

12-2018

Responding to Terror in America: Global Literature, Film and the Media Narrative After the 9/11 Attacks

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RESPONDING TO TERROR IN AMERICA: GLOBAL LITERATURE, FILM AND THE
MEDIA NARRATIVE AFTER THE 9/11 ATTACKS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2018

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The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how post-9/11 literature has contributed to the discourse about the geo-political, social, and cultural changes that have occurred since the 9/11 attacks. I aim to show how literature has sought to resist some of the unproductive concepts and ideologies that have surfaced after 9/11, specifically by reacting to the negative role that the media had played in the aftermath of the attacks. The aim of the dissertation is to reveal how literature discursively and critically examines the concepts and beliefs surrounding 9/11 that the media has tried to project. Each of the works that will be discussed in this dissertation touches on the complicated relationship between the media and its representation of terrorism. It is not an exaggeration to say that certain novelists and filmmakers covered in this dissertation suggest that without the media terrorism would not have gained its current status. Both media coverage of and literature's response to the aftermath of 9/11 consist of conflicting narratives. As a result, my theoretical focus is going to consist of two approaches: the first will use media theory to indicate how some media outlets have created a narrative about 9/11. Media theory analyzes cultural texts that underline the different ideologies and beliefs that help to shape our societies. This approach helps to decipher how a media culture tends to encode relations of power in our society. In terms of 9/11, texts such as *Media Representations of September 11*, *How the World's News Media Reacted to 9.11*, and *9/11 and the Visual Culture of Disaster* are fundamental to explain how media scholars examined how the media operated in regard to 9/11. Second, the literature texts

will aid me in unpacking how they form a counter-narrative to the media's own account of 9/11. The dissertation will explore the dialectical tension between the media and literature as the latter questions how the media constructs our sense of what happens in moments of political and cultural crises.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help and support of many people. First and foremost, I am entirely grateful to my supervisor Dr. Christopher Orchard for his endless support and encouragement even before I started writing the dissertation. His comments, suggestions, and feedback had helped me greatly in developing my writing and critical thinking as well. It was in one of his classes that I developed an interest in this topic. Also, I extend my appreciation to my committee members. I had the honor to work with Dr. Lingyan Yang during the coursework period, where she was an excellent mentor. Dr. Thomas Slater's comments and suggestions during the proposal stage have been instrumental in composing this research. He has broadened the scope of my topic. I am also grateful to all the professors whom I worked with during my coursework as they helped me grow intellectually.

To my parents, Khalifah and Nama, your continuance help and support ever since I left my country to pursue the degree have maintained my belief and confidence in overcoming the obstacles. You have always believed in me and I hope that I make you proud. Lastly, this work would not have been completed without the endless love and support that my wife, Shoq, have given me. Over the period of five years, she has been a tremendous help for me, as she believed in my successes from the moment I started my journey at IUP. I owe her a debt of gratitude.

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CHAPTER ONE

EXPOSING THE BIAS: AN INTRODUCTION

“Terrorism easily falls prey to change that suits the interests of particular states at particular times”

-Sami Zeidan, “Desperately Seeking Definition”

“The media are rewarded...in that they energize their competition for audience size and circulation—and thus for all-important advertising revenues. In this respect, [media and terrorism] enjoy a symbiotic relationship—they feed off each other”

-Brigitte Nacos, “Terrorism/Counterterrorism and Media in the Age of Global Communication”

In addressing Congress in the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991, George H. Bush believed that it was time to endorse a new world order, one that would “achieve the universal aspirations of mankind: peace and security, freedom, and the rule of law” (Bush). Michael Oren sums up Bush’s NWO by writing, “The president proceeded to outline his plan for maintaining a permanent U.S. naval presence in the Persian Gulf, for providing funds for Middle East development, and for instituting safeguards against the spread of unconventional weapons” (569). Oren’s words suggest that the NWO that Bush had in mind was mainly to extend and solidify U.S. hegemony in that region. However, his vision became evident a decade later, precisely after 9/11, where a new world order was indeed starting to take shape. Terror became an integral part of the NWO that allowed the U.S. and its allies to justify seizing control over some parts of the Middle East. Iraq serves as a prime example, since it was invaded under the pretext of Saddam Hussein posing a terror threat to the world. This new world order was characterized then by the discourse of terrorism and even counterterrorism that widened the gap between the West and the Muslim world in particular. When his son George W. Bush remarked to a

joint session of Congress in 2001 that “either you are with us or you are with the terrorists,” his words suggested that there was not a middle ground. Many Muslims felt like outsiders as a consequence of Bush’s words, sharing neither the beliefs of the terrorists or Western ideals and values. Unfortunately, that meant that the discourse of terror victimized many Muslims as well as non-Muslims who now felt the fear of being associated with the negative connotations of terror. The repercussions of 9/11 continue to be felt. The attacks of 9/11 have inspired many other attacks on major cities in the East as well as the West. They have also sparked wars and conflicts, since one of the immediate consequences of the 9/11 attacks was the invasion of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

What has been less emphasized in this narrative about the 9/11 attacks and the immediate global consequences is the role played by the media in supporting the new world order. The media is defined here as news channels and newspapers, since they were still the most popular and effective mediums at the beginning of the twenty-first century through which information was conveyed. The media narrative that dominated the world after 9/11 used terrorism as a pretext to strengthen the dominance of the West. In this dissertation, I plan to examine how novels and films offer a critical examination of the narrative created by the media in the wake of 9/11. To do so, I will examine the following works: Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, Ian McEwan’s *Saturday*, Amy Waldman’s *The Submission*, Richard Flanagan’s *The Unknown Terrorist*, H.M. Naqvi *Homeboy*, and Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and two documentaries, *9/11-- Press for Truth* directed by Ray Nowosielski and Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*. In this analysis, post-9/11 literature has not only contributed to the discourse about the geopolitical, social, and cultural changes that have occurred since the 9/11 attacks but has

sought to resist some of the unproductive concepts and ideologies that have surfaced after 9/11 in the media. Literature and film have discursively examined the complicated relationship between the media and its representation of terrorism, suggesting in some cases that without the media terrorism would not have gained its current status. If we take Flanagan's novel *The Unknown Terrorist* as an example, we notice how the media creates paranoia and fear among the citizens and creates a conglomeration of historically disparate terrorist events to exert its narrative hold over the public. The media self-importantly justifies its existence in this process of creating narratives about terrorism and terrorist-related news.

Media bias in political settings is not a new phenomenon and has been globally acknowledged. Our history is filled with examples of the role the media has played in agitating violence and conflicts. Michael Jetter writes, "Media in its various forms can play a pivotal role in political conflict situations. Radio, television, and newspaper coverage can spur or deter political violence; it can be used as a propaganda tool or simply as a megaphone to spread information across a large audience" (1). Likewise, David Yanagizawa-Drott claims that certain governments take control over the media when conflicts erupt. He asserts, "elites of autocratic states have repeatedly used mass media, which they often control, with the intention of influencing citizen behavior in times of conflict. That is, history presents us with recurrent episodes of mass media being used for propaganda purposes" (2-3). Indeed, there have been multiple examples in which the media was used as a weapon in times of conflict.

Maja Adena et al., take us back to the rise of the Nazis in Germany to show how the media, radio in particular, was crucial in changing public opinion. According to the

authors, “gaining control over mass media helped Adolf Hitler to come to power and...mass media propaganda during the dictatorship affected popular support for Hitler’s policies” (2). When the Nazis consolidated their power, they “began airing heavily pro-Nazi propaganda; in just one month, this fully undid the effect of anti-Nazi radio of the previous four years...radio propaganda was instrumental in ensuring public support for the regime,” which consequently “encouraged denunciations of Jews, leading to their deportation to concentration camps and causing open expressions of anti-Semitism, such as writing anti-Semitic letters to the national newspaper (31). For the Nazis, the media was a powerful tool that they exploited in order to consolidate their power and justify mass killings.

Similarly, in “The Echoes of Violence: Considerations on Radio and Genocide in Rwanda”, Darryl Li untangles how the media played a pivotal role in the Rwandan genocide in 1994 which killed around one million people. According to Li, the local radios made significant contributions to the genocide by explicitly urging the Hutu extremists to kill the Tutsi minorities. Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) has been singled out by many as the station that broadcasted and spread hatred and bigotry toward the marginalized. The biased station “

has achieved an infamous, if not legendary, reputation for allegedly inciting Rwandan Hutu to participate in massacring the country’s Tutsi minority on a scale and scope without precedent in the country’s history. . . The graves are only half empty; who will help us fill them?’ an RTLM announcer is reputed to have wondered out loud in one of the station’s less subtle moments” (Li 9).

In fact, the UN Commander Romeo Dallaire, who oversaw the mission to end the civil war in Rwanda, had proposed that the RTLM station be shut down in order to achieve peace. Similarly, Li talks about Philip Gourevitch, a US journalist covering the civil war, who published a book in 1998 called *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families* about what he saw and experienced in Rwanda. One of the points that he raises in his text, according to Li, is that preventing the genocide would have been much easier if the radio station had not existed.

Media bias, according to Matthew Baum and Yuri Zhukov, has a significant role in the Libyan civil war that is still ongoing. The uprising in 2011 had successfully managed to change the ruling government. However, after the deposing and killing of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, a civil war erupted in the country. Baum and Zhukov conduct a case study on the media coverage of the civil war and conclude, after examining news reports from 113 countries, that there is “evidence of a status-quo (i.e. pro-regime) media bias in non-democratic states, and a revisionist (i.e. pro-rebel) bias in democratic states” (2). The difference of approach to the conflict from the mass media fueled the war, as each party believes itself to be the legitimate ruler of the country. The same could be applied to the Syrian context. The clash between Bashar al-Assad’s regime and the Syrian rebels is another manifestation of how the media agitates conflicts and wars. The government-owned Syrian outlets are understandably supportive of the brutal killings of civilians by labeling the rebels as terrorists with foreign agendas aimed at destabilizing the country. On the contrary, almost all the global media is anti-al-Assad and portray him as a dictator and illegitimate ruler of the country. So, the difference in

representation of al-Assad in the media is a pivotal reason for the continuing use of violence from both parties on Syrian soil.

All the examples mentioned above share the fact that they occurred in non-democratic nations. Consequently, the media was not independent in these countries and were easily exploited by the government power or the people in power. Most people believe, rightly so, that the media in the Third World Countries or countries ruled by dictators suffer from the government's meddling which damages its credibility, unlike in the democratic nations where the media is believed to be independent. The assumption has always been that in democratic countries the media is a separate entity that does not submit to any authority. Moreover, the norm has always been that if one wants to measure the level of democracy in a nation, the media should be the place to look. As Joseph Trappel and Tanja Maniglio suggest, "the media have three specific democratic functions to carry out: (1) safeguarding the flow of information; (2) providing a forum for public discussion about diverse, often conflicting political ideas; and (3) acting as a public watchdog against the abuse of power" (169). They add, "the media in mature democracies fulfill their role for democracy in the best possible way" (171).

However, the terrorist attacks on 9/11 complicated these assumptions and beliefs. The media coverage of 9/11 raised questions about the concept of "democracy" by showing how the media is not overly independent in countries that claim to enact democratic principles. Inevitably then, there will always be media bias in a democratic nation. As I will show throughout the dissertation, media bias complicates democratic values. So, post September 11 is a vital time period in our history, and it is crucial to

uncover the bias since the media tried to justify the wars and conflicts that erupted especially in the Middle East as a consequence of 9/11.

Since my dissertation will untangle media bias in relation to terrorism, I feel the need to briefly discuss here the notion of terrorism. The word “terrorism” is a problematic term, as there is no fixed agreed-upon definition to the word nor does it have clear characteristics that could help understand who should be labeled a terrorist. Sami Zeidan complicates the term even further by claiming that it “easily falls prey to change that suits the interests of particular states at particular times” (492). Osama bin Laden, for example, whose image became the symbol of terrorism, was once backed by the United States in the Soviet-Afghan War. In the eyes of the U.S. government, bin Laden was an important ally in the late decades of the 20th century and yet a terrorist who topped their most wanted list in the beginning of the 21st century. So, the word “terrorism” is an arbitrary one and fluctuates with time. Consequently, its seemingly arbitrary designations allow the media the freedom to toy with this concept. For example, when a violent and deadly act occurs and the perpetrator happens to be a Muslim, the media describes the act as terrorism, whereas if a non-Muslim commits a similar act, the media refrains from using the word “terrorism” to describe the act. Two recent examples to support this claim are the Charleston church mass shooting in which Dylann Roof killed nine African-Americans cold bloodedly in a church in 2015, and the Las Vegas mass killing in 2017 where dozens were killed and hundreds injured by a man named Stephen Paddock. In both instances, the perpetrators were middle-aged white men and yet the mainstream media did not label them as terrorists. So, examining the relationship between the media and terrorism is pivotal to understand both how the “new world order,” an idea that

serves to reinforce the West's dominance over the Middle East, is taking shape, and to realize the role that the media plays in our culture and its ability to influence public opinion.

Media bias of the coverage of 9/11 did not go unnoticed. However, media scholars have reacted differently to the role that the media and its coverage played in the wake of 9/11. I will divide their responses to the symbiotic relationship between the media and terrorism according to three approaches, which, interestingly, correspond to the way in which the novelists whom I will also be discussing in this dissertation have reacted to the role of the media after 9/11. In other words, there is a striking similarity between how media scholars and novelists concur in their understanding about the symbiotic relationship between the media and terrorism.

In the first approach, some scholars have pointed out that the media provided the perfect platform for the terrorists to voice their ideologies. Dominic Rohner and Bruno Frey, in "Blood and Ink! The Common-Interest-Game Between Terrorists and the Media" conducted an empirical research on the relationship between media and terrorism. They conclude that "Over time...the increased media coverage of terrorism has encouraged terrorists, and a trend of increasing terrorist activity has emerged" (139). In the same vein, Jeff Lewis asserts, "terrorist organizations have employed critical marketing strategies designed to meet the demands of media networks' interests, style and scheduling" (88). Lewis argues that Al Qaeda knew that an attack at the heart of New York would catch the attention of the media, since "a violence-obsessed media could do little else but be entranced by the narrative and horror of the attacks, repeating over and again the spectacle of falling bodies and the inferno of the collapsing towers" (89).

Similarly, Bernard Lewis, in an article published in *The New Yorker* titled “The Revolt of Islam” few months after the attacks, claims that, thanks to the media’s strong publicity of their actions, the terrorists won a psychological war which was as valuable as an actual military engagement.

Even politicians have criticized how the media became obsessed with terrorism, potentially jeopardizing the stability of nations. In a press conference in 2016, the Secretary of State, John Kerry publicly pointed out the media’s negative role in relation to terrorism. He remarked, “perhaps the media would do us all a service if they didn’t cover it quite as much” (Kerry). Barak Obama, in an interview with *The Atlantic* in 2016, made a similar remark on how the media overreacts to the threats of terrorist attacks and that if his administration was “to satisfy the cable news hype-fest,” that consequently “would lead to us making worse and worse decisions over time.” (Obama par.11) Both Obama and Kerry’s criticism stemmed from their concern about how the media’s obsession might potentially encourage terrorists to perform other attacks as they already have guaranteed the publicity necessary to spread their agendas.

By allowing the terrorists to voice their ideologies, the mainstream media contributes to the construction of fear in societies. In *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2003), Jean Baudrillard explains how Western societies, by its nature, fears death more than anything. He writes that Western culture is based on “a system that operates on the basis of the exclusion of death, a system whose ideal is an ideal of zero deaths. Every zero-death system is a zero-sum game” (16). People with power, with the help of the media, exploit this type of fear. They plant the seed of fear so that the public feels under a constant threat of another terrorist attack with potentially large-scale deaths. People are kept on

edge anticipating the next attack. Individuals believe they will become a victim of terrorism because of the way in which the media exaggerates its threat. Michael Jetter believes that the media could be a valuable asset for a terrorist group “by (i) spreading their message, (ii) creating fear in a target population, and (iii) recruiting followers” (2). Yael Pries-Shimshi agrees with Jetter suggesting that one of the consequences of the media giving direct attention to the terrorists is the spread of fear and anxiety in Western societies. The constant exposure to terrorism-related news increases the chances of feeling anxious and paranoid. Leonie Huddy et al., in “Fear and Terrorism: Psychological Reactions to 9/11,” ask “whether the replaying of images from a terrorist event serves to heighten public fear and anxiety, in line with terrorist objectives?” (256). Don DeLillo and Ian McEwan, as I will explain in chapter four, answer this question in their novels, *Falling Man* and *Saturday* respectively. Both authors show us how the media’s hysteric coverage of 9/11 resulted in psychological disorders for their characters ranging from trauma to anxiety.

In the second approach, some scholars have discussed how the media follows the government’s agendas. In this sense, the media is considered as an agent of the government. Noam Chomsky, replying to a question on his views on the role of the media in the aftermath of 9/11 says, “it is entirely typical for the major media...to line up in support of power at a time of crises and try to mobilize the population for the same cause” (7). In the post 9/11 era, the war on Iraq is probably a pivotal example to understand the basis of how the media and the U.S. government worked in conjunction in an attempt to promote and justify the war. When George W. Bush declared the joint mission to defeat terrorism starting with the destruction of Saddam Hussein’s regime, the

mainstream media strongly supported the propaganda in which the public was made to believe that Iraq was in a possession of weapons of mass destruction. So, to examine how the government and the mainstream media worked simultaneously, one should look at the way the media operated in the build up to the war rather than the coverage of the war itself. Danny Hayes and Matt Guardino touch on how the media adapted an amalgamated approach to the war, dismissing any other viewpoints that could have affected the propaganda. According to the authors, “news outlets before the invasion did not air a wide-ranging and honest debate grounded in carefully vetted facts, and they failed to offer citizens analysis and commentary from diverse policy perspectives,” as they had “aided the Bush administration’s march toward a disastrous and costly war based on flimsy evidence, superficial analysis, and unwarranted assumptions regarding Iraq’s weapons capabilities” (60). Douglas Kellner argues that the two Bush administrations had used the same tactics for their invasion of Iraq in 1991 and 2003. Kellner writes, “the two Bush administrations have used media spectacles to promote their highly controversial agendas [the two Gulf Wars]. Hence, during an era of Terror War, politics are increasingly mediated and constituted by the production of spectacular media events and the political agendas of their producers” (59). Mike Gasher has textually analyzed both *Time* and *Newsweek* a week before to the invasion and concludes, “the news coverage delivered a message remarkably similar to that of the Bush Administration” (20). The implication here is that the integrity of the mainstream media was significantly compromised in the buildup to the war.

The alignment between the media and the government, especially in the wake of 9/11, is worrying in the sense that it undermines the freedom and credibility of the media

industry in the West. The build up to the war in Iraq is a tangible example on the effect of the government over the media, as you only need to look at how the media operated several weeks before the invasion to affect public opinion.

The rise of Islamophobia was another disturbing instance of how the media fell under the power of governments after 9/11. The governments of the leading countries responded to 9/11 by carefully choosing precise terms with which to describe the perpetrators of the events of that day or those who support them financially or morally. The most widely used phrases were: Radical Islamists, Muslim extremists, and Muslim terrorists. However, the media blurred these phrases and made them all-inclusive, grouping all Muslims as one group to the extent that almost all Muslims would thenceforth be identified as terrorists.

In defining Islamophobia, the discourse adopted by these governments has always implicated that it is a religious clash rather than an ideological one. Khaled Beydoun explains how the US government has played a strong role in defining Islamophobia. He writes that Islamophobia:

is a modern extension of a deeply embedded and centuries-old form of hate. Following 9/11 it was adorned with a new name, institutionalized within new government structures and strident new policies, and legitimized under the auspices of a “war on terror” that assigned the immediate presumptions of terrorism to Islam and the immediate presumption of guilt to Muslim citizens and immigrants. (7)

The hateful rhetoric from the US government, unfortunately, is still palpable. One of the strong factors that made President Donald Trump popular during his run for the

presidency in 2016, among other things, was his explicit demonizing of Muslims. Trump wanted to introduce new measures that would restrict the freedom of Muslims living in the country. Moreover, he wanted to ban Muslims from certain countries from entering the country. As Beydoun mentions, Islamophobia was in effect long before 9/11, but since that date the efforts in targeting Muslims has been legitimized, and Trump's rhetoric serves as a more recent and worrying example.

The mainstream media has played a significant role in the efforts to legitimize this Muslim hatred under the pretext that those who executed the 9/11 attacks were true representatives of the religion of Islam. In other words, they try to show that the beliefs of the terrorists represent the essence of Islam, which consequently means that every Muslim is a terrorist until proven otherwise. The backlash against Muslims and Arabs is mainly due to how the media has put them under the microscope. The Islamophobic narrative that the media spread has widened the gap between the East and the West. This is evident in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Homeboy* where both protagonists are unable to integrate in post 9/11 life in New York, making them return to their home countries, and leaving behind their dreams and aspirations.

The third approach is what I call the "neutral position" in which the media does not take sides or promote certain agendas. This is not as valorous as it sounds since in this sense, the media's main objective is to make as much profit as possible. They use a range of tactics and strategies to increase revenues. Brigitte Nacos explains the symbiotic relationship between the media and terrorism by claiming that "the media are rewarded...in that they energize their competition for audience size and circulation—and thus for all-important advertising revenues. In this respect, the two sides enjoy a

symbiotic relationship—they feed off each other” (1). Torres Manuel explains the media’s benefit in spreading terrorism. He writes, “it does help us to understand how economic factors can influence in the way a news broadcaster treats a story. In fact, given the available information, it can be affirmed that everything related to Al Qaeda has been wonderful in a business sense for the news channel” (13). Following the same argument, Christopher Campbell, in “Commodifying September 11: Advertising, Myth, and Hegemony,” talks about how the media, and the advertising industry in general, took full advantage of this tragic event to increase their income. Campbell suggests that major corporations exploited such an opportunity to make money (63).

For the media, increasing profits is necessary in order to survive in an age where the competition between many organizations is fierce. Revenues are crucial for media organizations in order to operate in a capitalist dominated world. However, scholars are critical about the way in which the media tried to financially exploit the events of 9/11. Terrorism has proven to be useful in terms of how some organizations have flourished. For their own good, the media, in the aftermath of 9/11, has sustained and exaggerated the threat of terrorism and how the world is going through a massive change to accommodate the new world order. Richard Flanagan and Amy Waldman, two of the novelists covered in this dissertation, fictionalize how the fear that struck the West, after September 11, is due, in a large degree, to how the media industry is benefitting financially. The characters of Richard Cody and Alyssa Spier respectively are both driven by their desperate need for good ratings, which will consequently push them to invent unfounded stories that draw the public’s attention.

In critically analyzing the three approaches, each of the body chapters will consist of one of these approaches that I have discussed. As I mentioned earlier, both novelists and media scholars have similar critiques of the role of the media after 9/11. Thus, I believe it is vital for me to devote a whole chapter to each approach, as it will allow a comprehensive outlook on the symbiotic relationship between media and terrorism. Equally important, each of these chapters will give me the opportunity to examine how fiction (the novelists' critique) and nonfiction (the media scholars' critique) blend perfectly with each other and produce a strong response to the media narrative. I should note that the documentary-focused chapter (chapter 5) brings together the three approaches, as the filmmakers discuss how the media constructs fear, falls under the power of the government, and to a lesser extent capitalizes financially on the 9/11 event.

Literature Review

Post 9/11 literature is still shaping itself, as it is considered to be a relatively new field of literature, and scholars are still trying to address the cultural and political changes that our world has experienced since the attacks occurred. A number of books and articles have been published in an attempt to situate an analysis of literature within this political field.

Scholars have taken several approaches to examine the literature published after and about 9/11. One of the most salient approaches is to examine how literature can adapt itself to the new cultural, social, and political changes, and equally as important, how it can stand up against the new challenges that surfaced after 9/11. Martin Randall's *9/11 and the Literature of Terror* (2011) evaluates how novelists and filmmakers have responded through their works to the crisis. Randall criticizes how most 9/11 texts failed

to adequately address how society was re-shaped in the aftermath of the attacks. He writes, “that not only has a certain kind of realist fiction generally failed to identify and describe the 'wounds' left after the attacks but that furthermore other more hybrid forms have helped to reveal the profound difficulties of representing such a visually resonant, globally accessible and historically significant event” (3). Randall is more concerned about the focus of the 9/11 authors, as they “are concerned with the impact that the events have on their characters” (8). The 9/11 fiction fails, according to Randall, due to its “absen[ce] from explicit description” (10). So, for Randall, post 9/11 literature falls short of creating a narrative where it can genuinely represent 9/11.

Similarly, Richard Gray’s, 2011 book, *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* is no different than Randall’s in terms of how critical it is of the literature published in relation to the September 11 attacks. Through his discussion of the different texts, the author believes that the 9/11 texts tend to “focus on the preliminary stages of trauma: the sense of those events as a kind of historical and experiential abyss, a yawning and possibly unbridgeable gap between before and after” (24). For Gray, the real struggle for 9/11 writers is to adequately address the social and cultural condition prior and post 9/11. Gray believes that by failing to show “enactment of difference between a pre- and post-9/11 world,” the 9/11 novelists have not sufficiently expressed this historical event in all of its dimensions. Though Gray praises several 9/11 works such as Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*, he still believes that the main flaw of the 9/11 literature is that it “locate[s] crisis in terms of opposition—them and us, the personal and the political, the private and the public, the oppressor and the victim” (65). This binary opposition, according to Gray, limits the scope of 9/11 literature. He

argues that 9/11 authors have “domesticated” this historical moment; as a corrective, he sees 9/11 as a global and transnational event that the novelists and filmmakers should address in order to make them speak to different audiences. I agree with Gray in the sense that 9/11 cannot be seen as a purely American event. The whole world has been affected by this catastrophe through various degrees. This accounts for the global nature of my discussed texts.

Transatlantic Literature and Culture after 9/11: The Wrong Side of Paradise (2014) is another noteworthy publication that deals with 9/11 literature. Edited by Kristine A. Miller, the essay collection offers a political and cultural commentary on the effect of 9/11, and how literature has responded to the catastrophe. In the introduction, Miller divides the literature approach to the events into two main divisions: “the first is trauma theory, which has framed 9/11 as a traumatic ‘wound beyond words,’ and the second is poststructuralist theory that represents ‘the attacks as a dramatic media spectacle” (3). Miller is critical of how the 9/11 literature is limited to these two facets. Her collection tries to open up new horizons; it engages its readers with a variety of topics that touch on important cultural and transcultural aspects. One of the essays, titled “The (Inter)national Bond: James Bond and the Special Relationship,” discusses the relationship between the US and the UK, after 9/11, through the examination of the James Bond films. The author believes that these series of films reflect the joint effort of both countries to defeat terrorism and reflect both superpowers’ same stance on foreign policy. I believe that this essay is similar to mine in terms of its coverage. Another excellent essay in this collection is Lynda Ng’s “Behind the Face of Terror: Hamid, Malkani, and Multiculturalism after 9/11.” The author questions, by examining two

literary works, the ability of a democratic nation like the US to heal after 9/11 and whether it can still uphold its reputation as a multicultural nation. In accordance with my work, I find this article very useful as it discusses the social and cultural impact of the attacks on American society, especially on minorities. Although the book contains many other articles, that range from interviews with critics and novelists to articles discussing the role of paintings and statues in the post 9/11 world, most of these pieces are not related to my focus. However, this book does exemplify how 9/11 fiction and films, among other artistic mediums, can raise significant concerns, suggestions, and reactions about the post 9/11 world.

Véronique Bragard, et al. book *Portraying 9/11: Essays on Representations in Comics, Literature, Film and Theatre* (2011) is another valuable book that examines the role of literature after 9/11. In the introduction, the editors complicate our understanding of 9/11, as they read it as “semantically surrounded by an almost infinite list of peripheral terms, events, and ideas including the War on Terror, imperialism, fundamentalism, globalization, as well as the East and the West” (3). This difficulty of categorizing 9/11 literature reflects its complexity. Most of the essays in this collection are driven by psychoanalytical theory, dealing with memory, violence, sub-consciousness, and the effect of trauma on the psyche. The gist of the book is to see to what extent literature can heal the wounds resulting from September 11. The authors of the essays want to contribute to the discourse about the supposed role of literature in countering the negative ideologies and beliefs that dominated the culture ever since 9/11. Since I will be examining many characters who have been involved in the attacks, either directly or

indirectly, I believe that this book raises many interesting points about the effects of the experience on individuals.

“Documentary in an Age of Terror,” a 2005 article authored by Lynn Higgins tries to situate the genre of documentary films in the post 9/11 world. In her article, Higgins explains how documentaries have started to dominate mainstream culture. The affordability of filming equipment and the accessibility of advanced technologies are the main reasons that have made creating documentaries more tempting. Moreover, according to Higgins, what makes documentaries more appealing to the public is the fact that they are free from corporate control, which give their makers more freedom in terms of content. According to the author, ever since the attacks, people are desperate for news but they have lost confidence in the traditional news outlets. Consequently, they turn to documentary films looking for the truth. However, Higgins does cast some doubt on how far documentaries can represent the absolute truth. She writes, “The problem documentary filmmakers face is that authentic representations have become simultaneously both imperative and impossible: a series of images—even moving ones—cannot possibly convey in un-mediated form the raw, undigested, fragmented, unpolished, unspun real” (29). Of course, the creators of documentaries have their own agendas and try to impose them in their films. The filmmakers can stage, frame, and bend the facts in a way that suits their needs. Nonetheless, they try to represent the “truth” in the way they see it. Most 9/11 documentaries are made under the premise that the filmmakers want to raise questions that the mainstream media fail, whether deliberately or not, to raise. As I will explain in chapter five, documentaries have gained a great deal

of appreciation after 9/11, unlike Hollywood 9/11 films, which according to critics, have failed in attracting the same audiences.

Another 2005 documentary-focused article is Steven Mintz's "Michael Moore and the Re-Birth of the Documentary." Similar to the previous article, Mintz shows how documentary films have become very popular in the last few decades. Mintz attributes this increase in popularity to Michael Moore's documentaries. However, Mintz's praise is conditioned by his question about whether filmmakers are exploiting and objectifying the people who participate in their films through exposing their sufferings. It is not easy to answer this ethical question. One of the points that I raise in chapter five is whether Michael Moore exploits and objectifies those who appear in his film. Film critics have discussed this point intensively, as I will show, in chapter five.

The final work reviewed here is an article by Aaron DeRosa titled "Analyzing Literature After 9/11" published in 2011. DeRosa examines the critics' works in their response to the literature published after 9/11. DeRosa attempts to comprehensively discuss all of the 9/11 criticism under one umbrella. He is "interested in how analyses of 9/11 literature present their own ideologically informed narratives of the tragedy. These analyses are also valuable in managing trauma...because they rewrite the history of the event" (607). In the article, DeRosa cites Randall and Gray's books to solidify his critique of the 9/11 criticism. For the author, the problem lies in the fact that "the rhetoric of loss and violation are so deeply enmeshed in discussions of 9/11 that it is difficult to gain critical perspective" (608). DeRosa claims that the overshadowing of the language of loss and violation slows down the ability for 9/11 literature to gain its genuine position within literary fields. DeRosa argues that this lack of critical perspective is what still

hinders post 9/11 criticism. Overall, I believe that DeRosa's piece harshly attacks 9/11 literature without much conviction. In fact, in my work, I will try to confound her argument by proving that this field provides significant critical perspective.

My research aims to contribute to this large body of critical work that represents the discursive work that has been done on literature published since and about 9/11. However, I do find my work unique. First, after extensive research, it seems as if my dissertation would be the first work that is focused on discussing the role of literature in critiquing and countering the media's narrative. While the majority of the criticism of 9/11 literature and film revolve around how the culture can adapt to the traumatic experience of the people involved, the representation of the "Other," violence, and other cultural manifestations that resulted from 9/11, my work focuses on an important cultural manifestation, the relationship between literature, film and the media, that still has not been fully investigated by scholars. Second, in his book, Richard Gray is criticizing what he believes is the domestication of 9/11 by critics, the tendency to limit this event to just within the U.S. My work will bring together different authors from all around the world. The works that I will be discussing in the dissertation combine American, British, Australian, and South Asian writers and filmmakers, hence adding a global dimension to the work. Moreover, my dissertation will try to counter DeRosa's argument that 9/11 criticism is somehow restrained, or ideologized. I believe that by freely criticizing the media, and to an extent the government, literature offers a discursive space where a plenitude of voices can be represented.

Theoretical Approach

Given the nature of my topic and in order to equip myself with the necessary tools to analyze the literature comprehensively, I will blend literary theories with media studies theories. Dan Laughey defines media theory as “a systematic way of thinking about means of communication” (4). From media studies, the theory of agenda-setting will be significant for my paper. Maxwell McCombs and Amy Reynolds define this theory as “the ability of [news media] to influence the importance of placed on the topics of the public agenda” (1). Related to this theory is the concept of framing, which refers to how certain media outlets bend the facts so they align with their agendas, meaning that they approach the news from one angle and dismiss the others. This theory will persist throughout the body chapters, since the basis of my work will be the way in which the media tends to mislead the public, specifically in connection to 9/11 and its aftermath. Media theories will dominate this research. However, literary theories such as trauma and postmodernism will be used in order to offer a comprehensive analysis of the texts used in this study.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2:

In chapter two, I will analyze two literary works: the first is H. M. Naqvi’s *Homeboy*, and the second is Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The two novels are similar in terms of how the protagonists are affected by the power of the media. The two Pakistani authors have depicted their characters quite similarly. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez’s life in New York goes through a significant shift as a consequence of the terrorist attacks. Prior to 9/11, Changez assimilates perfectly in New

York where he has lived since he came from Pakistan as a teenager. He is a Princeton graduate and immediately secures a job in a prestigious firm. Yet after 9/11, life in New York becomes unbearable, so he decides to return to Pakistan and devote his time and effort to fight for Pakistan's independence. Chuck, in *Homeboy*, also decides at the end to leave the U.S. and reunite with his family in Pakistan due to the backlash against Muslims that intensified after 9/11. Both Chuck and Changez acknowledge the role of the media in their dissimulation.

The theme of this chapter, which will connect the two novels together, is Islamophobia. I will start the chapter by listing several examples pre and post 9/11 in which the mainstream media either wrongly accused Muslims like what happened in the Oklahoma City bombings or tries to show that the beliefs of the terrorists are a true representation of Islam. The editorial cartoons that the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published is a clear example of the way in which the media distorts Islam. I will argue that in a post 9/11 era, Islamophobia represents the new moral panic that Stanley Cohen explains, in *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* in 1972, as "A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media" (1). In these terms, Muslims are depicted as a threat to Western social ideals and values. I will also build my argument on Samuel P. Huntington's idea on how religion is the key factor in the clash of civilizations. I will explain how the media contributes and fuels the clash of civilizations by depicting how Muslims spread "moral panic" within Western society.

Chapter 3:

Since chapter two highlights those who are victimized by the powerful narrative that has emerged from the mainstream media since 9/11, in chapter three, I will change the scope and examine those who create these narratives that dominate societies. What the two novels, *The Unknown Terrorist* and *The Submission*, have in common is that they both feature journalistic characters, Richard Cody in *The Unknown Terrorist* and Alyssa Spier in *The Submission*. Both characters, when first introduced, are struggling to lift their careers. Cody is demoted and his career is fading. However, when the news breaks that Sydney has been targeted by terrorists, Cody knows how to capitalize on the story and revive his career. Step by step, Cody creates a narrative that demonizes The Doll, a lower class Australian citizen, by associating her with Islam and terrorism. Spier goes through the same journey. When the news reaches her that a Muslim architect has won the competition to build a memorial in New York, she decides to exploit the story and bend it in a way that is intended to agitate the public. She centers her story on the idea that Mo, who won the competition, is an extremist and that his design reflects his contempt towards the West.

So, both characters feed on controversies to improve their own careers. The stories that Cody and Spier create stem from their obsession of good ratings and fame. One of their strong motives by creating their stories is personal gain. I will argue in this chapter that ratings and revenues are fundamental for media organizations and one way to achieve that was by capitalizing on 9/11 and its aftermath. Thus, a significant reason for the media frenzy that emerged after 9/11 is economic-based. The easiest way for Cody and Spier to revive their careers is to go with the trend and “invent” stories that demonize

Muslims. In the introduction of this chapter, I will explain how while revenues are vital for media organizations, it risks damaging their credibility. Also, I will try to show how the mainstream media tend to feed on controversies in which 9/11 represented the perfect opportunity. I believe that this chapter is important in the sense that it shows that media bias is due, to a large degree, to economic reasons rather than cultural or political ones. So, this chapter associates media manipulation with capital.

Chapter 4:

In chapter four, I will group Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* with Ian McEwan's *Saturday* in an attempt to showcase how media exposure can lead to significant health complications. *Falling Man* features a number of characters who are traumatized, Keith and Lianne most notably. The reasons that traumatize them are different. Keith understandably is traumatized as a survivor of the 9/11 attacks. Lianne's trauma, however, is triggered as a result of her constant exposure to the media, especially by the images that the news channels and newspapers keep showing over and over again. Lianne's self-awareness of how the media has become a source of trauma and shock is recognized by her attempt to prevent her son, Justin, from watching the news. Henry Perowne, also suffers from the media exposure, although to a lesser extent. After 9/11, Perowne becomes preoccupied with the media and it seems that since then the media occupies a significant space in his life. Perowne's anxiety is evident when he witnesses a plane on fire descending toward Heathrow. His mind is telling him that it is yet another terrorist attack just like the one that happened in New York. So, he begins to envision the situation in the plane and how the passengers are fighting for their lives against the terrorists.

By taking Lianne and Perowne as examples, I will argue that the media is a considerable source of trauma and anxiety especially through its excessive use of images. In the introduction of the chapter, I will historically contextualize the role of images in spreading trauma and anxiety by listing different examples from the past. More importantly, I will untangle how the images of suffering help in sustaining trauma through different generations. For instance, given that the exposure to images of the Holocaust can still trigger unpleasant reactions, the images of shock and destruction that spread after 9/11 are only a continuance of the images of suffering that date back to the rise of imagery. I will situate my argument around Jean Baudrillard's criticism on how the media is taking the events of 9/11 "hostage" since "the image consumes the event, in the sense that it absorbs it and offers it for consumption" (27).

Chapter 5:

In this documentary-focused chapter, I will introduce two documentary films that gained a lot of popularity upon their release, since they raise questions ignored by traditional media outlets. The first documentary, titled *9/11-- Press for Truth* directed by Ray Nowosielski, is an attack upon multiple fronts. The film launches a scathing attack on how the government handled the tragic event, how the media covered the attacks in the aftermath of 9/11, and how U.S. foreign policy failed after 9/11. I will limit my focus to the part where the media is put under the microscope. According to the narrator, the media failed to do its job properly. Nowosielski asserts that the media started covering the attacks objectively, but it did not take long before it started to mislead the public with false coverage. The film explains how we should look at the hierarchal structure of media organization to better understand its bias. The other documentary film that I will be

examining in this dissertation is Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Moore, like Nowosielski, attacks the shortcomings of the Bush administration in order to undermine the role of the media in delivering facts. More importantly, he sheds light on how the media collectively created an atmosphere of fear by projecting unfounded reports on potential security threats. So, in this chapter, I aim to explain how documentaries can offer us another dimension on the role the media played after September 11.

Chapter 6:

In the concluding chapter, I will sum up my argument and offer a comprehensive overview on the way novelists and filmmakers critiqued the essential role that the mainstream media played in misleading the public in the aftermath of 9/11. I will assert how media manipulation reached a worrying state after September 11 and how literature intervened to expose this negative phenomenon. In other words, I will outline how literature responds to the media narrative that was based on lies, deception, and dishonesty. In the second part of the conclusion, I will talk about which direction my topic should take in the future in order to keep it relevant and, more importantly, what else I would like to research in terms of my topic that I did not cover in this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

MORAL PANIC AND ISLAMOPHOBIA: HOW THE MEDIA DEPICTS MUSLIMS AS A THREAT TO HUMANITY

“No matter how big the lie; repeat it often enough and the masses will regard it as the truth.”

- John F. Kennedy

Media organizations, especially after 9/11, promoted and spread certain propagandas that harmed certain minority groups more than others. Those minority groups, mainly Muslims, were vulnerable and found themselves helpless trying to resist the media's hegemonic practices which, according to David Altheide, “refers to the dominance of a certain way of life and thought and to the way in which that dominant concept of reality is diffused throughout public as well as private dimensions of social life” (477). This chapter analyzes two novels - Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* - that share the fact that their protagonists are victimized by the power of this media as a consequence of the 9/11 attacks. The authors of these novels try to unmask the media's negative narrative, one that sought to demonize the Muslim minority and depict them as a threat to the values of social democracy. The notable similarity between these novels is that they feature Muslim characters, whose lives are rendered chaotic as a consequence of the media's narrative. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the main character is Changez, a Pakistani Muslim who lived in New York at the time of the attacks. Due to the backlash against Muslims that gained momentum in the media after 9/11, Changez no longer finds New York to be a melting pot. He explicitly states that the media's narrative is key to his decision to leave the country. Similarly, *Home Boy* tells the story of three Pakistani immigrants who were

living in New York when the planes crashed into the twin towers. After the attacks, the lives of the three friends take a dramatic shift. They immediately begin to experience the bias that the media promulgated, especially in New York. The media puts them in the spotlight by using religious identification as a means of determining who was guilty and who was not. Consequently, this profiling ostracizes them from society

That leads me to discuss Islamophobia, or xenophobia, as I believe that both of these terms point to the same idea, which is the fear of the Other. I want to discuss the supposed role that the media played in creating and spreading this fear that infiltrated Western discourse after the attacks. I will divide this chapter into three parts. In the first part, I will explain the symbiotic relationship between the media and the spread of Islamophobia by listing different instances from the recent past that exemplified how the Western media disseminated several Islamophobic viewpoints. In the second part, I will turn my attention to the literature and explain how the two authors offered their critique of how the media escalated their attacks on Muslims after 9/11. In the last part, I will explain how both novels reflected the extent to which the identities of their protagonist were manipulated by the biased narrative.

It is thought that the word “Islamophobia” - defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as a “Dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force” - first appeared in an essay by Etienne Dinet called “L'Orient vu de l'Occident” in 1922. However, the word became mainstream only recently, particularly after 9/11 when the term became widely circulated at a time when Muslims living in the West felt increasingly isolated. The issue under consideration here is the role that the media played in promoting this type of fear in Western societies Todd Green’s *The Fear*

of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West tackles this relationship between the media and the rise of Islamophobia. He writes that:

Terrorism is the most prominent theme in media stories of Islam. In the United States, stories of Muslim terrorism have dominated news coverage since 9/11 and reinforced the link between Islam and violence. The 9/11 attacks represent the most obvious example of this link. For weeks after 9/11, images and videos of the attacks saturated news coverage, as did stories of the hijackers and their motives for taking aim at US targets. The only news story about Islam was the story of “Islamic terrorism.” Islam was reduced to a religion that prompted violence against and hatred of the West. (236)

The media, for more than a decade, has continued to feed the public with stories about Islam that are filled with violence and hatred. The only types of news that surface are the ones that define it as a religion tied to terrorism and extremism. Consequently, the public has developed fear and paranoia toward Islam and Muslims. Objective coverage of any piece of news that involves Muslims has been replaced by bias representations in the mainstream media. When using the term “mainstream media” in this chapter, I refer to the traditional agenda-driven media outlets as opposed to the independent media groups and/or freelance journalism. In the following paragraphs, starting with citations from the U.S. media, I will try to show how the Western media has repeatedly failed to provide fair and nondiscriminatory news coverage when it comes to information concerning Muslims.

In the aftermath of 9/11, media organizations helped in reinforcing the dichotomy of “us” vs. “them,” “the good” vs. “the bad”. Muslims living in America became the

prime target by different media outlets whenever there were terrorist/violent attacks inside or outside the United States. Taking the anthrax spores attacks that happened weeks after 9/11 as an example, the initial assumptions generated by the American media pointed the fingers toward Muslims with ties to Al-Qaeda. *The New York Times*, one of the country's leading newspapers, was quick to hint that Muslims could be behind the attacks that killed five and injured a couple of dozens. The newspaper published a report titled "A Nation Challenged: The Investigation; Link Suspected in Anthrax and Hijackings," where it suggested, without solid evidence, a link between the plane hijackers and the anthrax attacker. The opening lines of the article read as follows: "Investigators pursuing the anthrax exposure cases in New York, Washington and Florida say they suspect that the rash of contaminated letters is related to the Sept. 11 attacks and are investigating the possibility that Al Qaeda confederates of the hijackers are behind the incidents" (Johnston par. 1). Eventually, the killer turned out to be Bruce Edwards Ivins, a U.S. citizen working in the army with no ties to Al-Qaeda or Islam.

It is worth mentioning that blaming Muslims for any terrorist related news did not occur only after 9/11. The misrepresentation of Muslims in the media can be traced back to the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. The Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting¹ (FAIR) published a report months after the tragedy where it showed how different correspondents representing the major TV channels and newspapers in the U.S. were quick to suspect that terrorists from the Middle East were likely responsible for the deadly attack. For instance, the report shows how Jim Stewart, a CBS's correspondent, stated, "the betting here is on Middle East terrorists." Similarly, John McWethy, ABC's special

¹ FAIR is an independent media organization that critiques the dominant media outlets by exposing their bias and inaccuracy.

correspondent, declared that “the fact that it was such a powerful bomb in Oklahoma City immediately drew investigators to consider deadly parallels that all have roots in the Middle East” (Naureckas pars. 4-6). In *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, Edward Said refers to the Oklahoma City bombing as a pivotal example of the media’s bias toward Muslims. He writes that “the entire factitious connection between Arabs, Muslims, and terrorism was never more forcefully made evident to me; the sense of guilty involvement which, despite myself, I was made to feel struck me as precisely the feeling I was meant to have” (xiv). The media’s initial speculations on the involvement of Muslims in the attacks turned out to be false. The man responsible for the deadly attack was Timothy McVeigh, a white American citizen. This example typifies the idea that Muslims are constantly under the media’s radar whenever news breaks out that involves violence and terrorism.

Ironically, even if there was not news of shootings or mass killings, the mainstream media seemed to invent stories and statistics that demonized Muslims. This is evident when, in a couple of instances, *Fox News*, known to be a conservative news channel, had to apologize more than once for presenting incorrect information regarding Muslims in Europe. One example occurred when a guest, who appeared on the channel, stated that Birmingham, England was a “totally Muslim city where non-Muslims don't go in.” In a second example, another guest had presented a statistic where he showed “that 69% of the Muslims in France actually support ISIS.” *Fox News* later apologized to its viewers for presenting this groundless information. In *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims*, Nathan Lean recognizes the negative role that *Fox Channel* plays in spreading Islamophobic news to the public. Lean affirms, “*Fox*

News, the American television station that brands itself as ‘fair and balanced,’ is the epitome of this relationship. It has been...at the heart of the public scaremongering about Islam, and has recently become the home for a slew of right-wing activists who regularly inhabit its airwaves to distort the truth to push stereotypes about Muslims” (66). This is alarming since *Fox News* is extremely popular within the U.S. In fact, according to a report that appeared in the *TVNEWSER*² website on May 31th 2017, *Fox News* is the leading news channel in America for the 185th successive month in terms of viewers. Lean adds that for media organizations, Islamophobia is an industry, and that “in many cases the very networks that spread their product are themselves participants in the ruse to whip up public fear of Muslims” (66). Islamophobia then not only represented an opportunity for the media to reinforce certain ideologies, but also a great opportunity to attract many viewers and subscribers.

The Ground-Zero Mosque controversy represents another example where the media projected many falsifying facts in an attempt to provoke the public. In the summer of 2010, when the news of the proposed construction of an Islamic center near Ground Zero appeared, the mainstream media once again targeted Muslims-Americans. What appeared to start as a local issue, was soon globalized by the media’s involvement. Even though there were pro-mosque rallies, as well as anti-mosque protests, the media seemed more interested in adopting anti-mosque views. The news channels and newspapers were filled with discriminatory and bigotry comments toward Muslims. Even worse, many of the mainstream media promoted unfounded news. Jeffery Jones, in the article, “Fox & Friends: Political Talk,” extensively discusses how *Fox News* had covered the

² A website that focuses on the rankings and popularity of the different news channels in the US.

controversy. More specifically, the author tackles the news show *Fox & Friends* in an attempt to prove how the channel was biased in relation to this particular topic. He writes that “*Fox & Friends* was at the forefront of the ‘Ground Zero Mosque’ event, repeatedly running segments on the Park 51 project...that stoked the flames of fear, paranoia, revenge, hatred, racism, and whatever else could be mustered” (191). Jones adds that the news channel “literally brought a proposed ‘mosque’ into being—as a religious center, as a ‘command center’ for terrorists, as a slap in the face of Americans, as a threat, as evil, as a *controversy* that did not exist in the early stages of the project” (191). Jones sums up his discussion by claiming that the channel “saw an opportunity to link the 9/11 terrorist attacks to the project, transforming a place of community gathering and worship into an imagined terrorist threat with alleged ties to radical Islamic terrorist groups worldwide” (192).

In the same direction, the *New York Post* was far from offering an objective coverage of the saga. The newspaper claimed that the site was intended to be open on September 11, 2011, hinting that the Muslim community in New York was trying to provoke the public by planning to open the center on the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Similarly, the media attacked Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, who was the proposed Imam for the Islamic center, despite being known for his peacemaking efforts. Evelyn Alsultany sees this controversy as “part of a larger debate about the place of minorities in U.S. public life, revealing that a particular kind of discriminatory logic— whether based on race, religion, or the racialization of religion— is alive and thriving” (167). It is important to note that the media, in its coverage of the Ground-Zero Mosque controversy, had adopted the term “mosque” rather than “Islamic center.” The media disregarded the

fact that this would be a 13-story building, and only concentrated on identifying it as a mosque in order to evoke the emotions of the public much more easily than they would by merely calling it an Islamic center.

The European media also are responsible for their share in provoking Muslim communities living in Europe. The most obvious example of this provocation, in recent history, was the editorial cartoons that the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published satirizing the Prophet Muhammad in 2005. The negative portrayal of Prophet Muhammad, whose sayings and actions represent the essence of Islam along with the Holy Quran, had sparked aggressive reactions from Muslims not only in Europe, but from all over the world. A series of violent protests erupted which resulted in more than 200 casualties. Most prominently, the staff of the French satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, were attacked and killed simply because they reprinted the cartoons. Many, even non-Muslims, interpreted these cartoons as an attack on Islam by trying to distort its image, and associate it with violence and savagery. Art Spiegelman describes the cartoons as tragic, adding that “insults were used as an excuse to add more very real injury to an already badly injured world... They polarized the West into viewing Muslims as the unassimilable Other; for True Believers, the insults were irrefutable proof of Muslim victimization, and served as recruiting posters for the Holy War” (43). Jytte Klausen, in *The Cartoons that Shook the World*, sees this controversy as “evidence of a global Islamophobia,” suggesting that “the cartoons were made into a chapter in the undeclared war between the West and Islam” (170). The *Jyllands-Posten* controversy is a clear example of how the media could incite hatred and violence. It also shows how certain media outlets polarize rather than bridge the gap between the East and the West.

The British media has also been accused of spreading Islamophobic rhetoric to the public. Though the British media seem more tolerant toward Muslims than the U.S. media, several British media outlets have contributed to an alienating discourse aimed at the Muslim community in Britain. *The Sun*, a tabloid newspaper that enjoys high circulation numbers in the UK, had caused a lot of controversy by falsifying a survey that hinted that all Muslims were inclined to violence. On November 23, 2015 on its front page, *The Sun* headlined “1 in 5 Muslims’ sympathy for Jihadis.” It did not take long for *The Sun* to issue an apology statement for the inaccuracy of publishing the poll results. The statement read, “The newspaper had failed to take appropriate care in its presentation of the poll results, and as a result the coverage was significantly misleading, in breach of Clause 1³.” This apology issued from *The Sun* showed that there were at least measures taken in an attempt to maintain credibility and integrity in the press. However, it looks as if the media has the power to bend the rules, and spread discriminatory news. Even if *The Sun* issued an apology, it could not soften the harm that this particular news had caused for the community. There is no doubt that this type of news dehumanizes Muslims living in the UK. It reinforces the ideology that position Muslims as a potential threat to humanity. Amir Saeed notes how the British media has negatively impacted the Muslim community. He writes:

A series of events brought Muslims into the media spotlight and adversely affected the Muslim population in the UK. New components within racist terminology appeared, and were used in a manner that could be argued were deliberately provocative to bait and ridicule Muslims and other ethnic minorities.

³ Clause 1 (Accuracy) prohibits the publication of inaccurate, misleading or distorted material which includes pictures.

Many social commentators have noted that media language has been fashioned in such a way as to cause many to talk about a criminal culture. (10)

The British media fails to offer fair and balanced news regarding Muslims. This failure in coverage might suggest to many that Islam is at odds with Britain's liberal and democratic style of life. As a consequence, a lot of pressure was placed on Muslim minorities to counter the media's image of them.

The stereotypical representation of Muslims in the media as people who spread violence and hatred in the community is the reason why Islamophobia is becoming a serious social phenomenon. The real concern for many Muslims living in the West is that if a violent or terrorist attack occurs and the perpetrator happens to be a Muslim, blame is never assigned to the individual; instead, the whole community is blamed. What is more frustrating for Muslims is that "the default assumption remains that the term 'terrorist' is reserved for acts of political violence carried out by Muslims" (Kundnani 72). If a non-Muslim commits an act of violence, the blame does not transcend to his faith or race. This reflects the media's double standards on how they cover the news. The media's tendency to report Islamophobic news has resulted in the marginalization of Muslims. Islamophobia is reaching a critical stage where it is now unofficially institutionalized. This is alarming, especially since it has reached the US, Europe, and Australia. Moreover, this phenomenon diminishes the concept of multiculturalism. Many ideological and cultural differences have caused a backlash against Muslims. These differences call into question the feasibility of different cultures living in harmony side by side. Fear and anxiety toward Islam have widened the gap between the East and West. Many non-Muslims became skeptical about the idea of living peacefully with Muslims. This

“othering” of Muslims in the West leads back to Samuel P. Huntington’s idea of the clash of civilizations. In 1993, in his groundbreaking book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Huntington anticipated that, in the near future, religion would be the main cause of the clash between cultures. He states that, “as people define their identity in ethnic and religious terms, they are likely to see an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ relation existing between themselves and people of different ethnicity or religion” (29). The accuracy of Huntington’s hypothesis is foundational to my argument in this chapter. Islamophobia is the result of this clash and all the stories and incidents that I mentioned previously prove the media’s role in spreading Islamophobic discourse. Subsequently, media organizations are largely to blame for the clash of civilizations that Huntington discussed a couple of decades ago.

Along with Huntington’s idea of the clash of civilizations, Stanley Cohen’s concept of folk devils and moral panic is also fundamental to my analysis of the two texts. Cohen first introduces this concept in his book, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* in 1972. He summarizes what he means by moral panic by saying:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges, or deteriorates and becomes more visible. (1)

Islamophobia, today, could be seen as a form of this moral panic. Muslims are considered to be a threat to social ideals, and their presence is seen to jeopardize liberal and democratic values. It is important to note here that Cohen also introduces the term “folk devils,” by which he means the people who are accused of spreading moral panic. Thus, in our age, Muslims have been accused of being the source of panic that makes them, to borrow Cohen term, the folk devils of our age. Islamophobia fits perfectly with Cohen’s concept, since this type of phobia spreads fear and paranoia within the society and Muslims are thought to be its main cause.

However, I am not going to dwell on the implications of this type of panic on an ideological/political basis. I am more interested in the role of the mainstream media in pushing these moral panics and making Muslims appear as devils. Cohen acknowledges the mass media’s essential involvement in spreading fear, and how it is orchestrating and shaping the public’s perceptions. Cohen identifies three stages through which the mass media contributed to the process of making (inventing) moral panic. These stages are as follows:

- (i) *Setting the agenda* – selecting deviant or socially problematic events deemed as newsworthy, then using finer filters to select which of these events are candidates for moral panic;
- (ii) *Transmitting the images* – transmitting the claims of claims-makers, by sharpening up or dumbing down the rhetoric of moral panics;
- or (iii) *Breaking the silence, making the claim*. More frequently now than three decades ago, the media are in the claims-making business themselves.

(xxviii)

These steps reflected how the media occupies a significant space in shaping the public's beliefs and opinions. Thus, I will approach the novels by examining how the media spread moral panic, in this case Islamophobia. More importantly, I aim to analyze how this moral panic complicates the lives of the victimized characters, and the extent to which media bias alienates the (foreign) characters and inhibits their ability to assimilate into society, especially after 9/11.

Naqvi's *Home Boy* tells the story of three Pakistani Muslim immigrants living in New York at the time the terrorist attacks struck the city. Shehzad, known as Chuck, narrates the story of his life adventures in New York, before and after 9/11, along with his two friends AC (Ali Chaudhry,) and Jamsheed Khan, known as Jimbo. Chuck is a banker; however, shortly after 9/11 he is fired and starts working as a taxi driver. Jimbo is a DJ producer, while AC is working on his PhD. Before the attacks, the three friends, like any young men residing in lively New York, were exploring and enjoying a certain lifestyle. They were drinking, partying, and leading a somewhat reckless existence. However, after 9/11 their lives take a dramatic shift. The highpoint of the novel happens weeks after the attacks when the trio go to Connecticut to look for their long-absent friend, The Shaman, at his house. When the three friends reach their destination, the house is empty. There is no sign of The Shaman. They decide to spend the night in their friend's house, only to be awakened the following morning by the FBI knocking on the door. The neighbors had called the police as they suspected that the three dark-skinned men were up to something suspicious. The FBI arrests Chuck and his friends and place them in solitary confinement. Chuck goes through an aggressive interrogation where the officer acts as if the Pakistani man is indeed a terrorist, or at least understands the

mentality of the terrorist since he shares the same religion with the 9/11 attackers.

Although Chuck is soon released, after this incident he begins to have second thoughts about his own identity, and whether he could handle life in a post 9/11 New York. At the end of the novel, Chuck is offered a decent job as a financial analyst, but he decides to forsake it in order to go back to Pakistan and reunite with his family, as life in New York has become unbearable.

Naqvi shows how the harassment and discrimination that the trio encounters are too much to bear. The novel opens in hindsight with Chuck's own disappointment on how their status has dramatically changed since 9/11. His first words are, "We'd become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren't before. We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo and me. We were self-invented and self-made and certain we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic" (1). These words from Chuck reflect the degree in which 9/11 represented a defining moment in their integration within the American society. Prior to 9/11, although they came from different religious and cultural backgrounds, they were hoping, nonetheless, that all of these differences would vanish, and they did. They manage to live peacefully despite the obvious differences. More importantly, they see themselves as seamlessly integrated into a larger global identity, one that disregarded particular ethnic and racial differences. However, Chuck explicitly states here that after the attacks, they become a targeted community just like the Japanese were in the aftermath of World War II, and the Jews in the greater parts of Europe after World War I. Also, he likens them to African-Americans during slavery and the abolition. Chuck's association with these communities shows how their status has deteriorated rapidly. They quickly realize that America is no longer the Promised Land.

Their peaceful pre 9/11 life is challenged immediately after the catastrophe. For them, America could no longer stand up to its reputation as a melting pot culture.

Chuck and his friends' involvement in a bar fight is the climax of the discrimination that they face in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks. They are attacked for no apparent reason other than the fact that they look different. They are wrongfully labeled "A-rabs" by one of the attackers, even though Pakistan is not in the Arabian Peninsula. Even when Jimbo tries to correct this misconception, the man replies by saying, "Moslems, Mo-hicans, whatever" (24). The irony here is that the attacker has grouped Muslims with Native Indians—Mohicans—who were the most persecuted ethnic group in the history of America. This association suggests that Muslims might be the 21st century equivalent of the Mohicans, subject to an ethnic cleansing. Here, Naqvi addresses the dilemma that many Arabs and Muslims face in America on a daily basis. Although not every Arab is Muslim and not every Muslim is an Arab, a large number of people in the West do not seem to know the difference. Bearing in mind that the root of the clash between the East and West is religious identity, Arabs, who are Christians, Jews, or even atheists, cannot escape being called Muslims and treated like Muslims. Therefore, they are dragged into this clash, even though they are different. Chuck makes it clear, throughout the novel, that he is a secular Muslim with no sympathy towards extremists, while AC even declares himself as "a self-respecting Muslim atheist" (97). Nonetheless, they are powerless in avoiding being categorized as a threat to society.

Chuck is excluded from society as a consequence of the attacks. This is evident when he is detained and the officer who interrogates him yelled at him saying: "You aren't American . . . You got no fucking rights" (107). This is a defining moment in the

novel; it is when Chuck knows that he would not be accepted as part of the society. The officer's statement contradicts with Chuck's own pre 9/11 sense of belonging when he shows his love of New York by saying, "I'd since claimed the city and the city had claimed me" (3). At one stage, he is emotionally attached to New York. Later on, the situation escalates and he could no longer live peacefully in it. This resulted in an identity crisis for the Pakistani Muslim. Chuck's struggle in constructing a fixed identity after 9/11, which I will discuss later in the chapter, is the main reason that made him to abandon New York and move back to Pakistan.

Media bias is a main cause of Chuck's misery, and Naqvi underlines the pivotal role that the media plays in alienating Chuck and his friends from society. On the first page of the novel, the narrator gives us a hint on how they are predisposed to information circulated by the mass media. The narrator states, "we surveyed the *Times* and the *Post* and other treatises of mainstream discourse on a daily basis, consulted the *Voice* weekly" (1). Attuned to constantly processing information, Chuck, AC, and Jimbo become obsessed in reading everything the media projected after 9/11. Similarly, Alsultany elaborates on how she anxiously followed the news in the aftermath of the attacks. She writes that:

I remained glued to my television. I watched the endless clips of the planes crashing, of the towers falling, of people pressing photos of the missing toward the news cameras, of the photos of the nineteen Arab Muslim men responsible for the attack. I grieved for all of those who lost loved ones and simultaneously grieved in anticipation for the backlash that was to come against us as Arabs and Muslims. (2)

Naqvi stresses the idea that Muslims turn to the media. They want to understand the way they are being portrayed by the media and to what degree they have been victimized by such a portrayal. Going back to Cohen's three stages on how the media pushes moral panic to the society, it is clear that here the media is setting the agenda by allowing Muslim-related news to occupy a significant space in their daily coverage of news. The three Pakistani friends could not resist watching the news, and thereby absorb all the negativity that is projected in the media. Consequently, this affects their social life in New York; their lives become constrained to a large degree. Their sudden interest on what the media spreads stems from the way they have been treated day in day out. The new political and social environment have alerted them to keep up with and rely on the media so they could figure out where they stood in the new status quo.

One news story, in particular, catches the attention of Chuck and his friends while watching a local news channel. It is about the twenty-four-year-old Pakistani-born permanent resident, Ansar Mahmood, who is apprehended because he raised suspicion by taking a photo that included a water treatment plant. A guard, upon noticing that Ansar is taking photos, has called the police as he suspects that the man is plotting a terrorist attack. Obviously, it is his identity as a middle-aged brown-skinned man that raises the suspicion. Though the man is cleared from any terrorist activity, he is deported because the police found out that he helped some friends in overstaying their visas. Unfortunately for Ansar, he "was, quite simply, in the wrong place at the wrong time" (91). Knowing that Ansar's story is real, Naqvi wants to shed light on the negative phenomenon of deporting Muslims without any reasonable justification. Muslim Americans were placed under the threat of deportation, particularly after 9/11 when the US Department of

Homeland Security initiated the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System⁴.

Within two years of implementing this program “approximately 80,000 complied, 2,870 of whom were detained and 13,799 placed in deportation proceedings” (Alsultany 5). By introducing the story of Ansar Mahmood, Naqvi shows how Muslims receive greater media coverage even on stories that are not supposed to make the headlines.

This story makes Chuck and friends fearful and anxious. They know that they could be on the news just like Ansar for no good reason. AC reacts angrily after watching Ansar’s story unfolding on TV. He yells at Chuck, “turn it off, chum! I told you I’m sick of the fucking news!” (91). AC’s reaction reflects how watching the news channels, reading newspapers, or even listening to the radio would only add more misery and despair to their lives. Turning to the media would always leave the three friends frustrated since the news was filled with stories that reflect the discrimination that they faced in the aftermath of 9/11. There is hardly any news that can uplift their spirits and make them believe that they are still an important part of the society, regardless of their faith or ethnicity. Chuck and his friends are caught up in a system that wants to stereotype Muslims as terrorists.

Naqvi also complicates the nexus between the media and the spread of Islamophobia by showing how political speeches had a significant effect on Muslims. Naqvi includes in the novel the speech addressed by President George W. Bush to Congress on September 20, 2001. The speech is considered to be a defining one in terms of America’s mission on the war on terrorism. It is in this speech that President Bush laid the foundations on the war on terror, which resulted in the invasion of Iraq and

⁴ This program was designed for citizens of certain countries, mostly from the Middle East who go through extra steps of identification upon entering and exiting the US.

Afghanistan. Bush's speech sparked a lot of reactions not just locally, but also globally. Hence, in the following months and years, many experts recognized this speech as a milestone, which helped raising his popularity among Americans. Many scholars have discussed Bush's rhetoric in an attempt to decipher its hidden messages. Debra Merskin, in "The Construction of Arabs as Enemies: Post-September 11 Discourse of George W. Bush," discusses four intriguing speeches given by Bush in the wake of the attacks, including the one that Naqvi reproduces. Merskin concludes that Bush's speeches, though they seemed reassuring to Muslims, fell short in achieving that. According to Merskin, "Pre-existing stereotypical media portrayals and presidential verbiage consistent with dominant ideology about Arabs provided the context for rigidifying the constructed Arab terrorist stereotype in a way that made such associations seem normal and logical" (172). So, it is fair to say that Bush's rhetoric did not much differ from the media's efforts in demonizing Muslims, and spreading Islamophobic stereotypes. Merskin recognizes that such rhetoric might translate into "a serious impact on the quality of life for Arab Americans (172).

Naqvi does not include the whole speech; he only includes the segment where Muslims are directly addressed, which is the greater part of the speech. The following quote of Bush's from the novel is what I believe is worth discussing:

I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah... And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism.

Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists. (97-98)

As Chuck and AC listen to Bush's speech on TV, his final remarks, "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists," strongly resonate with the two friends. This is evident when an intense exchange occurs between the two friends on how to interpret Bush's words. The dialogue ends with AC's obvious resentment about America's failure in living up to its reputation as a nation that embraces all cultures. He rages at Chuck by saying "I thought this country was based upon freedom of speech/ freedom of press/ freedom of your own religion" (98). Moreover, Chuck's discomfort upon listening to the speech is evident when he utters the words "Inna lillahy wa ina illahay rajayune," which mean, "We come from God and return to God" (96). Muslims usually recite these words when they are in distress.

In Bush's speech, he explicitly stated that people like Chuck and his friends, who have no affiliation with any terrorist groups, should not be concerned as they are an integral part of the American society. However, the irony occurs when the two FBI agents order Chuck and his friend to sit down. Chuck recounts how the situation was at that particular moment:

When we squeezed uncomfortably next to each other on the couch, necks stretched, knees clamped, one of us sat on the remote, triggering the volume control...*As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world.* (102)

The irony here is that as Chuck and AC are forcibly detained, Bush's words should have been reassuring to the public, and to them in particular. Even the volume is spontaneously raised to add more significance to the contradiction between Bush's remarks and Chuck's situation at that precise moment. The weight of this speech on the three friends is immense. They already know that the media is not on their side. However, listening to the speech makes them realize that the government is not as well. The political narrative tries to show that no one is at risk, but the reality shows otherwise. It leaves the three Pakistani friends uncertain about their identity and where they belong. Thus, Bush's speech is more provoking than reassuring. Naqvi wants to show, by introducing the speech, that the political narrative is no different than the media narrative, as both try to exclude this particular community. Although Cohen discusses extensively the role that the media plays in spreading fear, I argue that the political discourse, in general, after 9/11 has the same effect. It is the coalition between the media and governmental institutions that results in Islamophobia having such an overwhelming presence in the West.

Birte Heidemann has discussed how the apprehension scene is a mere reflection of what Chuck has seen on numerous TV news reports. In her article "‘We are the Glue Keeping Civilization together’: Post-Orientalism and counter-Orientalism in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*," she explains that "The moment the trio is led onto the street, Chuck is reminded of what he had seen in numerous news reports after the 9/11 attacks. Now, the only difference he feels is the twisted affinity to the fictional victims he had seen on TV sets, as though he is being driven out of his own reality into the mirrored world of the TV screens" (294). In a quick succession of events, Chuck finds himself detained under the suspicion of being a terrorist. Chuck believes, just like Ansar, that his story would be

in the news because the charges are unfounded. And indeed, here Naqvi mirrors the sad reality of how many Muslim Americans could easily be detained and interrogated on merely groundless accusations. It seems as if Naqvi is reversing the statement that says the accused is innocent until proved guilty, to make it seem as if every Muslim is guilty until proved innocent.

The media bias plays a crucial role in presenting all Muslims and Arabs as a monolithic entity, despite their obvious differences. The agenda-driven media punishes Islam by making the actions of few extremists seem to be the norm of the whole religion. The issue here is that “Muslims are cast as a homogenous outgroup, and the actions of a few extremist members result in the derogation of the entire group” (Johnson 55). This homogeneity has resulted in multiple hate crimes throughout the country, whether it is verbal or physical. Being a Muslim, or looking like a Muslim, is enough to make a person a possible target for these types of attacks. What Chuck and his friends encounter in the bar could be classified as a hate crime. Naqvi acknowledges this social problem that disturbs many Muslims in the aftermath of the attacks. Hate crimes intensified significantly “from 28 hate incidents in 2000 to 481 in 2001. According to New York City police, there were 117 reports of hate crimes against Muslims in that city alone between September 11, 2001 and March 2002” (Disha et al. 22). The negative representation of Muslims in the media is directly related to the growing number of hate crimes. Barbara Perry investigates the reasons that agitate hate crimes in the West. She concludes that “various media expressions of anti-Muslim bias has effectively lent ‘permission to hate’ to those inclined to commit hate crime against Muslims” (10).

In addition, the hateful discourse that the media spread encouraged the public to resent Muslims and express their resentment freely without any repercussions. Naqvi stresses the fact that verbal abuse comes, also, in the form of news articles. Walking near a newsstand, Chuck finds himself leafing through a couple of newspapers. What he reads terrifies him. On one newspaper he reads the following excerpt, “the response to this unimaginable 21st century Pearl Harbor should be simple and swift—kill the bastards...As for the cities or countries that host these worms, bomb them to basketball courts” (41). Similarly, Chuck comes across another racist piece entitled, “The Case of Rage and Retribution.” In it, he reads the following passage, “for once let’s have no ‘grief counselors’ standing by with banal consolations...no fatuous rhetoric about ‘healing’...What we need is a unified, unifying Pearl Harbor sort of purple American fury—a ruthless indignation that doesn’t leak away in a week or two, wandering into Prozac-induced forgetfulness...or corruptly thought relativism” (42). The two pieces are filled with aggression and anger. They call for the use of violence as a reaction to the violence perpetrated by the terrorists on 9/11. The rhetoric in these two pieces is direct and straightforward, and is what Cohen calls the rhetoric of moral panic. This hateful rhetoric identifies explicitly Muslims as a potential threat to society. However, what is worrying here is that this rhetoric seems to be inclusive, meaning that they target the whole followers of the religion. There is no separation between the terrorists and the anti-terrorists, or anti-violence Muslims.

Unfortunately for Chuck and his friends and family watching the news on TV is not a different experience. While watching the “ten o’clock news,” Chuck admits that “the news was all bad.” There were “sightings of dark men with dirty bombs and devices

in their shoes. Planes appeared and disappeared over the horizon.” Chuck confessed that their nerves were “already frayed” (56). Naqvi reflects how different media outlets are to blame for spreading Islamophobic news and moral panic within society. They provide a strong platform for generating hate and bigotry. Take for example, Terry Jones, who made headlines worldwide in 2010 for setting a day to burn Al-Quran. Jones set the ninth anniversary of the September attacks as the date to burn two hundred Qurans. The Pastor claimed that Al-Quran was responsible for the crimes against humanity. Due to public outrage, Jones had to cancel the event. As a result of this controversy, Jones was interviewed numerous times and became a public figure thanks to the media’s coverage. His anti-Islam rhetoric reached everywhere. Jones’s remarks were not different than the words that Chuck reads in the newspapers. They urge the use of violence against Muslims and Arabs.

Obviously, the media could not be at fault by simply following the story of Jones, since it was out of the ordinary, but the media does look for stories that attract as many audiences as possible. Media scholar Brigitte Nacos identifies three aspects that the media provides in order to make individuals, like Jones, achieve their goals. First, the media provides a certain degree of attention to a person, an organization, or even a terrorist group. Second, after the attention, the party will gain recognition. Finally, respect and legitimacy will be granted. Though it was up to the public to decide whether Jones had gained legitimacy or not, since some would find his rhetoric hateful while others would find it perfectly normal. But we cannot ignore the role that the media plays in spreading these kinds of discourse. The media represents the ideal platform and facilitates such discourse. Aljazeera News Channel, for example, continued for years to

be Al-Qaeda's exclusive medium to the world. The channel aired numerous tapes and hosted many figures from the terrorist group who encouraged the use of violence against the West. Thus, it seems as if the media sets aside a moral stand by voicing different hateful messages. I am not suggesting that some media outlets, by voicing certain violent rhetoric, are necessarily sympathetic towards terrorists. In fact, they can help in demonizing the extremists by exposing their terrorist mindset. Yet, from the perspective of the extremists, the media is their number one ally, as without it, their ideologies would not be so widely disseminated. Regardless of where the media stands, Cohen suggests that its "reporting of certain 'facts' can be sufficient to generate concern, anxiety, indignation or panic" (10). As a consequence, it seems that there is no escape from the media spreading moral panic.

Chuck's life in America is ruined due, among other factors, to the media's bias. It does not take Chuck too long to realize that New York is no longer a safe haven for Muslim immigrants. The media effect is so powerful that it could not be challenged and the stereotypes it pushed soon become ideologies. Chuck realizes this while in prison, where he expresses his dismay on how his situation has deteriorated. He says, "I finally got it, I understood that just like three blacks men were gangbangers, and three Jews a conspiracy, three Muslims had become a sleeper cell...in the interim...I threatened order, threatened civilization" (121). These words, even if exaggerated, show the extent to which Chuck feels as an outsider after 9/11. Asma Mansoor discusses the causes that contribute to Chuck's alienation. In "Post 9/11 Identity Crisis in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*," Mansoor states that, "[Chuck] is pushed into a liminal territory where American society, owing to its indoctrination through government propaganda via the American

media, blindly implemented the policies of alienation that its government proselytized” (25). As Mansoor recognizes, there is a culpable party: “the media is playing a concrete role in the ‘Othering’ process. The news bulletin broadcast that Chuck watches while at the Shaman’s home gives a practical demo of this fact” (29). The media, by supporting the backlash against Muslims participates in the demonization of Islam, and presents it as a religion of hatred and bigotry.

Naqvi underlines that, after 9/11, the notion of terrorism becomes redefined by the media to include all Muslims and Arabs regardless of the strength or weakness of their attachment to their own faith. For Chuck, New York has turned from a place that once included all of life’s pleasures to a place that constrains him. He does not hide his remorse when he talks to his mother on the phone:

There’s sadness around every corner? There are cops everywhere? You know, there was a time when a police presence was reassuring . . . but now I’m afraid of all the time. I feel like a marked man. I feel like an animal. It’s no way to live. Maybe it’s just a phase, maybe it’ll pass, and things will return to normal, or maybe, . . . history will keep repeating itself. (206)

Chuck’s words reflect his disappointment on how life in New York has become like a prison. The way in which his race has been represented by the media, and treated by the public and governmental institutions is too much to bear. The third stage for the media to spread panic, according to Cohen, is to make the claim. The media does not hide its attack on the Muslim community. It is fair to stress that Chuck decides to leave after the media makes it clear that Muslims jeopardize the social fabric. What is more worrying to Chuck and his friends is that the hostility is growing from the media and consequently

from the public. At the end, he sacrifices a decent job in New York in order to reunite with his family where he could find peace and tranquility. He wants to go back to a place where Islam is not a phobia.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez has experienced a similar situation. He has to give up his life in New York to seek a better one outside the place that once felt like home to him. The visible backlash against Muslims in New York and the surrounding areas is the main reason that makes Chuck and Changez leave the United States. Hamid, like Naqvi, exemplifies how post 9/11 New York changes from being a welcoming place to foreigners to a hostile place where Muslims struggle to fit in. Naqvi here captures Muslim anxiety in the city. In her book *Wounded City: The Social Impact of 9/11 on New York City*, Jennifer Bryan includes a chapter entitled “Constructing the True Islam in Hostile Times: The Impact of 9/11 on Arab Muslims in Jersey City,” She dwells on the social consequences that Muslims had to endure in the aftermath of 9/11. Though Bryan’s focus was on Jersey City, I believe that New York City falls under the same consideration, given the close proximity between the two metropolises⁵. Bryan writes that “It was not the attack itself so much as its aftermath—the state war on terrorism (with its transnational and local variations), the media images and stories linking Arab Muslims with terrorists, and the social and economic backlash against Arab Muslims—that caused such profound social effects” (133). The author scales the degree of victimization that Muslims face as a consequence of 9/11 to the surrounding areas of New York. Bryan’s research covers the excessive FBI investigations and detentions, the escalation of hate crimes, and the increasing number of reported discriminatory behavior

⁵ Jersey City is about two miles west of Manhattan

against this minority group. The author concludes, “the constant questions about Osama bin Laden, the Middle East, the FBI investigations, the war, and the ‘Jersey City connection’ made many Muslims feel under the spotlight. This pressure led many to feel uncomfortable with non-Muslim friends” (156). Chuck and Changez feel this pressure and it isolate them from the larger community. Both Naqvi and Hamid exemplify how this place in particular has its own unique reaction to 9/11. New York, and the areas around it, had long been known to be a safe place for the Muslim community and all other minority groups. Yet, post 9/11, New York becomes a place that poses a threat to the minority group. This shift is accurately depicted in both novels. Chuck and Changez’s pre and post 9/11 lives show how New Yorkers react to the catastrophe, and more importantly how Muslims develop a new image of New York. As the two towers vanished from New York, multiculturalism seems to vanish alongside them.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist revolves around the life adventures of Changez, a middle-aged Pakistani man. The story opens with Changez, in Lahore Pakistan, politely asking an unnamed American man to join him for a cup of tea. The unnamed man, who remains anonymous throughout the novel, accepts the invitation. While they sit in a café at the heart of Lahore, Changez begins to recount his life story, beginning from the time he travels to America in an attempt to improve his life conditions. There, Changez becomes a student at Princeton University, where he excels and graduates with a perfect GPA. After graduation, Changez manages to secure a job at the highly respected Underwood Samson Company where he works as a financial analyst. Before he starts his job, Changez and his friends go to Greece for a vacation. There, the Pakistani man meets Erica, also a Princeton graduate, and they soon fall in love with each other. Their love

continues when they return to New York. However, Erica is still mourning the loss of her previous lover, Chris, who has died of lung cancer. Her sadness overshadows her romance with Changez. As a consequence, their relationship falls apart, and Erica has to be admitted into a mental institution. She later goes missing, though the implications suggest that she commits suicide.

On a career level, Changez continues to work hard and to impress his superiors. As a result, he is sent on international job assignments to the Philippines and Chile. He witnesses the 9/11 attacks on TV while in the Philippines. After he returns, Changez notices a shift in the treatment of foreigners, which makes him uncomfortable. In Chile, and after putting much thought into it, he decides to abandon his work responsibilities and return to New York. Upon his return, the company fires him. Growing more distressed, Changez finally decides to move back to Pakistan. There, he secures a job at a local university in Lahore where he gains significant popularity as a lecturer. Changez, along with his students, organizes different demonstrations aimed especially against the U.S.'s foreign policies, and their supposed role in the clash between India and Pakistan. Although he is an advocate for non-violence demonstrations, one of his students is caught for plotting to kill an American diplomat. The novel ends with Changez and the American guest leaving the café, suspiciously followed by a group of local men. It is left unclear if either man does harm to the other.

Changez's experience in New York is almost similar to Chuck's. Changez's life takes a dramatic shift after the September 11 attacks. Prior to 9/11, the Pakistani immigrant is fascinated with life in New York. He has the privilege to study and graduate from Princeton. He has an excellent job that provides him with stable income to support

himself and his family back in Pakistan. Moreover, he is in a relationship with a charming American girl that he loves dearly. While conversing with the American visitor, Changez states that “I was the product of an American university; I was earning a lucrative American salary; I was infatuated with an American woman” (73). In a sense, he is living the American dream; he is Americanized. America is indeed the Promised Land to him. Yet, these privileges do not last long, as after the terrorist attacks, all the pleasures begin to fade away. His relationship with Erica ends tragically, he no longer feels secured at his job, while his colleagues start looking down on him after 9/11. His productivity drops so significantly that he ends up dismissed from the firm. To add more misery to his life, Changez becomes subject to racist remarks on multiple occasions. Suddenly, Changez finds himself as an outsider in the place where it has once almost felt like home for him. And, like Chuck, Changez could no longer feel safe in New York, so he too decides to go back to his home country.

On more than one occasion in the novel, Changez states that anger, not fear, forces him to leave New York. Unlike Chuck who is driven by fear and panic that, consequently, lead to his abandonment of New York, Changez is more capable of standing up against racial discrimination. Growing his beard, for example, is a clear sign of resistance, since it reflects his Islamic identity. Moreover, Islamophobia fuels his anger. His bitterness is so immense to the extent that even when he returns to Pakistan, he decides to devote his time and energy to unmask America’s role in the tension in South Asia and calls for Pakistan’s independence. However, even when, at first, Changez tries to resist his forced disengagement from the American society, his efforts are ruined by the dominant discourse that stereotypes people like him as a threat to human values. It

certainly does not help Changez that he is a middle-aged well-educated and professional Muslim man living in New York at that time. According to Anna Hartnell in her article “Moving through America: Race, Place and Resistance in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*,” Hamid’s protagonist “fit[s] the stereotypical profile of an Islamist terrorist: a highly educated migrant from the Muslim world disaffected by a sense of rejection on the part of the West” (345). The media circulates images of brown-skinned middle-aged bearded men as the stereotypical images of terrorists. Changez possesses these features. By letting his beard grow, Changez falls into the image of a terrorist. This could be the reason why he is provoked on several occasions. The attackers, upon seeing Changez, would subconsciously treat him as a terrorist because his physical features resemble those of a terrorist.

Brigitte Nacos has also talked about the demonizing stereotypes that surfaced in the news after 9/11. In her book, *Fueling our Fear-Stereotyping, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans*, the author writes that:

The media publicized many visuals that depicted Muslims, mostly males, as killers and would-be killers of innocents. These images were part of the day-in and day-out reporting on the major news events at the time and thus part of the free media’s responsibility to inform the public. [They] left out the full range of Muslims’ peaceful, lawful, and perfectly normal existence. (51)

Thus, Changez is regarded as Cohen’s “folk devil” through how the media spreads panic among the public by exaggerating “the risks of crime and whip[ping] up moral panics to vindicate an unjust and authoritarian crime control policy” (xix). After 9/11, Muslims living in America endured many policies initiated by the government under the pretext of

restoring peace and order. These measures were mainly concerned with immigration and airport security, but they limited the mobility of Muslims within the country. Making these policies country-specific raises many concerns on how post 9/11 turns from targeting few Muslims (who are affiliated with terrorist groups) into targeting the whole followers of the Islamic faith.

Taking into account what Cohen and Hartnell say, Muslims, especially those who have the same characteristics as Changez (age, sex, facial features,) are used as scapegoats by the media in order to consolidate their control over the public. The most recent example was how the some media outlets dealt with the Orlando nightclub shooting in 2016. Omar Mateen was immediately identified as the perpetrator who killed 49 and injured 58 people in a nightclub. However, the media dragged an innocent Muslim man into the atrocity. *Fox News* claimed that Mateen was radicalized by a local Florida imam named Marcus Dwayne Robertson. As a result of this false accusation, Robertson received death threats. Although the FBI could not find any substantial evidence that might link the imam to Mateen. The mainstream media was desperate to prove that this incident was not a one-man job, and that it involved the work of a whole community. Similarly, in the Boston marathon bombings, where two bombs exploded and killed three and injured hundreds of people in 2013, a twenty-one years old Saudi was immediately accused of being the man behind the terrorist act. *The New York Post*, *Fox News*, and *CBS News* had all reported that the Saudi man was a potential suspect because he looked suspicious. The unnamed Saudi was soon cleared of any relations to the attacks. Both the imam and the Saudi man were wrongly accused because they were middle-aged men with

Middle-Eastern features. With any terrorist attacks, the media terrifies the public with unfounded accusations targeting the Muslim community.

Changez does not hide his dissatisfaction on how the media contributes to his misery, and media discourse is a pivotal reason that results not just in Changez's abandonment of New York, but also in his radicalization. The Pakistani immigrant explicitly states to his American guest that "the rhetoric emerging from your country at the moment in history—not just from the government, but from the media and supposedly critical journalists as well—provided a ready and constant fuel for my anger" (167). Changez, in this quote, clearly reveals how media rhetoric is a major factor that guides his temperament and his decision-making. This claim is in line with Cohen's argument on how media rhetoric is essential in planting fear within society.

One of Changez's sources of anger is not just how the West constantly interferes in Pakistan's internal affairs, but how it seems to overlook Pakistan's rich history, consequently its civilization. One way to grasp Hamid's views on the supposed negligence of Pakistan's civilization is to closely examine the nature of the conversation between Changez and the American guest. It is clear that Changez is dictating the conversation, and in some instances, he seems to manipulate his guest. We could read this as an analogy as to how Pakistan was superior to America for most of the history, especially by the fact that the guest remains voiceless in the whole novel. Moreover, it suggests that Pakistan has the capability to run its own matters. The reason that I discussed the idea of civilization here is because the recent history has taught us that the government/media agencies always play with the "lack of civilization" card in order to justify their intrusion into the affairs of any Third-World Country. Daniel Johnson offers

a more recent example on the collaboration of the media with the colonizers. In the article, "From the Tomahawk Chop to the Road Block: Discourses of Savagism in Whitestream Media," Johnson showcases the Canadian media position in regard to how the citizens of Six Nations demanded the reclamation of their stolen lands from the Canadian government in 2005. He asserts that "Colonial officials and the news media use Savagist discourse to legitimize a violent response to what was and is peaceful dissent against colonization...the news media subtly fostered a Savagism-Civilization binary, portraying the government and police as hoping for peace and Six Nations citizens and their supporters as deviating from the law" (121). The media was vital here in legitimizing the atrocities done by the colonizers.

This leads me to discuss the collusion between the government and the media and how Hamid tackles it. Hamid sheds light on how many, if not most, media outlets facilitate the policies initiated by the government. Many media scholars have discussed how the media has followed and spread the government's agendas. Ibrahim Yenigun argues that the American media has always been the ideal voice for whatever the government is trying to impose upon the masses. He wrote, "what the particular news stories tell is the grand narrative that is positioned in the dominant discourse. In the case of the American media...what is represented is defined in terms of whether it is for or against American interests" (43). The implication here is that the powerful media institutions are driven by certain agendas, which challenges how the media takes pride in proclaiming that they are factual and accurate.

Similarly, Zizi Papacharissi and Maria Oliveira, in "News Frames Terrorism: A Comparative Analysis of Frames Employed in Terrorism Coverage in US and UK

Newspapers,” perform a comparative analysis of media coverage after 9/11. Their most considerable finding is “the alignment of news frames with corresponding policy in the two nations...pointing to the symbiotic relationship between the policy agenda and the press” (71). David Altheide also points out how the government and the media work in conjunction with each other in constructing ideologies. He affirms that “terrorism and 9/11 were used by the mass media and politicians to promote fear related agendas and ideologies” (182). Hamid thus underlines the idea that Islamophobia is of the government’s making and that the media reflects the government’s policies. By blaming both the media and government policies, Changez unmasks the correlation between the two in creating a hostile environment toward a specific minority group.

This correlation is affirmed when Changez meets Erica’s parents. He is quickly annoyed by the comments made by her father. Erica’s father has provoked Changez by expressing his opinions about the situation in Pakistan, saying “I like Pakistanis. But the elite has raped that place well and good, right? And fundamentalism. You guys have got some serious problems with fundamentalism” (55). Changez does not reply to Erica’s father’s comments. Instead, he tells the American guest that “there was nothing overtly objectionable in what he said; indeed, his was a summary with some knowledge, much like the short news items on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*, which I recently begun to read” (55). Changez’s remarks here are worth discussing on two fronts. First, *The Wall Street Journal* is known to lean towards the political Right. Erica’s father’s comments are therefore filtered through this right wing sensibility. Second, the novel is set at a time when the country was run by a Republican administration. Bush’s administration was criticized repeatedly on how it encouraged prejudice against Muslims.

Thus, this indirect collusion between the government and certain media outlets suggest how the media could be accused of doing the government's dirty work.

Second, Changez's observations show how people are easily affected by what they read, listen, or watch. Changez indicates how Erica's father's opinions are formed by what he reads. He is reading what the media outlets have reported on the situation in Pakistan. This direct connection between what the father says and what Changez constantly reads in the newspaper exemplify the media's hegemony. According to Changez, while Erica's father is not totally correct in his assessment on the local issues in Pakistan, nonetheless, the parent thought he is right from simply reading what is in the newspapers. Here Hamid is criticizing the shallowness of those who parrot what they grasp from the media without analyzing it objectively. Hamid demonstrates how the media easily shapes public opinion. Hence, the media by possessing the power of influencing the public's opinion by simply presenting foreign policy from a certain political perspective as unquestionable truth.

Changez's claim that the opinions of Erica's father are usually on the front pages of *The Wall Street Journal* is another important observation that needs further discussion. It is widely known that if a particular news piece makes it to the front page, it means that it has more significance than those articles that are buried inside. Moreover, readers are usually more engaged with the stories that appear on the front page. This is a technique that Maxwell McCombs discusses in his book, *Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and Public Opinion*. He writes that, "Newspapers communicate a host of cues about the relative salience of the topics on their daily agenda. The lead story on page 1, front page versus inside page, the size of the headlines, and even the length of a story all

communicate the salience of topics on the news agenda” (3). So, Changez’s claim gives us an indication of the types of news that filled the front pages of the popular newspapers in the United States immediately after September 11. Whether to maximize their profits or to spread fear and paranoia, newspapers across the country were dominated by Islamophobic news and crafted certain ideas about Muslim countries in particular and the ideas of those who inhabited them.

News channels and radio stations, also, use the same technique. The order in which a particular piece of news appear in a newscast reflects its importance. When a story appears first, it means that it is the most important one, and that logically should attract more attention than the following news. The prioritizing of certain news, whether it is a headline in a newspaper, or what comes first in order in a newscast, has a greater chance in shaping the public’s beliefs. The episode with Erica’s father highlights the extent to which negative stereotypes concerning Muslims occupy a considerable space in the different media outlets in the aftermath of 9/11.

Hamid, like Naqvi, refers to the dilemma that many non-Arab Muslims living in America face, which is being labeled, hatefully, as Arabs. After the attacks, hostility grows towards people who have Middle-Eastern features. Changez is the subject of different hateful remarks in a post 9/11 New York. One in particular is engraved in his memory that he could not help but to narrate to his mysterious American guest. Changez was in a parking lot when he “was approached by a man [he] did not know. The man made a series of unintelligible noises...and pressed his face alarmingly on Changez’s...’Fucking Arab,’ he said” (117). The irony here is that the Pakistani immigrant, Changez, was wrongfully labeled as an Arab. In “Framing Islam: An Analysis

of U.S. Media Coverage of Terrorism Since 9/11,” Kimberly Powell discusses how media stereotypes strongly shape the popular culture in our age. She asserts that:

The reality created by media results in lasting images and stereotypes about groups, religions, and peoples... When the agenda is consistent among media sources, the media has the power to create associations for people, race, culture, and religion. For example, when covering Muslims the diversity of Muslim identities, practices, and forms of belonging are reduced into a few reactionary cultural practices. (93)

Since the hijackers were all Arabs, the general understanding is that all Muslims are Arabs. Consequently, Changez’s identity is simplified to fit a terrorist profile. Hamid addresses how the misconception has sparked multiple assaults on many Muslim Americans. The incident that Changez has with the man should not be directly linked to the media, as it is an individual act made by a man who sees Muslims as a potential threat to their life values. However, the man’s hateful remarks must have been fueled by something. As I mentioned earlier, Islamophobia would not surface without the media. Thus, the man’s abusive remarks are a mere reaction to the type of news that emerged after 9/11. In this episode, the man is playing up to the stereotypes of Muslims. So, it is fair to say that the media shares the blame in these types of attacks.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Hamid complicates the media’s coverage of issues concerning Muslims. Through Changez’s narration, the author takes the issue of media coverage to an international level. When Changez is explaining to his American guest the tension that occurred between India and Pakistan, he takes a swipe at how the American media seems unfazed about the situations between the two countries. He

criticizes the American media by saying that the situation is “little noticed by the media in your country, which was focused at that time on the first anniversary of the attacks on New York and Washington” (178). However, the irony comes in the following page. Hamid’s protagonist explains to his guest that when he returned to Pakistan and his popularity grew considerably, it did not go down well with the foreign media. Changez is telling the unnamed American visitor that he and his students are “participating in demonstrations for greater independence in Pakistan’s domestic and international affairs, demonstrations that the foreign press would later, when our gatherings grew to newsworthy size, come to label anti-American” (179). Thus, the media meets his revolutionary activism with aggression.

Here, Hamid unmasks the media’s double standards on foreign issues. At one point, the media seems indifferent to the political struggle between India and Pakistan, even if the situation is critical with a potential war around the corner. This is a war, needless to say, that might result in a large numbers of casualties. Yet, when Changez, along with his students, starts to organize regular nonviolent demonstrations that call for Pakistan’s own independence, the media interferes to undermine the significance of these demonstrations and distort their noble target. In other words, the media begins to create and promote the propaganda that these demonstrations advocate violence and hatred towards the West. Changez is implying that the media attacked their efforts simply because they are against America’s foreign policies. For Changez then, there is no escape from being associated with violence by the media, not even in his own home country.

The media’s attack on Changez’s activism does not come as a surprise since the independence of Pakistan could in turn jeopardize the West’s neocolonial power over the

South Asian countries. In a neocolonial era, the media plays a vital role in legitimizing the inhumane nature of neocolonialism. The scholar Jerry Domatob, in “Sub-Saharan Africa's Media and Neocolonialism,” has investigated the role that the media played around the time that neocolonialism penetrated Africa. He remarks that the “media are supportive rather than antagonistic of neo-colonialism. Indeed, the media foster neo-colonialism through training, advertising, news, technology etc” (156). Although Domatob’s model is different since he is analyzing the consequences of neocolonialism in Africa, the circumstances are similar in Pakistan. Pakistan is a Third-World country that still suffers from the meddling of superpowers. Domatob suggests that the West is in desperate need of the support of the media in order to control the economic, political, and cultural products of a nation. The mainstream media could, to a certain extent, legalize this type of colonialism and make it to appear as a rather necessary action for the good of humanity. The media narrative has the ability to crush the skepticism that might surface from the public. So, it is safe to say that the media is an essential player in the process of humanizing the neoliberal ideologies.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, by labeling Changez’s demonstrations as anti-American, Hamid proclaims how media hegemony can stir chaos in less privileged regions. Hamid does not provide more details on how the media seemed hostile towards Changez’s anti-colonial demonstrations. However, he invites us to imagine how Changez’s activism is being represented in the mass media. Usually, when the mainstream media attempts to attack certain political movements that oppose the imperialist agendas, it tries to publicly distort their image. Barbarism, savagery, and violence are some of the characteristics that the media tries to associate with whoever

threatens the imperialist power. To support this claim, Adnan Mahmutovic argues that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a critique of global capitalism. He writes that by “Building the narrative around the terrorist attacks on New York, Hamid’s contribution to post-9/11 fiction may be...an allegorical discourse on global capitalism (with America as its core)” (2). Changez is on a mission to disengage his country from foreign intrusion, but the media promotes an aggressive narrative that demonizes him and his political movement.

In an interview with Hamid, he discusses the portrayal of his protagonist. Replying to a question that revolves around how the novel might influence the readers’ perspectives on the state of Muslims/American relations, the author states that “by taking readers inside a man who both loves and is angered by America, and by allowing readers to feel what that man feels, I hope to show that the world is more complicated than politicians and newspapers usually make it seem” (Hamid). Hamid’s claim that the depiction of his hero differs greatly from the media’s simpler realizations of global politics is itself an attack on the media’s lack of credibility. The media’s failure in exposing the dilemmas that many Muslims face as a consequence of the attack is what urges Hamid to unmask the media’s impact on them. Changez’s agonizing journey, after 9/11, in New York and then in Pakistan is a genuine representation of the struggles that the media fails to reflect. In other words, Hamid tries to depict his protagonist in a way that counters the idea that Muslims are the folk devils who spread moral panic in our age.

After discussing how both Naqvi and Hamid comment on the media and the spread of Islamophobia in *Home Boy* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* respectively, I will now move to discuss how the biased media narrative results in an identity crisis for

the two protagonists. Being represented as folk devils who are threatening the safety of the society is too much to bear for both men. The attack that the media launches on Muslims, in the wake of the attacks, is a main factor that causes an identity crisis for the two Pakistanis. Different scholars have tackled the nexus between media bias and identity construction. In their study, “U.S. National Identity, Political Elites, and a Patriotic Press Following September 11,” John Hutcheson et al. have concluded that “mass media, particularly news media” play a massive role “in the construction, articulation, and dissemination of... identity...media organizations plays vital day-to-day roles in the production and re-production of identity, and certainly not only in the United States” (47). Shilpa Dave discusses how the media narrative, if biased, has the power to problematize one’s identity. Dave looks at this subject through an East-West dichotomy, asserting that “one common [media] narrative...can create an identity crisis between ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ values within an individual” (3). This is a bifurcation that can be seen in both protagonists.

There are multiple similarities between the depictions of Chuck and Changez. First, they are both Pakistani immigrants who come to the US searching for better life conditions. Second, in their pre-9/11 New York journey, they were more integrated in American society than their place of origin. Third, their lives witness a significant transformation in the aftermath of 9/11. Lastly, both Changez and Chuck could no longer handle life in New York, and decide to return to their home countries. The socio-political developments in the US, after 9/11 complicate their assimilation as immigrants. They find themselves not only as outsiders in a place that once almost felt like home to them, but also as people who are perceived to plant fear and panic in society. I will analyze

Chuck and Changez's identity crisis on the basis that it occurs as a consequence of the racist rhetoric that the media adopts.

According to Kath Woodward, in *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Ethnicity*, Identity is marked by similarity, that is of the people like us, and by difference, of those who are not. [. . .] identities are necessarily the product of the society in which we live and our relationship with others. Identity provides a link between individuals and the world in which they live. Identity combines how I see myself and how others see me. Identity involves the subjective, and the external. It is a socially recognized position, recognized by others, not just by me. (7)

Thus, identity is strongly affected by its surroundings. More importantly, identity formation depends largely on how others regard and treat the self. Manuel Castells, a sociologist scholar, discusses the struggles that might surface from having multiple identities. He asserts, "For a given individual, or for a collective actor, there may be a plurality of identities. Yet, such a plurality is a source of stress and contradiction in both self-representation and social action" (6). The plurality of identities is what could trigger an identity crisis that affects the person's sense of belonging to a particular, culture, or a place. The crisis happens when the self struggles to be identified within one particular group.

Edward Said devoted a great deal of his writing to identity construction. In fact, the basis of his seminal concept of Orientalism is his focus on identity formation. In *Orientalism*, Said claims that "The construction of identity...is finally a construction— involves establishing opposites and "others" whose actuality is always a subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us'. Each age

and society recreates its ‘Others’” (332). So, after 9/11, religious identity becomes an essential player in positioning a person either within the minority group (Muslims) or the dominant group (non-Muslims). In the aftermath of 9/11, the gap between the Muslim community and the other communities widens, hence resulting in the “othering” of Muslims.

Although the exclusion of Muslims from the social sphere is not only apparent after September 11, nonetheless Hoineikip Haolai has examined how 9/11 represents a defining moment for Muslims living in America in terms of identity construction. Muslims and Arabs become more conscious of how their identities are represented and defined within the popular culture. She writes that “In the post 9/11 world, there has been a stark change in the attitude and approach towards the Muslim community. This change in outlook has led to a renewed awareness among the Muslims regarding their identity and true self” (301). The dominant rhetoric in the post 9/11 America has alerted the Muslim community to be aware of the degree in which the political backlash could affect their identities. Yet, that does not prevent many Muslims from struggling to acquire a fixed identity that would not fluctuate depending on the changing political circumstances under which they live.

As stated earlier, both Changez and Chuck go through an identity crisis while residing in New York. The first notable transformation in their character, as a consequence of the hateful rhetoric that dominated the country, is their religious identities. Both Chuck and Changez have led a secular way of life, despite their upbringing in Pakistan which is known as a conservative Islamic country. Chuck’s secularism is reflected when he is interrogated by an FBI agent. During the investigation,

Chuck states that he does not pray five times a day, neither does he fast the whole month of Ramadan, even though this is a stereotype elicited by the agent. Moreover, he claims that he drinks alcohol regularly. All of his statements are against the principles of Islam. Changez also admits to his guest that he drinks alcohol and that he is in a love relationship, ignoring the “no sex before marriage” principle in Islam. So, both Naqvi and Hamid present their protagonists, in their pre 9/11 lives, as secular Muslims.

However, after the “the war on terror” rhetoric intensifies and Muslims are put under the microscope, a fundamental change in their religious identities occurs. Chuck’s religious identity shifts significantly at the end of the novel when he decides to return to Pakistan. As he is waiting for the taxi to pick him up to JFK airport, Chuck “spread[s] the rug from the suitcase that [his mother] dispatched four years earlier, [stands], heels together, arms folded over stomach, and positioning [himself] generally east, toward Mecca, recite[s] the call to prayer” (214). The last act that Chuck makes before he leaves New York is performing a prayer. I should note that Naqvi provides a whole page at the end where he portrays Chuck performing “Wudhu” - The required Islamic act of washing certain parts of the body before praying- and prayer. Chuck’s final act in New York, which is the core of the Islamic religion, reflects his withdrawing from secularism and embracing of the basic Islamic principles. Changez, also, goes through a similar experience after feeling societal pressure. Letting his beard grow is a clear indication that reflects his Islamic identity. Even though Changez claims that growing his beard was a sign of resistance, he also asserts that “it was...perhaps a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind” (130). Changez, by growing his beard, reclaims his Islamic identity and distances himself from the American

one. Both Chuck and Changez's religious identities are challenged in the post 9/11 life. The biased rhetoric that emerges after 9/11 takes its toll on their religious identities. From a religious perspective, the two Pakistanis come to New York leading a secular way of life, yet they return with a more conservative approach to Islam.

The second type of identity crisis that problematizes Chuck and Changez's integration within the American society is what I call a nationalistic identity. This is perhaps more evident in Changez's character. Hamid shows us how Changez is torn between his Americanized identity, which he acquires prior to 9/11, and his Pakistani identity. While Changez is on a business trip in the Philippines, he thinks about the extent to which he perceives himself as an American. Changez is riding with his friends in a limousine when he exchanges hostile looks with a Philippine driver through the window. Attempting to justify this experience, Changez thinks that the Philippine driver "simply does not like Americans" (67). Here Changez aligns himself completely with America. Moreover, he expects everyone else to see him as an American citizen. However, when America was struggling to get back on its feet after the 9/11 catastrophe, Changez goes through a period of uncertainty. The Pakistani immigrant expresses his frustration when he utters to his guest the following, "I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belong—in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither" (148). Changez is lost; he does not know where to belong in that critical time. After going through a period of doubt and uncertainty, Changez finally makes up his mind and reclaims his Pakistani identity. When he is overwhelmed by distress and agony, he chooses to abandon his American identity and fully embrace his Pakistani identity. For Changez "when he visits Pakistan he admits that he is actually hiding his true identity in America and everything he projects is false"

(Haolai 304). Constructing a fixed nationalistic identity proves to be troubling for Changez.

Chuck and his friends, on the other hand, struggle to embrace a fixed identity. Shibily Nuaman discusses how Chuck and his friends are trying to claim an American identity. In “Metrstani Identity: A Study of H. M. Naqvi’s Home Boy” the author affirms that “Chuck, AC and Jimbo enjoy American life colorfully spending glamorous life in clubs in contrast with their original identity...At the same time, the friends and availability of care free enjoyment open in the American life make them believe that they can construct their own identities in America” (55). In his pre-9/11 life in New York, Chuck describes the city as a place in which “you felt you were no different from anyone else; you were own man; you were free” (20). Not long after 9/11 however, doubt begins to penetrate Chuck’s mind concerning whether he can assimilate to an American identity. Chuck explains his experience in that critical time, “You could feel it walking down some streets: people didn’t avert their eyes or nod when you walked past but often stared, either tacitly claiming you as their own or dismissing you as the Other” (45). Here, it is clear the Chuck is experiencing a period where he cannot assert himself as an American nor as a Pakistani. This blurring soon evaporates and he realizes that America is no longer a safe haven for him. When the FBI agent shouts at Chuck, saying, “You aren’t American . . . You got no fucking rights,” it was Chuck’s defining moment (107). It puts an end to his efforts to acquire a stable American identity. There is no doubt that the dominant discourse that excludes Muslims and Arabs from the society has shattered their efforts into fully integrating with America.

Both Naqvi and Hamid stress the fact that the socio-political context after September 11 represents a challenge for immigrants to fully assimilate into an American identity. At the end, Chuck and Changez are forced to reclaim their original nationalistic identities. America has always been known as a country that embraces all immigrants, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or religion. However, the two Pakistani authors deconstruct this claim. They show how the “Descents of Pakistani immigrants cannot claim their roles or their localities in the same way as before” (Nauman 57).

The third and last type of identity that reflects the crisis is cultural identity. I want to tackle this type of identity through their failed romantic relationships. Although Chuck’s is merely a single date rather than a long committed relationship, it surely contributes to his misery. Chuck wants to marry a Venezuelan girl in order to feel like an American. He claims that, “I found myself thinking that if I married her, I too would become a bonafide American” (13). For him, marriage can be his ticket to promote his identity since a hybrid marriage of people from two different nations can typify the heterogeneity associated with American culture. Nonetheless, his dreams are quickly crushed, as the Venezuelan girl rejects him when she realizes that he is a Pakistani rather than an Italian. This failed attempt is, yet, another proof of how the social atmosphere, after 9/11 in the US, is unwelcoming to Muslims. Chuck’s attempts in assimilating his cultural identity are met by social hostility that reminds him that America is no longer a multiculturalist nation.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez goes through a complicated relationship with Erica. Their relationship starts perfectly, and it seems that it will be a long-term love affair between the two Princeton graduates. Changez immediately falls in

love with the American girl. Changez feels more American and consequently immerses himself heavily in American culture. However, though the love is mutual, Erica simply cannot overcome her previous relationship with Chris. As time goes by, problems begin to surface. So Changez finds it impossible to continue in this relationship. His separation from Erica is seen as a massive blow to his efforts in being a part of the American society. The failed relationship “represents the most prominent symbol of Changez’s exclusion from America” (Haolai 304). This exclusion has made him to come to the conclusion that Pakistan, not America, is the right place for him.

In conclusion, both Hamid and Naqvi show us the scale of oppression that many Muslim Americans face as a consequence of 9/11. Obviously, the media plays a crucial part in pushing them out of an assimilative realm to which they feel they belonged. The two authors further complicate the media’s power in dehumanizing this particular minority group. They concisely examine how the media bias can question a person’s sense of belonging to a particular society or nation. The Pakistani authors do not just reflect how the media is filled with hateful and excluding rhetoric against Muslims but also show how this type of rhetoric has unfortunate consequences on them. Chuck and Changez’s life journeys exemplify the power that the media possesses in our era. Identity crisis is a notable consequence of media power. Both Hamid and Naqvi portray their protagonists in a pre and post 9/11 lives. It shows the massive shift that occurs in their lives after the attacks. The socio-political context is ideal for the media to propagate certain propagandas that demonized Muslims.

Islamophobia would not become a social dilemma without the media adopting it. The narrative that the media created in the aftermath of the 9/11 still echoes in the West.

However, Hamid and Naqvi try to counter this narrative. They try to reflect the socially constructed concept that all Muslims are terrorists. More importantly, they show how different media outlets try to depict Muslims as a threat to the liberal and democratic values of the West. The media represents all Muslims as folk devils who are responsible for spreading moral panic within the society. Hamid and Naqvi renovate Cohen's model and apply it to this age. They show how Islamophobia is the panic while the media serves as a key player in sustaining this link. This inclusiveness ruins the lives of many; Chuck and Changez are a fictional representation of the downfall in life conditions of this particular minority group. The two authors demonstrate how many Muslim Americans are, in fact, victims after 9/11. The backlash that the media initiated makes them vulnerable to discrimination, and both Hamid and Naqvi have tried to give a voice to the extent of the marginalization faced by Muslims living in the West.

CHAPTER THREE

WHEN PROFITS INTERFERE: MEDIA INTEGRITY AND POST-9/11 LITERATURE IN A CAPITALIST ECONOMY

“What the media produce is neither spontaneous nor completely “free:” “news” does not just happen, pictures and ideas do not merely spring from reality into our eyes and minds, truth is not directly available, we do not have unrestrained variety at our disposal.”

-Edward Said, *Covering Islam*

In the previous chapter, I discussed the role that the media played, especially after 9/11, in creating and spreading Islamophobia. More importantly, I tackled how the media’s negative role influenced the targeted community in terms of their sense of belonging and identity. I focused on the victims and to what extent the media was responsible for their victimization that resulted in their ostracism. In this chapter, however, I aim to change the scope of my focus and look at how the media operates from the inside. In other words, I will be looking at what accounts for the media’s negative reputation that has become more visible in recent decades. I will be asking the following questions: who is responsible for distorting the media’s credibility? And to what extent do economic profits affect the media industry? In an attempt to answer these questions and offer comprehensive answers, I will discuss two novels: Richard Flanagan’s *The Unknown Terrorist* (2006) and *The Submission* (2011) written by Amy Waldman. Both feature characters who represent the media industry. In *The Unknown Terrorist*, Richard Cody is an anchor for a news organization, while in *The Submission*, Alyssa Spier is a journalist. By portraying these types of characters, Flanagan and Waldman offer us an insight into how the media usually create, package, and distribute the “truth” to the public. In this chapter, I will, first, briefly list instances from recent history that exemplify

how some media outlets had capitalized on 9/11 to boost their revenues. Second, I will also tackle the dilemma that some individuals (TV presenters, anchors, journalists, radio broadcasters) faced in the light of 9/11 between presenting the truth and seeking personal gain. Lastly, I will discuss how Flanagan and Waldman comment on how the media in general and the individuals in particular try to take advantage of the fear and paranoia that struck every part of the world after the terrorist attacks on 9/11. This last point will also explain the authors' critique on the shortcomings of those characters who represent the media.

James Hamilton, in the book *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transform Information into News*, explains how economic aspects dominate the media industry. Hamilton introduces five questions that he believes every media outlet thinks about before presenting a news story. According to Hamilton, these questions, which he calls the "five Ws" are: "Who cares about a particular piece of information? What are they willing to pay to find it, or what are others willing to pay to reach them? Where can media outlets or advertisers reach these people? When is it profitable to provide the information? Why is this profitable?" (7). These questions give us an indication of how media businesses are run and their priorities. Making a profit is only logical for any media organization, as without revenues it will be difficult to compete with the others. However, prioritizing financial gain over credibility and transparency is what distorts the media's image in our age.

Jeffrey P. Jones and Geoffrey Baym, in "A Dialogue on Satire News and the Crisis of Truth in Postmodern Political Television," have also attacked the big media corporations for their capitalist approach to the industry:

Now, the boundaries that once shaped television news—between fact and opinion, public service and private profit, information and entertainment—are deeply obscured. Most news has become a product packaged to sell, its interests resting far more with attracting audiences and protecting corporate priorities than in the older mission of informing the citizenry and holding power accountable. (281)

Jones and Baym argue that media organizations no longer pursue the truth as it works against their interests. The only way for the different media outlets to survive in a capitalist world is to treat their news as commodities, in which the importance of a news piece is weighted according to how big of an audience it can attract.

The media's obsession with economic profits and ratings has been a prevalent factor for several decades now. However, we can understand this phenomenon better if we put it in the 9/11 context. Terrorism in general, and September 11 in particular, represented the perfect opportunity for the media to increase their profits. Many scholars have discussed how different media outlets have commodified terrorism and 9/11. An opportunity presented itself especially for the major organizations to exploit the horrible event in order to further increase their profits. Torres Manuel explains the media's benefit in spreading terrorism. He writes, "it does help us to understand how economic factors can influence in the way a news broadcaster treats a story. In fact, given the available information, it can be affirmed that everything related to Al Qaeda has been wonderful in a business sense for the news channel" (13). Manuel cites *Al Jazeera News Channel* as a clear example on how a major news channel has taken full advantage of 9/11 and its aftermath. It is widely known that the Qatari channel had an exclusive access to the tapes made by Al Qaeda leaders. This privilege meant a massive opportunity to increase profit

to the organization. According to Manuel, “The exclusive material on the bombings of Afghanistan was sold by Al Jazeera for a succulent quantity of money: they sold footage on Bin Laden for 20,000 dollars a minute and even a three minute long video with a 1998 interview of him for 250,000 dollars” (14). Ibrahim Helal, editor in chief of *Al Jazeera News Channel* admitted, in 2001, that these types of deals benefitted the company tremendously in terms of the amount of capital they raised. In an interview with the BBC, Helal says, “It is necessary to admit that to have these tapes in our power is a novelty that cannot be rejected from an informative and commercial point of view. I do not believe that any television it had thought two times. On having showed these tapes, we generate a major number of television viewers and sell better” (Helal). Thus, it is fair to say that *Al Jazeera* had capitalized on 9/11 and turned it into a money-generating event. For *Al Jazeera*, the more powerful Al Qaeda became the more money and fame the news channel got. *Al Jazeera* has always been criticized for giving voice to this terrorist group. Some voices claim that the news channel tried to legitimize Al Qaeda. However, I believe that the profits that *Al Jazeera* was making were a strong reason for this criticism to surface.

Following the same route, Christopher Campbell, in an article titled “Commodifying September 11: Advertising, Myth, and Hegemony” explains how the media, and the advertising industry in general in America, has taken full advantage of this tragic event to increase their income. Campbell points out the role of myth within the media industry, especially how “the storytelling traditions of the news industry,” tend to “sustain dominant ideologies” (50). These mythological narratives (mainly narratives of unity and strength) that the media promoted after 9/11, according to Campbell, played on

the emotions of the public. The goal was to attach these narratives to the media industry and attract viewers, which in turn would enhance their revenues. They adjusted their rhetoric so it could draw the public to its different media platforms. Francis Frascina examines how *The New York Times* had cleverly taken advantage of the event in order to boost their sales. In the article “Advertisements for Itself: *The New York Times*, Norman Rockwell, and the New Patriotism,” the author points out how the newspapers’ decision to reprint some of Norman Rockwell’s paintings (with some alterations to make them relevant to 9/11) was a clever strategy to attract more readers. Frascina asserts that “the altered Rockwell in *The New York Times* encouraged viewers to associate the post 9/11 journalistic mission with patriotism, patronage, and tradition, one of which is the daily purchase and reading of *The New York Times*” (93). This strategy proved to be successful in terms of materialistic gain, indicating how the newspaper had played on the emotions of the public in order to increase its profits.

It is worth mentioning that commodifying 9/11 was not only tangible in the United States and Middle East; it was also evident in the Far East. Yoneyuki Sugita explains how the Japanese mass media managed to turn the 9/11 catastrophe into a commodity: “the Japanese mass media again successfully sold the 9/11 attacks not by promoting a genuinely deeper understanding of historical event in the Middle East or the global Islamic community, but by renting professional scholars and asking them to present generally uncomplicated, audience-pleasing, black-and-white explanations” (105). However, Sugita claims that the Japanese media faced many obstacles in the process of commodifying 9/11. One of them was “the positioning of the 9/11 terrorist attacks within the context of Islam and the Middle East, a religion and a region unfamiliar

to most Japanese prior to 9/11” (99). Trying to familiarize the Japanese with Islam shows the extent to which the selling of 9/11 was a global tendency, in which the majority of media organizations saw the tragic event as a perfect opportunity to increase profits.

In the last couple of decades, a lot of media figures have attained celebrity status. Bill O’Reilly, Anderson Cooper, Bill Maher, and Barbara Walters, are all well-known media personas who anchor network shows. Those media personalities are affiliated with the most popular media institutions such as *Fox News Channel*, *CNN*, *BBC*, and *CBS News*. All of them managed to establish a fan base for themselves. In a capitalist world, this is a win-win situation for both the media personalities and the institutions they work for since the number of viewers is a vital factor in increasing revenues for the institutions and subsequently increasing salaries to their employees. Hamilton discusses the way in which the TV anchor’s salary depends largely on the number of viewers he/she can attract. He states that:

If anchors become more important in drawing viewers to programs, this may translate into higher returns for anchors in salary negotiations. The pattern in salaries from 1970 to 1999 confirms this story. The amount in salary that an anchor received for attracting a thousand viewing households increased from a range of 13¢ to 31¢ (1999\$) in 1976 to a range of 86¢ to \$1.07 in 1999...The increased value placed on anchors is consistent with these personalities playing a growing role in attracting viewers in a multichannel universe. (216)

These media personas pour money into the institution through the value of their opinions and views. The big news corporations find it easier to implement their agendas and ideologies through their famous individuals.

To keep up with their high ratings and number of viewers, TV presenters and journalists are under constant pressure to present pieces of news that capture the public's attention. They have to constantly impress their fans in order to hold up to their reputation. Hamilton makes the analogy between how political candidates try to attract voters, with how media personas try to attract viewers and subscribers. Once they establish a reputation and a fan base, they have the power to influence. More importantly, they have the ability to create news, craft particular news stories, and choose what perspective(s) to focus on and so forth. In a sense, people who occupy these positions have the opportunity to construct news, and to determine which piece of news is worth more discussion and debate. Of course, their ideologies and political agendas interfere with what they present. However, fame and wealth is their ultimate goal and the two novels discussed in this chapter represent this claim.

So, if powerful media figures prioritize personal gains, the next logical question that comes to mind is whether what is presented or written in the different media outlets is the absolute "truth." Or whether the urge of fame and wealth come at odds with presenting the genuine "truth." Is there a conflict of interest? Does the "truth" get twisted and tweaked to draw the attention of the public by those who work? Bernard Goldberg, a renowned American writer and journalist who has more than four decades of experience working at CBS and HBO, created a controversy upon publishing his book *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News* in 2001. Goldberg exposes whom he calls the "media elites" and how they are damaging the media's reputation. Goldberg mentions the real motives that push the media to produce different shows. He writes "So, do I believe my good friend Andrew Heyward [former president of CBS] would put on a

scary program whose primary goal was to get high ratings even if it meant telling half-truths?...In a word, Yes!” (41). Goldberg explicitly indicates here that credibility is not a priority, at least in the place and time when he worked. This is an alarming statement, as it uncovers where the truth stands in an age where only profits and revenues matter to the media industry.

The journalistic responses to 9/11 and its aftermath have received much criticism from a number of scholars. Kevin Marsh writes that:

Journalism was hugely influenced by the political consensus in the face of the 9/11 attacks. Both that consensus and the speed at which events careered towards war. And those failings are the usual ones; daily journalism’s aversion to complexity; its centripetal tendency, dragging the apparent plurality of multiple outlets towards common framings; its inevitable preference for the striking event over the telling trend; and its eternal excuse—we’re just telling stories. (81)

Charlie Lee Potter, in *Writing the 9/11 Decade: Reportage and the Evolution of the Novel*, has also shared a similar stand on the failure of adequate response from journalists in the wake of 9/11. She affirms that “journalists were turning news into stories. Some reports at the time were fabricated from rumor posing as fact, seasoned with heavy doses of psychic paranoia” (24). Similarly, Raymond Bonner attacks the way journalists, including himself, reacted to 9/11. Bonner asks the following two questions in his article: “Did we exaggerate the threat of Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda, thus contributing to the collective paranoia, intrusive security measures at airports, and multi-billion dollar security industry that survives on fear? And did we fail to monitor the erosion of civil

liberties?” (Bonner). Bonner’s article suggests that journalists failed in offering a fair and reasonable coverage in the aftermath of 9/11.

I am in line with the comments made by Marsh, Lee-Potter, and Bonner, especially on how journalists play a significant part in casting fear and paranoia. However, none of them has elaborated on how profits and ratings had a prevalent factor in shaping some of their response to 9/11. Their works fail to touch on the economic aspects that made some journalists to approach 9/11 through the perspective of capitalism. This chapter then aims to fill this void. Both Flanagan and Waldman recognize the essential part that those individuals played after 9/11. They give us insights into how the stories get created and distributed, and what media conglomerates gain from misleading the public.

The Unknown Terrorist tells the story of Gina Davis, known as the Doll, who is a pole dancer from the suburbs of Sydney. The Doll’s grows up in a lower class neighborhood filled with immigrants. Her parents are separated when she is young. Her mother leaves her and her two brothers alone and runs off with a new lover, where she is eventually killed due to her involvement with drugs. The Doll is determined to leave the past behind her and embrace life in Sydney. She works at the Chairman’s Lounge Club, a place known for its high profile customers, such as politicians, media personalities, and businessmen. The Doll makes a lot of money by working in the club. Yet, her plans are only to save enough money so she can buy her own home, i.e. her freedom, and move away from the city.

Unfortunately for the Doll, her plans and hopes for the future are ruined the moment she meets a stranger named Tariq Al-Hakim. Her one-night stand with Tariq, a

man with Middle Eastern features, is the beginning of the end for the Doll. In the following day, she finds herself in the middle of a media frenzy. She is seen as a prime suspect of a terrorist plot that targets the heart of the city. The image of her with Tariq, who has gone missing since spending the night with her, makes it into the headlines. While in distress, the Doll decides to hide until at least her name will be cleared. Richard Cody, the media personality, is the one who fabricates the story of the involvement of Tariq and the Doll with the terrorist attacks. Later on in the novel, we find out that Tariq Al-Hakim, who is found dead, has nothing to do with the terrorist plot. He is involved in smuggling drugs into Sydney. When the Doll realizes that her life cannot be the same again, she decides to confront Cody. The confrontation turns out to be deadly. She shoots and kills Cody, and then a detective kills her.

My analysis of the novel will be divided into two parts. In the first, which will also be the lengthiest, I will be focusing on the character of Cody and how Flanagan has depicted him. Specifically, I will be looking at how he is represented as the dishonest journalist who joins in on the narrative about terror and controls, packages, and distributes it the way he desires. The second part will be on the Doll who, when caught up in the narrative, exemplifies the dehumanizing nature of the mainstream media. On multiple occasions in the novel, the Doll expresses her contempt towards the media and tries to expose their role in fabricating terror. Even though she fails to stand up to the power of the media in the novel, her role is essential in exposing how the media fabricates the facts and bend them to serve their best interests. She becomes the voice of the manipulated.

Interestingly, even before Cody is introduced in the novel, Flanagan has already set the tone for how he will be depicting the media. When the Doll is relaxing on the beach, “a nearby radio ran the same news it always seemed to run...repetition of distant horror and local mundanity”(12). There is a stark contrast between the Doll’s state at that exact moment (relaxing on the beach) and the type of news the media seems to always broadcast. In this context, the repetition creates the background noise of continuous terrorism while reassuring the Australian public that nothing is happening on their soil. When the Doll supposedly perpetrates a terrorist act, the public are both shocked it is happening there but alert to the violence since it appears to be perpetual. And this is a global media narrative since what Flanagan cites here was equally true for American consumers of news before 9/11 happened.

Richard Cody is first introduced as a man in distress, as he is struggling to reclaim his position within the TV channel where he works. While he is attending a luxurious lunch party with some of Sydney’s elites, his superior, Jerry Mendez, has informed him that “he is being transferred from his job as anchor for the network’s flagship weekly current affairs program, *This Week Tonight*, to their nightly current affairs show, *Undercurrent*...not as the anchor...but as ‘senior network correspondent’” (25). Being dropped as a leading anchor is a massive blow for Cody. After he knows about his demotion, Mendez offers what he believes to be the secret recipe for Cody so he can “work [his] way back” (26). Mendez is lecturing Cody on where the word “truth” stands within the media industry. His advice is as follows:

These fuckwits who think it’s about the truth, you know where they go wrong? . . .
They think the truth has power, that it will carry everything before it. But it’s

crap. People don't want the truth, you know that, Richie? . . . People want an exalting illusion, that's what they want. Find that sort of story, ginger it up with a few dashes of fear and nastiness, and you've hit gold. True gold. (26, 27)

Mendez's words are very clear: reporting the truth will not help your cause. The truth has to be tweaked and tailored in order to draw the attention of the public. So, according to Mendez, the defining characteristics that determine a good anchor from an average one is the ability to meddle with the truth and produce an exalting illusion.

Mendez's advice uncovers the media's dark side. It shows how the media tries to seize control over the public, especially by implementing the notion of fear within their news. Nacos has discussed how, after 9/11, the major media organizations were tempted to construct fear within society in order to achieve their economic goals. She believes that "infotainment thrives on the images and themes that terrorist incidents offer: drama, tragedy, shock, fear, panic, grief—ideal ingredients for turning real-life terror into breathtaking thriller and heartbreaking soap opera that captivate audiences" (10). The media adopted the tactic of spreading fear in order to commodify 9/11. The author adds that:

Similarly, news narratives and images that amplify the threat of terrorist violence and the war metaphor are likely to hold the attention of the audiences in targeted societies. Thus, when guided by the imperatives of the press as commodity, media organizations' self-interest would be well served by magnifying and prolonging the fear and anger associated with the specter of war as expressed by "Attack on America" and "America's New War" on television screen banners and headlines in print soon after 9/11 attacks. (10, 11)

By creating and spreading fear, the media manipulates the emotions of the public. For their own interests, sustaining fear and paranoia would reinforce the media's hegemony over the society, specifically in terms of maximizing its profits.

Kimberly Powell discusses how fear has struck American society immediately after 9/11. She writes, "after the 9/11 attacks 53% of the U.S. population changed their plans, including not going to work that day. In the days after, 9 in 10 worried about more terrorist events happening and about being a victim of a future attack." Powell recognizes the role that the media plays in spreading fear. She adds, "Maximum impact of an act of terrorism comes from widespread media coverage, which creates a climate of fear among the population, focusing government attention, economic resources, and military resources on fighting a 'War on Terror'" (92). The media orchestrates fear. It works for the media's own interests if fear penetrates society. The aftermath of 9/11 represented the ideal environment for the mainstream media to spread fear. Thus, when Mendez offers his advice to Cody about adding the element of fear to any piece of story, he knows very well that with it manipulation becomes rather easier. Therefore, Mendez is explicit in his advice: the first step to be famous and rich for a media anchor is to find a story and add the element of fear to it. In addition, through Mendez's advice, Flanagan goes a step further by showing that fear and manipulation are rooted in making profits for the media organization.

It does not take Cody very long to start taking Mendez's advice seriously. When he is still at the lunch party and talking to the host and guests, he wants to experience how he can intimidate people into giving him power. He tells them "dark tales of terrible plots foiled, of the mass poisoning and bombings and gassing planned and, through

vigilance, averted, offering vivid descriptions of how Australians might otherwise have died en masse in the very heart of Sydney” (32). After Cody utters these words, “he sensed the pull of a story, the power of its telling, as the table went quiet, their imaginings not hot-wired to his images of conspiracy, fanaticism, horror. He could feel himself cheering up. He was on to something” (32). Cody immediately realizes that intimidating people gives him an immense satisfaction, especially noting how fear has given him control over the attendees, putting in mind that all the guests are people with massive power and wealth. For Cody, the lunch party is almost like a rehearsal to examine the extent to which fear can make people vulnerable. His words of intimidation have helped him move from being unnoticed at the party to a man who everyone listens to attentively. He wants to do the same to his fading career. He knows that if he can come up with a story coated with fear and paranoia, his chances of making his way back will be very high.

When the police raid the apartment building in which Tariq lives in, the Doll is sitting in a coffee shop across from the building. As the customers are witnessing the raid, the Doll overhears multiple scenarios on what is happening. A waiter claims that a man is taking his family hostage, another woman maintains that it is a drug-related raid, while another man whispers to the Doll that “it was a terrorist they were after” (87). These superficial speculations show how people easily become ripe targets of media manipulation. When speculations and rumors spread, people turn to the media to know the “truth” that cannot be disputed. For Cody, this is the perfect way to compose his narrative. He can direct the story the way he desires, since people are fearfully speculating on what is happening in Sydney that day.

Interestingly, the public's fear quickly turns into anger. The anger is directed toward Muslims living in Sydney since the media points the blame at them. When the Doll yells in anger at a woman who is wearing a burkah for accidentally hitting her with an elbow, the people who witness it hail the Doll for what she does. A man, talking to the Doll, says, "good on you...they won't integrate you know" (93). A kid also joins in and yells what the media can easily transform into a catchy slogan "they flew here. We grew here" (94). The media continues to fuel people's anger towards the supposed terrorists who plan to bomb the city. A man is reading a newspaper in which its headline reads "TERRORIST LOVERS—SYDNEY READIES FOR ATTACK." The man expresses his anger by saying "they should shoot the bastards" (125). So, when the news spreads that the city is a potential target for terrorists, it sparks fear as well as anger in the public. The Doll witnesses multiple incidents of irrational frenzy and anger outbursts. Cody now has a good chance to insert his story linking the Doll to Islam and presenting her as a threat since the public already fears and despises Muslims.

Another factor that works in favor of Cody is the extent to which the news of Tariq and the Doll's involvement is already spreading. In fact, the narrative is already growing at a considerable pace even before Cody decides to interfere. At first, the only available piece of news is the footage of the apartment building in which the Doll has spent the night. Later on, Tariq is identified in the news because the security camera footage shows Tariq entering the building "with a female accomplice" (95). Moments later, the Doll's photo is all over the news, as she is identified as a prime suspect in the failed terrorist attack. As the accumulation of the events happen before Cody joins in, it is now easy for him to tack on his own narrative.

So when Cody inserts himself in the already growing narrative, he wants to direct this narrative. In order to seize control over the story, Cody seeks the help of others who will also benefit from this conspiracy. Siv Harmsen, a spook working with the Australian Secret Intelligence Organization (ASIO) proves to be decisive in helping Cody construct his story. Harmsen, though his appearance in the novel is few and far between, has an important role since his character performs the dirty work of governments such as leaking documents and framing innocent people. He is the one who encourages Cody to construct the story by saying to him that “we need stories that remind people of what horrifying things might just happen...I think we can count on each other” (113). Knowing that he has the backing of a state official, Cody is emboldened to start controlling the narrative.

Harmsen’s involvement encourages Cody to persuade Mendez, his superior in the channel, to give him a special so he can own the story. Mendez agrees to a half an hour special. Now the challenge, for Cody, is how to build his own narrative and more importantly how to draw people to it. Cody immediately starts putting together his story, as he is reflecting on how to present a story that “mesmerize[s] not a dozen people, [like he did in the lunch party] but millions.” He is “piecing together not so much the truth of Gina Davis’s life as rehearsing the story he would present about it” (106). Here, we learn that the truth has nothing to do with the story that Cody is trying to create and spread. The truth will simply work against his goals. Yet, creating a story that will captivate the public is not an easy task for Cody. From the little that he knows about the life of the Doll, he “realises that there were key dramatic elements lacking” (106). It is up to him to add the elements that might spur the story and make it into the headlines.

When the photos of the Doll appear on every station and newspaper, he immediately recognizes her. So, “when confronted with the fact of his humiliating demotion on the one hand, and on the other with his recognition of the shadowy face on the television news as that of the pole dancer who had insulted him the night before, [Cody’s] first instinct was to begin to make contact with a range of people” (106). He senses that the Doll can be a perfect fit to the conspiracy that he is about to tailor, so he decides to investigate more about her private life.

Cody’s story will center on the idea that the Doll is a Muslim terrorist, in an attempt to prove her involvement with the bombs that are found. For Cody:

What at first seemed ludicrous—a pole dancer an Islamic terrorist!—now seemed insidious and disturbing... Wasn’t the Chairman’s Lounge popular with the influential and powerful? It was obvious what was going on, and it was up to him, Richard Cody, to expose what was happening. And what a story it would be! What ratings they would get! It had everything—sex, politics, even bombs! ‘No doubt about it,’ thought Richard Cody, ‘it’s a killer.’ He reached for his phone and dialled another number. There was no time to lose. (107)

Cody contacts first Ferdy Holstein, the club’s manager, in an attempt to get know better if she can be a perfect prey to his story. Holstein does not provide him with much detail, as he also does not know much about her private life. He tells Cody that she is lonely. Ironically, that is enough for Cody to start sketching the story. Now he is ready to “invent” a story that might ruin her life, and save his in return. By knowing little, or almost nothing about the Doll, it gives Cody a space where he can fabricate facts about her life. More importantly, what really encourages him is when he knows that she is a

lonely lower class Australian citizen. In this vulnerable social position, she will be powerless to stand against his story.

The way in which Cody constructs his story brings to surface the theory of framing and the scale in which it is being used in the media. A number of media scholars have discussed the implications of this theory and the degree to which media organizations put it into practice. In the article “Framing International Conflicts: Media Coverage of Fighting in the Middle East,” Matt Evans touches on how framing is an integral part of the news making industry: “the media’s choices, as to which stories to cover and which facts to include, demand a certain amount of discretion. Consequently, news reporting entails ‘framing’ the process by which a communication source constructs and defines a social or political issue for its audience.” Evans adds that “Media framing is especially important in shaping the public’s and decision makers’ knowledge of the world” (210). Media framing is more tangible during the weeks and months that followed 9/11. Stephen Cooper asserts, in “George W. Bush, the American Press, and the Initial Framing of the War on Terror after 9/11,” that “eight weeks following 9/11, we begin to see the press reframing the theme of the nature of the enemy” (103). According to Cooper, the mainstream media immediately began to frame its news so it could align with the direction that the US government was taking on the war on terror. The invasion of Iraq, after 9/11, and the killing of hundreds of thousands under the pretext of possessing weapons of mass destruction was a salient example of how the media could frame certain news, and consequently, shape public opinion. Through the way that Cody constructs and frames his story on the Doll, Flanagan exposes how the media manipulates the masses.

More importantly, Flanagan gives us an insight into how a supposedly renowned media figure creates and spreads his story and turns speculations into unquestionable truth.

Nothing will stop Cody in his pursuit of good ratings that will guarantee fame and wealth. He knows very well that he needs to offer more details in order to convince the people that the Doll is indeed behind the terrorist plot. He needs a background story that should convince the public that she is guilty. He is desperate to come up with a story that supports his framing of the Doll, because “he ha[s] nothing that makes this a story” (180). Suddenly, Cody finds himself under pressure. His special is approaching and yet he cannot present a strong narrative. Cody knows that the people need more from his story. They want to know how an Australian citizen became a terrorist? What are the reasons that turned an ordinary Australian woman into a Muslim terrorist? Cody understands that he must answer these questions so his story can look solid. Struggling to come up with a convincing background story, Cody seeks the help of a psychologist named Ray Ettlinger to endorse his claim that a broken familial relationship can be enough to justify the Doll’s connection to terrorism. Ettlinger encourages Cody to focus on her rough upbringing as a child by claiming “of course, it all fits . . . Either way, she’s a fuckup. Either way, I can make it work for us. . . . It’s like Sudoku you just have to make the numbers fit” (184). Sudoku here is a metaphor for media manipulation since you just have to place the correct numbers in the right places to solve the puzzle. In other words, Ettlinger is suggesting to Cody that he should piece together different lies and make them into one solid story. Ettlinger’s awareness of the merits of Cody’s case and his complicity in constructing the narrative—he buys into the narrative with his collaborative

“us” - indicates the extent to other professional institutions are ingrained into the duplicity of the 9/11 story.

As Cody continues to piece together his own narrative, Mendez delivers the news that the special would run for a whole hour given how the public is captivated by the rapid unfolding of events. However, the pressure mounts on Cody to present a convincing story. He gets a useful assist. When doubt and frustration begin to penetrate Cody’s mind, and he starts to believe that the “material had not proven as juicy as [he] had hoped...his phone rang. It was Siv Harmsen” (255). The secret agent sends him a package that presumably “proves” Tariq’s involvement with terrorist groups. Furthermore, Harmsen mentions three names (an anonymous security source, a former US Special Force colonel, and a retired senior intelligence analyst) to Cody whom are willing to appear in his program to help Cody bends the story in a way that should conclusively prove the involvement of Tariq and the Doll with terrorist groups.

Harmsen’s role in the novel and his contribution to the narrative prove as important as Cody’s. Through his depiction of Harmsen, Flanagan underlines how the state and the media work in conjunction to consolidate power over people. This is evident when Harmsen is talking to a skeptical police officer about how it is vital for governments to spread fear within society. Harmsen says, in reference to the public, “unless they’re terrified, they won’t agree with what we do and why we have to do it” (272). In the route of spreading fear to the masses, the media becomes vital. Since he is desperate to revive his career, Cody becomes the voice of the government; in fact, his story reinforces the ideologies of the state. Bruce Bennett acknowledges the way in which Flanagan attacks both the media and the government in *The Unknown Terrorist* by

arguing that “Flanagan’s principal target is the Australian media whose journalists and their employers fall too readily for government propaganda and make their ratings-based reputations on vastly exaggerated projections of violent threats to people and property” (13). The author comments on how in a post 9/11 world the mainstream media became more and more aligned with the government’s manipulation of the public.

When Cody takes control over the narrative so that it became his own, he begins to cleverly direct the attention of the public to his upcoming special. In the process of owning the narrative, Cody does not just depend on the help of Eттslinger and Harmsen. He makes a couple of TV appearances in the build up to his special show. His first appearance is as a field reporter, reporting just outside the Chairman Lounge. In his report he claims, “we will be revealing...the lap dancing terrorist’s true identity, here, tonight, on *Undercurrent*” (140). Later on, he appears as a guest on a news channel. Again, he ends his remarks by reminding the viewers of his special (270). Promoting his special is vital for Cody since it strengthens his grip on the narrative. It is worth mentioning here that even when Cody reports live, he has yet to have a complete story. However, that does not stop him from promoting the special, desperate as he is to control the narrative. It is his only chance to win back favor with the station.

Eventually, Cody’s special appears on TV. The *Undercurrent* features the three men whom Harmsen suggests, the Doll’s father, and the psychologist, Eттslinger. They are “knitting all the disparate stories into one large untruth: a sad and bitter woman with vengeance on her mind, corrupted by a closet fundamentalist” (288). Eттslinger’s contribution on Cody’s special is emphasized more than any of the other participants. Cody knows that Eттslinger “needs money and he understands that to gain money he

needs attention.” Thus, for Ettlslinger, “it was irresistible,” to get the opportunity to contribute in the show in order to achieve his goals (183). Obviously, the only possible way for Ettlslinger to have a say in the show is to consolidate Cody’s claims on the Doll. It is a beneficial deal between the two: Ettlslinger approach will strengthen Cody’s position on the Doll by adding a supposedly scientific description of her situation, while in return Ettlslinger would have the chance to get much-needed attention. The deal between the two men uncovers the far-reaching nexus of corruption that lies both within and outside the media. It shows the extent of the corruption of some of media outlets that prey on people’s self-serving interests.

When Cody asks Ettlslinger whether it is true that Doll’s profile “fits with someone who could execute a major attack on civilians...and have no feeling for the loss of innocent life?” Ettlslinger replies by saying, “sadly...yes” (288). While it is clear that they are discussing the Doll, this exchange is far more complicated than it seems. The implication here is that Cody, with all of his conning and deceiving, fits the profile here. His story, which is based on manipulation and lies, implies that it is Cody who can be seen as a threat to society. He misleads the public in producing a story provoking fear and paranoia, which can be seen as a form of attack on the public. Also, Cody expresses complete indifference in sabotaging the life on an innocent woman. Flanagan unfolds here then how media personnel, who would do whatever it takes to boost their ratings, pose a threat to society. People rarely think about the negative impact on society of those who work in the media industry through spreading fear and turning lies into certainties.

Through the way in which Cody portrays the Doll in the media, Flanagan offers another perspective on how the media tends to be unethical. The media, especially

journalists and anchors who care about wealth and fame, do whatever it takes to achieve their goals. In these situations, ethics are set aside. Nathanael O'Reilly, in his article "Government, Media, and Power: Terrorism in the Australian Novel since 9/11," addresses how the urge of fame and wealth interferes with ethics in the media industry. O'Reilly writes that when the media "develops the story...speculations are presented as facts and possibilities stated as certainties. Flanagan continually depicts the media as unethical and fixated on increasing ratings and market share" (311). O'Reilly explains how rates and profits blind the media from embracing even the most basic of human virtues. Cody's story is an example of how the media completely disregards an ethical standpoint when it follows a particular story. Flanagan questions how far the media can go in order to reach its goals. Through his depiction of Richard Cody, Flanagan uncovers the diminishing magnitude of the truth within the media industry. It has been assumed that the media's only role is to deliver what is happening around the world, or at least be seen as an intermediary between the political institutions and the public. Yet, Flanagan showcases how the media actually takes part in creating the news for different purposes. More importantly, Flanagan addresses how unethical the media can be when given the opportunity to create and distribute news.

Switching my focus to the Doll, her role significantly exposes media manipulation. Even before she is caught up in the narrative, the Doll is introduced as a woman with a different mentality than the other characters. For the Doll "the whole world was based on deception...pretending to one thing when in truth being secretly desirous of something completely different" (47). Flanagan introduces the Doll as a woman who possesses an unorthodox way of examining society. The other victim in the

novel, Tariq, shares a similar way of thinking. When he explains the nature of raster graphics to the Doll, he says that “you can precisely manipulate an image by altering a single dot at a time.” Then Tariq wonders “what they’d like to do with real people if they could.” He is referencing “governments, corporations—whoever runs the place, I guess, powerful people” (76). The manipulation of raster graphics serves as a direct metaphor for how people can be easily manipulated by the media. Ironically, Tariq becomes a victim of media manipulation, thereby proving his point. The government frames him by fabricating footages and travel records that supposedly reveal his involvement.

The Doll gets caught up in the same narrative. When Flanagan describes her staring at a large public screen that shows her image, she realizes that she has been absorbed into the larger media narrative about terrorism. Separate events (the footage of the Doll and Tariq hugging each other, images of the police surrounding the apartment, the Doll dressed as a Black Widow) are coalesced into one narrative. At that moment, she knows that the media has turned her into an enemy. It is worth noting here that the Doll witnesses her supposed involvement on a giant public screen. The size and the dimensions of the screen can be seen as an allegory of the power and authority of the narrative. In the screen, Cody ‘was huge, his face monstrous...she was sliding past his mouth’ (149). Her position in front of Cody’s mouth, at that exact moment, suggests that the media has consumed her. Her tiny figuration beside the gaping mouth of Cody signifies the insignificance of her power.

Her different exchanges with Wilder are pivotal in revealing not just the manipulative nature of the mainstream media, but also how powerless she is feeling in resisting the narrative. When the Doll realizes that she gets mixed up in this situation, she

knows that turning to the media in order to prove her innocence is not an option for her. The Doll shows a total lack of belief in the media. She is “worried that the media, if she approached them, would set her up” (141). In a similar vein, the Doll reflects the monopoly of certain media outlets by saying, “everyone else is like me—they just look at the *Telegraph* headlines and watch Richard Cody and listen to Joe Cosuk” (161). Whether her claim is accurate or not, it shows how power is in the hands of a couple of men who possess the tools to shape the public opinion in a way that should serve their interests.

The Doll’s skepticism and loss of confidence stem from some of the negative characteristics that are associated with the mainstream media since 9/11. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, it became clear that the media lost its credibility. The public no longer saw the media as the place to seek for genuine and authentic news. The Pew Research Center published a report in 2005 that reflected the public’s dissatisfaction with how the media operated, especially after 9/11. A section of the report reads as follows, “The public discontent with the news media has increased dramatically. Americans find the mainstream media much less credible than they did in the mid-1980s. They are even more critical of the way the press collects and reports the news. More ominously, the public also questions the news media’s core values and morality” (42). The report also shows a significant decline in public viewing of the news. It states, “The percentage of Americans who watch TV news on a typical day, read the newspaper or listen to radio news decreased significantly from 1994 to 2004. The number watching TV news on an average day fell from 72% in 1994 to 55% in 2002” (44). A main reason for the public’s disinterest was their realization that the mainstream media was an agenda-driven

industry, in which, in most cases, their interests contradicted with the good of the public. Thus, the Doll's concerns are a reflection of a public reality. She knows that her innocence would work against the interests of the media. The Doll exemplifies how the media could no longer act as the voice of the people in reflecting their concerns, needs, and issues.

Despite the growing awareness of people's dissatisfaction with mainstream media, it still has enormous effect in shaping public opinion. Newspapers, news channels, and radio broadcasts still demonstrate their hegemonic reach over people. At one point in the novel, The Doll is venting her frustration to her friend, Wilder, on how the media has ruined her life. She tells Wilder that:

They can take everything from you, Wilder...They make these things up, they take something innocent about your life and say it proves you're guilty, they take a truth and they turn it into a lie. How can they do that? Like, there's this guy today at the ferry terminal reading these lies about me in the paper...I knew he believed them because up until yesterday I was like him, just hanging around, waiting for this or that, swallowing all the crap I read and heard, and then just puking all the crap back up. (164)

The Doll's words sum up the power of the media and the inability to challenge it. The Doll also touches on the notion of terrorism and how people with power are using it as an excuse to consolidate power over the public. Terrorism for the Doll "was just like fashion, it was simply about few people building careers, making money, getting power, and it wasn't really about making the world safer or better at all" (269). Her reflection is accurate. Cody takes advantage of how terrorism caused paranoia within the West. His

ultimate goal is to boost his career and make more money. The safety of people, or making the world a better place does not concern him. Unfortunately for the Doll, she realizes how the media manipulates the people when she becomes a victim herself. The damage is already done and the Doll is helpless in overcoming it.

In summary, by claiming that media figures are capable of performing a major attack on society, Flanagan suggests that media manipulation is a form of terrorism. Flanagan therefore complicates our understanding of the concept of terrorism. By casting fear and intimidating people with a false allegation that the city is under the threat of a terrorist attack, Flanagan widens the scope of terrorism. In *The Unknown Terrorist*, the media fuels the propaganda that Sydney is under attack and that the Doll is part of a sleeper cell that wants to harm the community. It creates a fearful environment, and even worse, it ruins the lives of many innocent people who got dragged into it. In this vein, while the title of the novel *The Unknown Terrorist*, does not identify explicitly the terrorist, as the events unfold in the novel, it becomes obvious that the terrorist is Cody, not the Doll. He is the one who masterminds the Doll's supposed role in the terrorist plot. His story does not just terrify the Doll and isolate her; it also creates a sense of unease within the whole city. So, his actions affect not only the individual (the Doll) but the whole community.

Flanagan's attack on the media is manifested through the actions of Richard Cody and the contempt shown by the Doll toward the media in general and Cody in particular. Cody's journey shows how some media journalists feed on mere rumors and gossips to reach a higher celebrity and financial status. Flanagan introduces Cody in the novel as a journalist who tries desperately to reclaim his stardom status. He knows that the only way

for him to regain his position is to construct a story that demonizes a lower class woman along with her Middle-Eastern supposed lover. Under advisement, he tells a story that terrifies the public and makes them to believe that they are under the threat of Muslim extremists.

The novel shows how much power media journalists possess. As readers, we follow every step that Cody takes in order to build up his story (how he gathers information, who he talks to, why the Doll, and so forth) and how he presents it. Flanagan shows how media journalists have the advantage to choose what to include and what to exclude, and what perspectives to focus on and what to ignore. Cody manipulates the facts to make them suggest that the Doll is indeed a devilish woman whose untamed teenage years affects her present. Metaphorically, Cody puts an end to the Doll's life after airing this show. The urge of ratings and fame is what triggered Cody to construct a groundless story. What is more worrying is that no one has the power to challenge the media and expose their bias. *The Unknown Terrorist* shows the extent in which the media could go in order to attract viewers and ratings. The viewers would most likely believe what they see on the television and rarely question the content. It gives the media the space and power to bend the facts and present them in way that ensure that their interests are met.

In *The Submission*, Amy Waldman follows the same route, as she criticizes how media journalists rely on controversies they create to boost their own careers. Waldman finds September 11 and its aftermath as the perfect time period in which to expose how media journalists try unethically to stir controversies and hold them captive. Waldman, "a reporter moved from news to fiction to create a novel about 9/11," fictionalizes how a

journalist could direct and shape public opinion (Lee-Potter 191). *The Submission*, thus, exposes how reporters feed on constructing fear and causing frenzies.

The Submission events take place in New York after 9/11. The city has decided to build a memorial honoring those who died on that tragic day. In order to choose the winning entry, the city council assigns a jury. All the entries are submitted anonymously. When the submissions are down to the last two, the Garden and the Void, the jury is divided on which submission to choose as the winner. Claire Burwell, who represents the families of the deceased since her husband is one of the victims of the attacks, has strongly pushed for the Garden to be chosen. After a long debate, the jury chooses it as the winning entry. When the name of the winning submission is revealed, the jury begins to question its choice, as the winner turns out to be a Muslim man named Mohammed Khan. Mohammed, or Mo as he likes to be called, is an American-Indian architect working at a prestigious architecture firm. His name is leaked to the press by Alyssa Spier, a *New York Times* reporter, who spreads the news that the memorial has been granted to a Muslim. As soon as the news breaks out, Mo is put under the spotlight.

Two organizations react to the news. The Muslim American Coordinating Council, known as MACC, is quick to defend Mo's right in building the memorial. In contrast, Save America from Islam, or SAFI, is an organization that is formed in order to revoke Mo's submission. Mo initially believes that MACC is the only avenue through which he would be able to build the Garden. However, it does not take him long to realize that the way in which MACC is approaching his case is not going to help his cause. The issue is that, according to Mo, "MACC campaign identifies me so thoroughly as a Muslim when I've been arguing I shouldn't be defined as one" (174). So, he

abandons the organization and their efforts of restoring his rights, as he does not want to be at the center of a religious clash in America.

As a result of the negative publicity following the revelation of Mo's name as the winning architect, chaos erupts in the city and Muslims become the target of multiple hate crimes, including the death of Asma, a Bangladeshi woman who has lost her husband in the 9/11 attacks. Claire, who once was his most devoted supporter, begins to reconsider her support of Mo. He refuses to answer her questions on what inspired him to design the Garden and whether it reflects his Islamic identity or not. Thus, she, along with MACC withdraws Mo's entry. Mo could not adjust to life in New York after the controversy. The media has distorted his image, so life in the U.S. becomes unbearable for Mo. He leaves the country and moves to India where he continues to work as an architect.

Alyssa Spier is behind most, if not all, the controversies that focus on decisions regarding the memorial. Similar to Flanagan's use of Cody, Waldman depicts Alyssa as a character struggling to boost her career, as she "wasn't a good enough writer for the blue-blood papers...A tabby all the way—that's what she was. She had no ideology, believed only in information, which she obtained, traded, peddled, packaged, and published, and she opposed any effort to doctor her product" (60). Waldman implies here that doctoring a product is the easiest way for a media persona to climb the ladder. Even though it is not ethical, it facilitates the overall desire to reach a higher status.

Spier is someone who opposes meddling with the truth, or at least manipulating the truth. For that reason she is struggling to make her way into stardom within the media industry. Yet, when she has the chance to get involved in the memorial controversy, her

long-standing principle is about to be tested. As soon as she learns that a Muslim man won the competition, she knows that this scoop could dramatically change her career. And it does, as she “watched, transfixed, as her Mystery Muslim scoop entered the news cycle and rolled forward, crushing every other minor story before it. By noon she was booked on three television news programs and had done four radio interviews” (58). All of a sudden, she is the center of attention. This spotlight leaves her feeling exhilarated: “she couldn’t believe her change in fortune. Two days earlier she had been a *Daily News* reporter with a radioactive scoop her boss didn’t want to run. Now she was a *New York Post* reporter whose reporting was the talk of the town, maybe even the country” (59). Alyssa could not resist the temptation. She makes sure that she spreads the news, even though the only information that she has on Mo, for now, is that he is a Muslim.

It is worth mentioning that the reason which makes Alyssa move from *The Daily News* to *New York Post* is because her former editor, Fred, refuses to publish her story because she only has one source, which according to him, is not enough. Her new editor, however, does not see this as a problem, as she agrees to publish the piece without demanding that another reliable source should confirm the story. This incident shows the extent to which mainstream media has compromised its integrity. Alyssa’s story, that causes unease within the whole country, is only based on one source. Even though it could be unreliable, it does not stop her from pushing the story through. Her ambition also indicates the vulnerability of the transmission of truth. Yariv Tsfati acknowledges how personal gains are interfering, or colliding, with the integrity of the media industry. In “Online News Exposure and Trust in the Mainstream Media: Exploring Possible Associations,” the author affirms that:

It is the feeling that the mainstream media are neither credible nor reliable, that the news media get in the way of society rather than helping society. Media skepticism is the perception that journalists do not live by their professional standards (Kohring & Matthes, 2007)— that journalists are not fair and objective in their reports, that they do not always tell the whole story, and that they would sacrifice accuracy and precision for personal gains. (23)

As soon as Alyssa receives the news, she has no interest in investigating the authenticity of the rumor. She is afraid that further investigation might reveal that either the news that the winner is a Muslim might turn out to be untrue, or, that the time that she may take to find another source could allow someone else to get ahead of her and spreads the news instead. In other words, she will lose her scoop.

Alyssa feels that the story is hers, so she continues to discuss the identity of the memorial designer. She takes advantage of the fact that Mo still has not revealed himself to the public by playing on the fear of the bogeyman. In a radio interview, she stresses that “for all we know some one-eyed, bearded killer wearing pajamas came up with this—that’s what’s scary” (91). Up to that point, Alyssa is toying with the public, knowing that no one actually knows the mysterious man. As a result, she depicts Mo the way she desires. Alyssa needs to demonize and distort Mo’s image to keep the public glued to her story. By labeling Mo as a “bearded killer” and describing the situation as “scary,” Alyssa is using the same tactics that Cody uses in *The Unknown Terrorist*. Mo is quickly established as an extremist Muslim. She taints her story with fear by depicting Mo as a person who is considered to be a threat to society.

However, Mo decides to hold a press conference and reveal himself to the public, hoping that might change the distorted image that Alyssa has created. Obviously, that does not go down well with Alyssa who can no longer continue to captivate the people on her ungrounded stories about the Muslim architect. Mo robs her of her ownership of his identity. She is disappointed because “nameless, Khan had been hers. Now he was everyone’s” (93). She feels that Mo is her own story, just like how an author feels about his/her own novel, where the author has total authority over the events. Moreover, getting a taste of what is it like to be seen as a celebrity media personality makes her even more disappointed, and the thrill of getting exclusives and scoops has made Alyssa more determined to get ahead of other reporters and journalists. Since Mo’s identity is revealed, her only option is to look for his family and friends, so she could keep the edge over other journalists. For her own interests, she wants to keep the memorial controversy alive.

In order to be ahead of everyone else and to still “own” the story, Alyssa’s next step is to visit Thomas Kroll, Mo’s colleague and future partner. She wants to know as much as possible about Mo’s private life and feels that there is nowhere better to achieve that than paying a visit to his best friend. Alyssa’s cruelty is evident when she realizes that Mo does not tell Kroll about his submission, as “she wanted his disappointment, Khan’s backstabbing, his compromising of a friendship and this all-American family. She wanted the wife, who she guessed would be happy to plumb those depths with her” (96). Alyssa is pushing Kroll to reveal all that he knows about his friend, hoping that she might grab something substantial and unveil it to the public. Though it is understandable that Alyssa is trying to extract any piece of information, the tactic that she adopts is questionable. In

an attempt to get as much as she could from Kroll, Alyssa plays with his emotions. The reporter tells him, “he never told you he was entering? Isn’t that a little odd—I mean, you’re planning to start a firm together, such good friends, right?” These words trouble the man as he “reddened a bit and began to slide his wedding ring on and off. The masculine ego—one had to handle it with tongs” (96). She wants to appear as an affectionate person who cares about the well being of Kroll, but her true aim is to portray Mo as an untrustworthy man in an attempt to grasp any newsworthy material from his friend.

Again, this episode raises many ethical questions concerning how far a media reporter can go. Does Alyssa’s strong desire to investigate Mo’s life justify the way she manipulates Kroll’s emotions? Could her tactics be seen as professional journalism, or does she cross the line? It is not easy to answer these questions objectively. However, since we, as readers, know Alyssa’s motivations are completely driven by her obsession for personal gain, it could only point us in one direction. Informing the public and telling the truth are never her true goals. She is under pressure, as she does not want other reporters to get ahead of her on what she believes to be her own story. Thus, this incident shows how some journalists overlook ethics especially if they contradict personal goals. Putting in mind that Waldman was a former reporter at the prestigious *New York Times*, she underlines how the code of ethics and journalism are sometimes at odds.

Disappointed that she could not get any valuable information on Mo from Kroll, Alyssa realizes that the only way to keep “owning” the story is to write a column. To the surprise of many, especially Claire, the column is filled with lies and false accusations. Alyssa has written, “another family member tells me that the winsome widow on the jury

has a soft spot for Mohammad Khan. If, metaphorically speaking, she's sleeping with the enemy, whose side is she on?" (109). This excerpt is the gist of the column, while the remaining part serves to demonize Islam and its followers. It is worth mentioning that Claire only met the reporter once before the publication of the article, where Alyssa asked her about the identity of the winner only for Claire to refuse to reveal it. Alyssa's source, who leaked the news that Mo has won the competition, has told her that Claire is favoring Mo's design. Ironically, that is enough for Alyssa to fabricate the story of Claire's alleged romantic feelings toward Mo. So, now Alyssa has dragged Claire into the controversy, and to make matters worse, she positions her with the enemy. Throwing Claire into the mix is a necessary step for Alyssa, since the longer that the controversy remains prominent the better it would be for the reporter. Having already succeeded in presenting Mo to the public as a man who poses a threat to Western values, now she tries to do the same with a local citizen. The inclusion of Claire into her story is mostly to add more drama to it, knowing that an American woman falling for a terrorist would add fuel to the fire. It would result in a public outrage that conversely would reflect positively on her image as the reporter who exposes all behind the scenes action in the memorial controversy.

Desperate to reclaim her control over the memorial controversy, Alyssa has to create a dramatic scenario. Her manipulative skills as a columnist are manifested in the two lines taken from the column mentioned above. First, the fact that she mentions the architect's full name in the article, Mohammad Khan instead of Mo. Even though she knows from Kroll that Mo is hardly a Muslim, by writing his full name, she strongly associates him with Islam. She wants to remind the readers that Mo is a Muslim, since

Islam is already under attack after 9/11. Second, her use of the word “enemy” to describe Mo is an attempt to turn the controversy into “us” versus “them.” The word “enemy” suggests that if there is an enemy, then logically there would be victims of this enemy. Alyssa wants to turn the controversy into a clash of civilizations. She wants the controversy to transcend the individual (Mo) and to make it about race/religion, and turn it from a local debate to a national and an international event.

The technique that Alyssa uses in her article is known in journalism studies as Narrative Journalism. The Nieman Foundation for Journalism, that strives to promote the standards of journalism throughout the world, defines this concept as “the genre that takes the techniques of fiction and applies them to nonfiction. The narrative form requires deep and sophisticated reporting, an appreciation for storytelling, a departure from the structural conventions of daily news, and an imaginative use of language” (Nieman Foundation par. 7). However, bias and manipulation could be easily implemented through the use of this technique, especially through word choice. In the book, *The Ethics of the Story: Using Narrative Techniques Responsibly in Journalism*, David Craig offers a guideline for journalists who seek to use this technique in their writings. He discusses the advantages as well as the limitations that this journalistic technique offers to journalists and reporters. While mixing fiction with nonfiction could help the author to better convey the ideas in the piece and therefore, affect how the readers interpret it, using it irresponsibly could reflect the author’s bias.

Craig devotes a whole chapter to observe how bias and labeling could be easily integrated with this technique. In the chapter, “Word Choice, Labeling, and Bias,” Craig argues that it is extremely difficult for journalists to become free of bias, and that this

narrative technique tempts the authors to bend the story the way they desire. Craig cites religion as an obvious example and how religious labeling, especially when it overlaps with politics, can reflect the journalist's position in a particular way. Applied to this novel, Alyssa presents her piece as if the events and drama are all true and that fiction presumably has no part in it. However, we know that most, if not all, of the column is pure invention, suggesting that she has used the narrative technique in order to implement her manipulation. Her blending of fiction and nonfiction is indicated in how she labels Mo as an enemy and claims that Claire is sympathizing with the enemy and possibly having a love affair with him.

With the passage of time, the controversy escalates and every media outlet seems eager to stretch it even further. This becomes evident in the following passage:

Claire turned on the television, wanting to know what the shouting classes would make of this. "In a potentially explosive development, the memorial design may actually be a martyr's paradise," a Fox News anchor reported soberly, before turning to a panel of experts on radical Islam. One intoned "as we all know by now, the terrorists who carried this out believed their act would get them to paradise, with the silks and wine, the pretty young boys and the dark-eyed virgins, and now it seems has." A second affirmed: "Their remains are in that ground, too. He's made a tomb, a graveyard, for them, not the victims. He would know that the Arabic word for tomb and garden are the same." "He's trying to encourage new martyrs—see, here's a taste of where you'll get if you blow yourself up," a third chimed in. (116)

Fox News' position on the memorial issue does not differ from Alyssa's. The mainstream media sees all alike in their coverage of the controversy, and are determined to blow it out of proportion. They are all taking the same approach. For their own interests, the media escalates and accelerates the memorial design controversy. All the three guests that Claire listens to on television are on the same page. Normally, when there is a panel of experts discussing a political issue, the news channel would usually choose guests with different opinions and points of view in order to cover the topic within all of its dimensions. None of the three guests tries to look at the controversy through different angles, and no one presents a more tolerant statement on Mo and his design.

However, the fact that the anchor and the three guests are on the same page could be seen as a commentary on how all media outlets seem to all agree on how to fuel fear and controversy. In "The New Era of Media and Terrorism," Mahmoud Eid discusses how the mainstream media feeds on covering news that sustains fear in a society. He writes, "News media are competitive and lucrative businesses that thrive on action and controversy. They have been known to sensationalize stories to boost ratings and have become obsessed with covering violence and scandals to grab the attention of viewers" (609). Waldman fictionalizes how *Fox News* and many other popular media outlets in the U.S. thrive on the memorial controversy. Nowhere in the novel do we come across an episode where a news channel, a newspaper, or a radio broadcast tries to present a different perspective on the issue, or at least take a more lenient approach. This observation makes Claire realize that "every news outlet stirring this already opposed

Khan because he was Muslim. They would do anything to stop him” (117). They all proceed with the mainstream perspective as they try to capitalize on the controversy.

Alyssa herself becomes associated with *Fox News* when her first column becomes a real hit and earns her a spot with the controversial host Bill O’Reilly who “said afterward that he would invite her back to the show” (156). She is enjoying her new status as a celebrity since major TV shows and hosts seek her appearance. She knows that the public is anxious to follow any updates on her story. However, her success means that more pressure is put on her to deliver more, particularly from her editor, Chaz. The success of her first column forces Chaz to give her the opportunity to write two more columns. However, her two columns “lacked exclusives, lacked bombs. The most recent had been so deadening that it had drawn a yawn, literally, from Chaz, who then killed it. Her currency was devaluing” (156). From the perspective of the editor, Alyssa’s value is measured according to how much money and ratings her columns could generate. By using the word “currency,” Waldman exposes how the mainstream media is an economy-based industry. They do not seek news that reflects the truth; instead, they follow news that causes chaos and fear because they are more profitable.

After cementing her position as a reporter known for getting exclusives and scoops, in fear of losing her ‘currency’, Alyssa becomes more adamant to continue with this path, even if it means that she must continue depending on lies and deceptions. Waldman describes Alyssa obsession as “like a junkie’s, her addiction had progressed from reading the news, to reporting it, to breaking it, then—the crack cocaine of her business—to shaping it. Being it. The prospect of her supply being cut off triggered a cold sweat” (156). Waldman uses a powerful analogy to reveal the dangers of this

business. Once a reporter gets used to incorporating lies and bends the news he/she desires, it is extremely difficult to deviate from doing so. It is like an addiction. As part of the story, journalists get a completely different feeling than merely delivering the news as it is. Seeing their names attached to big stories encourages them to take part in creating the news. Waldman uncovers the alarming consequences that might surface from such behavior. If a reporter reaches a stage where he/she depends on manipulation and lies, then the reporter will most likely continue using the same tactics. It means that the chances of groundless stories appearing on the news get even higher. Obviously, there are a lot of journalists whose stories made the headlines through the utmost integrity and credibility and it should be pointed out that *The Submission* only criticizes those who “create” the news, especially the ones overwhelmed with hate and bias.

When the pressure is mounting on Alyssa’s shoulders to continue offering more drama to the memorial controversy, she meets with Claire, even though she knows it will be difficult to convince her after Alyssa has distorted her image publically through her column. In an attempt to gain her approval, Alyssa tells Claire, “I have information you’ll want. On Khan...it could be explosive, for the families, and if I were you I’d want to be prepared for that” (157). This is a lie. She has no information on Khan. Desperate to come up with something before her scheduled meeting with Claire, she calls one of her informers asking for any tips on Mo. The only piece of information that she gets is that Khan has visited Afghanistan recently. Ironically, that is enough for Alyssa to fabricate it and turn it against Mo. In the meeting, she tells Claire that Mo “made a threat against the embassy there.” More worrying than lying is how Alyssa “felt no guilt about sharing only part of this story with Claire. Fabricating reality was criminal; editing it, commonplace”

(160). Alyssa reaches a point where fabrication and falsehood seem normal for her. She lies to Claire so she could have an exclusive with her, since getting one on one with a jury member would be a significant boost for her coverage of the memorial design controversy.

Media scholars have engaged in much debate about the concept of lying to get to the truth from reporters and journalists. These debates are mainly concerned with whether lying can be justified. In other words, where do ethics stand in the face of lying? Jennifer Jackson dwells on the implications of the issue on ethics in *Ethical Issues in Journalism and the Media*, where she writes that:

There remain two forms of justification for telling a lie: that your duty not to lie is overridden by another perfect duty more pressing in the circumstances, which makes telling the lie morally obligatory, or that your duty not to lie is overridden by another imperfect duty more pressing in the circumstances, which makes telling the lie more permissible. (109)

However, in Alyssa's case all the events within her story are based on lies and manipulation. So, lying to Claire to support her already groundless story eliminates any attempt to justify her acts. The moment that she decides to demonize Mo's image publicly, Alyssa knows that she has to set ethics aside.

After attacking and ruining the lives of Mo and Claire, Asma becomes the next victim. Asma appears when a public hearing is held. In the hearing, Asma insists on addressing all the parties involved, even though she cannot speak English properly. In her comment, or rather her speech, the Bangladeshi woman tries to counter the many wrong stereotypes that are associated with Islam. Moreover, she is supportive of the memorial

and tries to interpret it as a design that bridges the gap between Muslims and non-Muslims. Asma becomes a well-known woman after her speech that draws the attention of everyone, including Oprah Winfrey who wants Asma on her show. Alyssa intervenes when Asma becomes the latest figure that gets dragged into the memorial controversy. The reporter approaches Asma's house attempting to get an interview in order "to get a sense of the woman behind the story, her life story" (245). Asma agrees to sit with Alyssa, believing that no harm should come from a chat about her ordinary life. Yet, the following morning, the cover page of the *Post* shows "a photograph of Asma—laughing, head reared back and teeth exposed, as if she found hilarious the word written in huge capital letters across her face: ILLEGAL" (246). Alyssa has found out that Asma is staying illegally in the US. Alyssa, desperate to stay in the spotlight of this controversy, exposes Asma's immigration status to the public.

Unsurprisingly, a furious backlash gains momentum after the publication of Alyssa's interview with Asma: "since her exposure as an alien, politicians had whipped the public into a frenzy of fear over the thousand of untracked Bangladeshi Muslims in New York, starting with Asma's own dead father" (251). After Mo's frenzy has slowed down, Alyssa is determined to create another controversy, so she could still sustain her reputation as a renowned media reporter. Unfortunately, this comes at the expense of a poor widow, who is struggling to cope with life after the death of her husband on September 11. Regardless of whether Alyssa's exposure of illegal immigrants is part of her job or not, the manner is questionable. Asma is hoping that by agreeing to make the interview, the world would recognize the less privileged who lost their lives in the

terrorist attacks, since her husband was not officially counted with the deceased. Yet, Alyssa betrays her and exposes her illegal status to the world.

In fact, Asma's troubles do not stop after the interview. After much consideration, the Bangladeshi woman decides to leave America and return home, an inevitable departure given her immigration status. On the day of her departure, which is also publicized by the *Post*, "it seemed every Bangladeshi in Kensington and many from beyond had come to witness Asma's departure...there were also police, who had come to keep order, and reporters and news crews, the satellites atop their vans like giant ears cocked to the sky" (254). Her day of departure catches the attention of the public. A lot of anticipation has accompanied her farewell. As she marches down the building into the streets with the massive crowd watching with excitement, the unexpected happens. Someone in the crowd stabs her to death.

In the ensuing chaos, someone shouts "The press! The press! They killed her!" (257). All the journalists and reporters, who are present, are suddenly in the spotlight, and a tense standoff develops: "they were scattered through the crowd, refuse on a deltaic river. Men in the crowd had grabbed some of them by the arms and were holding them; other journalists had formed a small defenseless knot by a building, the brick at their back" (257). The angry crowd wants to take immediate revenge for the death of their fellow citizen. Nasruddin, Amsa's legal guardian and the godfather of the Bangladeshi community in New York, is puzzled by what is happening, as he "didn't know if they meant this literally—had a reporter stabbed her?—or that the journalists had endangered her with her stories" (257). Nasruddin spots Alyssa inside the crowd. Fearing for her life, he goes towards her, grabs her by the arm, and hands her to police asking them to

“protect her...she is responsible” (258). This gesture indicates how Nasruddin acknowledges Alyssa as the one behind the chaos that resulted in the death of Asma.

Nasruddin’s debating whether Alyssa—or any other reporter— has literally killed her or whether the damage is done by exposing her to the public through her interview is one of the highpoints of the novel. It reflects the kind of damage that can be inflicted by the media. If Asma is not literally killed by Alyssa, or any other reporter, then that does not acquit her from what happened to the Bangladeshi woman. The media is directly involved in the crime, mainly through the actions of Alyssa. When Nasruddin tries to protect her from the angry mob and takes her to the police, he is concerned about her safety. Nonetheless, at the same time he rightfully criminalizes her by claiming that she has a role in what just happened, whether directly or indirectly. He wants Alyssa to be punished for her role in the incident. Thus, the scene where Nasruddin hands Alyssa to the police is worth a close reading. Does this act imply that Waldman suggests that policing the media is a necessary step for restoring media credibility? Is Waldman suggesting that those who have the power to create, fabricate, and spread unfounded news for personal gain, or any other unjustified reasons, deserve the punishment? I believe that Waldman is calling for justice against those who, in creating lies, ruin the lives of many others.

When Nasruddin hands Alyssa to the police, they interrogate her in which she “told the police everything she had seen.” Interestingly, “three different detectives made her walk through, article by article, what she could have meant by [each article]” (259). Each of the articles that the detectives go through have, at least for a while, situated Alyssa as a prime suspect for the death of Asma. This is a pivotal scene in the novel as it

shows that words can also kill. This is almost the last scene in which Alyssa appears in the novel. It is clear here that Waldman criminalizes Alyssa for the way she composes her articles. She ends her role in the novel by having to explain to the detectives what her intentions were in all the articles that she wrote. Waldman shows us that fabrication and lies might, for a while, facilitate the reporters' mission in achieving personal goals but the public growing awareness of the role that the media plays could easily backfire. It could metaphorically kill the reporters' careers.

In conclusion, both Flanagan and Waldman compose similar portrayals of media figures in their novels. In *The Unknown Terrorist* and *The Submission*, both Richard Cody and Alyssa Spier commodify 9/11. They capitalize on the fear and paranoia that spread after the terrorist attacks. Both of them are driven by the urge of achieving good ratings and wealth. The social and political climate creates the perfect atmosphere for them to fabricate and manipulate, since the public deem Muslims as a threat. They take advantage of the backlash that is happening against Muslims so they could create and spread their stories. In other words, they see religion as a fundamental factor in achieving their goals. Cody misleads the Australian community by proclaiming that the Doll is a Muslim extremist who opposes Western ideals by plotting to attack the heart of Sydney. Alyssa, on the other hand, distorts the image of Mo, relying on the fact that he is a Muslim architect. She projects him as a fundamentalist who designs a garden that reflects his hate for the West. Religion is essential for them to exploit 9/11 for their own good. The portrayal of Cody and Alyssa exemplify how individuals, or even the institutions that they work with, exploit 9/11 for economic profits. Revealing the truth is never their goal. Both of these novels question the integrity and credibility of the mainstream media, and

ask where the truth stands in a time where everything is valued according to how much money can be generated.

Interestingly, the characters of Cody and Alyssa, when both introduced in the novels, are struggling to make a name for themselves. Cody's career was fading, and to make matters worse, he was demoted from a leading anchor to a correspondent. Similarly, Alyssa's job was limited to reporting news and she had no avenue through which she could promote herself as a renowned reporter. When the perfect chance presents itself to Cody and Alyssa, they take full advantage. They create, twist, fabricate, and spread their stories. Both of them enjoy a great success. They are almost treated like celebrities because their stories achieve such high ratings.

Yet, their success does not last for long. Cody is shot and killed by the Doll, while Alyssa is handed to the police and investigated by three different detectives for the articles she wrote and published. They are both exposed. The interesting observation that is worth tackling here is who exposes them. In *The Unknown Terrorist*, the Doll is aware of the power that the media possesses. On more than one occasion, she expresses her dismay on how the media could ruin lives, and more importantly, how easily they could manipulate the public. In *The Submission*, Nasruddin is the one who grabs Alyssa and hands her to the police, claiming that she is the one responsible for what happened to Asma. The Doll is a lower class Australian citizen. Nasruddin, though we do know a lot about his life story in the novel, is an uneducated man who comes from a Third-World country. He is still loyal to his own culture and heritage. The Doll and Nasruddin, in terms of class, gender, and ethnicity are stereotypically considered to be lacking wisdom and knowledge, at least in comparison to the white male hegemony. By giving power and

wisdom to the marginalized, both Flanagan and Waldman expose the fragility of the mainstream media. They deconstruct the idea that the biased media would find it easier to exercise its hegemony on the oppressed and the less privileged. Both the Doll and Nasruddin show a high level of awareness of the role that the media plays in creating lies. They expose the media's veiled goals, which is to commodify 9/11 and turn it into a profitable event.

CHAPTER FOUR

9/11 MEDIA NARRATIVE & VISUAL CULTURE: HOW LITERATURE EXPOSES

THE ROLE OF IMAGES IN TRIGGERING TRAUMA & ANXIETY

“When another person suffers and, although I cannot help him, I let myself be infected by his sorrow (by means of my imagination), then the two of us suffer, although evil actually (in nature) affects only one.”

-Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Ethics*

“The image consumes the event, in the sense that it absorbs it and offers it for consumption.”

-Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*

Since the beginning of the 21st century, visual representations have dominated our cultures through televisions, newspapers, magazines, billboards, and the Internet.

Understandably, these images convey meanings and demand our interaction. The glut of images gave birth to the term “Visual Culture,” a term first coined, according to Nicholas Mirzoeff in “On Visuality,” in the 19th century by the Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle in his 1841 collection of lectures *On Heroes*. Yet, it was only in the late 20th century that scholars began to realize the importance of studying these spectacles and called for the need to turn it into a field of study. Nicholas Mirzoeff, one of the strong advocates for the theorization of visual culture, defines it as a concept that “is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology. By visual technology, I mean any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil painting to television and the Internet” (3). Needless to say, there are different types of images and different mediums in which these visual representations can be seen. My focus in this chapter will solely focus on images of destruction and suffering and how individuals react upon exposing themselves to these types of images. More specifically, I will be focusing on the September 11

catastrophe and the images of shock and turmoil that the mainstream media heavily covered and disseminated. These visual representations began to have negative consequences especially on those who were constantly exposed to them. The Association for Psychological Science (APS) published an article in which it revealed the harm from engaging with images of suffering specifically in relation to 9/11. A section of the article reads as follows: “repeated exposure to vivid traumatic images from the media could lead to long-lasting negative consequences, not just for mental health but also for physical health. They speculated that such media exposure could result in a stress response that triggers various physiologic processes associated with increased health problems over time” (“Repeated Exposure to Media Images of Traumatic Events May Be Harmful to Mental and Physical Health, par. 4”). Thus, it is fair to claim that the media narrative, which emerged after 9/11, is responsible for triggering these kinds of disorders. I will be using the term “media narrative” interchangeably with “visual culture” as I believe that a large part of the 9/11 narrative was visually based. Almost all the newspapers and the news channels that covered the attacks depended on visual representations to show the scale of the devastation.

I argue that the competitive nature of the media industry probably was to blame for how the visual representations dominated the newscasts and front pages. Jean Baudrillard blames the media’s use of excessive images, which resulted in taking the events of 9/11 “hostage” since “the image consumes the event, in the sense that it absorbs it and offers it for consumption” (27). Similarly, in “The Dialectics of Disaster,” Fredric Jameson attacks the media for its “unrealistic visuals”, and remarks about the “amalgamation of media sentiment and emotion, which it would be inexact to call

hysterical, since even this hysteria struck many of us, from the outset, as being utterly insincere...The media is...to seize on a story of this kind and milk it for all it's worth to exhaustion" (297-98). Though Baudrillard and Jameson agree on how 9/11 turned into a spectacle event, Jameson finds Baudrillard's claim that 9/11 is a simulacrum event rather than a real one as an "offensive way of 'doubting' people's sincerity" (299). So, the argument here between the two is the extent to which 9/11 is real and how far images complicated the event. Jameson believes that the repetition of images risks taking away the real and authentic suffering of people. So, for Jameson the 9/11 images overshadow the true and genuine feelings (grief, shock, trauma) of the public that were jeopardized as a result of the media coverage. Baudrillard, on the other hand, blurs reality with fiction in regard to 9/11 by asking "how do things stand with the real event, then, if reality is everywhere infiltrated by images?" He answers by saying, "the collapse of The World Trade Center towers is unimaginable, but that is not enough to make it a real event...it is not real. In a sense, it is worse: it is symbolic" (28-29). For Baudrillard, the excessive use of images absorbed the reality from 9/11. Thus, according to him, since 9/11 is symbolic, it can only be a simulacrum. From an ethical standpoint, the mainstream media seems to overlook the negative consequences that might result from such exposure in pursuit of good ratings and revenues.

Fiction serves to expose the role that the media played in spreading trauma, anxiety, and fear. Two post 9/11 novels, in particular - Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* published in 2007, and Ian McEwan's *Saturday* written in 2005 – address how their characters are negatively affected by their exposure to traumatic scenes through the images projected in the media. Both novels feature characters whose lives take a dramatic

shift after 9/11, even though they are not directly involved in the attacks. In *Falling Man*, 9/11 turns Lianne Glenn into a troubled character. Her husband is a 9/11 survivor. Dealing with this fact, alongside her repeated exposure to the news on television and newspapers, results in a deterioration of her wellbeing. Even her son, Justin, is, to an extent, drawn into the events of 9/11 largely by what he was seeing in the media. In *Saturday*, Henry Perowne is heavily preoccupied with the media and how it dealt with 9/11. His preoccupation with the media strongly affects his personality since he prioritizes following the global news only after 9/11. More specifically, he is drawn into terrorism-related news. The novel depicts how he struggles to put the events of 9/11 behind him. By discussing DeLillo and McEwan's novels, I aim to showcase how the repeated exposure to images and scenes of suffering and shock can lead to significant feelings of trauma, stress, and anxiety. I attempt to uncover the role that the media plays in spreading these health threats. Before I begin to discuss the literature, in the following paragraphs, I intend to historically contextualize how the images of pain had negatively impacted those who expose themselves to them. A lot of tragedies had occurred but their images have ensured that trauma and shock transcend the victims and engage viewers emotionally, identifying with their victims, hence making the trauma and shock trans-generational.

Unfortunately, our history is filled with human-made disasters and catastrophes. One needs not to look far back in history to find instances of massacres and genocides. I will list two unfortunate examples from the early 20th century and include what some scholars had to say on the long lasting impact of these events on the public and how images play a crucial part in sustaining trauma and shock. The atomic bombs dropped on

Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 were two of the most devastating attacks executed in human history. The nuclear attacks resulted in the immediate death of more than eighty thousand people, while tens of thousands died later. One of the most iconic images of the modern era is the “mushroom cloud” image that was taken by Lieutenant Charles Levy at the time of the explosions in Nagasaki. This widely circulated image reflects the magnitude of the destruction executed by the bombs immediately after they were dropped. Moreover, it is one of the few images that circulated at that time. *The Washington Post* published an article, in 2015 titled “After the A-bomb: What photographers encountered in Hiroshima,” where it celebrated the very few photographers who risked their lives attempting to document the scale of the atrocity. The article cites, among others, Bernard Hoffman, a photographer working with *Life* magazine whose images of the ruins are still shown.

Steven Okazaki’s documentary *White Light/Black Rain: The Destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (2007) offers a comprehensive coverage of the destruction of the nuclear bombings on the inhabitants of the two cities. With the help of archival footages and the recollection of a number of survivors, the documentary reflects the horror that erupted in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Images of corpses piled up, along with people who sustained brutal injuries during the attacks are repeatedly shown in the film. It exposes the immediate aftermath of the attacks by presenting rare images of the disaster. Given the magnitude of the attacks relayed through the images, trauma transcended the locals and the survivors. In fact, they triggered collective trauma. In the book, *Beclouded Visions: Hiroshima-Nagasaki and the Art of Witness*, Kyo Maclear discusses how images of the catastrophe spread shock and disbelief across different

generations and regions. The author asserts that the “flickering images may, in the words of Chris Marker, ‘quicken the heart,’ propelling us to touch the breaks and tears in history upon which these signs of trauma gingerly rest, so that once the body of trauma ceases to exist, the wound is not forgotten” (28). Such visual representations, that reflected the scale of the destruction on the Japanese soil, keep us engaged with history and invoked our emotions every time we are exposed to them.

No less is humanity’s capacity for cruelty and barbarism, best exemplified by the concentration camps and the Holocaust. The genocide of the Jews during the Nazi regime during WWII had sparked a significant number of images of suffering and grief. However, it was only in the subsequent decades that the whole world realized the scale of the brutality of the Nazi’s regime. Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985) stands out as one of the best documentaries ever to be made on the Holocaust. The film is nine hours long and took the French filmmaker eleven years to finally complete it. In this documentary, Lanzmann interviews a number of witnesses, survivors, and even some German and Polish officials who were directly responsible for the death camps. Given the amount of suffering in the film, Gertrud Koch claims that *Shoah* “offers an image of the unimaginable” (21). Shelly Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz point out that Lanzmann’s film “establishes that the crime of the Shoah is one that takes place—that persists and continues to have repercussions” (11). Their emphasis on continuity acknowledges how *Shoah* functions as a link between what happened in the past and the present. The documentary does not present any archival images of the massacre; instead, it depends on the recounting of the interviewees to demonstrate the degree of the extermination. Libby Saxton touches on the significance of the facial expressions in

Shoah. She writes that “in the absence of direct images of the past, the survivor’s face becomes the site where trauma is visually registered and where the indication on direct representation is affirmed” (102). Saxon’s observation is applicable to describe the 9/11 survivors. What I mean here is that it is not just the images of destruction and panic that might traumatize people, but the recollection of those who survived and the vivid description of their experience that could potentially have the same effect.

Several decades separate the Holocaust from September 11, and a good way to connect these two unfortunate events in relation to trauma is Art Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers*. In this comic book, Spiegelman reacts to the tragedy of 9/11 since he watched its events unfold from his apartment window. His experience of 9/11 resulted in his suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). So, his work is an attempt to artistically represent his traumatic experience in the aftermath of 9/11. Moreover, since his parents survived the Holocaust, Spiegelman masterfully connects both tragedies in his work. He writes, “I remember my father trying to describe what the smoke in Auschwitz smelled like. The closest he got was telling me it was ‘indescribable’. That’s exactly what the air in Lower Manhattan smelled like after Sept. 11!” (3). David Hajdu explains that “Spiegelman clearly sees Sept. 11 as his Holocaust (or the nearest thing his generation will have to personal experience with anything remotely correlative), and ‘In the Shadow of No Towers’ makes explicit parallels between the events without diminishing the incomparable evil of the death camps” (par. 3). Spiegelman’s work is a personal and historical narrative in which it exemplifies the extent of a trauma deeply rooted in history. Thus, Spiegelman responds to the images of the 9/11 catastrophe by drawing his own images that convey his own narrative of what he saw and experienced.

The coverage of the September 11 attacks was according to Sarah Boxer, “the most documented event in human history” (par. 1). This is due to two main reasons: first, the attacks took place in an age when the media was easily accessible and available in almost every part of the world. Second, the attacks took place within the most powerful country in the world. It is feasible to state that if the attacks were conducted in a Third-World Country they would not have received such attention and coverage. The atrocity of the terrorist attacks on September 11 has resulted in a glut of images and clips that showcase the suffering, shock, and grief of people not just in New York, where it took place, but all around the world. Images of the falling of the two towers, photos of the survivors covered in dust and soot, and pictures of the planes’ debris were the most circulated images throughout all media outlets, serving to reflect the scale of the destruction executed by the terrorists. However, one particular image stood out. It was the image of the falling man.

Richard Drew, a photojournalist working with the Associated Press, took several pictures of a man falling from one of the towers probably in a desperate attempt to save his life from the fire and smoke. The identity of the man remains unknown. Within days, the image appeared in different newspapers all around the world. However, a lot have been said and written on the image and how these types of images invoke disturbing reactions from the viewers. In the “Falling Man: Don DeLillo and Jonathan Safran Foer's Photographic History of 9/11,” Aaron Mauro claims that “Due to the ensuing public outrage directed toward editors for what was deemed an obscene representation of a man's death, many newspapers were forced to issue apologies and refrain from publishing the image or images like it.” According to Mauro, “the image remains highly taboo

within the mainstream media and continues to evoke questions regarding the limits of representation and history” (584). Though I do not find Mauro’s claim that the image was considered a taboo totally accurate as it appeared in different newspapers, I agree that the photo raises concerns about the limitations of visual representation in our culture.

Susie Linfield also comments on the disturbing nature of the photo by claiming that it had “vilified as an insult to the dead and an unbearably brutal shock to the living.” She, also, adds that “The jumper photographs make clear to us the utter vulnerability of the victims; they present us with terrorism as a human experience, not just a political crime” (Linfield). Tom Junod was curious to know more about the story behind the images (the identity of the man, the photographer, the public reaction, etc.). It inspired him to compose a lengthy article published in *Esquire* magazine in 2003. Junod’s article discusses the multiple images that were spread of different people jumping from the towers in a desperate attempt to save their lives. However, the author points out the aesthetic nature of Drew’s images, which according to him, made this image an iconic one. Junod goes on to describe the image and how it sparked an aggressive reaction from people. He writes that the image exploited the “man’s death, stripped him of his dignity, invaded his privacy, turned tragedy into leering pornography” (Junod).

It is important to note that this image has inspired many art works including a documentary titled *9/11: The Falling Man* directed by Henry Singer. In the documentary, a decent segment is devoted to the moral obstacles that faced some media outlets upon deciding whether or not to publish the image. Specifically, Singer sheds light on the ethical debate that erupted between the members of *The Morning Call*, a local newspaper headquartered in Allentown, Pennsylvania. After a long discussion between its members,

the newspaper decided not only to publish the image but to devote a whole page to Drew's image which appeared in their edition on September 12. However, this decision sparked angry reaction from the readers, which eventually forced the newspaper to issue an apology to all its readers. The public outrage was deemed as a necessary action out of respect not just to the victim or his family and relatives, but for humanity in general. It is not an exaggeration to claim that this image in particular had traumatized and shocked a number of people who were used to seeing such images only in Hollywood films.

In fiction, DeLillo and McEwan portray how the visual representations that dominated the world became a worrying source of health threats. *Falling Man* is a nonlinear novel that consists of different vignettes and switches its focus from one character to another. The novel opens with a description of how Keith Neudecker, a lawyer working in the World Trade Center, barely survives the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Disoriented and confused Keith mistakenly grabs a briefcase and asks to be taken to the apartment of his estranged wife, Lianne Glenn. Before the attacks, Keith has been separated from Lianne and his son, Justin, for a period of time. Although they return to live together and enjoyed a fair share of intimacy, they feel distanced from each other. Keith is involved in a secret love affair with a woman named Florence. The briefcase, which Keith took on the day of the attacks, belongs to her. In her company, Keith finds himself more psychologically secure because they are both 9/11 survivors. Lianne's efforts to reconcile their marriage is shattered when Keith decides to join a national poker tournament rather than work on their marriage. Lianne has her own troubles ever since the attacks, overwhelmed with the images of destruction to such an extent that she begins to imagine the falling of two towers almost everywhere. At the end, the novel comes full

circle by giving more details on the moment the plane crashes into the twin towers where Keith worked.

As I mentioned earlier, no other historic event had received greater media coverage than the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Douglas Kellner accuses the mainstream media of creating spectacles of terror through the “use [of] dramatic images and montage to catch attention, hoping thereby to catalyze unanticipated events that will spread further terror through domestic populations” (43). These dramatic images, according to Kellner, have significant health impact on their consumers as “many people who witnessed the event suffered nightmares and psychological trauma. For those who viewed it intensely, the spectacle provided a powerful set of images that would continue to resonate for years to come” (44). Along the same lines, Ann Kaplan accuses the media of acting as a strong source of trauma. She asserts, “people encounter trauma by being a bystander, by living near where a catastrophe happened, or by hearing about a crisis from a friend. But most people encounter trauma through the media, which why focusing on the so-called mediatized trauma is important” (2). I should add that the media, as I will explain through the depiction of Lianne, overpowers any other source that Kaplan mentioned. Although Lianne is living near the place of the tragedy, and has a husband who is a survivor who recounts his experience of survival to Lianne, it is the media narrative that traumatizes her. Thus, it is fair to claim that the media’s use of images, in its coverage of 9/11, had a negative impact on those who are constantly exposed to them. I will situate the analysis of the novel under what both Kellner and Kaplan have said about how the media is a potential source of trauma.

Even though Keith is traumatized after his survival, he is not going to be a part of my discussion. The main difference between Keith and his wife is that Lianne is traumatized mainly from what she has repeatedly seen on the media, particularly the images of destruction and suffering whereas Keith is traumatized as a result of being in the World Trade Center at the time of the attacks, which puts him in a different category. Thus, though the whole family is traumatized, the difference lies in the source of trauma and the reasons that ignite it. Obviously, Keith's mental and physical state upon his return to his wife's apartment, after being rescued, has its psychological effect on Lianne as she is struggling to make sense of what happened.

When Keith appears at his wife's doorway "all blood and slag, reeking of burnt matter, with pinpoint glints of slivered glass in the face," a shocked Lianne immediately takes him into the living room (87). Interestingly, the first thing that Lianne does is to "turn off the TV set, not sure why, protecting him from the news he'd just walked out of, that's why" (87). For Lianne, the media becomes a source of fear and anxiety and she feels that the exposure to news can lead to physical and mental breakdown. She wants to shield her husband from what she is seeing on the news. She understands that her husband barely saves his life and feels that the news media would only make his condition worse. This incident tells us more about Lianne than her husband. She does not want her husband to absorb all the negativity from the media coverage.

Lewis Gleich, in the "Ethics in the Wake of the Image: The Post- 9/11 Fiction of DeLillo, Auster, and Foer," acknowledges the harm that media spectacles have done to Lianne. He writes,

Lianne processes analog images of terror and the media's exploitation of them before she can experience genuine emotion in response to what she is seeing. Thus, real emotion is made impossible by an inversion of symbolic order...For Lianne, the mediated image of the Twin Towers falling will always seem more real than any personal account her husband can provide... Because she does not witness the destruction with the naked eye...her memories of 9/11 are forever linked to the analog medium. (163)

Lianne wants to protect her husband from the media, yet she cannot protect herself from its power. She is not eager to grasp the details of the attack from her husband because the media fills this void. In other words, the media narrative is much more powerful than the real experience of Keith. Baudrillard touches on the significance of media spectacles, in our age, as opposed to real experiences when he claims that "Rather than the violence of the real being there first, and the *frisson* of the image being added to it, the image is there first, and the *frisson* of the real is added" (29). Baudrillard acknowledges here that people are drawn to the power of images. Similarly, Gleich claims that in *Falling Man* "the media's sensational coverage of 9/11 threatens to silence the personal narratives of survivors" (163). Lianne realizes that media coverage of the tragedy is filled with images of pain and suffering, yet she falls victim to its power. Even though she is sitting next to a survivor, she prefers the TV set to understand the scale of the tragedy. Ironically, Keith seems to realize that his wife is transfixed by the mediated narrative rather than his own. They are sitting next to each other watching the footage on T.V. "his hand on hers, in pale light, as though to console her for his dying" (135). Keith believes that in the narrative that his wife is drawn into, he is a casualty. Lianne is struggling to cope with the

idea that her husband is alive despite the horrific images that she keeps watching on the television. She cannot digest the fact that her husband is alive especially in light of how 9/11 has turned into a horrifying spectacle. So, Keith reaches a point where he realizes that, to borrow Baudrillard's idea, in the simulacrum nature of 9/11 he is dead to his wife, whereas in the real, which is unfortunately overpowered by the spectacle, he is alive.

Lianne's inner struggles are evident every time she is watching the news. Watching the images of destruction invokes disturbing feelings for her. The following lines illustrate her distress:

Every time she saw a videotape of the planes she moved a finger toward the power button on the remote. Then she kept on watching. The second plane coming out of that ice blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin, the fleeting sprint that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone's, into some other distance, out beyond the towers. (134)

Lianne knows that watching the news could lead to physical and mental breakdown, but she cannot resist watching the footage over and over again. Her inner struggle is manifested by her urge to turn off the television and her desire to keep watching the plane crashing into the towers. Moreover, what is even more worrisome is how she aligns herself with the victims. Her feeling that watching the second plane makes the image run "beneath her skin" showcases the severe effects of the footage on her psyche.

To make matters even worse for Lianne, she begins to imagine what was it like for those who were in the plane during the hijack. She envisions the following scenario: "a clear sky that carried human terror in those streaking aircraft, first one, then the other, the force of men's intent...every helpless desperation set against the sky, human voices

crying to God and how awful to imagine this, God's name on the tongues of killers and victims both" (134). The physical pain that she is imagining translates into a mental pain for her. In *The Metaphysics of Ethics*, Immanuel Kant explains the dilemma that a person feels upon seeing images of pain and suffering. Kant writes, "when another person suffers and, although I cannot help him, I let myself be infected by his sorrow (by means of my imagination), then the two of us suffer, although evil actually (in nature) affects only one" (34). Kant implies that images of pain are contagious; one's suffering can easily be transferred to the other through the spectacle. By repeatedly exposing herself to the images of suffering, Lianne becomes a victim of media spectacles. Thus, these visions will eventually traumatize Lianne.

Lianne's imagination becomes the source of her distress. She surrenders to her imagination, which pushes her to envision what it must have been like in the planes and how the passengers reacted to the tragedy. Again, she has the opportunity to get a sense of what exactly happened the moment the planes struck the two towers from a victim, and shut down any other alternatives. Keith can recount what was it like during those horrible moments, yet Lianne prefers the mediated inauthentic narrative over her husband's authentic one. In Baudrillard's view, images "have radicalized the world situation, the events in New York can also be said to have radicalized the relation of the image to reality" (27). Lianne manifests Baudrillard's idea on how images complicate what is real and what is simulacrum. For Lianne, what is real is the mediated narrative while her husband's is a simulacrum. So, what accounts for Lianne's ill feelings is mainly her choice of ignoring Keith's personal narrative and consuming the disembodied images on the television.

The twin towers has a pivotal role in the novel. It is through them that we understand the magnitude of the catastrophe on the personalities of some of the characters. The images of destruction that Lianne watches on TV begin to haunt her. She starts imagining seeing the towers in artistic representations, specifically Giorgio Morandi's still life paintings that are hanging at her mother's house. The painting in question "showe[s] seven or eight objects...two of the taller items were dark and somber, with smoky marks and smudges, and one of them was partly concealed by a long-necked bottle" (49). Martin, her mother's lover, asks her "what do you see?" and she tells him that she sees the twin towers (49). Her response reflects her obsessive state, haunted by the specter of absence. Lianne's preoccupation with what she has extensively seen on TV begins to take its toll on her. The twin towers now appear as images of bottles and jars. Lianne's mother, Nina, refuses to fall under the same interpretation of the painting. She ignores her daughter's reading of the painting by claiming that, "these shapes are not translatable to modern towers, twin towers. It's work that rejects that kind of extension or projection" (111). Though there is no one "correct" reading or interpretation of any artistic or literary work, Nina's interpretation, or at least her approach to the painting, seems more reasonable than Lianne's. Although Nina is not a central character in the novel and her appearance is rather infrequent, she is a character that is attracted to art, literature, and history. She shows a high level of intellect mainly through her different discussions with Martin and Lianne. Most importantly, she does not show any interest in the media and its coverage of the attacks, nor does she show any signs of trauma. This enables her to interpret the painting more objectively, free of any preoccupations, unlike

her daughter. In sum, the difference of the approach in analyzing the painting reveals the complexity and struggle of Lianne's character in coping with the aftermath of the attacks.

In the chapter, "Precarious Bodies: Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*," Katharina Donn points out that meditating in DeLillo's novel could be seen as "ways to respond to trauma" and that it "can allow us to grasp not only the impact of trauma, but its embeddedness in material conditions of existence and violence" (137, 160). Apart from Nina, who is not convinced that the jars reflect the twin towers in the painting, Donn is mainly referring to Martin and Lianne. Martin was a member of radical terrorist groups in Europe in the 1970s, particularly the Baader-Meinhof gang. Even if he did not experience trauma, then at least he understands those who embody it, since his membership of a radical group means that he encountered regularly feelings of horror, shock, and suffering. That is the reason why Martin invites Lianne to interpret the painting, as he believes that meditation has a strong connection with trauma. We could argue that parallel to Lianne who sees the twin towers, Martin is probably seeing something that reminds him of that time period. DeLillo complicates the idea of using art as a healing process for the traumatized. For Lianne meditating upon the painting triggers bad memories since it reminds her of the tragedy. To this degree, media representations of an image dominate any other form of art's attempts to do so. Diminishing the supposed role of paintings in terms of their potential meditating and contemplative power in healing trauma, DeLillo underscores the power of media spectacles especially after 9/11. What Lianne sees in the paintings is what she repeatedly sees in the media. This episode in the novel could be read as a contest between two forms of visual representations: paintings and media spectacles. At the end, through Lianne's interpretations, it is evident that the

media's power of representation overpowers paintings in the same way that she is drawn more into the media's narrative over the events of 9/11 than the narrative of a husband who actually experiences it.

DeLillo's title alludes to Richard Drew's prestigious photo of a man falling from one of the towers. However, in the novel itself, the initial contact with this title occurs when Lianne encounters an artist named David Janiak who is known as The Falling Man because, with the use of ropes and harness, he jumps through buildings, mimicking the victims who jumped from the twin towers. Janiak, a character whose appearance is few and far between in the novel, has a significant impact on the traumatized Lianne. Janiak's performances are unannounced and take place on the streets of New York. With the use of a safety harness, DeLillo describes Janiak's preparation for his street performance: the man "kneels forward, body rigid, and falls full-length, headfirst" (168). Although the performances are dangerous since Janiak risks urban encounters with vehicular traffic, Lianne feels "compelled, or only helpless" to watch the man falling (167). In fact, Lianne is drawn into the performance. She could have continued walking and dismiss the man's performance, yet, she could not resist the temptation of watching a man falling from different buildings. Her reaction upon witnessing the performance is that "she felt her body go limp. But the fall was not the worst of it...the worst of it was the stillness itself and her nearness to the man, her position here, with no one closer to him than she was" (168). Lianne becomes terrified only when Janiak became a still figure, a motionless man. In this state, Janiak, becomes in essence the frozen image of the free-falling man on the day of 9/11, photographed by Drew and described by Junod.

Stillness, in *Falling Man*, has a psychological impact on Lianne. In the Morandi still-life painting, she sees the twin towers, which brings back unfortunate memories. Moreover, she is greatly troubled by the images that she is repeatedly exposed to on television and newspapers. The performance of the Falling Man strikes her with fear only when he becomes motionless. Thus, for Lianne stillness triggers trauma since it offers no layout for her feelings, unlike the live motion performances of Janiak in which she can engage with all of her senses and emotions. For Lianne, Janiak's falling is "the ideal falling motion of a body" simply because it was in motion (222). So, in *Falling Man*, the motion and the motionless trigger different responses from the traumatized Lianne. Even though the unannounced performances of Janiak are rather dangerous, Lianne heavily engages with the man and his performance. Watching the performance live allows Lianne to interact with the performer physically and emotionally, as opposed to an image where contemplation is the only way in which she can engage.

According to Gleich, Lianne's witnessing of Janiak's performance "generates physical and emotional responses that the media coverage cannot elicit" (165). Images in general, whether in the media or paintings, constrain her. In contrast, watching a live performance, even if it is life threatening, liberates her and pushes her "to contemplate her ethical responsibility" (Gleich 165). Lianne knows that she can have a role in stopping a catastrophe if Janiak's safety measures fail him or that she can applaud his bravery. In contrast, watching the events of 9/11 unfold on TV as a mere spectator, helpless in aiding or changing the outcome, has devastated her. Janiak's performances offer her the chance to be a part of something that the media takes away from her. This time she is part of it, not just a helpless spectator.

Lianne is shocked when she reads in a newspaper, that is six days old, that the Falling Man is dead at the age of thirty-nine. His death, of natural causes, precedes his final performance, which would have been conducted without a safety harness. Lianne, obsessively searches for the following day's newspaper in order to find out more about the life and death of the performer. Interestingly, it is only when she knows about Janiak's death that she is finally able to look at Drew's image of the falling man for the first time. Her feelings are described as follows:

It hit her hard when she first saw it, the day after, in the newspaper. The man headlong, the towers behind him... The enormous soaring lines, the vertical column stripes. The man with blood on his shirt, she thought, or burn marks, and the effect of the columns behind him, the composition, she thought, darker stripes for the nearer tower, the north, lighter for the other, and the mass, the immensity of it... Headlong, free fall, she thought, and this picture burned a hole in her mind and heart, dear God, he was a falling angel and his beauty was horrific. (221-22)

When Lianne realizes that the Falling Man could no longer perform, her trauma and ordeal push her to search for the actual image of the falling man. Janiak's performances have, for a while, kept her away from reality and she was healing to a certain extent. What is worth mentioning here is that the media, again, becomes the place that triggers trauma for Lianne. An image in a newspaper makes her condition deteriorate. DeLillo acknowledges the harm that might result from the images that the media spread, especially in an age where there is a media glut. So, Janiak's role in the novel is significant, as he highlights the difference between a live performance and an image and how they produce different reactions in a certain viewer.

There are other instances where the media continues to be the place that generates ill feelings for Lianne. After 9/11, she develops a habit of reading in a newspaper the names of those who died on that tragic day. For Lianne “not to read them, every one, was an offense, a violation of responsibility and trust. But she also read them because she had to, out of some need she did not try to interpret” (106). The profiles of the dead that Lianne is reading is a direct reference to the “Portraits of Grief” that *The New York Times* published daily from September 17, 2001 until the eve of the first anniversary of the attacks. In these portraits, the newspaper tries to include all the victims who lost their lives in that tragic day, by providing a photo and a brief description of each individual. Those portraits were quite popular among the public, and according to Janny Scott “readers said they read them religiously, rarely missing a day. For some, it was a way of paying homage. Others said it was a means of connecting, a source of consolation” (Scott). However, some critics point out the dark side of these portraits. Simon Stow claims that “it might be argued, the series was something of a ‘melodrama’... The success of the “Portraits of Grief” series—among both producers and consumers alike—seems to have been measured in tears, the bodily fluid more commonly associated with melodrama” (234-35). Thomas Mallon criticizes the portraits for being “less about their ostensible subjects than about the people reading them” and that the newspaper “has been patting itself on the back for constructing the world’s largest sympathy card” (par. 3). Mostly, all the criticism revolves around the idea of how these portraits play with the emotions of its readers who found themselves reading the profiles of the victims on a daily basis for a whole year.

Lianne believes that it is a daily task for her to read these portraits, or else it will be a violation. But a violation to whom, she could not articulate. It puts an immense pressure on her, a heavy burden on her shoulders. Knowing that she is already traumatized, these pages might only worsen her mental and emotional health. This daily ritual of knowing more about the deceased makes her more occupied with the catastrophe and it establishes a connection between her and the victims of the attacks. Nancy Miller, in the “Portraits of Grief: Telling Details and the Testimony of Trauma” claims that the *New York Times* “reliance on detail, anecdote, and narrative” could be seen as “enactments of traumatic memorialization” (129). For Lianne these portraits could never heal her, or comfort her. In fact, flipping through the images of the dead immerses her more in her misery. Lianne’s failure to offer an explanation of why it is a daily routine for her to read the portraits reflects her mental confusion after September 11.

On the contrary, Anna, Lianne’s friend, refuses to engage herself with the portraits of the dead. In fact, she shows a different approach to them. Regarding the profiles of the terrorists, she tells Lianne that “it’s way too big, it’s outside someplace...you can see their faces but what does it mean? Means nothing to call them names...you don’t know what to do. Because they’re a million miles outside your life. Which, besides, they’re dead” (64). The difference in the reaction to the portraits gives us an indication on the extent of Lianne’s trauma. Anna shows more rationality in refusing to allow the images of the dead to influence her life. She puts a distance between herself and the victims. For Anna, Gleich argues, her “ability to empathize is determined by whether or not she can imagine each death individually. The media suggests that this is possible, but Anna knows better. She realizes that there are simply too many victims for

her to account for all of them” (164). Anna does not allow herself to be drawn into the images of the dead. 9/11 carries a symbolic meaning for Anna because she refuses to establish a personal relationship with the dead like her friend. For Anna, 9/11 is behind her and she seems ready to embrace a post 9/11 life. In contrast, Lianne believes that it is her duty to get to know the dead and read their stories, a duty that turns out to be too much to bear.

Lianne’s son, Justin is also confused and perplexed by the falling of the twin towers. Following the events of 9/11, Justin develops a habit, with a couple of his friends, of using binoculars to look at the sky, waiting for the arrival of Bill Lawton (a clear reference to Osama bin Laden) on a jet plane. Justin does not believe the towers have actually fallen. Justin cannot comprehend the idea that the towers had already fallen, despite how his parents “talked to him...[and] tried to make gentle sense” (102). Even though Lianne and her husband are sure that Justin understands that the towers had collapsed, the boy refuses to come to terms with this tragedy. More worrisome is his belief that Bill Lawton is secretly communicating with him and his friends. He tells his parents, “he says things about the planes. We know they’re coming because he says they are. But that’s all I’m allowed to say. He says this time the towers will fall” (102). Furthermore, the young boy develops an imaginative character of Bin Lawton who Justin believes “flies jet planes and speaks thirteen languages but not English except to his wives...He has the power to poison what we eat but only certain foods” (74).

Lianne takes certain measures in order to isolate Justin from the repercussions of the terrorist attacks, including ensuring that he does not get exposed to the media. However, because Lianne is also confused and traumatized after 9/11, it is difficult for

her to assess her son's state objectively. This is evident when she tries to explain to herself what accounted for Justin's actions:

She tried to imagine what he was thinking. His father was back home now, living here, sleeping here, more or less as before, and he's thinking the man can't be trusted, can he? He sees the man as a figure that looms over the household, the man who went away once and came back and told the woman, who sleeps in the same bed as the man, all about Bill Lawton, so how can he be trusted to be here tomorrow. (101)

Here, Lianne fails to offer a reasonable explanation for Justin's behavior. She clearly blurs her own worries and concerns and believes that Justin is confused for the very same reasons. Lianne is the one who does not trust that Keith would last long living with them. She believes that her husband while physically there is mentally and emotionally absent. Justin does not share the same feelings toward his father; in fact, he opens up more to his father rather than to his mother. Justin tells his father first about his "secret" waiting for the arrival of Bill Lawton on a jet plane. In sum, Justin's actions are a bit unusual and could suggest a traumatized character. Lianne's reading of her son's situation is far from convincing, and reflects her own bewilderment. There is a duopoly of trauma: Lianne imagines seeing the towers in an artwork while Justin refuses to believe that they have fallen. They are still there for both of them who are unable to reconcile themselves to their absence. Thus, the falling of the two towers is an analogy for their own fallen states.

Lianne is a troubled character. Her life is spiraling in a downward trajectory after 9/11, even if the first thing that immediately happens to her on the tragic day is her potentially positive reunion with her estranged husband. Ironically, with the passage of

time Lianne realizes that Keith's return has made her even more confused. However, I argue that the media plays an equal part in traumatizing Lianne. DeLillo showcases it on multiple fronts. When Keith first steps in at her apartment, the first thing that she does is to turn off the television as an act of protection. Similarly, she does the same thing with Justin. She does not want her family to be overwhelmed by the power of the media even though she is a slave to its images.

Lianne is overshadowed by the images of destruction and pain that she is repeatedly shown in the different media outlets. Two of the most iconic images that emerge in the wake of 9/11 are the collapse of the twin towers and the falling man. These two particular images have a significant impact on Lianne. She imagines seeing the twin towers in an art painting while the images of the falling man put her in a great state of distress. By contrasting her state of mind with those of Nina and Anna, it is fair to claim that Lianne is traumatized by what she is constantly viewing in the media. In contrast, as I will explain in the following paragraphs, Ian McEwan depicts his protagonist quite differently in his novel *Saturday*. While Henry Perowne is also preoccupied with the media, that only intensifies after 9/11, unlike Lianne, Perowne does not want to protect himself from the mainstream media. He is drawn into what the media projects about global events through its different mediums and does not want to filter out any of the information that he receives through these sources.

The novel recounts a day, Saturday February 15, 2003, in the life of Henry Perowne, a renowned neurosurgeon. Before dawn, Perowne wakes up to the sight of a burning plane careening toward Heathrow airport. Perowne initially assumes that it is a terrorist attack on London. Later, the plane turns out to be a cargo plane and the fire is a

result of engine failure. On the same day, London witnesses the greatest demonstrations in its history, as people gather to protest the United States' invasion of Iraq. Perowne is not interested in participating in the demonstrations as he is on his way to play his weekly squash game with his American colleague. However, on route, his car smashes into another car. Baxter, the driver of the other car, wants Perowne to immediately compensate him with money for the damage that he causes. Perowne refuses. As a consequence, Baxter and his two companions behave aggressively towards Perowne and it looks like a fight is about to commence. However, upon noticing that Baxter is suffering from Huntington's disease, Perowne promises Baxter that he can perform a surgery that can save his life. The surgeon's plan convinces Baxter, and he manages to leave the scene unharmed.

After playing the game, Perowne goes back home, ready to cook dinner for his family who are planning a reunion. His daughter, Daisy is the first to arrive from Paris. She is followed by her brother, Theo. Last to arrive is Rosalind, Perowne's wife. However, Baxter forces himself into the house, arming himself and his friend Nigel with knives. He holds a knife at Rosalind's throat and orders Daisy to strip naked and recite a poem to him. Moments later, Perowne succeeds in convincing Baxter to follow him upstairs so he could show him the technical details of his curative methods. Somehow, Perowne and his son manage to push Baxter down the stairs. As a result of this fall, Baxter is rushed to the hospital where Perowne successfully operates on him. The novel ends when Perowne returned to his home from the hospital on Sunday morning.

A central concept in the novel is the extent to which the attacks in New York and on the Pentagon produced a global reaction. While trauma was more noticeable in the

U.S., the attacks also created an atmosphere of anxiety and unease in the U.K. probably more than any other place, given the strong cultural and political ties with the United States. The media, obviously, played a great part in creating this negative atmosphere. Brian McNair, in “UK Media Coverage of September 11,” discusses the UK media’s general approach to the 9/11 attacks. McNair, writes that, “in Britain ...media coverage of the September 11 attacks was dominated by journalists’ genuine feelings of horror and outrage” (34). McNair points out that the government’s position is also reflective of the strong ties between the two nations, since Tony Blair “defined the event as an assault on ‘us’ as much as ‘them’” (35). Thus, the media, along with the state, created a climate of fear and anxiety within British society.

Henry Perowne’s life is dominated by this news. On multiple occasions through the novel, we see Perowne involuntarily engaging with the media while performing other tasks at the same time. While preparing dinner for the family, he feels “the pull, like gravity, of the approaching TV news” (181). Furthermore, when Perowne visits his mother in a nursing home, he cannot stop himself from watching the news of the demonstrations on TV. He is reading Darwin’s book “at the same time he was listening to the radio news” (4). Reading Darwin’s biography while engaging with the news is worthy of further elaboration, especially in terms of Perowne’s reflection on life in the post-9/11 era. Darwin is known for his theory of evolution, so we can read this episode as an attempt from Perowne to come to terms with the evolution of terrorism and mass violence especially since the beginning of the 21st century. He is seeking a scientific explanation, since science is his field, to satisfy his curiosity. Thus, the news becomes the script and Darwin’s book the theory to apply to search for answers. Actually, this could be the

reason behind his anxiety to follow the news. It is through the media that he could understand the phenomena.

Perowne's life heavily revolves around the media and the news. He is always tempted to see what is on the news. Of course, on that particular day, the incident that he witnessed before dawn occupies his thoughts and made him even more anxious to follow the news. Yet, McEwan suggests that following the media for Perowne is more of a habit. We learn that for Perowne "with the idea of news, inseparable from it, at least in the weekends, is the lustrous prospect of a glass of red wine," and the newspapers that he "deplores but always read" (180-275). Also, along with Perowne's many political discussions with Theo and Daisy, we learn that his engagement with the media goes far beyond that day.

McNair's observations on the media coverage within the UK after 9/11 and the depiction of the Perowne character as a heavy media consumer leads me to touch on the relationship between the media and anxiety. Many scholars have touched on this relationship, especially when it comes to news on terrorism and violence. In the article, "The Drama of Media Coverage of Terrorism: Emotional and Attitudinal Impact on the Audience," Anat Shoshani tackles this relationship by claiming that "The intertwined nature of terrorism and its media portrayal produces an inescapable invasion into the lives of a multitude of people, far beyond the direct victims of the attack...[It] draws the audience into the web of fear that so serves the terrorists' purposes" (637). Similarly, Michelle Slone affirms that "television broadcasts of political violence and national threat have the power to increase personal levels of state anxiety among viewers" (520). According to Coryn et al., "controlled exposure to media coverage of terrorist attacks

leads to heightened feelings of anxiety” (13). Asbjorn Gronstad and Henrik Gustafsson, in *Ethics and Images of Pain* dwell on how images could trigger anxiety. They write:

Photography—with its inevitable indexical moment, with that moment’s attendant realist excess—has become a site of anxiety not because images of the body in pain raise intransigent ethical questions about the production, distribution, and consumption of such images, although they do, but rather because each photographic image pins the human to its helplessness and vulnerability before the eyes of all others. (xii)

Thus, the continuous exposure to images of destruction and suffering of others overwhelms the individual and eventually leads to feelings of anxiety and distress. So, given what the above-mentioned scholars have to say about how media coverage could lead to anxiety, I will analyze the novel under this premise. I will try to show how anxiety penetrates Perowne’s character as a result of his constant exposure to news.

The novel is set after 9/11 and the news of the terrorist attacks dominate the media. Perowne’s character shows signs of anxiety when it is in direct engagement with the media. Perowne acknowledges that the media has been a source of anxiety for him ever since 9/11. He confesses that he been “joined to the generality, to a community of anxiety. The habit’s grown stronger these past two years; a different scale of news value has been set by monstrous and spectacular scenes. The possibility of their recurrence is one thread that binds the days” (180). Here, we learn that what sparks Perowne’s anxiety is what happened on 9/11 and how the media relayed the tragedy. The climate of fear that the media creates is evident by how he feels that it is only a matter of time until another terrorist attack occurs. The possibility of another attack keeps him on edge. But he is also

addicted to following events in the media: “the television networks stand ready to deliver, and their audience wait. Bigger, grosser next time. Please don’t let it happen. But let me see it all the same, as it’s happening and from every angle, and let me be among the first to know” (180). Not only is Perowne anticipating that there would be another attack, he believes that it would be far worse than 9/11. Most significantly, he wants so desperately to be involved in the media loop when it happens – “let me be among the first to know.” The fact that he does not want it to happen again, and yet to be the first to know about it, shows paradoxical signs of anxiety, or even worse, a sign of addiction to the news. Strangely enough, news addiction is something real. In Henry’s case, he is addicted to news media. In an article published in *The Telegraph*, Chris Moss elaborates on this type of addiction by writing “news is like fast food, satiating us quickly and then leaving us wanting more, or something else. Nothing connects, nothing is in-depth, nothing is fulfilling”. Moss, then, goes on to explain this addiction in a more complicated scientific method. He writes, “Stressful news almost certainly sets off the limbic system, the part of the brain that controls emotions. Triggering the release of glucocorticoid, news could lead to poor digestion, nervousness and becoming prone to infections” (Moss). This addiction keeps Perowne emotionally as well as mentally preoccupied with the media as he waits for the next attack and expects them to be the vehicles of that information.

Perowne is overwhelmed by the power of the media, which consequently makes him anxious and preoccupied. Jennifer Isherwood explains the power of media narrative on the individual consciousness. She asserts that “media narratives provide a linking structure between the macrorealm of global or national events and the microrealm of individual consciousness, thought, and feeling...it facilitates imagined connections

between individuals who are cognizant of a community in which events occur beyond their immediate knowledge or perception” (37). So, given this imagined connection, Perowne lacks agency. His role is only to receive and consume, and not to be part of the news. This type of role “is largely passive, intermittent, private and anxious” (Isherwood 37).

Perowne is a victim of this culture of anxiety that spread after 9/11. When he witnesses the plane on fire as it descends toward Heathrow airport, his initial thoughts are that 9/11 is happening again as he expects, this time in London, not far from where he lives. Perowne imagines the following scenario:

The horror of what he can't see. Catastrophe observed from a safe distance.

Watching death on a large scale, but seeing no one die. No blood, no screams, no human figures at all, and into all this emptiness, the obliging imagination set free.

The fight to the death in the cockpit, a posse of brave passengers assembling before a last-hope charge against the fanatics. To escape the heat of that fire, which part of the plane might you run to? (15-16)

Perowne's imagination on what is happening within the plane is all about suffering, death, and most importantly terrorism. It is quite clear that what sparks this deadly scenario in Perowne's imagination is what happened on 9/11. He never assumes that it might be an accident with no casualties.

Just before he starts to imagine what was happening inside the plane, his mind takes him back to what actually happened on September 11. His memory of that tragic day is immediately illuminated: “It's already almost eighteen months since half the planet watched, and watched again, the unseen captives driven through the sky to slaughter, at

which time their gathered round the innocent silhouette of any jet plane a novel association. Everyone agrees, airliners look different in the sky these days, predatory or doomed” (15). Needless to say, Perowne’s knowledge and perception of what happened on 9/11 is exclusively acquired through the media. The direct correlation between what he just witnesses from his bedroom window and what he saw on the television a few months back confirms how the media has invaded his psyche. When Perowne says, “half the planet watched, and watched again,” it does not show the scale of the attacks, but shows instead how the media keeps re-showing the images of destruction. So, repetitiveness is key here. The act of watching, for Perowne, becomes an endless loop of remembering and triggers a participation in the sphere of the disaster of the imaginary. The media’s endless reel of 9/11 has invaded his consciousness to the point that any new event that requires his imagination has to have at its core elements of terroristic terror he has already seen or read about. In other words, the media has implanted images that form the genesis of any imaginary projection. It is not too far of a stretch to suggest that the media has hijacked his conscious being and feeds all further conjectural thought. Thus, his engagement with what happened on 9/11 goes beyond spectatorship as he starts to imagine what it is like inside the planes with the hijackers. In sum, the media narrative overpowers him, and his initial reading of the incident on that dawn in London proves it. Perowne dismisses any other alternative scenarios; his mind tells him that it is yet another terrorist attack.

Perowne’s anxiety intensifies in the early hours of that morning, as he desperately awaits the news to see what happens. To his satisfaction, the news of the plane finally appears on television, and he pays close attention to the order in which his story appears

in the newscast. The order in which the story appears reflects its importance, and since he believes that what happens on this plane is his, it gives him even more pleasure. So, when the news channel broadcasted his story first, he is pleased. However, the excitement soon turns into disappointment when, in the following newscast, the plane story makes way for a more important piece, and his story is now its “second item. The same pictures, and only a few more details: an electrical fault is suspected to be the cause of the fire” (69). The last time Perowne checks the news in the novel, his story has been relegated as the fourth item, which makes him realize that the story “has collapsed” (184). The more details emerge on the story, the more it gets dropped in the order of news. Perowne’s preoccupation with the order of news stems from his belief that the plane story is his. The phrases “Henry’s airplane” and “his own story” are repeatedly mentioned in the novel suggesting that Perowne feels he writes the story.

Perowne’s hope and desire of his story making the headlines and causing a media frenzy are soon dashed. When it turns out the plane that Perowne saw is not a terrorist attack, it becomes “a disappointing news story- no villains, no deaths, no suspected outcome” (69). It simply does not look like the attacks on New York. Perowne does not want “his story” to have human casualties because he thrills at human misfortunes; in fact, he knows that it would only make the headlines if it involves conspiracies, deaths, and terrorism. This is a clear sign of anxiety in Perowne’s character. He wants so desperately to be part of the media narrative, even at the expense of human lives. He realizes that a story about an accidental engine failure would rule him out. His hope of deaths and fatalities is against human nature. Thus, it suggests to us Perowne’s anxiety and how this anxiety is mainly due to how his mind is engineered to be preoccupied with

the media. Given how the media projects over and over again images of destruction in the wake of 9/11, Perowne, rightly so, makes the assumption that only these types of news are important.

However, Perowne's hope that his story would be labeled a terrorist attack is soon revived. His son, Theo, tells him about rumors surfing on the Internet that the pilots are radical Islamists and that they had planned to attack the millions of people who gathered together protesting the war, only to "bottle out" at the last minute. Perowne is intrigued by the idea that the story might not be what it was first thought. Immediately, we hear the narrator telling us that Perowne is trying to convince himself that the rumor could be true:

It doesn't sound plausible. But in general, the human disposition is to believe.

And when proved wrong, shift ground. Or have faith, and go on believing. Over time, down through the generations, this may have been the most efficient: just in case, believe. All day, Perowne himself has suspected the story was not all it seemed, and now Theo is feeding this longing his father has to hear the worst.

(154)

Perowne is still resisting the fact that plane is not a terrorist attack. He feels part of the story and wants it to be the talk of the town. The neurosurgeon is struggling to come to terms with the idea that London was not struck by terrorists that dawn. The fact that he is depending on mere rumors from the Internet is an indication of his media-fuelled anxiety. Although he understands that since the rumor is spread from the Internet "chances of their inaccuracy are increased" (154), he wants to believe it. This rumor might revive his hopes of being part of the narrative, the powerful narrative that feeds on stories of horror and death.

However, Perowne finally realizes that what happened on that day is just an accident in which all other speculations have vanished. As a result, Perowne feels “no particular pleasure, not even relief” (184). With this realization, Perowne seems to learn a lesson. The following lines are a crucial moment in the novel:

Have his anxieties been making a fool of him? It’s part of the new order, this narrowing of mental freedom, of his right to roam. Not so long ago his thoughts ranged more unpredictably, over a longer list of subjects. He suspects he’s becoming a dupe, the willing, febrile consumer of news fodder, opinion, speculation and of all the crumbs the authorities let fall... The Russian plane flew right into his insomnia, and he’s been only too happy to let the story and every little nervous shift of the daily news process colour his emotional state. It’s an illusion, to believe himself active in the story. (184-85)

Finally, Perowne realizes that the media has been the source of anxiety, especially in terms of how it constrains him. The media narrative pushes Perowne in one direction that makes him preoccupied with terrorism. The post 9/11 narrative is so powerful that it hinders Perowne’s ability to think objectively. He is struggling against the power of the media. In admitting that he becomes a blind follower of the news, he acknowledges that his agency is stripped from him. It is also a confession about how his engagement with the news has had a toll on his emotional state. Isherwood explains how the media plays with Perowne’s emotions: “the type of emotional engagement with the media that Perowne exemplifies is caused in part by his frustrated desire to play a more active or meaningful role” (40). This is a delicate moment in the novel as Perowne breaks his emotional engagement with the media. He finally realizes that he was superficial in

believing that he could be part of the story, or, at least to have an active role in it. Can we say that Perowne had finally redeemed himself? I believe that he finally manages to detach himself emotionally and mentally from the media. So, at the end, Perowne realizes that for his own well being, he should not engage himself with the narrative.

In his depiction of Perowne, McEwan criticizes what sort of news interests the media. Since Perowne's story does not consist of terrorists or violence and casualties, then it does not catch the attention of the media. His story is relegated in favor of other news, simply because it does not fit into the mainstream media's standards. However, I believe that McEwan's critique of the media goes beyond that. More specifically, he is critical of the way in which the media creates a climate of fear in the UK, and how this fear is transmitted to individuals. McEwan published an article titled "Only Love and Then Oblivion" in *The Guardian* few days after the September 11 attacks. In the article, he explains how exposing ourselves to catastrophes, 9/11 in particular, eventually leads to psychological complications. He writes, "we remember what we have seen, and we daydream helplessly. Lately, most of us have inhabited the space between the terrible actuality and these daydreams. Waking before dawn, going about our business during the day, we fantasize ourselves into the events. What if it was me?" (par. 7). I assume that the character of Perowne is made out of these lines. For Perowne, another terrorist attack is always looming and that puts him in a state of constant anxiety. So, when he saw the plane that dawn, he fantasizes himself as a part - an eye-witness - of the attack. McEwan opens his novel with the plane incident as it sets the mood for his protagonist. This incident causes him anxiety. Consequently, losing the squash game and getting in a car accident can be attributed to that incident, since both can be associated with absence of

mind and losing focus. Perowne is not shocked at the sight of the plane burning; he is more concerned with how the media would treat the story and whether he would be a part of it or not.

To conclude, both DeLillo and McEwan show how the media can be harmful to individuals, especially through the constant images of pain and destruction that it spread in the wake of 9/11. Lianne and Perowne are both victims of such representations. DeLillo and McEwan uncover the powerful media narrative and illustrate how it creates a climate of fear and paranoia after 9/11. DeLillo shows how this narrative was dominant domestically, while McEwan, on the other hand, shows how the narrative went from local to global. These two novels show us that 9/11 is not just about those who died or barely survived. There are others who were equally affected by it and their lives probably would not be the same anymore because of the media narrative about terror.

That leads me to discuss the differences in the depiction of the two characters. The clear difference between the two is that Lianne is traumatized, while Perowne does not reach that stage. Although Henry Perowne is totally engaged with global news, he shows signs of anxiety but not trauma. This, I believe, is due to two reasons: location and occupation. Lianne is living in New York, a very short distance from where the attacks took place; even worse, her husband is a survivor who immediately comes to her apartment that day. So, this means that she is in total shock. Paradoxically, while working with a group of Alzheimer patients for whom she is trying to help retrieve memories, she wants to forget about the tragedy. Perowne, on the other hand, is in London, thousands of miles away from New York, meaning that Londoners did not experience first-hand the same chaos. Also, since Perowne is a surgeon, he is used to seeing people suffering and

in great pain. This, I believe, makes him more immune to trauma. Having said that, they are both victims of the visual representations that emerged in the media after the September 11 attacks. Both authors underline the significant negative impact of the media in showing images of destruction and devastation.

CHAPTER FIVE

DOCUMENTARIES IN THE TERRORISM ERA: HOW POLITICAL

DOCUMENTARIES RESPOND TO THE MEDIA NARRATIVE AFTER 9/11

“[Documentaries] are indisputably more in the news. In fact, they *are* news” (20).

-Lynn Higgins, “Documentary in an Age of Terror”

“The documentaries are forthright. They are explicitly engaged with the meaning of 9/11” (125).

-Stephen Prince, *Firestorm: American Film in the Age of Terrorism*

Filmmakers have, like novelists, responded effectively to the tragedies of September 11, writing and directing many movies and documentaries that have dwelt on the cultural, political, and social impact of the attacks on American citizens. The main argument in this chapter is to examine how filmmakers have contributed to the narrative that critiques the way in which the media have operated in the aftermath of 9/11. In doing so, I will discuss two political documentaries: Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) and Ray Nowosielski’s *9/11: Press for Truth* (2006). I will analyze how the two filmmakers address the post 9/11 media bias, and investigate the degree of bias in their own works. Before discussing the films, I will try to briefly comment on how and why fiction films failed in addressing the socio-political environment after September 11, whereas, on the contrary, documentaries enjoyed a considerable success. I will try to summarize the reasons that critics have identified as accounting for the considerable popularity of documentaries.

Films, through their different genres, are social and cultural manifestations of a specific country and/or era. Douglas Kellner acknowledges the role of films as a powerful representation of cultures by claiming, “films are an especially illuminating social indicator of the realities of a historical era, as a tremendous amount of capital is invested

in researching, producing, and marketing the product. Film creators tap into the events, fears, fantasies, and hopes of an era and give cinematic expression to social experiences and realities” (4). Thus, since September 11 is considered to be a defining moment in our history, the American cinema, in particular, rushed to produce films trying to address the catastrophe. Therefore, building on what Kellner says about films as essential texts that reflect the social and cultural issues of a given time period, it was logical for the cinema industry to invest its resources in an attempt to tackle 9/11 and its aftermath.

Many high-profile filmmakers have produced films attempting to address the consequences of the attacks. Paul Greengrass’ *United 93* (2006) recounts the horrific events from the United flight number 93, where the passengers heroically fought for their lives against the terrorists which resulted in the crashing of the plane in Pennsylvania and the tragic death of all the passengers. Oliver Stone’s *World Trade Center* (2006) starring Nicolas Cage similarly depicts the heroics of the rescue teams on that tragic day and how they overcame brutal life-threatening conditions in order to save the lives of those who were trapped. Mike Binder’s *Reign Over Me* (2007) offers a different perspective by focusing on the struggles of the traumatized Charlie Fineman (Adam Sandler) to cope with life after he lost his family in the terrorist attacks. Kathryn Biglow’s *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) is another blockbuster film that fictionalizes the hunt and the capture of Al-Qaeda terrorist leader Osama bin Laden by U.S. troops.

However, the issue that I am trying to raise here is whether the 9/11 Hollywood films have managed to portray the catastrophe and its effect to a satisfactory degree. To clarify this question, I borrow Stephen Prince’s question in which he asks, “in terms of the legacy of 9/11—the Iraq War, controversies over warrantless domestic surveillance,

forcible rendition, Abu Ghraib and policies of torture—how did American film respond to and portray these issues?” (2). Prince claims that the majority of films that dealt with 9/11 “did quite poorly at the box office,” apart from *The Kingdom* and *Charlie Wilson’s War* which according to Prince “found a reasonably sized audience” (4). *The Guardian’s* film critic Peter Bradshaw asks whether the “cinema simply fail after 9/11?” and gives his answer by saying “Even after 10 years, I’m still not sure” (par. 11).

Similarly, Rafer Guzman writes, “When 9/11 did show up in the movies, striking the right tone was a challenge” (par. 8). Wheeler Dixon complains that 9/11 films “offer escapism” rather than comment on the changing social landscape (1). Thomas Riegler claims that due to the audiences’ preference of “indirect approaches to overtly political ones,” this has “contributed to Hollywood’s uneasiness in representing the actual events of 9/11” (115). David Holloway talks about how Hollywood became politicized after 9/11 but notes that, ironically, that produced a quite traditional agenda: “On closer inspection, films that were assumed to be indicative of a new Hollywood radicalism often adhered to conventional aesthetic patterns that reflected incoherent – but quite traditional – Hollywood political commitments” (82). In *Parallel Lines: Post-9/11 American Cinema*, Guy Westwell defines the post-9/11 American film industry as “cinema of political struggle” (180). Although Westwell is more lenient in comparison to others who criticize the 9/11 cinema, he attacks the patriotic and nationalistic discourse that dominated most of the films. This banal tendency, according to Westwell, served to strengthen the dominant discourse that was initiated by the state, which was a discourse of unity and patriotism promoted by the Bush administration to easily impose its agendas, such as the controversial war on terror.

Slavoj Zizek shares a similar opinion on how Hollywood approached 9/11. He complicates the Hollywood critique by suggesting that Hollywood's reaction to 9/11 showed the intent to which it often submitted to the power of the government. He writes that:

At the beginning of November 2001, there was a series of meetings between White House advisers and senior Hollywood executives with the aim of co-ordinating the war effort and establishing how Hollywood could help in the 'war against terrorism' by getting the right ideological message across not only to Americans, but also to the Hollywood public around the globe - the ultimate empirical proof that Hollywood does in fact function as an 'ideological state apparatus'. (16)

Zizek's claims are worrying, as he uncovers how Hollywood is an institution that is controlled by the government. In this sense, Zizek's critique of Hollywood does not differ that much from the way in which media scholars attacked the mainstream media after 9/11. Both deconstruct the myth that Hollywood and the mainstream media are independent and not subject to any external authority. The overall sense is that Hollywood films have failed to offer reasonable answers to the many questions that emerged after 9/11.

In fact, one of the noticeable criticisms that were directed toward the filming industry concerns how a number of Hollywood productions helped in promoting the stereotypical representations of Muslims as terrorists, thus contributing, along with the mainstream media, to the ever-growing gap in relations between the West and the Muslim world. Jack Shaheen's two books *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs After*

9/11, and *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* typify the tension between Hollywood and the representation of Muslims. Shaheen examines the demonizing portrayal of Muslims and Arabs in Hollywood since the 1960s. He asserts in *Reel Bad Arabs* that, “At most, three dozen or so had balance, or what I would call positive images. In the rest of them, Arabs are either terrorists or shady sheikhs or people you would not want to associate with. Those images continue to pervade our psyches” (66). Although after 9/11, it is clear that the image of terrorist is more dominant than the image of the shady lousy sheikh in depicting Muslims in Hollywood films.

Television was not immune from these prejudicial depictions. Evelyn Alsultany touches on the trend that overwhelmed many TV shows that were produced few years after 9/11. She writes:

After September 11, 2001, a number of TV dramas were created using the War on Terror as their central theme. Dramas such as *24* (2001-11), *Threat Matrix* (2003-4), *The Grid* (2004), *Sleeper Cell* (2005-6), and *The Wanted* (2009) depict U.S. government agencies and officials heroically working to make the nation safe by battling terrorism. A prominent feature of these television shows is Arab and Muslim characters, most of which are portrayed as grave threats to U.S. national security. (20)

So, it is fair to position Hollywood and the television industry, in terms of how it treated Muslims after 9/11, in the same category as the mainstream media in America. They are both responsible for spreading and sustaining Islamophobic ideologies. There are hardly any blockbuster films that attempted to present a positive portrayal of Muslims.

Hollywood thus adds fuel to the fire by continuing to demonize Arabs and Muslims. As

Steve Rose writes, “9/11 happened and things became even worse. Old-fashioned Islamophobia is still thriving” (par. 11).

In contrast to the seemingly pessimistic responses from a number of film critics towards the way in which Hollywood handled 9/11, documentaries, on the contrary, received a fair amount of critical appreciation. Steven Mintz writes “the most stunning development in movies in the early twenty-first century is the surging popularity of the documentary. In 2004, box office receipts might have declined had it not been for documentaries, which grossed over \$170 million” (9). Lynn Spigel claims that, “it should be noted that in the wake of 9/11 documentaries of all sorts (but especially ones about terrorism) were... a ‘hot property’ in the television industry” (249). Stephen Prince also acknowledges the raise of documentaries in response to 9/11, asserting that,

Unlike Hollywood’s commercial feature films, which tend to obliquely filter references to 9/11 through the conventions of genre, the documentaries are forthright. They are explicitly engaged with the meaning of 9/11, and, unlike the case with a filmmaker working inside the frame of fiction, their directors often express clear and sometimes partisan point of view. (125)

Prince is suggesting several advantages to documentaries: they do not have literary conventions to follow, they are honest, and overtly indicate their agenda so that the viewer has no doubt about where they stand on the issue. In contrast, none of the 9/11 Hollywood films have touched on the role of the mainstream media in the aftermath of 9/11, hence failing to expose the symbiotic relationship between the media and terrorism. In the same vein, Lynn Higgins calls the first decade of the 21st century “a renaissance of the documentary” and while they “are not perhaps more numerous than in the past... they

are indisputably more in the news. In fact, they *are* news” (20). Kellner labels the beginning of the 2000s as “the Golden Age of Documentary,” and what attributed to the pouring of documentary productions is “the bankruptcy of corporate news and information in the United States, in which a small number of corporations controlled the major television networks, as well as important newspapers and Internet sites, and failed to be adequately critical of the state and major corporations” (53). Higgins and Kellner both point to the idea that documentaries were produced in response to the media’s shortcomings. They wanted to challenge the monopoly of certain news corporations and indicate how they fabricate and mislead. The idea of documentaries as the news is an intriguing one. It points to a tension between documentary filmmakers and the mainstream media. At least in regard to the documentaries that I am planning to discuss in this chapter, they all try to expose how the media tends to mislead the public. Consequently, Higgins and Kellner make a valid point about how documentaries challenge the media and how documentaries are trying to be more involved in news making.

Another vital factor that helped greatly in the rising popularity of documentaries in the post-9/11 era was the affordability of technological equipment. In “The Impact of Digital Technology on Documentary Distribution,” Nicole Nime affirms, “Digital has had an enabling effect on the independent sector by making filmmaking an affordable pursuit, distribution an easy achievement, and promotion a social enterprise” (43). Higgins, similarly, acknowledges how documentary filmmakers are utilizing these advancements by claiming that,

The affordability and thus the democratization of new technologies such as videography have also played a crucial role: Today's video cameras and computer editing software can be compared to the hand-held cameras, mobile microphones, and synchronous sound, new in the late 1950s, that made Italian neorealism and the French New Wave possible. (22)

For filmmakers, the accessibility of new technologies proved to be an essential asset for them as they have paved the way for filmmakers to challenge, or at least, to become more competitive with the Hollywood film industry, especially in terms of their superior technological equipment. This allowed the documentary makers to focus more on the content of their films, since using the latest innovations were not an obstacle anymore to their success.

Another essential factor is how we, the viewers, approach documentaries. In other words, what do we expect and experience upon watching documentaries? These films, especially the political ones, are made under the premise that they raise serious social and political analysis as opposed to Hollywood's purpose of entertaining the viewers. Lewis Jacobs observes that, "The documentary film came to be identifiable as a special kind of picture with a clear social purpose, dealing with real people and real events, as opposed to staged scenes of imaginary character and fictional stories of the studio-made pictures" (2). So, realism, according to Jacobs, is a distinguishable feature of documentaries.

Furthermore, Jennifer Borda claims that documentaries "have acted as a sort of social conscience, often against those in power" (57). The point that Borda raises is relevant to the post 9/11 context as almost all the political documentaries tend to challenge and resist the government's actions and what they try to promote. So, the notions of realism and

resistance that have been strongly attached to documentaries require different sort of interaction from the viewers. Instead of making us “passive listeners,” this type of documentary demand our interaction and more importantly challenge us to take actions.

Besides the two documentaries that I will discuss in this chapter, many other documentaries that were popular at the time of their release are worth a brief mention. The documentaries that were filmed within four or five years after the attacks focused mainly on presenting never-seen footages of that tragic day, or conducted interviews of those who survived and people who lost their loved ones on 9/11. The French filmmakers Gédéon and Jules Naudet’s documentary *9/11* (2002) is an astounding example. Their initial intention was to depict the daily challenges of Tony Benetatos, a rookie New York firefighter, over a period of nine months. This aim was replaced by taking several shots of the first plane crashing into one of the towers, along with recording the chaotic scenes that erupted. The film did receive a fair amount of criticism, most notably in terms of how the film diverts from the documentary conventions and adopts Hollywood conventions of storytelling. This is what Stef Craps argues in his article, “Conjuring Trauma: The Naudet Brothers' 9/11 Documentary.” In it, he writes that the film,

takes on the structure of a classical Hollywood film, complete with an omniscient narrator, a protagonist, a carefully crafted storyline, a dramatic soundtrack, and the obligatory happy ending: indeed, not only does Tony emerge from the scene of the disaster a hero, but all the company’s other fire-fighters turn out to have survived the ordeal as well. (188)

Thus, Craps positions the Naudet's documentary with some fictional films that were criticized for adopting the heroism narrative that dominated American culture after September 11.

One of the most noteworthy aural features of their documentary was the sound of bodies hitting the ground. One of these bodies was probably Richard Drew's falling man, arguably one of the most famous photographs ever taken. The image, understandably, sparked a lot controversy, which forced many media outlets to refrain from publishing it. According to Drew, who wrote an article in *Los Angeles Times* a couple of years after the attacks, the photograph "was denounced as coldblooded, ghoulish and sadistic" (Drew). Christopher Vanderwees explains that the image "terrifies viewers through their identification with the falling man in the frame, seeing themselves as him, him as themselves. In order to protect their sense of identity and uphold the social imaginary, viewers must reject the image" (239). As I had mentioned this image in the previous chapter, but I am reintroducing it here to show how since the media abstained from publishing the photograph, or even to discuss its implications inspired the making of several documentaries that tried to investigate the nature of the image and its socio-political repercussions. The documentaries wanted to seize the opportunity and satisfy the curiosity of those who wanted to know more about the iconic image. One popular documentary that revolved around the image is Henry Singer's *9/11: The Falling Man* released in 2006. *9/11: The Falling Man* traces the recognized image of a man falling from one of the towers. The film interviews the photographer who took the picture and also looks at the public reaction to one of the most controversial images in our history.

A decade after the attacks, a new wave of documentaries has emerged and they share a bold claim that the 9/11 attacks were an inside job. *The Anatomy of a Great Deception* (2014), *9/11 Decade of Deception* (2015), *9/11 Exposed* (2015), and *9/11 Conspiracy Solved* (2012) all are based on the idea that 9/11 was a conspiracy and all the filmmakers try to prove their theories by relying mainly on scientific explanations, especially on the way that the towers fell. These documentaries, and many more, are considered to be part of the 9/11 Truth movement that is based on refuting the official account of what had happened on that day. Regardless of the validity of this claim, the 9/11 Truth movement has encouraged many filmmakers to produce films that support this movement.

Fahrenheit 9/11 and *9/11: Press for Truth* are the main focus of this chapter because they remain two of the few documentaries that have explicitly attacked the mainstream media's role in the aftermath of 9/11. Moreover, both films are similar in their stance, as they point to the corruption of people in power. They also present a different dimension than the novels that I have discussed in this dissertation, which do not cover how the hierarchal structure of media organizations affects and hinders objective journalism.

Michael Moore's political documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* is arguably one of the most controversial films ever to be made. At the time of its release, *Fahrenheit 9/11* stirred endless debates across the nation, as some were strongly in favor of the documentary and praised it. Mintz points out that one of the traits of Moore's films, including *Fahrenheit 9/11*, is that they "engage in a powerful form of unmasking, laying bare realities that had been hidden or repressed" (11). Others, however, found it lacking

credibility. Armond White claims that “Moore neglects the real journalistic work... He's after an effect, not the facts. Difficult, gut-twisting and disillusioning as politics are, Moore never inquires into the human basis of political behavior” (White). Joe Scarborough writes that in the documentary “the scale of deceit and deception is breathtaking” (par. 5). Robert Toplin’s book, *Michael Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11: How One Film Divided a Nation*, and as the title suggests, is a good resource on how the film sparked different reactions from the viewers. In this book, Toplin offers an objective and unbiased reading of the film. He acknowledges the praise and critique that the film received upon its release and gives the reader a rare opportunity to examine both the strong and weak points of the film. Toplin reflects the success of the film by claiming, “the stakes in these conflicting viewpoints seemed large at the time, because Michael Moore’s film broke attendance records. For the first time in Hollywood’s modern history, a documentary film held the top position in audience appeal during its opening weekend” (14). To get a sense of the influence of this movie, another documentary was released several months after *Fahrenheit 9/11*, titled *Fahrenhype 9/11* (Peterson 2004) and its main purpose was to refute and question the content of Moore’s film. Ron Briley writes that in the wake of the release of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, “Michael Moore is both idolized and demonized” (11). It is important to note that this paradoxical reaction in the wake of the release of his film was a reflection of the divided political landscape in America. What I mean here is that the general approach to the film had conservatives denouncing the film and the filmmaker in particular while liberals praised it. Ken Nolley touches on the tension between the two political parties in responding to the film by claiming that

The state of American political discourse, particularly as it expresses itself in the commercial media today (including [*Fahrenheit 9/11*]), is a profoundly depressing one. Certainly it is a bankrupt response to that state of affairs for conservatives to focus narrowly on the most literal kind of textual accuracy in Moore's film, without examining the political context from which it sprang or the fact that their own rhetoric is often characterized by the same problems. But by the same token, liberal critics have a limited position to defend if they do not wade at least some way into the waters of referentiality and face the implicit truth claims made by documentaries such as this one, whether they finally believe that we can know, fix, or even agree upon the facts to which our documentaries point.

(16)

Moore's documentary, unsurprisingly then, initiated a tug of war between the two dominant political parties in the United States.

Fahrenheit 9/11 covers a wide range of controversial topics in his documentary. Its purpose is to enlighten the public to some of the wrongdoings of the U.S. government. The film starts with Moore questioning the way in which Bush had won the election in 2000. He wants to undermine the Bush administration and how it handled the catastrophe of 9/11 and its aftermath, especially the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. According to Moore, the inadequacy of the administration paved the way for the terrorists to execute the attacks. However, I am more interested in Moore's criticism on the role of the mainstream media and how he attacks its role in the build up to Bush's supposed mission to defeat terrorism.

Moore takes us back to the presidential elections in 2000 to unveil how the media manipulated the citizens. He singles out *Fox News* for misleading the public by projecting falsified news about the election votes. Moore includes different clips from different news channels that all presented the news that Al Gore, Bush's rival in the elections, had won the majority of votes in Florida. *Fox News* disagreed and in opposition to all other outlets claimed that Bush was the one who won in Florida, thus making him the 43rd president of the United States. Moore claims that Bush had some connections with the news channel that gave him the ability to pull the strings to win the elections. In other words, Moore reveals how the media played a significant role in legitimizing Bush's presidency, and thereby uncovering the corruption of some of the mainstream media, indicating how they easily fell under the government's influence. It is important to note that Moore opens up his documentary with this particular episode. He immediately depicts the media as corrupt and not to be trusted. Thus, he cleverly lays the foundation of his work by suggesting that the media has lost its credibility.

The media and how it operated post 9/11 has its share of criticism in Moore's film. More precisely, he reflects on the way in which it had approached the war on Iraq. Moore mockingly narrates the following: "Fortunately, we have an independent media in this country who would tell us the truth" (Moore 01:18:16). Then he introduces different clips from different news channels in which they all discussed the war on Iraq. They are depicted praising the decision of the war by deeming it a necessary step to neutralize Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons, which would in turn improve the security of the United States. However, by introducing this segment, Moore exposes how the

mainstream media blindly rallied behind Bush's administration in their supposed "War on Terror" and failed to question the validity of this action.

Also, in the same clips, all the anchors are delivering the message that the U.S. troops were making remarkable progress in the war. In other words, a positive portrayal of the war dominated the media. Moore disagrees, saying, "But one story the media wasn't covering was the personal story of each and every soldier who was killed in the war" (Moore 01:19:09). While uttering these words, he presents different clips of U.S. soldiers lying in coffins, others screaming in pain, and some in clear shock and distress. Inevitably, in any war, there has to be deaths and casualties, but Moore accuses the media of overlooking the psychological and moral suffering of the U.S. soldiers and focusing only on one angle. Moore "provides viewers with the grisly war footage of maimed Iraqis and American soldiers that has been missing from Pentagon-manipulated media coverage of the war" (Briley 12), in order to show how the media misled the public by showing that the troops were achieving their targets with hardly any repercussions.

Moore notes how the media contributed to the climate of fear that dominated American society in the aftermath of 9/11. I have already suggested how media scholars and novelists have touched on how the media cast fear, which would make the public vulnerable and, thus, easily fall prey to the power of the state. Moore provides concrete evidence of such media tactics. He includes different segments from the leading news channels, in which they broadcast specific stories on potential threats from terrorists just few months after September 11. *Fox News* reported the following, "We've got an unusual terror warning from the feds to tell you about. *Fox News* has obtained an FBI bulletin that

warns terrorists could use pen guns, like in James Bond filled with poison.” In another news sketch, *CNN* claimed, “America is on high alert tonight, just four days before Christmas. A possible terror threat, as bad as or worse than 9/11.” Similarly, CBS reported “Be on the lookout for model airplanes packed with explosives.” And then again, Moore presents a clip from *Fox News* that says, “The FBI is warning ferries may be considered particularly at risk for hijacking” (Moore 00:48:59-00:49:32). Needless to say, none of these threats had actually happened. These groundless stories only served to spread fear and paranoia within the society. Moore’s claim is that the media tried to amplify the threat of terrorism to indicate that the American people would always be the prime target of terrorists. These news items had no other purpose other than casting fear onto the public, making them anxiously awaiting the next terrorist attack.

Moore interviews Congressman Jim McDermott and asks him how casting fear might work for the advantage of governments. The guest answers by saying, “Fear does work, yes. You can make people do anything if they're afraid... you make them afraid by creating an aura of endless threat. They played us like an organ...they gave these mixed messages, which were crazy-making” (Moore 00:49:41-00:50:04). Obviously, the mainstream media provided an effective means for the government to send these messages. It was through the media that the threat of terrorism was sustained for a long period after the terrorist attacks. Moore proves that all the media outlets were similar in their approach. Thus, there was not much difference between right-wing (conservative) and left-wing (liberal) media outlets. Moore’s criticism of the media put them all in one pot.

The previous examples indicate where Moore explicitly attacked the media and its bias. However, the whole film could be seen as an attack on the media as well. All the facts that he presents in the film, according to him, were hidden from the public, which stand against the main principle of the free press. Though his prime target is the Bush administration and how it failed in handling 9/11 and its aftermath, the media is also one of his targets. So, Moore deconstructs the long-standing myth that the mainstream media in the U.S. is independent and free. The documentary taints the image of the media especially on how it always takes pride in being factual and accurate.

Ray Nowosielski's *9/11: Press for Truth* follows the same pattern as its main purpose is to expose how the U.S. government under Bush's administration showed a total lack of vision in dealing with the catastrophic attacks. The political documentary follows three girls, known as the Jersey girls, in their pursuit of answers about September 11. What brought the three girls together was their anger fuelled by how they believed that 9/11 and its aftermath could have been stopped altogether had the government been more tentative. The documentary is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the 9/11 Commission Report and how, after an immense pressure from the family of the victims, the government eventually agreed in initiating a formal investigation on what accounted for the terrorist attacks. Yet, as the documentary proves, the Commission did not provide satisfactory answers. The second part, my focus, is about how the media failed to perform what was expected from them in pre and post 9/11. Finally, the documentary takes us to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the incompetence shown by the U.S. intelligence (CIA) in capturing the Al Qaeda terrorist leader Osama bin Laden and other influential members of the group.

The section where the media is put under the microscope starts with one of the Jersey girls saying, “on 9/11, the media started out by doing its job and somehow got waylaid and stopped doing its job. It began reporting solely on the administration and the government activities.” The narrator then adds, “the news media while yielding a fact here and a fact there failed again and again to connect the dots” (Nowosielski 00:28:44-00:29:04). Thus, the mainstream media is introduced in the film not necessarily as manipulative, but simply as an entity that prioritized some types of news over others. In order to show how the media “failed to connect the dots,” the film relies heavily on the work of the 9/11 researcher Paul Thompson who published a book, titled *The Terror Timeline: Year by Year, Day by Day, Minute by Minute: A Comprehensive Chronicle of the Road to 9/11—and America's Response*, in which he includes more than five thousand articles from multiple news outlets that were about 9/11. Thompson exposes the media’s shortcomings through multiple fronts. At the time of the filming of *9/11: Press for Truth*, the book was yet to be published, and first started as an open website on the Internet. By compiling these articles, Thompson’s main argument is that the media had partly done its job by reporting news concerning the national security threat both pre and post 9/11. However, the media failed to follow up on this news. Thompson shows, for example, that even before 9/11, several newspapers and news channels had published different reports on the possibility that terrorists (Al-Qaeda members) were plotting to attack the United States. The media, according to Thompson, failed to reflect the scale of the threat, since it only reported these threats briefly and infrequently. Thompson says that “if you start to put all those rather obscure stories together you end up with an almost completely different narrative for just about any area relating to 9/11” (Nowosielski 00:31:26). So,

this section on the media criticizes the incompetence of the media rather than its bias. The idea of including Thompson in the documentary is mainly to show how his work provides a comprehensive coverage of 9/11, something that the mainstream media failed to do. The film exemplifies the way in which Thompson's work outshone the work done by all the media institutions.

Exposing the media in relation to 9/11 becomes more complicated later in the documentary. The filmmaker interviews Rebecca Abrahams, an assignment editor working for the *ABC News*. In the interview, Rebecca claims that “we are everyday kicking and screaming in the newsroom trying to get stories out but we could do a story and it might not make air. You have someone from the corporation making the editorial decisions. These are not journalists” (Nowosielski 01:16:28). In the same direction, Nowosielski interviews Dan Rather, the CBS anchor, who says “there was a time in South Africa that people would put flaming tires around people's necks. If they dissented and in some ways the fear is that you will be necklace-tiered...you will have a flaming tire of lack of patriotism put around your neck. Now it's that fear that keeps journalists from asking the toughest of the tough questions” (Nowosielski 01:17:21). The film includes other journalists who back what Abrahams and Rather have claimed on the limitation of freedom within the American media.

The documentary exposes the hierarchy and power relations within the major media corporations. Moreover, it points to the conflict of interest between journalists and their superiors. The film does not elaborate more on this claim, and is content with what a couple of journalists have to say on this matter. However, this clash between journalism integrity and the corruption of people with power in the media is worthy of further

elaboration. Raymond Bonner reflects on the dilemma that many journalists face when reporting on sensitive issues. He writes that “Editors long ignored isolated reports that the United States was holding suspected terrorists in secret prisons. ‘We wouldn't publish it even if we knew,’ a senior editor at a major American newspaper said when it was suggested that his paper devote its impressive investigative talent to exposing the secret prisons” (par. 8). It should be noted that the hierarchal structure of media organizations put editors, also, in a delicate position. They are pressured from owners who would typically have the ultimate power to decide what to publish. Richard Desmond elaborate more of this matter by writing:

Almost all newspaper owners exert control over editorial content. Most do it with subtlety. Some do it crudely. On very rare occasions, some do it overtly. Only one, the late Lord Beaverbrook, was candid enough to admit that he owned papers to make propaganda. In truth, the majority do the same. As even many journalists privately concede, what's the point of newspaper ownership if not to get one's own views across? (par. 2)

Owning news corporations facilitate the making and spreading of propagandas. Rupert Murdoch, for example, owns a large number of news corporations across the globe. It is only natural that the outlets that he owns adopt his views and ideologies. The corporations that Murdoch owns become an important platform in where his beliefs and political opinions are spread. Known as a republican, it comes as no surprise that his news corporations have backed Donald Trump, for example, in the recent elections. The same thing could be said on the role of his empire in the British elections in 2010 where David Cameron from the Conservative Party became the Prime Minister in the United

Kingdom. Nowosielski thus exposes the hierarchal structure of media organizations and indicates how the bureaucracy hinders media integrity. Objective journalism faces many hurdles in an age where the majority of news organizations belong to individuals who control the content, which often put journalists in an ethical dilemma.

Nowosielski's critique of the media in the aftermath of 9/11 is quite unique. The norm has been that when the media is being criticized, it is presented as one unit, meaning that there is no differentiation between journalists, anchors, editors, managers, and owners. Nowosielski shows us there is a difference and suggests that we should look at media bias from this angle. We cannot simply put them all in one pot. At the end, the institution is strongly affected by the owner's ideologies and beliefs. So, the filmmaker's attack on the mainstream media is complicated. On one hand, it shows that there are hardworking journalists who strive to inform the public no matter the consequences. On the other hand, the film demonstrates that those who have the authority to choose what to pass through to the public and what to keep secret can stymie their efforts. The last shot in the documentary shows a large screen divided into small screens where all and each one them displays different anchors apparently reading the news. However, their voices are intersected which makes it extremely difficult to listen to what they are uttering. I believe that the filmmaker is alluding to how media outlets in this era with their surging propagation have lost its credibility. This scene shows that all their words and stories have lost their value. To sum up, Nowosielski exposes the hierarchal structure of the media industry and more importantly, the process that stories go through before they are released to the public.

Both *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *9/11: Press for Truth* are political documentaries that attack the U.S. government's shortcomings in dealing with 9/11 and its aftermath, especially the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Since Michael Moore and Ray Nowosielski focus mainly on how the Bush administration reacted after 9/11, they find themselves forced to attack the mainstream media and its role in the post 9/11 era. Their films point to the corruption of the media and how people with immense power control the major organizations. Moore and Nowosielski contribute to the narrative that exposes the mainstream media and how it has lost its credibility since 9/11. They both cleverly consolidate their criticisms with clips and interviews that prove the negative role of the media in misleading the public.

However, we ought to be careful to overly celebrate the documentary makers' pursuit of the genuine truth, mainly because their version of the truth does not necessarily mean that it is the ultimate and undisputed truth. Probably one of the strong advantages that documentaries proclaim they possess is the idea that they are authentic. We commonly associate documentaries with real raw material. Understandably, filmmakers have their own agendas and political leanings, which in one way or another have to be reflected and inserted in their films. As Kellner puts it, "documentaries themselves are constructs and have their biases and entertainment and fictive components" (53). Filmmakers, in order to promote their cause, are subjective in the representation of their ideas and views. They have the freedom to choose what to include and what to exclude. In other words, they are biased to a certain degree. A key difference between documentary films and fiction films, whether it is Hollywood or else, is that in documentaries there is only the filmmakers, since they are also the directors and producers, who can impose

their views. In films, it is completely different, as there are screenwriters, directors, actors and actresses who have their own beliefs and opinions. So, for an idea or thought to be presented in a fiction film, it has to be filtered through the different players who make a film. In other words, it is not a one-man band. To put it another way, in documentaries, we refer to them either by using the title of the work, or simply by the name of the director. For instance, we can say *Fahrenheit 9/11*, or simply Moore's film. We can use the director's name and the title interchangeably.

The documentary bias, however, is different than the mainstream media's. The fundamental difference between them is that the media, with its bias, tends to mislead and manipulate the public, whereas filmmakers do not necessarily exert the same tactics. Documentary makers could focus passionately on their topic without attempting to deceive the viewers by presenting falsified facts, while the mainstream media deliberately fabricates facts to serve their own interests. Thus, it is reasonable to claim that the documentary bias is not necessarily negative. Building on Higgins and Kellner's idea that documentaries, especially since the last decade, are becoming more and more involved in constructing their own version of news as a way of challenging the mainstream media, along with my overall approach in this dissertation which is to critique the bias in the news, I will, in the following paragraphs, analyze the bias in the two documentaries that I have discussed in this chapter.

It is no secret that Michael Moore is a liberal democrat and his political activism is mainly based on promoting left-wing concepts and ideologies. An important factor that played to the advantage of Moore, upon the time of the release of his documentary, was how Americans were starting to lose their trust in the media. Regina Lawrence recognizes

this claim by writing that “ultimately, the popularity of *Fahrenheit 9/11* is one more indicator of the growing public disaffection with mainstream journalism and the sea change underway in the American media system. Increasing numbers of Americans prefer their information with a discernible perspective, which Moore amply delivers” (254). Lawrence’s words suggest that the success of Moore’s film was, in part, due to how the mainstream media operated after 9/11. People were desperate for factual and honest representation of what was happening locally and globally. Some people were expecting *Fahrenheit 9/11* to fill this void and deliver what the mainstream media did not dare to. Documentaries were beginning to compete with the media industry in becoming the venue to which people turned for their news.

One of the stark criticisms that were directed at Moore, in regard to *Fahrenheit 9/11*, was the timing of its release. The documentary was released in mid 2004, just a few months before the start of the presidential election, which saw Bush competing with John Kerry. Kellenr writes, “Moore intended *Fahrenheit 9/11* to be an important and perhaps decisive influence on the highly contested 2004 presidential election” (147). This suggests, as many have pointed out, that Moore is a propagandist who made this film to best serve his political views. Peter Wilshire elaborates more on the intention behind the timing of the release by affirming that:

There is no doubt that Moore’s intense desire to oust Bush from the White House was genuine – no one could question his firm commitment to the cause. But it may also be fair to suggest that Moore, shrewd marketing campaigner that he is, saw the box office potential of promoting *Fahrenheit 9/11* as an attempt to oust Bush from The White House, while no doubt being acutely aware of the

difficulties involved in removing an incumbent US president during a time of war, fear and uncertainty. (132)

Regardless of whether Moore's accusations against Bush in the whole documentary are valid or not, the timing of the release reflects his bias. More importantly, the theatres are essential avenues in which propagandists could spread their messages. Moore utilized this to his advantage, particularly in the light of the statistic provided by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) that in 2016, 71% of the American population went to the cinema at least once during that year. I doubt that the percentage was significantly different in 2004. So, Moore targeted almost a majority of the American public with its different political and social opinions. Therefore, *Fahrenheit 9/11* is no different than the mainstream news that has its own agendas and focuses on the news that best serve their interests.

Talking about the timing of the release makes me touch on Moore's aim to affect the voting pattern. It comes at no surprise why Moore opens up his film by a direct reference to the 2000 election, in which he claims that Bush's presidency was illegitimate. The film director wants to affect the public opinion and urge them to vote to the other candidate. Obviously, one crucial way for Moore to achieve his goals was to affect the voting pattern in 2004. The filmmaker has explicitly stated, in an interview with Daniel Fierman, that he intentionally pushed for the film to be released in June 2004 and the DVD version in October, just a few weeks before the election hoping that it might achieve his political goals in changing the outcome of the elections. Moore wanted to shift the balance of power, by appealing to the public to vote against Bush in the election. Cheryl Koopman et al., conducting an empirical study, discuss the implications

made by Moore in his attempt to influence the voting decisions. They write, “It is notable that in addition to the negative messages throughout the film about Bush as president, the issue of voting for him was specifically highlighted early in the film with material suggesting that he may have stolen the previous presidential election,” which according to their findings “may have added to the film’s power to affect viewers’ intentions to vote for him in the next election, making such voting decisions more salient” (150).

Fahrenheit 9/11 became then Moore’s vehicle in affecting the public opinion in the upcoming elections. Thus, Moore’s political bias is evident in his film by demonizing Bush and his political party to serve the interest of his own party.

Did Moore then exploit the emotions of the people who appeared in the film for the sole reason of demonizing the Bush administration? In other words, did Moore ethically and morally cross the line in *Fahrenheit 9/11*? Was it justifiable to include multiple scenes in which they showcased people in physical and emotional agony? It is not easy to give definite answers to these questions. Moore, in an attempt to appeal for the sympathy of the public, devotes the final segment of the film interviews to Lila Lipscomb, a mother of a US soldier serving in Iraq. I will examine the couple of scenes that Lipscomb appears in to try to answer the above questions. In the first meeting between Lipscomb and Moore, she proudly shows her pride in being a true American by urging her fellow citizens to send their sons, daughters, husbands, and wives to serve in the military to help the country in its cause.

However, later on in the film, Moore goes back to meet Lipscomb again but this time the meeting occurs after she had already found out that her son had died in Iraq. She explains in detail the way she learned about her son’s death, before Moore asks Lipscomb

to read the final letter that her son had written just one week before his death. The mother is understandably in tears, and breaks down while reading probably the last words that her son had written. This is a powerful scene in the film that engages us emotionally with the victim.

In the chapter, “The Conversation of Lila Lipscomb in Fahrenheit 9/11,” Thomas Rosteck and Thomas Frenz explain what Lila Lipscomb represents to Moore in the film. They write:

The film simultaneously invites its audience to contemplate essentially three Lila Lipscombs: historical person, narrative character, and exemplary persona. Moreover, we suggest that each of these three intertextual dimensions— history, narrative, myth— is necessary for a reading that retains the potential to reconstitute Lipscomb as the locus of audience sympathy with the potential to become a model for political action. (183).

Similarly, Robert Toplin elaborates on the pivotal role that Lipscomb plays in the documentary. He asserts that “Michael Moore cleverly presents a counterperspective through his interview with a super-patriotic woman who identifies herself as a conservative democrat...Moore shows Lipscomb in emotion-filled moments near the end of movie to hammer his thesis about the war’s impact on American families” (49-50). In other words, Moore uses Lipscomb as a political tool. She becomes an important device for Moore to deliver his message. Ron Briley reads this episode as an attempt from Moore “to exploit the grief of Leila Lipscomb” (12). Even though Lipscomb appears more than once in the film and her role is essential, she was objectified by the filmmaker. Lipscomb’s visage becomes the place that bears her genuine feelings of trauma and shock

that Moore tries to exploit. Bill Nichols elaborates on how facial expressions reveal as much as words do. He writes that “a great deal of emotional power resides in how a person uses his or her face and body in concert with what he or she says” and that the interviewees “reveal as much through the use of their faces and bodies as through their words” (93). We cannot argue against the point that Moore tries to raise by using Lipscomb, which is the personal suffering of those who serve in the army as well as their families. However, forcing Lipscomb to relive the horrific experience of reading her son’s final letter raises many ethical concerns.

The bias in Moore’s work is obvious. He directs the narrative in a way that would help his ultimate cause, which was to prevent Bush from securing a second term in the White House. His political leanings urge him to be biased. It is extremely difficult to be unbiased when politics are involved, but I believe that the bias must be recognized and documented to avoid misleading the public. To Moore’s credit, he made his intentions known to the public on the reasons that pushed him to make the film and the reason behind the timing of the release. We can say, then, that Moore has hinted that his film is biased, since he had other goals in mind. This is an important distinction between Moore’s film and the mainstream media, since the media claims that what it reports is unbiased and factual.

Ray Nowosielski’s *9/11: Press for Truth* puts me in a delicate position, as the film did not receive considerable attention from critics like the way *Fahrenheit 9/11* did. Also, Ray Nowosielski is not as popular as Michael Moore, which could explain why the film did not receive its much-deserved attention. Moore, as a public figure, made several public appearances in which he explicitly stated his motives behind making the film and

what were his expectations from the viewers after watching the film. However, compared to *Fahrenheit 9/11*, it seems that *9/11: Press for Truth* did not garner the same attention. The content of the documentary is based on two things; first, the three Jersey girls' search for an official explanation on what happened on 9/11. The second, the website, is designed by Paul Thompson, which contains thousands of news pieces that reflects that media's shortcomings in covering the event objectively. So, in a sense, the film is following a script.

In an interview, Nowosielski says that:

We read Paul Thompson timeline and we talked to these 9/11 family members and we knew that there was a lot of stuff in the middle. There were important issues that needed to be looked at regarding both government accountability before 9/11, and then also you know how the war on terror was conducted after 9/11. So we knew there were these important very provable facts... We set out to make just a very mainstream film that could reach everyone and make everyone aware of these important issues. (Nowosielski)

After watching the film, I really believe that what Nowosielski had said in the interview is reflected in the film. His critique of the Bush administration and the role of the media were by far more objective and balanced than Moore's. He did not seem to have any other goal other than informing the public of what went wrong and how the outcome would have been different had the U.S. government been more alert to the threats. Even the film's attack on the media is more rational than *Fahrenheit 9/11*. He, at least, gives credit to the honest and sincere journalists, who try hard to report the truth. Thus, content-wise *9/11: Press for Truth* is more balanced and the bias is not easily identified.

To sum up, both political documentaries expose the manipulative role of the media in the aftermath of 9/11. Even though the two films are mainly based on uncovering how the Bush administration reacted after 9/11, one of the main themes was how the media misled the public. So, the two films are similar in terms of their content as both critique the government and media roles in the war on terror. In addition, another striking similarity between the two is their use of rhetoric devices to appeal to the viewers. Bill Nichols explains what rhetoric represents to filmmakers. He writes that “rhetoric is the form of speech used to persuade or convince others about issues for which no-clear-cut, unequivocal answer or solution exists” (16). Both documentaries tried to prove and promote some controversial theories about the approach of the U.S. government to the war on terror. Ethos, pathos, and logos are the salient rhetorical devices that Moore, in particular, used in his film in order to persuade the viewers.

However, one of the central arguments raised in this chapter was to examine whether the two filmmakers had responded to media bias with their own bias. As Prince suggests, documentary makers have to exert some degree of bias in their films. Yet, they differ from each other in the level of bias. *Fahrenheit 9/11* reflects Michael Moore’s political bias, as his political views overwhelm his narrative. He had a target (Bush not to be re-elected) and used the film as a vehicle to achieve his political goals. So, it is fair to claim that Moore was biased in addressing the sociopolitical changes after September 11. *9/11: Press for Truth*, on the other hand, seems more rational in its critique. As a viewer, my general reaction was that Nowosielski tried to inform rather than to strongly impose his political views. Obviously, the bias is there, but did not seem overly exerted in his film.

In this chapter, I have tried to examine how political documentaries have strongly emerged in the mainstream culture, especially after 9/11. From one angle, they proved to be more useful in addressing the changing political landscape, which forced many scholars to categorize them as news, or at least an alternative to the mainstream news. This assertion reflects the growing dissatisfaction on the role of the mainstream media after 9/11. Losing hope in the traditional news outlets from the public played massively in favor to the rising of this genre. Moreover, since documentaries “address *the* world in which we live rather than *a* world imagined by the filmmaker, they differ from the various genres of fiction” (Nichols xi). In the post 9/11 context, documentaries raise questions and provide answers that fiction films couldn’t. The magnitude of the catastrophe may have meant that many abandoned fictional representations of 9/11 in favor of realism and authenticity, two characteristics associated with documentaries that contributed to the rising popularity of this genre. At a time when shock and trauma overwhelmed the public, direct storytelling with real time footages proved to be decisive in making documentaries immensely desirable.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The main research goal of this dissertation is to prove the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the media and terrorism in the post 9/11 era. Jean Baudrillard gives a direct statement on this relationship by claiming, “terrorism would be nothing without the media...the media are part of the event, they are part of the terror, and they work in both direction” (31). Baudrillard’s words are what my dissertation is based on. The exaggerated attention that the media pays to terrorism only serves to enhance its threat. Nicholas Kristof writes, in *The New York Times* in “Husbands Are Deadlier Than Terrorists,” that “the bottom line is that most years in the U.S., ladders kill far more Americans than Muslim terrorists do. Same with bathtubs. Ditto for stairs. And lightning” (Kristof). Regardless of the validity of this claim, it shows how the threat of terrorism in the 21st century has been amplified. The media, obviously, is an essential player in sustaining and spreading the exaggerated threat of terrorism. Ever since the tragic attacks on the twin towers and the Pentagon, a perceptible shift in the media discourse occurred. Terrorism and potential terrorist threats took center stage. These types of news dominated the media, even if there were not any actual threats or attacks.

This dissertation asks multiple research questions: what does the media gain from spreading fear by amplifying the threat of terrorism? Who are the real victims from such manipulative coverage from the media? To what extent does the media utilize the construction and distribution of fear in the post 9/11 context? What are the potential health risks that might result from the media’s exploitation of the 9/11 images? How does the media coverage of 9/11 affect East/West relation/integration? To answer these open-

ended questions, I have explored how literature counters the media narrative. The answers are spread throughout the four body chapters. Novelists and filmmakers resist the way the media operated in the aftermath of 9/11. Fiction and documentaries become the means to expose the wrongdoings that have tainted the integrity and credibility of the mainstream media. It is safe to affirm that the media has failed to do what is expected of them, which is to report unbiased and factual news. The credibility of the media is called into question as a result of how it approached the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Even though media manipulation was acknowledged decades ago, the events of 9/11 have exposed how the mainstream media follows certain agendas and adjust its narrative accordingly.

One of the central themes covered in this dissertation is how the media, by prioritizing terrorism-related news, help spread the terrorists' ideologies and beliefs. Dominic Rohner and Bruno Frey write, "The media are used as a platform for securing a broad dissemination of the terrorists' ideology" (142). For terrorists, it is vital to use the media as a venue to spread their message. If we take the events of 9/11 as an example, Al Qaeda not only succeeded in killing thousands of civilians in New York, but they have, in fact, managed effectively to spread their ideologies to the West. The *Aljazeera News Channel*, for instance, continued for years to voice and host influential figures from the terrorist group. They found the news channel to be a perfect platform to justify their actions. They wanted to promote their distorted version of Islam. Unfortunately, the media worldwide has granted them their goals. In a piece titled "The Outlaw" published in *The New Yorker*, Steve Coll tackles how Osama bin Laden was aware of the media as a major asset in spreading his ideologies, noting how he invested a lot of time in watching the news. Coll writes that "When bin Laden formed Al Qaeda, in 1988, one of its four

management committees was devoted solely to media strategy” (Coll). Bin Laden knew that the media was essential in spreading his beliefs and possibly spent as much time using the mainstream media in spreading his message than performing deadly attacks. A lot of misconceptions about Islam have arisen in the West as a direct result of how the media provided the terrorists a space where they managed to spread their ideologies. Thus, an essential way for terrorists to be recognized is to perform deadly attacks and terrorize people, which would consequently guarantee them much-needed media attention.

The attention given to the terrorists by the media helped in the spread of xenophobia, better known in the last decades as Islamophobia that took shape as a consequence on how the media promoted the extreme, non-genuine version of Islam and diminished the true peaceful image of the faith. As Todd Green puts it, “The media determines who tells the story of Islam, which elements and perspectives are included or excluded, and how the story is packaged and presented. Without a doubt, the media functions as the most powerful and influential conveyor of ‘knowledge’ of Islam” (233). The misrepresentation of Islam paved the way for Islamophobia to penetrate Western societies. The media helped in making the beliefs and ideologies of Osama bin Laden the true representation of the religion. The ultimate goal that the media tried to reach was making the ideals and beliefs of Al Qaeda the essence of Islam. Unfortunately, it has succeeded to a large extent. Many people in the West possess a negative representation of Islam. Islamophobia is a worrying phenomenon that causes many Muslims to be marginalized in the West. The media has adopted a homogeneous view on Islam and

Muslims that has resulted in those exposed to the mainstream media developing a fearful attitude toward Muslims.

One of the consequences of Islamophobia has been the spreading of hate crimes. The two novels *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Boy* depict how Muslims are victimized in the aftermath of 9/11. The protagonists' lives take a dramatic shift after 9/11. Before the terrorist attacks, they assimilated perfectly in the New York. Yet, after the attacks, they become the subject of racism and hate crimes, which made their life in the city unbearable. Mohsin Hamid and H.M. Naqvi deconstruct the long-standing myth that America, and New York in particular, is a melting pot that embraces the different races and religions. Eventually, the two protagonists decide to leave New York and reunite with their families, leaving behind their dreams and aspirations. Hamid and Naqvi fictionalize how the media helps in the process of marginalizing the two Pakistani immigrants. More importantly, they show how the mainstream media tries to legitimize racism toward Muslims. All the incidents that involve the media in the two novels share the fact that they attempt to demonize Muslims. Thus, the novels suggest that the media is an essential player in the spread of Islamophobia in the West by promoting Islam as a monolithic religion where all of its believers hold contempt and dislike towards non-Muslims.

Exaggerated fear and paranoia dominated the West after 9/11. The September 11 attacks seemed to spark a worrying tendency from the media to construct and distribute fear. A massive shift in the media discourse was noticed after 9/11. David Altheide explains the politics of fear and the supposed role of the media in spreading fear. He asserts that "The news media played a major role in promoting the politics of fear

following the September 11 attacks,” further stating that “Numerous public opinion polls indicated that audiences were influenced by news media reports about the attacks” (61). Chapters three and five tackle the space which fear occupies in the mainstream media and how it is constructed and distributed. However, the two chapters differ in their approach.

Chapter three offers an important insight on what accounts for media manipulation. It investigates the materialistic nature of the big media organizations and how it prevents them from being objective in the coverage. *The Unknown Terrorist* and *The Submission* exemplify how some journalists are blinded from pursuing the truth for the sake of good ratings and boosting their careers. Richard Cody, in *The Unknown Terrorist* constructs a story that casts fear within Australian society by demonizing a lower class woman. Cody understands that in order for his story to dominate and captivate, it should consist of certain elements, most notably, Islamic fundamentalism and a failed plot to bomb and kill civilians. Similarly, Alyssa Spier, in *The Submission*, follows the same route. She takes advantage of the growing prejudice against Muslims in the U.S. and victimizes a Muslim architect. Spier fabricates a story that accuses the architect of designing a memorial that reflects his extremist beliefs. Needless to say, the story terrorizes the public and stirs endless debates. Both characters are introduced as struggling to resuscitate their careers, so they fabricate and manipulate in the pursuit of fame and good ratings.

Richard Flanagan and Amy Waldman expose a rather unconventional reason of media manipulation. The events of September 11 have proven to be a golden business opportunity for the mainstream media. The major news corporations have capitalized on

9/11 to improve their profits. Todd Green dwells on what profit represents for media corporations in this age. He writes:

The reality created by the media, moreover, is often constructed to attract consumers and to keep a newspaper, news website, or television network in business. The mass media, after all, is part of the corporate world, with ownership of most news organizations held by a handful of companies. Profit is always a part of the picture, which means that the media faces immense pressure to present news stories that reinforce the assumptions and ideologies held by the dominant culture and its most powerful institutions. (234-35)

It is crucial to realize that a strong motivation for the mass media to bend the facts and fabricate them is to attract audiences, which consequently guarantees them financial gain. In the two novels, neither Cody nor Spier has ever indicated any reasons to fabricate stories other than to improve their careers. In other words, individualistic and materialistic reasons are the main motives that push them to construct their stories. This chapter is essential in my study as it demonstrates the tension between reporting the truth and increasing financial gain. It is also a chapter based on the perspective of those who fabricate and manipulate the public. Giving voice to those who are responsible of misleading us is crucial to understand how the media operates in a capitalist world.

Fear is also a dominant theme in the documentary-focused chapter. The political documentaries discussed in chapter five uncover how manufacturing fear is a joint process between the government and the media. The main theme of this chapter is to deconstruct the myth that the mainstream media is independent in a democratic nation as big as the United States. *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *9/11: Press for Truth* both promote this

claim. The events of 9/11, in particular, exposed how the media fell under the influence of the government. It adjusted its narrative according to what best serve the interests of the state. One of the effective means to seize control over the public is to spread fear. The propaganda of fear was at full swing immediately after 9/11, so the U.S. government could easily pass their controversial policies with minimal resistance from the public. The media narrative was in accordance with government policies which suggested to many how the government so easily manipulated mainstream media.

The two documentaries unmask how corruption penetrated the media industry. In his attack on George W. Bush, Moore claims that *Fox News* played a significant role in helping Bush steal the presidency. Nowosielski sheds light on how the hierarchical structure of the major media organizations limits objective journalism. Nowosielski uncovers how media elites and the powerful political figures share similar interests, which force them to control the content of the media to serve their interests. Nancy Snow and Philip Taylor explain how censorship and propaganda were noticeable in the U.S. media after 9/11. They write, “news organizations are often willing colluders with governments and militaries in efforts to censor because major media owners are members of the political elite themselves and therefore share similar goals and outcomes” (396). These words suggest that those in power have the ability to filter out what we see in the news, which shapes our opinions and beliefs. They are in a position to decide what the public should and should not know. The films indicate that the owners of the organizations are the ones distorting the media’s image rather than some journalists who are eager to report the facts. Thus, the two documentaries represent a major contribution to my research as they expose the corruption of major institutions.

Understandably, when we think of the victims of 9/11, immediately what comes to mind are those who died on that tragic day or those who lost their loved ones. However, in chapter four, I argue that the scope is wider than that and more complicated. Trauma, shock, and anxiety were all worrying health concerns that struck many individuals inside and outside the United States. The media, especially by its excessive use of images of the catastrophe, spread the above mentioned health issues. Images of the falling towers, survivors covered in dust, and the shock of the eyewitnesses were repeatedly shown in the mainstream media everywhere.

Falling Man and *Saturday* recognize the victims from the exposure of such images. Lianne and Perowne develop health concerns as a direct result of exposure to the visual representations that dominated our culture. DeLillo fictionalizes how the constant exposure of images of pain and shock could trigger trauma. Lianne is not a survivor, yet she is traumatized and struggles to adjust her life after 9/11. By preventing her son from watching the news, she realizes that the media is to blame for her health issues. Perowne, on the other hand, develops a form of addiction to the news. More precisely, he is addictively attracted to terrorism-related news. The neurosurgeon's preoccupation with the media leads to his feelings of anxiety. This chapter underlines how visual representations could lead to health complications. This chapter is essential as it acknowledges those who suffered from the terrorist attacks and yet were not probably recognized by the public in the same way as its victims.

What makes this dissertation distinctive is how it uses fiction and documentaries to expose the way the media operated in the aftermath of 9/11. By relying on novels and films, this dissertation helps us to realize the negative role that the mainstream media

plays in our societies. Media scholars have always critiqued the way the media conveys certain propaganda that misleads the public, whether it is related to 9/11 or another subject. However, I believe it is time to voice how fiction and documentaries offer their own critique on how the media reacted to the September 11th catastrophe. As I show in this study, novelists and filmmakers have exposed the media through several facets.

The novels and films used in this paper have answered the multiple research questions, which I introduced earlier in this chapter. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Boy* show how the media spread Islamophobia and thus widened the gap between the East and the West. *The Unknown Terrorist* and *The Submission* exemplify what media organizations gain from sustaining and amplifying the threat of terrorism. The two political documentaries demonstrate how the mainstream media is corrupt and falls under the authority of the state, especially by constructing and distributing fear to serve governmental agendas. *Falling Man* and *Saturday* uncover the media's excessive use of visual representations and their potential health risks on individuals. Putting together all the texts in this study that criticize the media has created a strong argumentative narrative.

Alongside the literature, literary theories used in this dissertation have helped me to unpack the narrative that literature has created in response to the media's. Theories such as Trauma and Postmodernism have all proven to be great aid in analyzing the texts. Moreover, theories from media studies are crucial to this study, such as framing and agenda setting. The blending of literary theories with theories from media studies have helped me decipher the way in which the literary texts resisted the role that the media played in promoting certain ideologies. This dissertation is inspired by Post-9/11

Literature that tries to address the significant changes in our world. So, this study is a valuable addition to the large body of criticism that tackles the significant cultural and political changes that happened as a result of 9/11.

My research topic has been limited to a specific time period because this was a critical time in our history when media influence was at its peak. This was conveyed through its traditional mediums that were popular during that time period such as newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and news channels. However, as a way to develop my topic further in the future, I want to widen its scope and incorporate the bias in social media networking websites. Today, we are witnessing a clash between traditional media outlets and social media sites. It is no secret that our lives are starting to get more and more dependent on social media. The different social networking sites are becoming the place where information is conveyed.

This shift, however, does not necessarily mean that the bias is not observed or has been diminished. Almost all the major media outlets are invested in the social media, which means that the social media is the new platform from where they spread their bias. Diego Saez-Trumper et al. conduct a research study to examine whether the media online accounts in Twitter do exercise some sort of bias. They summarize their findings by claiming that,

Political bias is evident in social media, in terms of the distribution of tweets different stories receive. This distribution is more closely related among communities of news media having the same political leaning (at least in the US for which we could obtain political leaning information). Political bias is also

observable in terms of the distribution of length of articles on different stories in traditional media, but to a smaller extent than in social media. (1648)

The bias is there: the only difference is the platform from which they spread their political bias. The major newspapers have been complaining about the decline in the subscription numbers. Similarly, news channels are witnessing a huge drop in viewer ratings. Yet, the major media outlets have survived by establishing a presence on the different social media websites. If we take Twitter as an example, we notice the great popularity that the major global news outlets are enjoying. *CNN*, for example, has more than forty million followers. The British Broadcasting Corporation, better known as *BBC*, has around twenty four million followers. *The New York Times* account is being followed by more than forty two million. *Fox News* has more than seventeen million followers. These are massive numbers that prove that the public is still seeking the major media organizations to get the latest news. So, it is fair to claim that these outlets are still influential and still have the ability to affect and change the public opinion. It will be interesting to examine the bias in their online accounts.

In a similar vein, I expect that novels and documentaries that comment on media bias and manipulation in the future will tackle the subject by addressing the news conveyed from social media sites rather than the traditional mediums. So, I believe that the future will force writers to widen their scope and investigate social media seriously to examine its bias.

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