

**LITERARY RECOGNITION: REPRESENTATION OF ISLAM
AND MUSLIMS IN POST-9/11 NOVELS**

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

..... (Signature)

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	6
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	9
Thesis Structure	11
Toward a Theory of Recognition in Post-9/11 Literature	16
‘9/11’ Terminology: From Event to Context.....	25
Beyond Trauma: The Current State of 9/11 Literary Studies.....	31
Throughlines: Key Ideas in the Post-9/11 Genre.....	36
The State of Exception	39
The Trace of Orientalism in the Post-9/11 Context.....	42
PART 1: THE EARLY 9/11 CANON.....	46
Chapter 2: Falling Men and the Reification of the Other	46
The Early Canon: Features of the Dominant 9/11 Texts.....	50
Trauma: the Dominant 9/11 Theory	60
<i>Falling Man</i> at the Centre	65
Misrecognition and its Effects	71
Representation as Reification.....	76
Chapter 3: Recognition and the Spectre of Terror.....	85
Islam and Terror	93
Jihad and the Struggle for Recognition.....	100
Terrorism as the Battleground of Ideology.....	108
Terror and Sexuality.....	114
PART 2: DIVERGENT NOVELS AND COUNTER HEGEMONY	121
Chapter 4: Towards Literary Recognition— America Meets its Muslims	123
Intersubjectivity: Visibility Precedes Recognition	125
Ethics of Resistance on Behalf of Another.....	132
Recognition and the Assessment of Risk	136
Recognition, but not Quite: the Spectre of Exceptionalism.....	140
<i>The Submission</i> : Engagement with the Misrecognised	142
Misrecognition and the Ethics of Risk.....	146
Secularism and the Public Nature of Islam	150
Islam and Democracy	153
Hope and the Divergent Novel	160
Chapter 5: Fragile Identity and Arab American Novels.....	162
Unravelling Identity in <i>The American Granddaughter</i>	165
Translating Identity and Citizenship.....	168
Autoimmunity: Pathology of the Intersubjective Wound.....	176
The American Dream in <i>Once in a Promised Land</i>	185
Failing Consumer Citizenship in the Promised Land	188
Political Identities: Recognition from Autoimmunity to Statehood.....	194
PART 3: ‘AFTERNESS’ BEYOND POST-9/11	202
Chapter 6: Homeland, Deterritorialisation and Islam.....	202
Post-exceptionalism and the National Other in Dave Eggers’ <i>A Hologram for the King</i>	209
Intellectualism and the Dialectic of Islam and Decolonisation in Teju Cole’s <i>Open City</i>	223

Strong in the Weak Places: The Politics of Vulnerability and Ben Lerner's <i>Leaving the Atocha Station</i>	235
Conclusion: Towards a Framework of Literary Recognition	240
Literary Recognition	245
Works Cited	248

Abstract

The emerging field of post-9/11 literary studies is now well into its second decade. During this short span, a small group of novels has dominated the field in an early process of canonisation. Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* is pivotal to the nascent genre but other novels such as Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* also quickly became exemplars of the United States' literary response to tragedy, and have remained important in the scholarly endeavours that followed. Even more evident is the dominance of trauma studies as the paradigm for analysis of the genre, partly because of the obvious connection with the content of the literature and the historical events that instigated its development. The effects of these early trends have had particular implications for the analysis of the representation of Islam and Muslims in the post-9/11 literary context.

This thesis takes a different starting point. It suggests that an alternative methodology is needed to understand the scope and complexity of the relationship between American writers and representations of Islam. It suggests that post-9/11 novels can be reframed from a genre bounded by traumatic event and religious motivation, to one that is part of a historically and politically driven struggle for recognition. After surveying the current position of the post-9/11 literary landscape, and acknowledging the consequences of the trauma theory model, the thesis considers how contemporary German social philosopher Axel Honneth and his comprehensive work in recognition theory offers an opportunity to explore the literary field more broadly. This involves considering a group of novels that diverge from the early canon by contending with Islam beyond trauma and the terrorist archetype. This group includes, among others, Amy Waldman's 2011 novel *The Submission*, with its Muslim American protagonist, and the translated work of Iraqi author Inaam Kachachi, *The American Granddaughter*. I assert that recognition theory provides

explanatory and analytical benefits when considering a range of literary responses that are the product of a post-9/11 context, even when not necessarily a direct representation of its experience. I determine that the reification and commodification of otherness, themes and motifs of misrecognition, and the threshold of the recognition of personhood are all elements of recognition theory that are echoed in the post-9/11 novels. I also demonstrate that Honneth's view of the centrality of intersubjectivity as a precedent to recognition is equally central in the evaluation of contemporary novels as cultural and political artefacts.

Ultimately, recognition theory provides a means to develop a taxonomy of the struggle for social and political progress. A glimmer of progress is explored in the final chapter of the thesis as it moves to a range of novels that engage with Islam in innovative and intriguing ways. The chapter identifies commonalities between the recent works of Teju Cole, Dave Eggers and Ben Lerner that all transcend the limitations of the homeland and place their diverse American protagonists in a global dialogue with the Muslim world. Issues of postcolonialism, post-exceptionality and the recognition of global vulnerability emerge. The thesis concludes that these novels suggest potential developments of the genre and its critical analysis through theories of recognition.

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“An event always inflicts a wound in the everyday course of history, in the ordinary repetition and anticipation of all experience.”

Jacques Derrida

“Islam is a mirror in which the West projects its own identity crisis.”

Olivier Roy

“There was never a misinterpretation that could not be revised, improved and overturned.”

Edward Said

Chapter 1: Introduction

There is barely an academic discipline that has remained unaffected by the attacks on New York City and Washington, DC on September 11, 2001. Much scholarly effort has been directed towards thinking about its political and sociological impact. This has included examining US military responses to the event, the role of the media, the nature of terrorism, and the geopolitical relations between the “West” and the “Muslim world”. In addition, an entire body of work has developed that explores the relationship between the events of 9/11 and their representation in fiction. More than fifteen years have now elapsed since the events, and the plethora of novels centred on 9/11 that have appeared in that time can be regarded as having formed a genre in their own right.¹ Despite the relatively short time since the attacks, the geopolitical importance of their aftermath has created an imperative to critically review contemporary understandings of both the events’ representations and the wider context of literature in a post-9/11 world. While this process clearly has begun, with a considerable body of criticism in existence that is devoted to post-9/11 literature, one area where research has remained limited in scope is the representation of Muslims and Islam within the genre.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse a selection of post-9/11 novels with a specific focus on their representation of Islam and Muslims. While the representation of 9/11 *as an event* quickly became a critical focus, particularly in regard to the limitations of novelists to capture its inherent trauma, relatively little detailed analysis has been undertaken of the literary depiction of Muslims and Islam beyond discussions of the terrorist archetype. My analysis is focused on the diegetic or narrative-world interaction between the West and Islam evident in a broad cross-section of novels written post-9/11, and I look specifically at representations of the nascent identities of Muslims within the West. The analysis will focus

¹Birgit Däwes puts the number of post 9/11 novels at 231 in her *Ground Zero Fiction* (2011) and it continues to increase.

primarily on the texts themselves. I will pay close attention to the role of language, structure and characterisation within the novels, but also consider, more broadly, how the novels operate within their literary field as material, political and ideological artefacts. My analysis highlights several theoretical issues for literary studies when engaged specifically with Islam, and when engaged with questions of alterity more generally. The thesis shows how the dominant literary representation of Muslims tend to consolidate longstanding cultural beliefs; these beliefs, despite their regular repetition, generally do not contribute to a deep or detailed understanding about the presence of Islam in the US. Instead, they uphold the ultimate binary of East and West. I assert that contemporary theories of recognition can provide the theoretical impetus for understanding the interaction between the US and its Muslims as a site of social and political struggle, underpinned by recognisable stages of intersubjective interaction that may prove essential to progress.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part 1, entitled *The Early 9/11 Canon*, consists of two chapters and focuses on the novels that have been discussed the most in 9/11 literary studies, which led to a process of early “canonisation”. It demonstrates how post-9/11 literary studies has given primacy to those novels that deal with public and private expressions of grief, the impact of trauma on the evaluation of social norms in the late capitalist era, and the relationship between trauma and US national identity. Chapter 2 discusses a group of novels whose critique has become dominant in the field of study. It begins with Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, which, since its publication in 2007, has become widely considered the most recognisable and significant literary text of the early 9/11 period. It has been extensively analysed in the existing literature, and it continues to be the most discussed novel in post-9/11 studies. This discussion is often focused on the way that the novel captures the changed subjectivity of the traumatised American everyman caught up in the events of 9/11, or on the author’s apparently prophetic interest in terrorism. Less has been written about how the novel constructs a binary relationship between the US and Islam, a portrayal achieved most obviously through its structure. My analysis focuses on the ways in which the novel contributes to the creation of a homogenised and threatening Islam that can only be positioned as an interloper in the domestic homeland. It also considers how the position of *Falling Man* within the genre has affected the consideration of other types of representations of Islam. In addition, I briefly discuss the positioning of Islam in three further texts that form the dominant canon of early 9/11 novels: Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland* and Jay McInerney’s *The Good Life*.

These three novels each engage with the ennui or malaise of contemporary America triggered by the events of 9/11. However, the novels are generally silent on global political issues, especially those relating to American militarism; they are introspective, domestically focused and existential in tone. Such novels fit comfortably within the psycho-theoretical framework of trauma studies, which has become the dominant frame of analysis in post-9/11 studies. This, I argue, has had the effect of limiting the analysis of 9/11 fiction overall, leading to critical gaps. These gaps include the assessment of the novels' tendencies to elide consideration of the global influences that led to the 9/11 attacks, and of the ongoing global effects that still resonate from them, including the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and the "War on Terror". My critique of these novels will highlight some of the deficiencies in the use of trauma studies as a theoretical framework, which, instead of supporting critical understanding, "may actually assist in the perpetuation of Eurocentric views and structures that maintain or widen the gap between the West and the rest of the world" (Craps and Beulens 2).

Chapter 3, *Recognition and the Spectre of Terror*, discusses a selection of novels that attempt to include, with varying levels of success, the voice of the terrorist in the 9/11 narrative. While this group introduces a more global political perspective, the focus remains on the US domestic implications of 9/11, which include the ramifications of "homeland security" policies, perceived threats to American values by Muslim immigrants and refugees, and the most insidious threat of all, the "home grown" terrorist. Some of the attempts to represent the terrorist involve a cycle of hyperrealism, where characterisation within the novels and the media reports of the actual perpetrators of the attacks become indistinguishable. In each of the novels, there is evidence that authors have drawn on deeply held, neo-Orientalist tropes in their attempts to grapple with the onerous task of characterising terrorists. Again, I focus on the early responses to 9/11 and those novels that

achieved significant critical attention (sometimes despite almost universal acknowledgement of their literary or aesthetic failings). This group of novels is centred around John Updike's *Terrorist*, but I also briefly consider André Dubus III's *Garden of Last Days* and Australian author Richard Flanagan's *The Unknown Terrorist*.

Taking Baudrillard's assertion that 9/11 is an event beyond terror where no cause, "not even the Islamic cause—can account for the energy which fuels" it (10), I consider the relationship between the portrayal of the 9/11 attackers, Islam and its political expressions. I propose that the terrorist archetype presents a fundamental literary conundrum. It calls for the author to develop a mode of characterisation for those involved in committing dehumanising acts. In the early post-9/11 period, this attempt is mostly unsuccessful, relying on long-held views of Islam as an intrinsically violent culture driven by repressed and/or excessive sexuality. It presents a bland and generalized otherness that often bears little relationship to the reality and particularity it attempts to represent. This failing, however, is deserving of close analysis. The analysis exposes both the place of Islam in the West's cultural imaginary, and the futility of attempting to comprehend a civilization through understanding only its extreme aberrations, as terrorism is. Novels that deal with Islamic terrorism are invariably underwritten by the concept of jihad (the Arabic word for struggle or effort). Jihad is a term that is widely debated in contemporary Islamic studies, and an understanding of this debate is relevant to understanding how the terrorism novels position themselves in relation to the term.

Many of the novels in this chapter rely on techniques of narration and characterisation that depict the cultural values of the Muslim as the violent, oppositional Other to a civilised, peaceful and democratic West. I argue that such ideological positions need to be interrogated within the literary field in which they operate. This in no way implies that the impact of the 9/11 attacks has been overstated. I consider how the dominance of such representations has

taken the place of a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the everyday identity constructions of Muslims in the West, political violence and the mainstream Islamic worldview. Remembering the work of Frantz Fanon and “the harm done to marginalized groups by continuous exposure to a galaxy of erosive stereotypes” (cited in Craps and Beulens 3), I consider the consequences of the over-representation of Muslims in terms of risk and threat, and I argue that by connecting the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks with the general Muslim population of the US, and by extension the general immigrant population, these novels rely on the consolidation of Orientalist tropes, thereby reinforcing Muslim Otherness.

Part 2 of the thesis, *Divergent Novels and Counter Hegemony*, focuses on novels that depart from the dominant post-9/11 tendency to conflate Islam with terrorism. Instead, they engage in counter-hegemonic ways with the Muslim presence in the US. Several of the novels have only recently been published and others have received almost no critical attention within post-9/11 literary studies. These novels clearly aim to explore the encounters and interactions between “East” and “West” in a hybrid, transnational and syncretic space. The novels in this group often explore the interactions of nation, identity, history, religion and resistance. Chapter 4, *Towards Literary Recognition—America Meets its Muslims*, explores the experience of recognising Muslims within the US homeland. The primary text is Amy Waldman’s *The Submission*, published in 2011. The second is Gayle Brandeis’s *Self Storage*, which was published in 2007 but to date has been given relatively little scholarly attention. In Chapter 5, *Fragile Identity and Arab American Novels*, I look at two novels that consider the experience of Arab Americans after 9/11. These are Laila Halaby’s *Once in a Promised Land*, one of the few post-9/11 novels published in the US by an Arab American author, and *The American Granddaughter* by the Iraqi author Inaam Kachachi (translated into English in 2010), which connects the events of 9/11 to the experiences of the Iraq war.

Finally, in Part 3 of the thesis, entitled ‘*Afterness*’: *Beyond Post-9/11*, I muse on the future direction of post-9/11 fiction through a discussion of several very recently published novels that engage with both terror and the Muslim world by positioning their American protagonists abroad. Dave Eggers’ *A Hologram for the King* reimagines the modern, American everyman in a post-exceptionalist world; Teju Cole’s *Open City* brings its cosmopolitan flâneur into contact with a decolonised world interconnected by history, memory and trauma; and Ben Lerner’s postmodern Künstlerroman, *Leaving the Atocha Station*, which encapsulates the post-9/11 affect of anxiety and vulnerability as part of a global experience. These novels point to new possibilities for fiction in the post-9/11 era; to a genre that is globally positioned, intersubjective, that acknowledges US vulnerability, and seeks to recognize the Other (or at least show an awareness of its inability to do so). I conclude that contemporary recognition theory provides a rigorous and comprehensive way of thinking with significant analytical potential when paired with literary studies, and particularly when regarding issues of alterity.

Toward a Theory of Recognition in Post-9/11 Literature

The theoretical foundation of my thesis is the consideration of contemporary recognition theory and how its central concepts can extend the paradigm of the post-9/11 genre.

Why recognition?

Recognition has been an element of the literary since Aristotle's explanation in his *Poetics* of the notion of "anagnorisis": a sudden moment of realisation. Usually internal to a character, it is the moment of recognition of an element of selfhood that, whilst previously unknown, had nevertheless been true all along. It can also refer to scenes of recognition as part of plot development. (As an example, although in a different literary context, Ben Parker makes a convincing argument that what he terms "narrative recognition" in the work of Charles Dickens is a kind of anagnorisis "overcoded by historical forms of social misrecognition [caused] by capitalist reification" (131).) Recognition theories have, in recent decades, become widely engaged in other fields, but as Rita Felski freely admits in her *Uses of Literature*, the concept has "received a drubbing in English departments" (29). However, Felski goes on to identify recognition as the first of four central "modes of textual engagement" (14) that "name quite ordinary structures of experience that are also political, philosophical, and aesthetic concepts fanning out into complex histories" (17). Her manifesto imagines recognition as part of a revival of literary criticism that has become enslaved to its own theoretical dogma. Although Felski focuses on recognition as a transformative reader experience (closest to "identification") she also reads recognition (and especially misrecognition) as an experience of characters within texts evident in, say, Austen or Eliot (28). Giving scope to recognition's history as an idea and its "use" as a reading phenomenon,

Felski shows that valued political theories of recognition and discarded literary understandings cross over. Felski also argues convincingly that recognition, the process of identification between text and reader, has been lost to contemporary literary studies and should be reacquired.

Concurrently, recognition has also developed as an important concept within political and social philosophy. It has a long and complex philosophical history (one which lies beyond the scope of this thesis) whose beginning is usually associated with Hegel. Political theories of recognition were revitalised by the work of Charles Taylor and others in the 1990s, mostly in relation to studies of multiculturalism. In more recent years, the idea has become most closely associated with the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur and the critical theory of the German philosopher Axel Honneth, upon whose work I will draw substantially. Honneth's work is centred on the relationship between power and recognition, and how this relationship contributes to social conflict. He sees recognition as the basis of social struggles—whether they are intrapersonal, interpersonal or political—and argues that the tensions between individual expression and the value of equality commingle with the concept of democracy. For all theorists from Hegel to Honneth, these struggles are a necessary component of social progress. Honneth's work has already been applied in a number of interdisciplinary contexts from social and political philosophy to international relations, education and economics. I argue that the developments in the understandings of recognition gained in critical theory have important implications for the understandings of recognition in literature, and in particular, that the central concept can be mobilised to shed new light on the question of Muslim representation since 9/11. To *re-cognise* is not only to look again but also to know again, to think about again. The historical events of 9/11 have prompted this type of thinking again with regard to Islam. The process has yielded a dual response from authors: the renewed but familiar Orientalism of Muslim representations, and by contrast the

recognition (that is to say both identification and validation of existence) of an Islamic world that was previously mostly unknown.

Recognition theory provides a compelling conceptual approach which gives reasoned consideration to the grounds of social struggles. In this sense, then, it is generic and can be applied to any number of literary considerations. My focus is on contemporary Muslim representation, but wider applications of a recognition theoretical approach to literature are also possible. I argue that, at its foundation, post-9/11 literature revolves around questions of ethical social construction, particularly as an encounter with otherness, especially as represented by Muslims. In many of the novels in the genre, non-Muslim characters grapple with their interactions with Muslims; the novels also delve into the role of citizens in Western democracies when faced with complex ethical dilemmas that may be perceived as testing the boundaries of liberalism. This leads the novels to deal with issues of public grief, memorialisation, vengeance, terrorism, war, civil liberties, difference, discrimination and other broadly political manifestations of social (dis)integration. The theoretical basis of their analysis must therefore be able to explain the complexities of interactions between individuals, and how these complexities connect with social and political institutions. Recognition theory can provide an analytical and explanatory framework of the post-9/11 literary experience. Recognition is based on the intersubjective experience; it is reciprocal and therefore able to explore social struggles and their complexities whilst maintaining an awareness of reifying binaries. Currently, trauma theory is the default analytical tool, but, as I will outline shortly, this has presented limitations in the scope of reading post-9/11 texts.

What is recognition?

The theories surrounding the concept of recognition are vast and complex. Since recognition is not commonly invoked in discussions of contemporary literary texts, it is necessary to outline some of the background to the concept and its key theorists. This general background will be expanded upon throughout my thesis as I theorize literary recognition—a term I use to identify recognition theory specifically in its application to literary texts.

To begin with, recognition, as it is used in general parlance, has multiple definitions. It can be an act of intellectual acknowledgement or apprehension. It can be the recognition of another, usually someone one has encountered before. It can be the act of acknowledging or respecting another's status, claims or rights. An expert may be recognised by a court of law, for example. An official apology may recognise the injury done to a colonised people, or a nation may obtain recognition by achieving statehood. It is important to note from the outset that recognition generally carries positive connotations in everyday usage but this is not always the case, and this is acknowledged in the theoretical writings. An individual may need to recognise that they have wronged another, for example, or a court may perform an act of recognition in sentencing a criminal.

Recognition is visible in post-9/11 literature in all of its various meanings. In some ways, the genre itself acts as a form of recognition whereby Muslim presence (in the West) conforms with the first definition of mere acknowledgement of existence. Many novels engage with this renewed awareness of Muslim presence by connecting with previous encounters, mostly Orientalist in tone. This conforms with the second definition, the recognition of a known entity, in this case a cultural memory. This type of recognition takes the genre out of its position as mostly ahistorical and places it in a broader aesthetic tradition.

But in most cases the issue of recognition relates to the philosophical and political implications inherent in the third definition—respect and rights. Such forms of recognition may be diegetic (internal to the narrative) or may be an element of how particular novels are positioned within the literary field (external to the narrative). By way of example, visibility is a concept closely related to recognition. It is evident internally in many texts through the interaction between American and Muslim characters, demonstrating a heightened state of wariness and hypervisibility. It is also evident externally; increased visibility is in itself a part of the process of recognition in that there is a history of literature in the West in which the Muslim is absent from the dominant discourse, despite having a longstanding historical presence. This process of *re-viewing* Muslims has also led to a need for *re-thinking* the relationship between Islam and the West. It is this process of looking and thinking again about Islam and its place in contemporary literature and criticism that is the catalyst for the use of recognition theories as a literary framework.

From these basic literal meanings, Paul Ricoeur's 2005 work *The Course of Recognition* attempts a comprehensive excavation of the term "on the plane of philosophical discourse" (ix). His findings divide recognition into three levels of understanding: first, its primary meaning of "identification". He then transitions from identity to the second level of ipseity or personhood. This proves crucial to the issues of Muslim representation which, it will be seen, conform to Renante Pilapal's assertion that "[s]truggles for recognition are not merely demands for recognition as a person of a particular kind, but instead comprise more profound demands for inclusion into personhood" (40). Finally, Ricoeur considers the transition from forms of self-recognition to mutual recognition.

The works of Taylor and Honneth follow a similar trajectory, considering first acts of recognition in the "intimate sphere," and only then how such acts are connected with the "public sphere" (Taylor 34). Central to understanding this path is the question of how claims

for recognition from individuals transition to group rights. In order to explore the full extent of recognition, Honneth uses a tripartite model based on Hegel's categorisations of family, state and civil society. Honneth reconceives the three realms as love, law and achievement, and allocates a "mode of recognition" that characterises each of the three realms, respectively: love, respect and esteem. Each of the three realms of recognition, according to Honneth, can contribute to social cohesion. The focus of the majority of his work is, however, on the "pathology" of misrecognition and how it contributes to social struggles and how, due to misrecognition, "individuals will never be able to fully function as autonomous agents" (Pilapil 41). In this thesis, the three "modes of recognition" are foundational to readings of post-9/11 novels as sites of social struggle.

Recognition has a strong connection with the concept of a collective imaginary. The historical and contemporary discourse about Islam contributes to the West's cultural imaginary. Felski points to the importance of collective discourse as a point of connection for readers: "It is not so much a real entity as an imaginary projection . . . it denotes our first person relationship to the social imaginary, the heterogeneous repertoire of stories, histories, beliefs, and ideals that frame and inform our individual histories" (33). The concept of engaging with a social imaginary is seen again in the theory of recognition in its negated form. Misrecognition is most likely to occur beyond the experience of direct personal encounter, which is to say, in the realm of a placeholder imaginary (Ikahemo). At this point it is the imaginary that holds the potential or possibility of recognising persons or groups. Where there is a misrecognition in this placeholder imaginary (and it could be argued that this occurs in the understanding of Islam in the Western cultural imaginary), there is the scope for social conflict and the entrenchment of damaging effects on individuals. Due to the intersubjective nature of recognition, there is a connection between this misrecognition in the imaginary and the reality of the misrecognised individual or group, which becomes a

recursive and cyclical pattern. Much of the criticism undertaken in this thesis is to identify how authors construct, depict and expose the place of “Islam” in the Western imaginary through and in their novels.

I first consider the individual realm primarily through the psychological basis of recognition theory and its connections with the depiction of Muslim characters. What elements have authors used successfully to create fully rounded, authentic characters recognisable for their humanity? And what has contributed to those characters that have been determined as inauthentic, stereotypical and flat? In much post-9/11 literature the strongest use of recognition theory is in the realm of misrecognition or non-recognition and I consider the implications of this type of representation on the existing body of criticism. By misrecognition I mean not only, as Simon Thompson puts it, “one party’s attitude of contempt being internalized by another party” (*Politics of Recognition* 40), but also the broader conceptualisation, proposed by Nancy Fraser, that “both recognition and misrecognition are rooted in social and political institutions” (Thompson *Politics of Recognition* 40). By looking at a group of novels that largely claim “identity” as a central theme, I consider issues such as intersubjectivity and the self/other paradigm, the agency of Muslim subjects, and the formation and destruction of hybrid identities. I also investigate the ways in which beliefs about Muslims have become pathological attacks on Western values themselves by incorporating Derrida’s metaphor of the autoimmune as part of the 9/11 experience.

Second, I consider the political implications of recognition, beyond the internal world of characters, by looking at the diegetic world of the novel. In his important 2007 piece about post-9/11 fiction, “The End of Innocence”, Pankaj Mishra asserts that a number of writers are “unable to acknowledge political and ideological belief as a social and emotional reality in the world”. In contrast to this, I demonstrate that several post-9/11 novels engage directly

with political ideas and I consider how a selection of post-9/11 novels have both extended the characterisation of Muslims beyond the terrorist archetype, and recognised the political worldview evident in the narrative. This group of novels I broadly refer to as “divergent” in recognition of their counter-hegemonic nature (Part 2). The political focus of recognition theory, driven as it is by the tension between political equality and cultural difference, is utilised as a framework for understanding the varying interactions between Islam/Muslims and ideas of democracy and liberalism which are common themes in the novels. Thompson highlights this connection as a typical feature of recognition theories, which show “a concern not just with individual rights of cultural survival but also with democracy” (8). I also consider how ideas of US nationalism and patriotism operate within the novels and how they act as a complicating factor for Muslim (and some non-Muslim) characters. The novels show that the acknowledgement of difference in the post-9/11 US construction of patriotism, which has tended towards being both totalising and homogenising, may engender a resistance to earlier democratic ideals, such as the founding principles of free religious expression. As Carol Fadda Conrey puts it, the US national vision is reliant upon “the acknowledgement and acceptance of difference” (539). Recognition, as it is understood by Charles Taylor as a component of multiculturalism, is also relevant here, attacking as it does “the assumption that there can and should be a simple coincidence of national identity and political authority” (Thompson 2). Taylor’s connection between recognition and identity at a political level is pertinent, particularly his assertion that “a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (25). Beyond the strictly political aspects of the novels studied, I also demonstrate how other institutions of power, such as the law and statehood, are important components in recognition, protection from discrimination, and the upholding of minority rights. From this brief discussion of recognition, it is already clear why

Felski concludes that “[l]iterary texts invite disparate forms of recognition, serving as an ideal laboratory for probing its experiential and aesthetic complexities” (32).

‘9/11’ Terminology: From Event to Context

This thesis falls within the bounds of the emerging field of post-9/11 studies. A field’s development inevitably leads to a commonly used terminology. In this case, however, the field has gravitated towards terminology that is highly fraught. Because of their importance to this thesis and the field in general, the use of term 9/11 itself, as well as the concepts of the “West” and “Islam” require some initial reflection.

At the most literal level, “9/11” refers to the day on which four terrorist attacks were carried out in New York City and other sites in the US. The term has also come to refer to these events understood as a spectacle: a moment that changed time, and as has been represented iconically by the *ad nauseam* repetition of the images of the collapse of the World Trade Center towers. Jacques Derrida notes in his preliminary responses to the event that the term itself carries a greater signification: the naming of the event by its metonymic date indicates a spectacle of a scale which was traumatic beyond describability, and therefore known not by what it was, but by when it happened. The omission of the year from the date creates a perpetual calendar, one where the images of the event are both captured in time but are also eternal. In addition, the repetition of the term as part of everyday parlance has become a “kind of ritual incantation” (Borradori 86) that changes in significance and connotation with its continued use. It is a term which is epistemologically unstable. Derrida claimed, five weeks after its happening, that 9/11 was an event in the “shared archive of a universal calendar, that is, a *supposedly* universal calendar” (qtd. in Borradori 86). His comment highlights the perspective from which the events of 9/11 are commonly viewed; in the Islamic calendar the date was 22 Jumada Al Akhir 1422. Judith Butler writes in *Precarious Life* about the implications of grief and mourning when certain lives matter more than others, about how such judgements connect not only with public discourse, violence and

politics but also with the most intimate relationships and subjectivities. Although the effects of 9/11 have arguably been felt as much in the Muslim world as they have in the West, from its outset the assumed universalism of the date identifies the dominant paradigm as one of Western trauma rather than of the events' global implications, which have included invasion, war, political instability, refugee crises, an increase in international terrorism, and an entire generation of Muslims and non-Muslims who have never experienced a pre-9/11 world.

Butler poses what she knows to be both an unaskable and unanswerable question: "Can we find another meaning, and another possibility, for the decentring of the first-person narrative within the global framework?" (7). It is a question that is also increasingly being engaged with by creative writers and critics.

One of the issues created by the use of the term 9/11 as an eternally repeating event is that its historical position becomes unclear. Is it a singularity of world-changing significance, or is it part of a historical continuum of tragic events? This consideration is particularly important in literary studies where discussion initially centred on issues of representation. It was expected that the event of 9/11 would translate into a break from established literary forms; one akin to that augured by World War I. Baudrillard called 9/11 "the absolute event" and argues that "the whole play of history and power is disrupted by this event, but so too are the conditions of analysis" (4). Kristiaan Versluys in *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel*, also claims that "September 11—for all the physicality . . . is ultimately a semiotic event, involving the total breakdown of all meaning-making systems" (2). Such hyperbole is found in many of the early literary attempts to portray 9/11, and in the critical readings of those attempts that focus on the event as a singular, paradigm-changing trauma. The literary debate that came soon after 9/11 focused on it as an act of unspeakability, which could not be represented and which therefore generated an existential crisis for the arts. Few critics today would argue that such a break in form eventuated. Despite this, at the heart of the term 9/11

remains an event of grotesque violence, which undeniably caused great personal and national anguish. The nature of the tragedy is never separated from the necessary critical and analytical work since undertaken in the emerging field of 9/11 studies, including the work that considers both political repercussions and artistic endeavours.

Beyond the actual events of that historic day, we need to consider the term “post-9/11”—a term that, like many other “posts”, poses questions about what has come after, how it is connected to the before and indeed whether it exists at all. The aftermath of the event has been substantial and undeniable; this includes the impacts on New York City itself, the wider US perception of national identity, and the changed international political and military climate. It is difficult to view 9/11 as a singular event without also factoring in the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, or the ambiguous War on Terror and its implications for worldwide civil liberties. Such a vastly altered global context has clearly also affected the ways in which many novels, and not just those that deal directly with the event, are written, read, and evaluated; it is therefore necessary to reconsider the impact on literature of a fractured and disrupted world after 9/11. Novels are now read in a post-9/11 context regardless of their subject matter or their time of publication, a fact clearly demonstrated by Richard Gray in his important work *After the Fall*, which explores the orientation of 9/11 literature in the wider context of the history of American literature. Pankaj Mishra has also suggested that readers “seeking a capacious moral vision in contemporary American Literature may have to move off the narrow category of ‘9/11 fiction’”. This thesis thus considers the post-9/11 literary field in its broadest sense, a continuously changing context that goes beyond its initial conception as the representation of a traumatic but historic event.

Terminology presents an ongoing problem for post-9/11 studies. This is never more evident than in the uses of the terms “Islam” and the “West”. Such terms support a substantive distinction between two monolithic and historically complicated concepts and

their use contributes linguistically to the belief that Islam and the West constitute a justifiable binary opposition. Such complications are not new; as Edward Said notes, neither term has any “ontological stability” (*Orientalism* xii), and yet the terms have had renewed resonance in the post-9/11 context. Both concepts are heavy with political connotation: the West is synonymous with ideas of capitalism, freedom, liberal democracy and secularism that have only been consolidated by the rhetoric of the “War on Terror”. The West sees Islam, by contrast, as associated with violence, tyranny, extremism, anti-democratic and anti-modernisation movements. These qualities are seemingly reinforced with each violent, political upheaval in the Arab world, and each devastating act of terrorism in the West since 9/11. Edward Said’s seminal work in *Orientalism* (2003) identified the deeply rooted cultural discourse that creates or contributes to this binarising tendency; Samuel Huntington escalated such perceived cultural differences to the level of geopolitical warfare in his *Clash of Civilizations* (1996). According to Yasmin Ibrahim, 9/11 marks “the emergence of a new temporality in which the ideological reframing . . . of Islam . . . positions it as a global risk and a threat to Western modernity and civilization” (38). Whether this phenomenon is new is arguable, but the entrenchment of the idea that Islam is incompatible with Western values has certainly been central to much 9/11 literature which tends to “restate and reaffirm the centrality of the West,” reducing the “complexities of the relations between Islam and the US in the wake of 9/11” to “the clash of monotheistic religions” (Hartnell 477). It is an ideological worldview that has often elided the history of Islam in the United States, as well as the diversity that exists within Muslim societies and political thought. Through the close analysis of a cross-section of 9/11 novels, the depth of these historical biases and ideological tensions readily becomes evident, as do the genuine social and political questions raised by Muslims living in the West. Post-9/11 works have a tendency either to support or destabilize

these binaries, and a critical review of the genre demonstrates that initial attention was trained on those novels that do the former.

The use of “Islam” as a totalizing concept carries its own complexities. Beyond its position as a world religion, Islam is often used to refer variously to the entire Arab world, the conglomeration of Muslim majority countries, or to Muslims themselves, whether their identity is established by religion, nationality, ethnicity, language, culture or politics. A lack of specificity or clarity often results. It is also common to assume that Islam belongs outside the academic realm of the humanist study of literature, and is a more appropriate subject for the disciplines of theology or sociology. My analysis will demonstrate the novels considered in this thesis warrant serious consideration for their *literary* depiction of Islam and Muslims; the analysis also points to a historical segregation of Islam from the realm of critical theory, a separation that is worth reconsidering. The use of “Islam” as an organising concept risks reifying an oversimplified distinction, thus grossly hindering the understanding of the representation of Muslims and, however inadvertently, “conflating widely varied” groups (Fadda Conroy 535). In the contemporary context, such a conflation is often the precursor to “reducing them to supposedly identifiable subjects that need to be monitored, controlled and contained” (Fadda Conroy 535). Despite, and to some extent because of, these risks, one of the aims of this thesis is to identify and explore some specific concepts and descriptors that may ensure that the analysis of the representations of Islam and Muslims becomes more particular and precise.

The complexities, nuance and historicity of Islamic culture, especially in the aftermath of European imperialism, are in danger of being lost in the overuse of the post-9/11 dichotomy of “Islam versus the West”. Locating the position of the Other as an endpoint of analysis, may result in a lack of attention to the specific aesthetic concerns regarding the representation of Muslims and the literary, particularly as in relation to the experience of the

everyday in what are essentially contemporary realist novels. Butler poses the question “who is normatively human: what counts as a liveable life and a grievable death?” (xv), but her argument is dominated by the importance of the latter. The novels discussed here often revolve around the question of what it means to achieve the recognition of personhood, and it is the absence of an ability to conceptualise a liveable life for Muslims that is a precursor to the ease of their ungrievable death, whether literal or metaphorical.

The valorisation of the Other as non-specific and historical dismisses the ideological work done by a number of texts. As Mahmoud Mamdani argues, homogenisation contributes to the perception of a monolithic form of Islamic culture that “seems to have no history, no politics, and no debates, so that all Muslims are just plain bad” (*Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* 18). By reframing Otherness and placing the figure of the Muslim at the centre of analysis, we are able better to perceive hegemonic power structures and concentrate on some otherwise overlooked issues, including the paradoxical effects of hypervisibility, the recognition of personhood, and the absence of emotional and political lives in the representation of the figure of the Muslim. Giovanna Borradori notes in her introduction to *Islam and the West: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* that “[t]here is plurality in Islam as well as multiple Islams, as there is plurality in the West as well as multiple Wests” (Cherif xv) and it is in this spirit that I use these two terms throughout.

Beyond Trauma: The Current State of 9/11 Literary Studies

The existing criticism of 9/11 fiction is already vast and varied, however, there are two important monographs of literary criticism that exemplify the points of focus in the early critical debates: *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel* (2009) by Kristiaan Versluys and *After the Fall: American Literature since 9/11* (2011) by Richard Gray. Versluys' dominant paradigm in the selection and analysis of texts is trauma theory. While Gray accepts a place for the writing of trauma, he also seeks to extend beyond questions of an unwriteable, representational dilemma to consider 9/11 literature as part of a continuum of American literature. I will address each of their central arguments in turn.

Versluys' work centres on 9/11 as a personal and national tragedy. It frames the literature within the discipline of trauma studies, compelled by the idea that "traumatic memory must be turned into narrative memory" (3). Versluys's selection of texts is driven by the impetus to explore trauma. The novels analysed include DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, thereby contributing to the formation of what I identify as the early 9/11 canon. He does not significantly extend his analysis into the changing public perception of the event or the resulting wars, nor does he take a global perspective, despite a good deal of time having lapsed between the initial shock of the attacks and the publication of his book.

Versluys' project is ultimately recuperative, and he relies on an underlying belief that literature has the power to heal and improve the individual reader: "The discursive responses to 9/11 prove . . . that the individual is not only made but also healed—made whole—by the necessary mechanisms of narrative and semiosis" (4). He says "[t]here is a globalized need to comprehend, to explain and to restore" (4) but this globalized need does not extend to a globalized selection of literature, nor an assessment of the global impacts of the attacks,

either geographically or historically. His focus is on the ability of the novelist to write the unwritable, to bring personal reflection to an event that seems so incomprehensible that “novelists arrogate to themselves a certain power of explanation, comprising not systematic knowledge but a kind of affective and empathic understanding” (12). Versluys’ approach limits the scope of the texts he critiques from being understood as political and interconnected artefacts and relegates them to the realm of the emotive.

Richard Gray, by contrast, immediately places both the 9/11 events and the literary genre in a global and historical context. He identifies the attacks, their causes and their aftermath as public and political in nature: “It was a demolition of the fantasy life of the nation in that it punctured America’s belief in its inviolability and challenged its presumption of its innocence, the manifest rightness of its cause” (*After the Fall* 11). Gray is generally critical of American writers’ responses to the attacks, finding their novels to be, both in theme and structure, lacking in innovation as “American writers were suddenly, rudely awoken to this debate by the irruption of 9/11” (16). This, he says, was followed by “a desperate retreat into the old sureties” (16). He identifies the ways in which the media and domestic political rhetoric influenced writers of the day who provided “a response to the crisis that is eerily analogous to the reaction of many politicians and the mainstream media after 9/11” (16). Gray finds the rhetoric of the unwritability of trauma inconsistent with the conservative form utilised by most authors. He does not completely reject trauma theory’s relevance to 9/11 literary studies; he does, however, see it from a different perspective: “the fictions that get it right . . . use a strategy of convergence, rooted in the conviction that the hybrid is the only space in which the location of cultures and the bearing witness to trauma can really occur” (17). Ultimately, Gray provides insightful analysis of a broad range of novels dealing with 9/11 and relates them, through his comprehensive knowledge of American literary history, to a wider selection of texts, particularly novels written after the Vietnam War. Gray also

recognises that his analysis falls short of truly capturing the global and multicultural elements so essential to contemporary American literature. His call is for American authors to “insert themselves in the space between conflicting interests and practices” and to “represent the reality of their culture as multiple, complex and internally antagonistic” (19). This thesis responds in some respects to Gray’s call by identifying where and how authors have inserted themselves into this space in relation to Muslim representation.

Part 1 of the thesis includes a meta-analysis of the criticism of the existing 9/11 “canon”. I draw primarily on discussions of the relationship between trauma studies and literature, and focus in particular on its appropriateness for considering 9/11 literature. The basis of trauma theory, derived from its emergence as a discipline from the horrors of the Holocaust, is that through the process of bearing witness to tragedy “critics can gain access to extreme events and experiences that defy understanding and representation” (Craps & Beulens 1). Ostensibly, this seems precisely the theory most suited to the far-reaching shock of 9/11 and consideration of how the arts managed its representation. There are, however, some important criticisms of the dominance of trauma theory, particularly in relation to its claims of multiculturalism. Stef Craps determines that “trauma studies’ stated commitment to the promotion of cross cultural ethical engagement is not borne out by the founding texts of the field . . . which are almost exclusively concerned with traumatic experiences of white Westerners and solely employ critical methodologies emanating from a Euro-American context” (Craps & Beulens 2). Butler concurs that certain groups are more vulnerable to violence and trauma than others, particularly the effects for those “whose bodies labor under duress, economic and political, under conditions of colonization and occupation” (25). So, whilst trauma theory has its place (as Gray argues) in some of the literature of 9/11 it has also contributed to a limited understanding of the genre; as the effects of 9/11 have become more globalized and literary representations more intercultural and complex, the limitations of

trauma theory as the dominant perspective have become more evident. As Craps argues, trauma theory delimits the *who* of traumatic experience to “dominant groups in Western societies” and has “routinely ignored or dismissed . . . the chronic psychic suffering produced by the structural violence of racial, gender, sexual, class and other inequities” (3). He also identifies a number of other issues that are relevant to my research, including the focus on linguistic control for healing rather than material recovery, which would require the “transformation of a wounding political, social and economic system” (4). This lack of discourse at the systemic level is furthered by trauma theory’s emphasis on individual psychology that “ignores and leaves unquestioned the conditions that enable the traumatic abuse” (4). Butler’s work supports the view that there is a need to recognize that the experiences of 9/11 go beyond simple understandings of victim and perpetrator, that our “fundamental dependency on anonymous others” is connected to a wider political interdependence which transcends “unbridled sovereignty” (xii). A need for understanding post-9/11 literature beyond the portrayal of trauma prompts my exploration of contemporary theories of recognition as an analytical framework.

Georgiana Banita’s recent monograph, *Plotting Justice: Narrative Ethics and Literary Culture After 9/11* (2012) is the closest in orientation to this thesis. Banita’s work in re-reading and extending the post-9/11 field through an ethical lens is relied upon predominantly in Chapter 4 of this thesis, but one aspect of her work that is worth mentioning here is the question she raises about post-9/11 literature’s very “literariness”. Banita acknowledges that many of the texts she has chosen for analysis “wouldn’t have made the cut” in the anthologies of Gray or Versluys, which focus on an “almost exclusive interest in the most ‘iconic’ mainstream responses” (14). The question of literary or aesthetic value within the field is addressed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, where I consider *Falling Man*, the most iconic of the mainstream responses. I analyse whether considerations of literariness were overtaken by

nationalistic political concerns and how the development of the literary field has since been influenced by this singular text. Banita's work also identifies that critical responses have a "disabling lack of commitment to theory," (15) a lack which she addresses through her development of the concept of narrative ethics. Banita's text selections are, then, based on ethical as well as literary concerns, producing a mix of "canonical and underrated works" (12). Banita focuses on the form and style of these novels (which is the sole literary form focused on in her book), and this approach is reinforced here.

The final monograph of relevance in this introduction to the existing body of literature is Geoffrey Nash's *Writing Muslim Identity: The Construction of Identity* (2012). This is the first, and to-date only, post-9/11 extended literary analysis that uses Muslim representation as its organising concept. Nash brings to bear on contemporary fiction an extensive academic background in Arabic and Islamic Studies, as well as classical Orientalism. His focus is British rather than American fiction (all of the works mentioned in this review are by scholars from Europe or the United Kingdom), but his discussion of the association between Islam and terrorism is particularly relevant to Chapter 3 of this thesis. Importantly, Nash also argues that Muslim identity requires a unique theoretical approach outside of its common association with postcolonial theory, since "[p]ostcolonial theory is yet to come to grips with Islam as a religious as opposed to a cultural category" (4). Nash brings a historical and political perspective to his analysis, which allows him to examine the construction of the Muslim Other in literature and the role this construction plays in the identity of the West.

As the field of post-9/11 studies continues to develop, understandings of "Islam" continue to be tested, and the allocation of the position of generalised Otherness to the representation of Muslims becomes less sustainable without the consideration of historical, theological and contemporary contexts. This supports an ongoing need to consider both the theoretical approaches to 9/11 literature and the texts that constitute it.

Throughlines: Key Ideas in the Post-9/11 Genre

This thesis relies on the concept of a post-9/11 literary genre, which raises obvious questions about how texts are chosen, included and excluded. And what of texts that perform at the limits of the genre? These questions are addressed in each chapter in discussions of how individual novels perform within an ideological class; however, there are some general comments to be made.

I have limited this study to novels. Much of the existing 9/11 literary analysis focuses on the representation of the event without regard to artistic medium. Thus graphic novels, short stories, visual arts, drama and poetry are all often considered alongside novels in the analysis of the portrayal of 9/11. My analysis aims to contribute to the broadened context of post-9/11 literature beyond the representation of the events as the defining element of the genre. Unlike Richard Gray, whose understanding of 9/11 literature is broadened by placing it within a timeline of American literary history, I maintain a consistency of historical context by limiting the novels discussed to those written and set after 9/11 with little reference to novels that came before. This is primarily due to my focus on Muslim representation. There are, of course, depictions of Muslims in American novels prior to the events of 9/11, but this date marks a significant break with respect to representation. The context of the novels selected emphasises the connections between historical events that resulted from 9/11 rather than seeing these events as disparate sources of literary representation or distinct sub-genres.³ The impact of this separation of events is most significant when it is considered in conjunction with the representation of Muslims, particularly in relation to issues of post-9/11 resistance to US-led military actions as seen in, say, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) or Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya's *The Watch* (2012). Considering

³ The Library of Congress Subject Headings, for example, contain distinct classifications for the September 11 attacks and the Iraq War 2003-2011.

“post- 9/11” as a unified historical context also serves to highlight some of the gaps in the literary landscape. Whilst there are, for example, a plethora of novels, memoirs and non-fiction accounts of the experiences of US soldiers during and after the Iraq War, relatively few novels about the experience written by Iraqis (either in English or translated into English) have emerged.³ For example, the Iraqi author Inaam Kachachi’s novel *The American Granddaughter*, which examines the complexities of Iraqi-American identity, is included as part of this broadened conceptualisation of the post-9/11 genre.

There are risks inherent in considering literature by genre. Frow warns that a “lack of internal coherence characterises almost all attempts at a systematic scholarly analysis of the literary genres, which uneasily mix thematic, formal, modal, and functional criteria” (13) and in an effort to minimise this risk I aim to make transparent the decisions regarding the generic elements of each chapter. It is only through considering individual textual *and* collective generic functions that the ideological performance of literature (and its analysis) with respect to Islam after 9/11 become apparent, or as Frow concludes, “genre classifications are real . . . and they bind abstruse and delicate negotiations of meaning to the social situations in which they occur” (13).

Drawing conclusions about the themes and worldviews of various types of novels is particularly difficult when dealing with the representation of Muslims. There is the danger of reifying the very totalising and essentialising processes that critical analysis is intended to reveal. This risk is partly nullified by the texts themselves: the novels in Part 2, chosen as exemplars that diverge from simple binarism, proceed by “problematizing simplistic types of 9/11 patriotism that demand a unilateral type of national identity” and act as a response to “racial stereotyping, blanket labelling, and discriminatory profiling, by insisting on complex representations” (Fadda Conrey 533). These novels express a shared counter-hegemonic

³ See Marcia Lynx Qualey’s blog post “Whose Iraq Stories” for a discussion.

position, one that creates a commonality of resistance to the dominant national narrative, giving them a linked positionality despite the vast differences in their content. By relying on readings that maintain the complex, the networked and the paradoxical, the consideration of these novels within a generic boundary serves to enhance rather than limit their meaning.

The State of Exception

The second throughline in this thesis concerns the way in which the events of 9/11 triggered a state of exception in the United States. The defining characteristic of 9/11 literature has not, therefore, been the representation of an historical event; rather, the event has been an instigator of a political state of exception that has influenced literature of the post-9/11 era. As a consequence, critical responses give primacy to novels according to the level of compliance they demonstrate with the dominant national narrative, which was, at least initially, synonymous with what became known as the Bush doctrine.

Exceptionalism has been a part of America's identity since the nation's founding, although it has taken various guises throughout its history. Donald Pease defines exceptionalism as "the dominant structure of desire out of which US citizens imagined their national identity" (1), thereby placing it in the realm of the cultural imaginary. The post-9/11 manifestation of exceptionalism relies on the construction of Islam as both Other and enemy and the novels and criticism of the era perform some of this ideological work. Early post-9/11 literary criticism was not generally driven by an aesthetic assessment of the works. Value was initially determined by how closely authors were able to adhere to the approved national narrative, in particular the ability to represent individual and national trauma. Authors of high regard, Don DeLillo and John Updike taking the lead, were given authoritative positions ostensibly because of their status as greats of American novel writing. However, the standing given to both authors was despite the aesthetic concerns identified in both books and their "reach for some widely circulated clichés in their fictional accounts of terrorists" (Mishra). In other words, within the early post-9/11 genre, upholding ideological positions was more important than literary considerations.

There were, though, some examples of criticism that took a more critical stance on the exceptionalist doctrine. Susan Sontag's dissent sat alongside John Updike's response in *The New Yorker* article "Tuesday, and After", published 24 September, 2001; first person accounts of shock, fear and anger emanated from all corners although Sontag's was memorably political in her strongly-worded description of responses that spouted "self-righteous drivel and outright deceptions . . . unworthy of a mature democracy" (Updike, 2001). Mishra asserts that the overwhelming response of shock and trauma that overtook America was lessened for those writers whose views were housed in more globalised and historical environs. Mishra compares the response after 9/11 to World War I, acknowledging that in both cases "the crisis had been in the making for many years," briefly alluding to the historical factors at play both as an event and as a literary phenomenon. Mishra's assessment is not purely postcolonial or historical. He identifies the connection between World War I, the "severe rupture and crisis in civilisation" that "pressed down upon writers", and the need to develop new ways of describing the social changes that it brought through "a capacity for abstract thought as well as formal daring". These innovations are not reflected in his assessment of post-9/11 writing, which he ultimately sees as failing to probe the political, social and ideological positions of the time. Many others have since agreed that there is little formal innovation associated with the genre and that a more prevalent trend is the desire to maintain the US's position as a moral and civilizational beacon.

In her seminal work, *States of Fantasy* (1998), Jacqueline Rose makes a strong case for psychoanalytic critiques of national narratives. Although her focus is Israel, her approach (as Donald Pease demonstrates) equally can be applied to America's understanding of itself, especially with regard to exceptionality. Such a position must be upheld by the exceptionalist state or it would "lose all inner rationale and psychically collapse in on itself" (Rose 4). The state is, Rose reminds us, etymologically related to the psychic state, which is to say, the

internal world is not unrelated to the origins of the state. Indeed, “[t]he private and public attributes of the concept ‘state’ are not opposites but shadows” (Rose 8). That the novel would make a contribution both to the construction and the expression of that national fantasy is not surprising. Rose reminds us that “[b]ehind any fantasy is likely to be some such protective narrative,” or, to use the Freudian term, “protective fictions” (5). Such protections are evident in the early 9/11 canon, which is rooted in the protection of the homeland. Mishra observes that the early novels contain structural impediments which prevent them from challenging the sanctioned narratives: “[t]here are barriers to self and world knowledge—too young (Foer), too complacent, comfortable”. Authors such as Foer and McInerney “strenuously avoid anything too intellectually alien and bewildering” (Mishra) and as such do little to make the national narrative precarious in their works.

The reignited state of exception after 9/11 is fundamental to understanding its literature. The era is dominated by what Derrida calls the “language of terror”, the public elements of political rhetoric and media analysis that became “the prevailing language, which remains most often subservient to the rhetoric of the media and to the banter of the political powers” (qtd. in Borradori 102). For many authors, this language of terror is also closely related to writing about the experiences and effects of trauma. The critical tools used to read post-9/11 literature therefore need to be attuned to the cycle of repeated fantasy. These tools need to engage with the ideological states that are entrenched in the genre’s inherent engagement with the West/Islam binary.

The Trace of Orientalism in the Post-9/11 Context

One of the outcomes of the traumatic nature of the events of 9/11 is the tendency for literary criticism to treat it ahistorically—if it is an event without justification, it must therefore be seen as an irruption without cause or context. The specific history of Muslim and Western cultural engagement is not reflected in the reductive representation of Muslims as Other. This explains why the particularities of representation of Islam are rarely encountered in post-9/11 literary criticism,⁴ beyond a few disgruntled comments addressing theological inaccuracies in the works of Updike, Dubus and others, which are covered in this thesis. It is clear that in many ways post-9/11 literature does not represent a break in the historical representation of Muslims by the West (as it has not been a break in so many other areas) but is part of a longstanding orientalist discourse. This critical oversight is problematic on two fronts: it entrenches existing binaries and prejudices, whilst also preventing the recognition of genuine points of contention in relations between Islam and the West. A discussion of the recognition and accommodation of group differences within a liberal tradition, or “group differentiated rights,” (6) to use Will Kymlicka’s term, which is common in political philosophical thought, has not, for example, been substantially evident in the discussion of post-9/11 literature, even though tensions are evident in many of its texts.

The importance of considering Islam in literature as both historically situated and as participating in a cultural discourse are elements of Said’s tradition that are as important to understanding contemporary literature as they were when Orientalist discourse was at its height. This is despite the acknowledgement of counter-arguments regarding the

⁴ This is notwithstanding the recent work of Nash in *Writing Muslim Identity* which also takes an engagement with Islam as its organising principle.

homogenising dangers of a ‘Western’ cultural imaginary.⁵ What remains true is that Islam and the West are inter-related entities that “support and to an extent reflect each other” (Said *Orientalism* 5) and that there remains a “flexible positional superiority” (Said *Orientalism* 7) whereby individual circumstances and contexts may change but the assumption of the relative superiority of the West does not. The long history of debates over civilisational superiority have contributed to the production of what Said characterises as a “distorted knowledge of the other, each [with] its own reductive images, its own disputatious polemics” (*Orientalism* xvii). What is of relevance to contemporary literary study is the acknowledgement that the representation of Islam quite often relies on accessing this pool of “distorted knowledge” more so than current geopolitical realities.

The history of European perceptions of Islam as the enemy was replicated in the idea’s transportation to America. In her 2013 book *Thomas Jefferson’s Qur’an*, Denise Spellberg outlines the importance of the theoretical (or what was assumed to be theoretical) presence of Muslims to the founding fathers and their conception of America as a pluralist and secular democracy. The long history of North/South tensions between Europe and the Muslim world was in its turn inherited by the New World in the form of “almost a millennium of negative distortions of the faith’s theological and political character” (Spellberg 4). Since America’s inception, the inherited, imaginary Muslim has tested the limits of the nation’s liberalism. Nevertheless, Jefferson and others among the nation’s founders could, in the end, “divorce the idea of Muslim citizenship from their dislike of Islam” (Spellberg 9) in the name of creating, at least hypothetically, an inclusive political community. As with so many other aspects of the interaction between Islam and the US, the situation was already more complex than Jefferson understood with historical records

⁵ Contributions to the debates range from accusations of gross historical inaccuracies and polemical misreadings to attacks which argue that Said’s position is one of victimhood and uni-directionality. Suffice it to say, these debates acknowledge the centrality of the text whilst expressing a desire to move on from the “binary blame game” (Varisco xi).

showing that he in fact owned slaves from West Africa who were, unbeknownst to him, Muslim (Spellberg 7). Much post-9/11 rhetoric has been framed within this historical schema of the Muslim as external to the homeland, and this in turn is reflected as a concern in many of the early post-9/11 novels. However, 9/11 has also created the scope to engage with other paradigms for understanding the relationship between Islam and the US: representations of the Muslim within the homeland, and of an indigenous Western Islam are explored in Part 2. Chapter 5 also considers texts that engage the idea of a US national identity as a deterritorialised entity, where borders of the homeland prove to be decidedly porous.

The importance of Islam to the emerging literary genre of post-9/11 studies may be discomfiting to what is a secular endeavour. Does it trigger a conflict between secular and religious worldviews where “each has a distinct epistemology irreconcilable with the other?” (Asad vii). For Edward Said, there was no question that critique is a humanist endeavour; this is, after all, one of the most strongly-held beliefs of the Western post-Enlightenment tradition. He instils critique with an almost mystical power such that “humanistic ideals of liberty and learning still supply most disadvantaged people with the energy to resist unjust war and military occupation” (*Humanism and Democratic Criticism* 10). Notably, this belief did not prevent his deep engagement with the discourse of the Orient, of which Islam is a major component. However, the connection between secularism and critique is one that has been recently questioned by various scholars of critical theory, such as Talal Asad et al in *Is Critique Secular?* (2013). In the present environment, the preface notes, “a particular conception of secularism is central to the identity of the West (liberal, democratic, tolerant, critical), juxtaposed against its imagined other, which in this historical moment has become consubstantial with Islam” (Asad et al viii). This specific “historical moment” encourages enquiry into the co-existence of Islam with critical theory. Such enquiry is not limited to a “Western” perspective; Islamic scholars in the West, such as Tariq Ramadan and Hamza

Yusuf who, far from espousing the othering of Muslims, support the existence of a Western (European and American) Islam, also speak of the need for Islam's own tradition of critical thought and secularity to be recognised and revived. The question of whether critique is secular has as its corollary the question of whether religious orthodoxy can only be seen as dogmatic and antithetical to critical enquiry. It is not possible fully to explore this question here, but I highlight it as an important consideration. It reminds us that terms such as "West" and "Islam", "secular" and "critique" are decidedly ambiguous, and their spectral presence is often perceptible at the invisible boundaries of post-9/11 literary criticism.

The historical understanding of Islam as opposite to and excluded from the Western critical tradition does not prevent their interactions from being understood in new ways and in new contexts. Said calls this process of revision and reappraisal "the unending process of emancipation and enlightenment" of the humanist endeavour (*Humanism and Democratic Criticism* xi). It is possible to "open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis" to avoid "a belligerent collective identity" and replace it with "understanding and intellectual exchange" (Said *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* xvii). There is a need to reframe the aftermath of 9/11 in light of political and historical encounters rather than "stubborn cultural legacies" (Mamdani 11), and part of this process is to investigate the contemporary understanding of the cultural imaginary of Islam with renewed attention. Before delving into the divergent texts that extend and subvert expectations of the post-9/11 novel, Part 1 begins with the novels that dominate the existing field—the early 9/11 "canon".

PART 1: THE EARLY 9/11 CANON
Chapter 2: Falling Men and the Reification of the Other

Among the Just/Be just,
among the Filthy filthy too,
And in his own weak person, if he can,
Must suffer dully all the wrongs of Man.

The Novelist, W. H. Auden

There is perhaps no better contemporary example of a novelist putting himself at risk for his “dangerous ideas” than Salman Rushdie. In the 1990s it would have been unimaginable to discuss Islam and literature without placing the Rushdie affair front and centre. Even at its twenty-year anniversary, it still had the power to act as shorthand for “an iconic register of the radical intractability of cultural difference”⁶ (Mondal 59). The at-times violent reception of *The Satanic Verses* and the consequent issue of a legally questionable and politically motivated fatwa by the Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, were evidence, it seemed, of the fault lines between Islam and the West that extended even into the realm of literary representation. Indeed, the incident was part of the inspiration for Don DeLillo’s 1991 novel *Mao II*, which is often deemed prophetic in relation to the rise of political terror and, as will be seen shortly, reference to the incident opens Jay McInerney’s *The Good Life*. Since 2001, however, the central position once held by Rushdie has been replaced by the events of 9/11. Any consideration of Muslim representation in contemporary literature, despite how broad such a consideration could become, is dominated by the spectre of that fateful incident. The outcome, however, has remained remarkably unchanged: the majority of post-9/11 literature

⁶ Mondal goes on to argue that rather than being evidence of a cultural clash the Rushdie controversy shows how cultural difference is produced and constructed by dynamics of power.

serves to entrench the idea of a homogenized and threatening Islam at odds with foundational Western values. Despite the consideration of the effects of 9/11 from seemingly endless perspectives, attention to how authors have constructed their novels, and how critics have understood them, in relation to Islam remains surprisingly limited. It is a literary landscape that predominantly consolidates and reinforces Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" model. Part 1 of this thesis focuses on this existing 9/11 literary terrain and the novels that constitute it. It investigates how novelists' early responses contribute to the foundations of a nascent post-9/11 genre.

The initial responses to 9/11 literature focused predominantly on the ways in which novels represented the events, and how they captured the trauma of the devastated American population, particularly in New York. It was assumed that the events of 9/11 had created a problem of representation, and that any failings of artists to capture its significance were due to the impossibility of such a task. According to Versluys, 9/11 is "a limit event that shatters the symbolic resources of the culture and defeats the normal processes of meaning making and semiosis" (1). How, it was asked, would writers respond to depicting the "the ultimate event, the mother of all events, an event so pure it contains within it all the events that never took place" (Baudrillard 1). How could novelists be expected to react to the ad nauseam media coverage of the horrific collapse of the twin towers, falling bodies, and ash-covered rescue workers? Surely this would present the need for a complete break in form, an innovation in representation commensurate with the event itself. But such a break has failed to eventuate.⁷

In reality, the majority of the novels that responded to 9/11 and received wide attention from the academy had one thing in common: a retreat from the depiction of the events into an almost complete cocoon of the domestic. The preoccupation for most writers

⁷ See Dunst (2012) for a detailed discussion of the debate between the perspective of 9/11 as a break in form and those who see it as a part of a continuum.

was the post-traumatic response of the New Yorker, symbolised by the internal world of the survivor. 9/11 marked a definite irruption followed by a process of introspection, including a re-evaluation of family, intimacy and the ennui of millennial life. According to Richard Gray “[t]he crisis is, in every sense of the word, domesticated” (30). Correspondingly, early 9/11 responses did not tend to focus on the broadly political; US military responses, Bush era rhetoric, and attempts to place the events in their global or historical context are largely absent from the novels that continue to dominate the genre. American writers “tended to make too much of private life, to impose on it, to scour it for meanings that it cannot always legitimately yield” (Rahv cited by Mishra). This de-politicising of the post-9/11 literary field has been widely identified and although more recent criticism has tried to broaden its perspective to include the political and public aspects of the 9/11 novels, this criticism remains dominated by a Western worldview.⁸ Some critics have explicitly called for more global responses; Michael Rothberg, for example, claims that “we need a fiction of international relations and extraterritorial citizenship,” (153) but rarely does this broadening of perspective extend beyond that of homeland trauma, or in some cases a call for deterritorialisation.⁹ In reconsidering the novels most closely associated with an emerging 9/11 genre, it becomes clear that they are strongly affiliated with trauma theory as the dominant tool of analysis and that other approaches have been overlooked, including the critique of the literary representation of Islam and Muslims beyond the identification as the “ultimate Other” (Versluys 17).

This chapter explores how certain novels came to dominate the post-9/11 literary field at the expense of alternative voices. It considers the dominance of trauma in the interpretation of the novels and some of the deficiencies of this theoretical approach. It then goes on to

⁸ See Cilano (2011) for 9/11 perspectives from outside of the US although they are limited to Canada, Australia, the UK and Pakistan.

⁹ Deterritorialisation is one of the principles that underlies Gray’s wide discussion of American literature as a ‘borderland’. See also Richard Crownshaw (2011). The idea will be returned to in Chapter 5.

consider the preeminent post-9/11 novel, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, particularly in relation to its role in constructing the position of Muslims in the post-9/11 narrative. In that analysis, I also draw on some elements of recognition theory, particularly Axel Honneth's interest in social reification, in order to reframe the role of *Falling Man* within the genre as a whole.

The Early Canon: Features of the Dominant 9/11 Texts

Post-9/11 studies has emerged as a discipline based on the representation of an event. Along with the emergence of the genre, consideration can be given to those novels that have become “canonised” within the genre and how these have been extremely significant to the understanding of the field as a whole. I use the contested term “canon” intentionally, for it appropriately captures the complex “position-taking” that Pierre Bourdieu describes in *The Field of Cultural Production* as a quality of the literary field, whereby artistic works are positioned—that is, preferred—due to their “possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition), and at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this specific capital” (30). In the case of 9/11 novels, judgments are likely to include not only literary aesthetic concerns, but also assessments based on their compliance with the US national narrative during the present state of exception, a period epitomised by the dominance of national mourning and national security concerns in political discourse. An additional feature is that the binary construction of an “us and them” worldview was predominantly unquestioned by the political establishment, enabling legal actions such as the passing of the 2001 PATRIOT Act and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security to be achieved without significant political obstruction. As Duvall and Marzec reflect, 9/11 was used to “construct a new form of PC (Patriotic Correctness) in order to help justify the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq” (381). Clearly, post-9/11 novels participate within this world of “Patriotic Correctness,” and the process of canonisation extends beyond a mere assessment of literary merit into participation with ideological debate. Edward Said notes the likely etymological relationship of the word canon with the Arabic word “qanun”, meaning legal or binding (*Humanism and Democratic* 25), and in many ways positions in the post-9/11 field are determined by those novels that are

bound to an interpretation of 9/11 as an insular event, isolated from its aftermath and the geopolitical conditions that made it possible, thus invoking 9/11 as evidence of a civilizational clash. As I will show in later chapters of this thesis, those novels that question, complicate or subvert the national narrative, in even relatively minor ways, are unlikely to hold a canonical position within the field, as they do not fulfil the requirements of the specific symbolic capital valued after 9/11, which is to say an adherence to the mood of nationalism.

The number of novels that participate in the 9/11 genre is extensive. As Versluys notes, despite the trauma of the event, calls for “dignified silence” (12) as the only proper response were not heeded; the responses to 9/11 have been many and varied, but by Versluys’ own accounting a large percentage of these have “little or no literary merit” and in these works the “terrorist attacks are shamelessly recuperated for ideology and propaganda” (13). For most of the first decade after 9/11 the novels deemed worthy of serious literary consideration were relatively few, so whilst any allocation of texts as “canonical” is arbitrary, there are those that have undoubtedly had a significant impact on literary criticism, led by Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* (2007).¹⁰

The group of novels that exemplifies the early 9/11 canon (including *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, *The Good Life* and *Netherland*) developed not only from a consideration of their literary merit.¹¹ In many cases, such as John Updike’s *Terrorist*,¹² discussed in Chapter 3, novels have remained of generic value despite recognised aesthetic failings, which indicates that other factors are at play, including examples of “the instrumentalization of the aesthetic by the state” (Irom 518).¹³ It has taken some temporal distance for this complication to become recognized; after all, as Ann Keniston notes in her

¹⁰ See Irom (2012), De Rosa (2013) and Dunst (2012) along with many others for recent analyses of *Falling Man*.

¹¹ See Duvall and Marzec’s comments on dominance of *Falling Man* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* in submissions to their 2011 special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies*, and their call to look to other fiction.

¹² See Mansutti, among others, for a discussion of the complications of Updike’s novel.

¹³ An idea reinforced by Liu, 2006, p 154.

introduction to *Literature After 9/11*, “[n]o one wants 9/11 to be misrepresented, politicized, co-opted, or distorted. Yet it seems difficult not to do just that” (1). Understandings of post-9/11 literature continue to be extended, particularly in identifying how “the aesthetic of the 9/11 novel remains inflected within the circuits of power” (Irom 522) and how this has had an impact on concepts of Otherness as the works “struggle towards alterities opposed to the instrumentalized ideological imaginaries of the state” (Irom 545). For these reasons, more than fifteen years later it remains necessary to undertake a review of the 9/11 novels that have dominated the field and to consider how they have been influential in their positioning of Islamic representation.

In looking briefly at early 9/11 novels, I aim neither to extend their body of literary analysis as a whole, nor to bring about an ethical recuperation to the canon in light of more recent opinions of US responses to 9/11. Rather, my research considers how, together, some novels construct a position for Islam and Muslims that structurally and metaphorically supports their othering, and how the critical response to these novels gives primacy to ways of understanding the events, their representation and the theoretical approaches to them that reinforce simple binary constructions of East and West at the expense of other inherent complexities.

A cursory consideration of the early canon of post-9/11 novels shows that Muslim representation is mostly notable by its absence. Despite the events' undoubtedly traumatic effects on the American populace, there is an almost complete gap, a distinct silence, when it comes to the perpetrators of the attacks and their motivations. With the exception of *Falling Man* (which is dealt with in the next section) none of the novels discussed here explore with any depth the role of the terrorists in 9/11, nor its possible causes or the repercussions on US domestic and foreign policies. They are mostly silent on US military actions taken as a result of 9/11, and on the impact of 9/11 on American Muslims and immigrant groups more widely.

The tension between counter-terrorism responses and civil liberties is also absent, despite this issue being heavily debated quite early in the period of the War on Terror.¹⁴ One could assume from the importance of 9/11 as an event that there would be a concentrated attempt to closely understand its causes, or the intricacies of its execution, as well as its consequential repercussions. This is not the focus of this group of novels, nor is it even of peripheral interest.¹⁵ Both the representation of the event and any sense-making process about its causes, is left unspoken in all of these novels, save for, to some extent, *Falling Man*.

What the novels do focus on is the domestic, personal and existential questions faced by their protagonists, who are all male, affluent Manhattanites.¹⁶ All four novels are set predominantly in New York, a commonality that Keniston also notes in her observation that the “[l]iterary representations of 9/11 focus almost exclusively on events in New York City” (1) and they rarely consider the attacks in the other sites. In each of the four novels, the setting of New York clearly operates as a symbol of capitalist endeavour but is disconnected from any globalised sense of the world, no more so than in *The Good Life* where the narrator notes that New York’s investment bankers “viewed the world beyond Manhattan primarily in terms of investment and vacation opportunities” (McInerney 47). In all but *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, central characters are high-level lawyers and businessmen whose identities are tied to their careers and their roles as family providers.¹⁷ As identified in *The Good Life*, before 9/11 “Manhattan was an existentialist town, in which identity was a function of professional accomplishment” (McInerney 5) and afterwards, that existentialism and the reliance on professional identity is questioned in favour of a revival, however short-lived, of the centrality of marriage and family. *The Good Life* is an example of the return to

¹⁴ See Meyers for an account of the unprecedented changes in democratic life following 9/11.

¹⁵ Duvall and Marzac point out that geopolitics is more likely to be encountered in genre fiction such as crime or espionage novels than in literary fiction.

¹⁶ See Irom on the “concept-metaphor of the domestic”; see Duvall and Marzec on why even domestic novels are political.

¹⁷ See Susan Faludi on the return of the traditional male role model to the cultural imaginary after 9/11.

traditional narrative. It continues the story of Russell Calloway, a literary editor, and his wife Corinne who first appeared in McInerney's 1992 novel *Brightness Falls*. It begins with their pre-9/11 bourgeois life as part of Manhattan's moneyed arts circle. The novel opens with a dinner party featuring a glamorous group of literati with the central character, Russell, having just been disappointed by apologies for dinner but acting "as if having Salman Rushdie over to dinner was no big deal" (McInerney 9). His wife Corinne is somewhat relieved since "she was still worried that a bomb might go off in his vicinity, although supposedly the *fatwa* had been lifted" (McInerney 10). Another friend and dinner guest, a filmmaker, is more welcome since his "films hadn't alienated any Muslim fundamentalists, as far as she knew" (McInerney 10). The dinner party conversation that opens the novel emphasises the features of the characters' society, namely material success challenged by a modern nihilistic sensibility, and espousing a liberalism that is affronted by an understanding of Islam determined mostly by the Rushdie affair.

Prompted by the trauma of 9/11, Corinne begins an affair with Luke, a former banker turned writer, whose shallow wife, Sasha, and troubled teenage daughter, Ashley, leave him with an unsatisfying home life. The growing relationship between Corinne and Luke, who is originally from Tennessee, leads them to cultivating the idealised dream of leaving New York and building a new life together in the seemingly innocent and un-endangered South. The dream is thwarted by Corinne's guilt about her six-year-old twins, and Ashley's eventual drug overdose. In the end, both Corinne and Luke return to their spouses, the affair becoming merely a heightened response to "the initial confrontation with mortality in September" (McInerney 353). The novel makes sparse comment on issues outside of the direct emotional experiences of its central characters but when it does, it is often to identify a sense of an external threat that is generalised and nebulous, seemingly unworthy of investigation.

The novel follows the standard narrative trajectory of the romance genre and this undermines claims of its performance as an exploration of trauma. Gray, responding in a similar way to DeLillo's novel, finds that through reliance on traditional structure the genre "evades the trauma, it suppresses its urgency and disguises its difference by inserting it in a series of familiar tropes" (28). The same can be said for *The Good Life's* approach to its wider context. References to the Middle East, which is seen as complicit with the terrorist acts, are fleeting and tend to rely on cliché and stereotype. In a common feature of the literary responses to 9/11, reactions swing from an extreme liberalism unable to acknowledge the reality of political terror, to racial stereotyping, which also fails to capture reality. McInerney's examples show a crying man on the street: "People die, people in the Middle East get blown apart every day and we read about it in the *New York* fucking *Times* or the *Post* while we're sitting at Starbucks drinking our white chocolate mocha" (McInerney 145). Or later when a Guardsman gripes that he does not have his weapon, he is told by his sergeant: "You'll have your gun soon enough . . . when they send you overseas to fight the towelheads" (McInerney 151). The only reference to Arab culture is "Scheherazade, the ageing Arabian mare" (McInerney 272) at Luke's mother's farm. Whilst such minor inclusions no doubt capture a sense of the post-9/11 anger and hatred towards the terrorist attackers they also perform, and when repeated across texts they reinforce neo-Orientalist tropes that bear little relation to the complexity of either the causes of terrorism, or the political relationship between the US and the Middle East.

Another common element in the novels is the portrayal of military interventions as a mediated experience through background images. This kind of simulacrum never allows for direct interaction between the characters and the national political action taking place around them to achieve the level of an act of recognition happening to real people. *The Good Life* sees Corinne at home where she "couldn't concentrate on Rushdie's new novel, about a

gaudy *fin de siècle* New York that no longer existed, or on the news, which was all about the terrifying reality that had replaced it” (McInerney 208). Later, Hilary, her sister, is reading a magazine “while images from Afghanistan flickered on the television screen” (McInerney 222). In Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland*, the narrator notes that on a cold day in 2003, “the newspapers broke up the Iraq stories with photos of children tobogganing” (94) and that in the end, despite protest, the war in Iraq begins: “On television, dark Baghdad glittered with American bombs. The war started. The baseball season came into view” (O’Neill 122). The startling parataxis highlights the disconnection between the scale of the US military invasion, and the innocence of the national pastime, whilst concurrently connecting them both as a game—war and baseball established equally as part of the national identity. Gray (drawing on Alexis de Tocqueville) identifies the importance of such gaps, between the intensely personal reflection of individual characters in trauma, and their vague and disinterested larger conceptions of the world. He determines that post-9/11 novels have dealt with this variation poorly, finding that the “link between the two is tenuous, reducing a turning point in national and international history to little more than a sentimental education” (30).

Of the early 9/11 novels, it is *Netherland* that is the most self-conscious about the outside world as made evident by its central character, Hans van den Broek, a Dutch citizen working in the finance sector in London at the novel’s opening and closing, and in New York at the time of the attacks. Once again, the focal point of the novel is the intimate sphere with the breakdown of a marriage triggered by the terror of living through 9/11. This time the breakdown is between Hans and his English wife, Rachel. It is a process that leaves Hans lost and shocked, living an aimless existence in New York after Rachel and their son Jake return to London in the pursuit of safety and security. Hans is guided by an unlikely new friend, the Gatsbyesque entrepreneur Chuck Ramkissoon, originally from Trinidad. The novel becomes a peripatetic meandering through the immigrant experience of New York, which includes a

vast array of English dialects, culinary experiences and entrepreneurial undertakings which Hans has been previously unaware of, but are central to Chuck's existence. The lack of plot development reflects Hans's lack of direction after his wife's departure and the general sense of shock that pervades the city.

The novel is unified through the motif of cricket, a shared love of Hans and Chuck, and many of the other immigrant characters they meet. New York is portrayed as a multicultural hub of postcolonial complexity and provides the symbol around which the flâneur Hans undertakes his journey of discovery. *Netherland's* interest in New York as a symbol of globalization is clearly influenced by O'Neill's own background. Irish born, of Turkish ancestry and raised in Holland, O'Neill lives in New York City. The novel does not have a specific interest in the attacks, but instead the author creates a New York that is filled with colourful, zany and mostly non-threatening foreigners who man an underground economy of taxi cabs, import businesses and restaurants. O'Neill shows his desire to reconnect with the narrative of New York City as a site for immigrants to pursue financial success based on hard work and secular egalitarianism; its exceptional status is reinforced by the choice of the Whitman epigraph of the invincible city, "the new City of Friends". The novel is sensitive to not undermining the American success story but O'Neill also shows at times (as the title of the novel suggests) the dark side of the American dream. One character who personifies this dark side is Hans's peculiar Turkish neighbour, Mehmet Taspinar, who is dressed as an angel when Hans first encounters him in the hallway. Mehmet discloses that the landlord has thrown him out of his apartment, thinking he is a terrorist. Taspinar responds to his circumstances with a faux-theology that nevertheless exposes the material and psychological vulnerabilities of immigrants after 9/11: "In a sense I can understand him. An angel is a messenger of God. In Christianity, Judaism, Islam, angels are always frightening—always soldiers, killers, punishers" (O'Neill 35). Also in *Netherland*, we find one of the few

expressions of post-9/11 anti-American sentiment, although interestingly it comes from the Englishwoman Rachel whilst she is with friends in Britain.¹⁸ She is a strong critic of the Bush administration's ideology and the proposed invasion of Iraq and claims that part of her motivation for returning to England is to protect Jake from the attitudes of "an ideologically diseased country," (O'Neill 95) although the reader suspects that her political outrage is at the service of her desire to leave the marriage. Hans explains Rachel's sudden political activism as being "about a life and death struggle for the future of the world" (O'Neill 98). He contrasts her hyperbole with his own admission that "I had little interest. I didn't really care" (O'Neill 101). Although *Netherland* gives a taste of New York as a more multicultural and cosmopolitan city than the other novels in the early canon, it still focuses on the post-9/11 experience as a retreat into the realm of unravelling intimate relationships, with global events mediated only from this point of orientation.

In each novel introduced here, 9/11 is the trigger for the existential crises of the central characters, which include divorces, extra-marital affairs, wayward children and relocation. However, the actual experiences of the 9/11 attacks and their national and international repercussions feature very little in the post-traumatic portrayals. The treatment of the events by many writers leaves the impression that the trauma could have arisen from almost any cause, even a natural disaster, an idea supported in *The Good Life* which equates "bombings, revolutions, earthquakes, hurricanes" all as belonging to a category of "cataclysmic events", as the epigraph of Ana Menendez states. It is the effect and not the cause that is given primacy. Each of the novels relies on a presence of the event, but the details, the specifics of the event beyond spectacle, are peculiarly absent. The effects of trauma, a retreat into the domestic, and an unwillingness to globally contextualise the political ramifications of the events are common elements of the early 9/11 texts. Together

¹⁸ In Chapter 5 I consider in detail how author's use territory outside of the Homeland as critical space.

these aspects have also given rise to the primacy of trauma theory as a tool of analysis for post-9/11 literature and it is this dominant theoretical model that I turn to next to consider its role in the canonisation of particular novels.

Trauma: the Dominant 9/11 Theory

The emphasis on domestic experience in early 9/11 novels is one of the reasons why trauma theory has become the dominant paradigm for understanding the 9/11 genre as a whole. The early preoccupation was with the unwritability of the events, and the question of their representation,¹⁹ in which “9/11 literature works as a prosthesis, an awkward substitute for and attempt to compensate for the unrepresentable absence effected by 9/11 itself” (Keniston 2). Literary criticism immediately following the events did not focus exclusively on how the trauma was portrayed, it was also used as the theoretical model to understand the world within the novels; trauma became both thematic and theoretical. Thus, the 9/11 novel is both constitutive of, and constitutes, the experience of America’s national mourning. With trauma theory’s interest in areas such as grief, the ethics of mourning, memorialization and the power of testimony, the focus of critics became recuperation: how to heal from the events and how the American public would live in a post-9/11 nation. Thus, there are common themes across each of the novels considered in the early canon including the effects of trauma, the personal and public expressions of grief, and the solace and emptiness of domestic life and personal relationships. The personal realm exposed in the literary sphere carries an atmosphere of nihilism, a confirmation that the postmodern condition is one of existential crisis, and 9/11 becomes the quintessential prompt towards that introspection.

The association between trauma theory and post-9/11 novels has become so strong that it is difficult to approach the texts from any other perspective. Alexander Dunst refers to trauma as the “organising metaphor” (56) of the twenty-first century; yet there are significant limitations in the use of trauma theory that necessitate alternative theoretical positions. As

¹⁹ See Irom (2012) for a summary.

Aaron De Rosa notes in his 2013 essay on 9/11 and alterity, “representations of trauma ethically occlude the other” (170) since victims do not empathise with assailants. Duvall and Marzec call more directly for 9/11 studies to move “past the dominant theoretical paradigm of understanding it—trauma studies” (396). It is neither my intention to discuss the relationship between trauma theory and literature in full, nor to contribute to the already substantial body of criticism that applies trauma theory to the early 9/11 canon. Instead, I return to my initial assertion that the investigation of how the novels portray Muslims and the Muslim world has been rarely engaged from a critical or ethical standpoint and that the dominance of trauma theory goes some way to explaining this.

There is also a question over whether post-9/11 novels have successfully engaged with the full extent of trauma. When the “paired cultural form” of trauma and narrative is considered, according to Lyotard, narrative performs an important cultural role: “[i]t does not say the unsayable, but says that it cannot say it” (qtd. in Luckhurst 81). As Versluys identifies incisively, “[c]entral to all of the 9/11 novels under consideration is the question of language: How can words be found that are capable of naming the unnameable?” (15). It is a question that preoccupied early 9/11 studies but has mostly been answered by the lack of any real innovation in literary style or structure. Narrative’s ability to undertake “serious play” with time (Luckhurst 79), to engage “enigmas of identity, memory and selfhood” (Luckhurst 80) and to live in the aporia of an “impossible possibility of an aesthetics of trauma” (Luckhurst 81) all point to the expectation of narrative innovation in texts that respond to trauma. The trauma aesthetic is expected to be “suspicious of familiar representational and narrative convention” (Luckhurst 81). This has clearly not been the case with early 9/11 novels. Indeed, Keniston identifies that “[b]oth Baudrillard and Žižek critique assertions of the incommensurability of 9/11 given our constant re-consumption of the spectacle,” (10) suggesting that claims to unrepresentability have not been demonstrated. It may be

completely justifiable to include trauma as a thematic component of the genre, but it is less sustainable when it is the only theoretical paradigm.

Within the history of trauma as a discipline, there is also the spectral presence of the Holocaust, which remains the pivotal event that instigated the link between trauma, history and narrative. The ethics of Holocaust testimony, Luckhurst asserts (by drawing on the work of Lawrence Langer) resist attempts to “mediate atrocity by domesticating it into a narrative or generic form” and this trace is evident in the “opposition between traumatic event and narrative possibility across the work of Caruth, Laub and Felman, and into the body of cultural trauma theory” (81). The trace of the Holocaust is undoubtedly a part of post-9/11 criticism, and in some cases an overt connection within texts (most notably Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*), which makes a direct connection between the trans-generational experience of trauma from the Holocaust to 9/11 in the family of its young protagonist. The antecedents of trauma theory result in particular complications when considering the position of Islam and narrative and at times, De Rosa asserts, “[t]rauma itself is a red herring” (176). The effects of 9/11 are not limited to the trauma of New Yorkers, or Americans, or the “West”. As will be demonstrated in later chapters, the impact of 9/11 was almost as immediate in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the wider Arab world, as well as in minority Muslim immigrant groups in Western nations and for the Muslim victims of the attacks. Judith Butler argues that not all lives are mourned equally, or as Derrida observes, “one does not count the dead in the same way from one corner of the globe to the other ... It is our duty to recall that the shock waves produced by such murders are never purely natural and spontaneous. They depend on a complex machinery involving history, politics, the media and so on” (Borradori 92). Trauma theory creates a structural binary between victim and perpetrator that prevents consideration of their interactions, making necessary the use of alternative methodologies that cope better with this complexity. For more globalised novels

(take Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown*, for example, which recognises the interconnected nature of terror) Duvall and Marzec conclude that "a typical trauma analysis of the novel would miss the point" (390).

Whilst there is no question that trauma is one of the dominant themes in the novels discussed in this chapter, there is also provision for alternative readings that are not illuminated through its use as a theoretical framework. Again, Gray succinctly clarifies the issue, noting that post-9/11 literature is only partially grappling with the contemporary political context: "Recognition that the old mind-set has been destroyed, or at least seriously challenged, is widespread in recent literature. Not all of it, however, manages to take the fictional measure of the new world view" (Gray 27). This is consistent with the idea that trauma is a "transitional mode where knowledge and meaning can be constantly disarticulated and reassembled," (Luckhurst 79) but in the post-9/11 context the majority of novels have addressed interaction with Islam not by "reassembling" but by returning to longstanding ideas of essentialist Othering. It is left to Gray, whose scope encompasses the broad view of American literature more generally, to conclude that literary attempts to represent trauma have often failed despite their manifest ethical intent because "their forms do not necessarily register or bear witness" (51) to the claim that the world has changed beyond understanding. The actual response of authors has been such that the "strange is neatly familiarized; an eruptive moment is rendered safe by being reinserted in a traditional narrative pattern," (Gray 29) further undermining the predictions that 9/11 would prove to be an epoch-creating literary event.

With temporal distance from the events, there has been an increasing acknowledgement that literary responses have in some ways supported and reinforced the patriotic rhetoric of the post-9/11 context. The literary field, from creative writing to criticism and dominant theoretical positions had in many ways fallen under the spell of a national

narrative of exceptionalism where patriotism was seen to justifiably dominate the aesthetic. Gray identifies the recurring tendency in American fiction that links “the national fate, at moments of crisis, with notions of innocence and the fall into a deeper self-consciousness, a darker knowledge” (29). Whilst he acknowledges the recurrent nature of this phenomenon, he also admits its importance, pointing out that “[n]ew events generate new forms of consciousness requiring new structures of ideology and the imagination to assimilate and express them” (Gray 29). However, when he considers how new or different the structures of the 9/11 novels are, he concludes that the “answer is, for the most part, not at all” (Gray 29). The literary field has remained somewhat in service to the dominant patriotic narrative and innovation that critics expected to respond to the scale of the events has not been evident. Some scholarship has identified the methods by which this occurred, most notably a retreat into the private sphere and a de-politicisation of the 9/11 acts, but further theoretical work is needed. In what remains of this chapter, I consider first how the dominant 9/11 novel, *Falling Man*, has been confined by trauma theory and then how an element of the recognition process—reification—can help explain the novel’s influence on the genre.

Falling Man at the Centre

The central novel in the early 9/11 canon is unarguably Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*. It is the most immediately recognisable of the 9/11 novels, and it is the one that has garnered the most critical attention. Published in 2007, it was not the first novel to deal with the impact of 9/11 but it quickly became the most important, due in part to DeLillo's existing standing as a great contemporary American novelist with a long interest in political violence. The book tells the story of Keith Neudecker and his estranged wife, Lianne, who reunite in a temporary and unsatisfactory return to domestic intimacy after his escape from the terror attacks. The novel begins with Keith's experience of fleeing the towers on September 11, 2001 and of then making his way unconsciously to his estranged wife and son. This narrative is told in parallel with that of the fictional terrorist, Hammad, whose story unfolds retrospectively, until the two arcs meet in the final explosive scene, which returns the reader to the moment of collision between plane and tower, between Keith and Hammad, and between East and West.

Falling Man influences the understanding of novels after 9/11 and it therefore shapes the academic discussion. It has provided a certain infrastructure to the post-9/11 literary context, one that sharply contrasts the traumatised New Yorker with the evil terrorist. Gray notes this kind of opposition is quite common: "With the collapse of communism, a sinister other that enabled American self-definition may have disappeared. It is a truism, however, to say that it has now been replaced by Islam" (32). He concludes, however, that this engagement with a new other has been mostly unsuccessful: "[w]hen it comes to encountering the enemy, though, a kind of imaginative paralysis tends to set in, to immobilize many texts" (Gray 32). DeLillo's position on 9/11 surprised many with his small and personal story, considering that the author was previously known for the kind of

conspiratorial, incisively political narrative that would have seemed so suitable to the 9/11 novel. Instead, *Falling Man* is primarily a domestic story. Although DeLillo's work has longstanding connection with the themes of terrorism and international politics, and he is widely considered to have had an almost prophetic ability when it comes to the events of 9/11, *Falling Man* turns sharply away from his past as "DeLillo confines himself to recording the emotional and existential struggles of 9/11 survivors" (Mishra). Beyond its portrayal of the post-traumatic condition there are wider implications for the novel's position in relation to its engagement with Islam.

In particular, *Falling Man* reflects the relationship between the author's worldview and an attempted fictional realism typical across the genre. DeLillo's first response to 9/11 was an essay, "In the Ruins of the Future" which appeared in Harper's Magazine in 2001. Many of the issues raised in the essay are reflected in the novel in sometimes eerily similar ways. DeLillo's thesis begins by asserting that the events of 9/11 have ended the dominance of US capitalism. It is a comment that is without justification on any objective measure, but it begins the rhetorical process of constructing disparate worlds: "Today, again, the world narrative belongs to terrorists" (33). DeLillo's language is blunt, his rhetoric clear: there is "our world" and there is "theirs" from which he draws the inevitable conclusion that "we are living in a place of danger and rage", although the implication is clear that the danger only comes from "their" world and not from "ours" (DeLillo 33). The difficulty with such a strong assertion articulated by DeLillo in the article is that whilst much of what he says is likely true of the extreme acts of the 9/11 terrorists, the language becomes indiscriminate; it is not tempered by an acknowledgement of the minority position of such extremists, and it acts to consolidate the binary worldview that became the basis of both his novel, and, because of its influential position, the genre more widely.

The nature of the homogenized enemy, although a direct definition of “them” is never enunciated in the essay, is clearly set out by DeLillo: anti-modern, anti-secular and characterised by an essentially violent nature: “We are rich, privileged and strong, but they are willing to die” (34). Aside from drawing on qualities associated with Arab Muslims that go back to the earliest days of Orientalism, many of the tropes which he uses in this first influential essay will be seen over and over again in 9/11 novels. There is a fear of the communal nature of Islam, the danger of “brotherhood” where “they share the codes and protocols of their mission here and something deeper, a vision of judgment and devastation,” a reference to the perceived threat of the unity of Islamic practice and its beliefs (34). DeLillo articulates the process of de-humanisation that is at the heart of acts of terror (or war); the terrorist does not see the humanity of his victims, be they men, women or children: “This is his edge, that he does not see her” (34). He thereby constructs an anonymous but menacing individual who carries the threat to Western civilization in his very being. The de-humanising impetus captured in metaphorical visibility and invisibility is seen again in *Falling Man* and across the genre in a number of guises; it is an important antecedent to the act of recognition that will be investigated throughout this thesis.

In a sleight of logic, the individual terrorist and his dark motivations become interpellated in a wider metaphysical battle. The terrorist’s standpoint is contrasted with the use of the inclusive “we” to create a unified Western ideology, “He knows who we are and what we mean in the world—an idea” (34). The American victims of terror have become symbols of democratic rights, ironically the very rights that were later tested by US post-9/11 actions: “free expression and our justice system’s provisions for the rights of the accused” (34). The terrorist, by contrast, is apolitical, merely acting out the essentially violent nature of his religion: “He pledges his submission to God and meditates on the blood to come” (34). Submission, the English translation of the Arabic word Islam, becomes

connected via the coordinating conjunction “and” with violence and threat, as if the one is the inevitable consequence of the other. Of course, DeLillo knows where such a position will lead: “It was not all-out war, at least not yet” (36) but such a response cannot be tempered at this early stage of dealing with the shock of the attacks. A single-sentence paragraph in the essay stands out as it is left unclear who is voicing the command, “Kill the enemy and pluck out his heart” (37). DeLillo understands that a US-led war is inevitable and that it will be spectacle, just as the media coverage of the events has been. In his memory of the first Gulf War, he refers to the “first euphoric days” (38) before the war to come, with a tone not only of support but also of nostalgic pride.

In the early days after 9/11, DeLillo captures the central tension between the contemporary threat and the everyday Muslim citizen. He describes the threat of Islam as a “global theocratic state, unboundaried and floating” (40), and contrasts this with perhaps the most telling image of all when the essay ends with the description of a lone Muslim woman, praying on the street in New York. The author acknowledges that this is an acceptable perception of Islam in the West—individual, apolitical, feminised, unthreatening. It is evidence of Western pluralism and liberal tolerance, but only when defined within its own hegemonic parameters, for in all other cases Islam is synonymous with violation of the homeland and the threat of violence. Perhaps it is this final image that leads Versluys to conclude, somewhat perplexingly, that the article’s rhetoric has a “tendency towards moral uplift” which is contrasted with “the most devastatingly pessimistic novel among all the 9/11 narratives” (14). The initial position of DeLillo’s essay, that the attacks are evidence for a wider clash of civilizations, is clearly reflected in his novel.

Despite the vast changes to the geopolitical circumstances between the time when this essay appeared and the publication of *Falling Man* in 2007, remarkably little changes in the writing. In the essay, the anaphoric explanation for 9/11 is that “[i]t is America that drew

their fury. It is the high gloss of our modernity. It is the thrust of our technology. It is our perceived godlessness. It is the blunt force of our foreign policy. It is the power of American culture to penetrate every wall, home, life and mind” (*Ruins* 1); this is contrasted with the trump card of the terrorist, that “they are willing to die” (*Ruins* 2). The essay ends with “*Allahu akbar*. God is great” (40). In the novel, the explanation of the context of 9/11 remains the same. As Duvall and Marzec point out, whilst the attackers’ “political motivations are not fleshed out” in their own dialogue, their “position finds voice in the character of Ernst Hechinger,” (385) now named Martin Ridnour, the European former terrorist who interprets the new world that New Yorkers now inhabit. In a heated discussion between Lianne, her mother and Martin about the relationship between the terrorist motivations and the position of the Islamic world, Martin, the outside viewer, summarises: “One side has the capital, the labor, the technology, the armies, the agencies, the cities, the laws, the police and the prisons. The other side has a few men willing to die” (DeLillo *FM* 58); to which, presumably Lianne, replies ironically “God is great” (DeLillo *FM* 58). Despite the intervening wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and his increasingly sceptical views on the Bush administration’s actions after 9/11, DeLillo remains remarkably unchanged in the way his novel characterises the event as involving a simple binary of “us and them”. It is a binary that draws on outmoded visions of the East as a site of pre-modern villages filled with uncivilised outlaws. There might be a justification for authorial distance from such a worldview if it were not for the earlier personal response of the essay. It is also significant that in one of the few times when “DeLillo invites the reader to think historically,” (Duvall & Marzec 385) he does so through a reference to the European Red Army, an example unrelated to the 9/11 attacks.

Falling Man clearly reinforces in its structure the fundamental acceptance of the belief that Islam is essentially opposed to and incompatible with the West. However, it is

certainly not universally acknowledged as a novel without flaws for, as Gray identifies, its ideology is sometimes self-conscious: “the structure is too clearly foregrounded, the style excessively mannered; and the characters fall into postures of survival after 9/11 that are too familiar to invite much more than a gesture of recognition from the reader” (Gray 27). In its structure, *Falling Man* exemplifies the narrative of 9/11 as a matter of binaries rather than dialectic. The novel’s masterful control of time is instructive in how this is produced. Keith’s storyworld is narrated through trauma-prompted analepsis, told in the period after the attacks. By contrast, the peripheral re-telling of Hammad’s narrative covers the period leading up to the attacks. DeLillo maintains the two trajectories in parallel. The thrust of the plotting is on a literal collision course, which produces the devastating climax between Keith and Hammad. Its form most closely reflects the rhetoric of DeLillo’s earlier non-fiction response, as well as the Bush-era “with us or against us” worldview. There is a clear binary at work and East and West are at all times in disparate opposition and heading for oblivion, a haunting presence which has gone on to be one of the fundamental principles that underlie the canonised works in the 9/11 literary genre.

Misrecognition and its Effects

Falling Man undeniably is a novel about trauma. However, it can also be seen as an engagement with problems of social cohesion that have come to typify the Muslim position in the US. It is a site of a recognition-based struggle that clearly shows how the acts of 9/11 have consolidated the historical position of Islam in the cultural imaginary through a process of misrecognition. The failure to accurately recognise others is inherent in the structure of the novel. *Falling Man* has a triadic structure, with each part bearing the title of a misnamed character. The title of Part One, Bill Lawton, is a child's misunderstanding of the name Bin Laden. Part Two is titled Ernst Hechinger, which is the former name of Martin Ridnour (Lianne's mother's lover) who, as a former Red Army terrorist, was forced to create a new identity in order to avoid arrest. Part Three is named for David Janiak, the fictional performance artist known by his stage name "The Falling Man" seen throughout New York after the attacks. The relationship between names and identity, particularly the publicly identifiable nature of many Muslim names is also a recurring element of recognition in post-9/11 novels. It will be seen that not only do Arabic names carry an immediate identification as Other, but carry as well the connotation of threat. As Keith notes, it was often difficult to carry out simple everyday tasks like catching a cab when "every cabdriver in New York was named Muhammad" (DeLillo 34). Beyond the narrative structure, the characterisation of Muslims also contributes to the geopolitical worldview of the novel.

Hammad is the young fictional terrorist located initially in Germany, where the real-life attacker Mohammad Atta (known in the novel by the Arabic title Amir, meaning commander or leader) is grooming him to carry out the twin towers attack. The combination of characters based on the real terrorists and fictional Americans is quite a common approach in the genre, one also seen in Andre Dubus III's *The Garden of Last Days*, which will be

discussed in the next section. The characterisation of terrorists, however, consistently proves to be problematic with Hammad pressed into the service of his necessary purpose in the plot, which is to bring about the final attacks. This is ultimately Keith's story. The attempts at explaining Hammad's motivations consist of clichés and recycled media snippets, seemingly random items briefly referred to and held together by the motif of Hammad's growing beard. In his recent evaluation of Muslim identity in fiction, Geoffrey Nash assesses the characterisation of Hammad harshly: "DeLillo's attempt to humanise Hammad extends to showing him lusting after girls and secretly wanting to trim his beard" (103). Although a somewhat throwaway comment, this points to an important trend in contemporary characterisations of Muslims. Violent motivations of male characters are often linked to a pathological sexualisation, the traditional Orientalist threat of the over-sexualised Arab man to the innocent Western woman. In the short introduction to Hammad, there are several references to lusting after bike-riding German women and his affair with a local girl whilst coveting her roommate. There is also a reference to Hammad stepping over "the prone form of a brother in prayer as he made his way to the toilet to jerk off" (DeLillo 101). These examples show an underlying suspicion that for Muslim characters, outward signs of piety hide an inner insecurity or hypocrisy towards their own beliefs, and for DeLillo, the greatest threat comes from unity—brotherhood—the ubiquitous beard signifying indoctrination, that "[h]e was becoming one of them now, learning to look like them and think like them" (105). Whilst such a portrayal may reflect some of what is known about the terrorists' motivations, particularly the dangers of young men influenced by anti-Western rhetoric, it also harks back to some longstanding cultural prejudices. As identified by Said, the difference between Westerners and Arabs is that the former are "rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things" (Said *Orientalism* 49). Portraying Hammad as the gullible victim of Amir, swayed by

a belligerent cultural pressure to suppress his normal, human desires (whilst the reader is left oblivious to his motivations) plays directly into these stereotypes.

Misrecognition in *Falling Man* is exemplified by the inability of the characters to grasp the humanity, or personhood, initially of the terrorists but ultimately of any of the Muslim characters. The ability to evaluate others has become damaged, and what Honneth would call a “social pathology”, has disrupted the process of recognition. In other words, the portrayal of the perpetrators of 9/11 does not lead to an accurate recognition of their motivations and the unjustifiable nature of their actions but instead to the consolidation of deeply held, pre-existing misunderstandings or what Edward Said refers to as “a kind of second order knowledge . . . with a life of its own” (O 52). An example can be seen in the dialogue of Anna, a minor character from the Alzheimer’s group, who at one point comments that “it’s outside some place, on the other side of the world. You can’t get to these people or even see them in their pictures in the paper. You can see their faces but what does it mean? . . . You don’t know what to do. Because they’re a million miles outside your life” (DeLillo 80-81). This dialogue is reflective of very common vernacular responses to the attacks, born of fear and shock, but the language is also significant. The use of demonstrative determiners without a clear referent (“these people”) is part of a common linguistic pattern when referring ostensibly to the terrorist attackers, but are conceivably alluding more broadly to a nondescript and all-encompassing Muslim or Arab threat. Other examples are seen in *The Good Life* when, during a post-9/11 bomb scare evacuation, one “hysterical woman” cries out “For the love of God, what do these people want? What did we do to them?” (McInerney 119), and when seeking to understand whether the city faced a “pre-apocalyptic” or “merely near apocalyptic” situation, like the Cold War, Hans reaches out to his father-in-law whose cool response is that “This lot are a different kettle of fish. One simply doesn’t know what they are thinking” (O’Neill, 25). The early canon novels are consistent in their

portrayal of Muslims as a homogenised threat, indistinguishable from the perpetrators, and they reflect a more substantial trend. This depiction of Muslims is underwritten by the novels' inability to recognise individual personhood within a group.

Falling Man demonstrates the same type of misrecognition through the inability of traumatised New Yorkers to accurately name or recognise the faces of the perpetrators. (As seen previously, the misrecognition of names is in fact one of the key structural elements of the novel.) Anna identifies the difficulty of giving names to, presumably, the terrorist perpetrators although there is no referent used in conjunction with 'them': "Means nothing to call them names. I'm a name-caller from before I was born. Do I know what to call these people?" (DeLillo 81). When Lianne sees the face of a terrorist in the newspaper she notes that "[o]nly one of the nineteen seemed to have a face at this point" (DeLillo 23), through which we see again the inability to recognise the fundamentals of identity. Of course, this process of misrecognition is also evident in the perpetrators, a fact that DeLillo observes in his early essay, as does Versluys who notes that: "The terrorists . . . fail to recognize the humanity of their victims" (Versluys 19). The pattern of misrecognition extends to places as well, such as when Lianne admits to Martin that she cannot mentally picture his situation when he is outside of the US; she imagines him to be travelling between distant cities "and neither place has shape or form" (DeLillo 42). In a brief reference to the character of Omar H, the only non-terrorist, (presumed) Muslim character DeLillo hints at the dangers of misrecognition. Omar is the only member of the Alzheimer's writing group who does not wish to write about the planes because "it made him nervous" (DeLillo 76), the first sign that the effects of 9/11 on the general Muslim population of the US would produce its own kind of insecurity, a sense of guilt by association due to the lack of distinctions between Muslims. Omar is afraid to go out on the street. His fear of being misrecognised is driven by a feeling that people are looking at him. His only safe place is the writing group that acts as his own

“prayer room” (DeLillo 76). The process of misrecognition is essential to the clash of civilizations model and becomes an entrenched linguistic pattern that extends the descriptions of the terrorist perpetrators to the wider Muslim community, and the immigrant community in general.

The lack of recognisable markers of identity in Muslim characters extends to the lack of intimate relationships. Indeed, not one of novels discussed in this thesis contains a Muslim character who has a significant and stable intimate relationship and not one of them has children; there is no characterisation outside of the perfunctory. Take, for example, Hammad; in his role as terrorist there can be no complications of relationships with family or friends, there can be no personal history, there can be no humanity or grounds for empathy. The genuine discussion about the complications of political terror and contemporary geopolitics are left to Lianne, Nina and Martin to discuss as DeLillo resorts to “explaining terrorist politics through a Westerner” (De Rosa *Alterity* 170), avoiding the possibility that explanations of the attacks might be confused with justification. Consider the contrast in the characters of Keith and Hammad. For Keith, the events of 9/11 instigate a retreat into sex, family and past memories in an attempt to achieve intimacy, although as a therapeutic strategy it ultimately fails. When these same issues are addressed in the Muslim other, they become perverse, absent or pathologised; Hammad has to “fight against the need to be normal” (DeLillo *FM* 105). This writerly choice may seem necessary considering the subject matter and ultimate destiny of Hammad, but it is identified here because of its wider discursive applications to Muslim representation, beyond the portrayal of terror. These qualities become particularly problematic when considered in conjunction with a secondary element of the novel, namely the homogenisation of Islam.

Representation as Reification

In this section, I will examine DeLillo's portrayal of the various cultural elements that contribute to the exclusion of *any* acceptable form of Muslim presence, not just in the obvious rejection of violent extremism, but also in the way he portrays Muslim culture as outside of and incompatible with Western culture. Through the concept of reification, as it is explored by Axel Honneth, I consider how Western art in the novel is used to extrapolate the qualities of the terrorists to the expression of Islam as a whole in order to create a commodified otherness; the novel embodies a philosophy of otherness which condenses the other into a conglomerated mass without specifics of time and place, naming, humanisation, or character differentiation.

Recognition, by contrast, is intersubjective; it requires the maintenance of the dialogic, the individual in the many. The subject must attain that status in order to participate in the intersubjective. Recognition is therefore antithetical to the homogenizing impulse, but there is a need to be circumspect in allocating what Duvall and Marzec identify as the "dialogic tension" between "productive and unproductive elements" in a text (394). These tensions are part of a complex interaction and the mere identification that they "may be implicated in supporting America's War on Terror or in creating the Islamic Other does not mean that it might not also be opening spaces at other moments for questioning those self same matters" (394). It is in this attitude that DeLillo's intricate oeuvre operates.

The perception of the supremacy of Western culture plays an important role in the binary worldview of *Falling Man*. For Nina and several of the characters, a retreat into the Western tradition of art and literature is consolatory; Nina simply wants to retreat to her home with "her Europeans" (34) whilst art collector Martin has a number of European artworks which become a means for Lianne to attempt to contextualise her world pre- and

post-9/11. By contrast, in a kind of neo-Orientalism, Islamic culture becomes identifiable only with the fear of intrusion, interjection, and interruption. In a tacit acknowledgement of the historical roots of this cultural clash, the first mention of Islam in the novel is Lianne's shocked observation of a postcard bearing a copy of Shelley's 1818 poem *The Revolt of Islam* (9). Although the "revolt" of the poem's title is a noun referring to a revolution set in a fictional Islamic empire, without this contextualisation it could easily be read as a verb signifying disgust. (This was clearly not Shelley's intention; the poem, having very little to say about Islam *per se*, is a symbolic response to French Revolutionary ideals; however, the impression, whether ironically or not, is easily inculcated in the reader's mind.) During the post-9/11 time of crisis, there is an entrenchment of the most traditional of Orientalist distortions, with DeLillo returning to the apogee of the Romantic era as a reinforcement of the concept of Orientalism. By contrast, the novel resists any reference to a cosmopolitan or universalist understanding of Islam. Along with the previously mentioned trend in 9/11 literature that marks a return to traditional and domestic narrative, Cilano, in her Introduction to *From Solidarity to Schisms*, marks literary nostalgia as another common element. She defines this as "a reliance on older literary techniques and texts that seeks to trace the continuity of Western history and culture straight through 9/11" (21). The outcome of such stylistic choices is to represent a "regressive turn to colonialist thinking, a consolidation of 'home,'" (Cilano 21) which is evident in *Falling Man*.

The most notable element of *Falling Man*'s treatment of the cultural interaction between the West and Islam is the motif of music. This is introduced when, still adjusting to Keith's return after the attacks, Lianne hears "world music" drifting through her hallway (DeLillo 24). She becomes increasingly disturbed by her Greek neighbour's continuous playing of the music; to Lianne's ear the music is "Middle Eastern, North African, Bedouin songs perhaps or Sufi dances, music located in Islamic tradition" (DeLillo 84). The

observations about the music are interspersed with Lianne's thoughts in a kind of stream of consciousness where influences from the media, her memories of her father, his death, Keith's traumatised re-entry into her life, and her growing anger and desire for revenge intermingle. Lianne's reactions escalate until the music takes on a significance that concretises her anger at anything identifiable as Islamic (even incorrectly, in another case of misrecognition). The passage begins with the intrusion of the music into Lianne's sleepless anxiety:

“She was awake, middle of the night, eyes closed, mind running and she felt time pressing in, and threat, a kind of beat in her head” (DeLillo 84).

It is immediately followed by the non sequitur, one-sentence paragraph referencing the media:

“She read everything they wrote about the attacks” (DeLillo 84).

And then by another, a memory:

“She thought of her father. She saw him coming down an escalator, in an airport maybe” (DeLillo 84).

The next thought, relates to her rekindled relationship with Keith, and foreshadows a connection with Hammad via the symbolism of the beard:

“Keith stopped shaving for a time, whatever that means” (DeLillo 84).

This cycle of thoughts continues with increasing descriptive detail for several pages; seemingly random, they always circle back to the imposition of the music. The presence of the music acts as a continual irruption into Lianne's present world and she begins to fantasise about how she will address the neighbour, Elena, about the offending sounds, rehearsing in her mind the various escalating interventions, "She might adopt a posture of fake civility," then, "Knock on the door. Mention the noise. Don't call it music, call it noise" (DeLillo 84). What is the nature of her objection? Lianne outlines once again the threatening perception of

unity: “They’re the ones who think alike, talk alike, eat the same food at the same time. She knew this wasn’t true. Say the same prayers, word for word, in the same prayer stance, day and night, following the arc of sun and moon” (DeLillo 86). At the scene’s climax, Lianne lashes out in an irrational response to what she sees as an unjustified act of resistance from her neighbour, Elena. As Nash points out, neither the neighbour nor the music appear to be Arab or Islamic and thus it is her own misperception that causes Lianne’s reaction. Lianne sees the music as a political and religious act that she feels compelled to act against, almost patriotically.

DeLillo’s use of the music motif performs an important function in generalizing the anger, hatred and confusion from the terrorist perpetrators to Islamic culture and civilization *in toto*. It is clear that the threat Lianne feels is from a generalised Islam, identified by a unity of ritual and belief, homogenised into a fantasy of invariability despite her own acknowledgement that she knows this not to be true; still, she is willing to go along with the dominant rhetoric. Even though the narrative voice, focalised through Lianne’s character, chastises her for her own generalisation and even though she knows that her assumptions are flawed, this does not alter her views, for the desire to address the offending music overwhelms her. Even the simplest element of everyday life becomes a validation for Lianne’s agonistic position: “They didn't own, they rented, like people in the Middle Ages” (DeLillo 86). Although begrudgingly acknowledging the music as beautiful, Lianne feels it is also “a certain form of political and religious statement” (DeLillo 87) which seems to force its way into her thoughts, despite her resistance, beyond her own ability to reason. The section finishes with her finally returning to sleep, “following the arc of sun and moon” (DeLillo 89) in a repeated phrase used previously to refer to Muslim prayer, a nod to the fact that Islam has now become a shared experience and a part of her world. The structure of this passage makes all of the necessary connections to reify the threat of terror into the

widespread fear of all things foreign, especially those that are Islamic or perceived as Islamic. The importance of this incident is evidence of what Gray identifies as one of the “limitations of these texts . . . their encounters with strangeness” (Gray 32), and it is when Lianne is confronted with "strangeness" in a seemingly benign form that it becomes incorporated into the complex inner construction of her worldview which involves reconciling the trauma of her past, her present and her relationship with a world that has been reconceived as indiscriminately menacing.

Here I turn to Axel Honneth’s notion of reification. In his 2008 work *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, Honneth undertakes a detailed exploration of the concept. He begins by specifically considering the term in response to the work of Georg Lukacs in which it was heavily associated with its Hegelian-Marxist connotations. Reification, put simply by Lukacs, signifies that a relation between people has become mediated through and through by commodity exchange and thus has taken on the character of a thing. For Honneth, however, the idea, which had lost some contemporary currency, is worthy of re-evaluation in light of its broader social applications. He considers reification as the “core critical category paralleling the normative centrality of recognition” (Deranty *Beyond Comm* 465), and so its position in considering literary recognition is also central.

Honneth begins his revision of the concept of reification by identifying how it extends beyond ideas of commodity exchange and refers to process by which the objectification of others and things has become “second nature” (98) in capitalist society. In a normative sense “it signifies a type of human behaviour that violates moral or ethical principles by not treating other subjects in accordance with their characteristics as human beings, but instead as numb and lifeless objects—as ‘things’ or ‘commodities’”(Honneth *Reification* 19). Honneth notes that such an occurrence is notable in “recent novels and narratives that radiate an aesthetic

aura of the creeping commercialisation of our everyday life” (92).³⁰ He goes on to suggest that these novels perform (and, it is implied, construct) a kind of social reification:

By using particular kinds of stylistic devices or drawing upon certain specific lexica, these literary works suggest that we view the inhabitants of our social world as interacting with themselves and others as they would with lifeless objects—without a trace of inner sentiment or any attempt at understanding the other’s point of view.
(Honneth *Reification* 18)

This notion of social reification has clear resonances with the monolithic construction of the Muslim imaginary that DeLillo accesses. The central premise of Honneth’s view of reification is that it involves a *forgetting* of the stance of recognition that is necessary to avoid pathological social problems. In short, the commodified nature of relationships with others and objects becomes so entrenched in everyday life and social behaviour that mere cognition cannot overcome it (as seen in Lianne’s inability to act in accordance with her intellectual understanding that the neighbour’s actions were not related to the terrorists’.)

Reification, according to Honneth, is the product of the forgetting of an antecedent stance of recognition. Amnesia is a recurring idea in *Falling Man*, which has a thematic interest in forgetting, both cultural and personal, including through Lianne’s father’s Alzheimer’s-driven suicide, her involvement with the Alzheimer’s support writing group, and as a result of post-9/11 trauma. Whilst usually read as an outcome of traumatic experience, I interpret this thematic amnesia as a manifestation of misrecognition, an inability to undertake the normal process of recognition that underlies social interaction. In *Falling Man*, there is a cultural reification that occurs through the literary elements identified, which serve the purpose of placing Muslims in the necessarily oppositional position that the post-9/11 national narrative requires (for reasons of national mourning, military engagement and

³⁰ Honneth suggests Michel Houellebecq and Raymond Carver as examples.

economic imperatives). It is the extrapolation from the identification and representation of the 9/11 terrorists to a generalised allocation of their qualities to the idea of “Islam” that constitutes the transition from an abstract concept to a concretised thing; Islam becomes a threatening, oppositional presence in the post-9/11 narrative. This has certain inevitable conclusions; for example, in its reified state, Islamic culture can only exist in a monolithic form without context or nuance. It is on this basis that Mahmoud Mamdani grounds his good Muslim/bad Muslim paradigm and concludes that the process of making Muslims ahistorical and apolitical is in service to a presupposed negative position, the bad Muslim. The individualised human is removed from association with “Muslim” and in its stead there emerges a cultural imaginary that serves a wider political and ideological purpose which Duvall and Marzec identify: “Without a doubt the policing custodians of culture were transforming the status of 9/11 as an event of historical singularity (if you believe Baudrillard’s thesis) into a commodity that could only be discussed and claimed by a select few—the few that subscribed to American exceptionalism and innocence” (394).

Honneth’s reconsideration of reification, and his observation of it as a literary phenomenon, is part of a broader ethical turn that relates to Gray and De Rosa’s call in their entreaty for a more ethical basis to the understanding of post-9/11 literature. In acknowledging the paucity of literary responses to Otherness since 9/11, Gray argues for “an enactment of difference: not only the capacity to recognize that some kind of alteration of imaginative structures is required to register the contemporary crisis . . . but also the ability and willingness to imaginatively act on that recognition” (30). The identification of the ways in which authors have enacted a reification of Otherness is an essential element in this analysis. I have previously demonstrated how Othering has become the dominant model for understanding literary representations of Islam. Whilst such an observation about literature after 9/11 is certainly not new, it is clear that in cases where the consideration of Muslim

otherness stops at the identification of neo-Orientalist tropes, the “ethical imperative” that De Rosa speaks of has not been achieved. In fact it has achieved the opposite by undermining a broader imperative to avoid “static, binary conceptualisations of hegemonic cultural paradigms” (Park Sorensen 12). So, whilst “Gray dismisses current 9/11 fiction in favor of an as-yet-unwritten multicultural fiction of 9/11,” (Duvall and Marzec 383) as Duvall and Marzec correctly point out, assertions by Gray, Rothberg and De Rosa about what 9/11 literature ought to have done to provide a more global and historical, less domestic response serve to impose a normative function on novels. Such prescriptive responses are problematic as they are “sure that they know what 9/11 ought to be doing” (Duvall and Mazec 384). But it is not necessary or desirable to implore American authors to engage directly with the Islamic other, just as it would not be necessary for *Mrs Dalloway* to engage with the Serbian other, as Duvall points out. (Besides, Updike and others have already attempted such engagement without success.) What is important, however, is to note what substitutes for the cultural imaginary in place of these historical, religious or political understandings.

In later chapters I demonstrate that there is a literary maturity that can be reached through the consideration of issues of recognition where, beyond the reification of the Other, progressively more complex and nuanced readings can be achieved in the consideration of Muslim representation. In this regard, Honneth’s recognition-theoretical framework becomes one of literary praxis; there is a need for the reconsideration of the position of Islam in literary analysis and theory. What is needed is a response that adequately allows for non-binary critique whilst avoiding normative and recuperative calls for what literature ought to be, a response that allows scholars to “connect these principles to the world in which they live as citizens” as Said has it (*Humanism and Democratic Criticism* 6).

Chapter 3: Recognition and the Spectre of Terror

“Repression in both its psychoanalytical sense and its political sense...ends up producing, reproducing and regenerating the very thing it seeks to disarm.”

Jacques Derrida

It is to be expected that the fiction produced in the wake of 9/11 would have an interest in terrorism and Islam, and the relationship between the two. This chapter looks at the portrayal of terror in the post-9/11 context and how the early canon struggled with its engagement with the archetype of the terrorist. Within this group of novels, characters range from those who fit neatly into the violent, anti-Western, sexually repressed and exotically fascinating tropes of the Orient, to the more nuanced and ambiguous depictions of contemporary hybridity and global power. The maintenance of a monolithic Islamic Other is crucial to the worldview of this group of novels, and the stagnation of post-9/11 novels with regard to portraying the complexity of Islam and Muslims is partly explained by the understandable centrality of terrorism to the plotting in some of the early novels. These novels have been almost universally unsuccessful in creating characters and worlds that go beyond superficial reflections of media discourse and the contributions of mainstream terrorism studies. This chapter considers those novels that engage with the terrorist narrative as central to the post-9/11 experience. In these novels terrorism becomes further entrenched in the Western imagination as being essentially synonymous with Islam. Whilst this group includes novels by such authors as André Dubus III, Mohsin Hamid and Lorraine Adams, the two examples considered in depth are John Updike’s *Terrorist* (2006), in many ways the “flagship” post-9/11 terror novel, and Australian author Richard Flanagan’s *The Unknown Terrorist* (2006). The majority of terrorism novels, with the exception of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, are

widely agreed to be poor literary works even in cases where the author has had a substantial and successful career, as is certainly the case with Updike and Flanagan. They do, however, perform an important function in contributing to an understanding of how the West sees Islam and its historically derived relationships with violence, perverted sexuality and anti-modernity.

Terrorism itself is well-recognized as one of the unstable terms that underpin post-9/11 studies. Since the 1980s, the US Federal Bureau of Investigations has produced an unclassified status report called “Terrorism in the United States”. The most recent adds data from the period 2002 to 2005 to the existing data from the 1970s onwards. It provides the following note about defining terrorism:

There is no single, universally accepted, definition of terrorism. Terrorism is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations as “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (28 C.F.R. Section 0.85).

The term is used in most of the canonical texts to mean terror as it is experienced and understood in the West. It does not consider examples of violent extremist action in the Muslim world, where the vast majority of terrorist actions take place and where the victims of those actions are overwhelmingly Muslim. Overseas acts of terrorism are essentially absent from the post-9/11 narrative genre. Despite the fluidity of the term, representations of terrorism in the early canon mostly acquiesce to stereotypical images. Despite this, there is evidence that the term is inherently complicated. Peripheral issues of state-sponsored violence, fringe ‘lone wolf’ actors, and the use of defining acts as terrorism for rhetorical gain are also apparent in the terrorism novels.

This chapter re-considers the terrorist novel within the theoretical framework of recognition. It poses an essential question: can individuals and groups become unworthy of or outside of the realm of recognition? In other words, is the literary depiction of the terrorist an ethical impossibility? The terrorist archetype embodies this dilemma. Indeed, Zurn uses ideologically-driven terrorists as an exemplar of “evil claimants” (90) when he proposes a counterargument to Honneth’s theory. Zurn continues, if recognition were extended to all regardless of “behaviour, aims and character” (90) then not only would the idea of esteem become meaningless, but the whole theory would seem “worse than worthless” (90). Further, what of those situations when recognition is extended to a group who also undermine the recognition of others. The examples of human rights abuses often associated with the Muslim world, such as the restriction of women’s and LGBTQ rights, are obvious examples. Such examples induce fear particularly when they are seen as contaminating liberal democracies via their immigrant communities. Crimes such as so-called honour killings or underage marriages are seen as conclusive evidence that Muslims do not and cannot belong in the West. Do such actions create an environment where recognition can and should be withheld or disregarded? This chapter considers these liminal spaces of recognition through a focus on terrorism, particularly as a component of characterisation.

In order to consider the relationship between recognition and terrorism, it is first necessary to look at the current understanding of Muslim literary representations and their synonymous association with Otherness. As Banita identifies, post-9/11 novels are “constantly torn between individual insecurity and the interpersonal imperative of engaging with Otherness” (*Plotting Justice* 12) and this has at its root “a pre-ontological ethical relationship to the Other in the Levinasian tradition” (*PJ* 19). Not all critiques of Otherness are as clear in identifying their conceptual roots; there is a shorthand at play in the use of the term that denies the concept its long, complex and sometimes contradictory philosophical

history, and reinforces its deployment as a euphemism for Muslim. As Christopher Peterson points out, the notion of the other has quite varied meanings, and these variations are especially apparent in the differences between the dominant ideas of Levinas and Derrida. He notes that the development of the:

notion of an absolute other has most often been conceived pejoratively by American cultural studies, where 'other' usually refers to a racial, gendered, or ethnic other that the dominant culture very much wants to erase. Whereas Levinasian ethics champions, even idealizes, alterity, the production of the racial, gendered, or ethnic other is what cultural studies largely sees as its mission to contest. (Peterson 93)

Peterson goes on to note in his discussion of the contradiction inherent in Derrida's other compared with Levinas' other: Derrida's work seeks to "displace such extreme possibilities: the relation between the same and other emerges as a chiasmus. The other is always 'in' the same, and vice versa" (94). Recognition theory incorporates these multiple aspects in its attentiveness to both the intersubjective and the socio-political elements of group recognition.

The ambiguity in the use of the term other in post-9/11 studies presents two significant problems. The allocation of the position of generalised Otherness to what is clearly a specifically Muslim other hinders exploration of the specifics of that identity. Catherine Morley, to single out just one example, in her 2011 article which surveys the current position of post-9/11 literature, refers to Updike's *Terrorist* by asserting that he "manifestly failed to understand or to offer a convincing portrait of the other" (719), by which she means the protagonist, who is specifically a "home-grown" potential terrorist. She also refers to "the other's encounter with the American scene" (719) by which she is referring to general experiences of immigration. In a third sense she compares DeLillo's "considered encounter with the other" (723), by which she means his representation of the actual perpetrators of 9/11. As this small example shows, the term "other" suffers from a lack of lexical clarity,

does not always serve its intended purpose, and may in fact conflate vastly different experiences of alterity. Second, far from being understood as a concept interconnected with the nature of Self, the Other has become a way of reifying difference. Versluys, in his chapter “September 11 and the Other,” makes the interconnection explicit: “The Other (upper-case) as a concept involves the recognition of the singular and self-generated identity of someone else, in particular someone belonging to a different ethnicity or culture” (150). Apart from being somewhat over-simplified, Versluys’ account immediately applies the conceptual notion of the Other to the particularity of the individual, “someone else”, and as a result, despite an attempted ethical turn, the Other becomes entrenched in a simple binary construction which reinforces an essentialist position. In other words, Versluys fails to recognise the Other as also a Self, or the Self as somebody else’s Other. It also suggests Otherness as a discrete identity (“singular and self-generated”), thereby undermining the intersubjective or socially constructed nature of the self and other, a position whereby the nature of Islam is understood as being inseparable from its relation with the West. De Rosa has identified this difficulty: “While academics demand an ethical engagement with Arab and Muslim Americans, they unwittingly reify a binary distinction of Other-Same” (*Analyzing Lit* 1), and in such a construction there can be no scope for understanding the influence of each upon the other. Versluys goes further in his discussion of Otherness and accepts that during states of exception, a process of “othering” becomes difficult to avoid, and is therefore tolerated and even preferred: “In times of war, the process of ‘othering’ easily takes precedence over the recognition of the Other” (151). This crucial statement isolates the tension (or perhaps there is no such tension since it happens “easily”) that exists between the reification and the recognition of the Other. In short, it is accepted that recognition is superseded by the presence of the *evil* Other.

I contend that the generalised Otherness allocated to representations of Muslims is connected with the failings of those representations in terms of characterisation. As De Rosa summarises, “[n]umerous literary critics have argued that 9/11 fiction generally fails to represent the other” (*Alterity and the Radical Other* 159). The generalised Other becomes a source that leads to flat characters; in order to achieve a sense of literary identification or recognition, characterisation needs to be made specific, complex and conflicted.²¹ When they do draw on cultural and historical contexts, “they tend to homogenise historically and geographically discrete moral visions, rather than differentiate them” (Banita *PJ* 19).²² They rarely engage with the representation of Muslims and everyday life. The failings of the terrorist archetype are a central element in identifying and describing literary recognition in the post-9/11 genre. The focus on terror has also exposed some of the dubious expectations placed on novelists. They are “supposed to practice imaginative identification . . . to have a special affinity with the Other” (Versluys 150). This is not a particularly desirable goal, nor the purpose of literature. Whether the expectations placed on novelists are reasonable or not, there has been a tacit agreement that although writers like DeLillo and Updike have failed to avoid the temptation to “fixate understandable anger on a well-defined enemy,” the challenges of their task were deemed to be ultimately insurmountable: “How, without for a moment condoning violence or implying moral equivalency, can one explore the roots of terrorism and explain the grounds of its existence?” (Versluys 151). The answer came that novelists have not, in any convincing way, given such an explanation, yet their attempts to do so have exposed deep cultural values.

There is an increasing awareness of the demonisation of Islam and perceptions of the diverse Muslim population as monolithic. These practices have been consistently identified in

²¹ See further discussion from Felski on Recognition and Simpson “Cognition is Recognition: Literary Knowledge and Textual Face”.

²² Interestingly throughout this discussion Banita refers to the Holocaust, the war in the Balkans and the fall of the Berlin wall as reference points, not interaction with the Muslim world.

the disciplines of media studies, international relations and in some literary scholarship. However, they have remained difficult to supersede. As Edward Said lucidly summarises in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*:

Since September 11, terror and terrorism have been thrust into the public consciousness with amazing insistence [which reinforces] two flawed suppositions: one, that their civilization (Islam) is deeply opposed to ours (the West)...second, the preposterous notion that to analyze the political history or even the nature of terror, in the process of trying to define it, is equivalent to justifying it. (8)

To delve into the dark world of the *jihadi* terrorist is as unavoidable for critics as it has been for authors, but it is a necessity of analysis that should not be confused with justification. In order to extend the understanding of the contemporary position of Islam in the American literary field, there is a need to explore new theoretical perspectives and develop a more nuanced terminology that transcends the current tendency to entrench, even inadvertently, the binary of Islam and the West and the perception that Islamic cultures are an intrinsically more violent culture than Western cultures. This is especially true with regard to political discourse where the term Islamist must seemingly be taken to refer to the political identity of all Muslims. There has been insufficient critical engagement with this group of novels with regard to their construction of otherness, and the literary aspects that contribute to that construction. This chapter is framed using one of the most contentious terms in both the representation of Islamic terror and debates over Islam in general—*jihad*, the Arabic word for struggle.

Since the publication of Honneth's seminal work *The Struggle for Recognition*, emphasis has been placed on the recognition component of the title. This chapter shifts attention on the component of "struggle" which is given equal importance in the title. This chapter reconfigures the representation of Muslims, including the terrorist archetype and

counter-terrorism strategies, as a site of various levels of striving, contestation and conflict. It argues that the limited understanding of *jihad*, which foregoes historical and contemporary debates about the concept from within Islamic scholarship, contributes to superficiality in both literary depictions of Muslims and critical responses to them. I explore the terrorist as gendered and racialised figure in Updike's work and the marked connection between sexuality and terrorism in Flanagan's. I also give consideration to terrorism in the West as an example of what Honneth would term a social pathology.

Islam and Terror

In this section, I argue that theories of recognition provide a better basis for explaining the failure of the terrorist narrative than the idea that the portrayal of terrorism presents an insurmountable ethical challenge for the Western novelist. There have been, of course, numerous times in literary history when novelists have effectively captured the experiences of characters or historical figures that are criminal, sociopathic or simply pure evil. There is no inherent reason why depictions of the terrorist should remain superficial, ahistorical and disingenuous. What the novels of Updike and DeLillo demonstrate is an inability to recognise their subjects, the complexity of their identities and their experiences of everyday life. They also fail to recognize the possibility that terrorist acts (however misguided and grotesque) are an act of political struggle rather than religious inevitability.

The opening lines of John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) reveal two things: that the acclaimed author is depicting the internal voice of a young religious man whose future can be guessed from the novel's title; and that concerns of gender and sexuality are going to be a dominant feature of that voice. It is a voice of hatred, anger and exclusion; it is the voice of someone who feels under attack from an unnamed enemy as "they seek to take away my God" (Updike 1). The novel tells the story of Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy, a New Jersey high school student who lives with his lapsed Irish Catholic mother and whose father, an Egyptian graduate student, has been absent most of Ahmad's life. Ahmad, bright and articulate but clearly an outsider, comes to the attention of his secular Jewish guidance counsellor, Jack Levy, who takes an interest in this unusual boy. Ultimately, Levy counteracts the influence of Ahmad's Sheikh, a questionable character who has commissioned Ahmad to drive an explosives-filled truck into a Manhattan building. The story of Ahmad, who is isolated and vulnerable, and is

coerced by his America-hating religious teacher into carrying out an act of incredible destruction against innocent citizens is one that is pulled straight from the headlines. But is this claim to realism justified or is it another example of the cycle of hyperrealism between media discourse and literature so typical of the genre?

In the burgeoning field of terrorism studies, there is seemingly an endless volume of research into the motivations, ideological bearings and actions of terrorists, both actual and potential. Terrorism studies paints a difficult and complicated picture from which simple conclusions cannot be reached. The academic discipline itself is in a battle over the power it wields; it faces claims that it supports counter-terrorism strategies that promote a heteronormative, white nationalism (Puar & Rai). Much of the complexity available in the critical study of terrorism, particularly the labyrinthine politics of the postcolonial Middle East, is not reflected in Updike's novel, nor in several of the other post-9/11 terror narratives. The character of Ahmad has had no real contact with his father or his Egyptian heritage; his transition into terrorism is never satisfactorily explained, merely portrayed as an easy and inevitable step based on his disillusionment with contemporary American values. Instead, terrorist novels like Updike's rely on certain commonalities of the cultural discourse of Islam that are both increasingly sophisticated and yet remain stereotypical. Apocryphal narratives abound, such as that terrorists are nearly always young men driven by sexual frustration, or that they become "radicalized" in mosques by evil religious leaders. These certainly seem like real threats and give Updike's novel a certain claim to accuracy, but they more reflect the news cycle than what is currently known about the motivations of domestic terrorists. In the early years after 9/11, the majority of terror plots identified within mosques were not cases of radicalisation but involved FBI informants who were embedded in the community.²³ They were often people with strong financial motivations to create an opportunity for prosecution.

²³ See the Human Rights Watch/Columbia Law School report "Illusions of Justice: Human Rights Abuses in US Terrorism Prosecutions" (2014).

Whilst, of course, novels are fictional and not required to be mimetic of reality, it remains important to look at the ways in which the works of DeLillo and Updike perform certain commonly-held if erroneous beliefs about the manifestation of terrorism.

Updike's approach echoes the psychodynamically based understanding of terrorists that has dominated since 9/11. Can we "get inside the head" of perpetrators to understand their motivations, who they are, why they "hate us"? This aim was taken up by some novelists after 9/11, but it forms part of a much wider process of reinforcing civilizational limits that Puar and Rai identify in their highly pertinent article "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The war on terrorism and the production of docile patriots": "The forms of power now being deployed in the war on terror in fact draw on processes of quarantining a racialised and sexualised other, even as Western norms of the civilised subject provide the framework through which the very same others become subjects to be corrected" (117). The terrorist as sexualised threat (explored later in this chapter) is a key trope, deployed as part of a political strategy to control the population at home.

The characterisation of Ahmad is of interest because of its failings rather than its successes, particularly if this failure is framed as a problem of recognition. The portrayal of Muslims in early post-9/11 literature ranges from "resistance to represent, or even think, alterity in literary forms to the desire of exploring, if not mastering it through characterisation" (Mansutti 106). John Updike's novel has been almost universally criticised for its failings of characterisation, and yet it is still given a prominent position in the early 9/11 canon (no doubt, for Updike and for DeLillo, this is due partly to their previous standing and their early journalistic responses to the attacks which captured the shock and outrage of the events).²⁴ The novel's exploration, if not its mastery, of the terrorist character is an attempt to understand the motivations for such incomprehensible actions. Although it does not

²⁴ See Updike's piece in the article "Tuesday, and After" in the September 24, 2001 issue of *The New Yorker*.

convince, an analysis of this lack of authenticity sheds light on significant issues. In her review of the novel for *The New York Times* Michiko Kakutani is scathing. She focuses on the unrealistic portrayal of Ahmad as the novel's central weakness: "unfortunately, the would-be terrorist in this novel turns out to be a completely unbelievable individual" (2006). Presumably, "Mr Updike found the idea of such a person so incomprehensible that he, at some point, abandoned any attempt to depict his inner life and settled instead for giving us a static one-dimensional stereotype" (2006). There are any number of critical responses that agree with this: "Ahmad comes out as a completely vapid creation, lacking plausibility, humour and credibility and even an understanding of what he wants and why he wants it" (Al-Leithy 205). James Wood in his review "*Jihad and the Novel*" goes furthest in explaining the reason for the novel's problems as an issue of free indirect discourse—a combination of Ahmad's completely unrealistic diction and Updike's continually imposing authorial voice. Ahmad is prone to sound as though English is his second language: he explains to Jack Levy that his father "decamped. Is that the correct word? I encountered it in an autobiographical memoir by the great American writer Henry Miller" (33). This is an example of the continually self-conscious dialogue that intervenes in the reader's experience of Ahmad as an American teenager whose first language is English and who has grown up with an English-speaking mother. Updike's character symbolises the difficulty of this novelistic endeavour: the problem of understanding Islam through a paradigm of violence and dehumanisation contrasted with the need to address the genuine localised issue of "the unnamed source of America's post-9/11 fear: the Islamist enemy within" (Hartnell 396). Ultimately, his character does not add to an understanding of this paradox because there is no level on which the reader can identify with or recognise Ahmad; he is simply too inconsistently and unrealistically drawn a character for readers to be able to make sense of his motivations.

The nature of this difficult balance is partly one of terminology. Just like “Islam” and “the West,” the term terrorism itself is so ideologically laden as to no longer serve any clear critical function. Edward Said refers to the “demonisation of an unknown enemy, for whom the label ‘terrorist’ serves the general purpose of keeping people stripped up and angry” (*Orientalism* xxvi). Debates rage between those who wish to eliminate Islam (and therefore Muslims) from the US and those who see their thriving as the sign of a healthy liberal democracy. They are a community who have become contested ground. Despite the seriousness and devastation caused by regular incidents of “Islamic terrorism”, the scale of the threat in the West remains exaggerated in the public’s mind. Derrida notes the need to identify a number of enemies (Chechnya in the case of Russia, or Palestine in the case of Israel) as terrorists and as homogenised groups, “but only as terrorists . . . who share the same logic or are part of the same network” in order to justify not just counterterrorism but an international war: “The ‘facts’ clearly show that these distinctions are lacking in rigour, impossible to maintain, and easily manipulated for certain ends” (qtd. in Borradori 110). The complications of terrorism are not new, and alongside the growing body of mainstream terrorism studies there is a body of critical studies of terrorism which questions the quality of some mainstream research, identifies its Western and right-leaning biases, and which interrogates “widely accepted ‘wisdom’ about terrorism in ways that were quite unthinkable in the early years following the 2001 attacks” (Jackson, Smythe & Gunning 1). Obviously, the novels of the early post-9/11 period do not reflect this more mature view and fiction is not and need not be measured by its historical accuracy, but in the works of Updike, Dubus and other typical terrorism narratives we see the perpetuation of a particular kind of worldview, one that is historically connected to Orientalist ideas and is yet a distinctive response to its time. (In Chapter 5 I will consider the changes to the genre in its second wave, including different perspectives on political violence.)

The second, and more significant, problem of terminology in the terrorism sub-genre is the politically all-encompassing idea of Islamism. Political Islam is reduced to a single entity. It, therefore, does not encompass a political schema that incorporates variances in political systems, ideologies and beliefs, including from authoritarian to democratic systems or from conservative to progressive positions. (Again, in Part 2 of this thesis I discuss novels that diverge from the dominant representation of Muslims as politically and socially ultra-conservative.) This ideological dominance of Islamism as almost the only possible portrayal of the political identities of Muslims effectively homogenises and reifies their otherness in the Western context as a matter of political expediency. But as Amr Sabet notes, the “politics of Islam do not inevitably reflect Islamic politics” (1). Muslims in the West have varied political identities and they participate in a complex, burgeoning and innovative dialogue about the development of Western Islam, but these are not a part of Muslim portrayals in the early post-9/11 canon. As will be seen in future chapters, the expansion of Muslim identities to include political agency, in both the private and public elements of their lives, and recourse to the protections of democratic institutions are features of the divergent, second wave of 9/11 novels.

The construction of the early terrorist archetype is remarkably consistent. Updike’s work (and the same is seen in Dubus) makes use of the theologically-derived cultural signifiers of Islam as self-evident markers of violence, intellectual gullibility and single-mindedness. Novels such as *Terrorist* rely on a misappropriated theology to support their view of Islam as a religion solely defined by its belief in jihad as violent opposition to the West. The novel is littered with Qur’anic verses but “[o]nly the verses that tackle the issues of jihad and martyrdom are quoted in the text” (Al-Leithy 205). In these novels the portrayal of Islam is at its most literal, in that they directly quote Qur’anic verses. However, as others have pointed out, this element of the novels is not very sophisticated. Gray notes that in the

work of Dubus, “the learning is not carried lightly enough” (79); Mishra’s assessment is that due to the poor standard of hasty research “assembled from jihad-mongering journalism and propaganda videos and websites, their identikit terrorists” are one-dimensional, and they fail to truly explore cultural otherness (7). Islamic theology is instrumentalised in service to the narrative and contributes to Ahmad’s stilted internal dialogue as he imagines a Heaven maintained by: “feeding its dark-eyed houris, swelling its heavy-hanging fruits . . . as described in the ninth sura of the Qur’an (2). It might be possible to see the novels as portraying Muslims at their most ontic, but this representation is still a self-consciously constructed kind of “Islam as religion”, distanced from an authentic cultural experience of everyday Muslim-ness. Indeed, the inclusion of everyday life more broadly as an element of characterisation is one of the essential elements of literary recognition that is absent from *Terrorist*, and many other novels of the field. Felski identifies the importance of the everyday as a democratic concept, one that “recognises the paramount shared reality of a mundane, material embeddedness in the world” (79) and it is this acknowledgement of the quotidian that is absent from the portrayal of the terrorist figure and contributes to it as a stereotype. The attempted hyper-realism as a literary device fails to assimilate either Muslim ontology or the motivations of the minority who turn to terror, and ultimately remains distant from an understanding of the advent of extremism.

Jihad and the Struggle for Recognition

In 2006, James Wood wrote “Jihad and the Novel”, a review of Updike’s *Terrorist*. It is one of many times that the Islamic concept of jihad is singled out in the discussion of Muslim representations. Jihad underpins the War on Terror narrative and it is also a term which can be added to the problematic terms within the field of 9/11 studies, along with “Islam”, “the West”, “the Other” and “terrorism” itself. This highly complex concept is often translated as “holy war” but is in fact the Arabic term for struggle or effort.²⁵ The traditional Islamic understanding of jihad, from the earliest scholars to contemporary understandings in the Western context, is consistently that of an ongoing struggle on various levels stemming from inner psychological issues to outer social issues, and is only expressed as war under particular legal conditions. It is etymologically related to another foundational Islamic concept *ijtihad*, the effort or struggle towards optimal critical reasoning, which is central to contemporary debates in Islamic law and politics. Indeed, Mamdani claims the “attitude toward *ijtihad* is the single most important issue that divides society-centered from state-centered—and progressive from reactionary—Islamists” (60). The depth and breadth of this concept in the Islamic tradition cannot be overstated. Tariq Ramadan gives the following more detailed explanation of jihad:

The path towards justice demands individual and collective efforts, jihads, to be made at various levels and in various areas. On the intimate level, it is working on one’s self, mastering one’s egoisms and one’s own violence; on the social level, it is struggle for greater justice and against various kinds of discrimination, unemployment and racism;

²⁵ The Oxford English Dictionary provides the etymology of jihad as ‘struggle, contest’ but defines it as “A religious war of Muslims against unbelievers, inculcated as a duty by the Qur'an and traditions,” a definition which has persisted in the media despite the efforts of many scholars to extend the understanding of jihad for both Muslims and others. The early examples of usage given by the Oxford Dictionary are from the 1860’s to the 1880’s at the height of Orientalism.

on the political level, it is the defence of civil responsibilities and right and the promotion of pluralism, freedom of expression and the democratic processes; on the economic level, it is action against speculation, monopolies, and neocolonialism; on the cultural level, it is the promotion of the arts and forms of expression that respect the dignity of conscience and human values. (113)

An exploration of jihad in the post-9/11 novels tends to favour the simplistic “holy war” idea, one that has also dominated mainstream media.

Islam presents a particular challenge to critical responses because of its holistic foundation. The Muslim world does not have the same tradition of secularism as the West; there is no separation of church and state, regardless of how theoretical such a Western division may be. However, the world portrayed by *Terrorist* and *The Garden of Last Days* assumes that in Islamic cultures there is no secular tradition at all, or even the possibility of secularization. Mamdani identifies the flaw of such assumptions pointing out that: “modern Islamic discourse is largely secular” because “Islamic societies were able to secularize within Islam, rather than in opposition to it” (47). In this sense, religiously derived terms like jihad also have a secular or critical interpretation. (An analogue might be the theory of just war, a question broached in secular ethical debates and secular legal systems but which derives from the Christian theological tradition.) It is unsurprising, therefore, that we should find correlations between Honneth’s conceptualisation of recognition as a process that necessarily entails struggle, and the Islamic concept of jihad as a struggle towards social justice. They both refer to the central elements of self-actualisation as a process of maturation. They both acknowledge the tension inherent in intimacy, that “all such relationships are necessarily conflictual, involving a struggle in which each subject tries to turn the other into an object, and at the same time tries to resist being turned into an object by that other” (Thompson 159), a description of the intersubjective struggle for recognition at the interpersonal level. They

both acknowledge that social progress is the purpose of recognition and that the struggle for recognition may be derived from a negative condition, the absence of esteem, respect and love. This negative form of recognition is explored in detail in Honneth's work *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* in which he states that:

Only after undertaking a closer analysis and laying bare the normative points of reference that remain mostly unarticulated in everyday reality does it become apparent that these negative experiences are based implicitly on a demand for previously withheld types of recognition. (xii)

These negative forms develop into social pathologies (of which terrorism must surely be one of the worst) and Honneth's philosophical manoeuvre is to recast these phenomena, grounding them in recognition theory.

The question remains, how do these components of recognition as struggle work in a literary context? The idea of conflict has always been central to narrative, but these literary conflicts may also reflect struggles for recognition (whether for self actualisation, social progress or political change) since "social relations cannot be cleansed of conflict or antagonism" (Felski 31). Recognition is as clear in the constrained resistance of the heroines of Jane Austen as it is in the imaginative genius of the novels of George Orwell. The literary relationship with recognition discussed here is built on three ideas. First, that the historical (Orientalist) view of Islam as an intrinsically violent culture taints understanding of its contemporary manifestations. Second, that part of the canonisation of early novels involved viewing state-sanctioned violence uncritically, whilst seeing terrorism as merely the inevitable playing out of a religiously sanctioned and intrinsically violent nature. Third, the novels have a laser-like focus on extreme acts of violence but rarely consider the causes of such violence as an inherent social phenomenon. They also do not consider the role of micro-

aggressions or the importance of the portrayal of the everyday (or its absence) as a central element in the characterisation of Muslims in the West.

The events of 9/11, for all of their shocking visual impact, cannot be understood without reference to the historical relationship between Islam and violence; despite being referred to as events “out of the blue,” they have ultimately been understood as a confirmation of an intrinsically violent culture: not such a shock after all when it comes to the perpetrators. Indeed, the use of violence is the defining difference between an act of terrorism and those actions that are seen as legitimate actions of protest or resistance (for example, public protest against the invasion of Iraq in 2003, or civil rights campaigns calling for the closure of Guantanamo Bay). The perception of Islam as inherently violent is another common Orientalist binary: violence of the West is constructive, productive and creative whereas violence of the East is destructive, predatory and barbaric. Kenichi Yamaguchi considers the function of violence and Orientalism in the post-9/11 state of exception, focusing on the social understandings of violence in the seminal works of Foucault and Agamben. The post-9/11 context is a continuum of the Orientalist worldview which reinforces Western dominance, even taking into account what Yamaguchi calls the “disjunctions, deformations and mutations from one era to another” (242); like so many aspects of the post-9/11 genre, there is both a break and a continuum. Despite the volumes of critiques of Orientalism, there has not been a substantial “new reading of the various mutations of the Orientalist episteme, including its complicity with war, violence, military strategy, public policy and geopolitics in the post-9/11 context” (Yamaguchi 243). The maintenance of a unified West that dominates a failed Orient has remained substantially intact and representational consistency provides some of the cooperation to maintain the power balance. The final chapter of this thesis will look at the later treatments of terror and its aftermath through the concept of “afterness”, and tries to define some of the literary trends

that indicate how the genre is both connected to and separate from what came before 9/11. This includes more oblique, less literal explorations of the role of violence and terror in the US, and its national and global identities.

Hegemony is an ongoing process; there is always a past derived from language and culture that participates in the interaction: “The I and Thou never face each other naked and unadorned” (Felski 31). For Updike, the belief in Islam’s intrinsic admiration for the most excessive violence is written into the novel as a matter of course. As Jack Levy lies awake thinking about his students’ lack of historical knowledge, he imagines figures of history that will never be accessible to them: “Charlemagne, Charles V, Napoleon” and “the unspeakable but considerably successful and still, at least in the Arab world, admired Adolf Hitler” (Updike 20). A belief in a deep-seated desire for world-altering violence and hatred is left as the only possible motivation that can be attributed to Ahmad, and it must be derived from the blood of his absent Arab father in a genetic transfusion that leaves this teenage American boy desiring the worst for humanity. Thoughts such as this one expressed by Levy, the voice of “reason” in the novel, demonstrate the deeply held view of Islamic culture as a having a love of extreme violence. Of course, a consideration of violence in the post-9/11 period is not limited to the attacks themselves. There is also the state-sanctioned violence that is associated with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; the violence of torture that is closely tied to the Bush doctrine; and the extra-judicial violence of rendition and containment in Guantanamo Bay, all of which are “morally disturbing and counter productive” elements of the counter-terrorism domain (Jackson, Smyth & Gunning 1). Mamdani claims that modern societies are against violence that “cannot be justified by progress” (4) and 9/11 is clearly monstrous violence without the justification of progress. The positioning of the violence of war (on terror), or state-sanctioned violence such as the invasion of Iraq, is not seen with the same universal horror since it is assumed to be furthering progress. Updike’s position over the tension of

state-sanctioned versus non-state violence is exemplified by Jack Levy's pragmatic recommendation that Ahmad should join the army, particularly as his knowledge of Arabic would be useful. He has no issue with Ahmad participating in active service, whereas Ahmad's response that "the army would send me to fight my brothers" (38) is seen as both naïve and less than patriotic. The positioning of violence, either as jihadist efforts to protect Muslim lands, or as Western efforts to support freedom and democracy, is one of the ideological battlegrounds in post-9/11 literature.

The portrayal of a world segregated by religion and race is prevalent throughout *Terrorist*. The Secretary of Homeland Security shows how the cultural markers of the Muslim world indicate complete Otherness: "the world they monitor, of electronic chatter crackling with poetic euphemism and pathetic braggadocio, is as alien and repellent to the Secretary as any underworld of sleepless Geeks, even those of Caucasian blood and Christian upbringing" (Updike 44). According to the Secretary, the Arabic language "makes them feeble-minded, somehow" (255). A Qur'anic verse, slightly altered by the addition of the words "in the east," is used to draw a connection between scripture as a form of coded language, and a potential attack: "When the heaven splits asunder in the east and reddens like a rose or stained leather" (44). The scriptural elements of the post-9/11 novels have been noted already as self-conscious and superficial, but this is more than a theological debate. It is also part of the process that limits the political expressions of Islam, particularly in the West: "The debate around radical political Islam is thus increasingly a debate on the meaning of "jihad" . . . A Muslim's first duty is to create a just and egalitarian society in which poor people are treated with respect. This demands a jihad (literally effort or struggle) on all fronts: spiritual and social, personal and political" (Mamdani 50), but without this complete sense of the word and the social phenomenon, jihad becomes a battle cry for needless and unrestrained violence which constructs the world around us as much as it reflects it.

The general failing of literary representations of terrorists is related to the limited understanding of the concept of jihad as struggle in the intimate and public spheres, a failing made obvious in Updike's attempt at portraying the home-grown terrorist and the relationship between mother and son, who have been alone together since the father's departure when the son was an infant. According to Kakutani, "Updike gives us no sense of their day-to-day relationship or the emotional history they have shared for nearly two decades, the sort of thing he has done so effortlessly with characters in earlier novels". When it comes to the terrorist figure (and I begin with this archetype because the commonalities here are seen again in later chapters that discuss Muslim representation in general), relationships in the private, intimate world are instrumentalised in service to the purpose of creating a violent perpetrator and are not in any real sense comparable to the private, internal worlds of other kinds of characters. There is a risk in writing about terrorists, as "their novelist-host has to overcome much fear and revulsion in order to take seriously murderous passion aimed at his own society. Sympathy often breaks down, and hasty research reduces individuals as well as movements to stereotypical motivations" (Mishra). Ultimately, it is a problem of recognition: the humanity, values and aims of the terrorist can never be acknowledged and therefore he can never achieve the requirements that would enable identification of personhood or as a character. Kakutani again goes some ways towards identifying this phenomenon: Ahmad is "more robot than human being and such a cliché that the reader cannot help suspecting that Mr Updike found the idea of such a person so incomprehensible that he at some point abandoned any earnest attempt to depict his inner life". The genre becomes stuck in an aporia—the novels mean to show a Muslim character, but it is impossible to create a character out of what is essentially a monster in the mind of the creator. The observation that Ahmad speaks as if English is his second language is not a minor one; it shows an inability to create, or even imagine, the voice of the American Muslim. The idea of Islam as an everyday

part of American life is anathema to the writer's purpose. Updike inadvertently creates a lacuna by being unable to present the lived everyday experience of Muslims, such as fundamental interpersonal and sexual relationships. Muslims do not have the potential to be complete individuals. They are presented as ahistorical, lacking a "complex social identity, which is always specific, and hence deeply tied to language, region, custom, class, and so on" (Ahmad 1). Recognition theory informs our understanding of how all of these elements intertwine in the understanding of personhood and the development of social and political identities. Instead of portraying this, authors in the early canon rely on the cultural imaginary vis-a-vis Islam and violence to fulfil this role. Whilst Felski reminds us that "[t]o contemplate something as art is to remove it, at least temporarily, from the pragmatic needs and demands of the quotidian" (80), in this particular case, this omission seems more within the ideological than the aesthetic realm.

Terrorism as the Battleground of Ideology

Ideological positions are another point of interest in Updike's novel because they show the variance between how two cultures are positioned. Islam is portrayed as incompatible with democracy: an ideology that is anti-modern, its followers are victims without critical thought. The West is critically aware of itself and has sophisticated ways of understanding both its own violence and its own oppressions. Only the other is accused of holding the pejorative position of being duped by ideology (Žižek). One can point to *them* and their belief in the false overlay of a religio-political system unable to acknowledge the truth; the same is not applied to the ideological positions of *us*, those who have the feel of complex critical and independent thought. Felski, paraphrasing Althusser, points out the impossibility of Updike's mission:

One's personhood has a sheer obviousness about it as a self evident reality that demands to be recognized. Yet this very obviousness renders it the essence of ideology, the quintessential means by which politics does it work. It is via the snare of fictional subjectivity that individuals are folded into the state apparatus and rendered acquiescent to the status quo. (27)

In *Terrorist*, the discussion of ideologies is an unequal one, purely based on the language used by the various characters as focalised through the third person narrator. In the parallel narrative of the Secretary for Homeland Security, the Secretary ponders the effects on daily life of ever-increasing security measures: "How can the fluid, hydraulically responsive workings of capitalism, let alone the commerce of intellectual exchange and the social life of extended families, function through such obdurate thickness of precaution?" (Updike 43). The vocabulary is sophisticated, the sentence structure complex. The critical

tone enables the narrator to reflect on ideological issues around capitalism and social structures. Compare this with the language used by Ahmad in the following examples: Ahmad staring at Joryleen's nose ring says, "That little thing in your nose. I didn't notice it before. Just those little rings on the edge of your ear" (65). Readers are expected to believe that an intelligent young man from an English speaking home who attends a public high school does not know the word earring. "Ahmad hadn't known the organ had so many notes on the keyboard" (Updike 62), is another example of an inappropriate level of cultural ignorance, especially as one of the qualities that brings Ahmad to the notice of Jack Levy is his intelligence and academic ability. Showing the normality of Ahmad's life with a description of his job at the "shop-a-sec," the diction again intrudes as Updike has him "observing the customers and the varieties of costume and personal craziness that American permissiveness invites" (Updike 68). Ahmad's understanding of his position in the world is expressed in the same simple and unsophisticated binarisms: "My teacher at the mosque says that all unbelievers are our enemies. The Prophet said that eventually all unbelievers must be destroyed" (Updike 66) he proclaims to Joryleen after their church visit. Ahmad's dialogue is completely at odds with his characterisation, but the language choices make more sense in terms of the character's ideological positioning. The effects of Islam on this young man essentially turn him into a simplistic thinker who is completely vulnerable to a worldview that places him totally outside of regular American life, and renders him comfortable in considering it the enemy. His understanding of religious practice is mechanical, never encroaching the spiritual, and does not reflect the ways in which "subcultural Muslimness itself is contextual, deeply shaped by history, geography, politics, the larger multi-religious milieu, myriad rhythms of material life" (Ahmad 1). The contrast between Ahmad's internal thoughts and those of the Secretary continue until the Secretary begins to sound like the terrorist, defending ideological positions with religious fervour: "The enemy cannot believe

that democracy and consumerism are fevers in the blood of Everyman, an outgrowth of each individual's instinctive optimism and desire for freedom" (44). Religion is seen as faith without rationality; capital and democracy are the natural home of reason and human potential. In *Literature after 9/11*, Rothberg argues for the need to historicize 9/11, reminding us of "the crucial work of literature—and especially narrative—in bridging the private and public realms" and its aim to "expose the ideologies that drive acts of interpretation" (9). It is true that terrorism has been carried out in the name of Islam, and that torture has been carried out in the name of democracy. However, the truth of these statements does not reduce their ideological character; nor does it negate the fact that these statements drive acts of interpretation.

Existing critiques condemn Updike's poor handling of terror, but the novel should be valued for its engagement with Islam, even as it highlights a lack of understanding about how widely the term jihad can be interpreted or how terror manifests. The novel can enlighten understandings of the cultural imaginary, the epistemological gap when it comes to Islam, and the need to better understand terror and its relationship with Islam. In the change from the first to the second wave of post-9/11 fiction, John Updike's *Terrorist* has been reduced in its standing as a canonical text. This is partly because of a response to the portrayal of terror that is driven by principles of liberalism—the terrorist archetype is problematic because it reinforces racial and ethnic stereotypes about Muslims. These stereotypes needed to be counteracted in the aftermath of the post-9/11 rush to condemn. Updike (like DeLillo before him) shows that the presence of Islam in the West does not undermine ideas of Western pluralism; Islam as a private religious expression is, like any other religion, theoretically acceptable—but his novel also shows that public or political expression is not considered acceptable. (It is also problematic to see the novels as didactic or providing context about terrorism to the American public; the story of Ahmad bears little resemblance to

understandings of how terrorists are manifested, nor the everyday lives of American Muslims.) But *Terrorist* can be reassessed. Instead of being canonised, it can be seen as belonging to a stage in the process of recognition. There is visibility, acknowledgement, as Updike “takes the risk of focalising . . . the terrorist and his putative mindset” (Nash 105). It is one of the few literary novels that make the relationship between Islam and terror central to the plot. This novel should remain significant within the genre, despite its failings, as it shows the immediate rush to ideological sureties after the shock of 9/11. The commonalities, assumptions and biases inherent in the writing can be made plain by acknowledging a new visibility of the Western Muslim.

If literary recognition is seen as achieved simply due to the reader’s identification with a character, then there is a danger that “readers formally aligned with a fictional persona cannot help but swallow the ideologies represented by that person wholesale. Identification thus guarantees interpellation” (Felski 34). One must go beyond mystical connections between reader and character to unravel the complexities of recognition. The cultural imaginary to which Updike gains ingress is based on an unrealistic representation of Ahmad’s subjectivity, but also relies on avoiding any portrayal of an Islamic historical or social context “which is not restricted to religion per se, but encompasses wider cultural, national and socioeconomic referents” (Fadda Conrey 539). Clearly, it is not the complex nuances of Middle East politics that attract Updike. What he does achieve is to show Islam in another guise, which Olivier Roy puts so succinctly as the “mirror in which the West projects its own identity crisis” (xiii), in short, a conflicted position. Levy worries about the future of his adolescent charges, a world of “dwindling resources, its disappearing freedoms, its merciless advertisements geared to a preposterous popular culture of eternal music and beer and impossibly thin and fit young females” (21). Whilst Updike uses the narrative voice of Levy to bemoan that “politics for these teenagers is an obscurer department of celebrity

heaven” (35) this complaint is followed almost immediately by an extended speech from Ahmad outlining his political grievances, which range from using sex to sell, to the colonial slant in history teaching, to the use of Christianity to justify genocide of Native Americans, to US support of Israel (36). As has already been noted, the author fails to infuse any authenticity into the diction of the teenage boy discovering global injustice. Instead, he uses Ahmad as a reverberation of the disgruntled authorial voice. The voice of resistance may come from the jaded middle-aged hero Jack Levy, but the same message, when it comes from Ahmad, is seen as a naïve or perverse understanding of the West. It is in these moments that Updike does just enough with his novel to tantalisingly hint at Islam in its role as a source of resistance to the capitalist West. If one agrees with the views of Hamid Dabashi (2008) and Mahmoud Mamdani that “[p]olitical Islam was born in the colonial period” (Mamdani *Good Muslim* 14), then the position of Islam as an opponent of capitalism has little to do with its originary identity and stems mostly from colonial expansion and Orientalist expedience. Dabashi makes the polemical claim in his *Being a Muslim in the World* that “‘The West’ is no more—and nor are, *a fortiori*, all the binaries it has coined and crafted over the last two hundred years plus—chief among them the notion of ‘Islam’ that Orientalism invented for the West” (2). His argument focuses on the idea that there was no historically unified conception of Islam prior to the effects of colonialism and that today’s visions by some fundamentalists of a return to a seventh-century Arabian ideal are a response not to any traditional understanding of the religion’s teachings, but as a postcolonial manifestation. It is, he says, Islam as a colonial construction doing the work of resistance to Western capitalism. This is much closer to the ideological work that Updike participates in. According to Cazdyn and Szeman, “Capitalism itself now constitutes a very real limit to thought” (7), and therefore “the other side is not the irrational . . . but the rational within a different frame” (Cazdyn and Szeman 8). Updike’s home-grown terrorist is important, therefore, not because it is

particularly accurate or convincing or insightful but because it points in the postcolonial context to the “need to think through the full implications of victims becoming killers” (Mamdani 9).

Beyond monolithic views of Islam, Baudrillard finds the root cause of terrorism in the effects of globalization: “There is, indeed, a fundamental antagonism here, but one which points past the spectre of America (which is, perhaps, the epicentre, but in no sense the sole embodiment, of globalization) and the spectre of Islam (which is not the embodiment of terrorism either), to triumphant globalization battling against itself” (Baudrillard 11). Perhaps novels of terror did not achieve what critics expected of them in terms of healing trauma or embodying terrorists but they have gone some way to both constructing and exposing the ideological knot that terrorism has presented in the wake of 9/11.

Terror and Sexuality

Let us return to the opening lines of Updike's novel: "girls sway and sneer and expose their soft bodies and alluring hair" (1). This is the first of many references to Ahmad identifying the female body and sexuality as the ultimate symbols of the conflict between the values of Islam and those of the West. It is a conflict that links the novels of the post-9/11 genre, and also a concept with a much longer history, between terror and sexuality. Indeed, the portrayal of terror is probably more closely tied to expressions of conflicted or repressed male sexuality than it is to anything else, even the violence which often hovers as a threat. The trope of the sexualised Muslim must stand in for any number of other elements which remain unspoken, such as political aims, expressions of trauma, historical grievances, or sociopathy. It signifies the return of the lustful Moor, but with a new post-9/11 signification that places western women's expressions of overt sexuality as the cultural ground zero. Sexuality has become, according to Puar and Rai, central to a certain kind of knowledge that "has entered the academic mainstream as 'terrorism studies'" (117). It underpins the psyche of the terrorist with the "racial and sexual monsters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" and pits them against "an aggressive heterosexual patriotism" (Puar & Rai 117). For Ahmad, the potential terrorist, this takes the form of "a deep disgust with sex" (Kakutani). His conflicted view of women includes his own feelings towards his classmate Joryleen and his view of his mother's affair with Levy. Again, it is the communal nature of Islam that is recast as evidence of a patriarchal divide. Ahmed compares his experiences of the mosque with his experiences of attending Joryleen's Black church: "The mosque was a domain of men; here, women in their spring shimmer, their expansive soft flesh, dominate" (Updike 47-8). There is a homoerotic tension between Ahmad and Sheikh Rashid, whose eyes the narrator describes as having "the

elusive gray-blue of a kafir woman's" (Updike 37), that underpins the control the older man has over the younger. Gendered and heteronormative divides do double service in metaphorically reinforcing the East–West divide.

The connection between sexuality and terrorism is made even more explicit in the post-9/11 novels of Andre Dubus and Richard Flanagan. Both terrorist narratives centre on a female stripper who comes into fleeting but apparently crucial contact with the dangerous terrorist figure. Dubus' *Garden of Last Days*, inspired by news reports that some of the actual 9/11 hijackers attended strip clubs before the attacks, tells the story of April, the hard-working, honourable stripper who, as a single mother, must dance to make ends meet. She has a professional encounter with Bassam, the Arab foreigner whose odd behaviour and conflicted relationship with his own sexuality prompts his own retrospective narrative. Like Updike, the language used is littered with transliterations of Arabic terms and phrases. The internal dialogue of Bassam is preoccupied with the behaviour of the "kufar" (unbelievers), which is self-consciously inserted as a descriptor for all Americans. Dubus is at pains to show how the everyday life of Bassam is dominated by such thoughts: in Chapter 2 we are introduced to the character as he "sat among the kufar and ate a small basket of onion rings"; we see "the kafir woman at the bank" who issues his cash (Dubus 22). Again, like Updike, the decontextualised and carefully selected Qur'anic references relate only to jihad and martyrdom, but rather than demonstrating an authentic understanding of the internal motivations of the character, such obvious techniques often result in "unintentional comedy" as Jay McInerney (author of *The Good Life* discussed in Chapter 1) notes in his review of the novel (*NYT*). McInerney notes a seemingly natural reason for this—the impossibility of the task of fictionalising the 9/11 terrorist: "Perhaps inevitably, Bassam, the terrorist, is the least successful of these characters" (*NYT*). The triumvirate of Arab Muslim, sex and violence

devolves into cliché and fails in its attempts to access the humanity of a character who can undertake such inhuman actions.

Australian author Richard Flanagan's novel *The Unknown Terrorist* achieves quite a different, and far more innovative, outcome through the terrorist/stripper narrative. The novel is set in Sydney, and the protagonist, known by her nickname "The Doll", lives a life marked by drugs, loss, isolation and abuse. She has a brief encounter with Tariq, an Egyptian graduate student and minor drug dealer, and they experience a night of cocaine-fuelled sex that performs a kind of transformation in the narrative. The following morning, Tariq is found dead in the street, and the police focus on the unknown woman (The Doll) caught on video entering his apartment the previous night. Her life spirals (quite unrealistically) out of control as the media, police, politicians, business owners and the public re-cast The Doll as the ultimate incomprehensible threat—the suspected home-grown terrorist sleeping with the enemy. Using the same narratological elements as the other terror novels, Flanagan constructs a counter-discursive approach that shows the dangers to both the vulnerable and the powerful in the West when the terrorist narrative becomes overblown. The Arab suspected terrorist provides the initial impetus for the story but quickly becomes absent and somewhat irrelevant as the narrative trajectory moves towards the paranoia, fear and self-interest of existing power structures. Flanagan's wide-reaching concerns range from the risks posed by counter-terrorism strategies to the poor and immigrant populations of Sydney's west, to the caricature-like journalist escalating the story for his own career, wealthy politicians, and the abuse of police powers. Of course, the whole sorry tale begins with the foreigner who is the catalyst for The Doll's troubles. Careful to avoid drawing Tariq as a one-dimensional criminal, Flanagan makes the first contact between him and The Doll a coincidental beach encounter where Tariq helps save a drowning boy. This is later followed by a too-coincidental reunion and a brief sexual encounter. Tariq's trajectory from handsome

hero to transformational lover to dead terrorist is efficiently dealt with in the plot, whilst the impact on *The Doll*, the complete unravelling of her life and descent into violence and desperation forms the basis of the story. For most of the other terror novels, as Richard Gray suggests about Dubus' work, there is a correlation with Freud's psychosexual stage of latency; the sexuality of the foreigner is repressed, never consummated. Flanagan's approach differs. He appears to realise that creating an Arab Muslim character who can carry the narrative of the victim of increases in institutional power after 9/11 is an impossibility. Instead, he uses the sexual encounter to transfer the role of the protagonist to the feminised, local vessel, a character who can be identified, empathised with and recognised.

For both novelists, the figure of the stripper is important; for all of their worldly and commercial use of their sexual attractiveness, both strippers have a certain naiveté and a goal to achieve something socially valued (For April, caring for her daughter; for *The Doll*, getting herself into university and buying her own apartment). But it is a conflicted trope—the desire of the men who gaze at them also contains their disgust at the strippers, and the men's inevitable frustration when the women are not available means they are often subjected to threats and intimidation. The power that comes with getting money for exhibiting their bodies, combined with their self-disgust and vulnerability at being the object of male fantasy, carries a certain resonance with the figure of the terrorist. This conflicted position between control of one's own destiny and hapless victim captures the imagined psyche of the terrorist: that there is such overt disgust with the "kufar" but always the suspicion that underneath this is an admiration, a desire to be with, to be like, to be. Bassam has an obsessive fascination with April that goes beyond mere physical desire—her body, her scar, her life, her name—he wants to know and have it all. Tariq and *The Doll* experience an intense, erotic moment with the potential to become something more—to open up *The Doll*'s persona and reach her authentic self behind the façade. It is a tantalising glimpse of the possibility of grasping the

Other, of losing oneself in the connection with another, but it is interrupted by the violence of his world penetrating into hers. There are “different forms of subordination” (Gray 81) at stake here that are ripe for textured and complex portrayals but, as Gray notes in the work of Dubus, the depth of this struggle is not successfully explored. Muslim sexuality falls into two camps: either the repressed innocence of Ahmad or Bassam, whom April describes after the attacks as “just some drunk and lonely boy” (526); or a darkly hidden sexual power laced with threat such as The Doll experiences in her encounter with Tariq, his face “twisted in a violent grimace, the savagery of his desire momentarily frightened her” (83). The novelists’ concern with sexuality as a central component of the threat of Islamic terrorism is a structural element of the post-9/11 genre that once again draws on historical concepts.

The connection between Islam, sex and violence is commonly drawn and deeply entrenched. The sexual threat of the Moor (immortalised in *Othello*) shows how “imaginary Muslim monsters have determined the construction of the Muslim in Western thought” (Arjana 1) even when transposed into a distinctive contemporary form.²⁶ Muslim characters are invariably positioned further away from normative experiences of intimacy and the nuclear family, whilst portrayals of Western intimacy have had their own rather traditionalist revival. Regardless of changing sexual mores,²⁷ the outcome always places Muslims “in a time and space removed from the West’s normative human community” (Arjana 9) and partly underpins the dehumanisation necessary for misrecognition.

Honneth’s recognition framework relies on a hierarchy, from the most intimate relationships to the macro level of nationhood. He defines the three components (the modes of recognition) that enable this as love, self-esteem and respect. With Muslim characters, even when there is a sexual relationship it is one without love, without intimacy, perhaps

²⁶ Another direct use of this idea is seen in the plot of *After* by Claire Tristram in which a 9/11 widow intentionally seeks out a married Muslim man to entice into an affair as a form of therapy.

²⁷ The sexualised Moor in a time of Western conservatism or the repressed Muslim in a time of Western permissiveness.

driven by sex as commodity (and this is common to all of the Muslim characters across the genre, whether they be terrorists, suspected terrorists or innocent bystanders). There are almost no examples across the genre of loving relationships with parents, siblings, children or friends; the problematic relationship between Ahmad and his mother in *Terrorist* is the only family relationship portrayed that is central to the plot.²⁸ This dehumanising isolation is a necessary component of the reification process, whereby characters cannot be recognised through their familiar human relations, and nowhere is this more obvious than when characters perform one important role—that of terrorist. But this is not the only place where this is apparent; post-9/11 authors have maintained this quality impeccably.

The issues raised by considering the representation of Islamic terror in Western novels may seem self-evident. It is a difficult manoeuvre for novelists to perform. They have to tackle the question of “[h]ow to react humanely to inhumane violence?” (Versluys 151). Questions of recognition help identify how the novels create visibility without achieving recognition, not only because their portrayals of the roots of terror lack historicity, but also because the process of characterisation excludes recognition of an intimate sphere. Relationships to self and to intimate others are precluded for the Muslim. By corollary, this also points to how novelists can authentically engage with alterity. Recognition as a theory is fully cognisant of the self-other relationship and makes apparent that the terrorist has become a figure embedded into the psychological needs of a traumatised nation, whilst an understanding of the complexity of terrorism remains unaccomplished. This is not to suggest that recognition is a panacea to prevent stereotyping; the Levinasian tradition warns against “the hubris of thinking that we can ultimately come to understand that which is different or strange . . . to recognise is not just to trivialise but also to colonise . . . an imperious expansion of subjectivity that seeks to appropriate otherness by turning everything into a

²⁸ Lorraine Adams’ *Harbor* is again the notable exception with its use of flashback to portray the background story of Algerian refugees in the US.

version of itself” (Felski 27). Rather, recognition is both multifaceted and a process towards progress. Gray proposes that “belief in the hybrid space” and “understanding through a strategy of deterritorialisation” are the methods that “transform crisis into a story that can be accurately and adequately told” (83).²⁹ However, Gray also proposes that in this hypothetical space the reader “is compelled to bear witness to what Bhabha would call a ‘hybrid’ interaction between competing and contending cultural constituencies” (81). But such a transformation is an impossibility when one of the constituencies is not recognisable, or is not identifiable as an independent constituency. Recognition precedes this fantasised hybridity. The early 9/11 canon does not perform this hybridity, but rather than bemoan its absence, we can make its imaginary explicit and thereby critique its assumptions.

As Honneth’s work suggests, the lack of recognition at the level of humanity and personhood is reflected in a lack of political identity and a lack of a role in the nation. The following section about divergent novels, takes an in-depth look at the relationship between the emerging recognition of personhood and the intersubjective development of political identities through the feminised, non-violent resistance of novels by Amy Waldman and Gayle Brandeis.

²⁹ Chapter 5 of this thesis will show how several authors have utilised deterritorialisation to move beyond 9/11.

PART 2: DIVERGENT NOVELS AND COUNTER HEGEMONY

“I went to the West and saw Islam but no Muslims; I came back to the East and saw Muslims but not Islam.”

Muhammad Abduh

Part 1 of this thesis focused on a collection of novels that has dominated the concept of a 9/11 fiction. I demonstrated how trauma theory has become the presiding paradigm for understanding these novels, and that this has consolidated a number of underlying cultural inequalities. Not only have certain texts attained prominence in the field of 9/11 fiction, but certain theoretical approaches also act to consolidate a binary understanding of Islam and the West that has contributed to the generalised reification of the Muslim as Other. In the second part of this thesis, I turn my attention to a selection of novels that diverges from this dominant paradigm of a homogenised Islam conflated with terror by complicating, in various ways, the East/West relationship, as well as by questioning the exceptionalist national narrative that dominated after 9/11.

It is evident from the present discussion of 9/11 fiction that the preliminary theoretical perspective no longer provides the complexity or explanatory function the field requires.³⁰ In addition, the number of novels that can be included under the umbrella term post-9/11 literature continues to grow. As such there is a need for more expansive understanding of texts and, in particular, to begin the process of decoupling acts of political terror from the representations of everyday Muslim experiences. This necessitates reframing post-9/11 fiction as not purely based on the trauma of a singular event underpinned by terror, but rather as a reflection of a broader site of struggle towards social cohesion between the US and

³⁰ Borges (2013) provides a discussion of the misunderstandings and misuse of trauma and calls for more “diverse interpretive approaches” (9).

Islam. This struggle forms part of an existing historical debate and is underpinned by components of recognition, which are reflected in the novels discussed here.

Chapter 4: Towards Literary Recognition—America Meets its Muslims

In this chapter I investigate two novels that explore the implications of the presence of Islam within the US: Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011) and *Self Storage* (2007) by Gayle Brandeis. Both novels rely on the visibility of Muslims within the US homeland to create ethical dilemmas for their central characters. To some extent, this means acknowledging that the events of 9/11 have not only garnered a response characterised by terror and fear but have also created the potential to transcend such fear. Post-9/11 fiction has become not only a part of America's national mourning but also a site for the exploration of its relationship with Islam and the wider world. This is an idea developed in both novels (and in various aspects in each of the chapters that follow).

This chapter argues that a recognition theoretical approach provides a strong explanatory tool for understanding these novels as narratives concerned with representing the struggle for ethical, social and political engagement with Muslims in the West. Both novels pursue an interest in the balance between cultural difference and egalitarian democracy, a tension that is also central to Honneth's theories. My analysis focuses on the psychological experience of recognition, which is to say the development and maintenance of identity, its integration and disintegration, and the impact of others in this process through considering its intersubjective basis. This is a function of what Charles Taylor calls the "intimate sphere" (37) where recognition in the form of relationships with significant others is "crucial to the formation of identity" (Thompson 10). From a narrative perspective, the focus in this section is on character and characterisation, with a particular emphasis on how authors construct the qualities of Muslim characters and their interactions within their private diegetic world. I then go on to consider how recognition manifests in the more public and political thematic elements of the novels by considering the functions of citizenship and the nexus of Islam and democratic values. Ultimately, both the private and public elements of the novels intertwine,

reflecting the idea that “individual and societal development mutually constitute each other” (Anderson qtd. in Honneth *SfR* xx).

The use of recognition theory is not intended to recuperate a romanticised or prescriptive notion of the Muslim that stands in opposition to the problematized characterisation of the terrorist archetype.³¹ As Honneth realises, recognition is not limited to socially valued or positive traits, but includes acknowledgement of the contribution of misrecognition and non-recognition to social disunity and social pathologies. His interest, like Hegel’s, is not “merely a normative theory of the liberal constitutional state, but at the same time a diagnosis of the danger of social developments” (*I in We* 25). The intention here is to utilise recognition as the basis for a critical response that can fully engage with the cultural imaginary as it relates to Islam in order to provide an analytical and evaluative methodology.

³¹ A fault that could be addressed to both Gray and De Rosa’s calls for more ethical engagements from authors, and has been criticised by Morley as “prescriptive”.

Intersubjectivity: Visibility Precedes Recognition

“Often the group demanding recognition feels inaudible and invisible.”

Simon Thompson

One of the most important concepts that underlies recognition theory is intersubjectivity: the reciprocal and mutual nature of relations between the self and others, at both an individual and group level, and the way this constitutes identity. This idea is, according to Honneth, both the foundation of social cohesion, and the normative basis of struggles for recognition that occur in every element of social engagement from teenage assertions of independence to legal claims for statehood. Mutual recognition is not, however, a perfected state that leads “immediately to a world of commonly shared reason” (*I in We* 16) rather it is epitomized in the process of struggle. This chapter will look at how intersubjectivity underpins the structure of both *The Submission* and *Self Storage*. Unlike *Falling Man* or *Terrorist*, which contrast the subjective narrative of the New Yorker with the purely objectified position of the terrorist archetype, the two American authors discussed in this chapter genuine effort to grapple with the relationship between the self and other, and with Islam as a presence in the West. Although they do not completely succeed, the novels can be understood as explorations of intersubjectivity rather than as a consolidation of the Muslim purely as object or as non-specific Other.

Intersubjectivity underlies the theories of recognition of both Charles Taylor and Honneth (who both draw on the early work of Hegel). Intersubjectivity has a fundamental role in defining the self and in understanding the symbiotic nature of connections with others. According to Honneth, drawing on Hegel: “In the encounter between two subjects, a new sphere of action is opened in the sense that both sides are compelled to restrict their self-

seeking drives as soon as they encounter each other . . . in the process of interaction both subjects undergo a transformation” (Honneth *I in We* 15) and this experience of change after engagement with another is evident in both of the novels discussed. One of Honneth’s stated aims is to take Hegel’s early explorations of the intersubjective and to re-assess them in the light of contemporary post-metaphysical knowledge. Although Honneth generally operates from the disciplinary position of social philosophy, he also (controversially) draws on anthropology and individual psychology (in particular the psychological and sociological work of GH Mead) to demonstrate the ongoing relevance of intersubjectivity in understanding individual and social development. Intersubjectivity is, he believes, one of the underlying principles of individual development and it relies on engagement with a generalised other. These ideas have been explored by Honneth and others working in philosophy and sociology but their application in literary studies have yet to be investigated. The more dominant subject-object schema is likely to be the underlying assumption of most criticism, particularly in relation to post-9/11 literature. Duvall and Marzec, for example, see the extreme subjective position of DeLillo and others as “depleting all other existentialist possibilities in the post-9/11 era” (392). Perhaps this explains why those novels that are better understood through an intersubjective lens are more likely to complicate the national narrative and therefore do not feature in the early canon. One of these is *Self Storage*, a 2007 novel that has received little attention from 9/11 scholars but was one of the early responses that attempted to engage with the idea of Muslim presence in the US. It engages with the questions this raises regarding civil responsibility, not only in the present context but also in alignment with America’s historical national identity.

Self Storage explores, as the title intimates, the effects on the self through unexpected interaction with the Other. Its narrator and central character is Flan Parker, a young mother of two situated in the eclectic and diverse enclave of graduate student housing in Riverside,

California where her husband, Shae, is completing a PhD. Her young toddler, Nori, runs onto the street and is hit by a vehicle driven by Flan's Afghan, burqa-wearing neighbour Sodaba Suleiman, the wife of a microbiology student. As a result, the two women begin a complex relationship fraught with inequality and ethical confusion. *Self Storage* takes place in the summer after the 9/11 attacks. Whilst the events in New York clearly shocked the Parker family and particularly have traumatised their insecure young son, Noodle, relatively little time in the novel is spent dealing directly with 9/11 as an event. Instead, the novel explores its aftermath in the everyday.

Unlike characters in the novels discussed in Chapter 2, the Parker family is not directly connected to Manhattan life: they are not successful, wealthy or powerful and are geographically on the opposite side of the US. They live close to poverty with their income supplemented by Flan's ability to turn over random collections of cheap consumer goods sourced from auction (the abandoned self storage lockers of the title). But like the constantly oppressive heat, the ever-encroaching effects of 9/11 will eventually change the course of the lives of the Parker and Suleiman families and they become more and more present in the narrative. The novel might easily have reinforced the "us and them" binary that prevails in the field, and it is easy to see how it relies on some deeply stereotypical ideas regarding Muslim women, but beyond this the novel endeavours to chart an alternative course through its tense political climate via Flan's discernment of her own personal ethics in what is for her the unfamiliar and challenging experience of recognising the Muslims in her community.

Self Storage differs from many of the other novels in the 9/11 genre. It is a novel that deals with 9/11 at a distance, both geographically and thematically. The previously discussed novels have mostly relied on a worldview that sees the West and Islam as not only distinct but also as generally holding incompatible values. *Self Storage* begins the process of considering the various complexities of the West and an increasing awareness of Islam as

more intertwined and interdependent, as well as closer to home. It does this mainly through the experiences of individual characters, particularly Flan, but also through their symbolic roles as members of a wider political and military entanglement. Flan is the symbol of American independence, a Walt Whitman-loving, liberal-educated Californian. She is unconventional, from her quirky dress sense to her “free spirit” parenting style. Sodaba’s national symbolism is, by contrast, as a living example of the oppressed, burqa-clad Afghan woman so crucial to the rhetoric of Operation Enduring Freedom. Brandeis explores the relationship between these two symbolic characters not as a point of opposition but as a site of struggle towards an outcome that maintains the values of both of the characters. She does not, however, achieve this through a function of hybridity (as we will find in *The Submission*) but instead through the use of the character of Sodaba as a literary foil, a prompt to Flan’s introspection on her role as citizen.

What separates Sodaba from the earlier discussions of Muslim representation, apart from her gender, is that there are no indications in the novel that she is in any way associated with terrorism. Portrayed as the foil to Flan’s unconventional independence, she is in every way the contemporary Orientalist’s Muslim woman: Burqa clad—a fact that is revisited at every sighting—she is initially nameless, mysterious and isolated. When discussing the students’ regular communal dinner, Flan notes “[t]he couple from Afghanistan, who lived two doors down from us, never participated” (18). Flan’s fascination is piqued, she is not quite sure if their aloofness is cultural or, following 9/11, simply self-protective. Throughout the narrative, Sodaba remains a passive and distant character, almost completely without agency. Unable to speak English, she is constantly associated with victimhood, oppression and powerlessness. Her portrayal is in terms stereotypically associated with Muslim women. She is silent, mostly invisible, assumed to be oppressed, and sometimes less than human. In a depiction reminiscent of earlier descriptions of faceless terrorists, Flan initially describes

Sodaba as if “[s]he almost didn’t seem like a person. She was more an idea of a person. An approximation of a person” (173) in the now familiar trope of misrecognition which denies the specific qualities of personhood to a Muslim character. The novel does, however, evolve into a demonstration of Renante Pilapil’s assertion that “through the notion of personhood, the moral dimension of recognition struggles is not only emphasised but also a more effective ideal for political mobilisation is brought to light” (40). Brandeis uses this state of non-recognition as the catalyst for the novel’s plot and Flan’s edification rather than as an end in itself.

Despite the stereotypical characteristics of Sodaba, she becomes the instigator of an ethical and political engagement in the character of Flan. It is through their intersubjective interaction that both Flan and Sodaba are changed and the beginnings of recognition take place. This is a narrative of interaction, unlike the parallel storyline in DeLillo *Falling Man* with its climactic collision, Flan and Sodaba’s collision (a literal car accident) occurs at the beginning of the novel and the question becomes one of how to proceed. The novel clearly places Flan in a position of cultural supremacy. She is the Western feminist as hero and saviour to her third world sister and her husband, as Flan feels she is “destined to help them” (77). As Gray correctly points out, the “Afghan characters are narrative instruments, beneficiaries of Flan’s liberating gestures,” (121) but to discount the entire novel because of this would be to diminish Brandeis’s interest in the power of the other to confront and influence the self, to promote a process of self-analysis that leads to an ethical engagement with the post-9/11 world. Sodaba’s role in the narrative, therefore, is not to be a “whole person”, an outcome which would perhaps be beyond the powers of Brandeis to achieve, but to act as an ethical mirror through which Flan questions her own values as an American and determines her own response to the War on Terror. The visibility of the Muslim in the post-9/11 world is a gaze that requires a response from the Western viewer; merely by the act of

maintaining her religious and cultural identity, Sodaba instigates the need for a response from Flan's liberal democratic world, which will in turn affect both of their opportunities, and it is this recursive process that drives the novel's action.

Questions of visibility are also of interest to Honneth. In his essay "Invisibility: On the epistemology of 'recognition'" (2001), Honneth utilises Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *Invisible Man* to elucidate the experience of social invisibility and its relationship with recognition. Honneth relies quite heavily on this literary depiction of invisibility to support his argument about recognition. Invisibility for the Black narrator is the experience of others looking straight through him. It is not a function of the optical but the social; it is his knowledge that others have "an inner disposition that does not allow them to see his true person" (Honneth *Invisibility* 111) that creates his own perception or condition of invisibility. For Honneth, this raises the question of "what must be added to the perception of a person . . . in order to make it into an act of recognition?" (*Invisibility* 111). (The negation of this might also be posed; what is it that keeps a person in a position of non- or misrecognition?) The level of visibility of the other person, he argues, depends on the extent to which one can identify them "according to the character of the relationship, as persons with clearly defined properties" (*Invisibility* 113), which is to say the unique and recognisable characteristics of another person. Visibility is an antecedent to recognition, although how that recognition (non- or mis-recognition) will manifest varies. Gray outlines a similar process, which also emphasises the associated risks of visibility, in Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* in which the central character Aziz, an Algerian refugee "comes to realise that he is invisible . . . He is unseen, but he sees" (117) until 9/11 when "no longer unseen . . . they become the subject of an intense scrutiny that misinterprets their every move" (Gray 118).³² Gray also finds that "other kinds of invisibility are at work in *Self Storage*" (120) in what he sees as the foregrounding of Flan's

³² *Harbor* is another 9/11 novel that lends itself to a recognition theoretical reading but as Gray notes it has significant failings in plot and form so that despite its promise it "leaves the strange new world of terror and counter-terror strangely invisible" (120).

preoccupation with “finding herself” whilst “the public crisis” (121) remains in the background, (an assertion that I question in the following section). Barriers to visibility and the closely related process of recognition are themes returned to again and again in the post-9/11 literary engagement with Islam.

The question in *Self Storage*, then, becomes why Sodaba’s character achieves a level of visibility in Flan’s purview but not enough to fully achieve mutual recognition. The most significant reason for this is that the character of Sodaba is not given adequate narrative agency. Again, a similar conclusion can be drawn to that of Gray in his discussion of *Harbor* in which he argues that the characters remain tantalisingly out of reach to readers, because they:

remain invisible as anything other than objects of suspicion; as possible terrorists or conspirators, they come into the line of vision but as human subjects they are still outside it. The problem is that, as human subjects, Aziz and his friends never come into the line of narrative vision either. (119)

The change from invisibility to visibility is often closely related to ideas of suspicion and surveillance, seeming barriers to recognition. In the case of *Self Storage*, visibility also becomes the precursor to at least a preliminary form of recognition; as Flan deems Sodaba a person worthy of certain rights, this realisation has significant ethical and political repercussions for both characters.

Ethics of Resistance on Behalf of Another

Self Storage was published in the same year as *Falling Man* but it has received little scholarly attention. Banita identifies it as part of the “second wave” fiction that attempts to “deal with America’s liminal position between historical borders and cultures” (166). Gray also gives it brief consideration, seeing it as one of a group of novels that “interrogate the assumptions on which the either/or discourse dealing with 9/11 and the war on terror is based” (114). Some of the difference in the amount of attention given to the two novels can be explained by the literary standing of the two authors, and perhaps some can be attributed to the variation in narrative complexity. In Gray’s assessment, however, both novels are “flawed” for similar reasons, which are that “difference is diminished, crisis is distanced” and there is an over-reliance on “conventional narrative structures” (114). This leads him to discount *Self Storage* as “a gently sentimental novel that uses New Age pieties to celebrate resistance to the War on Terror” (120). Despite its shortcomings, I suggest that *Self Storage* is somewhat undervalued because it is an example of a novel that undermines the post-9/11 national narrative which relies on the maintenance of a distant Other to support the War on Terror rhetoric. It is included here as an important starting point to the process of recognising Islam *within* post-9/11 America, however flawed or preliminary that portrayal may be. In her book *Prophets of Recognition*, Julia Eichelberger explores the connection between early writers from American minority groups who have iconic status and their apparent objective of promoting recognition, what she calls “a vision of an as-yet-unrealized democracy” which provides the narrative space for the individual to prove “capable of a wholesome and fulfilling

participation in human society” (2).³³ It is a utopian vision of recognition, far removed from Honneth’s philosophically rigorous dialectic, but one that points to those novels, like *Self Storage*, that perform the genesis of recognition and that can be explicated within a recognition-focused critique.

Self Storage tackles political resistance within the homeland when the character of Flan chooses to subvert the actions of the US government in order to be true to her own political ideals and help Sodaba escape deportation, at great risk to both families. Partly because of its domestic and feminised subject matter, the novel portrays the post-9/11 US in its everyday conditions of increased surveillance and the hyper-vigilance of ordinary citizens towards Muslims. These themes are common to a number of novels across the field that address issues such as peer-to-peer surveillance both thematically and structurally. As Banita identifies, they are about “being seen, about ‘visibility’ as the barometer of belonging and citizenship in a post-9/11 ‘culture of control’” (*PJ* 252). Citizens like Flan must reconcile the actions of the government, in the guise of both Homeland Security and international military actions, with their own understandings of US national identity and their own experiences of Muslims as individuals, even when that reconciliation requires a resistance to the government’s official position. Flan’s response to her changed world after 9/11 prompts the need to undertake autonomous moral action, and as Thompson states, when we change those “with whom we ally ourselves, then our social identities may change with us” (30). Flan commits to act on behalf of another, someone she does not completely understand, in order to maintain her own integrity. The action she takes requires a preceding act of recognition. Although Sodaba is portrayed mostly without the elements that customarily create individuality, and she is not given the narrative agency to undergo her own act of recognition, she is nevertheless recognised by Flan. There is progress towards acknowledgement of

³³ Eichelberger provides analyses of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, Saul Bellow’s *Seize the Day* and Eudora Welty’s *The Optimist’s Daughter*.

Sodaba's basic humanity, a shared experience of motherhood, and Flan's eventual actions in support of Sodaba's right to freedom, all of which point to the underlying fact of recognition.

Sodaba's plight ignites Flan's political identity. She accesses an active citizenship that is missing in her contemporary environment but is restored through her access to America's historical identity. This is achieved primarily through the intertextual use of the poetry of Walt Whitman,³⁴ but is also evidenced by interrogation of the existing cultural imaginaries of both East and West. It is not an easy process; Flan and Sodaba cannot easily understand each other's actions, values or attitudes. They must chart their own course. To begin with, Flan's perception of Sodaba takes the classic Orientalist form. When imagining the inside of the Suleimans' storage locker, she pictures a "harem den" of Persian rugs, teapots, red cushions and a hookah (Brandeis 79); the reality is that the locker is filled with mundane everyday items. Flan immediately acknowledges her own ignorance: "Such rooms might exist in Afghanistan, but maybe not. They might be a Hollywoodized, completely stereotypical, vision of the Middle East, for all I knew. I was unfamiliar with the real Afghanistan, other than what I saw on the news, and that was mostly rubble" (Brandeis 79). The experience of both foreign nations and America at war is, once again, mediated through television images, distanced from the reality of the repercussions of the War on Terror that both Flan and Sodaba experience in their own lives. Despite Flan's acknowledgement of her own ignorance, it cannot easily replace the cultural imaginary; Flan later has expectations when entering the Suleiman family home that it will be in Ottoman decor, "but I was wrong again" (Brandeis 167). Brandeis exposes the limited understanding of her everywoman American character who fails to recognise the contemporary reality, and must oscillate instead between an outdated Orientalist fantasy and news-mediated television images as her only hopes to reconcile her exposure to the Muslim world with existing beliefs. Taylor, drawing on Franz

³⁴ As Banita and Borges have noted, Whitman is also central to Michael Cunningham's post-9/11 novella *Specimen Days*.

Fanon, asserts that where hegemony involves imaginings of the other as inferior, then “the struggle for freedom and equality must therefore pass through a revision of these images” (qtd. in Thompson 33) and Flan’s continual self-checking of Sodaba’s reality is but one example.

Just as Sodaba’s cultural heritage is initially understood through Flan’s Orientalist-inspired cultural memory, Flan’s own American identity is accessed through a mythology of American exceptionalism, represented by the prominence of the work of Walt Whitman, particularly “Song of Myself” from *Leaves of Grass*. The novel is scattered with quotes from the epic poem and it also performs a pivotal role in the plot; Flan, fleeing authorities after assisting Sodaba to evade deportation, is able to sell her mother’s cherished first edition of the book to fund a new life for her and her family. Whitman acts as a leitmotif for the pinnacle of American liberal values; Flan’s love of his persona harks back to an early American commitment to egalitarian democracy even in times of great internal upheaval. Flan’s post-9/11 world is characterised by citizen hyper-vigilance and government surveillance that contribute to escalating community tensions. Ultimately, when confronted with war (be it Civil War or War on Terror), the response of both Whitman and Flan is one of political activism, confident individualism and faith in American exceptionalism. The work of Whitman provides the vision of universal community acceptance to which Brandeis aspires; the poet also neatly encapsulates for us the relationship between visibility and recognition, “Whitman said *In all people I see myself—none more and not one barleycorn less*” (Brandeis 91).

Recognition and the Assessment of Risk

The burgeoning ethics of post-9/11 Muslim recognition seen in *Self Storage* is accompanied by questions of risk that infiltrate its world. The novel's ethical stance signifies a move away from the clear-cut world of victims and perpetrators seen in Part 1, to a world of anxiety, vulnerability and potential danger that is shared by all. In fact, the event that leads to the first encounter between Flan and her Afghan neighbour is not the 9/11 attacks but a simple car accident.³⁵ The cause is a combination of Sodaba and Flan's inattention, so the accident is one in which blame is not easily apportioned; it is simply the result of living in a risky society. The circumstances of the accident are manifestations of a world "[w]here the distinction between the morally reprehensible 'foreigner' and the victimised white American is no longer clear cut" (Banita 184). By implying a shared responsibility for the damage to an innocent child, "the novel replaces fear of the Muslim outsider with a close scrutiny of what it means to live with the threat of imminent hazard" (Banita 185) and this sense of threat in post-9/11 America applies to all of its residents, including Muslims. Although risk defines the new America, as Eichelberger points out, in novels that explore the early stages of recognition the vulnerability is not equal and the novels should "acknowledge the individual's vulnerability to the dictates of a larger group" (22). Sodaba always has more to lose than Flan.

The accurate assessment of risk, and in particular the way in which this normative social process was interrupted by the effects of 9/11 is important in both *Self Storage* and *The Submission*. Brandeis deftly provides a redefinition of narrative agency that moves away from racialised models of otherness to "an ethics of risk" (Banita 185). Indeed, making

³⁵ A random car accident also instigates the plot of *Once in a Promised Land* discussed in Chapter 5.

judgements about which threats are real and which are not, and assessing the accuracy of these judgements, is a consistent theme in post-9/11 fiction from Updike's home-grown, potential terrorist Ahmad to Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Banita demonstrates how an "ambivalent ethical approach that coheres around risk as key to the cultural animosities of late modernity" (166) has replaced the existing discourse of Otherness as race. Issues of risk include coincidence, accident, chance and insecurity (Banita 167). This move towards a risk focus constitutes a necessary change in paradigm specifically to manage the Muslim other who is not always identifiable by race, but in the post-9/11 context is always identifiable as potentially threatening. The ethics of risk are closely connected with the accurate recognition of others (as will be seen in *The Submission* which centres on the dangers of misrecognition). The rights of the individual are fundamental to social and political recognition but these rights "may be overridden in the interest of collective survival" (Thompson 57). The tension between the respect that underlies recognition and the need for risk assessment is complicated by the complexity of the contemporary environment, which clearly includes genuine threats (from a number of sources) that need to be identified and mitigated. The threat to democracy comes when the "cultural valuation may be a *post-hoc* rationalization of the political injustice" (Thompson 61). *Self Storage* shows that this involvement in risk management has become part of the lives of everyday Americans and their responses test the very limits of American liberal values. Living with vulnerability to risk involves understanding the foundations of social integration, including those of intersubjectivity, visibility and recognition.

The pervasive reality of an insecure world permeates the entire novel. Flan's first experience of Sodaba's husband, Raminullah, demonstrates how she instinctively undertakes her own assessment of him as a threat. The novel describes Raminullah screaming into the crowd at the self-storage auction where his belongings are being sold off. Unclear as to the

circumstances, the crowd is “staring at him in terror, as if he had a grenade in his hand or dynamite strapped to his chest” (Brandeis 83). Again, here we see a Muslim character immediately associated with violence and terror, a potential threat; the reality is that he is a poor student, unable to meet his financial obligations, and his emotions are heightened by the reminder of the loss of his child by the baby clothes and furniture being sold. Flan’s reaction is in defiance of the dominant view: “I probably should have been scared. Isn’t that who the news told us to be scared of, angry Middle Eastern men?” (Brandeis 83). Yet she cannot reconcile this with her observations of the Suleiman family. The inability to recognise and accurately assess the emotions of Raminullah goes some way to explaining the ease with which even an educated and diverse community like Flan’s is complicit in ostracising its Muslim members. Flan continues to observe as the incident escalates throughout the neighbourhood, prompting comments like, “Did you hear about the crazy Arab?” and “I heard he was insane. I heard he threatened to bomb the Child Development Centre” (92). “Terrorists live here” is written on the Suleimans’ sidewalk and Raminullah is reported to the FBI by a vigilant neighbour, leading to his detention, presumably at Guantanamo Bay. Eventually the attention of the government brings institutional attention as the university shuts down Flan’s garage sales as a breach of university policy. Despite their remoteness from the events of 9/11, its effects infiltrate the enclave as the Suleimans become misrecognised as a source of risk. The questions of Muslim visibility and the validity of recognition are therefore closely connected to both the under- and over-identification of threat, and each has distinct dangers. The risk-driven society is indiscriminate, and therefore it may not accurately assess risk, it will not effectively reduce risk and in some cases it actually increases risk. For Jacques Derrida, this inability to recognise danger is the real risk, “because of the anonymous invisibility of the enemy . . . because we cannot put a face on such terror (individual or state) . . . the worst can simultaneously appear insubstantial,

fleeting, light, and so seem to be denied, repressed, indeed forgotten” (qtd. in Borradori 99). The uncertainty surrounding the likelihood of potential threats creates an atmosphere of anxiety that permeates the post-9/11 genre, and combines with historical ideas of race and culture that bring a renewed danger of ostracism for Muslims located within the homeland.

Recognition, but not Quite: the Spectre of Exceptionalism

Self Storage conducts no formal experiments, but it does engage with a few ideas that have proven to be some of the most important in the post-9/11 environment, namely the role of the everyday citizen in a time of state exception, and continuity in an America that is both historically shaped by, and newly exposed to, the reality of global risk. The novel acts as a site of struggle, initially promising to “supplant the ethic of American individualism with a more sustainable, community-based lifestyle” (Banita 186) but it is ultimately thwarted by its exceptionalist heritage. Brandeis again calls on the words of Whitman: “What living and buried speech is always vibrating here . . . what howls restrained by decorum” (93), and this is followed immediately by Flan’s account of the day of September 11. The tension in the novel derives from America’s continual struggle to live up to its founding democratic principles. 9/11 unearthed deep-seated suspicions and hatred that had previously been veiled by its own rhetoric of tolerance. Eichelberger finds in the narrative structures of canonical texts, particularly in their conclusions, that they “end with the protagonists more or less detached from the public world, which appears to have taken little notice of them as individuals” (12). Such a resolution can “reveal the novelists’ ultimate resignation in the face of cultural ills the novels have identified” (12) but is also evidence that “the process moves each protagonist towards recognition of the individual, toward that co-operative, intersubjective state that is the basis of successful democracy” (13). For Brandeis, the need to move forward, to act ethically, is universal, it is driven not by the specifics of knowledge of the Other but by the ability to appropriately recognise others regardless of their individual characteristics. It is a stance consistent with Hegel’s view that the social contract is a natural outcome of recognition. For groups to be excluded from the polity, they must deviate from

the norm and “threaten the necessary unity” (Thompson 132) or common good. In order to act ethically, Flan must act illegally, but the result ultimately reinforces rather than undermines the triumph of American exceptionalism. Her character allegorically upholds the identity of the US as the protector of Enlightenment values but, in the end, Flan’s actions increasingly reflect Whitman’s in that the pursuit of happiness happens independently; the communal issues that promoted her initial ethical actions are discarded in favour of new beginnings for her and her family. The implication is that Americans will make their own moral decisions even when it goes against the position of the government. Recognition is a dynamic process, moving from individual to group and between self and other, but its impetus is towards social progress, despite never being linear.

The Submission: Engagement with the Misrecognised

The public visibility of a Muslim character is at the heart of Amy Waldman's 2011 novel *The Submission*, a recently published novel that addresses multiculturalism in post-9/11 America. Unlike the novels considered in Chapter 2, *The Submission* is not about how 9/11 is represented nor is it purely about the trauma that the events visited on New York's citizens, or the American public in general, although these elements are present. It is a novel that is interested in the political impact of the commemoration of 9/11 and how that creates a series of interrelated issues that reach beyond New York. The structure of the novel reflects this; although there is a third person narrator, the narrative is focalised at various times through each of the central characters, each with their own distinctive voice that reflects their individual context. At the core of the novel is a Muslim character, Mohammed Khan, an architect and the unintentional instigator of a furore that erupts around the building of the 9/11 memorial. The novel is set two years after the attacks and opens *in medias res* during the deliberations of the selection committee, a hand-picked group of New York élite, who are arguing the merits of two finalists in the anonymous architectural competition to build the memorial on the site of the World Trade Center. The anonymous designer of the eventual winning entry, called The Garden, is identified as Mohammed Khan, and it is this simple act—a democratic process that ends with the recognition of a Muslim name—that is the catalyst for the novel's events. Like Brandeis' *Self Storage*, it is the process of recognizing the Muslim other within the homeland that ignites a series of personal, political and ethical dilemmas; the committee is thrown into moral confusion about the appropriateness of the winner and political concerns about the public's reaction ensue. When the media exposes the rightful winner of the competition, it creates a moral panic which ignites anti-Islamic lobby

groups and “shock jocks” alike. Watching on are the family members of the victims: Clare, an upper-class Manhattanite and 9/11 widow whose role on the selection committee is to represent the families of victims; Sean Gallagher, the guilt-ridden and insecure younger brother of a lost firefighter whose misplaced attempts to represent his family see him in league with anti-Islamic activists; and Asma, the Muslim Bangladeshi widow of an illegal immigrant working as a janitor in the World Trade Center. Each character’s path is affected first by the loss caused by the attacks themselves, and then by the various reactions to the selection of Khan’s memorial. The epilogue, set twenty years into the future, shows that The Garden was never built on US soil. Instead, Khan is ostracised, successful but alone in Mumbai. His work is fêted internationally, and with the patronage of a sheikh The Garden has been built on foreign soil, but with one significant change: the names of the 9/11 victims have been replaced with the Arabic script of the Qur’an.

In *The Submission* there is a move away from the portrayal of the stereotype of the Muslim terrorist seen in Updike and DeLillo. In its place is the model of the “Good Muslim”, Mohammad Khan, who clearly has the preferred qualities of the Western Muslim that make him, at least prior to 9/11, an acceptable member of a liberal democracy. As Mahmood Mamdani outlines in his Good Muslim/Bad Muslim paradigm, “Good Muslims are modern, secular, and Westernized, but Bad Muslims are doctrinal, antimodern and virulent” (24).³⁶ Khan is handsome, successful, educated and urbane. Initially, he has no connection with his religion or the Muslim community apart from the faint cultural trail of his Pakistani-born parents. American-born and English-speaking he is in almost every respect “Western”, and his Western mindset extends to a belief in his entitlement to the democratic and constitutional rights upon which he relies to try and maintain his legitimate competition win. And yet, when his own country begins to target him and to act against its own values of religious pluralism

³⁶ These positions are not only constructed between Islam and the West but, as Mamdani points out, they also operate to divide the Muslim world and promote the need to excise the ‘Bad’ from within.

and equality, it ignites in Khan a sense of loyalty to his Islamic identity that he does not recognize. As he begins to internalize and react to the suspicions thrown at him, he stands his ground in a kind of passive resistance to the process: “He had decided . . . that he would not give in to pressure to withdraw, nor would he reassure anyone that he was ‘moderate’, or ‘safe’ or Sufi, whatever adjective would allow Americans to sleep without worrying that he had placed a bomb under their pillow. It was exactly because they had nothing to worry about from him that he wanted to let them worry” (Waldman 78). Despite having an identity constructed of all of the ‘desirable’ traits of an American, the discrimination that Khan undergoes after 9/11 begins to damage his American identity, as well as the community around him. It is this interaction that is both internal to the character and a part of his diegetic community interaction that reveals the recursive nature of intersubjectivity. The process is reciprocal rather than the expression of an essentialised opposition between civilizations: when Khan begins to be perceived differently, he behaves differently, and his behaviour encourages others to see him as different. There is no basis for the suspicions cast upon him, but innocence is insufficient protection from the effects of misrecognition.

Khan’s identity is quickly unravelled by his post-9/11 experience. His American citizenship is insufficient indemnity against the onslaught of negativity that he suffers. Waldman’s construction of this process highlights some important aspects concerning the relationship between a personal Islamic identity and US citizenship, and, in particular, exposes why they may be perceived as incompatible states. As his ostracism at the end of the novel shows, Khan’s citizenship is proven to be a superficial “consumer citizenship,”³⁷ which is an inadequate safeguard when he comes under attack for the one element of his identity that he had not previously thought of as problematic—his Islamic heritage. As long as he fits the paradigm of the Good Muslim, which includes fulfilling the economic imperative as a

³⁷ For a background discussion of the consumer as citizen see Kate Soper (2004).

professional and ambitious architect, his presence goes unnoticed. However, unbeknownst to him, the acceptance is tenuous. In his post-9/11 position he must access the very citizenship rights to which he thought he was entitled but he finds lacking. His American inclusion proves to be “superficial ‘self styling’ or ‘performance’ rather than . . . a vehicle for any concerted political action or exercise of citizenship” (Soper 112). These broader implications for the compatibility of Islam and democratic identity that the novel raises are considered in the following section.

Misrecognition and the Ethics of Risk

The early stages of the recognition process and its relationship with risk were discussed above in relation to *Self Storage*. *The Submission* examines the relationship between misrecognition and its potential for danger, which acts as the root cause of social, legal, and political exclusion. To clarify, misrecognition in this sense “is not to suffer distorted identity or impaired subjectivity as a result of being depreciated by others. It is rather constituted by institutionalised patterns of cultural value in ways that prevent one from participating as a peer in social life” (Fraser & Honneth 29). Khan’s process of unraveling begins with his changed treatment after the 9/11 memorial competition win when he becomes recognisable, by which I mean publicly known. Initially portrayed on the newspaper front page as an anonymous face wearing a ski-mask in the style of a criminal (again the motif of the faceless yet threatening Muslim figure), Khan is eventually exposed by the media as the contentious competition winner. He is immediately both presented and perceived as synonymous with risk and threat, assumed to have a hidden “Islamist” agenda.³⁸ The experience of having a created, threatening version of himself projected back to him begins to undo Khan’s psychological stability. As Simon Thompson explains, “[g]iven the intimate and profound connection between identity and recognition . . . the individual can be damaged by misrecognition” (23). Khan’s integrity comes under question: from his colleagues who know him best, to political representatives and the media machine. Experts interrogate his design, *The Garden*, to determine its Islamic design roots, and these roots are speculated about as evidence of his dangerous intentions. The question of whether his inspiration was Islamic, about which he refuses to comment, becomes central to the public interest. Although there is

³⁸ More evidence that this highly problematic term reinforces that there is no safe political identity for Muslims post-9/11.

no basis for the portrayal of Khan as a menacing outsider, he quickly becomes trapped in and begins to internalise this misrecognition.

Waldman's nuanced scrutiny of the effects of the process of misrecognition are not just psychological, they are also material as Khan faces real economic costs and potential legal implications. Straight after the 9/11 attacks, and well before the competition furore, Khan starts experiencing changes and he begins to internalise the post-9/11 suspicion cast on all Muslims. Cautious not to offend, he goes from being brusque to obsequious on worksites, noting "the difference wasn't in how he was being treated but in how he was behaving" (25). But he *is* also treated differently; targeted when in line at Los Angeles airport, he is interrogated and his baggage inspected. Questioned with suspicion about his work, his travel, where he was during the attacks and his views on radical Islam, his defence, which consists of a longstanding disinterested secularity, does not protect him. It surprises Khan that at a time when his irreligious identity was most needed, the Muslim declaration of faith (the *Shahada*) "floated unbidden into his mind . . . at the moment he planned to disavow his Muslim identity, his subconscious had unearthed its kernel" (Waldman 28). Indeed, throughout the novel Khan's Islamic identity seemingly becomes more important to him the more it is threatened, until the epilogue which shows him having built a successful career on a blend of Islamic and Western architecture. Later in the novel, when overlooked for an expected promotion at work he worries that it is because of his background, something that did not occur to him prior to the attacks. This creates self-doubt where previously he was over-confident—is it because he is Muslim or are there other reasons, he worries (Waldman 39). His job insecurities contribute to his identity insecurities. When he considers this in connection with the airport interrogation incident and the ubiquitous media discussion about the position of Muslims, it contributes to his changed self-perception. He suffers from increasing paranoia (Waldman 40) about being perceived as a lesser American and a danger

to his community, and this contributes to a damaging “feeling of being unwanted or not being worthy to be part of society” (Margalit qtd. in Pilapil 41)—a state of humiliation.

Whilst the perception of Khan as a threat remains without basis throughout the novel (he never shows any interest in retaliation apart from protecting his legal rights), it constitutes a process of misrecognition whereby longstanding fears of Islam, triggered by the attacks, are projected onto an innocent citizen. Taylor refers to this kind of misrecognition as “a grievous wound” that can result in self-hatred (454). Honneth argues that such group misrecognition is “normally considered an indicator of a social pathology that can end in a condition of ‘invisibility’” (*Invisibility* 119) which is the effective result for Khan who ends the novel in self-imposed exile. Because of the interconnected nature of the interactions, the wounding extends to the wider US community, which is also greatly damaged by Khan’s treatment. The process by which individual experiences of misrecognition contribute towards Honneth’s concept of “social pathology” is one that is not yet clearly agreed, but invisibility and misrecognition are two of the components that Fabian Freyenhagen identifies. Both of these components ignite social disharmony in the novel. The dispute over Khan’s memorial becomes the instigator of truculent media coverage, belligerent town meetings and violent anti-Muslim protests on the streets. The violence culminates in the assassination of Asma by an unknown assailant; the perceived threat of violence and the actual threat of violence are once again misunderstood and misplaced. With so many possible perpetrators of the attack on Asma but none identified, Waldman implies that the whole society is complicit. *The Submission* presents its Muslim characters, and the varying reactions to their recognition in the US, in order to create an atmosphere of psychological honesty that reveals the complex interaction between identity construction and social cohesion.

One of the elements that is common across the Muslim characterisation discussed to this point is an absence of any portrayal of intimate relationships. It was evident, and perhaps

understandable, in the portrayal in the terrorist narratives, but is also evident in these divergent novels. Khan, for example, has no stable partner, no children or siblings and his parents are almost absent from the story. His friendships and social standing are tied to his professional function as a successful architect and are lost when that role disappears. In the epilogue, Khan recalls his remark to his lawyer and lover Laila that he would have children later, but “later had never come. Work had been his child, his partner” (Waldman 290). Similarly, Sodaba in *Self Storage* has an absent husband. Her attempts at motherhood have included miscarriage and still-birth. She is without friends and there is no reference to any connections in Afghanistan. The consistent portrayal of Muslims who lack such connections is significant. More than a plot contrivance, it suggests a barrier against portraying Muslims in normative relationships, and when considered with Honneth’s claim that intimate relationships are one of the building blocks that contribute to the necessary self-confidence that maintains sound identity (*S for R* xiii) the implications become part of the inability to achieve recognition. Without the protections of intimacy, Khan’s risk of misrecognition was perhaps more predictable than initially indicated by his successful exterior.

Secularism and the Public Nature of Islam

The Submission identifies a tension between the inherently public nature of Islam and the potential for this to be perceived as antithetical to ideas of secularity. Waldman's focus is not, however, on the most obvious public expressions of Islam that appear throughout the genre (common references to hijab, for example, or scenes of collective prayer), but on the public recognition of names. The importance of names, both of victims and recognisably Muslim names, becomes a regular motif in *The Submission*. Names feature in both the opening and closing lines. The opening line of the novel is spoken by Claire in support of her choice of *The Garden* as the competition winner, "The names . . . what about the names?" (1) she asks, highlighting the importance to the family members of having the victims' names recorded on the memorial. This is contrasted at the opening of Chapter 2 with the identification of the winning entrant's name which was "passed from palm to palm like a fragile folio" (16): the offending name in question, Mohammad. Debating whether the committee should reach the obvious conclusion one member states, "I think we should assume the worst—I mean, that he's Muslim" (16). Although the speaker immediately becomes aware of the faux pas, such comments show that simply being identified as a Muslim, and with no other information, is assumed to have negative connotations. The representation of Mohammad Khan is central to the novel's tightly structured plot, and yet he is a loosely drawn character. His most important role in the plot, aside from the design of *The Garden*, which has occurred before the novel begins, is attached to the public recognition of his name. The reader's introduction to Khan comes at the opening of Chapter 3: "His name was what got him pulled from a security line at LAX" (24). This coincides with a change in the narrative focalisation, including Khan being referred to by his self-appointed nickname 'Mo'. He clearly identifies himself by this more secular, American-friendly moniker and as he presents his business card to the

Homeland Security officers, he is “ruing that the Gotham font screamed his full name, MOHAMMAD KHAN”. The relationship between Islam, race and risk is evident again here and the trend extends well beyond just Khan. Asma must stand up for the right for her husband to be recognised among the deceased listed on the memorial, despite the fact that he was working as an illegal immigrant: “He had to be named, for in that name was a life” (77). The idea is opposed by anti-immigrant groups who reject the additional names in order to prevent them from being considered “equivalent to citizens” (77). In a further example from the everyday experience of New Yorkers, the sign advertising the local station master Talib Islam is removed due to public pressure. Deeply offended by its presence Sean Gallagher asks, “They expect us to look at that name everyday?” (119). In an example of the novel’s ability to transition between the varying perspectives of its characters, the narrator concludes “Now Khan’s name, and his paradise, would torment them in a place far more sacred than a subway” (119). The repeated reference to names as a fundamental element of identity establishes a deep signification in this everyday component of Muslim culture.

With Khan’s name proving so problematic, it is not surprising that the first reaction of the selection committee is to try and remove it. Committee chair, Paul, seeks to resolve the tension by having the winning entry put under another architect’s name, or even for Mo to change his name. The power of names is contrasted with the importance of not naming. First, anonymity has a democratic importance as the memorial is an anonymous competition, a tradition that is precisely designed to remove prejudice and nepotism. Second is the unnameable nature of the event of 9/11 itself.³⁹ For most of the novels discussed here, various euphemisms stand for naming the day, or even less common describing the events of the day. In the introduction to the committee chairman’s recollection of 9/11 the narration describes how “[h]e thought, too, of the day, as he hadn’t for a long time” (12). The novel

³⁹ Waldman notes on her website that the terms 9/11 and Ground Zero are intentionally not used anywhere in the novel.

also ends with a reference to the relationship between naming and memorialising. After the shock of seeing *The Garden* with the victim's names replaced by Qur'anic script, the final act of the novel is left to Claire's son, who leaves his own cairn, a stone memorial, in memory of his father, concluding that: "With a pile of stones, he had written a name" (Waldman 298).

The multivocal narrative and varied characterisation of *The Submission* makes it one of the recent novels that most successfully meets the call for greater diversity in the field. Duvall and Marzec claim that in general "the last ten years have not been kind to artists' attempts to represent 9/11" (381), but Muslim representation has been particularly problematic for American authors. Waldman's novel provides a nuanced and complex understanding of the Muslim world (no doubt fuelled by her experience as a foreign correspondent in South Asia). Her Muslim characters are representative of a more diverse view of Islam; Khan and Asma are male and female, educated and uneducated, secular and devout, Pakistani-American and Bangladeshi, US-born and immigrant. There are also things that her characters are not: Arab, for example, or terrorists, or anti-American or even particularly politically aware of the Islamist agenda. Indeed, Asma as a "9/11 widow" is a victim of the attacks and of the violent aftermath. She is also one of the few characters in any literature post-9/11 portrayed as a practising Muslim. In fact, she calls on her religion to try and make sense of the attacks, which seem as incomprehensible to her as to every other victim: "Why had God allowed these men to cremate her husband—and claim to have cremated him in God's name no less?" (73). The first portrayal of a Muslim character in the novel is of the committee chair's Pakistani driver who, upon hearing the news of the attacks immediately recognises the implications and says "I hope it's not the Arabs," thereby distancing himself from any allegiance to the terrorists based merely on a common religion. (This does not save him as he is soon replaced by a Russian driver with whom Paul feels more comfortable, an ironic nod to the changing US public enemy number one from Cold

War Soviet to Muslim.) Waldman presents the Muslim community of New York not as one monolithic, anti-American bloc, but as altogether diverse.

The public presence of Islam is utilised by Waldman as a symbol that tests America's limits to freedom of religious expression, a value that is much more historically rooted in American understandings of Islam than current post-9/11 critique might suggest. As Denise Spellberg argues in *Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an: Islam and the Founders*, Islam has been the litmus test for America's secular objectives since the time of the founding fathers. The true test of America's future success, she claims, was not whether it could separate the State from a Christian state religion, but whether it could tolerate a Muslim president (158). Therefore, Waldman's emphasis on the public nature of Islamic tradition accesses a richly historical, peculiarly American political debate that accesses a significant global exploration of the relationship between the Islamic tradition and democracy.

Islam and Democracy

“Politics is first and foremost the activity of the Citizen.”

Peter Alexander Meyers

At its core, *The Submission* asks a profound political question: is there something essential about Islam, about Muslims, that is incompatible with liberal democracy? It is a question prompted, or at least reignited, by a post-9/11 era where the presence of Muslims has come to be seen as a challenge to Western values, both from within and outside of the homeland territory. Whilst a concern with democracy is a common feature of struggles for recognition (Thompson 7), the novel is specifically interested in the extent to which the presence and recognition of Muslims creates a need to reconsider the impact on democratic institutions and

values. The novel maintains an acknowledgement of the traumatic effect of 9/11 on New Yorkers; the events of 9/11 took place two years before the book begins, although in memory they remain unnameable and unprocessed by many of the characters, and 9/11 is referred to only in allusions: “He had brought her the news . . . ‘The buildings have fallen,’ he said, and she knew” (Waldman 71). Clare, the 9/11 widow on the selection committee, clearly experiences the after-effects of her husband’s death in symptoms associated with trauma and grief—nightmares, an inability to come to terms with the reality of his absence, building rituals of memory. And yet the novel importantly moves beyond the exploration of trauma and exposes the deep-seated vulnerabilities that the post-9/11 world has exposed: “Manhattanites who had always prided themselves on their liberalism confessed that they were talking to their therapists about their discomfort with Mohammed Khan” (125). Waldman’s incisive irony identifies how important political identities are to the social tensions in the book.

The title of Waldman’s book, *The Submission*, itself is rich in connotation. It refers to the anonymous submission of Khan’s entry into the memorial competition that is the catalyst for the entire plot and the character’s most active point of agency. It is also the translation of the Arabic word Islam which means to submit or surrender. Islam also shares its etymology with the Arabic word for peace (*salam*) and so Islam connotes the peace gained through submission to God. But in the contemporary, Western context, the novel also explores the theme of submission to the values of democracy. The central tension stems from the committee’s desire to submit to democratic process (the anonymous competition), pitted against its more primitive emotive response of disgust at a Muslim designing a 9/11 memorial. The assertion by Waldman seems to be that citizens in a democracy should submit to its values, including due process and pluralism, even when that submission is difficult or counterintuitive. A society that does not, Waldman’s novel suggests, undermines not its

enemy but itself by acting against its own values and interests (an idea that is further explored in the next chapter through Jacques Derrida's concept of autoimmunity).

This same tension is at the root of the political theory of recognition. Charles Taylor claims that "there is something in the dynamic of democracy that pushes towards exclusion," (143) a force to which Waldman's post-9/11 New York succumbs in its treatment of Khan and Muslims in general. Taylor identifies the source of the tension: there is a "politics of universalism" evidenced by individual autonomy and guaranteed by rights and it is this impetus that is evident in Khan's architectural submission. A citizen like any other, he believes in his right to equal consideration based on merit. What he learns is that democratic principles of equality are balanced against the "politics of difference" that accommodate the individual expressions of cultural identity (Thompson 10). A preoccupation with the inspiration for Khan's design develops: does it encompass Islamic design principles? Is *The Garden* a symbol of paradise from the Qur'an? Or perhaps it is simply too un-American. The notion that "gardens are fetishes of the European bourgeoisie" is the basis for art critic Ariana's objections to the design (5). This preoccupation with the symbolism of the design becomes the barometer of cultural difference, which ultimately falls on the side of exclusion. *The Garden* is a bridge too far for American pluralism.

In effect, the novel questions whether democracy and Islam can coexist but rather than accepting the common wisdom that they cannot, Waldman complicates the expected answer at every turn. The architectural competition in *The Submission* acts as an allegory of the US democratic system; the US is a constitutional republic that is governed by law, where decision-making is by the vote of a group of representatives, and where checks and balances, such as anonymity, are in place to avoid nepotism and prejudice. The symbol of the architectural competition even encompasses the difference between the US as a direct democracy and a republic, "Because if it was an election, you think Americans would vote

for a Muslim?” (99) as one character says. Equality between the entrants is an assumed principle. The interesting premise of the novel poses the question of how extensively this political system can be tested. As Spellberg’s important re-evaluation of the place of Muslims in America’s founding asserts, Muslims were the test case for determining America’s founding principles of pluralism. Whilst there was no doubt in the minds of Thomas Jefferson and others that Muslims were wrong theologically, he believed that to exclude them politically on this basis would be to replicate the existing tensions, a European inheritance, between Catholics and Protestants. Therefore, Muslims played an important role in Jefferson’s political theory in that their “theoretical citizenship would prove the universality of American rights” (Spellberg 5).

The question of the protection of minority rights is another area where *The Submission* reflects political concerns about recognition. Taylor considers the “unjust exclusion of some individuals from citizenship” (Thompson 132) as one of the two conditions that can prevent a genuine participatory democracy, and this is experienced when a group is not considered to be a normative part of the citizenry bonded by a common good. This is no doubt the experience of Khan, whose ostracism from public life, and eventually from the US homeland, is based purely on his Muslim heritage and that this carries an assumed antagonism with his American identity. There is a demonstrable conflation of religious and political identities, whereby “[i]t is assumed that people’s public behaviour, particularly their political behaviour, can be read from their habits and customs, whether religious or traditional” (Mamdani 19). And yet such exclusion, either by preventing others from joining the citizenry (what Taylor calls “outer exclusion” as seen in the case of Sodaba), or by excluding certain groups despite their citizenship (the “inner exclusion” that Khan suffers) is anathema to democratic ideals. In recognition of this contradiction, advanced democracies have the redundancy of protection of minority rights but the idea that Muslims

would need minority protection as an essential component of a democratic US can be a confronting idea in the post-9/11 context. When Khan seeks the support of the peak body that represents Muslim citizens to obtain legal recourse over the denial of his competition win, he wanders into a minefield of legal, political, religious and public relations issues. “The law is political, especially right now,” (82) Laila, the lawyer advising Khan, reminds him. The system fails to protect Khan’s legitimate win. The novel is peppered with instances where theoretical political questions about minority rights or the state of the social contract are put to everyday tests in post-9/11 America. For example, when the Governor of New York is questioned about the appropriateness of The Garden’s design, her politically expedient response is that “It would be unconstitutional to allow the establishment of any religion on public land” (118). The law and the rhetoric of secularity are used for the direct opposite of their intent, to oppress a religious minority.

The media plays an important role in the construction of the negative perception of Muslims in the novel and, more generally, the ramping up of social tensions. Waldman’s own background as a journalist and foreign correspondent (like both Lorraine Adams and Inaam Kachachi) gives her an insider’s view of the role of the media.⁴⁰ It is not a flattering portrayal with the character of reporter Alyssa Spier, who stands out for her ambition and competitiveness, actively pursuing an agenda that inflames the already tense situation. With her newfound success based on uncovering the memorial story, Spier becomes a columnist and is able to swallow any ethical concerns in order to keep her success flowing. “The problem with Islam is Islam . . . the religion’s violent propensities, its oppression of women, its incompatibility with democracy and the American way of life” (Waldman 106), she writes in a nod to the popularity of a clash of civilizations mindset and in full knowledge that such rhetoric would bring her professional attention.

⁴⁰ Waldman notes on her website that she reported from New York on the day of the attacks and later from Afghanistan as the South Asia bureau chief of the *New York Times*.

When Claire Messud, author of the post-9/11 novel *The Emperor's Children*, reviewed *The Submission* she astutely observed the narrative's inability to create the intimate knowledge of the two most important characters—Khan and Claire—that would better elucidate their motivations and their reactions. This is an example of the journalistic distance that remains in Waldman's writing and whilst the journalistic perspective is beneficial in her portrayal of a varied group of characters, it also prevents her from giving the reader the emotional depth needed to engage fully with the two characters who determine the outcome of the narrative. Waldman's former role as a journalist also has stylistic impact. Her ability to control the complex plot is evident, as is her concision with language and her ability to create the multiple points of view. She creates short but impactful sentences. For instance, she writes that Claire can see "Her future was gilded blankness" (11), and that "Sorrow can be a bully" (7). The attempts at a more literary diction are less successful, with the "charnel ground" (1) and "the chiaroscuro of winter" (2) sometimes self-consciously described. So, whilst Waldman may not create the emotional connection with victims that, say, Jonathan Safran Foer does, she is able to give a very valuable and more comprehensive picture that captures the social qualities of its time.

The Submission is not just an exploration of wounding, but also of how to heal: the novel explores some of the positive ways to move beyond trauma, through commemoration and a return to founding values. The function of architecture in re-constructing the physical and emotional losses of 9/11 has a symbolic function. The tension between the actual loss that victims' families have experienced, through characters such as Asma and Claire, is contrasted with a sense of a loss of innocence and an increased vulnerability that is experienced nationally. Both are important but remain different. Ultimately, like *Self Storage*, *The Submission* is unable to create a world that is post-exceptionalist. The US has its aspirational democratic role to fulfil, even though Waldman clearly sees the nation falling

short. It must re-unite to fulfil its manifest destiny and the epilogue shows that it succeeds: “the country had moved on, self-corrected, as it always did, that feverish time mostly forgotten” (287). But the epilogue also hints that America will learn to exist in a new world order with the economic rise of the developing world: “The center of gravity had shifted, even if Americans didn’t recognise it back then. I guess they do now,” concludes Mo with a telling use of the third person plural to refer to his fellow citizens.

Hope and the Divergent Novel

Self Storage is a problematic post-9/11 novel in many ways, but it also performs some important functions in opening up the genre. From its West Coast setting and portrayal of everyday family life, to its feminist resistance to the War on Terror, it questions many of the early foundational assumptions of the canon and begins the process of Muslim recognition. Due to the intersubjective nature of the symbolic central characters, it explores the political implications of the War on Terror for US citizens faced with an ethical dilemma. Although it is naïve in its return to America's mythological position as global moral leader, it goes some way to breaking through the clash of civilisations model. It demonstrates how the struggle for recognition takes place between and within cultures, and is therefore an explanatory model for the post-9/11 social context.

There are, of course, many other novels that could also be categorized as divergent. Mishra, for example, identifies Lorraine Adams' *Harbor*, Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*, and Laila Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* as novels that are "untouched by the crude hysteria about jihad and Islam" and instead "describe sympathetically the divided selves of Muslims". The novels chosen for inclusion in this thesis each engage with the subjectivity of the individual in a post-9/11 context that is also positioned as part of a globalised worldview. David Simpson marks the events of 9/11 as a time of global solidarity, which prompts him to ask: "Could this have been a utopian moment, an opening?" (qtd. in Cilano 14). Such a question is difficult to contemplate as it proposes a 180 degree turn from the view of 9/11 as confirmation of a global disintegration, as ultimate trauma, and yet it has some resonance when it comes to the visibility of Muslims in America. Perhaps Simpson's assertion is too idealistic, but it hints at a better

understanding of the historical phenomenon where “the customary nationalist narcissistic reaction to traumatic events like 9/11 has the potential to be transformed into a deeper understanding of the interdependency of nations and communities” (Duvall & Marzac 396).

Chapter 5: Fragile Identity and Arab American Novels

Chapter 4 considered two novels that engage with the recognition of Muslims in America in the post-9/11 environment. This chapter will evaluate two novels that further complicate the post-9/11 narrative by including the perspective of Arab Americans. The first is *The American Granddaughter* (2010) whose author, Inaam Kachachi, is an Iraqi journalist who has lived in exile in France since 1979 when she, like many Iraqis, fled the oncoming Iran/Iraq War. Her novel imagines the life of the daughter of Iraqi refugees living in the US at the time of the 9/11 attacks. It is one of the few novels written by an author outside of the US that attempts to capture the 9/11 experience of Arab Americans and goes on to connect that event with the 2003 Iraq War.⁴¹ *Once in a Promised Land* is a much better known example of the Arab American perspective of 9/11 and its author Laila Halaby is often called upon as an exemplar of the “Other” voice of 9/11. In this section, I look at both novels with respect to the intersubjective nature of identity formation and disintegration, and how political discourse after 9/11 created an environment that pathologised the fragile identity of Arab Americans, particularly in their role as citizens. I also consider how these novels vary stylistically from many of the other post-9/11 novels by going beyond the strictly realist examples that have dominated the discussion to date and attempt more innovative narrative techniques that reflect their hybrid concerns.

In addition, this chapter considers the application of the political aspects of recognition within the novels. Political theories of recognition focus on the tension between the need to recognise equality as an essential component of democracy, and the need to value individualism and the potential for difference this entails. The relationship between Muslims

⁴¹ For a discussion of the lack of English translations of Iraqi authored novels see the Warscapes blog <http://www.warscapes.com/column/marcia-lynx-qualey/time-traveling-whose-iraq-stories>

in the West and democracy was a feature of the novels discussed in Chapter 4, and will be a feature again here. The theory of recognition, as it has been espoused by key thinkers, rests on democratic presuppositions; it relies on certain principles of democracy to eventuate. This conception of democracy is not merely the expression of a democratically elected government and all that it entails (such as an independent judiciary who enforce the rule of law) but also includes less structural definitions of democracy such as Honneth's understanding of "a system of reflexive co-operation in which citizens consciously engage with their fellows in order to solve collective problems" (Thompson 130). The divergent novels discussed in Part 2 of this thesis are all focussed on political and democratic themes consistent with Honneth's definition. This is most evident in *The Submission*, which focuses on the nexus of Islam and liberalism, but it is also present in each of the other novels where plots are driven by the fallout from political reactions to 9/11 and the reactions of everyday citizens. Like the politics of recognition, there is a constant tension within the novels between the aspiration towards democracy (Derrida's democracy-to-come) and the practical results of living with democracy's failings evident in the invasion of Iraq, but also in a post-9/11 US mired in surveillance, suspicion and restrictions on civil liberties. The tendency of democracy to exclude has already been noted; a related inherent quality of democracy is its inclination inadvertently to damage its own ideals in an effort to protect itself. This impulse is best captured in Derrida's concept of the autoimmune which has been strongly associated with 9/11 studies and was the concept to which Derrida turned in his first responses to the event (Borradori 2003). This chapter considers how *The American Granddaughter* personifies the autoimmune impulse in its discussion of the 2003 Iraq War, as well as autoimmunity as a rejection of the foreign body in *Once in a Promised Land*.

Through the experience of the intersubjective and the autoimmune impulse, both novels partially deconstruct the joint monoliths constructed in the novels of earlier chapters:

the monolith of the free West *and* the monolith of an authoritarian Islam. As Fadda Conrey identifies, such novels operate in political ways that “undercut the us/them binary” through their ability to portray characters in “ways that complicate and challenge reductive and exclusionary conceptualizations of US citizenship” (534). Although Fadda Conrey is speaking specifically about the representation of Arab American characters, her analysis applies more generally and includes the complicated challenges to citizenship that befall American characters such as Flan in *Self Storage* or Claire in *The Submission* (although they are admittedly less vulnerable to exclusion).

In the post-9/11 literary landscape, there is a need to acknowledge the West’s relationship with the Muslim world and authors must decide what form that relationship will take in the everyday. The novels show a common interest in what it means to be rationally autonomous agents in the contemporary environment. The expression of autonomy is especially tricky for Muslim characters attempting to define a Western Muslim identity consistent with liberal democracy, but it also applies to Western characters who are faced with the choice of whether to recognise their Muslim counterparts. In the case of Arab Americans this tension is internalised but the novels in this chapter make it manifest.

Unravelling Identity in *The American Granddaughter*

“What is realised in the novel is the process of coming to know one’s own language as it is perceived in someone else’s language”

Mikhail Bakhtin

I turn first to *The American Granddaughter* by Paris-based Iraqi journalist and author Inaam Kachachi. This was her second novel and it was published in Arabic in 2008. After being shortlisted in 2009 for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, the so-called “Arabic Booker”, the English translation by Nariman Youssef was published in 2010. (Kachachi’s most recent novel *Tashari* was also shortlisted for the 2014 Arabic Booker.) Kachachi, an Iraqi of Chaldean background, writes mostly about the experience of exile, the Arab diaspora and the fragility of hybrid identity. Having turned from journalism to fiction after the 2003 Iraq War, she is “preoccupied with giving voice to the Iraqi people in their dilemma” (AbdelRahman 2). In *The American Granddaughter*, Kachachi tells the fictional story of Zeina, a young woman who fled with her family from Saddam Hussein’s Iraq to Detroit, Michigan in the 1990s only to return in 2003 as a translator for the US military. At the beginning of the novel, Zeina's hybrid Arab American identity is secure. She has a love of Arabic poetry and language that she accommodates easily with her American friends and lifestyle. There is no question that she considers herself an American citizen and she is seemingly oblivious to the complex political world her family has escaped. And then comes the irruption of 9/11 and Zeina is as affected by the events as other Americans.

As the invasion of Iraq becomes inevitable, Zeina is called on for her translation skills. She is motivated by a blend of patriotic fervour and the salary, which she calls “the price of my precious language, the price of my blood” (Kachachi 10). On arriving in Iraq, Zeina’s

identity becomes less solid. She reconnects with her beloved grandmother, a proud nationalist, and her Iraqi family is appalled by Zeina's involvement with the US troops. They begin a process of "re-education" to open Zeina's eyes to the reality of their situation and to her complicity. Zeina's experiences in Iraq lead to a gradual unraveling of her carefully constructed identity until she becomes a wounded woman, uncertain of her own ideas of self, nation and virtue. The tension between Zeina and her grandmother is symbolic of the broader tension between the US and Iraq, and of the internal conflict that develops within the character of Zeina. This is expressed most overtly through the conflict between the character of Zeina as the first-person narrator, and the interjection of a reflexive persona, who refers to herself as "the writer". Through this meta-fictive device the two voices battle over who will tell this story, who has the literal authority to tell. For example, Zeina narrates: "The writer opened her desk drawer and brought out a bundle of newspaper cuttings and human rights reports that she tossed in my direction. 'Read these' she said" (90). And later: "My grandmother wanted me to inherit her memory. And the writer was happy with the decision because it served her novel" (91). This formal aspect points to the novel's concern with the contested ground of identity and nation, but the collapse of borders between author, narrator and character also reflects the vulnerability of narrative itself, the implicit dangers in presenting the sides of a complex story, the sides of war.

The novel moves from the experience of diaspora, of adjustment in new surroundings, to one of exile, the ongoing loss of home, and this is a change directly brought about by 9/11 and its ramifications. The opening lines of the novel highlight a concern with the increased anxiety and vulnerability that develop as a part of this change, but rather than seeing this as a negative affect they paradoxically become a source of security for Zeina. Kachachi begins:

If sorrow were a man I would not kill him. I would pray for his long life. For it has honed me and smoothed over the edges of my reckless nature. It has turned the world

and everything in it a strange colour with unfamiliar hues that my words stutter to describe and my eyes fail to register. Maybe I was colour blind before. Or was my eyesight perfect then, and is the colour that I see now the wrong one? (1)

The prologue shows the maturity that has come with Zeina's exposure to her past, her heritage and the plethora of associated losses that have resulted from colonisation, tyranny, exile and war. Once again, metaphors of seeing, blindness, knowing and recognition are evident early in the narrative and become an important motif. The opening lines also define Zeina's present, which involves living with the reality of her American identity including being a participant in the exercise of its military power. The rest of the novel retrospectively reveals how Zeina reached this point of vulnerability which results in a life of freedom in the US that "tasted like vinegar" with "a sadness like pure honey . . . good for insomnia and poetry . . . It was a kind of suffering that lifted me up then weighed me down again" (Kachachi 176).

The new vulnerability that Kachachi describes is a consequence not of the fear of violation which has dominated the post-9/11 US homeland, but of the vulnerability that comes from learning to live in a world where the connection to global violence and destruction has been made explicit; it is a paradoxical increase in facing the reality of terrorism and war which brings with it a strange and nascent wisdom. It is this endpoint of uncertainty combined with an increased understanding of her own, her nation's and the world's vulnerability that takes the place of Zeina's initially buoyant view of her American life.

Translating Identity and Citizenship

It may seem incongruous to choose *The American Granddaughter* in a thesis dealing with Muslim representation, particularly as the exemplar of novels about the Iraq invasion, because neither its author nor its central character are Muslim. Zeina is an Iraqi American of Chaldean background, an Eastern Catholic sect with its largest population in Iraq. (Zeina's history reflects the actual experience of many Chaldeans like Kachachi who were persecuted under Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime.) When forced to flee Iraq because of her father's torture for a minor anti-government transgression (as a news reader one of his stories was determined to be too long), the family moves to Detroit.⁴² The novel highlights some important points about how the monolith "Islam" operates. First, the conflation of Islam with Arab is called into question. There is a tendency to see Islamic representation as interchangeable with Arab representation, with the vast focus of literary criticism dealing with Muslims focused on the experience of Arab Muslims. Hamid Dabashi (2008) argues persuasively that what he calls "capitalised Islam" as a homogenised concept evolved out of the Colonial/Orientalist project and has since been consolidated by Muslim responses to Orientalism (*Post-Orientalism*). Part of this has been the dominance of the representation of Arab Muslims. This is further consolidated by the central critical position that Edward Said's *Orientalism* holds in the field, which reinforces the conflation of Arab and Muslim. This is a form of misrecognition of the global nature of Muslim identity and how it is often enmeshed with other cultures. In order to better represent "Islam" in its complexity, it is as important to consider the representation of non-Muslim Arabs as it is to consider Muslims in the West, and to demonstrate in this way that delineations of East and West are far less concrete than commonly portrayed. Further, Zeina's experience of pluralism is one not often projected as a

⁴² Detroit houses the largest Arab diaspora in the United States and was also the site of the first local office of Homeland Security. It has been prominent in debates about Arabs in America and has received a great deal of attention from counter-terrorism initiatives.

part of life in the Middle East; she has close interaction with other Muslim characters in the novel, particularly the family's long-time housekeeper Tawoos and her son Muhaymen. Muslim and Christian live closely together, their histories and daily lives intertwined despite the religious, political and legal discriminations that each has experienced.

Zeina's identity is clearly delineated into pre- and post-9/11 manifestations. Prior to the attacks she predominantly sees herself as a regular US citizen, with an Arab heritage that is expressed culturally, mostly through her love of the language. She has little in the way of a political identity, despite being a political refugee: "What did patriotism feel like? A load of nonsense that never meant much to me, neither during my Iraqi childhood nor during my American youth" (Kachachi 11). Despite this, there are some indications that she is aware that some immigrants experience the "nightmarish quality of the American dream" (AbdelRahman 5). Both Zeina's parents are in much reduced employment which brings with it a continuous humiliation. (Her mother is embarrassed by her diminished social status until she runs into a former Baghdad philosophy professor working in a supermarket.) Her younger brother is a drug addict. Like Mohammad Khan in *The Submission*, and as will be seen in *Once in a Promised Land*, it is 9/11 that is the catalyst for the destabilisation of her sense of a unified self and the subsequent blossoming of a political awareness: "then came 9/11 and it was like an electric shock . . . I knew these two buildings . . . every American did" (Kachachi 11). Outraged by the attacks, and identifying herself with its American victims (although she also remembers the Iranian kebab seller whose cart was outside the World Trade Center) Zeina is prompted into action: "What could I do to help my country [US] in its adversity?" (12). The author captures how completely this Arab American feels and behaves like an American in her early responses to the terror attacks.

Ultimately though, unified outrage at 9/11 will prove fragile as America's response escalates. It is with the sight of the bombing of Baghdad that Zeina's Arab roots become

exposed and her feelings more complicated, "I collapsed into myself as I watched Baghdad being bombed . . . It was like watching myself . . . set my own hair on fire" (Kachachi 15). One senses that had 9/11 not occurred Zeina would have fully assimilated into her American life with her American boyfriend and patriotic commitments; the very picture of first-generation success. It is only through her experience of the Iraq War that she begins to acknowledge where her Arab and American identities may be in conflict: "I told that other who was also me that there were terrified children and innocent civilians dying in Baghdad" (Kachachi 15). The novel delves thoroughly into the experience of hybrid identity and what the experience of war can do to dismantle it. *The American Granddaughter* is a contrast to previously discussed novels because of its emphasis on the effects of America's global actions. They contribute to the emergence of a political identity that challenges, and at times threatens, the American identity that Zeina had possessed so completely prior to 9/11.

In many ways Zeina's dismantled identity is emblematic of the general American post-9/11 experience—from shock and calls for retribution to disillusionment. Initially, prompted by the sudden desirability of her bilingual skills, Zeina is as keen to support the invasion for personal financial reasons as she is for patriotic ones. Her motivation is strengthened by the desire to support her brother's access to drug rehabilitation, and perhaps to see her nation (Iraq) rehabilitated too. This decision creates the conditions by which her political awakening is catalysed; the reality of her war-time experiences not only undermines her belief in America but also exposes the depth of her cultural ties to Iraq. Like the Haddads in *Once in a Promised Land* and Khan in *The Submission*, the events of 9/11 prove to be as disruptive for the hybrid identities of Muslim and Arab characters as they are to the traumatised white residents of New York. Whereas the novels discussed in Chapter 2 focus on disruption to the domestic sphere and to positions within social classes, for the Muslim/Arab this unravelling of identity invariably becomes a question of citizenship and

access to political recognition as an authentic and valued member of American democracy. For each of the protagonists in the divergent novels, the isolation from the American ideal is not only psychological but also physical. Whether it be Khan's ultimate ostracism to the Gulf, Sodaba's need to go underground, the Haddads' return to Jordan, or Zeina's experience in Iraq, eventually each of these Americans is rendered distant from their US home and homeland.

These changes in political recognition point to another aspect of the post-9/11 novel worth discussing. In each of the novels discussed so far, there is a distinctly material connection between the protagonist and their sense of national identity. For Flan, the storage auctions of the book's title involve an underground cash economy based on unwanted and low-value consumer items. The auctions help establish her identity as resistant to the national narrative of consumption that was urged on all Americans after the attacks.⁴³ The plot of *The Submission* revolves around the vast sums of money and the political dealings required to rebuild the World Trade Centre.⁴⁴ *Once in a Promised Land* will be shown to rely on a consumer citizen role that proves tenuous, whilst *The American Granddaughter* shows how the actions of war are intrinsically related to those of the economy. These connections form part of a broader process that Yasmine Ibrahim calls the "commodification of terror" (*Commodifying Terrorism*) that links terrorism, counter-terrorism and unintended economic gains.

The commodification of terror sees increased associations between everyday objects or services and terrorism, a process by which items such as transportation, farm chemicals, letters, backpacks and mobile phones all take on the potential to terrorise. When such neutral

⁴³ President Bush asked for "continued participation and confidence in the American economy" in his speech of 20 September, 2001 which was commonly understood as an invitation for Americans to shop. See http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html

⁴⁴ At more than USD3.8 billion 1 World Trade Centre (Freedom Tower) is claimed by the Wall Street Journal to be the most expensive office tower in the world <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052970203920204577191371172049652>

items become associated with Arabs and Muslims, they immediately become imbued with risk and threat. This process returns to Orientalist discourse in ensuring that certain assumptions remain dominant when it comes to Muslims; these assumptions include not only that Muslims are inherently violent, but that they are only able to express their political ideas through violence and are preoccupied with anti-Western activity. The effects of this transformation of the everyday into a terror threat are seen in all of the divergent novels. The actions of Muslims such as Mohammad Khan in *The Submission* (an architect questioned by Homeland Security for carrying blueprints on a plane) and the husband of *Self Storage*'s Sodaba (and his distress at selling his dead child's items) are redefined from their signification of everyday activities to being considered threatening actions. The translation and interpretation of certain languages (such as Arabic, Persian and Urdu) have also become a part of this commodification of terror process.⁴⁵

The interplay between economics, patriotism and violence is visible in *The American Granddaughter* through the function of translation. One of the strongest motivations for Zeina to return to Iraq is financial. She has lived the intergenerational poverty often associated with immigration where "women didn't cry from loneliness alone, but also from want. Money was another happiness" (Kachachi 9). She now sees that her bilingual/bicultural status is of renewed value as a translator for the American army. It is this survival motivation more so than her patriotism that initially motivates her and others to act: "'Ninety-seven thousand dollars a year. All expenses paid.' That was the mantra that started it all" (Kachachi 8) and the offer of money for translation "outdoes any fear of injury or death, any question of betrayal or loyalty" (AbdelRahman 6). Zeina is attracted to the military because of the financial security and is naïvely able to look past the other risks. Translation, therefore, becomes an important symbol of the hybrid nature of Zeina's character, or as AbdelRahman

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the economic and ideological role of translation see Mona Baker "Narratives of terrorism and security: 'accurate' translations, suspicious frames" (2010).

states, translation in the novel is “the embodiment of dialogue as it simultaneously encompasses the immediate linguistic act and the cultural mediation implicated therein” (3). But it is also part of the broader economic engagement that Mona Baker discusses in her consideration of the relationship between translation and narratives of terrorism, where “constructing and disseminating ‘knowledge’” about the Middle East through translation providers is “now a big industry” (347).

Not only is Zeina’s bilingualism changed by 9/11 into a recognised and marketable skill, highly valued by the US military, it also acts to increase the social status for groups who had previously been devalued or invisible. Now, the Arabic speaking community had necessary skills and all of their other differences were overlooked: “Regardless of your age or religion or background or ethnicity or educational level, you qualified for the job as long as you spoke Arabic and English” (Kachachi 49). Despite having fled Iraq as victims of various types of persecution over the last fifty years, the linguistic group is united by the US army’s needs.⁶ This equality is, however, shortlived; with her arrival in Baghdad, Zeina finds local interpreters positioned at the outside gates and only American interpreters are permitted to work inside the gates with those found to have a genuine claim to an audience with the US forces (Kachachi 87). In the post-9/11 environment where Arabic translations have often been open to question and accusations of mistranslation, Zeina lives “in a heteroglossia of voices” and aims to find “a more humane way of translating their intercultural world” (AbdelRahman 3). Assmaa Naguib identifies how language and cultural exchange operate for Zeina:

At times she curses at her Iraqi brother in English and wishes he could understand how vulgar the meaning was, and at other times she wishes her fellow American soldiers could understand the intricacies and complexities of her Arabic words. (181)

⁶ See “Arab Detroit 9/11: Life in the Terror Decade” for a discussion of the recruitment of translators by the US Defence forces, the CIA and the FBI.

The novel's approach is consistent with Baker's argument that translation is not merely about 'accuracy' but requires a more "nuanced understanding of the subtle devices used to generate dehumanising narratives of Arabs and Muslims" (347). The translation of culture is a part of Zeina's narrative and *The American Granddaughter* as a literary artefact participates in the same process since "cross cultural negotiation of publicly-disseminated representations of self and other(s) is possible in a milieu of unfinalizable dialogicality" (AbdelRahman 2). Translation in the Middle East is cultural, ideological and material, and Kachachi's novel helps us to recognise it as such.

The dominance of the psychological, cultural and political aspects of recognition at the expense of issues of equitable material redistribution has been a central part of the reinvigorated discussion of recognition theory in the last decade. This has most notably taken the form of an ongoing debate between Honneth and Nancy Fraser. Honneth, particularly in his early work, gives primacy to the psychological and social formation of recognition. Fraser critiques Honneth for his lack of attention to material issues of redistribution, adding to the debate the importance of what she calls "parity of participation" (*Redistribution* 36). This idea encompasses the equal recognition of all adults in a society as peers with an aspiration to equal opportunity:

It requires that institutionalized patterns of cultural value express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem. This condition precludes institutionalized value patterns that systematically depreciate some categories of people and the qualities associated with them. Precluded, therefore, are institutionalized value patterns that deny some people the status of full partners in interaction—whether by burdening them with excessive ascribed 'difference' or by failing to acknowledge their distinctiveness." (Fraser *Redistribution* 36)

The tendency to focus on the cultural, legal and political forms of recognition, and to give less consideration to issues of economic justice is a path that has also been followed in the literary criticism of post-9/11 novels. The economic aspects of immigration, displacement, war and individual survival, as seen in *The American Granddaughter*, are often present in the novels or their context. Although the inclusion of issues of distributive justice is not inherent within the philosophies of all theorists of recognition, Fraser's dual system of economic and class distinctions, as well as culture and difference, convincingly suggests that the two forces are constantly interacting in the process of recognition. It is a point that Honneth also concedes, although he believes that recognition is a prerequisite for, rather than a result of, economic equality.

Kachachi's novel encompasses a wide range of the effects of 9/11. It considers the economic and cultural impacts of immigration and return, and the fragility of hybridity and the effects on identity formation and disintegration, particularly as a result of national and geopolitical concerns. It does not discount the material motivations and outcomes for individuals or nations. Clearly, Kachachi's novel has an interest in the effects of war and its impact on the everyday experiences of Iraqis, but there is also a broader issue at play in the novel and this is explored in the following section through Derrida's concept of the autoimmune.

Autoimmunity: Pathology of the Intersubjective Wound

“This horizon of non knowledge, this non horizon of knowledge (the powerlessness to comprehend, recognise, cognise, identify, name, describe, foresee) is anything but abstract and idealist.”

Jacques Derrida

Chapter 4 of this thesis dealt with the experience of misrecognition in terms of Honneth’s concept of social pathology, a term taken from medical discourse. According to Freyenhagen, "the diagnosis of social pathologies is not simply the diagnosis of a state of affairs, but rather of social processes, which, if not stopped or reversed, will lead to a further deterioration— just like an infection of the body" (133). The biological is in service to social cohesion and democracy. In this respect we can see a correlation between social pathology and Jacques Derrida’s idea of the autoimmune, a concept that has been widely associated with 9/11 studies. The concept of autoimmunity relies on an emphasis on the joint construction of the self and other, rather than a binary distinction that places them in opposition. Like Derrida’s metaphorical adaptation of the *pharmakon*, the distinction between the disease and the cure is blurred, with each being housed within, and affected by, the other; an attack on one is an attack on the other. Indeed, the attack comes not from outside of a body, but from within. It is a motif that became peculiarly resonant after 9/11. Derrida captures the autoimmune impulse in his comments on the War on Terror when he says that “by declaring war against terrorism, the Western coalition engenders a war against itself” (Borradori 143). Autoimmunity was one of the first concepts that Derrida raised in his early deliberations on 9/11. Like the use of the terms trauma and pathology, autoimmunity originates from medical understandings of the body. It is based on the experience of an organism that fails to recognize its own constituent

parts as self (Hillis Miller 221). It is when the self is misrecognised as foreign, that the self's role in its own protection against the foreign is misinterpreted. A pathologised misrecognition then occurs and an autoimmune response is triggered. Autoimmunity can thus be seen as a type of misrecognition. The effect is not only damage to others, but also to the essence of the self: "It is not some particular thing that is affected in autoimmunity, but the self, the ipse, the autos that finds itself infected" (Derrida *Rogues* 154). (Jean Baudrillard goes even further than autoimmunity by explicitly confronting the unspoken, the idea of US complicity in the events of 9/11 "because no one can avoid dreaming of the destruction of any power that has become hegemonic to this degree" (5).) That the West *desires* its own destruction is a radical variation of the idea. There is a more moderate interpretation of the complex reality of the relationship between the West and its Others, between protection and engagement, between the homeland as protective skin or penetrated by infection. Derrida envisions the autoimmune process as "that strange behaviour where a living being, in quasi-suicidal fashion, 'itself' works to destroy its own protection, to immunise itself against its 'own' immunity" (Borradori 94). When the intersubjective experience is characterised by misrecognition, it can become a wounding relationship, damaging to both self and other. Both this autoimmune impulse and its inherent quality in democratic life are identifiable throughout the divergent novels.

The autoimmune impulse can be seen in the very nature of the 9/11 attacks. It is clear not only in the suicide of the terrorists, but also in the method of the attacks themselves. As Derrida has identified, the 9/11 attacks involved using the tools of the West against itself to create destructive spectacle. In the use of commercial aircraft and strategic buildings as weapons in an attack on the heart of capitalism and globalization, Derrida sees a "suicidal turning against ourselves of weapons, machinery, and ideology that we had developed as a kind of immune system to protect us, to keep the United States safe, indemnified, even holy,

the sacred ‘homeland’” (222). Geopolitically, the idea is also reflected in the US’s history of supporting and arming groups that later developed into the terrorists who attacked the homeland, including Osama Bin Laden and al Qaeda, and the *mujahedeen* of Afghanistan. Having extended the idea of the autoimmune from medical discourse to include philosophical, political and psychological aspects, Derrida finds particular relevance in the concept of autoimmunity when considering terrorism. He identifies the ways in which responses to terrorism perform a function in its own continuation, arguing that “all these efforts to attenuate or neutralize the effect of the traumatism (to deny, repress, or forget it, to get over it) are but so many desperate attempts. And so many autoimmunitary movements which produce, invent and feed the very monstrosity they claim to overcome” (Borradori 99). Borradori interprets this autoimmune element and its effects: “Terrorism is for him the symptom of an autoimmune disorder that threatens the life of participatory democracy, the legal system that underwrites it, and the possibility of a sharper separation between the religious and the secular dimensions” (20). For Derrida, there is never the possibility of a simple binary distinction between civilizations or cultures, between Islam and the West, between good and evil, for all are constitutive of democracy, but there is clarity about the institutions under threat from terrorism and the ways in which responses to terrorism perform a function in their degradation. These effects on democracy, the law and secularity in the post-9/11 context are all themes addressed by the divergent novels. It is not surprising then to find that the autoimmune is a common theme. This theme is a logical extension of the novels’ explorations of pathologised intersubjectivity, (mis)recognition, and the necessary but terrifying need of democratic life to include both the possibility of its own destruction and the potential to ethically engage with the other. Autoimmunity cannot be excised from democracy any more than misrecognition can, and so political and social recognition can only ever be “to come”. Like Derrida’s views on democracy, recognition is an impetus that

motivates social progress through struggle; it can never be perfected and it is always at risk of producing exclusion.⁴⁷

In the divergent novels, autoimmunity is evident at the level of character as well as many of the events in the plots. There is a common reaction to the post-9/11 context from many of the Muslim characters, which evidences a sense of complicity and guilt combined with their rejection and outrage. For the Muslim characters, there is great difficulty in reconciling their own identities with the terrorists and their actions, “men whose culture was a first cousin to her culture, whose religion was her religion,” as the central character of *Once in a Promised Land* puts it (Halaby 11). Although all are shocked by and denounce the attacks, and they feel at one with the US as victim, they also carry the “guilt by association” of knowing that they are in some way connected to the terrorist as well. There is a repression of the ways in which the Muslim characters identify with the terrorist as part of the self, a recognition that is too confronting to acknowledge. This process is also reciprocal since the guilt and complicity is also imposed on all Muslims through the post-9/11 rhetoric of “with us or against us”. Fadda Conrey points out that the assignment of Arab Americans as universally requiring surveillance has created a “pervasive guilt by association logic that frames the post-9/11 mandate of vigilant citizenship” (535). Guilt by association becomes the basis upon which the targeting of Muslim and Arab Americans is justified, but to consider this autoimmunity as an impulse peculiar only to the experience of the Other is not sufficient. Western characters (such as *Self Storage*’s Flan) also carry within them the threat to their own society’s wellbeing; they must hold the knowledge that foreign policies, military incursions, and economic injustice are all a part of the national identity to which they belong, and they must accept the consequences of this identity, both good and bad.

⁴⁷ At the time of writing, the manifestation of the literary motif of exclusion has been made manifest in the 2017 executive orders of President Donald Trump which bans entry to the US for people from seven Muslim majority nations, the so-called “Muslim Ban”.

The American Granddaughter is perhaps the novel in which autoimmunity is the most pronounced. From its opening lines that foreshadow how Zeina's experiences will change and shape her identity in a mix of positive and negative ways, to her recognition that she is not simply an American translator in Iraq, the novel shows the interconnectedness of 9/11 and the Iraq invasion in all of its complications:

The debris blown by the wind from the burning, crumbling buildings was evocative of the ash that had rained over New York on that painful 11th of September. Pain could only lead to pain, and destruction to equal destruction. Or that was what I thought in my early naïve days. (Kachachi 39)

Zeina experiences both the effects of 9/11 and Iraq; she is an Iraqi who is as affected by US actions as she is a hopeful believer in the power of the US to bring justice to her native country. In this tug of war, there is a reluctant recognition of her role in both sides that leaves her haunted by her experiences of war, feeling both victim and perpetrator.

Zeina's experience of nationality is one that moves from naïve simplicity to complex reality. Her "idealized notion of home as a double belonging to two different nations fails the test of her return to Iraq by examining the roles played by loyalty, language and history" (Naguib 175). Her hybridity leads her to identify with a type of positive cosmopolitanism as a "citizen of the world" and "such openness for multiplicity and recognition of similarities make Zeina refrain from a univocal monologic understanding of the situation" (AbdelRahman 6). However, when this cosmopolitanism is put to the test in Iraq, the result is unexpected. On arriving in Baghdad on an American tank in an American uniform, Zeina is recognised by the citizens of Baghdad as an enemy. Zeina cannot reconcile this experience with her own view of herself as one of their fellow countrymen and "she cites this encounter as her first time of becoming aware of both her belonging to Iraq and the painful feeling that now comes with being part of the enemy's army" (Naguib 178). Thus, the novel starts and

concludes with “disillusionment” (Naguib 179) that reflects Zeina’s disappointment in her commitment to US aspirations of spreading democracy and the complete failure to achieve this goal in Iraq. *The American Granddaughter* is ultimately a “novel of return” (Naguib 179) both to an Iraq that she did not previously identify with, and which now connotes nostalgia or longing, and a return to the US with a renewed understanding of the effects of its international military power. Despite knowing that Zeina will eventually see her life in the US as one of exile (in the sense explored by Edward Said as a feeling of ongoing loss combined with a rare opportunity for multiplicity of experience), the journey to this destination is the driving force of the novel.

Nowhere is the autoimmune impulse made more explicit than in the tug-of-war to dominate the narrative point of view that moves between Zeina, her grandmother, and “the writer”. This narrative device shows how “Zeina tries to maintain an objective view of immigration, the Anglo-American invasion and her own belonging to Iraq” whilst “Kachachi insists on exposing Zeina as a traitor” (181). In this literary struggle, Zeina believes that “the writer” wants her to arrive at a simplistic patriotic conclusion that demonstrates the triumph of her Iraqi heritage and marks her collaboration with the American army as an act of betrayal. Even as she admits the injustice inherent in the US-led invasion, Zeina cannot fully repudiate her allegiance to the US. This struggle between the two narrators allows the novel to inhabit the complexity of both the Iraq war and the notion of a hybrid identity, and to embody the importance of the autoimmune as a defence against nationalism. For Naguib: “[l]oyalty in this instance dictates that Zeina realizes her disillusionment with the Anglo-American operation and recognizes her actions as foolishness and naivety” (181). From a “typical” American citizen, such a response may be seen as completely loyal to American values, but from Zeina’s vulnerable position as an Arab American, such a determination takes on a treasonous shade. At the same time, Zeina cannot support her grandmother’s

nationalistic support of Iraq, knowing that it has been oppressive and tyrannical, and incompatible with her experience of Western multiculturalism. There is no safe place for Zeina to establish her identity as she becomes the embodiment of the autoimmune response, each element attacking itself in its efforts to protect against the outsider. Regardless of the complexity of her subject matter, Kachachi aims to maintain the personhood of all of her characters despite the “vulnerability of humanistic and idealistic values under the weight of war” (AbdelRahman 7) and so the novel maintains the experience of recognition within its scope.

Beyond its manifestations in the tension within or even between characters, the autoimmune is a significant force in the development and maintenance of national identity that is shaped not only by the experiences of citizens but also by how the nation state interacts with others. Drawing on Taylor, Thompson suggests that “others’ contemptuous attitudes can shape a sense of national identity, and hence influence the pattern of political debate” (33). With Zeina’s realisation that the US involvement in Iraq would “replace torture with torture” (Kachachi 140) as the result of a “vicious circle of mutual violence” (AbdelRahman 7), it is clear how the autoimmune impulse is operational at the national level. Although not specifically mentioned, the reference to American soldiers as torturers brings forth images of Abu Ghraib as well as other extra-legal US actions such as those perpetrated in the Guantanamo Bay detention base and through policies of extraordinary rendition.⁴⁸ Kachachi “realises that national identity in the setting of this conflict remains the most important frame of reference” (Naguib 175). This novel, as with all of the other divergent novels, never loses sight of its central characters as individuals nor as players in a vast and complex geopolitical arena, bodies within a body politic.

⁴⁸ Evidence of torture and abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers was made public in late 2003.

The American Granddaughter is one of the few 9/11 novels that portrays an Arab Muslim who has remained in his homeland. Zeina's "milk brother" Muhaymen is a Muslim character with a strong political identity as part of the emerging Iraqi insurgency known as the Mahdi Army. Kachachi attempts to show the complexities of Iraqi political resistance without the stereotypical extremist and anti-Western perspective. Formerly imprisoned, and now active in violent resistance, Muhaymen is therefore an enemy to Zeina but one with whom she has fallen in love and wants to defend: "Why should he be ashamed of the fact that he was a communist who turned Islamist? . . . Militias nowadays were replacing political parties in Iraq. Religious faith was the new politics" (Kachachi 162). The relationship between Zeina and Muhaymen is further complicated by the traditional role of the *rada* or milk sibling, which in the Islamic tradition is a bond created through a common wet nurse (an example of literal autoimmunity due to the transfer of antibodies). This makes the relationship *mahram*, or one that replicates the familial relationship and therefore makes a sexual relationship taboo (*mahram* in Arabic signifies one who is not legally marriageable). The relationship itself therefore expresses various kinds of autoimmunity as they become each other's lovers and families, invaders and protectors (Muhaymen in Arabic means protector or defender), enemies and allies. For Zeina, Muhaymen becomes increasingly attractive as part of her awakening Iraqi identity. In fact, she proposes that he return with her to America, an idea that he finds ludicrous, and instead he lectures her on "theories about how emigration created a rupture in the migrant's spirit" (Kachachi 130). Muhaymen sees emigration as a captivity "suspended between two lives," whilst Zeina tries to convince him that with globalisation it was realistic to see it as a "form of settling", a new way of belonging (Kachachi 130). Their relationship remains unresolved, they are neither lovers nor enemies, much like the difficult relationship of their respective nations.

Autoimmunity is metaphorically evident throughout Kachachi's novel, a reflection of the painful, slow and complicated movement towards democracy. It is also connected with the intersubjective experience that is at the root of recognition and misrecognition, and these elements are revisited in Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*.

The American Dream in *Once in a Promised Land*

Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) has most often been called upon in the post-9/11 literary field to represent the viewpoint of the Muslim Other. As an Arab American author, Halaby holds a significant and symbolic place; she has become a prominent literary voice for those Arabs and Muslims (and in some cases many other misrecognised ethnicities) affected by the legal, political and social repercussions of 9/11 in America. The novel was prompted, she says, by her concerns over the misrepresentation of Arabs in the media after 9/11, and deals with the failed attempts of Arab immigrants to find a place of belonging in the US both before and after 9/11. Like *The American Granddaughter*, the novel is not without its faults but its place in the literary landscape is, according to Nash, mostly due to the writing's "obvious superiority to those Anglo-American authors whose tone-deafness to the [Arab American culture] significantly disables the value of their work" (116).

The story of *Once in a Promised Land* revolves around the experience of a young Arab couple from Jordan, Salwa and Jassim Haddad, who are busily building their life together in Tucson, Arizona and are focused on the pursuit of their idealised American Dream. The decision to leave their homeland has not yielded all that they had hoped; there are cracks in their relationship, in their ability to assimilate completely into the American way of life, and in becoming reconciled to what they have left behind. All of these issues come to a head in the months after 9/11 when a series of events, including a car accident in which Jassim kills a young boy, and an ill-fated affair between Salwa and a young American co-worker, leave the seemingly ideal lives of the Haddads crushed.

This chapter focuses on the material roles of consumer and worker as identifiers of citizenship in the novel, and how this connects with the same consumer impetus and commodification of terror seen in *Self Storage*, *The American Granddaughter* and *The*

Submission. The consumer citizen is shown to be a stable identifier of acceptance for Arab/Muslim Americans prior to 9/11 in a way that it is not afterwards. *Once in a Promised Land* shows, once again, how Muslim American characters are internally destabilised through the misapplication of markers of risk and threat, and become subject to state and peer surveillance and suspicion. Once again, this suspicion is misplaced, and the process of misrecognition leads to the disintegration of identity and eventual ostracism from the homeland.

The relationship between Arab/Muslim Americans and political identities in the novel has been under-recognised by its critical reception. Through the central male character, Jassim, Halaby shows that the relationship between risk and recognition is a source of psychological distress that leads to both disillusionment and ostracism. The non-recognition of the national identity of Muslim Americans through the withholding of authentic citizenship is a breach of Fraser's "parity of participation" (*Redistribution* 36), which insists upon all citizens having an equal opportunity for political involvement. This exclusion from the post-9/11 national narrative contributes to a further manifestation of the autoimmune impulse, as the increase in surveillance and suspicion of fellow residents creates what is ultimately a false sense of community protection. I also consider how the non-recognition of nationality of the Haddads in the US is replicated in the non-recognition of the statehood of Palestine, a place that is central to their political and historical identities. The repetition across the genre of experiences of exclusion from the nation for Muslim characters leads to the conclusion that even when they have done all of the "right" things by being good capitalists and citizens, by rejecting their Arab/Muslim identity and by seeking inclusion to the American melting pot, exclusion and ostracism are the only available outcomes for Muslims in the post-9/11 context.

Failing Consumer Citizenship in the Promised Land

“Salwa and Jassim are both Arabs. Both Muslims. But of course they have nothing to do with what happened to the World Trade Center.

Nothing and everything.”

Laila Halaby

Once in a Promised Land establishes its central characters Jassim and Salwa as immigrants prepared to reject their past in order to embrace what they perceive to be the most inclusive of American qualities: ambition, material success and a consumer identity. In both cases, however, this construction proves tenuous, easily undone by racialised mistrust. As with the novels discussed in Chapter 4, Halaby’s work is concerned with the accurate assessment of risk and threat, which is part of a broader process that Banita identifies as an oscillation between a “morally simplistic understanding of post-9/11 racial fear and a complex ethics of risk” (53). Like Mohammad Khan in *The Submission*, for Jassim 9/11 becomes the catalyst to an unravelling of identity as he becomes imbued with suspicion. His sense of self, which seemed fixed securely at the opening of the novel, is completely shredded both by the post-9/11 context and by a series of seemingly random but connected events. Like Khan, Jassim is initially portrayed as the “Good Muslim”—educated, secular and apolitical. A successful hydro-engineer, he is highly rational, methodical and somewhat unemotional. Raised in Jordan as a Muslim, since coming to America he has embraced atheism: a keen swimmer, the “years passed and his lung capacity increased as his belief in God dwindled” (Halaby 46). But like Khan, the protection offered by the role of the secular “Good Muslim” proves inadequate.

What causes the life of such an assured character to unravel? He is involved in an accident and kills a young boy skateboarding on the road. For Jassim the accident is unavoidable, although there is a suggestion that the boy deliberately swerved in front of the car in a suicidal manoeuvre. Overcome with trauma and guilt, he hides the accident from his wife. The novel explicates how secrecy, mistrust and unmet expectations cause the Haddads' marriage to crack under pressure as their lives spiral further away from their initial hopes of the good life in the US.

When Jassim comes to the notice of the FBI, courtesy of a hyper-vigilant colleague, his world careens further out of control. It is his manager who offers what he thinks is the most supportive assessment he can, unintentionally outlining the valued qualities of the American Arab, defending Jassim as the most "reliable and as apolitical and unreligious a person as I know" (Halaby 223). Jassim's America has become one where institutions are preoccupied with "making personal safety the main concern of the people and stressing the insecurities of the new urban life caused by the intruding outsiders" (AbdelRahman 5). This leaves individuals like Jassim isolated and vulnerable. In a moment of recognition, Jassim understands his position as he "began to see, slowed down, and looked at those looking back. And for the first time he felt unsettled in his beloved America" (Halaby 165). He develops a double-consciousness of misrecognition as he internalises what mainstream Americans see.

Not only has Jassim's American world become one of false security, but in the process he has consciously abandoned his Arab Muslim identity. At his most lost and depressed, Jassim drops to his knees "facing southwest, a direction God could not receive," placing him in a position outside of Islamic practice, but which shows it to be the absent presence in his life (Halaby 218). Despite Jassim's complete commitment to his adopted country's values and his rejection of his previous political identity, there is an Arab trace that never leaves him and that keeps him distant from the language and culture he has acquired.

He is “increasingly isolated and insecure in a society that both objectifies and marginalises them as a part of no-part” (Banita 53). As Nash identifies, it is Jassim’s “realisation of cultural otherness” (112) that becomes a kind of heartbreak: his love of America is unrequited and causes his eventual disintegration.

After 9/11, the majority of Arab Americans felt threatened, not threatening. Carol Fadda Conrey describes the feelings as “vulnerable” and capturing “the anxieties and dangers inherent” in being Arab or Muslim (536). The pervasiveness of anxiety and vulnerability is a post-9/11 affect that is portrayed as exclusive to New Yorkers, often unaware of the experience of Arab Americans and others in the city and beyond who are caught up in the event. Much has been written about the Islamist terrorist who is anti-Western and anti-modern, but in the character of Jassim we see a representation of the lesser known but more prevalent role of Arab Muslims in the post-9/11 West, one that shows that even those Arab Muslims who aspire to inclusion are still subjected to racialised rejection. The Haddads embody a process rooted in steps towards recognition followed by missteps as a result of misrecognition.

Jassim’s wife, Salwa, is a very different character but, initially at least, shares her husband’s commitment to the American Dream. Theirs is a “mixed marriage”: she is Palestinian Jordanian, whilst her husband is Jordanian. Much is made of Salwa’s American citizenship as she was born in the country—somehow leaving a trace in her of a grasping ambition. Salwa’s identity is closely tied to her commitment to consumerism, personified in continuous references to her collection of luxurious pyjamas. She is a consumer citizen and her promised land is not the Biblical one that she left behind but one of brand names and excess. This should bring her into alignment with the emphasis placed on the role of consumption in the fight against terrorism that became a part of the rhetoric of President George W. Bush in the early days after the attacks. As Duvall and Marzec make clear, “far

from needing to make sacrifices during a time of national mourning, Americans can be patriots simply by performing their cultural labor as consumers. In sum, if the economy tanks, the terrorists win, so keep spending” (387). This patriotic duty does not protect Salwa, who faces a wall of mistrust and suspicion after 9/11.

Despite their differences, Salwa and Jassim share the same outcome. Initially, her life revolves around money; she takes her role as a banker seriously and progresses her career further by becoming a real estate agent. There is even the suggestion that her decision to marry the educated and established Jassim rather than her local sweetheart Hassan is motivated by a desire for financial success. Her family teases her “that she is really first world. A coloniser . . . she even studies money!” (Halaby 70). Salwa hopes that she will “one day wake up in the Promised Land” (Halaby 49), yet discovers that such “wishes don’t come true for Arabs in America” (184). The collapse of Salwa’s belief in the promised land is brought about by her own behaviour as well as the responses of her fellow citizens. After a short but intense affair with her young colleague Jake, Salwa ends their relationship only to become the victim of his violent response, in yet another case of an inaccurate assessment of threat. The experience violently expels from her any faith in her American aspirations. As seen with *The Submission*’s Mohammed Khan and Jassim, there is a commonality of experience when the “good Muslim” becomes the object of suspicion; they become a jaded disbeliever in the reality of American values and this ultimately leads them to be spurned by the nation.

It is Salwa who reacts most strongly to the pressure of the accusations she faces from fellow citizens as her American dream collapses after 9/11. Steven Salaita explains that non-conformity with the national interest is often labelled as unpatriotic, and this “generates its strength most consistently at the level of morality” (qtd. in Banita 178). Unlike her male counterpart, Salwa is not seen as a violent threat: instead it is her sexuality that becomes tied

to the national narratives that she embodies—whether it be American, Jordanian or Palestinian. When she begins the affair with her young co-worker, the decision intermingles questions of morality and questions of patriotism, even if it is a patriotism she only understands based on an “exported America of Disneyland and hamburgers, Hollywood and the Marlboro man” (Halaby 49). When under pressure to behave in approved ways, Salwa is unable to conform; given American flag decals to put on her car as a source of protection, she is outraged, seeing them as “given to her in kindness and in themselves loaded with hatred” (Halaby 56). By such ‘moral’ transgressions she has “betrayed her status as tolerated guest” (Banita 247).

Perhaps more than any other novel, *Once in a Promised Land* connects Arab American assimilation to economic success. Simon Thompson states clearly that “all struggles for recognition are simultaneously struggles for redistribution, and vice-versa,” (17) thus simplifying a debate between the relative importance of material and cultural struggles for recognition. In each of the novels discussed in this chapter, there is both a question of identity construction and a materially determinable basis to that construction. Fadda Conrey further correlates the Haddad’s economic pursuit with their decreasing political awareness, claiming that their “immersion in the consumerist comfort of upper-middle-class American life overpowers any lingering transnational political engagement linking them to the Jordan they have left behind” (546). This is particularly true in the case of Salwa, who rejects her Palestinian identity and political activism in favour of a big house and nice lingerie: “Her privileging of a consumer citizenship in her pursuit of ‘good citizenship’ inevitably leads to the silencing of her political Palestinian identity” (Fadda Conrey 546). The novel promotes the couple initially as the ideal of the Good Muslim, no more so than in their role as workers and consumers, but the silencing of their political identities, initiated by their desire for acceptance in the US and intensified by the events of 9/11, is never completely effective and

betrays the myth of trying to build their lives purely on an American dream that was never truly available to them.

Political Identities: Recognition from Autoimmunity to Statehood

Once in a Promised Land is the intimate story of a disintegrating marriage but it is constantly overshadowed by the presence of the nation state. Halaby's intention to show the effects of the post-9/11 environment on the everyday lives of Arab Americans is clear and she is "initially skilful in weaving together the personal and the political" (Gray 115). The connection between perceptions of self, social interactions and the broader political environment is central to the novel and demonstrates how "apparently distant political events can disrupt normalcy" (Gray 115). This section demonstrates how the autoimmune impulse continues to be evident in the divergent novels; it then goes on to explore the centrality of Palestine and questions of statehood in Halaby's work.

As we have observed, Derrida's concept of the autoimmune is pertinent to post-9/11 fiction in several respects. For Salwa and Jassim in *Once in a Promised Land*, the events of 9/11 trigger an awareness of a repressed pessimism within their hybridized identity, which contributes to the novel's ability to portray the complexity of the post-9/11 racialised environment. Salwa, lying in bed on the morning of 9/11, becomes aware of "a peace she would remember for years, as it would be scratched away within the hour by men whose culture was a first cousin to her culture, whose religion was her religion" (Halaby 11). Whilst not condoning their actions, neither can she completely remove herself from the terrorists. They ostensibly share a religion and although they are not of the same nationality, she and the terrorists are both part of the broader Arab culture, and the terrorists cannot be excised from Salwa's own experience. For her husband, the US after 9/11 feels like "he had gotten on an amusement park ride (not a plane), whose controls had been stolen, hijacked, sending him careening into buildings," (Halaby 219). There is a spectral presence of suicide, another trope

of the autoimmune, throughout the novel, from the attack of 9/11 itself to the incident of the teenager killed by Jassim in a car accident. The young man, who carried clear anti-Arab sentiments exemplified by the “Terrorist Hunting Licence” sticker on his skateboard, swerved in front of the car intentionally, an example of the cohabitation of hatred for the other and damage to the self. The idea of autoimmunity even extends to Salwa’s miscarriage and the guilt she feels over the loss of an unwanted pregnancy she had hidden from her husband: “It is as easy to lie to the Self as it is to Another” she reflects (Halaby 10). Complicity, guilt, and death are ever-present in this novel showing how the autoimmune impulse is subtly filtered through everyday society like a virus circulating undetected in the bloodstream. Protections have become threats, and everywhere there is evidence of “the dimensions of the auto-immune and self sacrificial supplementarity, to this death drive that is silently at work in every community . . . constituting it as such in its iterability, its heritage, its spectral tradition” (Hillis Miller 221).

The autoimmune impulse is also evident in changes to the nature of American citizenship after 9/11—a component of national identity that previously was an invisible protection for the majority of Americans had now been made explicit and was recast as functions to protect the homeland. Through the commodification of terror, everyday citizens become co-opted into being part of the resistance to terrorism, encouraging hyper-vigilance and surveillance on their fellow Americans, and inadvertently accepting the same upon themselves.⁴⁹ Of course, the dangers of such an approach quickly became apparent whereby “[t]he emergence of pervasive, automated and discriminatory mechanisms for risk profiling and social categorising constitute a significant mechanism for reproducing and reinforcing social, economic and cultural divisions in information societies” (Ibrahim). Halaby reflects the extent of these risks in the novel with reference to a real world and commonly reported

⁴⁹ Much of the surveillance culture was enshrined in law through the USA PATRIOT Act passed on 26 October, 2001. Its full name is Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act.

event in which a Sikh gas station attendant was killed in retaliation for 9/11 by a perpetrator who mistook (misrecognised) him as Muslim (21). Reactions to State calls for hyper-vigilance in the novels vary. In *Self Storage* Flan plays an active role in subverting the government agents in pursuit of Sodaba. For Jassim's workmates it means surveilling and reporting on their Arab colleague for no other reason than his ethnicity. Salwa is encouraged by her well-meaning workmate to outwardly display her patriotism by placing American flag decals on her car because "you never know what people are thinking, and having this will let them know where you stand" (54). For the central characters of the divergent novels, the result of the commodification of terror is that everyday employment and lifestyle decisions are ascribed with ideological significance, rarely in alignment with their self-identification.

The duty of American citizens is thereby extended, both legally and culturally, to include the power of influence over the rights of their Arab and Muslim fellow citizens, in effect denying them the status of equal inclusion within the political community. According to Honneth's view of recognition, such exclusions constitute a form of disrespect through which participation in democratic life and legal recognition can be distorted. At its furthest extreme, it may even be a precursor to statelessness and the denial of personhood. Of course, this is not to suggest that such exclusions only appeared after 9/11. What the emergence of the post-9/11 atmosphere has done is to emphasise and exaggerate features such as citizen duty in the new risk society, and the extension of black-to-brown racism whilst maintaining a façade provided by rhetoric about freedom and security. These effects were predicted by Zygmunt Bauman in his discussion of "liquid modernity" when he asserted that the understandable desire for security combined with the pressure to adopt different kinds of systems "will create a culture of control that will colonise more areas of life with or without the consent of the citizen" (123). The citizen, worker or consumer who has no terrorist ambitions whatsoever nevertheless has their opportunities circumscribed by the subject

positions or categories that are imposed upon them. Bauman cautions that for some these categories may be extremely prejudicial, restricting them from consumer choices because of credit ratings, or more insidiously, relegating them to second-class status because of their colour or ethnic background (124); something which is clearly evident in *Once in a Promised Land*.

With the dominance of negative connotations associated with politically active Muslims, especially Arab Muslims, it is unsurprising that Halaby begins her novel by narrating the process by which Haddads had become depoliticised as they worked to establish an approved American identity. In *Once in a Promised Land* we see a couple who, whether consciously or unconsciously, have become de-politicised by their experiences in the West, a process which eventually leaves them lost and ungrounded. Economic success, demonstrated by high educational attainment and the dedicated pursuit of the American Dream, constitutes the aspirational goal of “consumer citizenship” for the Haddads, and in their pre 9/11 world it seems to be working. Their “immersion in the consumerist comfort of upper-middle-class American life overpowers any lingering transnational political engagement linking them to the Jordan they have left behind” (Fadda Conrey 542), but their attempts to immerse themselves in consumerist bliss ultimately fail to secure their genuine inclusion in America. When the FBI interview Jassim’s boss, suggesting that Jassim is a public threat, they ask about Salwa: “Is she politically active?” (Halaby 290). They see no need to define these terms—the implication is clear that when it comes to Muslims any activity perceived as political represents a threat to US interests. The experience of the Haddads demonstrates that when it comes to political identity, even the Good Muslim who chooses the US, consumer citizenship and public good is not safe from misrecognition and the ensuing abuse of rights.

Richard Gray includes *Once in a Promised Land*, along with much of the rest of his assessment of 9/11 fiction, as generally unsatisfactory as literature because of its lack of

innovation where “difference is diminished, [and] crisis is distanced or even suppressed by being accommodated to familiar and often conventional narrative structures” (114). This is, he says, despite *Once in a Promised Land* being a “relatively nuanced novel” (114).

However, Gray’s reading of the novel fails to account for the depth with which Halaby subtly excavates her Arab characters’ complex histories, particularly in relation to the centrality of Palestine. The novel’s most conspicuous literary technique is a framing device that positions the story of the Haddads as a modern fairy tale; though one that will not lead to the predictable happy ending. The prologue, entitled “Before”, connects the Haddad’s two worlds: the contemporary US and their ancient Arab heritage and language. The novel opens with:

“Kan

Ya ma kan

Fee qadeem az-zamaan

They say there was or there wasn’t in olden times a story as old as life, as young as this moment, a story that is yours and is mine” (Halaby 1).

According to Nash, this device of opening with the Arabic transliteration of ‘once upon a time’ “signposts rather gratuitously” a “normative Arab narrative about America” (112), and whilst the technique is somewhat self-conscious, its importance in giving the events of 9/11 some historical context is worthy of note. Salwa is “Palestinian by blood” (Halaby 70) and Nash identifies that this is an identity synonymous with the “unquestioned upholding of demands for justice and restitution for their nation that go with it” (112). Salwa’s history also includes the decision to marry the already established Jassim rather than her first love Hassan, whom she admired for his political activism and is “a symbol of Palestine” (240). Hassan is connected to his friends and family who mostly live in Wihdat and he is struggling

to complete his studies.⁵⁰ Although Salwa's family see the benefit of her relationship with Hassan in that "he reminds you who you are" (Halaby 240), Hassan cannot compete with what Jassim can offer Salwa in terms of economic stability. Upon reconnecting with Salwa after 9/11, Hassan is shocked to find how much Salwa has absorbed American traits upon becoming a real estate agent, which he translates as "land pimp" (12). She has even taken her husband's surname (a Western tradition) and has "erased Palestine from her very name" (Halaby 36). Despite their past decisions, Hassan is a presence maintained throughout the novel. He remains on the horizon as a potential route for Salwa to return to her origins.

By contrast, Nash refers to Jassim as being without Palestinian connection and having "no commitment to the Palestinian narrative" (112), but this assessment does not take into account the motif of water that is used by Halaby in relation to Jassim and his internal world. For Jassim the misuse of Palestinian water rights is part of his motivation to become a hydrologist. He recalls listening to his father talk about Palestine "as everyone did in those days" (40) because it was an issue of "both of pride and of humanity" (41). Although Jassim is not attracted to his father's passionate theorising, he is attracted to his uncle's view that water management and not land rights is the logical approach to resolving the area's political problems (Halaby 41). He carries this commitment to the importance of water with him throughout his life, both in his career and in his reliance on swimming as a form of meditation. It is a lecture on hydrology that brings Jassim and Salwa together. Her interest in the subject stems from "what the Israelis have done with our water. Jordanian water and Palestinian water" (Halaby 66). So, for both Salwa and Jassim, Palestine acts as a litmus test of the characters' political awareness: their awareness is strong at the beginning of the novel, fading with their time in the States, but never entirely absent.

⁵⁰ The second largest Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan is officially called the Amman New Camp but is locally known as Wihdat.

The centrality of Palestine, which will be revisited in the second wave fiction discussed in Chapter 6, is a pivotal issue that remains unmentioned in Western novels which focus on 9/11 as the spectral presence of trauma, whilst in the work of the Arab novelists it is never absent. For many of the Muslim characters in 9/11 fiction (*Harbor*, *The Submission*, *Self Storage*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *The American Granddaughter* and *Once in a Promised Land*) characterisation is already historicised having been affected by various struggles for recognition, mostly in battles for independence after colonization and against oppression under the tyranny of neo-colonialism. They have experienced the trauma and displacement associated with Algeria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine or Pakistan prior to 9/11. After 9/11, however, Muslim characters are almost universally identifiable by their association with risk with little consideration of their varied or specific historical backgrounds. In each of the novels discussed here, there are experiences of loss of access to legal recognition by the state, an inability to claim rights as a citizen, and a damaged sense of respect from others, all of which are elements of political recognition according to Honneth⁵¹ and others.

The political identity of Western characters in the divergent novels is generally activated by their involvement in the post-9/11 world, but the same cannot be said for Muslim characters, for whom the establishment of a political identity is fraught with difficulty. Indeed, no Muslim in any of the novels achieves political recognition; evidently, they must be apolitical and naïve, such as *The Submission*'s Asma or *Self Storage*'s Sodaba, or risk being cast as politically dangerous, such as Mohammed Khan or Jassim Haddad. The political Muslim is always positioned as part of the Bad Muslim paradigm, regardless of what form that political identity takes. For many novels, such as those discussed in the earlier chapters of this thesis, the political Muslim is synonymous with the terrorist archetype,

⁵¹ See Kelly Staples (2012) for a detailed discussion of recognition and statelessness.

encompassed in the non-specific identifier of Islamist. As Fadda Conrey summarises, post-9/11, the terrorist and the Islamic fundamentalist became the dominant representations of Arabs, replacing earlier stereotypes such as the wealthy oil sheikh. In another example of the power of representation to affect real-world outcomes, these tropes have “become more fervently deployed in anti-Arab state policies” (533). However, even when the political identity of the Muslim is firmly embedded within democracy, there is no escape from the risk paradigm. Mohammad Khan claims one of the fundamental rights of the citizen of a democracy—the right of a member of a minority to be free of oppression or prejudice—but this does not free him from suspicion and ultimately expulsion. The position of Muslims in the West cannot be fully considered without understanding how their political identities are emerging and at the same time being placed under restriction.

PART 3: 'AFTERNESS' BEYOND POST-9/11
Chapter 6: Homeland, Deterritorialisation and Islam

“Now we are at home. But home does not pre-exist: it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile centre, to organise a limited space. Many, very diverse components have a part in this, landmarks and marks of all kinds.”

Deleuze and Guattari

“Implicit in terms like sacred and secular are larger interwoven narratives of space, time, place, corporeality and emotion.”

Day et al.

For this final chapter, I have taken as my starting point Gerhard Richter’s idea of “afterness” from his 2011 work *Afterness: Figures of Following in Modern Thought and Aesthetics*. His detailed analysis is, he says, “concerned with certain structural and conceptual features of afterness,” an exploration of what it means to come after; afterness, he says, “bespeaks an irreducible belatedness in language and thought” (1). His exploration includes ideas of survival, following, living on, trauma, the spectral, repetition and iteration, among many other manifestations, each of which encapsulates both a connection with and a separation from what came before. Afterness is a quality evident in much contemporary political thought. What is the imagined afterness of globalisation, for example? Or the after of capitalism? (Cazdyn & Szeman). The same impetus is seen in the current revitalised discussion of American exceptionalism and its after, as well as in the post-9/11 novel and the indicators that authors are beginning to wonder what might come after the ‘post’.²² However, as Richter identifies, moving beyond the “post” is a complex matter and “a rigorous thinking

²² See Hodgson and Pease.

of the after, even of an expansive, encompassing state of afterness, should not return to the language of various ‘post-isms’, the ‘end’ of this or that paradigm . . . Rather, something else, something more fundamental is at stake” (8). This chapter considers the early indications of what form the literary afterness of 9/11 might take.

Part 1 of this thesis showed how post-9/11 studies has been dominated by trauma theory, which has been criticised for its Eurocentricism as well as its support of clear binaries between perpetrator and victim and the subsequent consolidation of an “us and them” worldview. Novels such as Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* and John Updike’s *Terrorist* are typical of the early responses to the event with their emphasis on the conceptual homeland and its necessary opposition, the foreign threat. Part 2 analysed novels that take a differing view of the homeland from the Part 1 novels by considering the Muslim within. Part 3 will consider the ongoing importance of the homeland from various perspectives including geographic/spatial, historical/temporal and metaphorical conceptualisations. The conceptual borders of the homeland are made up of legal, political, military, psychological and even literary boundaries that delimit who and what can be included, and, as a corollary, excluded. As such, the homeland is intimately connected with notions of security, risk and vulnerability, constantly under threat of penetration or violation.

Nowhere was the idea of the homeland more vigourously reignited than in the establishment by the Bush administration of the cabinet level Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2002, as a direct response to the September 11 attacks. With the protection of US territorial boundaries as its purview, particularly in relation to terrorism, the Department is a bureaucratic manifestation of the binarism that governed early 9/11 fiction and which positions Islam as an interloper to domestic security. The development of the DHS also signified “the momentous expansion of the state security” which formed part of the post-9/11 turn from international sympathy to a period characterised by “worry, fear and anger”

(Cazdyn & Szeman 15). Homeland Security has become part of an “Orwellian litany of naming” that “has reshaped America’s political discussion . . . widened the divide between Red and Blue states, not to mention the divide between the US and other nations” (Duvall and Marzec 381). Guantanamo Bay and rendition are legal and military manifestations of the desire for extra-territorial space in the post-9/11 environment. The protection of the conceptual homeland from the foreign threat has proven a consistent and necessary component of compliance with the post-9/11 national narrative and has, at the same time, had an impact within the nation’s boundaries. Notwithstanding the fact that, as Derrida identifies, there are great difficulties in defining the limits of terms like “national territory” and “American interests” (qtd. in Borradori 91) these liminal concepts form the metaphorical underpinning of early post-9/11 fiction.

In recent years, however, several novels have begun to question the boundary of the homeland and to explore processes of deterritorialisation in order to overcome the barrier of borders and engage instead in a transnational dialogue, particularly with regard to Islam and the Muslim world. I argue that in this “second wave” of 9/11 fiction the dominance of the homeland as mythical, paternalistic protector has been supplanted by concerns about the interrelationships between nation, globalisation, cosmopolitanism and democracy. The novels also highlight, through their alternative positioning, a concept that has underpinned early novels but is rarely identified: the impetus towards an “afterness” for Islam. Most of the early novels deal with the *before* of 9/11 (depicting or alluding to characters before the terrorist act) and leave the event largely unrepresented. As Gray notes, though, the reader is already *after* 9/11 and therefore there is a sense that “the moral panic”, specifically the fear of Islam, was present before the event because “the reader is experiencing the before of the characters afterwards” (Gray 79). By contrast, the novels of the early canon do not depict a worldview that involves Islam as within or present in the afterness; there is an unspoken desire for a

world beyond Islam, a secular ideal, the exorcism of that which offers no real value to the contemporary. It is a subconscious desire made manifest in the novels of Part 2 that the Muslim is ultimately ostracised from the polity.

Several novels, ones perhaps not immediately identifiable as “post-9/11,” have begun to question, challenge or undermine both the stranglehold of the homeland and the exclusion of Islam by physically and thematically centring their narratives outside of the US. It is a rhetorical manoeuvre that is at once a risk to the existing dynamic of the US as a ‘state of exception’ and one that authors must undertake to transcend the greater risk of self-censorship. The second wave of transnational post-9/11 fiction seeks to understand previously ostracised elements, such as political terror or the everyday lives of Muslims, beyond their dominant readings. In this gesture, the post-9/11 context has been repositioned from being one of purely homeland trauma to one of participation in global struggles for recognition.

This chapter looks at three novels that challenge the conceptual homeland barrier and argues that by placing characters physically outside of the US territories and in various types of dialogue with the Muslim world, they perform a process of deterritorialisation. They overcome in a literary guise the danger of authorial repression imposed by the homeland metaphor, and contribute to the second wave of post-9/11 fiction that seeks to understand the nature of Islam as both transnational and possessing its own subjective voices. Each of the books in this chapter troubles the assumed distance between the US as territorial homeland and the experience of the foreign, demonstrating Derrida’s assessment of “[s]emantic instability, irreducible trouble spots on the borders between concepts, indecision in the very concept of the border” (qtd. in Borradori 105) over fixed territory. The readings are presented here in the form of close analyses that, when taken together, postulate the features of the post-9/11 fiction genre going forward.

Dave Eggers' *A Hologram for the King* (2012) performs this process of territorial destabilisation by reframing the archetype of the American everyman in a new world order. Set entirely in Saudi Arabia, the novel acts as a national allegory of a post-exceptionalist US identity in a globalised economy. Teju Cole's *Open City* (2012) is a widely acclaimed novel that uses its flâneur narrator to make connections between colonialism, aesthetics and the cosmopolitan in such a way as to evaluate the complexity of contemporary geopolitics and its effects on identity. Finally, Ben Lerner's debut novel *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011) captures the dominant post-9/11 affect of vulnerability and anxiety through its künstlerroman of a young American poet in Madrid during the 2004 terrorist bombing. By exposing increasing vulnerabilities and fragilities (personal, national, authorial and in the literary field), each of the novels questions the ability to accurately assess the location of risk, as well as what is put at risk by social and political actions. Each of the novels questions whether there is a limit to the cosmopolitan, and whether Islam lies beyond such limits. In the process, they attempt to recognise the ways in which cultures are connected and can be understood through an intersubjective framework. The novels ultimately determine that historical, material and political factors are at play, and that progress ultimately requires an ethical engagement with otherness.

In this consideration of the second wave of 9/11 fiction, it is clear that the development and broadening of the field does not mean a break with what has come before. Indeed, such a break could not be expected here any more than in the first wave of 9/11 novels, in which formal innovation is lacking and historically Orientalist views are clearly evident (as discussed in Parts 1 and 2 of this thesis). Richter asks: "What is meant when one thing is said to 'follow' another? Does what follows mark a clear break with what comes before, or, paradoxically, does it perpetuate its predecessor by remaining bound to the concepts and conditions of that from which it was thought to have taken its leave?" (8). In the

novels discussed in this chapter, there is a tension evident between the existing terms of US national identity and the impetus to move beyond its global exceptional position, as well as a tension between the trauma of terrorism and the desire to understand Islam.

There are significant commonalities between the novels that are identified and discussed in this chapter. The events of 9/11 are increasingly referenced indirectly, yet there is an undoubtedly post-9/11 quality in this contemporary literature. Each is reliant on the realist mode with elements of hyper-reality where actual events, media reports and autobiographical elements are blended with the narrative. Each relies on certain features of literary modernism and postmodernism. There is, for example, a high reliance on intertextuality that connects these novels with important moments in American literature and criticism. The flâneur as narrator performs a similar role. Themes recur, such as the function of trauma and violence in history and social progress both in the US and globally. The novels themselves perform an uncertainty of language and at times question the very form of the novel. Each of the novels is connected to a literary past through “[q]uestions of temporal experience . . . discourses of guilt and the other, the thematics of the name, the subject” (Richter 7) whilst simultaneously engaging with specific features of the post-9/11 including the failings of the Iraq War, an increased presence of security and surveillance, and heightened fear of a Muslim world that prior to 9/11 was to a large extent unknown.

These novels continue to demonstrate all of the theoretical underpinnings discussed in the introduction to this thesis: they are contextualised by the political state of exception, engage with the Orientalist cultural imaginary, and the critical responses to them is reflective of the changing nature of the literary field as perspectives about 9/11 and its aftermath have changed. But what constitutes a “break” from these elements, and differentiates them from earlier post-9/11 novels, is the repositioning of the post-9/11 context from homeland trauma to one of national vulnerability and recognised participation in a world of violent struggle.

They conform with Banita's assessment that some novels move "[t]oward a more overtly globalised understanding of the 9/11 events" although still framed in a "lens of world-historical memory and trauma" (1) in recognition of afterness as both connected to and diverging from what came before.

Post-exceptionalism and the National Other in Dave Eggers' *A Hologram for the King*

A Hologram for the King (2012) by Dave Eggers is a national allegory of an America grappling with a post-exceptionalist experience of the world. Set in Saudi Arabia in 2010, the central character, Alan Clay, is the classic American everyman. A salesman, tackling middle-age as a divorced father of a college-aged daughter, his world is one of financial stress and generalised dissatisfaction in which he continuously stands at the precipice of failure. The novel is set outside of the US homeland, apart from several significant events narrated through external analepsis, most notably the barely-noticed suicidal drowning of a neighbour. The events of the novel take place mostly in the desert outside of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia where Alan is located with his young sales team. The sales team is in the area to pitch a hologram-based communication technology to the Saudi King, Abdullah, at his new development, the King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC). The setting of the novel creates a kind of hyperrealism in what would otherwise be an absurdist paradise. KAEC is a real-world “megaproject” which, since 2005, has seen the Saudi King undertake a huge commercial development in the desert in an attempt to solve a number of major macroeconomic issues facing Saudi Arabia; predominantly the need to diversify away from dependency on oil and stimulating employment opportunities for its young and educated population. (The world’s largest construction company, the Saudi Bin Ladin Group is one of the companies contracted to carry out the building project.) In the novel, this structural and thematic connection between the US and Saudi economies indicates the relative importance of the two nations and is evidence of Eggers’ intersubjective understanding of the world. King Abdullah, who ascended to the Saudi throne in 2005, is an absent presence in the novel; as the sales team wait interminably for his attendance in order to make their pitch, their hope for business

success dwindles. In the interstitial space created by the pervasive Beckettian waiting, Alan reflects on his own life and the global position of the United States more generally. The novel, a National Book Award finalist in 2012, is dominated by references to the changing macro-economic environment of the US over Alan's lifetime.⁵³ In particular, the loss of its manufacturing base and the transition to a globalized labour force, as well as the haunting impact of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. However, the global economic elements of the novel are so closely tied to the American national identity that the novel can also be understood as an exploration of America's current geopolitical position, as well as a re-evaluation of the decisions its government has made in the recent past. Such considerations of national character can scarcely be understood without framing them as part of the broader concept of American exceptionalism.

Jacqueline Rose makes a strong case for the consideration of the psychoanalytic in the national narrative. Although she is writing about Israel, Donald Pease demonstrates how her approach is equally applicable to America's understanding of itself, with its own national narrative being closely tied to its belief in its own exceptionality. The narrative genre, then, makes a contribution both to the construction and the expression of that national narrative. Eggers explores the "state" predominantly through the psychic and material state or condition of the central character of Alan Clay. The state of the US can be read through Alan's state of mind, his relationship with his past and his future, his position in history, even his physical health. Alan's reflections on his life are not positive. He is unable to pay his daughter's college tuition, "because he had made a series of foolish decisions in his life. He had not planned well. He had not had courage when he needed it" (Eggers 4). Past decisions (both his own and those of the nation) affect Alan psychically and bodily. As the novel begins the reader learns of an untreated cyst on the back of Alan's neck. It is a condition that

⁵³ Each of the three novels discussed has received critical acclaim and been awarded a number of prizes. This goes some way to suggesting that the literary field is more accepting of these novels' worldviews than it is of the worldviews of earlier post 9/11 novels.

undermines his sense of wellbeing with the constant, sinister threat of becoming something lethal; it is a cloud over his future, “sapping him of vitality, squeezing away all acuity and purpose” (Eggers 10). It is eventually removed without incident by a multinational medical team. (Even America’s diminution in medicine and science is present in Eggers’ world.) The struggle to recover from the damage caused by past decisions and circumstances is one of the central concerns of the novel; by extension there is a need to define an alternative future, one that involves living with the Arab/Muslim world.

Exceptionalism is an umbrella concept that hangs over the US citizen and promotes compliance with the political global order. The aspect of the American exceptionalism meta-concept that Eggers’ novel reflects developed in the Bush era after the attacks of September 11; it has been defined by the global role of America in relation to the Arab world. The historical context thus gives the novel’s setting in Saudi Arabia significance beyond mere pragmatism or exoticism. The two nations act as the beacons of exceptionalism within their own civilizational contexts; Saudi Arabia is the spiritual, historical, political and economic centre of the Islamic world (and, it should also be noted, is subject to a complex tension between its founding principles and the threat of religious extremism in the form of Wahhabism). Saudi Arabia, then, is a mirror image to the US that represents the kind of exceptionalism to which the US has aspired; it sees itself as having a “manifest destiny” to lead the Muslim world from its dark times into modern prosperity without losing its unique identity. At other times Saudi Arabia is a reflection of America’s own folly; the desert city is mostly a ludicrous failure, and behind the glamorous glass of the mirrored cube that is the KAEC office lie disturbing gender and labour inequities.⁵⁴ (Alan stumbles, for example, on the appalling living conditions of the imported labourers who are constructing the city: “We don’t have unions here. We have Filipinos,” his driver quips (Eggers 41).) At other times,

⁵⁴ An architectural reference to the Ka’ba located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia plays the traditional role of the binary Other whose customs and values are incomprehensibly strange to Alan Clay. However, Eggers is unwilling to reify a civilizational distinction in the Huntington vein. Instead, Alan's interaction with his casual young Saudi driver, Yousef, and eventual romance with his exotic doctor, Zahra Hakem, create the space for a re-evaluation of his own position: his life which has attempted to live up to the myths of American exceptionalism has been mostly unsatisfying, and he must determine what comes next and how he will live in the aftermath. This would not surprise Richard Gray, who claims that with the impact of globalization and immigration, America "has lost any claim it may have tried to make once to a Eurocentric character and an exclusive destiny" (Gray 23). The novel is an example of how literary conceptions of American exceptionalism, what Jacqueline Rose terms the "state fantasy", complicate the experience of the individual. Thomas Crocker identifies in his consideration of exceptionalism and literature after 9/11 that "[o]rdinary life was reduced to its economic aspects with the imperative to return to normal routines of life and work," and that, as a result of this, the "dominant narrative" became "the two tensional themes of exceptional politics and ordinary life" (304). With deceptive simplicity, *A Hologram for the King* intertwines the trials of the everyday, via the life of Alan Clay, with the need for America to imagine an after that grapples with its post-exceptionalist identity.

The effect of a foreign land on understandings of the homeland is central to Eggers' tale. The Bush "Homeland Security State" era was a time when the state "exploited . . . September 11, 2001 for state fantasy work" (Pease 5) and is one that, according to Hodgson, embodies "a new demand for uncritical assertion of national superiority" (xiii). At a time when criticism of America's exceptional status may be seen at worst as a form of treason, and at best conflicting with national interests, the literary considerations of exceptionalism become increasingly relevant. At one point in his aimless wanderings around the isolated KAEC

compound, which is in a constant state of construction, Alan Clay is alone in a crater that will eventually become the foundations of a building, when he is discovered by local workers. The narrative's free indirect discourse points to Alan's symbolic role: "You are not supposed to be there . . . pacing, angry, recounting unchangeable events from not just your own past but that of the country as a whole" (132). And what are the recollections that are both taboo and nationally significant? As Alan recalls several pivotal events from his past, becoming increasingly angry at their implications, the national ramifications become ever more present. The image of the crater is reminiscent of Ground Zero. Alan is reminded of an incident with a fellow salesman, Terry Wren, who had been in line to provide the blast-resistant glass for the new World Trade Center, the "Freedom Tower". The glass, locally designed, patented and produced was not only financially important to Terry but a part of a wider story of national recuperation: "To be involved in the Freedom Tower! It was the reason you got to work in the morning," (Eggers 129) says Terry with his "American flag pin on his lapel. It all meant something. Until it didn't" (Eggers 130). The patriotic fantasy is shattered by the economic imperative that allows the glass to be purchased from a Chinese provider who has obtained the rights to the patented glass and can produce it more cheaply. Alan, Terry, and those like them, can no longer invest in the post-9/11 narrative as the economic and political realities put pressure on the structures that hold America's belief in its own exceptionalism in place. Alan's disillusionment is partly driven by his continual drift outside of the accepted geographic and conceptual national boundaries, which leaves him with no firm position in a post-exceptional world.

In many ways, Eggers' own literary biography reflects the very issues of globalization that *A Hologram for the King* raises. Since the publication of his first book, the memoir *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000), Eggers has been something of a wunderkind of American contemporary writing and publishing. His work is prolific and

varied. It has achieved critical and popular success, and is accompanied by activism on issues such as youth literacy and social justice. His work in *A Hologram for the King* represents a maturing of the author, but also intentionally places itself without irony in the continuum of “great American writing”. His style is spare, the narrative structure elegant, but most notably the novel resides within a tradition that harks back very clearly to the height of Modernism in US drama and literature. Its intertextual elements are significant; critics have compared his style to those of Orwell and Hemingway and his characterisation to that of Arthur Miller. The experience of Alan Clay as the passive victim of economic change, the everyman whose hardworking commitment to personal and national financial wellbeing has left him with nought, has drawn comparison with Willy Loman from *Death of a Salesman*. But in returning to the question of the individual in the economic machine of American capitalism, Eggers also questions a number of the central pillars of America’s perceived exceptional status. These include its unquestionable position at the forefront of economic growth, the inevitable aspirational success of the hard-working individual, and the dominance of capitalist democracy in the post-Cold War era. The post-World War II promise of an America that was becoming the world’s superpower in economic and military terms haunts the novel through its formal qualities. The epigraph, “It is not every day that we are needed,” is taken from Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*⁵⁵ and it is the first telling indicator of Eggers’ Modernist inspiration. It positions the novel in the space between: in the realm of the absurd, but also calling for action. It is both universal and exceptional, optimistic and transfixed, in the waiting is the nothingness but also the potentiality for an emergence of a new reality. The

⁵⁵ The full quote is “Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for one the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say? It is true that when with folded arms we weigh the pros and cons we are no less a credit to our species. The tiger bounds to the help of his congeners without the least reflexion, or else he slinks away into the depths of the thickets. But that is not the question. What are we doing here, *that* is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in the immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come -- ” (II.526)

work of unravelling these traces from their complex interactions exposes the reliance on fantasy, mirage, memory and absence as sources of identity both individually and nationally. The ‘hologram’ of the title is but one reference to spectral traces. The fragmented remembering of the death of a neighbour, Charlie Fallon, is another: Charlie “had discovered the Transcendentalists late in life and felt a kinship with them” (Eggers 6). He was living close to Brook Farm—a real life utopian agricultural commune with an emphasis on education from New England’s early history. His slow drowning as he wades imperceptibly deeper into a lake goes undetected by passers-by; this mirrors the way America’s early idealism incrementally is lost. The novel raises the question of whether the era of American exceptionalism (in economics, politics, military might and morality) has come to an end.

America’s premier position is lost; it is a nation no longer respected without question. The sales team has become subservient to that most un-American of figures, a King; “ONE MAN’S VISION, ONE NATION’S HOPE” (Eggers 38) as the KAEC billboard reads. Alan and his team are reliant (indeed, the name of their company is Reliant) on a paternal but disembodied figure of authority who has the power to determine their future. Upon its arrival at KAEC, the group is surprised to be placed in a tent with poor facilities and no hospitality. They must watch on from the sidelines as the real seat of power resides in the black cube to which their leader, Alan, cannot gain access. In Eggers’ post-9/11 context, the worldview is not one of lapsarian loss of US innocence, but a historically contextualised continuation of pre-9/11 geopolitics. It is clear that the American ideal exists, at least in part, in the nation’s past: when Alan Clay’s professional decline sees him left at home without work he resorts to a glorified moment of the national pastime, baseball, and he “watched those four and half minutes a hundred times” and felt “something like joy. A sense of rightness, of order. It was a victory that could never be taken away” (Eggers 11). From the beginning of the novel, Clay is in battle: it is a battle in which the comfortable retreat into the myth of ongoing exception

which could fuel his optimism and efforts to re-establish his life, is pitted against the acceptance of a cold, postmodern reality that America no longer holds the ideal economic, moral and political position it once did, or at least once imagined. In Alan's present psychological, physical and financial position, however, the battle is one-sided and it seems impossible for him to do more than force an internal narrative of hyped up sales-talk, in which he could "stride the world, a colossus" (16), and "needed to adopt an air of ownership, of belonging" (17); as "an American businessman . . . He could muster something . . . He could be better than a fool"(19). There is a pervasive sense of the loss of the glory days for Alan and for America. He can recall periods of optimism, such as his early days with his ex-wife Ruby when he "had never felt more vital" (31). And he can sometimes muster the same optimism towards the KAEC project: "He wanted to believe that this kind of thing, a city rising from dust, could happen" (39), and yet on his arrival in Saudi Arabia something has changed; he can no longer sustain the fantasy. In Saudi Arabia, Alan realizes that "[h]e was a fool. He was more a fool every year", and that he can no longer lie to himself or others because "[h]e could no longer muster the energy, the creativity required" (Eggers 7). The fantasy is unsustainable and despite knowing that his role is to lead within his microcosm, Alan is left in every sense impotent, his team at Reliant requiring him to forge ahead, but he is left "in a dark and hollow place, three young people holding candles, waiting for him and his lantern" (Eggers 8). Alan is unable to be the moral leader for the next generation since he can no longer sustain the fantasy and is uncertain about what might replace it.

Alan Clay's struggle to define his future in a changed world is difficult. One of the essential qualities of the US identity is a continuously optimistic outlook. Whether it is related to market confidence, the power of democracy, or global moral leadership, the myth of exceptionalism only works if everyone believes in it. It is difficult for Alan to let the ideals go. When subjected to a tirade from a fellow plane traveller, Alan is faced with a

pessimistically realistic assessment of the global future: “It was good for a while, right? . . . But it was over” (12) and the US had to relinquish its special power in the world and “join Western Europe in an era of tourism and shopkeeping” (Eggers 12). The “malaise” and “presumption of decline” is implanted in Alan’s subconscious, despite his use of his only tool for defence: denial (Eggers 13). He resists such an assessment: he “did not want to despair . . . Alan was optimistic, wasn’t he?” (Eggers 14). He concludes that America’s demise is unthinkable: “he had heard it before and he didn’t want to hear it anymore” (Eggers 14).

The revelations that Alan experiences are prompted only by his changed location; outside of his homeland he gains a new perspective. When Alan first experiences the memory of home it is of his empty house being “staged” for sale. The reality of his home is superficially improved to appeal to buyers: “they brighten the darkness you have brought into it with your human mess” (Eggers 14) until the reality is gone and it becomes merely a spectre filled with artworks of “non-committal abstractions . . . signifying nothing” (Eggers 15). Alan becomes a “ghost” in his home, from which he is absent but observing, whilst it is shown to potential buyers by agents (Eggers 16). Throughout the novel there is a consistent loss of the mythical overlay of Alan’s American life, revealing a harsher more brutal reality. In his early interactions in Saudi Arabia, Alan is tempted to replace the old illusion with a new one: “Who knew Saudi Arabia had a vast pristine coast? . . . He thought of staying here. He could assume a new name . . . leave the crushing vice of his life in America behind” (Eggers 16). It is a vacation fantasy that he quickly jettisons, the old optimism challenging his escape: “But no. He was more than that . . . Some days he could encompass the world . . . Everything he wanted to do had been done before, so why couldn’t he do it again?” (Eggers 16). When Alan wakes up in Jeddah, he finds himself in the middle of an existential and ideological battle between the supremacy of American optimism and the reality of globalised power that no

longer fits the mould, but there is never a complete loss of optimism despite the pervading atmosphere of lost potential. It is a novel about redefining, not despair.

The liminalities of homeland, borders and frontiers are experiences shared by America and Saudi Arabia. America's experience as a frontier nation is a part of its historical exceptionalist identity, but the frontier spirit is now lost, as Alan's fellow passenger describes America as "a nation of indoor cats", adding: "Thank God these weren't the kind of Americans who settled this country. They were a different breed!" (Eggers 13).⁶ If Alan Clay is the symbol of the American state's contemporary entanglement with demise, then his role can only be perfected through interaction with a national Other. Saudi Arabia is presented as the new frontier nation: "anything built here, an unrelenting desert, was an act of sheer will imposed on territory unsuited for habitation" (Eggers 34). Among the qualities of Saudi Arabia that Alan is attracted to are the sheer scope, the vision, that he sees as a replacement for the missing leadership in his own nation: "Alan had always been a sucker for a model like this, vision like this" (Eggers 45) although the form is very different in this "city-to-be" (Eggers 44) which contains a mosque that can hold two hundred thousand worshippers, and a dedicated terminal to process three hundred thousand Hajj pilgrims.

American exceptionalism performs within the borders of the US, but also connects with many transnational concepts in politics, history and literature. It is an idea used to house discussions on topics as varied as democracy, individualism and moral philosophy (Pease). In its contemporary guise, the basis of American exceptionalism has become at least one side of the clash of global ideologies. *A Hologram for the King* is important because it takes its central character out of the borders of the homeland and puts his beliefs to the test in the most opposite place imaginable. The transition is evident from the novel's opening sentence: "Alan Clay woke up in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia" (Eggers 1). The statement is ambiguous, speaking

* The frontier model is, however, not really exceptional. It has been replicated in settler nations such as Canada and Australia, which also incorporate the pioneering spirit as part of a national identity, butting against the fear of the encroaching landscape and the indigenous peoples.

literally to the novel's setting, and yet the pun "woke up" points to an epiphany, a recognition that Clay achieves in and through his experience in Saudi. Exceptionalism can only be maintained with reference to a necessarily apocalyptic other. The threat of nuclear destruction was used effectively for political ends during the Cold War, and after the end of the Cold War, the threat of civilizational destruction as part of the War on Terror has taken its place. Much of what Clay sees in Saudi Arabia causes him to question the reality of this civilizational clash. He is not surrounded by the Orientalist tropes that one might expect; the Arab world he encounters is not the threatening, conservative and anachronistic one that is typically represented in post-9/11 American fiction. As Alan notes from his experience, there is not a single "instance when a custom or dictum described in a guidebook had ever been borne out in practice" (Eggers 22). He finds descriptions of Saudi Arabia "over-wrought when it came to elucidating the dangers . . . The State Department had Saudi on highest alert" (Eggers 22). Although Alan knows that he is supposed to fear the Arab world, his experiences there are not consistent with there being a constant risk that he "might be sold to al-Qaeda, ransomed, transported across borders. But Alan never felt in danger anywhere" (Eggers 9). He engages with Saudi Arabia outside of the terrorist archetype and finds instead that it is a place of complexity, where stereotypes are overturned and genuine recognition and engagement are possible. The introduction of the character of Yousef, Alan's local driver, is a case in point. He is characterised by humour, irreverence and affability. On their first encounter, when Yousef checks his car to ensure that it is not wired, Alan asks with concern "To explode?" to which Yousef responds, "It's nothing terroristic . . . just this guy who thinks I'm screwing his wife" (Eggers 24). In fact, it is Yousef's "blasé demeanor" (Eggers 25) that helps Alan to stop worrying about his own domestic situation; they become friends, bonding over Alan's ability to tell well-worn jokes, and Yousef's ability to still laugh at them. The relationship instigates a reciprocal respect for their respective places in the world; positions

that eventually become complicated, but which nevertheless are underpinned by mutual recognition. Notwithstanding the obvious labour and gender inequities, Alan Clay finds a nation of progress and growth. It is the customer, or potential customer, to whom Alan and Reliant must ply their wares. Far from being the isolated, insular land of the Victorian era, Saudi Arabia is a globalized and cosmopolitan place. The power differential between the US and Saudi is maintained by asserting a national narrative—leader of the free world, economic powerhouse, self-determined individualism—a view which, for Clay, is shaken when he views the America from the outside. As Žižek suggests, the fantasy (of exceptionalism or nationhood) can only be sustained by lived communal practices; when the subject is removed from this environment, the group identity becomes more difficult to maintain. Deterritorialisation is central to Eggers' attempts to reframe the clash of civilizations.

An atmosphere of anxiety pervades *A Hologram for the King*. It is an anxiety brought about by a need to embrace change, vulnerability, and a more realistic assessment of self and nation. It is part of a post-9/11 paradox: “Stronger than ever, Americans felt more vulnerable than ever” (Hodgson 29). The novel expresses this anxiety and vulnerability through the motif of Alan's tumour, which, once removed, proves to have been no real threat at all, despite having been a source of psychological torture. In fact, the tumour is the source of Clay's new relationship with his doctor. The perceived threat of a civilisational clash between them proves equally nebulous, as demonstrated in the following conversation in which Alan and Zahra acknowledge their symbolic roles. Alan asks, “What do you think our kids will make of this.” Zahra responds: “You and me? Because we represent some kind of culture clash? . . . Please, we are separated by the thinnest filament” (292). According to Gray, America is haunted by the “fear, among other things, of its own possible impotence and potential decline” (21). Eggers portrays the fear literally and allegorically; Alan is sexually impotent until the end of the book. He attends a party at the US consulate, which is a scene of

bacchanalian orgy that Alan observes as an outsider, with no desire to participate. He is unable to consummate the advances of Hanne, one of the European staffers from KAEC headquarters. Instead, in a return to past national glories, “he wanted only to go home . . . to watch his Red Sox DVDs” (178). It is only his relationship with his doctor that re-ignites his passions. There is an element of the Orientalist fantasy in the exoticised Arab woman, of course, but in addition something of the redemptive. It is only through transcending difference that Clay’s psychological, physical and emotional balance is restored.

At the climax of the novel, vulnerability is shown in a more menacing guise. Alan’s misadventure on a shooting trip with the locals ends with him inadvertently shooting at a shepherd boy, having mistaken him for a wolf. Although his Arab hosts leave their response unspoken, they are disappointed and shocked by Alan’s seemingly careless behaviour. They are suspicious of his motives, and unable to trust in his ability to use weapons responsibly. Although the boy is not injured, Alan is ashamed at his inappropriate actions, is quickly ostracised by the rest of the group, and his friendship with Yousef is damaged. In an area where Alan felt some confidence, his knowledge of guns, his reckless actions undermine his position and leave him feeling contrite and alone. This registers the damaged post-Iraq reputation of the US in the Muslim world that can no longer believe in one of the pillars of exceptionalism—an America that uses its military power for global good.

In the end, Alan’s company cannot compete technologically or economically in the globalised field of hi-tech manufacture. The contract goes to a Chinese company, and the question becomes what will Alan do in the aftermath? The last line of the novel is a question, the tone both resigned and optimistic: that America and Americans will continue to fulfil a difficult but necessary geo-political role because “otherwise who would be here when the King came again?” (312). *A Hologram for the King* explores the aporia of both the ennui and

exhilaration that comes with discourse about the continuation and the end of the exceptionalist myth. It is a novel that moves from the post-9/11 experience into the aftermath involving, as Richter identifies, a repetition that does not repeat, “a living on and after that both remains attached to what came before and, precisely through an analysis of that abiding yet often invisible attachment, departs from it in ever new directions” (4). In the second wave fiction there is a desire to see beyond the immediate effects of 9/11 to its global repercussions, which involves physical, political and literary repositioning.

Intellectualism and the Dialectic of Islam and Decolonisation in Teju Cole's *Open City*

The second novel discussed as part of this chapter dealing with the aftermath of 9/11 is Teju Cole's 2012 novel *Open City*, which provides further proof of the centrality of the deterritorialised and globalised subject in the second wave of post-9/11 fiction.⁵⁷ The novel revisits the contemporary interest in the flâneur in post-9/11 New York. It shares some of its concerns with Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (discussed in Chapter 1). Cole, however, brings his own experience as a Nigerian migrant to the US to bear in the novel, which clearly situates itself within a postcolonial and cosmopolitan worldview. *Open City* is narrated in first person by Julius, a Nigerian-German immigrant to the US, who lives in New York and works as a psychiatrist. He has recently ended a seemingly significant relationship and finds himself at a loose end. He attempts to resolve this state by walking the streets of New York, during which he observes daily life, recording brief but significant interactions, and reconciling his observations through his aesthetic and intellectual outlook on life. Julius joins the literary tradition of the flâneur, not unlike the narrator of *Netherland*. But where O'Neill's naive Dutch protagonist is guided by an underclass of immigrants to become enlightened about the "real" New York, Julius is a solitary narrator with a complex past who remains detached and inaccessible throughout the novel. What has attracted the interest of critics and juries is the way that Cole's narration moves effortlessly between profound concepts such as race, memory, history, art, trauma and critique, and more than one critic has noted the obvious influence of WG Sebald. Despite "a flat, nearly affectless tone" (Vermeulen 40), the narration flows from Julius' childhood memories of Nigeria, to the complexity of New York daily life, to the mysteries of his grandmother's German Jewish heritage and its associated engagement with the challenges of Europe's multicultural reality. None of these ideas self-

⁵⁷ Although *Open City* is sometimes referred to as his debut novel, Cole's first novel *Everyday is for the Thief* was published in Nigeria in 2007 although not in the US until 2014.

consciously obtrudes into the narrative, which remains meandering and subtly structured mainly due to the flâneur as narrator; for, as Julius explains, “New York City worked itself into my life at walking pace” (3).

The most relevant aspect of the novel for a consideration of the aftermath of 9/11 is one of its central events: Julius’ journey to Belgium, ostensibly to seek out his long-estranged grandmother. Instead he meets Farouq, the local employee of an internet cafe. They embark on an unexpected but intense interaction in which they overtly and implicitly enter into a discourse about contemporary geopolitics and questions about the relationship between Islam and the West. The novel has proven to be of particular interest to post-9/11 scholars because of its cosmopolitan worldview and its attempts to bring issues of race, memory and history to bear on a field that has been criticised for both its Eurocentricism and ahistorical approach. As one of the recent post-9/11 novels that engages directly with perceptions of Islam, *Open City* is consistent with the second wave novels discussed in this chapter for both its global worldview and its direct interlocution with the politics of Islam as an engagement extrinsic to the homeland.

Like both Eggers and Lerner, Cole places his protagonist, at least for large parts of the narrative, outside of the US homeland, both physically and conceptually. With the positioning of Muslim otherness so dominant in the first wave of 9/11 fiction, it is significant that all three texts discussed in this chapter participate in a process of Deleuzian deterritorialisation as part of their engagement with the Muslim world. Julius’ direct reference to 9/11 is limited to one of his nocturnal wanderings that sees him in lower Manhattan. In his travels he identifies “a great empty space” (52) which he is able to see but unable to recognise: “I immediately thought of the obvious but, equally quickly, put the idea out of my mind” (52). It is only on a second viewing that he sees the empty space for what it is: “I now saw and admitted, the obvious: the ruins of the World Trade Center” (52). Julius

makes a fleeting connection between the place and its significance before moving past it and on to his next seemingly random contact: “The place had become a metonym of its disaster: I remembered a tourist who once asked me how he could get to 9/11: not the site of the events but to 9/11 itself, the date petrified into broken stones” (52). In the end, Julius casts the site as part of the broader palimpsest of New York City’s history: Ellis Island, the whaling industry, the memorial to lost police officers—all reminders of the city’s traumatic and violent past. Julius contemplates them with his usual mix of historical contextualisation and intellectualism: “Each one of these past moments was present now as a trace,” (54) he states. “But atrocity is nothing new, not to humans, not to animals. The difference is that in our time it is uniquely well organised, carried out with pens, train carriages, ledgers, barbed wire, work camps, gas” (58). He is randomly prompted (in a reference to JM Coetzee) to see it all as part of an engagement with the ethics of violence, “Elizabeth Costello’s nagging questions showed up in the strangest places” (58) and his conclusion is that “[t]he site was a palimpsest, as was all the city, written, erased, rewritten” (59). This spatial and temporal view is very different to the emphasis on Ground Zero in earlier novels. Julius’s observations prompt a rare insight into the narrator’s desire to connect personal and global histories: “I wanted to find the line that connected me to my own part in these stories” (59). The novel’s sometimes banal wanderings and detailed observations evolve into an inner life laid bare and a profound whole which exposes the complexity and interconnectedness of its themes. Cole’s ability to capture this post-9/11 context of traumatised observer mixed with a conflicted sense of culpability is indicative of a significant change from earlier novels, in which the position of 9/11 was limited to a representational challenge for authors.

Like so many of the novels already discussed, *Open City* is full of references to seeing and visibility and their link with recognition. The example of seeing Ground Zero is but one; the epigraph to Part 1 of the two-part novel is another: “Death is a perfection of the eye”

suggests the centrality of Cole's flâneur, whose role is traditionally to observe in a style "acutely attentive to the spectacle provided by the process of commodification and urbanisation that surrounds him" (Vermeulen 41). Vermeulen also notes that the epigraph can be read in conjunction with the opening chapter's subordinate clause, "And so when I began to go on evening walks last fall" (3). Julius begins his arbitrary city walking and combines it with his idiosyncratic interests in bird migrations and listening to European radio stations whilst reading aloud, mostly books in translation, enjoying the way his voice is intermingled with so many other influences. The opening pages of the novel immediately identify Julius as hyper-vigilant to the world around him, and perhaps this is reflective of Cole's own profession as a photographer and art historian who specialises in early Netherlandish painting, but the author is also in a constant state of connecting these observations to a grander narrative beyond simple observation.

The opening pages also include Cole's first intertextual reference to Julius's reading—from Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* to Tahar Ben Jelloun's *The Last Friend* (5) the narrator's references to books and reading are a part of Cole's distinctive voice which is able simultaneously to "embrace and critique the literariness that is integral to the protagonist's cosmopolitan identities" (Hallemeier 240). On several occasions, texts are revisited in different places; Julius is reading Barthes' philosophical treatise on photography again during his time in Belgium (where its connection with the death of Barthes' mother resonates with Julius's search for his grandmother), and his first discussion with Farouq, a multi-lingual Moroccan, is about the relative literary merits and postcolonial *bona fides* of Ben Jelloun (who publishes fiction in French) and Mohamed Choukri (whose non-fiction was published in Arabic). Vermeulen comments that *Open City* "unapologetically inhabits a high culture frame of reference," (40) and whilst Hallemeier also explores the work's literary cosmopolitanism she acknowledges the distancing effect that allows Cole's narrators to

“eschew their personal histories and focus instead on books” (241). This intellectualism pervades the entire novel, giving it both a globalized perspective and a capacity to transcend the entrenched “us and them” binarism of the genre.

The novel’s aesthetic is also permeated by classical music, often in a synaesthetic way reminiscent of Nabokov, whereby even musical experiences are explained in visual terms. While listening to a Gustav Mahler symphony in a closing-down Tower Records store Julius loses himself as he “enters the strange hues of its world” (16), he is later struck by the power of the final movement “as though the lights had, without warning, come blazing into my eyes” (17). The impact of the music follows him into his everyday working world as if the power of the symphony “had been transferred to the world of visible things, and every detail had somehow become more significant” (18). Whilst Julius fulfils his role as the flâneur/narrator who “anticipates a cosmopolitan ethos that thrives on intercultural curiosity and the virtues of the aesthetic” (Vermeulen 41) there are also points in the narrative that obscure the aesthetics of seeing and recognising in favour of politics.

The first direct observation of Islam in the novel comes when Julius arrives in Brussels; it occurs at the same point in the narrative that explains the title of the book. Brussels is an old city that bears the scars of “slaughter and destruction, ferocious to a degree rarely experienced in history” (97). It is only by declaring Brussels an “open city” in World War II that its complete destruction was avoided although “surrender, of course, played a role in this form of survival” (97). Julius’ first observations of the city are of people clearly from elsewhere, including veiled women signifying that “Islam, in its conservative form, was on constant view” though he cannot logically see why since “Belgium had not had a strong colonial relationship with any country in North Africa. But this was the European reality now, in which borders were flexible. There was a palpable psychological pressure in the city” (98). After observing this connection between Muslim immigration and social tensions, Cole

then narrates the details of a criminal act that had recently occurred in the city. Although not named, the fictional account is clearly based on the 2006 murder of Joe van Holsbeeck, a Flemish boy stabbed at a train station for refusing to hand over his MP3 player to two youths who were reported in the media as Arab. The incident exposed and escalated widespread social tensions which led to right-wing politicians proclaiming crime as a problem of immigration, and liberal multiculturalists bemoaning the lack of citizen action in intervening to assist the boy who was attacked in broad daylight. In the novel, as in the case of van Holsbeeck, investigations ultimately reveal that the perpetrators were not Arab but European, Polish citizens of Roma ethnicity. Cole's use of this incident not only continues the convention in post-9/11 fiction of integrating media events into the fictional narrative, but also reinforces the function that misrecognition has played in many of the assumptions about the nature of European Muslim social tensions. Cole goes on to list a number of other hate crimes that were reported during the time he was in Brussels—all cases of white Europeans attacking black victims in the name of anti-immigration rhetoric. For Cole, the core issue is not a matter of a European country being under attack from outsiders but the expression of vulnerability and loss of ethical identity based on fear: "The country was in the grip of uncertainties—the sense of anomie was apparent even to a visitor" (100). It is in this tense social environment that Julius' conversation with Farouq becomes permeated with symbolism.

On their first meeting, Farouq is reading Walter Benjamin's *On the Concept of History* and, recognising a fellow intellectual reader, Julius strikes up a conversation about Tahar Ben Jelloun. Farouq is unimpressed with the famous, exiled author who publishes in French rather than his native Arabic. The postcolonial issues evident in such a discussion are reinforced by the narrator's immediate questioning of his own orientalizing impulse with what is ostensibly a defence of Ben Jelloun but is also a meta-commentary on his own position as an author: "It

is always a difficult thing, isn't it? I mean resisting the orientalizing impulse. For those who don't, who will publish them?" (104). Their conversation leaves Julius taken aback by the "serious-faced thinker" and he is able to acknowledge this incongruity with his own preconceptions: "What had I expected? Not this . . . the crisp, self-certain intellectual language" (103). As they discuss various authors, Julius is further surprised as "Farouq spoke without the faintest air of agitation . . . This calmness of his put me off balance" (104). One wonders why, then, James Wood in his glowing review of *Open City*, refers to Farouq as "an angry Moroccan student", and adds that "to Julius, Farouq seems angry, 'in the grip of rage and rhetoric.'" This quote is taken from a scene in which Julius is describing Farouq in an impassioned conversation with another Moroccan man. It is followed by an excursus typical of the narrator questioning the value of angered political action. Julius weighs this against his own style of inaction, or as he puts it "by being magnificently isolated from all loyalties" and is left wondering "was that not an ethical lapse graver than rage itself?" (107). Anger is not the defining characteristic of Farouq and to limit his character to such shorthand denies the complexity of the interaction that extends beyond their initial meeting.

Issues of visibility and recognition are expressed through a common interest in critical theory and philosophy and create a strong connection between Julius and Farouq. For Farouq, though, intellectual life is a crucial part of his identity construction whereas for Julius it is a matter of maintaining a stance of objectivity. Farouq is an admirer of Edward Said, especially for his commitment to "the Palestinian question" (104), and Malcolm X who "recognised that difference contains its own value, and that the struggle must be to advance that value" (104), a neat summary of the struggle for recognition. Farouq elucidates his position in spatial language: "There's always the expectation that the victimised Other is the one that covers the distance, that has the noble ideas; I disagree with this expectation" (105). Despite Julius' willingness to listen and his fascination with Farouq, he is still confounded by this

presentation of familiar ideas from a seemingly incongruent source: “The victimised Other: how strange, I thought, that he used an expression like that in a casual conversation. And yet, when he said it, it had a far deeper resonance than it would have in any academic situation” (105). As Hallemeier suggests, Farouq’s commitment to his “project,” which is an exploration of critical theory and the value of difference, is a kind of academic activism, contrasted with the “cultivated detachment and elite intellectualism” (244) of Julius. During one of their discussions, Farouq explains how he reconciles his Muslim and Western identities and it is an example of how closely connected his religious, intellectual and political identities are. He says:

I am sure you know what Paul de Man says about insight and blindness. His theory has to do with an insight that can actually obscure other things, that can be a blindness. And the reverse, also, how what seems blind can open up possibilities. When I think about the insight that is a form of blindness, I think of rationality, of rationalism, which is blind to God and the things that God can offer human beings. This is the failure of the Enlightenment. (127-8)

This is one of many important observations in the interactions between the characters of Farouq and Julius that seem to be operating outside of the main narrative of Julius’s life in New York and his pursuit of an African/American identity. They are peripheral interactions, not because of any lack of relevance to the everyday, but because they cannot exist within the contained homeland.

Both the ways that authors interact with the representation of Islam and the ways that critics understand the resulting texts contribute to the relative situational power of those texts within the literary field. Once again in *Open City* there is evidence of a critical response that undermines a novel’s complexity in favour of exclusionary critical assessments. Vermeulen, among others, has identified the connection between *Open City* and a generalised literary

discourse on human rights. Of the many points where the novel interacts with various histories of violence, exploitation and racial oppression he lists the following:

American persecution of its domestic Japanese population during the Second World War, the violent suppression of Native Americans by the Dutch settlers in the Americas, the suffering of Ugandan-Indians under Idi Amin, the lingering legacies of slavery, the situation in contemporary Iraq, as well as the suffering of Germans at the hands of the Red Army after the Second World War. (44)

Although this is not an exhaustive list of the violent colonial and postcolonial encounters mentioned in the novel, there is one obvious encounter that it does not include: the lengthy and significant discussions of Julius with Farouq about the US involvement in the Middle East and the Israeli occupation of Palestine, which Farouq calls “the central question of our time” (121). This is instead categorised as “a particularly demoralising dialogue” where Farouq’s friend “Khalil rehearses uninspired clichés about American foreign policy, Israel, Hamas, and so on” (Vermuelen 48). This is somewhat dismissive of one of the important conversations in the novel. James Wood’s influential review performs a similar acknowledgement of the rights discourse of the novel with its “attention to the contemporary, in particular to those in danger of becoming modern victims of prosperous urban forgetfulness or carelessness”. This is followed by a telling assessment of Farouq’s character. Farouq recounts the rejection of his masters thesis based on suspected plagiarism, which Farouq put down to its timing (the week after 9/11) and prejudice (suspicion that a North African could write so well). Wood states, “And how very subtle of Teju Cole to suggest, at the same time—but with barely an authorial whisper—that perhaps Farouq leans too heavily on his theoretical texts, and that this was the real cause of the plagiarism charge. (The 9/11 scapegoating seems unlikely, though Julius doesn’t say so.)” This is a potential over-reading of the text, for there is no interjection by the narrator that suggests, not even with “barely an

authorial whisper” that Farouq’s academic integrity is in question. In fact, plagiarism would be inconsistent with the “seething intelligence” (129) that is demonstrated in each of their conversations. The assertion that prejudice against Arabs would be unlikely in the post-9/11 environment also seems doubtful, especially when it is acknowledged by the critic that his observation does not stem directly from the text of the novel. Indeed, Julius recognises such systemic racism and identifies its dangers; “How many would-be radicals, just like him, had been formed on just such a slight?” (129). Despite the importance of the interaction with Farouq in the novel, and despite the extent to which it engages with geopolitical concerns, Wood can only recognise the character in Orientalist terms, again diminishing Farouq to simply an angry foreigner, whilst seeing Julius as having a valid and progressive political identity: “We learn a lot about Farouq’s anger in these pages, but we also learn a lot about Julius’s liberalism—about its secret desires, its dissatisfaction with itself, and its passivity” (Wood). The lack of a recognisable (and safe) political identity for Muslims has been a common thread throughout both post-9/11 literature and the criticism it has attracted, something we see again here in spite of the efforts of the author to write inclusive dialogue.

According to Walkowicz, “Conditions of national and transnational affiliation depend on narrative patterns of attentiveness, relevance, perception and recognition” (cited in Vermeulen 6) and Julius shows attentiveness to his decolonised fellow thinker who must also make his way in the globalised complexity of the West. But these conversations, points of true recognition, can only occur outside of US territory. When Julius tries to play the role appropriate to the US aspect of his identity and reject Farouq’s claims of America’s complicity in its own demise, he cannot perform: “But I was pretending to an outrage greater than I actually felt. In the game, if it was a game, I was meant to be the outraged American, though what I felt was more like sorrow and less like anger” (120). Critical responses do not

always recognise the nuance of the engagement between Julius and Farouq, or the global importance of their topics.

Both Julius and Farouq are engaged in a process of territorialisation; exiled from their homelands and estranged from family they are each adrift in their contemporary political realities. Julius' half-hearted search for his Oma (grandmother) in Brussels is also a nagging psychological search for the homeland of his Nigerian childhood. He remains estranged from his own mother for reasons that we never learn. Farouq, displaced in every sense, is also not truly at home; he is part of an immigrant group viewed with suspicion and fear. For both, the pursuit of a homeland is no longer about basic physical or economic security, but is instead about the search for a rational and political solution to their deterritorialised states of being. For both, this search is driven by exposure to literature, European philosophy and critical theory; but Julius believes that for Farouq "Europe only looks free. The dream was an apparition" (122). For American critics, the pursuit of the homeland in post-9/11 fiction has meant a metaphorical "return", an attempt to regain the nation's exceptional status damaged by 9/11 and what came after. Cole's cosmopolitan interest goes beyond the homeland and includes the homes of others: the Liberian refugee in detention in New York; his former professor who was interned in Japanese camps; the ongoing trauma experienced by his patient, a Native American academic; and, above all, Palestine. From its opening pages, which connect bird migrations, European radio and reading, this is a novel about connection, the search for it and the barriers to it. One of the few events that disrupts Julius's emotional equanimity is his chance meeting with his neighbour and the discovery that his wife had died some months before: he is shaken by the thought that "a woman had died in the room next to mine . . . and I had known nothing of it" (21). In both Cole's and Eggers' novels, the death of the closest neighbour can go unnoticed in the homeland and it is only by leaving and connecting globally that the protagonists can see the tragedy of this.

Farouq's intellectual work (in another intertextual reference to the territorial, his thesis was on Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*) remains formally unrecognised by his university and others. Despite this, he finds another way to carry out his project, studying to become a translator of Arabic, English and French. More important is his everyday life, which he sees as "the test case of what I believe, people can live together but still keep their own values intact" (112) and it "appeals to the human side of me and the intellectual side of me" (112), since for Farouq the two are inseparable, a synthesising effect that Julius has not yet discovered. Farouq recounts an incident when he was working as a janitor at a university and struck up a conversation with the Dean; "we discussed Deleuze's concept of waves and dunes, and about how it is the spaces between those forms, the necessary spaces, that gives them their definition" (112). But on a second meeting, the academic did not remember Farouq, leading him to conclude: "There was a line, and I was wasting my time attempting to cross it" (113). The experiences of misrecognition that Farouq is subjected to are not foreign to Julius either. He recognises that he is not in such a different position as the "dark, unsmiling, solitary stranger," (106) who could be in danger if found in the wrong situation. Perhaps this is the revelation that leads Julius to close the chapter on Farouq, whom he decides is both too similar and too vulnerable for the relationship to continue. Although he sends him a copy of Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Cosmopolitanism* on his return to New York, the intimate connection is over, along with the basis for their mutual recognition: "He had brought me too close to his pain, and I know longer saw him" (129). This relationship between exploring the deterritorial, or the post-exceptionalist, and the necessity for vulnerability is the distinctive second wave affect and it is seen in the final novel discussed in depth in this thesis, Ben Lerner's *Leaving the Atocha Station*.

Strong in the Weak Places: The Politics of Vulnerability and Ben Lerner's *Leaving the Atocha Station*

I have suggested in this chapter that “afterness” is reflected in the post-9/11 canon in a desire to move beyond trauma by excising Islam and ostracising Muslims from the civilizational boundary. This is combined with a paradoxical recognition that Islam cannot simply be removed from the homeland as though curing a virus. Some contemporary literary examples provide alternative imaginings of this relationship, creating a space for re-thinking, re-*cognising* the relationship. This gesture includes deterritorialising the homeland and providing a space for the intersubjective, but also acknowledging the place of vulnerability and anxiety in moving past traumas.

Leaving the Atocha Station (2011) is the debut novel of American author Ben Lerner and returns us to the issue of terrorism and the response of the individual American, which was seen in Part 1 of this thesis, although Lerner's response shows some important differences from the earlier novels. *Leaving the Atocha Station* tells the semi-autobiographical tale of a young poet, Adam Gordon, who is living and working in Spain on an elite international scholarship. The narrator and the narrative are filled with anxiety and uncertainty as the young poet makes his way into European artistic and intellectual life. In the form of a *künstlerroman*, the maturation of its protagonist is the central concern, and it is a maturing that takes place in a locally and globally unsettled environment. The novel shows the artist, the student, the American abroad in a vulnerable position, barely staying afloat in his sea of personal anxiety and self-medication. The narrator struggles to make authentic connections. At the novel's climax, which is marked by the bombing of the Madrid train station, the protagonist remains distant and removed from the reality of the political instability that surrounds him.

Like Eggers' novel, the narrative is set entirely outside the US, taking place in various locations in Spain, mostly Madrid.⁸ There are only fleeting memories of American life, told through analepsis. These memories are sometimes mere lies with the unreliable narrator making claims that his mother had died and that he had lived in New York, whilst admitting to the reader that these are lies he tells without understanding why. His translations of Spanish are uncertain or inaccurate with the reader left in the same position as the narrator, unsure of the conversations surrounding him, sometimes to humorous effect. The same can be said for his work in reconfiguring the poems of Federico García Lorca into forms of "translations". Language, art, family, nation, truth and memory are all made vulnerable by Lerner's extremes of honesty and deception.

The novel embodies the post-9/11 affect: the event may have faded from direct representation but there is a distinctively post-9/11 world portrayed, in this case revisited in the imagery of smoke, body bags and first responders as Gordon walks by the Madrid station on 11 March 2004, known in Spain as 11-M. Despite the carnage around him, Gordon remains detached, unable to process the event directly. Once again, the experience is a mediated one, read through the *New York Times* online from his Madrid apartment: "I could feel the newspaper accounts modifying or replacing my memory of what I'd seen; was there a word for that feeling?" (Lerner 119). The underlying trauma remains, but the American abroad is engulfed in a dangerous and complex world, which he can neither completely ignore nor fully experience except as a pervasive sense of precarity.

Like Eggers novel, *Atocha Station* engages with inchoate afterness, a sense that permeates contemporary American fiction. In the conceptualisation of affect, which includes consideration of both positive and negative emotions, anxiety and vulnerability are usually identified with the latter but in this chapter I argue that anxiety has become a way of

⁸ There are also important historical resonances in the setting with a visits to Granada and Toledo carrying the trace of Andalusia and referencing a significant historical period of predominantly peaceful co-existence between Europe and the Muslim world.

“working through” in the contemporary post-9/11 novel, the legacy of a trauma that is increasingly less concrete and more nebulous. Lerner combines the anxieties of love, language, poetry, politics and terror with a darkly humorous interiority. The novel points to what the aftermath of post-9/11 fiction may look like: an experience of increased vulnerability but one which is commensurate with an increased maturity, a new reality that renegotiates America’s global position rather than perpetuating the isolationist vulnerability of homeland violation. There is a reinforcement in the novel that “9/11 is not the first act of terrorism, and that it is not only the US that needs to deal with the phenomenon” (Duvall and Marzec 389). In a field characterised by the theoretical and thematic dominance of trauma, a turn to post-exceptionalist anxiety and vulnerability marks a change in the national and political identity of the US, which may yet prove the legacy of the era. In his review of *Leaving the Atocha Station*, Gary Sernovitz compares it to Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*, suggesting a reversal of fortune in the position of Americans abroad between the two, that the “rebalancing of pity” is a comment on an America whose path is “frighteningly downward”. Sernovitz also claims that today’s “lost generation” does not have World War I as an underlying traumatic event and that for Lerner’s aimless hero “the lack of a traumatic event is the traumatic event”. But this does not take into account the local trauma of the climactic terrorist bombing which gives the novel its title (something that goes unmentioned in Sernovitz’s review). It is this act of political violence (with an unconfirmed perpetrator) that configures the novel. Thompson and Hoggett in *Politics and Emotions* assert that “[i]n late modernity, the state becomes the focus of social anxieties which manifest themselves in recurrent moral and risk panics” (6) and Lerner explores the connection between these state and individual manifestations of vulnerability in a distinctly post-9/11 way.

In each of the novels discussed in this chapter, the protagonists personify vulnerability and also act to some extent as national symbols. Simone Drichel describes the conventional

understanding of vulnerability as “openness and exposure to threat and violation,” often paired with violence. Drichel argues that since 9/11 vulnerability has lost what she terms its “ambivalent potentiality,” by which she means getting helplessness right (10). In the novels highlighted here, I argue, vulnerability is not defined by fear and its resultant need for protection, but is instead a function of self-reflection and engagement with otherness that ultimately leads to hard-won gains in self, national and international knowledge. This process returns vulnerability to an ambivalent condition that is both challenging and empowering.

Atocha Station manages to bring forth a sense of hope from its vulnerability and its anxiety-fuelled narrative. The hope stems from the young poet’s kernel of belief in the authentic experience of art; something akin to Farouq’s faith in critical theory. The novel opens with Gordon witnessing a man crying in front of a painting, *Descent from the Cross*. This leads the narrator to wonder whether the man was having “*a profound experience of art?*” (original italics 8). Throughout the novel, Gordon questions the authenticity of his own emotional reactions. The narrator is sceptical about everything; even his internal life is dominated by scare quotes. He fakes tears over the pretence of his mother’s death yet has no reaction to the terror acts, he suffers from sexual anhedonia, and continually exposes himself as an imposter poet. He achieves a paradoxical level of authenticity by exposing that nothing touches him authentically, either aesthetically or emotionally. His only profound experience of art is one of distance, “a profound experience of the absence of profundity” (9). Glimpses of his reliance on poetry and the self-reflexive experience of the novel at once reinforce his certainty about the importance of the aesthetic and the very vulnerability of literature itself. Whether it be love, literature, politics or self, *Leaving the Atocha Station* tangles with the difficult resistance of moving from pretence to authenticity, from alienation to recognition. He describes the postmodern condition: “Who wasn’t squatting in one of the handful of pre-fabricated subject positions proffered by capital” something that he can only overcome

through his practice of poetry, despite his admitted failings, “admitting my bad faith in good faith, so to speak” (101). Lerner does not return to the domestic or the romantic genre seen in the early 9/11 canon, therefore the novel becomes a cathartic moment after the deferment of earlier narratives that failed to truly address trauma.

The imaginative responses that constitute the post-9/11 literary field continue to expand in numerous spatial and temporal directions. Joseph O’Neill’s first book after *Netherland*, *The Dog* (2014), is the story of a highly-strung American lawyer working in Dubai. There is the revisionist history of Laila Lalami’s *The Moor’s Account* (2014), which imagines the origins of Islam in America through its first Moroccan slave. The near-future dystopia of an Islamically-ruled France is envisioned in Michel Houellebecq’s *Submission* (2015) with its literary academic narrator, and the peculiar but generic crime fiction of Thomas Pynchon’s *Bleeding Edge* (2013), fuelled by technology driven 9/11 conspiracies. Along with many other recently published novels, these important additions contribute to the second wave of post-9/11 fiction. The interdisciplinary value of the philosophical concepts of both recognition and afterness show that the worlds these authors create are at once more vulnerable and more connected than earlier responses to 9/11; they move away from a national narrative of binarism underpinned by fear, to one of cosmopolitanism, including a newly-accepted sense of global vulnerability.

Conclusion: Towards a Framework of Literary Recognition

“This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

“This future beginning can be thought not only as the other yet to come but also as something that, for all its otherness and futurity, already or still inhabits us.”

Gerhard Richter

There is a deceptive simplicity to the idea of post-9/11 fiction. It would be easy to assume that few literary descriptors have had such an apparently clear historical marker of their beginning or identifier of their content. But this assumption has proven to be misleading. As the genre continues to develop and moves into its second decade, the concreteness of the term, if it was ever there, begins to evaporate. Instead, a host of questions emerge: is post-9/11 literature a new genre, and if so what are its features? How has the post-9/11 literary field evolved? Which novels are given primacy and why? How does the literary field manifest ideological and political positioning? Has the field been determined based on aesthetic concerns (“literariness”) or on ideological ones? What do Western authors do when they write Muslim characters? What do they know or believe about Islam? Are there theoretical gaps in the discipline of literary criticism when dealing with Islamic alterity? The introduction to this thesis outlined the central ideas that were consistent across all of the readings undertaken and it suggested the ways in which a focus on recognition can reframe investigations into this developing genre as a site of both social tension and social progress.

Despite the distance from its originating events, it is essential to keep a critical focus on the genre. Terrorism remains at the forefront of contemporary political life while attacks continue globally. There is a generation of young Muslims who cannot remember a pre-9/11 world. The Western Muslim identity remains under construction, particularly when it comes to political identities, and the identities that emerge from this process will no doubt be influenced by the spectre of terror and counter-terror actions. But these should not be the only contributing factors. The development of an understanding of Islam as an intrinsic component of Western nations is happening at the same time that the state of exception mentality continues to manifest in political rhetoric and military actions. Counter-terrorism strategies

continue to expand and move closer and closer to creating an “afterness” of 9/11 that is based on the total ostracism of the Muslim figure. There is a rich seam of meaning still to be explored through post-9/11 literature in its social and political context.

My reading of the post-9/11 literary genre has found that significant critical emphasis was given to a small number of novels in the process of early canonisation, most notably DeLillo’s *Falling Man*. This group of novels continues to constitute the core texts from which other texts are evaluated. In general, these novels reflect a problematic relationship with Islam; authors account very little for its varied global histories and practice. They often move from preliminary research about Islam to characterisation that lacks sophistication, giving primacy to simplistic religious interpretations rather than political ones. Gains in Islam being represented for all of its historical, religious, social and political diversity and complexity are sporadic. The hope that postmodern literary representations could creatively speak to history have not yet fully eventuated, but issues around stereotypical and hackneyed representations within the genre have eventually yielded to more expansive ones, as I explored in Part 2 of the thesis, which focused on the Muslim presence within the United States beyond the terrorist archetype. There is evidence of progress in the form of the novel itself; there is an interaction between the reader, who has their own constructed worldview, and the text, which is an entrance into another world. It is an interaction that the reader must choose to engage with if they are to have the experience of reading the literary; or, as David Palumbo-Liu succinctly states, “literature itself is otherness” (12). The novel enables the hope of empathetic reading, one in which an engagement with otherness is possible, what Felski refers to as recognition as a “mode of textual engagement” (14). The novels discussed in Part 2 of the thesis diverged from the early canon’s focus on Islam as an interloper whose intrinsic foreignness and violence are a constant source of fear. They began the process of looking at the East/West relationship as intersubjective, constructed by its intertwined

experiences and not as the clash of disparate and irreconcilable groups. With their feminist underpinnings and cosmopolitan authors, these novels were much more likely to problematize the roles into which both Muslims and non-Muslims are cast. Notwithstanding Felski's warning on the instrumentalisation of literature, whereby affinity with a particular reading frame "is open to recruitment as a potential medium of political enlightenment and social transformation" (6), the divergent novels perform important work in extending and diversifying the genre.

With the passing of time and an increasing understanding of the global position of the US, the second wave of post-9/11 fiction seems to be pointing to a more engaged and nuanced discourse around Islam. However, Muslims have not yet reached a fully participatory position in private and public life within the democratic polity. As Sherene Razack has so eloquently argued in *Casting Out*, the figure of the Muslim is one excluded from law, access to rights and democracy, and often personhood itself, and the novels of deterritorialisation embody this. There is no question that contemporary literature will reflect the difficulties of its time, dealing with the abhorrence of violent actions against innocent citizens, tensions between religious and secular worldviews, and the restrictions imposed by patriarchal and hetero-normative social values. But literature is not limited to only these issues in its attempts at hyper-reality. The study of the literary representations of Muslims involves questioning the "adequacy of any storytelling framework in which the narrative might be presented" (Jameson qtd. in AbdelRahman 3); it encourages criticality with an element of hope since "the false, once determinatively cognised and made precise, is already an index of what is right and better" (Adorno qtd. in Richter 48).

Post-9/11 fiction has become an important emerging genre, even if not for the reasons that might first have been expected. We no longer need to restrict the reach of the term to considerations of representing the trauma of the events, a focus that tended to emphasise a

retreat from the world into the perceived safety of the homeland. We can now see that it has the potential to describe a broad contemporary fictional genre which re-contextualises America's exceptionalist identity in a new geopolitical environment.

Literary Recognition

Beyond a study of the post-9/11 literary field, this thesis has also undertaken a consideration of developments in the understandings of recognition gained in critical theory and their implications for the understandings of recognition in literature. The argument aims to move towards a hermeneutics of recognition through the development of a recognition-theoretical literary framework. With deliberate attention to literary elements (structure, character, language, setting, themes, context, and so forth.) and their relation to the construction of Muslims and the cultural imaginary we label Islam, my analysis has also shown there is a place for renewed theoretical perspectives to grow along with the genre. Recognition theory, which has been touched on only in its briefest form in this thesis, provides great scope for renewed work on the relationship between literature and alterity.⁹⁹ It is a promising area for further research, not only because of the growing body of knowledge about recognition and how it operates as a social and political process, but also due to its potential consideration as a literary phenomenon. This recommended inclusion of recognition as a critical concept is not an attempt towards recuperative reading, an attempt to let social and political aspirations trump aesthetic concerns. Rather, recognition is a method by which we can observe the ways in which literature is put to “use” in the sense that Felski considers it: how recognition as a critical reading lens exposes constructions of subjectivity and the ideological underpinnings of texts. Beyond the theoretical use of recognition as a methodology, it is also reflected thematically in the recognition, non-recognition and misrecognition processes that precede social and political struggles and conflict portrayed in texts.

⁹⁹ This is only one aspect of the value of recognition. Ben Parker’s work on recognition scenes and Marxism is another example.

At the beginning of this thesis and in its title, I introduced the term literary recognition. Having explored it through a range of post-9/11 texts, it is possible to determine a framework for how literary recognition operates. In particular, recognition has been useful in identifying gaps and silences in the representation of Muslims: the lack of an ability to imagine everyday lives of Muslims in the West, to see them in normative roles of parent, lover, sibling, friend or colleague. Recognition theory suggests that these omissions are significant not just because they reflect a lack of integration into mainstream Western life, but also because of the connection between the ability to recognise at the level of the intimate or personal as integral to the ability to be recognised at the political or national level.

I have focused on several key elements from Honneth's recognition theory. First, that visibility is antecedent to recognition; in other words, that Muslims must be present and visible in a work for recognition to be a possibility. Works such as *The Submission* or *Self Storage* enable the exploration of the recognition process because Muslim characters are fully present in the narrative.⁶⁰ They represent the challenge to liberal values of "others who insist on entering the system as full participants, with their otherness fully intact" (Palumbo-Liu 4). The second recognition element that I have already alluded to is that identified by Honneth as love and it manifests in the practical relation-to-self as self-confidence. This need for an intimate and emotional life, the recognition of sexual relationships, friendship and family, and an interior subjectivity available in the text is almost completely absent from the array of novels studied in this thesis. This absence contributes both to a lack of particularity and the instrumentalisation of character in service of plot. Love is preceded by the recognition of personhood and so it is not unexpected to see this element in its negative form, the paradigm of disrespect, in a number of novels. According to Honneth's interpretation, disrespect is the

⁶⁰ In case this appears as simply an issue resolved by the passing of time, *Submission* by Michel Houellebecq is an important addition to the genre that imagines a near-future France with a Muslim president. Despite the centrality of this character to the experience of the French academics who must grapple with their new reality, Mohammed Ben Abbas is only ever referred to in the novel and does not appear as a character.

basis of social reification. The transactional nature of the intimate world of Muslim characters, seen most obviously in the terrorist/stripper narratives of Dubus III and Flanagan, are also evident, albeit less obviously, in the work of Waldman and Brandeis, despite their attempts to overcome the reification of the Muslim figure. Beyond the realm of intimate relationships, the recognition-theoretical reading of these novels has highlighted other commonalities. A lack of identity within the nation (by both self and others) leads to various forms of ostracism, often including exclusion from the recognition of the State (such as the withdrawal of passports or removal from the US), the multicultural polity, or personhood itself. This relationship between Muslims in the West and their claims to legal rights and moral autonomy is as central to Waldman's *The Submission* as it is to *Once in a Promised Land*. The measure of the acceptance of Muslims within liberal democracies is not merely presence or tolerance, nor is it economic participation; it is the right to legal recognition, parity of political participation and the protection of minority rights. Examples of the suspension of these rights in the case of Muslims abound in the real world. This same impetus to exclude Muslims from access to democratic rights is evident in situations such as Mohammad Khan's ostracism from the US or Sodaba's husband's disappearance to Guantanamo Bay. By closely analysing the structure, characterisation and language of texts, it becomes apparent that the representation of Muslims in post-9/11 fiction ultimately portrays an exclusion from the democratic and multicultural polity, whilst it simultaneously contributes to literature as a site of the struggle for recognition.

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