arab Muslims pushing east and by raiding Mongols forging south and west, then exploited by their own people. (Faulks 323)

By pointing out the negative aspects of Arab Muslims' political history, Faulks demonstrates how political issues might be the greatest motivational factor for terrorism or demonstrations for self-rule and geographical power. This is also more explicitly demonstrated through discussion between Hassan and his father about the history of Islam.

We can be part of this world too", Hassan says, "Why should we be excluded? (...) It's a great sadness", Farroq replies, "[b]ut it may also be a little bit our fault. We've had possession of the truth for nearly 1,500 years, but we've never developed ways of living, you know, the practical aspects of state and church and politics and law to bring an Islamic society into being. (Faulks 364)

The discussion between Hassan and his father opens up the question of the motivation for terrorism. While terrorism is interchangeably linked with religion from a 'typical' Western point of view, Faulks' work suggests that the reality is more political. The discussion also recognizes the 'Eastern' point of view, the suffering and the absence of a coherent Islamic state. At a meeting Hassan listens to a speaker who advocates for an Islamic state, he demonstrates an opposite view: "Hassan was not impressed by the speaker. When at the age of sixteen he'd first told his father about this idea of an Islamic state, Knocker had ridiculed it. 'It's not in the Koran, 'he said,' it's a pure invention" (Faulks 235). Through fleeting insights into Islamic history or explicit discussion between Hassan and Farooq, Faulks raises

arguments regarding why terrorism exists and by discussing and questioning the history and political issues of Islam, Faulks creates a more nuanced picture of a terrorist's motivations.

## **2.5 Limitations in Faulks' Terrorist Portrayal**

Although Faulks shows complexity in his discussions of terrorism and in his portrayal of Hassan, he is disinclined to portray an actual terrorist. Furthermore, his general depiction of Muslims remains limited, as there are few Eastern perspectives in the novel. The terrorist portrayal in *A Week in December* exceeds other literary works such as DeLillo's *Falling Man* or Updike's *The Terrorist* as Faulks at least includes insight into the minds of Hassan's parents, and especially his father, but also they are described mostly through Western eyes as "keen Allah-botherers" (Faulks 8). The little information given of a very limited selection of non-Western people allows the context to become too small for a properly nuanced description. Still, Faulks' portrayals are considerably more complex than many works of fiction written at the start of the new millennium. He includes discussion of both East and West and demonstrates a critical view on aspects of both sides. Faulks is thereby demonstrating that enough time has passed after 9/1 for a more complex and critical depiction of terrorism and its implications on Western society. However, his inability to disconnect from a Western "happy ending" and general point of view also illustrates the difficulty in actually understanding these events. The only explanations given are a resistance to the Western "immoral" way-of-life, an unquestionable religious faith or insanity. The difficulties due to Islamic history and politics are sometimes discussed, but almost always linked to an indisputable religious conviction which again prevents any further rational discussion.

### Chapter 3 – *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

While British born Sebastian Faulks is able to offer a complex but Westernly oriented portrayal of modern terrorism, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* gives an objective discussion of anti-Western sentiments from a seemingly non-Western point of view. The novel is written by British Pakistani Moshin Hamid, who spent part of his upbringing in the US. As Hamid grew up both in the United States and in Pakistan, his perspective on current tensions between East and West and the modern role of ‘the terrorist’ is an interesting one to compare with that of Faulks, who despite great effort fails to produce a believably nuanced and active terrorist. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* demonstrates a clear distance from trauma’s potential restrictive effects, such as the notion of the ‘unspeakable’ or a claim to Western moral superiority that was often represented in literature after 9/11.

Firstly, Hamid directs a critique towards the US and by extension the West, but his approach is more refined and reflected than Faulks’ harsh comparison of Western capitalism and a devilish and inhuman character. Instead, Hamid describes through the character of Changez, the conflicting feelings of love towards American culture and individualism and disgust with US’s ‘arrogant’ self-claimed position of moral superior and world leader. Changez illustrates, like Hassan, a person who faces the challenge of living in the middle of two colliding cultures. However, Changez’s feelings cannot be explained by blaming teenage-rebellion. More importantly, Changez does not change to please a Western audience, but gradually evolves into an anti-Western protester.

Secondly, the novel’s use of symbolism in the main characters’ names and the term ‘fundamentalist’ paints a sympathetic and touching picture of the characters’ and especially Changez’s motivation, feelings and struggles in a world that is unable to relinquish the past. The fairly subtle, but powerful role of the love interest Erica, whose name and existence mirror Changez’s complicated relationship with America, relates Changez internal struggle without explicitly telling the reader. Hamid is able, through symbolism and the character of Changez, to tell a nuanced and layered story of a possible fundamentalist whose motivation exists outside a personal or religious space. Instead the discussion grows in complexity as political power and the history of empires are revealed to be the real reasons of anti-Western demonstrations.

Finally, the narration in the novel demonstrates the complexity of Changez's character. The whole story consists of one conversation in which Changez is the only narrator. By listening and believing Changez's narrative one gets a detailed and believable account of his character. However, the telling in the story reveals aspects of Changez that he does not explicitly divulge. Changez's conversationalist, the silenced American never speaks, but it is possible through Changez's telling to infer the American's reactions which in turn cast doubt on Changez's narrative. Furthermore, the telling reveals Changez to be a person in control as he leads the conversation as well as the plot. Changez's ease, together with the American's apparent uneasiness and the constant hints of an impending collision raise the novel's tension and promise a dramatic ending, but which also leave the reader with doubt and wonder as a final conclusion is never provided.

Symbols, open criticism and narrative are used to create a discussion of the perspectives of terrorism or anti-American sentiments but Changez is never explicitly portrayed as a terrorist. Hamid is, like Faulks, not explicitly depicting an actual terrorist, but rather a man with anti-Western inclinations and possibly a past involving some sort of anti-Western demonstrations. Also, and more importantly, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* excludes the issue of religion and its relevance for potential terrorist actions. While Faulks' novel is unable to view religion from an objective perspective, Hamid disregards the issue and excludes it from the discussion altogether. While complex and fairly disconnected from the trauma of 9/11, both novels restrain from discussing the individual's reality of explicit acts of terror. Furthermore, the discussion of religion remains restricted, as it is either portrayed as irrational or simply avoided. While the literary depictions of terrorism as a concept have clearly evolved after 9/11, the importance of religion and the psychology of the terrorist remain limited or unchallenged.

### **3.1 The Clash of Two Cultures – Changez and his Relationship with America**

Changez's narration allows the reader to follow the process of a Pakistani man's first exciting meeting with the West, his rising success in a capitalistic society and his gradual disaffection with a nation he also admires. Changez is not only the central character and the possible fundamentalist in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. He is also the narrator and the only perspective shown to the reader throughout the novel. His thoughts and feelings are therefore

offered in great detail, but due to the one-sided perspective, one also has to consider the objectivity and truthfulness of the character. Changez's ability to reflect and to share unflattering details of his life increases his credibility, and as a polite and well-spoken man, he is not difficult to sympathize with from the very first page. He starts his story by describing his first meeting with America and the University of Princeton as "(...) a dream come true" (Hamid 3). Hamid thereby portrays Changez's introduction to the US as the typical American dream where anything is possible. The objectivity of this representation of the West precedes Faulks' as the focus is immediately from an outsider's perspective. Although Hassan's father in *A Week in December* also demonstrates a fondness for Western culture, this depiction is less convincing than Hamid's description of Changez. While Faulks demonstrates the complexity of emotions in separate characters, as Hassan and his father, is Hamid able to give the perspective and process of a single individual, which makes the portrayal seem more objective and less Westerly biased.

Changez is initially impressed with the Western culture and technological advances, but is also from the start conflicted as his experiences cause envy and displeasure at the reminder of his homeland's deteriorated condition. Changez expresses this himself as he says

[o]ften, during my stay in your country, such comparisons troubled me. In fact, they did more than trouble me: they made me resentful. 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. (Hamid 34)

Changez's relationship with America is always showed in comparison to Pakistan, thereby indicating the importance of Changez's connection to his homeland. He compares Manhattan with his home town of Lahore and identifies their most common trait as the power the cities have to force an individual to become part of a crowd. He says,

[a]nd that was one of the reasons why for me moving to New York felt – so unexpectedly – like coming home. But there were other reasons as well: the fact that Urdu was spoken by taxi-cab drivers; (...) the coincidence of crossing Fifth Avenue during a parade and hearing, from loudspeakers mounted on the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Association float, a song to which I had danced at my cousin's wedding. (...)

On street corners, tourists would ask me for directions. I was in four and a half years, never an American; I was *immediately* a New Yorker. (Hamid 33)

Changez, like several of the characters in *A Week in December* relates the shame and unfairness he feels when he compares the historically great Eastern empires with the young, but advanced American nation. However, his discovery of resentment is a gradual epiphany as his love for the US is consistently present while he simultaneously dislikes the ‘unfair’ advancements America has had.

Changez’s early innocence is early on depicted as a quality that will change. His possible anti-Western inclinations are foreshadowed in both the title, as we might guess he is a fundamentalist or terrorist, and in his early descriptions of his trip to Greece. There he jokingly answers that he “hoped one day to be the dictator of an Islamic republic with a nuclear capability” (Hamid 29) when asked what he one day dreams of becoming. The novel is thereby from the onset hinting at Changez as a potential terrorist or at least suggesting his future disinterest in America and Western culture.

Changez’s process of gradual realization depends on his own successful experiences within the capitalistic system. Due to his foreignness and expected hunger for success he is hired in a valuation firm, ‘Underwood Samson & Company’. At first, the company’s stature makes him proud and he enjoys the perks and money that followed his job as he says: “I do not mean to imply that I did not enjoy my initiation to the realm of high finance. On the contrary, I did. I felt empowered, and besides, all manner of new possibilities were opening up to me” (Hamid 37). However, it is also through his work he realizes the shallowness of his profession and on a business trip in Manila he reaches his epiphany. There he sees a country so poor and disorganized, a previous colony of the US, but which is still more developed than his own home country. Finally, his epiphany culminates as he sees the 9/11 attacks on TV in his Manila hotel room. “I stared as one – and then the other – of the twin towers of New York’s World Trade Center collapsed. And then I *smiled*. (...) I was caught up in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees” (Hamid 72-73). Changez’s inappropriate smile creates the same uncanny and defamiliarizing effect as Veals’ smile in *A Week in December*. His reaction is furthermore perhaps the most unsympathetic action explicitly showed to the reader throughout the novel. However, it is exactly this reaction that distinguishes *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to Faulks’ novel, as well as most other post-9/11 terrorist novels. The main character and narrator is unapologetically demonstrating a non-Western response to one of the most influential attacks on Western soil

in modern history. Hamid's ability to write such a reaction proved Eaglestone's critique wrong as it demonstrates a definite detachment from trauma and the publicly accepted portrayal of terrorism that evolved after 9/11 (Eaglestone 361).

This achievement cannot solely be explained by trauma theory's idea of openness over time, where time allows people to process with the trauma and possibly become more objective. As *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was published, there were still many novels which were unable to abandon a Western favored perspective, such as Updike's *The Terrorist* and *A Week in December*. Therefore, there must also be some subjective reasons for why Hamid in a greater sense is able to discuss anti-Western sentiments from a non-Western perspective. Arguably, the author's non-Western background could explain why Hamid's discussion of terrorism seems less limited by a Western bias. Hamid, as part British and part Pakistani citizen, who also spent some time of his upbringing in the US, might be able to have a broader and more nuanced perspective. Hamid's depiction of Changez's reaction to 9/11 as well as his use of a first person style of narration makes him, along with other writers such as Hisham Matar and Kiran Desai, according to Margaret Scanlan, able to write between the binaries of terrorist discourse (Scanlan 23). Changez's conflicting and changing relationship with America, as well as Hamid's style of narration require readers to practice empathy with the narrator, but also to view themselves, the West, from an outside perspective. Through the dominating narrator of Changez and his silenced Western audience, the novel becomes a "voyage in" (Scanlan 3) that challenges the West's perception of itself as a morally superior sanctuary for less fortunate people.

### **3.2 Complexity through Symbolism in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist***

To understand Changez's character one has to examine more than his narrative. The portrayal of Changez as a terrorist becomes more complex with the consideration of the symbolism in the text. As previously mentioned, the American observer remains nameless, most likely to suggest an anonymous Western audience. Furthermore, the other names, as well as the title of the novel carry symbolic weight that underlines the main themes of nationalism, identity and terrorism.

It is not a coincidence that Changez's unhappy love interest in the story is called Erica, a contraction of the word 'America', as she symbolizes both Changez's relationship to

America and America's current state of decline. Changez relationship with Erica correlates, not coincidentally, with Changez's relationship with the US. At first he falls in love, and she is to him beautiful, smart, complicated but also conflicted. Erica herself suffers from a deep loss and a constant state of nostalgia as her boyfriend Chris has passed away. Erica is never able to relinquish the memory of Chris, who arguably symbolizes America's glorified history. In the novel he is best described thus: "His nurses had been charmed by him: he was a good-looking boy with what she described as an *Old World* appeal" (Hamid 27). Chris, whose name could be associated with Christopher Columbus, symbolizes the origin and founding of America and him dying consequently represents the fall of the American empire. The love story in the novel is thereby not as much a personal tale as it also represents Changez's conflicted relationship with America. Erica becomes destroyed as her inability to forget Chris, or more precisely, the memory of Chris causes her to stagnate and in the end, disappear. Hamid thereby predicts America's future to fail as all other great empires in history. Even Changez's personal relationship with the US is signified through his relationship with Erica, as he is unable to make physical love to her. Only, by pretending to be Chris is Erica able to be intimate with Changez, but this scene is not one of harmonious love, but an awkward forcing of events as Changez describes: "I attempted to separate myself from the situation, to listen to her as though I were not both aching for her and hurt that – seemingly despite herself – her body had rejected me" (Hamid 90). Changez has to assimilate to be accepted by Erica, and even when he pretends to be Chris, he is never truly accepted. Likewise, although he tries, he is never truly recognized as an American. His foreignness is innate and impossible to change. This alienation is further enhanced after 9/11 when Changez's increasing estrangement is represented in Erica's disappearance and probable suicide. The attacks symbolize the turning point of American society, and like Erica's, its fate is unknown but in decline.

Considering the several possible 'changes' in the novel, it is natural that Changez's name often is associated with the word 'changes' indicating either Changez's change of heart or the change in American society after 9/11. However, according to Robert Adams, Changez's name is instead a reference to Genghis Khan, the Mongol emperor who fought against Muslims and forbade Islam practices. Consequently, the character of Changez could not truly be a Muslim fundamentalist, as no believing Muslim would be named after Genghis Khan (Adams). One element in the novel which supports this theory is that religion is never mentioned throughout the book. Furthermore, the word 'fundamentalist', which appears already in the title of the novel, refers, not to what one might suspect; a religious fanatic, but



Changez's work as a value estimator. In his job he is told to "[f]ocus on the fundamentals" (Hamid 98) which is explained to be Underwood Samson's guiding principle. Changez's name and the word 'fundamental' are used to reveal the novel's true message concerning terrorism. By using the word 'fundamental' without referring to any typical fundamental religious movement, Hamid raises expectations of a fundamental terrorist and by not including one, he highlights Western prejudice and hypocrisy regarding a stereotypical 'terrorist. Ironically, Changez is only shown as a 'fundamentalist' when he is working within the capitalistic Western society. As Changez never discusses religion and is named after an anti-Islam emperor, he cannot be considered an Islamist 'fundamentalist'. However, Changez is from the very beginning obviously nationalistic, as he feels pride and shame in connection with Pakistan's economical and political condition. Furthermore, the word 'reluctant' in the title also indicates that Changez has been unwillingly forced into a fundamentalist position. It is therefore natural to assume that Changez might be a fundamentalist in the sense that he has a strict belief in a set of ideas or principles, but that, like the title indicates, he has been 'forced' into this position by outside factors; factors that have turned him into, not a religious fundamentalist, but a Muslim nationalist.

### **3. 3 Narrative and Telling – Changez's Questionable Credibility**

While the character of Changez and the symbolism in the novel provide insight to the novel's discussion of terrorism, the style of the novel, the first person narration and the telling, challenge the concept of terrorism in the novel and raise the question of whether Changez really can be considered a terrorist. The silenced American, who represents a Western audience, functions as more than an incentive for Changez to speak. The American's thoughts, speech and actions are told or implied through Changez's monologue which forces the West to view itself from a different and less flattering perspective. When Changez interrupts his own story to comment on the American's body language: "Jim leaned back in his chair and crossed his legs at the knee, just as you are doing now" (Hamid 8), he reveals his awareness of the other's distress while also demonstrating his own control. Changez's role as the sole narrator parallels his level of control while it also provides insight to his character. The truthfulness of Changez's narration is always questionable as it is the only one that is introduced. The reader is instead forced to read between the lines, and it is particularly in the

American's reaction that Changez's credibility falters. When Changez describes his life after he moved back to Pakistan, he also comments on the growing hostile reaction from the American.

I must say, sir, you have adopted a decidedly unfriendly and accusatory tone. What precisely is it that you are trying to imply? I can assure you that I am a believer in non-violence; the spilling of blood is abhorrent to me, save in self-defense. And how broadly do I define self-defense, you ask? Not broadly at all! I am no ally of killers; I am simply a university lecturer, nothing more nor less. (Hamid 181)

It is easy to partly trust Changez as he is an eloquent and intelligent speaker throughout the novel. However, the American's reactions still provoke uncertainty. This might only illustrate innate Western prejudice had it not also been for the frequent episodes of uncertainty and potential danger that are presented throughout the novel, especially towards the end.

What? Changez says. Is somebody following us? I cannot see anyone... Well, we cannot expect to have Mall Road to ourselves. (...) Yes, you are right: they have paused. What do you mean, sir, did I give them a signal? Of course not! I have as little insight into their motivations and identities as you do. (Hamid 176)

The tension rises throughout the story as the suspected 'fundamentalist' tells about his increasing resentment to the US while his American listener grows uneasy. Although we might suspect the American to be paranoid and Changez to be truthful, the continuing elements of surprise and uncertainty make Changez's credibility questionable.

Still, even though Changez's credibility weakens, he is never explicitly proved to be a terrorist. On the contrary, Changez himself rejects the idea of him acting as a Western categorized terrorist as he says

[a]nd lest you think that I am one of *those* instructors, in cahoots with young criminals who have no interest in education and who run their campus factions like marauding gangs, I should point out that the students I tend to attract are bright, idealistic scholars possessed of both civility and ambition. (Hamid 180-81)

Hamid is thereby challenging the Western stereotypical portrayal of a fundamental and violent terrorist. Changez is never proven to be a terrorist, but his confession is made ultimately doubtful in the novel's ending scene which culminates in an exciting but confusing climax; a climax that also ironically draws focus to the readers' possible perceptions throughout the story. Changez's speech is directed to the reader as well as the American as he says:

(...) perhaps you are convinced that I am an inveterate liar, or perhaps you are under the impression that we are being pursued. (...) [I]t seems an obvious thing to say, but you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all under-cover assassins. (Hamid 183)

Hamid gives the reader conflicting signals as he both draws attention to people's frequent misconceptions and simultaneously hints at an upcoming conflict between a Pakistani man and an American, a clash between East and West. The ending is without any resolution and it is impossible to say if there is going to be a clash or who the triumphant party will be.



## Chapter 4 – A Comparative Analysis – Faulks and Hamid

### 4.1 The Representation of Terrorism on an Individual or Collective Scale

Changez and Hassan are thereby never explicitly portrayed as a terrorist. Changez's character and the novel's plot relate themes of political conflict and tension between East and West, but Hamid still gives no specific individual terrorist portrayal. By demonstrating political, economical and historical reasons for conflict between East and West, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* gives a complex portrayal of terrorism, as well as a *possible* terrorist in Changez. However, as with Faulks, Hamid is not in reality portraying an 'active' or explicit terrorist and one could question the possibility to write a narrative where explicit violent acts can be depicted while also creating a sympathetic portrayal of the agent. Can the reader gain sympathy with a terrorist while also being shown the terrible consequences of terrorist attacks?

The taboo of terrorism and the effects of the cultural trauma after 9/11 have made it difficult to depict and humanize an individual terrorist. What Hamid and Faulks instead manage to focus on are terrorism on a larger scale. Their discussion of terrorism is limited as they lack a humanized terrorist, but their discussion of terrorism is still important to understand individual's motives and attitudes. It is necessary, according to Pål Kraft, to discuss both the individual and the general movement (Kraft 123). There are many factors that contribute to terrorist movements, but one central in Hamid's novel, is the element of jealousy. Kraft states how terrorism derives from jealousy, as well as anger and frustration, and while religion is often a factor it is definitely not the dominant one (Kraft 122). In connection with jealousy lie the element of perception and the importance of maintaining a positive self-image. Kraft especially comments on what is called 'ethnocentrism' or 'group serving bias' where a group acclaims itself in positive cases, while divert the blame to someone or something outside the group if anything negative happens (Kraft 126). From public rhetoric, both in the news and in popular culture, it is obvious that many Western countries, America in particular, show the same bias. This bias is visible in *A Week in December* as Faulks is unable to relinquish a Western favored perspective in his discussion of religion, and Hassan's change of heart. While Faulks also includes jealousy as a possible collective motivation for anti-Western demonstrations, his Western perspective limits the

understanding of historical jealousy as a comprehensible motive for terrorism. Hamid's novel, on the other hand, is able to relay the complex motivations for terrorism on a collective scale by focusing on Changez's conflicting feelings of jealousy and affection. Hamid thereby demonstrates a more objective depiction as he portrays Changez realistically and as a complex human being, not simply as an exaggerated figure. Still, the notion of a self-serving bias is visible in the character of Changez. Both the American's suspicions as well as Changez's clear anti-American confessions give the impression that Changez has a self-serving bias to his Pakistani group and society. This bias, combined with the questionable credibility of Changez's testimony indicates that he might be involved in physical demonstrations; demonstrations he does not characterize as acts of terror, but which the West might define as incitements to violence.

Motivations for terrorism in *A Week in December* are Hassan's struggle to adapt to Western society, the clash of two different cultures and Islamic countries' political and historical reasons for discontent. Hamid's portrayal of Changez demonstrates even more clearly the innate resentment an Eastern person might have towards the prosperous and technically advanced America due to its arrogance and 'unfair' advances. Still, what both novels lack is perhaps a proper portrayal of the *individual* terrorist. Faulks tries in his detailed description of Hassan, but fails as Hassan in the end chooses to return to a 'good path' and has a hopeful future from a Western perspective. Faulks' Western bias is sustained as he is not able to depict an actual attack, especially not on the West. Hamid is perhaps less Westernly biased, but his terrorist likewise never performs any terrorist attacks of which the reader is informed. In fact, Changez potential demonstrations are never explained or shown but merely hinted at towards the end of the novel. This is partly due to the manner of narration in the story and the development of suspense which brings the novel to its final climax, but perhaps also because group mentality and cultural movements are easier to justify and explain than the inhumane action of actually killing an 'innocent life'. The *individual* terrorist is more difficult to portray than a terrorist movement.

#### **4.2 Aspects of Religion and Sanity in Terrorist Portrayals**

Although both novels lack a proper depiction of the individual terrorist, there are some great distinctions between the two 'terrorist' portrayals, particularly regarding the difference in the

depiction of religion. Faulk's uses religion to explain Hassan's motivation for becoming a terrorist. Furthermore, *A Week in December's* critical view of the Koran and its importance for the anti-Western movement demonstrates how religion encourages anti-Western beliefs. Faulks also includes some discussion of the political aspects of Islam and the different views Muslims might have on the subject of a 'pure' Islamic empire. Still, this political discussion is always in some way impaired by basic anti-West perspectives. Hassan's arguments for an Islamic state and justification of violence are based in his youthful discontent and misplacement in a Western society. Furthermore, his father Farooq's counter arguments are, as previously mentioned, unsound as he is illiterate and uneducated. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* on the other hand does not mention religion once. It is possible to assume Changez is a Muslim based on context and his background as he for instance explains to Erica that he has had to have "a Christian bootlegger who delivered booze" (Hamid 27) to his house as it was illegal for Muslims to buy. Still, Changez religious beliefs are never an issue of discussion. Instead, Hamid focuses solely on history and politics in his character's arguments for anti-Western sentiments. The two novels thereby have a significant difference in the possible motivational causes for terrorism and I would claim that Hamid's portrayal shows a more objective and nuanced portrayal, although ignoring an important part of terrorism, religion.

It is a delicate task to discuss the religious aspect of terrorism. As religions and believers are so diverse, the challenge is to accurately discuss the relevance religion, and in this case Islam, has for the 'terrorist'. One argument which is often used from a Western perspective is that jihadists are religious fundamentals who are able to do obscene actions so they can be rewarded in heaven. While both Faulks and Hamid complicate this view as they add other factors such as cultural isolation or political history, it is difficult to get a good sense of Islam in either novel. While Faulks' descriptions could be said to be too 'Western', as well as simple and overly-critical of Islam, Hamid avoids religion as a theme altogether. One could argue that Hamid's discussion might also be too simple as it leaves out elements such as martyrdom and religion, which might not be the sole motivational factor for terrorist attacks, but still often plays a role, especially with Islamist terrorists (Elster 157). While terrorist actions may fundamentally be based in political and historical factors, there are also elements of values and religion connected to most violent acts. Both East and West use to some degree an idea of 'correct values' to justify their actions. Islamic terrorist lean on their belief in Allah, and the West justifies a 'war on terror' by depending on Christianity or its 'moral superiority' (Kraft 129-30). Changez himself discusses his motivation for anti-

American actions towards the end of the novel when he explains to his American conversationalist about his experience with the US's invasion of Iraq and the tense situation between Pakistan and India.

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

The notions of justification of terrorism and difference in perspective are further discussed in Richard Jackson's *Confessions of a Terrorist*, an intense fictional interview narrative about a wanted terrorist and a British intelligence officer. Jackson's story consists of a dialogue between two men where one is a captive and the other an interrogator. Their conversation deals with many of the current political and ethical dilemmas of current social events, and Jackson's terrorist explicitly questions the notion of self-group biases, political motives for violent acts and the West's one-sided perspective on terrorism. Furthermore, he challenges the idea of the *individual* terrorist; the monster and the cause that could lead a person to perform grotesque and evil actions. Especially, the 'terrorist', "the professor" highlights Western prejudices and hypocrisy in his answer to:

Professor, have you ever considered that you might be a little bit psychologically unbalanced...that maybe you're suffering from delusion? A touch of madness... P: Ah, yes... I was wondering when we would get to this most predictable of questions. I am fully aware that this is the most common perception in your society [...] Terrorists (...) must be insane or abnormal in their thinking. After all, they commit horrible, extraordinary acts... so they must be mentally unbalanced by definition. (Jackson 169-70)



Jackson follows Hamid's discussion of the categorization of terrorism and how the West's self-acclaimed moral superiority leads to actions which can be labeled as hypocritical. However, Jackson furthers the discussion of individual terrorism by also including a discussion of the insanity of the terrorist versus the sanity of the Western war hero. This discussion, although not explicitly examined by Hamid, is what elevates *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from Faulks who clearly links terrorism with instability, both through the changeable mind of Hassan, but also in the comparison of the schizophrenic Allan and Islam. Jackson's terrorist, the Professor, comments on this explicitly as he says "it is a complete myth that terrorists are insane or mentally abnormal... criminals, maybe... but not militants or revolutionaries. I know this for a fact. In my experience, it actually takes emotional stability and intelligence (...) to be a successful insurgent... not to mention courage" (Jackson 175). Jackson's terrorist is, like Hassan and Changez, not directly portrayed as a participant in violent actions, but still openly describes the more 'gruesome' details of a terrorist's reality as an attacker or suicide bomber. Jackson thereby challenges a terrorist's anticipated mental instability from a Western perspective, and which Hamid follows to a certain degree as Changez also is intelligent, well spoken and sane. Still, Jackson's novel demonstrates a terrorist portrayal that is even more complex than Hamid's and Faulks' as he in detail and length discusses and questions aspects of terror the West takes for granted. Jackson's novel thereby proves that contemporary writers can create a more complex and nuanced terrorist, even from a Western perspective. However, the fact that Richard Jackson essentially is not a novelist, but a professor and expert on terrorism and current international conflicts, makes his novel more challenging to include in a literary study. Even though the novel is an interesting and thrilling piece of fiction, Jackson does not represent contemporary novelists as he has a different agenda than to create literature and his book consequently reads more like a lecture than a novel.



## Conclusion

Ultimately, Hamid's and Faulks' discussion of terrorism clearly demonstrates a change in post-9/11 fiction where writers are more detached from the restrictive aspects of trauma. They include a discourse of the relevance of politics, history, jealousy and religion which provide a greater and more complex perspective on the issue use terrorism; and challenge the West's binary and self-serving point of view. This again demonstrates a shift in publicly accepted perspectives. While the trauma of 9/11 and the public definition of terrorism as an 'unexplainable evil' restricted literary portrayals of terrorist fiction shortly after 9/11, Faulks and Hamid show new perspectives that are less Westerly biased. This thereby indicates a shift in contemporary terrorist portrayals that enable a more objective discussion of terrorism. Faulks' and Hamid's critical perspectives on the West show their distance from the two first stages of trauma, fragmentation and regression, as they both include complex discussions of the environmental factors of terrorism. They critically scrutinize aspects Western society and display a distance from the Westerly binary perspective that dominated after 9/11. Still, Faulks' and Hamid's depictions are less objective in their approaches to religion, either by excluding it from the discussion all together or demonstrating a perspective favoring the West. Furthermore, both novels lack insight into the mind of the individual terrorist and fail therefore to provide explanations for how sane people can perform violent and heinous acts. Faulks and Hamid discuss and justify terrorism in a larger context, but refrain from diving too far into their terrorist's psychology or to humanize an actual terrorist. They try to show how the line between 'normal' and 'a terrorist' might be closer than expected, as they both depict 'normal' people with anti-West inclinations, but the mind of the actual terrorist is still part of the 'unspeakable'; a taboo caused by 9/11 limiting effects on terrorist portrayals.

The ultimate reason for these limitations, I believe, lies in the aftereffects of trauma, but more importantly, the existing taboo on understanding and humanizing terrorists. The complexity of both novels demonstrates their detachment from the trauma of terrorist attacks, but their terrorist limitations also demonstrate the effect cultural trauma and the taboo of terrorism still have on Western writers. This observation is not made to necessarily criticize Western fiction writers, but to instead examine how the trauma of terrorist attacks on Western soil affects Western culture, in particular terrorist novels. Furthermore, I believe that literature has the great ability to aid the healing process of trauma and to educate and affect people. An understanding of terrorism through literature could therefore enlighten Western society of its limited view of terrorism in general and the unknown individual behind the gruesomeness.

Change can only happen through knowledge, both of the individual, the human, and the driving environmental factors. Both Faulks and Hamid demonstrate the possibility for a literature that could create such an understanding. Their novels show how Western terrorist portrayals have progressed, which might indicate that the limiting effects of 9/11 will not have the same influence on future terrorist fiction.

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