

**Media as an Exploitative Tool in the Hands of the Powerful: A Critical Study
of *The Unknown Terrorist* by Richard Flanagan**



By

Farhat Jabeen

**Area Study Centre for
Africa, North and South America**

Quaid-i-Azam University

Islamabad

February 2018

**Media as an Exploitative Tool in the Hands of the Powerful: A Critical Study
of *The Unknown Terrorist* by Richard Flanagan**



Farhat Jabeen

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the **Masters of Philosophy** in
American Studies

Supervised by:

Dr. Bahramand Shah

Area Study Centre for Africa, North And South America

Quaid-i-Azam University,

Islamabad.

February 2018

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my individual research and it has not been submitted concurrently to any other university for any other degree.

Farhat Jabeen

DEDICATION

Dedicated to all those teachers who instill curiosity and inspiration in their students

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to thank Allah Almighty for bestowing on me the ability to accomplish my goals, and for blessing me with strength and willpower to face even the most difficult times while completing this task. This endeavor of mine is the result of the assistance and the guidance of many people. I would therefore like to offer my deepest gratitude to all of them who went a long way in the completion of my research work.

I am highly grateful for the support, encouragement and guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Bahramand Shah, who has always been helpful in my research work. His insightful comments and constructive criticism at different stages of my research were thought-provoking and they helped me focus my ideas.

Moreover, I am also indebted to Dr. Noman Sattar , Dr. Muhammad Islam and Dr. Sadia Suleman for having taught us American History, Research Methodology and Homeland Security respectively. All these courses have been contributive in adding up to our knowledge and in refining my concepts which ultimately helped me in accomplishing this task.

I am also thankful to my friend Farhat Batool with whom I had a wonderful time at Area Study Centre. She has been very co-operative, kind and appreciative.

My family has been a constant source of encouragement, love and prayers. My husband Muhammad Tariq Raheem and my daughters, Khadija and Madiha have really been very patient and generous. My special thanks to my mother who has always been great and wonderful.

Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to show how media is used as a manipulative tool in the novel *The Unknown Terrorist* that results into victimization of the innocent. The principal objective behind this study is to explore the repercussions of the media exploitation on the main character. The novel is an unceasingly intense masterpiece that paints a bleak picture of a society that believes every word that comes from the media or the government. The author has brought forward the ills of a society that is corrupt and hideous. By orientalising the main character, she is represented as the Unknown Terrorist and every truth of her life is turned into a lie. This study has been undertaken in order to find out how the biases against a specific religion lead to many generalizations which ultimately devastate the peace of individuals and that of nations. Moreover, the study also shows how by distorting facts and by airing false news stories about “other”, for their own social, political and economic ends, the powerful morph every reality of a person’s life to prove him or her guilty. The life of the main character is turned upside down by branding her as the “Unknown Terrorist” just because of an unsubstantiated allegation as she had an ephemeral association with Tariq who was of Middle Eastern descent. The study also shows how the terms Muslims and terrorists are used interchangeably in Western societies, thereby proving the binaries of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’. Orientalism by Edward Said has been taken as an instrument to analyse the text qualitatively. This research has also drawn those aspects from Said’s *Covering Islam* which reiterate some of the key elements of Orientalism concerning Muslims and the stereotypes associated with them.

Keywords: Media Exploitation, Muslims, stereotypes, Orientalism

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE:

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Research Methodology..... | 8 |
| 1.3 Research Questions..... | 8 |
| 1.4 Research Objectives..... | 9 |
| 1.5 Delimitation of the Study..... | 9 |
| 1.6 About the Author..... | 9 |
| 1.7 Purpose of the Study..... | 13 |
| 1.8 Organization of the Study..... | 14 |

CHAPTER TWO:

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Literature Review | 15 |
|--------------------------------|----|

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <u>CHAPTER THREE:</u> Media’s Reinforcement of War on Terror Rhetoric and Islamophobia..... | 34 |
|--|-----------|

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <u>CHAPTER FOUR:</u> Motives Behind Media Exploitation and its Repercussions for Individuals and Society..... | 47 |
|--|-----------|

CHAPTER FIVE :

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Conclusion | 60 |
|-------------------------|-----------|

WORKS CITED

| | |
|-------|----|
| | 65 |
|-------|----|

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The present study aims to investigate the impact and the repercussions of the exploitation by the powerful, the media and the government, of the protagonist in the novel *The Unknown Terrorist* by distorting the facts and by airing false news stories about her. For their own social, economic and political ends, media personnel endeavor hard to prove the innocent guilty. They have this quality of making a mountain out of a molehill. All this brings about a huge metamorphosis not only at individual level but at societal level as well. It results into multi-faceted effects that are witnessed by the people all over the world. One of them is terrorism which is still being talked about and discussed and has become a phenomenon whose many dimensions are yet to be discovered by the humanity.

Terrorism results into huge loss of human lives and resources. It also contributes in creating rifts among different nations. Moreover, people all over the world detest this inhuman and tortuous practice and protests can be seen by peace loving nations against it globally. An often cited definition was proposed by Thomas Perry Thornton in 1964. Terrorism is, “a symbolic act designed to influence political behavior by extranormal means, entailing the use or threat of violence” (qtd. in “Terrorism in Literature”). The damage caused by such acts is not as important as the impact they have on the people who repeatedly witness them through media. The constant hammering on their minds becomes traumatic experience of their life.

Fiction writers have focused on different areas as far as writing about terrorism is concerned. Some of them have focused their attention on those social conditions due to which people become terrorists. Others pinpoint that terrorists oppose some cultural and political systems, so they try to rise against such systems because they consider them inappropriate or contrary to their own system. Another group of authors tries to slip into the shoes of the terrorists and explain the thought processes that make a person a terrorist, criticizing simultaneously the terrorists for their dehumanized practices. While another group of authors write about the traumatic experiences of the victims of terrorism and their repercussions. So, the writers try to explain the phenomenon of terrorism in one way or the other.

The September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the World Trade Center, Twin Towers in New York and on the Pentagon near Washington DC were perhaps the most watched and shocking event that inaugurated 21st century. Kellner states in this regard:

The 9/11 spectacle of terror was a global media event. Attacking the heart of US symbolic power in the World Trade Center in the New York financial district and the symbol of U.S. military power the Pentagon, the terror spectacle took over live global media for days to come, becoming an emblematic event in media history, whereby McLuhan's "global village" became a site of horror, death, and destruction (123).

A new era dawned after 9/11 attacks in which terms like war on terror were coined and this war on terror initiated many new debates all over the world. Military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan began and many countries collaborated with

America to fight against this so-called war on Terror. The citizens of US started believing in the vulnerability of their country for further such devastating attacks. The effects of these events still reverberate in the realm of literature. The relationship between Muslims and non Muslims has been very tense since 9/11 attacks. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the upsurge in terrorist activities all over the world are huge challenges for the civilized nations. The role played by media in analyzing and reporting such events is quite significant. The fiction that was produced after 9/11 attacks was termed as “Post September 11 fiction”. Webb states, “ Jo Lampert (2004), Benjamin Bird (2007), Kristiaan Versluys (2009) and many other critics and commentators have made use of this phrase to describe the literature that emerged in the wake of, and responded to, the events of that day” (2). At first this event did not seem to be generative of the fiction, though immediately post September attacks certain plays, poems and other non-fiction was produced by many writers. But after some time authors started writing novels on the theme of terrorism. Nathanael O’ Reilly in 2009 wrote that there are twenty two Australian novels published since 2001 with the theme of terrorism (295). The biggest objection that this post 9/11 fiction received was that this form of writing asks for certain breaches of the conventions of fiction. Reviewer Magdalena Ball, for instance, wrote in her review of an Australian post 9/11 novel, “One of the key objections I had to Richard Flanagan’s last novel, *The Unknown Terrorist*, was that it put the ideology first: making a political point at the expense of the characters and the plot” (*The New York Times*).

Australian authors also chose to write on the theme of terrorism, though their country was not directly affected by the 9/11 attacks. Webb notes in this regard:

What has happened to us has (mostly) happened outside the borders of this country: Australians caught up in the Bali or London bombings, Australian ‘terrorists’ captured in the American net, Australians trapped in the Twin Towers, Australians in the war zones ... But we live in a globalised world, and so though our stories may remain inflected by the local context, they will necessarily be informed by global event. (3)

All over the world people were fed up with an overdose of information given by the media in post 9/11 world. People were terrorized, and as a result of fear they embraced the information, and took it as a reality especially the Australians. However, the situation was not simple and straightforward. This whole scenario did two things that proved to be lethal for the peace of this world. Firstly, it heightened racism towards Islamic cultures; secondly, nations following the US tightened security measures thereby compromising civil liberties of the people. Such events in the last few years have caused estranged relationship between Muslims and Non-Muslims. The ensuing circumstances posed unavoidable challenges for all the nations. Media plays a pivotal role in this situation as it analyses and reports the events for the public through which public forms their opinion. People show their reactions in response to what they read or watch, and their reactions mount to different attitudes in the society. This is what Richard Flanagan’s novel, *The Unknown Terrorist*, reflects. Flanagan combines fiction and reality with meticulous finesse. The story that Flanagan presents takes place in Sydney from Saturday to Tuesday. The year is not mentioned explicitly but we come to know that it is 2007 as the author gives references to many real terrorist attacks. The story revolves around Gina whose life is destroyed as she is portrayed as a terrorist suspect

just because she spends a night with Tariq, a part time drug dealer who is of Middle Eastern descent. She becomes the victim of media manipulation and some characters in the novel get the benefit. Gina's nickname is Doll and she works as a lap dancer in King's Cross. She works there in order to save up to get admission in a medical college and to buy an apartment. After she spends a night with Tariq, three unexploded bombs are found at Homebush Olympic Stadium. He has already gone when she wakes up. Later it is revealed that he has been killed. All over the country the footage of Gina and Tariq is shown while they enter his apartment. When the hunt for Doll begins, she escapes the police and looks for a haven. On the other hand, Richard Cody, in order to lift his languid status as a media person, uses media as an exploitative tool to serve the interest of the powerful. Later it was disclosed that Gina was innocent and Tariq was not a terrorist either. Eventually Gina dies after shooting the corrupt journalist Richard Cody.

What inspired Flanagan to write *The Unknown Terrorist* was the 9/11 attacks in the US and the subsequent social and political situation. As he drew the attention of the reader in his article, he has referred to a real situation by using a fictional event; the impact that the September 11 attacks had in every single country but especially, in Australia. This stereotypical representation of Tariq in the novel depicts that Muslims are orientalized by the Western media and they are made the scapegoat for every wrong that is done in the Western world. This has been explored in detail by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*. Orientalism is defined by scholars and historians as the depiction of the East by the West. The West generally includes the US and Europe, while the East incorporates Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. The term also entails the demarcation

of the Islamic cultures in the East and the Christian West. Orientalists are those scholars who study East and everything related to it. Edward W. Said, in his book, *Orientalism*, defined it as the acceptance in the West of “the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, “mind,” destiny and so on” (2). Said argues that the West presents a distorted image of the East, thereby bringing forth a West that is civilized, progressive and has all those positive qualities that the East does not have. The West looks down upon the East in order to control them. In order to achieve this goal, they start attaching certain stereotypes with the East.

The edition of *Orientalism* used in this thesis carries a new preface written just a few months before his death in 2003. Due to the political climate and US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, a renewed interest in Orientalism was generated and the book was published again. In the new and updated edition, Edward Said says that the attitude of the US towards Islam and the Middle East is quite contemptuous and is even more subject to, “demeaning generalization and triumphalist cliché” since 9/1 (xviii). According to Said, the wars undertaken against Islamic world are the result of the media and the self appointed specialists of Islamic cultures because they recreate and reinforce the same old stereotypes related to Islam. They “re-cycle the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalizations so as to stir up ‘America’ against the foreign devil” (xx). He shows his desire to use Orientalism as “humanistic critique” to evoke more “understanding and intellectual exchange” among scholars instead of “polemical, thought-stopping fury” that focuses on a collective identity (xxii).

Covering Islam was published in 1981 and it was the third and the last in a series of books in which Edward Said tried to, “treat the modern relationship between the world of Islam, the Arabs, and the Orient on the one hand, and on the other hand, the West: France, Britain, and in particular the US” (xlix). The central theme of *Covering Islam*, as of *Orientalism*, is the affiliation of knowledge with power. In the updated edition of the book, in the Introduction, Said criticizes American academics, journalists and columnists especially the owner of *The New Republic*, Princeton University Professor Bernard Lewis, a well-known Orientalist. The journalist Judith Miller of *The New York Times* who is also the author of the book *God has Ninety Nine Names: A Reporter’s Journey through a Militant Middle East*. Her book is “like a textbook of the inadequacies and distortions of media coverage of Islam” (xxxiv). In *Covering Islam* Said discusses events like Iranian Revolution, Hostage Crises, Gulf War and World Trade Centre bombing(1993) and negative media coverage by the US. The revised edition fully updated and with a new introduction was published in 1997. The central theme of *Covering Islam* is the reinforcement and extension of those ideas which were already perpetrated in his *Orientalism*. Said is of the view that the knowledge of Islam and Islamic nations in the West through the disciplines of Orientalism is sought not only through dominance but also from the animosity with its cultures. A biased face of Islam is shown to the people of the West by the Orientalists as its “Other”, and this establishes a framework which limits the knowledge about Islam. Gordon Welty comments, “Said’s arguments have become even more timely than they were in the early Eighties. The events he recounts both refresh our memories as well as serve to highlight how severely

the U.S. media has continued to distort our view of the Middle East” (“Review of *Covering Islam*”).

1.2. Research Methodology

The present study is an attempt at exploring the repercussions of media exploitation of the protagonist in the novel. Furthermore, it analyses the role of media in generating fear among the public and exploiting that fear to their benefit. It also aims to study how the misrepresentation of the Muslims and the Muslim world by media leads to forming a hateful and negative image of Islam before the whole world. The theoretical framework of this study will be provided by Orientalism by Edward Said. The primary source of this research will be the text of the novel *The Unknown Terrorist*. I will adopt Qualitative research design for my research and the secondary sources of data collection would be books, research journals, articles, magazines and the web.

1.3. Research Questions

1. How do media and the government generate fear among the public and how they exploit it?
2. How has media exploitation affected the life of Gina Davis, the protagonist of the novel?
3. What are the reasons behind media’s reinforcement of War on Terror Rhetoric?
4. How does media instill hatred of Muslims and Muslim culture among Westerners?

1.4. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to investigate the impact of media's exploitation on the protagonist, Gina Davies. The research also highlights the motives of the media in presenting the main character as a terrorist in the novel. It also delineates the role that media plays in portraying Muslims as terrorists. It attempts to evaluate the significance of the distorted facts and exaggerated news items in opinion making and also aims to record the reactions of the people at different levels in the society.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

A number of novels have been produced on the issues of post 9/11 situation. This research study is mainly focused on the novel *The Unknown Terrorist* by Richard Flanagan. This novel aptly represents the role that media plays in the post 9/11 world.

1.6. About the Author

Richard Flanagan made his native Island of Tasmania the pivot of his fiction, and his novels have set records in the publishing history of Australia. Richard Flanagan was born in Tasmania in 1961. He joined the local school in Roseberry but left the school at the age of sixteen and started working as a bush laborer. Later, he attended the University of Tasmania. He was awarded a first class honors degree in 1982. He was bestowed a Rhodes scholarship, so he attended the University of Oxford in England, earning a Master's degree in Literature in 1983. He developed an interest in history during his stay at Oxford. He initiated his career as a writer by writing history books because it was much easier to get published in history. Before he became a writer, he did many small jobs that ranged from a chain hand cutting lines through forests to becoming a river guide and a doorman. Flanagan's expertise in writing on historical topics helped him a lot in

acquiring techniques of publishing and provided a good background for his novels.

Flanagan had developed an affinity with the Tasmanian landscape and with Tasmanian rivers, and it is very much evident in most of his novels. He shows appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of Tasmania. He had great love for the oral traditions of Tasmania where folklores were handed down from generations to generations. Though the stories were not always pleasant, he dared to write about Tasmania's deep history.

His first novel, *Death of a River Guide*, was a tremendous success that sold more than thirty five hundred copies in the first three weeks. Flanagan was of the view that the reason behind its huge success was the loving and engaging portrayal of Tasmanian people. This novel won the 1996 National Fiction Award in Australia and the 1995 Victorian Premier's Award for First Fiction. Before he turned to fiction writing, he wrote four history books. "Richard Flanagan has also written many essays and works of non-fiction, a collection of which was published as *And What Do You Do, Mr Gable?* in 2011" (*British Council*). *Death of a River Guide* (1997) is the story of Aljaz Cosini who is a river guide. It also has some biographical elements as Flanagan himself worked as a river guide before turning to writing. *Death of a River Guide* introduces many of his favorite themes that are mediated through campfire lore, legend and family tales.

In *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1998) he engraves the sorrows and worries of the forefathers of his Slovenian wife. *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1998), examines the Tasmanian immigrant experience, the treatment of post-war immigrants in Australia. In *Gould's Book of Fish: A Novel in Twelve Fish* (2002) Flanagan unearths Tasmania's agonizing history, and through this gets amazing treasures. It is with his third novel, *Gould's Book of Fish: A Novel in Twelve Fish* (2002), which won the 2002

Commonwealth Writers Prize (Overall Winner, Best Book) that Flanagan has become an international figure. His later novels are mainly concerned with life's big questions. *The Unknown Terrorist* (2006) is demonstrative of his anger directed towards Australia's anti terror laws. In *Wanting* (2008) he digs out the material from the past and recounts the story of desire which ultimately results into harm even after having suppressed it for long. *The Narrow Road to Deep South* (2013) is the last book that tells the story of Dorrigo Evans who was a war hero with a personality flaw and who survived the Death Railway in Burma which is present day Myanmar.

At the launch of each of his books, in his interviews, he opined that humans find meaning in life by connecting with other people. Most of his works address this basic issue. There are uncountable ways of stopping authenticity and love. It is unavoidable that humans will fail to achieve what they intended many times, but striving towards human connection than individual success is what matters the most. "His novels are notable for their imaginative range, their risk taking, and their insistence upon the foregrounding of love at the heart of human experience" (Holcombe "Richard Flanagan"). In fiction, Flanagan expressed his thoughts concerning the Tasmanians' vitality, intelligence and creativity. He also talks about Tasmania's colonial past and recognizes human beings' nature of being fallible but also admits their having the ability to learn and move on. He does not give up the hope of getting ahead in life after all the obstacles have been crossed.

Richard Flanagan has also written for the Australian and International press on topics like literature, the environment, art and politics in *Le Monde*, *The Daily Telegraph* (London), *The New York Times*, and the *New Yorker*. Some of his work has proven

controversial; his article *The selling out of Tasmania*, about the relationship between the Tasmanian government and some large corporations, prompted Paul Lennon, the former Tasmanian premier to say, “Richard Flanagan and his fiction is not welcomed in the new Tasmania” (“A Letter From Richard Flanagan”). Flanagan has won several awards, the latest being the Tasmanian Book Award, which he received in 2011 for his novel *Wanting*. In 1998, a film adaptation of his novel *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* was released, with Flanagan himself in the director’s chair. He also co-wrote the feature film *Australia* along with Baz Luhrmann.

The Unknown Terrorist aroused a controversy and the author explains in very strong words, clearly angry and frustrated, why indeed he does not like the country Australia has come to be anymore, one of the reasons being the entire David Hicks incident. He says:

I don’t like the racism, the materialism, the inescapable stupidity, the way in which we embrace everything American, be it another fucked up war or another series of West Wing or letting them anally rape an Australian citizen and keep him locked up in Guantanamo Bay, and I don’t like the way we’ll cop just about everything now and smile as long as rates stay on hold. I am exhausted by having to listen to shock jocks and read opinion columnists and accept their nonsense that has created an Australia where a skinhead Nazi with a flag draped around his body on Cronulla Beach is seen to be more Australian than a Muslim or someone of Middle Eastern origin (“Writing The Unknown Terrorist” 4).

Flanagan has dedicated the novel *The Unknown Terrorist* to David Hicks. David Hicks is Australian and had converted to Islam. He was also known as “Australian Taleban”. Tragically, he was captured and detained in Guantanamo Bay from 2001 to 2007, where he was kept in habeas corpus. The first charges were filed against him in 2004. Australian government was condemned initially for not taking any concrete steps for sending him back to Australia. The situation got worse keeping in mind the victimization of the detainee in the detainment camp with torture. When Wiki Leaks disclosed the facts about his life, Hicks camp revealed a document which enlisted the inaccuracies about Hicks in official file.

1.7. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to highlight the role played by the media in the society as a whole and how it affects the individuals and their life. The study will critically analyze media’s role as being constructive or destructive. Does it present before the public, the true picture of the events and people, or is it used as a manipulative tool to serve a particular stratum of the society? The study will also examine the significance of media reporting in creating terror and fear among the public and its resultant exploitation and disruption as depicted in the novel under the theoretical framework of Orientalism in enabling better reader judgment. It will help in understanding better the role media plays at individual level and on the level of humanity. The study will add to the resource of learning for the teachers, students and researchers in the field of American Literature.

1.8. Organization of the Study

The study will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will be devoted to introduction, research questions and methodology. Moreover, it will also state the purpose of the study and the delimitation. The second chapter would review the existing literature on the topic under research and it would also state how researcher's work is different and significant. The third chapter will focus on the reinforcement of the war on terror rhetoric by media and rise of Islamophobia. The fourth chapter will document the motives behind the exploitation of the characters by the powerful in the novel and its repercussions for individuals and society. The research will also delineate the role that government plays by being the accomplice of the media. Towards the end, the fifth chapter will wrap up the whole discussion by giving a systematic review regarding the media being used as an exploitative tool by the powerful.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter illustrates the review of the related literature to the theoretical framework of the study. The study attempts to explore the role that media plays in the life of individuals and how, in doing so, it brings enormous social, political and psychological changes at individual as well as societal level in the novel *The Unknown Terrorist* by Richard Flanagan. The theoretical framework for the study comprises the elements of Orientalism to critically analyse the text, *The Unknown Terrorist*.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 are etched into the memories of people not only in America but outside America also. People responded differently to this mammoth event. The writers and artists also came up with their literary productions and tried to interpret this event in their own way. Van Wijngaarden notes in her dissertation:

In the wake of the terrorist attacks, post-9/11 fiction and film responded to the (neo) - Orientalist political discourse and stereotyping that dominated Fox News and other conservative media, and the discriminatory measures that followed the Patriot Act of October 2001, in different ways. Some writers and film directors reproduce the stereotypical image of the “Other” as dangerous, which is typical for an Orientalist view, while others challenge these stereotypes and Orientalism in general. (3)

In the introduction to *Literature and 9/11* (2008), Ann Keniston argues that it is important to “examine the ways that literature has participated in the larger cultural process of representing and interpreting the events of September 11, 2001, while also

revealing the difficulties of doing so when cataclysmic events are still so recent” (Keniston 2). The polemical work produced in the decade after 9/11 is highly prejudiced regarding Arabs or Muslims and strongly endorses Samuel Huntington’s notion of Clash of Civilization. The tendency of the authors such as Daniel Pipes, Steven Emerson and Robert Spencer to portray Middle Eastern or Muslim Other as wicked and threatening, accedes to justifying America’s war on terror. The American Self is presented as a heroic victim of a barbarian Muslim “other” which leads to forming stereotypes related to Muslims and their culture.

The Western perception of Islam which delineates the Orientalist assumptions is propagated throughout the world and people buy into such notion because it is a fact universally acknowledged that if a nation is economically strong, they rule the world and their opinions are heard and accepted widely. The Orientalist stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam are trumpeted and highlighted by media and presented before the world as a reality. Public opinion in the US and elsewhere about Muslims is shaped up either by Orientalist writings or by producing such dramas and movies that reinforce the same stereotypes associated with them. According to a study, “From “Aladdin” to “Lost Ark”, Muslims get angry at “bad guy” images, because the same crude and exaggerated stereotypes are fuelling Islamophobia” (*The Guardian*). In *Titanic* three hundred Lebanese were on board and died in that unfortunate voyage. In the same movie two “stupid Arab couples” were shown to be looking for an “exit” sign on the Titanic. Hollywood movies like *The Siege*, *United 93* and *World Trade Centre* contribute a lot in propagating the negative image concerning Muslims.

The public perception about Muslim Americans was largely shaped up by the US media. The portrayal of Muslims in the first six months after 9/11 improved public perception of Muslims. However, through the stereotypical representation of Muslims in media, the “othering process” was accelerated. The electronic media and print media namely CNN, FOX, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* clearly had an agenda which they followed. Muhammad Abid Amiri in a study conducted regarding the coverage of Muslims in American media concludes:

Right after the first anniversary of 9/11 in 2002, cable news coverage and newspaper articles pursued a different framing style – a negative propaganda style that injected misleading information into public sphere about Muslims. As Cultivation Theory suggests, exposing public to recurrent negative images about Muslims resulted in convincing Americans the threat from Muslims is real. Thus, this agenda driven anti-Islamic/Muslim rhetoric in the media added to public hatred and anger towards Muslim Americans, which eventually led to public uprising against Muslims in the recent years over the Ground Zero Mosque in Manhattan and other such incidents. (10)

Orientalism has, according to *Oxford Dictionary*, been the term used for the subject and the works of the Orientalists, scholars versed in the cultures, histories, languages and societies of Asia or the Orient, since the 18th century when the tradition was born. During the years of decolonization in the early 1960s, the first criticism surfaced on Orientalism and the Orientalists. Ensuing this critique and debate, Orientalism became the most contentious and the most charged word in modern

scholarship. The critique was launched essentially from Muslim scholars but the most influential one came in 1978 from a Christian Arab, Edward Said. Edward Said is notable for his classic study *Orientalism* in which he discusses the representation of the Oriental “Other” in Western discourse. Said defines Orientalism as a “style of thought” based upon the acceptance of “the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts [in the West] concerning the Orient, its people, customs, ‘mind,’ destiny and so on” (2).

Moreover, historians and scholars have defined Orientalism as the identification of Eastern cultures as portrayed by the West. This hemispheric division of the world into the West and the East does not just refer to the geographic boundaries but also connotes the differences in values, cultures, beliefs and the way of thinking. Orientalism basically differentiates the Islamic Cultures in the East from the Christian West. Orientalism means everything that concerns the East and the scholars who study the East are called Orientalists. For the first time Said connected Orientalism to Western biases towards the East. Said outlines those parameters on which the West judges the East and by doing so it implicitly draws benefit for itself. Said’s *Orientalism* was praised and criticized simultaneously by Oriental Scholars and it greatly influenced the postcolonial studies. The 9/11 attacks instilled a new spirit among scholars to revisit Orientalism from a slightly modified perspective. As a result, theories of Neo- Orientalism were brought forward to talk about the cultural responses to the attacks.

Said argues in *Orientalism* that the West presents a distorted image of the East because it judges the East on the basis of its own values. Said builds up the argument regarding Orientalism by discussing the works of Cromer and Balfour to contextualize

the history of Orientalism. Said describes Orientalism as “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience”

(1). Said regards the Orient that is presented through Orientalism as “a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire” (203).

Said criticizes the Orientalist tradition by saying that the West considers the East as static (106). He counters this argument by saying that the East has the ability to change, but Orientalist overlook this fact. Furthermore, the West looks down upon the citizens of the Orient in order to manipulate them. The West also calls them “white man’s burden” because they think the East is dependent on them for guidance. As Said argues, “a white middle-class Westerner believes it is his human prerogative not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it, just because by definition ‘it’ is not quite as human as ‘we’ are” (108). This entails that the West stereotypes the East and the people living in it. In the history of Orientalism, an important historical and cultural circumstance is the “habit of deploying large generalizations” such as race, types, colors, language and mentalities and underneath “these categories” is the “rigidly binomial position of ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’” (227). Orientalism is way of thinking according to which the West defines itself by defining the East. According to this discourse Asians are dangerous, barbaric, uncivilized, dark, mysterious, exotic and strange. The West’s colonization and exploitation of the people of Asia has been rationalized by the West by declaring the Asians as stagnant and in need of civilizing and control.

Said’s *Orientalism* received both praise and criticism from many scholars around the world. In a review of *Orientalism*, the anthropologist Talal Asad says that

Orientalism “reminds us that the hegemony of Orientalism is still so massive that it is not feasible to try to develop alternative approaches without first confronting it with a view to undermining, not its rational achievements, but its traditional authority” (Asad 649).

Riley Quinn in *An Analysis of Said's Orientalism* explains how Said connects Foucault's ideas with Orientalism. He states:

Foucault said that ideas expressed by scholars in discourses set a boundary beyond which others then could not go. In other words, Foucault thought that discourse controlled the way we saw the world. Said took up this idea. He sought to show how scholarly study of the East could first be affected by colonial ideologies and would then in turn reproduce those ideologies.

(27)

Bernard Lewis, in his article, “The Question of Orientalism” (1982) accuses Said of an “arbitrary rearrangement of the historical background, a “capricious choice of countries, persons and writings and an “unpolemical ignorance” of historical facts (qtd. in Macfie 11). In *Contending Visions of the Middle East* the author quotes his words regarding *Orientalism*, “[t]he tragedy of Mr. Said's Orientalism is that it takes a genuine problem and reduces it to the level of political polemic and personal abuse” (Lockman, 192). Ziauddin Sardar in his book (2002) is of the view that Said was not saying anything new in the late 1970s. It was the way Said approached the topic of Orientalism was new to the discipline (66). Ali Behdad called Orientalism “a pioneering text” thereby opening the field for other scholars to build on what he has said and to find out the implications (709). Clifford James has criticized Said's Orientalism for the inconsistencies in defining what actually Orientalism is. He states, Said “qualifies and

designates [Orientalism] from a variety of distinct and not always compatible standpoints” (23). Said has continuously defined and redefined Orientalism throughout the book. He says regarding Orientalism:

Orientalism is not only a positive doctrine about the Orient that exists at any one time in the West; it is also an influential academic tradition [...], as well as an area of concern defined by travelers, commercial enterprises, governments, military expeditions, readers of novels, and accounts of exotic adventure, natural historians, and pilgrims to whom the orient is a specific kind of knowledge about specific places, peoples, and civilizations. (203)

Another criticism that Said's *Orientalism* received was that it tends to divide the world into two separate entities, thereby implicitly doing the same thing that it criticizes. It is creating the binary divisions, the divisions of “us” vs. “them”. The problem was pointed out by Bruce Robbins in 1992. He is of the opinion that Said “can be charged with keeping the unrepresented from representing themselves, substituting [the West's] own elite intellectual work for the voices of the oppressed even as [the West] claim to represent those voices” (50). However, the criticism by different scholars and writers from around the world on *Orientalism* does not underestimate the point it makes. Though there are problems that scholars have talked about, but the avenues that it has opened up are thought provoking and are still relevant in the 21st century.

Moreover, in his book *Covering Islam* (1981) he draws our attention to the point that American specialists on the East and American media both have failed in their efforts

to understand and explain the Muslim world to the American public. More specifically, he argues that, “Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, apprehended either as suppliers of oil or as potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Islamic world” (Said, 28). *Covering Islam* is divided into three main chapters: “Islam as News”, “The Iran story” and “Knowledge and Power”. In “Islam as News”, Said unearths the history of relationship between Islam and Christian West, and especially the threat of Islamic Armies to Europe. This threat and fear of Islam has deep religious roots in which Islam is seen as a “Competitor to Christianity” (5). In this section Said argues that Muslims are known to the Americans or are made known as oil suppliers or terrorists. The media by covering “newsworthy issues” actually, hides or obscures Islam. So, ‘covering’ Islam has a dual meaning; covering as in writing about them in news, and covering as masking or hiding the truth about them. This is what Said emphasizes and says that it is in complete contrast to what is revealed.

The “Islam as News” section talks about how ‘newsworthy issues’ are determined. The journalists, news agencies, and networks consciously go about deciding what is to be portrayed, how is it to be portrayed and the like. The journalists and American media inevitably collect information on the outside world inside a framework dominated by government policy. In broader terms, so, the ‘newsworthy issues’ are determined by groups that have political and economic interests. Said asserts that media shows to American citizens what it wants by distorting the facts and by hiding the truth. He narrates that truth is not made available to us directly and certain facets of the reality

are hidden before they are made public. Said contends that this prejudiced view surfaces because media shows specific aspects of reality while others are hidden.

The next section “The Iran Story” is about the West’s portrayal of the Iranian Revolution, the overthrow of Raza Shah Pahlavi and the Hostage Crises. Said states while talking about media coverage of Iran at the time of hostage crises. He states:

Nowhere was this more evident than in the long Iranian crisis during which the American consumer of news was given a sustained diet of information about a people, a culture, a religion— really no more than a poorly defined and badly misunderstood abstraction—always, in the case of Iran, represented as militant, dangerous and anti-American. (83)

Khomeini was depicted as a medieval despot who wanted to push Iran back to Seventh century. Khomeini and Iran symbolized everything that was objectionable related to Islam, be it terrorism or anti- terrorism. The “Iran Story” was also used to show as equivalent to Marxist-Leninism. News stories like ‘Iran Sucks’ or ‘The Dagger of Islam’ or ‘Ayatollah’s Mein Kampf’ or ‘The New Barbarians are loose in Islam’ or ‘Militant Islam’ propagated animosity against Islam and public demanded military intervention. It was a complex situation that was shown to be as a simple dramatic story. It was never told to the general public that America was involved with Iranian politics. The role of US in bringing Shah to the power and trying to keep him in power was hardly mentioned.

The final chapter is “Knowledge and Power” in which Edward Said states that books and research about Islam, the Middle East and the Arab world by segments, the US

academic scholars influence and shape public policy and legislative debate about these issues. “Anything written about Islam by a professional scholar, writes Said “is within the sphere of influence of corporations, the media, the government, all of which in turn play a very large role in making interpretations about Islam, and subsequently, knowledge of it, desirable and ‘in the national interest’ ” (166). Said wants to emphasize the point that knowledge and coverage of Islam are determined in the US by its geopolitical and economic interests. Edward Said opposes this long history of coverage of Islam that is based on animosity and ill-feelings, and calls for a new knowledge which he termed as “antithetical knowledge” (167). His thesis in the entire book has been that the “canonical, orthodox coverage of Islam that we find in the academy, in the government, and the media is all interrelated and has been more diffused, has seemed more persuasive and influential, in the West than any other “coverage” or interpretation” (169). According to Said for antithetical scholar criticism, dialogue and moral sense should be the purpose of intellect and not serving the powerful.

The terrorism research has dealt with the central question of the relationship between terrorism and the media. It has become widely accepted that there is an almost “symbiotic relationship between terrorism and the media as terrorism provides for exciting and violent stories which help sell the news product and the media provides terrorist groups with a means of spreading their messages and creating fear among the general public.” (Spencer 6). Turner Hospital’s *Due Preparations for the Plague*, written by an Australian, also talks about the same. This has been discussed by Dolores Herrero in his article on the novel. The terrorists are aware that their activities are being videotaped and their messages are being recorded, and they make use of media to spread

fear. O'Reilly sums up the whole thing in these words, "Thus, the terrorists use the media to disseminate fear, while the media use terrorism to boost ratings" (298).

Muslims and Islam have been covered widely in media after the 9/11 attacks in 2001, London bombings in 2004 and Madrid bombings in 2005. This coverage has had devastating effects on the Muslim identity. Western media has emphasized the involvement of Muslims in these attacks. This has resulted in the outburst of anger and hatred for the Muslims and protests against Muslim clothing as the niqab and the construction of mosques in different parts of the Europe can be witnessed. These stereotypes have been flared up and aired so much that they have seeped into Western society. The societal relationships among Westerners and Muslims have been tainted and sometimes violent reactions by the Westerners in different parts of Western societies can be seen.

Different writers have produced different works on the theme of terrorism in different parts of the world. Some of the writers have made the terrorists, their activities and the effects of these as the themes of their writings. While others have concentrated more on the role of different governments and their allies in propagating the fear of the terrorism. Both have tried to do their best in portraying the prevalent situation around the globe through their unique and peculiar style. In fiction mostly novels have been produced in post 9/11 world. On the visual side of the tragedy, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* stand out. Some other major works on the theme of terrorism are: *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* (2004) by Martin Amis, *Saturday* (2005) by Ian McEvan, *Underground* (2006) by Andrew McGhan, *Once in a Promised Land* by Laila Halaby, *The Reluctant*

Fundamentalist (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, *Guantanamo Boy* (2009) by Anna Perera and *Terrorist* by John Updike. Australian novels are different from others in the genre because they are set entirely in Australia unlike many of their counterparts that are set either in the Western cities or in the North Western Pakistan.

Different writers in their books have also written about the role of media in instigating the sentiments of public against Muslims. Nacos (2006) in *Fueling Our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans* primarily focuses his attention on the media coverage of Muslims, the role it plays in shaping public opinion, and the reaction of some of the community members. The analysis shows that, apart from the initial a few months after the events of 9/11, the depiction of American Muslims by the media has been full of negativity and hatred. Consequently, the public opinion and the government policy concerning Muslims were formed on the basis of media coverage.

Tram Nguyen (2005) in his book *All Suspects Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities After 9/11* discusses the impact of Post 9/11 policies on immigrants in the US. He narrates the accounts of those who were detained illegally or their friends, neighbors or family members were deported on mere suspicion. They were targeted for their ethnic origin or religious orientation.

Ahcar in his book *The Clash of Barbarisms: 9/11 and the Making of the New World* is of the view that the clash is one of “barbarisms” and not of “civilizations” as predicted by Samuel Huntington in 1993 in his *Clash of Civilizations*. His main argument is that what Huntington has mistaken something for a clash of civilizations, is actually a

clash of barbarians. In the first part of the book he has argued for the principle of Humanity. He says “the right thing to do is the one that, according to the best judgment and information, is the rational one with respect to the end or goal of saving people from bad lives” (53). According to his analysis, both the Western and Islamic Civilizations show their barbarism by competing in this new Hobbesian World Order. Patricia Chilton reviewing this book writes, “What these barbarisms spawn is a cycle of escalating violence, of mutual annihilation, a version of exterminism. Civilizations, he argues, here and elsewhere, would by definition be incapable of dealing with each other in this way” (57).

Another important book *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public* by Pippa Norris, et al. (2003) theorize that:

the events of 9/11 can best be understood as precipitating a critical culture shift in the predominant ‘news frame’ used by the US mass media for understanding issues of national security, thereby altering perceptions of risk at home and threats abroad. We argue that American perceptions of the threat of world terrorism changed with 9/11, more than the actual reality. The heart of our explanation lies in the idea of ‘news frames’, representing persistent patterns of selection, emphasis, and exclusion that provide a coherent interpretation and evaluation of events. (chapter 1 p.1)

According to Webb, “The novels that comprise the sub-genre of Post September 11 fiction, to varying degrees, attempt to pry open the agora and reinvigorate the public debate.” (5). She lists some of the important works on the theme of terrorism like Janette

Turner Hospital's *Due Preparations for the Plague* (2003) *Orpheus Lost* (2007), Steven Lang's *An Accidental Terrorist* (2005), Andrew McGahan's *Underground* (2007) and Richard Flanagan's *The Unknown Terrorist* (2006) Adib Khan's *Spiral Road* and Adrian d' Hage's *The Beijing Conspiracy*. She further states:

Australian post 9/11 novels are somewhat different from others in the genre because of their explicit focus on domestic political situation of the country, and because they direct the accusations at the Australian political system instead indulging with religiously inspired terrorism of Muslims and it is assumed to have been financially supported from the Middle East or South Asia.(5)

Bennet in "Of Spies and Terrorists: Australian Fiction After 9/11" while reviewing some of the Australian post 9/11 novels remarks:

McGahan, Flanagan, Turner Hospital, Khan and d'Hage all demonstrate a close and welcome engagement with a period of major upheaval in world affairs. All five reveal critical perspectives and imagine vivid scenes, characters and situations. Significantly, while indicating political weakness and lack of leadership and independent judgment, they together reveal Australia as a country of increasingly complex trans-national individuals and stories.(19)

Pons also writes about *The Unknown Terrorist* in one of his articles on Post 9/11 novels, "In *The Unknown Terrorist*, Flanagan pays a lot more attention to the social and political context but this is because the novel is not about terrorism but about how the fear of

terrorism is exploited by media personalities, law enforcement officers and politicians to manipulate the citizens” (31).

Nathanael O’ Reilly has in *Government, Media and Power: Terrorism in the Australian Novel since 9/11* has dealt in detail with three Australian novels: Turner Hospital’s *Due Preparations for the Plague*, Andrew MacGahan’s *Underground*, and Richard Flanagan’s *The Unknown Terrorist*. He comments:

McGahan and Flanagan both set their novels in Australia after 9/11 and focus on the nation’s responses to acts of government domestic terrorism seemingly perpetrated by Islamist extremists. Both novels depict governments that have become increasingly totalitarian, ruling societies driven by fear and paranoia...the government’s response to 9/11 and domestic terrorism is to attempt to exert control over society, however, in the process, the government, rather than terrorism, becomes the primary threat to Western Civilization. (296)

The Unknown Terrorist explores the mutual relationship between the main pillars of the state i.e. the government and the media. It critiques the media and the government’s use of terrorism to exert, maintain, and increase power. The media is an all over the place entity in *The Unknown Terrorist*. It shows its presence by influencing the lives of the characters through newspapers, television, radio, and magazines. Bruce Bennet asserts 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” (13). Michael Ashby

contends that Flanagan portrays the role played by media in fuelling the fire of “paranoia and prejudice” (Review of *The Unknown Terrorist*). Not only through the presentation of scornful media behavior and the narrator’s commentary, but also by the statements made by the media personnel, has Flanagan tried to depict the media that is fierce and hateful.

Underground is another one such novel that deals with the state terrorism. The protagonist Leo is captured and he shelters in an unfinished resort during a colossal cyclone. The cyclone is given the name “Yusuf”. Leo surmises that the government intentionally named it so because, in doing so, it links it to Islam, as “a state of emergency decree” because it is “big and dangerous” (3). The homegrown Islamist terrorist group, Great Southern Jihad, kidnapped Leo during the cyclone. He was “rescued” and then “rescued” again along with Aisha by a group called Oz Underground. The media airs the false news of Leo’s death during the cyclone. Even though his brother, Bernard, knows he is alive, the media reports that Leo has been declared dead by his brother. O’ Reilly analyses the whole situation in these words, “The Australian government in *Underground* recognizes that the maintenance and expansion of power is only possible if there is terrorist threat, and thus, when terrorists do not exist, they must be created” (301). The discussion about the above stated novels reveals that in West Post 9/11 fiction focused mainly on terrorists and the terrorist activities and asked for the accelerated counter terrorism efforts. However, Australian writers are an exception. These writers concentrated on directing their criticism on the policies of the government which were compromising the civil liberties of the people in the name of security measures.

Different newspapers have also given reviews of *The Unknown Terrorist*.

Huffpost reviews it in the following words:

Although the basic outlines of this story come from Heinrich Böll's novel *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* written in response to the terrorism scares that Germany suffered in the late 1960s and '70s. The social environment of Sydney in *The Unknown Terrorist* is a world governed by fear and greed, by paranoia, glittery materialism, and media hype. It's a world in which "success" and wealth abound, as do the poverty and self-destructive ignorance of the exploited underclass. Flanagan describes it all with a gritty realism that deteriorates, slowly, inevitably, toward the end of the book, into madness and nightmare. We are swept along by a prose that is rhythmic, unadorned, compelling — I'd almost say hypnotic.

Sydney Morning Herald states:

The effect on the Doll is profound: her association with Tariq, however fleeting, means she too is identified as a terrorist. The fact that she once performed as the burqah-clad Black Widow in an erotic dance lends a shaky credence to this. In a plot that involves appallingly venal media and government representatives and unlikely coincidences, she careens from one bad decision to another, confronted at each step by the combined xenophobia and indifference of the public, and her increasing awareness that she too is part of that cruel public.

In *Underground* there is considerable indifference and none of the characters are beyond redemption. “Flanagan and McGahan do not see fault merely in the perceived sources of terrorism, outsider Muslim suicide bombers, rather they hinge the entire blame on their own government for being complacent and letting the menace of terror grow into an unmanageably monstrous size” (45). Flanagan and McGahan offer a view of Western governments-our governments-not as defenders of freedom or protectors of the rule of law but as organizations that, to use Frow’s phrasing, manifest “contempt for the rule of law and for rational policy formation” (Webb, 5).

The novel *The Unknown Terrorist* for reviewers and scholars alike seems to lack subtlety. Webb even formulates it as following: “This material is thickly laid on, to the extent that, as Oscar Wilde said about the Death of Little Nell, you’d need a heart of stone not to laugh” (8). But she then mentions Tague, who “excuses the flaws he identifies on the grounds that the world of fiction has been taken over by the mass media, and perhaps Flanagan’s narrator is simply turning the tables by making the media the villain of this tale” (8).

After having gone through the reviewers’ reviews and the whole discussion that follows, we may conclude that almost every writer or reviewer talks about the government and media, their collaboration with each other, the manipulation of the people by the media and the government etc. The researcher’s present research focuses on the repercussions of this fear, exploitation and paranoia on the individuals and society. Moreover, it also delineates how people suffer from the agony and mental torture by the hyped up security measures and how people who are actually not guilty of any crime, are presented as the number one enemy to their public.

The present research is different from the other researches conducted in this era in that it talks about the trauma and agony suffered by the people not because of the atrocities of terrorists and their activities as seen in many researches conducted in different parts of the world. On the contrary, this research focuses mainly on the traumatic experiences of an individual who does not suffer because his or her loved one got killed or went through some psychological trauma because of a terrorist attack. Rather the suffering is triggered by a particular faction of a society who actually magnify the fear of terrorism to an extent that people are terrorized and the fear of unknown makes their lives hell. This is done purely to benefit the media and the government as they are the biggest perpetrators of the terror that destroys the lives of individuals. This ultimately leads to a domino effect in which any terrorist activity in one part of the world affects the whole world.

Chapter Three

Media's Reinforcement of War on Terror Rhetoric and Islamophobia

We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality.

Karl Rove

Words have an immense power not only to communicate and give expression to our thoughts, but also to shape the thought itself. According to *Merriam Webster* "rhetoric" means 'language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect, but which is often regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content.' The 9/11 attacks were not only a huge source of grief and suffering, but they also have had significant social and political repercussions. After the attacks, the US, in the words of Judith Butler, "heightened nationalist discourse, extended surveillance mechanisms, suspended constitutional rights, and developed forms of explicit and implicit censorship" (XI). Almost after two decades of September 11 attacks, there have been significant modifications in the foreign policy and the security measures all these years globally:

The "War on Terror" emerged as the dominant narrative following 9/11, delineating a specific set of policy responses following the crisis. The "crisis of terrorism" presented by the 9/11 attacks represented a point of departure from the past, even though President George W. Bush turned to past rhetoric in order to define and frame the changing realities.(3)

The first words spoken by President George W. Bush in a public address after 9/11 attacks in New York City and Washington DC, initiated the rhetoric of terrorism. He said, "Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in

a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts.” President Bush continues, “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.” The strategic framing had already started by the president Bush before the perpetrators were even known. America is good and anyone saying anything against America was evil. Americans actually did not see through the situation and did not try to look for the reasons because of which anyone would want to do harm to the United States. President Bush meant to say that they must hate us because of our freedom.

The 9/11 attacks, apart from killing thousands of people, not only left indelible impression on the minds of American people, but also had a deep effect on Muslims and Arabs also. The political and cultural arenas have also seen the manifestations of these attacks. The American films and television series have dealt with the ‘war on terror’ and present the same stereotypical portrayal of the people from Middle Eastern descent. A few instances of such television shows in which Muslims are sketched this way are:

NCIS: Los Angeles, 24 and NCIS: Naval Criminal Investigative Service etc.

The theme that is prevalent in *The Unknown Terrorist* is the war on terror rhetoric and its effects. The governments of US, Australia and Britain alike, have passed certain laws to safeguard the freedom of their people, but, in fact, in doing so, they curtailed the civil liberties of the people, hence freedom in its truest sense was compromised, as Webb notes. In U.S. alone, this was materialized by passing of the controversial law USA PATRIOT ACT in 2001, an acronym short for Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act. This Act placed a huge authority with the law enforcement agencies in carrying out their

investigations against terrorists and their criminal activities. It was also made possible to intercept the telephonic and email communication of any citizen. The authorities in these investigative agencies were also allowed to go through the financial and medical records.

This law was not welcomed in US and it was criticized heavily after its implementation. One such law that actually curtailed the citizens' freedom in Australia was passed in 2002. It was related to the ASIO and the Bill was named as the ASIO Legislation Amendment Bill. According to this Bill anyone, on mere suspicion, can be detained and questioned without any charge in the name of counter terrorism. The Bill further says that the ASIO officials can detain any person for twenty four hours and can extend the interrogation for over seven days. If the detainee refuses to answer a question and is unable to prove that he or she does not have the answer to the asked questions, may have to face an imprisonment of five years maximum. Flanagan comments on this, "To protect our freedoms as Australians, laws were passed here in Australia whereby people can now disappear and we will not know" ("Writing The Unknown Terrorist" 3). He further remarks, "It became possible to say anything outrageous, and the more outrageous the more publicity it got. Aborigines hadn't really suffered. Refugees weren't really genuine. Torture wasn't torture if Americans did it, and Australians were doing their Australian duty doing whatever Americans told them" ("Writing The Unknown Terrorist" 3).

Flanagan criticizes this bill fiercely in *The Unknown Terrorist*. During their hunt for Gina who had been declared a suspect and was charged with having terrorist ties, the police arrested her friend Wilder. She is interrogated about where Gina was and the ASIO officials directly mention the ASIO act. Under this act they used their authority to raid

her apartment at midnight and she was taken to a police station along with her five-year-old son. The ASIO agents through the coercive use of power threatened Wilder and told her that they were allowed to detain anyone as long as they wanted. They kept Wilder and her son apart from each other. Wilder, as a result, threatened them that she would tell media the whole episode if they did not let her see her son, Max. The ASIO people told her that under Australian law she could be put behind bars if she informed anyone about her arrest. “You breathe one word about your arrest, this interrogation, to a neighbor, your sister, your best friend, you go to jail for five years. Besides,’ he says, under the ASIO Act the media isn’t allowed to run any story about your arrest and detention or they go to jail for five years too” (221).

In one of the places in the novel an Australian politician who was described as ‘leader of the opposition’ in one of the interviews can clearly be seen resonating president Bush’s rhetoric of “either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists”. He proceeds to saying:

Terrorists are not Australians. Australians are decent people. Let me just say also that we welcome calls to change the law to strip any Australian citizen of their citizenship, whether they be native born or naturalized, if they are involved in anti-Australian activities. Either you are with Australia or you are no longer Australian and have lost your right to the rights of other citizens.(158)

Media is criticized heavily for presenting stories in a way that provoke public interest but at the cost of accuracy. The rhetoric of the war on terror is bolstered up by

media for no other reason than ratings. Jerry Mendes, who was the boss at Six's new and current Affairs division, invited Richard Cody to a lunch at Katie Moretti's home. He turned to Richard Cody and told him "exciting things were afoot at Six, that the board was keen to spend more on current affairs in the chase for ratings" (25). Later Richard Cody himself points his criticism at media, which is quite strange and ironic. His own popularity is the top priority for him. For him being an ethical journalist is least important. He concocts fake stories in order to be in the limelight in the media circles. During the lunch that he was invited to by his Boss, he wanted to draw the attention of Katie Moretti, as she did not seem interested in what he was saying, "Richard Cody began inflating several stories he had heard of 'dangerous Islamic types' [...], playing up a few well known names with whom he had, if he'd been honest, only the vaguest connection" (28). Some moments later, "Richard Cody then argued for the necessity of torture, properly managed. Proper management, sensible policies, agreed procedures—it was possible, after all, to civilize something as barbaric as warfare with the Geneva Convention, and now we needed a Geneva Convention on how we might conduct torture in a civilized fashion" (31).

Flanagan shows his criticism of the media by saying that the more shocking the claim, the more media attention it receives. This is clearly reflected in Cody. Sometimes he himself is surprised by his opinions and the way he influences others with them. He is left shocked even more by "how other people tended to agree meekly with him, not, he feared, because they thought he was right, but only because he was stronger, louder, more aggressive" (31). Though he liked to be heard and felt good but soon after:

Richard Cody would realize he didn't believe anything he had just so passionately said. "Worse, he had only argued because he felt it important that his view, and his view alone, prevail. And then everything he said seemed to him so full of hatred and ignorance, intended only to hurt and to impress, and he despised the way no one would rise to his challenge and call him the fool, the bully, the buffoon that, in his heart, he feared he was. (32)

Everyone in the party was listening to him and no one dared to disagree with him. This thing made him furious and happy at the same time. "Because no one had the courage to speak the truth or, [...] they simply left, Richard Cody would keep on talking and it was hard to know when, if ever, he might stop" (32). Flanagan perhaps wants to implicitly suggest that Australians do not question the government or media and blindly follow them in their efforts of countering the so called war on terror. So this war continues to exist and no one knows when it will end. Cody realizes that the dinner party was a much microcosmic display of what happens at a macrocosmic level in the media and the public. People do not actually pay heed to anything, "but they still felt the need to repeat what they had read in the *Sydney Morning Herald* which repeated the opinions of people at dinner parties such as the one they were now at, all feeling slightly dizzy with the familiar dullness of everything" (23). Further it is stated, "But all these subjects existed only to lard the hard truth of the lunch: the gossip that traded knowledge for money and power; the finessed probings of position and status; the sly seeking of alliances and linking of chains of patronages;" (23). So everyone seems to be in a race to get ahead of others for their own ulterior motives. The bomb scare story also shows the

same continuation of the vicious circle in which everyone seems to be copying each other:

a string of so-called experts — mostly consultants wanting a job as an expert in security, terror, politics — commented on each other's remarks, which in turn repeated and elaborated the few brief comments made by the police and government spinners, all pretending that in this vortex of nonsense might be found some sign predicting what might next occur. (21)

While fabricating the story around Gina, he looks back on his feat of captivating people at dinner party with his lies. He is a selfish person who thinks of his interest first without keeping in mind the consequences for others. In Gina's case, "He wanted to do the same again, but this time mesmerizing not a dozen people, but millions" (106). O'Reilly comments in this regard, "The construction of Cody's narrative about the "unknown terrorist" is explicitly depicted by Flanagan as an artificial process, a combination of disparate elements, a mixture of truth, lies, and speculation" (311). Richard Cody kept on thinking about the story that he would create about the pole dancer. In doing so he did not say to himself: "Although there is no evidence of any guilt or wrongdoing, I am going to stitch this woman up with concocted assertions. He did not think any such thing, because he would have despised himself if he had ever thought himself capable of making up such monstrous lies" (112). It is not just Cody who talks on the topics he has little knowledge of and who is insincere also. The Doll also gives out strong feelings of resentment when she first comes to know about the bomb scare. she says, "They should shoot the bastards," [...] because it's what you said, and in so far as she thought about such things, it was more or less what she thought" (87). Richard Cody

was over obsessed with this story about Gina Davies. He was, in his dreams, “was on the stage accepting his fourth gold Logie as tv personality of the year” (114). In his dreams a faceless host was saying, “Above all, his work in uncovering a terrorist network in Australia showed Richard Cody to be not only Australia’s foremost journalist but its most fearless” (115).

Severin and Tankar (1997) argue that the recurring images of Muslims as terrorists shown on media reiterate the belief that they are actually terrorists. Thus, resentment and discrimination against Muslims in general is instilled in the general public by the media. This phenomenon is called Agenda-setting theory where mass media creates a hype regarding an issue and it is presented to the public as grossly important and carrying high value. Van Dijk (1991) affirms this and adds that the exposure to news media is directly proportional to the public’s concern about issues covered regularly in media. The media impacts greatly the process of public perception change among the masses. In *The Unknown Terrorist* media, government and society are the sources of terror and not the actual terrorists. Media with all its sensationalism gives rise to a situation of paranoia, terror and negativity that permeates the whole society.

Another theme that is prevalent in the novel is of Islamophobia. “Islamophobia may be defined as alienation, discrimination, harassment and violence rooted in misinformed and stereotyped representations of Islam and its adherents” (Ghazali, 5). The first use of the word in English in print appears to have been in an article by Edward Said in 1985, where he referred in passing to ‘the connection ... between Islamophobia and antisemitism’ and criticised writers who do not recognise that “hostility to Islam in

the modern Christian West has historically gone hand in hand” with antisemitism and “has stemmed from the same source and been nourished at the same stream” (Said 8-9).

Xenophobia is the irrational fear of the unknown. This term is especially used to show dislike of or bias against people from other countries. Xenophobia was not invented by Americans in the post 9/11 world. Rather, American media has slowly and gradually infiltrated this ‘fear of the other’ into the minds of the Americans who had just the superficial knowledge about Islam and its geography. Ghazali talks about the anti-Muslim sentiment in post9/11 world in the following words:

In the post 9/11 America attacking Islam and Muslims became the fashionable sport for the radio, television and print media. Unfortunately, the events of 9/11 were used as an excuse to greatly magnify the hostility toward Muslims and cloak it in pseudo-patriotism. Muslim-bashing has become socially acceptable in the United States. Is Islamophobia, a de facto state policy? (qtd. in Safeer 525).

The stereotypical representation of Muslims can also be witnessed in the novel. Muslims and their culture is discussed on several occasions, though they are never mentioned by name. Flanagan depicts the prejudiced behavior of Australian society against Muslims whose minds have been stuffed with the hatred against Islam. Gina Davies reassesses her ill-conceived notions and faulty judgments regarding Muslims when she is faced with different situations in the novel. For instance, a few moments before Gina comes to know that police are looking for her, a Muslim woman wearing a black burqah bumps into her and her elbow hits Gina accidentally, she gets furious and

rude. She hurriedly thinks of three unexploded bombs found at Home bush Olympic stadium and associates the muslim woman with terrorism. She does not treat her as another woman, but “something terrifying and unknown, an evil spectre she had seen so often in films, a short, stubby Darth Vader” (93). By losing her temper she shouts at her and asks her to “just fuck off back to wherever [she’s] from” (93). She does feel bad about her demeanor, but considers wearing burqah in that heat “stupid” (94). “Why can’t they just be like us?” [...] And it struck the Doll as a particularly humiliating thing for any woman to have to get about in gear as bad as a burkah” (94). During this incident Gina is supported by the bystanders for being rude to the woman. They reacted like this:

‘Good on you,’ a middle-aged man in a canary yellow shirt said in a slightly trembling but loud voice. “They won’t integrate, you know,” he said even more loudly, perhaps intended for the woman in the burkah to hear, though she had already vanished. A large woman clapped. A kid in a Microsoft baseball cap yelled, ‘They flew here. We grew here.’(94)

Gina did not know whether to be happy or not over this reaction by those people. Immediately she is reminded of Richard Cody, “telling her how it must be humiliating to be in her line of work, and she felt strangely confused” (94). This whole episode of her short-lived encounter with the Muslim woman and later her thinking over what Cody had told her, shows that she was implicitly trying to draw a link between herself and the Muslim woman. It further shows that Gina could predict her profiling as a terrorist. During this whole situation a slight indication is given that she would certainly assess her hasty judgments. Again when the veiled woman walks into her, she says something to Gina she does not understand. Gina, without knowing exactly, assumes that the woman in

burqah was accusing Gina, that it was her fault, but she was not quite sure. “Maybe it was an accusation or maybe it wasn’t. [...] Later, the Doll wondered if she hadn’t actually been apologizing. But that was much later” (93).

At another place in the novel, on Monday, while Gina was waiting on a ferry, on a radio talkback show a caller reminded her of the last day’s encounter with the woman in burqah. The middle-aged man had commented on immigrants not integrating. “I just want to talk about that poor little girl in the paper today all dressed up in the veil and all that garbage and her family making her go to school like an alien, well, what’s that all about Joe? They won’t integrate, you know” (125). What the caller on the talkback show said clearly demonstrates the intolerant attitude concerning the religious dress. Some moments later another radio caller expresses the same ‘concern’, so to speak. “I’m sure she’s pretty underneath all that,’ [Gina] hears another radio caller say. ‘I’m sure she is,’ replied the shock jock. ‘Well that’s my question, Joe,’ said the caller. ‘Why do they do it?’” (126). Here the intolerant attitude of the Australian society towards immigrants’ culture is clearly visible.

Moreover, Gina in one of her dance acts wears a long black dress and hijab as she appears to be Black Widow and later she strips naked. “And as she did so, Ferdy, using a data projector, would cover her flesh with swirling Arabic lettering, which he claimed to the audience was ‘the Black Widow’s most sacred book’, the Koran” (41). When Richard Cody orientalises her because of her fleeting association with Tariq, a Middle Eastern man, he tries to portray her as terrorist in his sensationalist show *Undercurrent* and uses this Black Widow dance act against her.

Incredibly, [...] in what may just be the cover of all covers, it turns out that this possible ‘unknown terrorist’ — I stress possible — is no other than a lap dancer at this club right here, behind me, who was known as — and wait for this —the Black Widow! Now, as we know, this is the same name given to militant Islamic women prominent in suicide attacks in Russia.

(140)

Richard Cody’s stressing the word ‘possible’ clearly demonstrates that he himself is not sure of what he is saying. His sole purpose is to weave a story around Gina and get rewards and awards at the cost of somebody’s life, respect, and peace of mind. To further validate the story, he consults the psychologist Ray Ettlslinger, “who knew almost nothing about Islam” (184). He simply comments, “Islamist ideology is irresistible for such a profile” (184).

Everyone in the novel seems to be blaming Muslims for the attempted bombing apart from this general attitude of intolerance towards Islam. When Gina for the first time watches the news of the attempted terrorist attack, the newsreader is “talking about a failed police stakeout of a notorious Islamic terrorist” (95). Everyone appears to be accusing Muslims of planting bombs or carrying out terrorist activities and no one questions the allegation. Gina does not believe that Tariq could be a terrorist, because she “didn’t think his behavior in bed suggested a devout Muslim” (112). Similarly, Richard Cody uses the same reasoning when he is pondering over the likelihood of Gina being a terrorist, “From what Richard Cody could gather from his phone calls there was no motive. Apart from being a Muslim, there was no evidence that Gina Davies knew

anything about Islam. As much as anyone knew, she had never received any terrorist training” (112). Thus, Muslim and terrorist become somewhat indistinguishable.

Gina is ridiculed in the novel by media when she is associated with the terrorists. On Tuesday when she had her hair cut to hide her identity, she saw herself being turned into a cartoon in which women in burqas were shown pole dancing. “Further in, there was a cartoon she didn’t really follow, showing women in burkahs pole dancing, with the caption— The Mullah’s Lounge” (260). Here again the words Chairman’s Lounge have been replaced with Mullah’s Lounge. Mullah is a word that is used for Muslim cleric and, in doing so, the media actually connects Muslims and Islam with terrorism.

To conclude, we may say that this clamoring and propagation of War on Terror rhetoric by media leads to such circumstances which give rise to huge and sometime unattainable challenges. These challenges pose great questions before nations and their leaders. Mostly this war is directed towards Islam and Muslims and media plays a vital role in instigating the Westerners’ sentiment against Islam and Islamic cultures. It should, rather, work as a bridge so that the feelings of harmony and peace could be generated among the masses of different nations.

Chapter Four

Motives behind Media Exploitation and its Repercussions for Individuals and Society

Power, fame and money are those driving forces that corrupt the high ups in media and they do whatever they want at the cost of life, integrity, respect and peace of the common man. Media is used as a tool for the manipulation of the masses and they are terrorized as a result. This is what *The Unknown Terrorist* reflects. Nathanael O' Reilly comments on the role of media in *The Unknown Terrorist* by stating, "As the media develops the story and receives information from government sources, speculations are presented as facts and possibilities stated as certainties. Flanagan continually depicts the media as unethical, subordinate to the government, and fixated on increasing ratings and market share" (311).

Australian media gave out a cry of outrage in response to Flanagan's Article *The Selling out of Tasmania*, and also made the Tasmanian Premier say that Flanagan and his writings were no longer welcome in the new Tasmania. Flanagan writes what shocked him the most was the, "Way the media seemed more than happy to run with the government spin with almost no questioning of it, and the way most people believed most of what they were hearing and reading. People, I realised, thought I was who they were being told I was. For many, the lies of others were to become their truth about me ("Writing *The Unknown Terrorist*" 3). O' Reilly reiterates the point in *Government, Media and Power: Terrorism in Australian Novel since 9/11*, "The media is eager to present stories about terrorism, and thus maintain constant contact with government

sources while constructing its narratives” (311). Cody tries to convince his boss to air a special in which he would break the story of Gina being the terrorist. He also tells Mendes that Channel Six and Gina are in a kind of race to get the story out first: “her with her bombs or them with a tell-all current affairs special” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 113). So, the media has to get approval from the higher authorities in the government for its media representations so that the interests of the powerful are met. The politicians utilize media in order to spread fear among the masses. They show a firm stance on terrorism while appearing on radio talk shows and make statements like, ““These terrorists are subhuman filth [...] The government needs to be doing more to ensure they are hunted down and eliminated”” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 121). In the novel, the ASIO agent phones Richard Cody and tells him that Tariq has been found dead, it is clearly indicative of the connection between media and the government. Earlier, while talking to Harmsen about the bomb scare, Cody asks him if he can count on Harmsen. ““I think we can count on each other,’ said Siv Harmsen. “Don’t you, Richard?”” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 113).

After the attempted Home bush Olympic attack, media displays recurring images of Twin Towers falling down. Resultantly, it inculcates fear in Australians and they believe a public truth without even asking if it is real or not. “It was only when the Doll was halfway between the fifth and the fourth floors that she noticed a vast image—broken into a grid by the frames of the scores of plasma screens that stacked together formed the giant whole—of the Twin Towers burning.” (*The Unknown Terrorist*, 148). The September 11 attacks have been referred here for the first time in the novel, and great importance has been ascribed to them because they are depicted as if they are falling

down at the very moment, “The Twin Towers fell again (...) The Doll closed her eyes. When she opened them, she saw Osama bin Laden, George W. Bush, Missiles being launched. Missiles being launched. Men in robes, firing grenade launchers. Great buildings exploding into balloons of fire. Women covered in blood.” (*The Unknown Terrorist*, 159). The fall of the Twin Towers and the repetitiveness of the event is directly linked with Doll’s feelings. The more traumatized she feels, the more that image flashes through her mind. O’ Reilly comments in this regard:

Flanagan constantly depicts the media as creator of the fear of terrorism, as well as to reveal the Doll’s growing recognition of her predicament and her fear of the government and her fellow citizens. The recurring images serve to link the Doll to Tariq and the unexploded bombs; moreover, the repetition of the footage creates an escalating level of fear amongst the general public. (309-10)

Gina Davies explains her predicament by saying that it is not going to end soon for the simple reason that “people like fear” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 166). By pointing out the “other” and the outsider, the media generate fear and that fear is heightened by the government and ultimately this whole vicious circle serves their interest. This is what happens in *The Unknown Terrorist*. As Catherine Morley argues, the ordinary lives of the people are infiltrated by the rhetoric of terror which makes the reality to be reminiscent of a suspense film (85). Western politics has also been criticized in the novel. One of the characters in the novel Frank Moretti who is also Gina’s private client tells Gina the story behind the Beretta. He claims that the Beretta was part of a Dutch NATO group. The purpose of sending him there was to protect the Bosnians of Srebrenica. He instead of

helping them gave the weapons to Serbs and left. “And this Beretta, [...] meant to protect all those people, never used. [...] That’s something, eh? Three thousand Americans die and it changes history. Eight and a half thousand Muslims die and it’s forgotten” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 134). It is almost self explanatory that Moretti is talking about the 9/11 attacks. Later that same day, Gina remembers this story told by Frank and tries to link it to her troublesome situation and, “it seemed to the Doll that the Dutch soldiers meekly handing over their weapons were the same people as the politicians and the security forces and the journalists, who, instead of protecting people, also betrayed them” (*The Unknown Terrorist*, 186).

In *The Unknown Terrorist* Detective sergeant Nick Loukakis of the Narcotics Unit believes that Gina is innocent. His duty is to monitor the activities of Tariq because of his involvement in drug trafficking. He asks his friend Tony Buchanan to look into the matter. At first he is a bit hesitant but later agrees to discuss this matter with Siv Harmsen. In his meeting with Siv Harmsen, Tony was surprised to know that Siv Harmsen and his partners in the government had intentionally and falsely implicated Tariq and Gina Davies, because Australian people needed to be frightened. “It’s bloody frightening, Tony, and people need to be frightened. And that is part of our job, too”. “I thought you just said people were already frightened,” said Tony Buchanan. “Not enough,” said siv Harmsen, “Never enough” (*The Unknown Terrorist*, 271). When Buchanan asks the truth about who planted the three bombs, Harmsen replies, “Anything is better than another Sari Club”, after which he gives a strange unsettling smile expressing “weariness and knowledge” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 272). Later that day, Buchanan makes a phone call to ask him the last time: ‘Who killed Tariq al-Hakim?’ [...]

There was a strange laugh at the other end of line, a *how-fucking-dumb-are-you?* laugh, then Siv Harmsen said, ‘I would say people with an interest in terror did that. Wouldn’t you, Tony?’ (*The Unknown Terrorist*, 273). (emphasis original) It clearly shows that the goal of terrorism is political and this is doubtlessly an act of terrorism.

Gina also carries out the self analysis: the day, she had “ignored the beggar with the raw face” and “rushed past an old woman being tormented by kids” (*The Unknown Terrorist*, 186). She immediately derived the conclusion that as she had never thought about, cared or raised her voice for others they were also behaving in the same manner.

She thought:

And as countless others would now fall asleep in their lounge rooms after watching her fate unravel on tv thinking little other than that it was about something vaguely bad and opposing it was something vaguely good — national values, national lifestyle, national security — hadn’t she also dozed off at the end of a hundred other news stories thinking nothing? — nothing! (187)

Following this self-criticism, Gina also critiques the selfish society in which people have become so desensitized that they have stopped caring about others. On Saturday, while Gina was lying on beach and was listening to the news on radio, about, “bombings in Bagdad, more water restrictions and more bushfires; another threat to attack Sydney on another al-Qaida website and another sportsman in another sex scandal” found it all as “irrelevant noise” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 12). In general, Flanagan paints a very bleak picture of Australian society. She thinks people of Australia have all the

negative attributes. Australia is a place where people are racist and bitter. They trust media for anything that they report. The media steer their thoughts and their lives even. They need 'the Devil'. "That's why I'm important to them, Wilder, because if you can make up a terrorist you've given people the Devil" (*The Unknown Terrorist* 166). The doll gets aware of her predicament through the media that she is being chased by the government and will be hunted down as she is viewed as a terrorist. She does think about turning herself to police but she is afraid that they will not trust her. She also considers the idea of contacting media but again does not dare to do that because of her fear. Ultimately she says, "Perhaps what was wrong was not the world, she thought, but her in not agreeing with the world, and it was this of which she was guilty" (*The Unknown Terrorist* 173). She wonders if perhaps these things happen for a reason. In the last moments before she died, the conclusion that she draws is, 'No,' thought the Doll:

'Nothing is funny. Everything is about hate. The world only exists to hate and destroy. Every joke, every smile, everything happy exists only to cover up this truth.' And then, as if in confirmation of what she had just been thinking, directly opposite her [...] two beggars [...] were quarrelling, pulling a piece of bedding back and forth. From doorways and shop alcoves a small crowd of the ragged watched, some laughing, some egging their favourite on, everyone happy to observe such a pitiful spectacle solely to be amused. 'Yes,' she thought, 'even beggars make war on other beggars — that's life'. (*The Unknown Terrorist* 299-300)

On Tuesday, the fateful day when Doll breathed her last, police raided Wilder's house and during investigation she tried to defend Doll, they said, "Have you ever

thought maybe it's you who doesn't know Gina? Have you ever thought she might be trained to never tell or breathe a word to you?" (*The Unknown Terrorist* 209). The Doll said nothing but a terrain of thoughts moved in her mind and, "There were many sounds all around, Wilder's voice was just one. How many sounds equal the end of something and the beginning of doubt? [...]. The Doll could feel her feet losing their grip beneath her, could feel other forces sweeping up her body and taking it away" (*The Unknown Terrorist* 209).

The 6th of March was the birthday of her dead son and she would visit her son's grave every year that day. This year she again did not forget the day and headed towards Rookwood and, "She felt wretched with tiredness; her body at sixes and sevens with itself; one moment too hot, at another too cold; [...]. As she walked the streets, her senses seemed at once dulled and overly sensitive" (*The Unknown Terrorist* 214). So this was the mental state with which she was moving ahead without registering what was going around. She was thinking about many things like, "She had no home, no family, and there was no way back. Her childhood had been about little, how could it mean anything more now? But she wished she had more valium 5[...] wished that she didn't feel so anxious, so uptight, so strung out, just because she was sitting on a train riding back into the burbs" (*The Unknown Terrorist* 224). When she came to know for the first time that she was that unfortunate girl who had been used as the scapegoat for those bombs found at the Homebush Olympic Stadium, she could not believe her ears and started reassuring herself that it could not have been possible and she was worrying without any reason. "Why listen to what wasn't true? If she saw and heard no more, perhaps her life of only a

few days ago might return, her grief and sadness might stay hers alone, and she would once more be able to pursue her hopes and her dreams” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 213).

On the financial side, she lost all of her money when police raided her house and they found money from her apartment. It was the money that she had earned by working in Chairman’s Lounge as a pole dancer. She had planned that she would quit this place once she gets enough money to get admission in a university and owns her own apartment. She cries, “My money! My money! Thought the Doll—and she knew it was all gone. Wilder had not got there in time and now could never retrieve it. It was all her savings, and she would never ever get it back. She could not prove she had earned it legally and they would claim it had been obtained illegally” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 232).

Her hopes, all of them were shattered and dashed to the ground. She could not possibly believe what was going on and her life was like a whirlpool of twists and turns and lots of grief. “She felt giddy, made herself walk into the hardware store though the floor was rising and falling away at the same time. For gone with the money was her dream of a home, and with the home, her dream of leaving dancing and starting a new life” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 232). What tormented her the most was that she was being treated like a porn star and like a worthless object. She was terrified by the titles that she was being given by different channels just to spread sensationalism among the public and to get ratings, “Further in, there was a cartoon she didn’t really follow, showing women in burkhas pole dancing, with caption—The Mullah’s Lounge” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 260). This reminded her of what Tariq had told her about:

raster graphics—how it was what they—the powerful—would like to do with real people if they could[...] They were doing something far bolder: turning her from a woman into cartoons, headlines, opinions, fears, fate. They were morphing her pixel by pixel, the Doll realized with terror, into what she wasn't, the Black Widow, the dancer of the Death, the unknown Terrorist. (*The Unknown Terrorist* 260, 261)

She had so many aspirations for her future but now she had lost all hope of her promising future and the only thing she could feel was nothingness. She had a strong feeling of annihilation. She considered everything that was going on as worthless.

And as the taxi pulled away and the man disappeared from her view, it suddenly seemed to the Doll that there was ranting everywhere, that it fell out of the opinion pages, the radio airwaves, the tv current affair programmes. It was the vomit of the journos and pollies and shock jocks thinking life could be theirs, and it was as vile and stupid and pitiful as the man on the street corner yelling at the world as it went by. (*The Unknown Terrorist* 295)

Wherever she went she heard about the same thing, she read about her, she watched herself being treated like a commodity and not a human being. She felt as if her soul was being crushed under the feet of the world:

But the next channel was the same, and the channel after, and after that, everywhere, all the Doll could sense was the same darkness amplified a million fold, unavoidable, a mudslide of binary signals brought on by the

ceaseless rain of fear. All the Doll knew was that they had taken not only her money but stolen her very soul. (*The Unknown Terrorist* 290)

The associate professor Ray Ettlslinger is a despicable and familiar person who is always shown on media standing in front of his bookshelf and telling them what they want to hear. Ettlslinger and Cody scratch each other's back for their mutual benefit and interest. "And on the psychologist went, knitting all the disparate stories into one large untruth: a sad and bitter woman with vengeance on her mind, corrupted by a closet fundamentalist [...] These are the rational acts of a rational human being. In understanding one woman's history we can better understand why these terrible atrocities occur" (*The Unknown Terrorist* 288). Here is the core of Flanagan's anger: the fiction of terror, the generating of fear, the cynical cops, unctuous journalists and experts-for-hire who all have an interest in spreading false alarms.

Gina Davies was so desperate that she started thinking of impossibilities in the state of utter hopelessness, "I'll begin again, thought the doll. I will—but then she realized no new beginning was possible now. There was no starting over, there was no choice, no freedom, only the time left waiting for fate to seize her... There was no hope, nor was there despair [...] everything had to be shaved off" (*The Unknown Terrorist* 280). She had panicked in the situation and was indecisive as to be or not to be. She could understand that many powerful people were in it now and they would not let her say the truth about her. They would just accuse her of the crime that she had not done as:

The doll's mind pitched and swayed with the impossibilities and hopelessness of her situation. To give herself up was madness, for they

wanted her as a terrorist, no matter what Wilder or Nick Loukakis said, they wanted their victim... Too much had been said, too much done, too many powerful people were now mixed up in it. And, anyway, who would listen to her, a pole dancer, a nobody, a westie, when they had taken the little truths of her life to make up a big lie? (*The Unknown Terrorist* 251)

The Doll after having gone through this tormenting experience of terror and disappointment, she had become so much sensitized that she could feel fear running through her body. As if the fear of the unknown would swallow her and she would be doomed to get devastated.

Her body felt astonishingly alert. Her eyes darted everywhere, her ears tuned in and out of conversations around the room [...] She could feel the smallest breeze caused by someone moving past her [...] And above all, what her hyped-up body could sense was fear— [...] It seemed so tangible, she felt she could smell fear and taste fear, all this fear they were breathing in, drinking up and eating, all this fear they lived by and with. (*The Unknown Terrorist* 266)

When Richard Cody appears on television in one of the talk shows he is asked a question by the host Larry “Richard, the question I suppose on everyone’s mind is why? Why would an Aussie girl allow herself to get mixed up in all this madness?” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 269). He connects one event with the other one by one to stress that terrorism keeps changing its form or nature. He comes up with his concocted assertion to prove his point:

What the experts are telling us is how terrorism constantly mutates,” said Richard Cody, “like a super virus— a bird flu of the soul, if you like. So, first it was a Middle Eastern phenomenon; next it spread to countries like Chechnya. Then in Britain we saw English-born Muslims turning into suicide bombers. In Gina Davies we are seeing the latest morphing, with an Australian woman... making common cause with the terrorists.(270)

Later in the novel we see the reaction of Australians in one of the radio programmes where Muslims were being called as “Islamic Scumbags” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 275). We can also see the reaction of this flared up terrorism story that Australians have also developed a kind of hatred for Muslims and their culture. Here indirectly Muslims are being targeted and they think that their governments are not doing enough to counter this phenomenon of terrorism.

We all get you, Trev, and, what’s more, I think we’re all with you. We’re the land of the fair go, but these trouble-makers who come from elsewhere need to know that’s not the same thing as weakness. And if the government won’t do it, sometimes it’s up to people to show what our standards are [...] And if that’s beyond us as Australian I don’t think we should be living here either. (*The Unknown Terrorist* 276)

The Doll was so frustrated by the state she was in that she changes her appearance, by getting her head shaved off. In a way she simply altered into what she was not just to hide herself from those around her. “The Doll watched in the mirror as her damp hair fell in short blonde hanks to the floor, and a hideous white scalp and a stranger’s face

were slowly revealed. She felt she looked like a skinhead. An ugly, dykey skinhead. She felt what she wanted to feel. She felt nothing” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 224).

To put the whole thing in a nutshell, we can say that the collaboration between the media and the government, for their own benefit, sometimes does injustice to the ordinary citizens. The Doll became the victim of Orientalism and was tortured emotionally and psychologically. Her victimization shows that it could be anyone who can be the next to become the target of the media. The manipulation, fear and the paranoia that surrounded the whole story is demonstrative of the callousness of the media and they use media as an exploitative tool because they think they have absolute power. We may conclude this chapter with Gina’s words in which she explicitly states Flanagan’s stance and a bitter reality, “It was a war against everyone, and it didn’t matter whether you were Muslim or Christian, a Leb or a lap dancer — there was only this war and whatever you were, [...] you were going to be sucked into it no matter what” (*The Unknown Terrorist* 279).

Chapter Five

Conclusion

After the 9/11 attacks the binary division between “us” vs. “them” was highlighted once again while focusing the Middle East and the old Orientalist discourse. The misperception towards the East by the West has deep historical roots and is not a new phenomenon. Since the Crusades, Islam was regarded and represented in a way that created and intensified prejudiced and racist feelings in the Western psyche. Literary texts are one of most influential means that shape Westerners’ knowledge, attitude and interest toward the Orient. The 9/11 attacks spurred many authors and journalists to write about the attacks and the ensuing war on terror. The huge number of literary and non-literary works concentrated on multiple issues. One of the much debated topics was the portrayal of Arabs and Muslims. The stereotypical image that was presented in American media was that of bearded male who was depicted as an extremist and terrorist.

Moreover, this has been best described in *Orientalism* by Edward Said. It was first published in 1978 and outlines certain parameters on which the West judges the East and presents a made up image before the world for its own benefit. The attacks of 9/11 instilled a renewed interest among the scholars and theories of Neo-Orientalism were put forward concerning the cultural responses to the attacks. The fiction produced in the post 9/11 world responded differently to this neo-orientalist political discourse and stereotyping that permeated the Fox News and the other media. Some writers challenged this stereotyping. However, others were hand in hand with the views of Orientalists. Another important work by Edward Said addresses the, “Western and specifically

American responses to an Islamic world perceived, since the early seventies, as being immensely relevant and yet antipathetically troubled and problematic” (1). We may call *Covering Islam* the sequel to *Orientalism*. In *Covering Islam* Edward Said exposes misperceptions of Islam and shows how partial media coverage usually finds what it wants rather than what is there. In the first part of the book, Said attacks columnists who offer more opinion than fact, but reserves his harshest criticism for the television networks, major newspapers, and opinion magazines.

Richard Flanagan is an Australian author who has written both fiction and non-fiction. *The Unknown Terrorist* by Richard Flanagan criticizes the media of fear, manipulation by the media and its collaboration with the government for each other's benefit. Its aim in presenting a pole dancer as the suspected terrorist is to underscore the point that anyone can become the target of the media and the government even if one does not have any apparent links to terrorism. Flanagan presents an Australian society that cannot be cured of its illnesses. This society faces danger not from the terrorists but from the media and government who are self-centered and biased.

Flanagan in his interview comments while writing *The Unknown Terrorist*. “I took the book from everywhere —radio ads, infotainment programs, newspaper headlines, pub talk. A lot of what is most disturbing in the novel are quotes from shock jocks and politicians— no one, I felt, was doing fiction better in Australia than those clowns” (5). He criticizes the journalists and politicians in what they are doing in propagating the terror and fear among the public for their ulterior motives. *The Unknown Terrorist* is truly reflective of the situation after 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers. This fear of the future attacks on USA or Australia rather aggravated the situation. It

ultimately gave rise to the notion that whatever came out of the mouth of media was true. The war on terror rhetoric was trumpeted heavily on TV channels. This constant hammering of war on terror rhetoric proved to be rather counterproductive as it did not pacify the issues rather aggravated them.

The textual analysis of *The Unknown Terrorist* brings out some very interesting findings about the role of the powerful in simply distorting the realities of a person's life and presenting them as someone they are actually not. The present study sought to bring to light some of the significant aspects of the exploitation on the part of the powerful be it media or the government. The media and the government count on each other for their mutual benefit. They actually generate fear among people and ultimately try to get rewards and get even higher positions in their careers. I have attempted to establish the fact that manipulation and exploitation by the media can have devastating impact on the individuals. In order to fulfill its own desires and to benefit itself, it can go to any extent and turn upside down the realities of one's life. In so doing, a person is left hopeless and helpless. It can be deduced after having analyzed the life of the protagonist in the novel that she falls prey to the desires of the authorities and all her dreams, desires and plans for her future are dashed to the ground.

The examination of the whole story of her life has given me the opportunity to show that the pole dancer was singled out and was presented before the public as "the other". This othering of Gina Davies left some indelible imprints on her personality. She had to quit her social life. She could not enjoy the freedom that she had before she was branded as the terrorist. She could not continue her job. Her hard-earned money was taken from her that was legally earned by her. However, the money was shown to have

been earned by having connections to terrorists' cell in the Middle East. She felt disillusioned and dejected at times and could not bear the pressure that was exerted on her. As a result, she became avenging and opted to kill her arch fiend, Richard Cody. Richard Cody was the journalist who morphed every reality of her life for his own ulterior motives. He wanted to give a rise to his degenerating career and for that he could go to the extent of destroying the life of the pole dancer. She also wanted to lead a respectable life like any other person in Australia and in order to attain her goal she would even do the job that she would detest the most. But then this twist simply devastated her life within days and she was turned into a notorious terrorist from a pole dancer.

All the measures taken by government and the media to counter the terrorism in the world turn out to be counter-productive rather than being helpful in locating terrorists. How anti-Western element is generated in the hearts of Arab and Muslim world by portraying all the Muslims as terrorists is a matter of great concern. Flanagan also concludes the account of writing *The Unknown Terrorist* by saying, "I wanted to write a book that somehow captured all this madness. But I needed a story that would make it work. It was no good doing it about a Muslim, or an Arab, or anyone like that. I wanted people who weren't Muslim or Arab to read this book and think: it could be me they come for next ("Writing The Unknown Terrorist" 4). This clearly shows falsely incriminating Muslims and Arabs as terrorists would serve as a boomerang. By saying so, we mean that, accusing others for the crimes they have not done, backfires and with deadly consequences.

The Unknown Terrorist by Richard Flanagan can be analyzed further to explore the theme of racism that is also present in the novel. Gina Davies, the protagonist, is herself racist and looks down upon those who are from another racial background. This racist attitude can further be explored as far as some other characters in the novel are highly racist. How racism ultimately becomes a reason for generating hatred and ill-feelings in a society. The novel is filled with examples where such feelings of racism are heightened and are further aggravated instead of pacifying them.

Works Cited

- Alatas, Farid Syed. Ed. “*Covering Islam: Challenges and Opportunities for Media in the Global Village.*” The Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs (RIMA), Singapore & Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF), Singapore. 2005. Web. 4 Dec 2017.
- Awan, Safeer Muhammad. “Global Terror and the Rise of Xenophobia/ Islamophobia: An Analysis of American Cultural Production since September 11.” *Islamic Studies*, vol. 49. no. 4, 2010, pp.521-37. Web. 6 Nov. 2017.
- Amiri, Abid Muhammad. “Muslim Americans and Media after 9/11.” *Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal*, vol. 5. no. 2, 2012 Web. 7 Nov. 2017.
- Altheide, David L. “Terrorism and the Politics of Fear.” *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies*, vol. 6 no.4, 2006, pp. 1-25. Web. 23 Nov.2017
- Altheide, David L. “The News Media, the Problem Frame, and the Production of Fear.” *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 38. no. 4, 1997, pp. 647-68. Web. 18 July. 2017.
- Altheide, David L. “The Mass Media and Terrorism.” *Discourse & Communication*. vol. 1. no. 3, 2007, pp 287-308. PDF file.
- “A Letter From Richard Flanagan - Transcript.” *Australian Story, ABC*, 3 Nov. 2008. Web 08 August 2017.
- About ASIO - Overview. “ASIO. Commonwealth of Australia”. Web. 28 July 2017
- Bennett, Bruce. “Of spies and terrorists: Australian fiction after 9/11.” *ASIATIC*, vol. 2. no.1, 2008, pp. 10-20, Web. 20 Sept. 2017.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso, 2004, Web. 23 Dec. 2017. PDF file

Bush, George W. "Address to Joint Session of Congress Following 9/11 Attacks." September 20, 2001, Web. 4 Nov. 2017.

Clothier, Peter. "The Unknown Terrorist, by Richard Flanagan: A Book Review." *Huffpost*, updated Aug 23, 2016. Web. 5 Aug 2017.

Elaasar, A. *Silent victims: The plight of Arab & Muslim Americans in Post 9/11 America*. Bloomington: Author House. 2004. *Google Books*, Web. 8 Dec. 2017.

Flanagan, Richard. "Politics, Writing, Love: Writing 'The Unknown Terrorist'". *The Monthly* Web.4 Sep 2017.

---. *The Unknown Terrorist*, London: Atlantic, 2008. Print.

Gray, Richard. "Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis." *American Literary History*, vol. 21.no.1, 2009, pp.128-148. Web 7 Oct 2017.

Ghazali, Abdus Sattar. *Islam & Muslims in the post 9/11 America*. Modesto: Eagle Enterprises.2008, *Google Books*. Web. 13 Sept 2017.

Huntington, Samuel P. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72. No.3,1993, pp.22-49. Web.18 Oct 2017.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998. Web. 23 Jan. 2017.

Holcombe, Garan. "Richard Flanagan." *British Council*, 2005. Web. 25 Oct. 2017.

Iweala, Uzodinma. "Unusual Suspect." Review of *The Unknown Terrorist* by Richard Flanagan. *New York Times*. 22 July 2007. Web. 5 Nov. 2017.

Keniston, Ann, and Jeane Follanbsee Quinn. Editors. *Literature after 9/11*. New York: Routledge, 2008, *Google Books*. Web. 6 Nov 2017.

Kumar, Malreddy Pavan. "Introduction: Orientalism(s) after 9/11." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Vol. 48.no.3. 2012. pp.233-40. Web. 26 Dec 2017

Khalid, Maryam. "Gender, Orientalism and Representations of the 'Other' in the War on Terror." *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 23, no.1, 2011, pp. 15-29. Web. 8 Nov. 2017.

Kellner, Douglas. *International Journal of Communication* 1 (2007), Book Review

Kakutani, Michiko. "A Misunderstanding , and a simple Life Descends into a Nightmare." Review of *The Unknown Terrorist* by Richard Flanagan. *The New York Times*, Web. 6 Sept 2017.

Lockman, Zachary. *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. PDF file

Macfie, Alexander Lyon. *Oreintalsim*, Routledge, New York: 2014.*Google Books*. Web. 16 Oct 2017.

Mackenzie, John and Mackenzie, John M. *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*,
Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York: 1995. *Google Books*.

Web. 19 Nov. 2017.

Morley, Catherine. "The End of Innocence: Tales of Terror after 9/11." *Review of
International American Studies* 3.3-4.1 (Fall 2008): 82-94. Print.

Marr, David. "Review of *The Unknown Terrorist*." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Oct 28,
2006. Web. 11 May. 2017.

Nacos, Brigitti Lebens and Reyna, Oscar Torres. *Fueling our Fears: Stereotyping, Media
coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim American*. Roman & Littlefield ,
2006. *Google Books*. Web. 24 Dec. 2017.

Nguyen, Tram. *We are all Suspects now: Untold stories from Immigrant Communities
after 9/11*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007. *Google Books*, Web. 4 Aug. 2017.

Norris, Pippa, and et al. Eds. *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and
the Public*, London: Routledge, 2003. *Google Books*, Web. 5 Dec. 2017.

"Orientalism", *Oxford Dictionary*. Web. 4 Oct. 2017.

O'Reilly, Nathaneal. "Government, Media, and Power: Terrorism in the Australian Novel
since 9/11." *From Solidarity to schisms: 9/11 and After in Fiction and Film from
Outside the US*. Ed. Cilano Cara, Rodopi, 2009, pp 296-314. *Google Books*. Web.
8 Dec. 2017.

Pons, Xavier. "Realigning the Spiritual Compass: Representations of Terrorism in Some
Recent Australian Fiction." *The Journal of the European Association of Studies
on Australia*, Vol.1. 2009. Web. 18 Oct 2017.

“Orientalism” *Oxford Dictionary* Web. 8 Oct 2017

Powell, A. Kimberly. “Framing Islam: An Analysis of U.S. Media Coverage of Terrorism Since 9/11”. *Communication Studies*, Vol. 62, no.1, pp.96-112.
Web. Aug 18.2017.

Quinn, Riley. *Orientalism: An Analysis of Edward Said’s Orientalism*. Macat Library, 2017. *Google Books*. Web. 20 Oct 2017.

Rothberg, Michael. “A Failure of the Imagination: Diagnosing the Post-9/11 Novel, A Response to Richard Gray.” *American Literary History*, Vol. 21. No.1, 2009, pp.152-158. Web. 4 Oct. 2017.

Ruthven, Malise. “Covering Islam by Edward Said”. *London Review of Books*: Vol.4. no.3. 18 Feb 1982 .pp.9-11. Web 14 Oct. 2017.

“Rhetoric” *Meriam Webster Dictionary* Web. 4 Oct 2017

Said, Edward W. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage Books. 1997 Print.

---. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin, 2003. Print.

Sultan, Khalid. “Linking Islam with Terrorism: A Review of the Media Framing since 9/11.” *Global Media Journal. (Pakistan Ed)*, Vol.9. no.2. 2016. Web. 23 Oct. 2017.

Spencer, Alexander. “Lessons Learnt: Terrorism and the Media” *Arts and Humanities Research Council*. March 2012. Web. 23 Dec. 2017.

Utz, John. "Terrorism in Literature: Not Just the Usual Suspect." *B&C: The Christian Review. Christianity Today Mag.* Web. 2 Nov. 2017.

Van, Dijk Teun A. *Racism and the Press*. London: Routledge.1991. Print.

Weimann, Gabriel and Winn, Conrad. *The Theater of Terror. Mass Media and International Terrorism*, New York: Longman.1994. Print.

Webb, Jen. "Distant Context, Local Colour: Australian 'post September 11' Fiction." *JASAL Special Issue: Common Readers*, 2010, pp.1-14, Web. 6 Aug. 2017.

Wijngaarden, Tinka van. "(Neo-) Orientalism in Post 9/11 Fiction and Film." Diss. Universiteit Leiden, 2015. Web.7 Aug.2017.

Welty, Gordon. "Review of Edward Said Covering Islam". Wright State University, *Dayton Voice* .1997. Web. 27 Dec. 2017.

Ward, Lucy. "From Aladdin to Lost Ark, Muslims get angry at 'bad guy' film images." *The Guardian*. Web.15 Aug. 2017.