Domestic Terrorisms: Genre, Violence, and Family Life in the Contemporary British Novel

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Abstract

This thesis brings together three British novels written before and after 9/11 that represent terrorism—Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist* (1985), Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), and Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017)—and addresses how each novel engages with ideological violence at the level of the family through its manipulation of generic conventions. In depicting terror, each novel plays upon an established genre or canonical text: the *bildungsroman*, the modernist one-day novel, and Greek tragedy. Notably, each of these genres is also invested in the intricacies of family dynamics, and especially the destiny of young people whose moral, ethical, and political attitudes differ from their parents' worldview. As opposed to exploring the psychology of the terrorist character, this thesis engages with the terrorist as an agent of critique within the novel. It also re-locates the terrorist novel outside the United States and traces a continuity between the pre- and post- 9/11 depiction of terrorism as an intensely local phenomenon that implicates each member of the family unit and the institutions with which they interact. *The Good Terrorist*, *Saturday*, and *Home Fire* confront the "terrorism taboo" by unengaging with terrorism as its own genre, and instead, reorienting domestic fiction and the family novel towards institutional and formal critique. Rejecting the notion that a "retreat" into the domestic obscures the political urgency terrorism engenders, I posit the critical potential of the terrorist character. By tracing a genealogy of novels that consider terrorism and domestic life, this thesis outlines a continuity between pre- and post-9/11 representations of terrorism, stressing a dually transnational and local approach to terrorist fiction within familiar generic bounds.

Résumé

Cette thèse réunit trois romans britanniques écrits avant et après le 11 septembre qui représentent le terrorisme —*The Good Terrorist* (1985) de Doris Lessing, *Saturday* (2005) de Ian McEwan et *Home Fire* (2017) de Kamila Shamsie—et traite de la manière dont chaque roman aborde la violence idéologique au niveau de la famille par sa manipulation des conventions génériques. En dépeignant la terreur, chaque roman s'appuie sur un genre établi ou un texte canonique: le *bildungsroman*, le roman d'un jour moderniste et la tragédie grecque. Notamment, chacun de ces genres s'investit également dans les subtilités de la dynamique familiale, surtout dans le destin de jeunes gens dont les attitudes morales, éthiques et politiques diffèrent de la vision du monde de leurs parents. Plutôt que d'explorer la psychologie du personnage terroriste, cette thèse aborde le terroriste en tant qu'agent de critique dans le roman. Elle relocalise également le roman terroriste en dehors des États-Unis et établit une continuité entre la représentation du terrorisme avant et après le 11 septembre en tant que phénomène intensément local qui concerne chaque membre de la cellule familiale et des institutions avec lesquelles ils interagissent. *The Good Terrorist, Saturday* et *Home Fire* affrontent le « tabou du terrorisme » en ne s'engageant pas avec le terrorisme en tant que genre propre, mais en réorientant la fiction domestique et le roman familial vers une critique institutionnelle et formelle. En rejetant l'idée qu'un « retrait » vers le domaine domestique masque l'urgence politique qu'engendre le terrorisme, je postule que le personnage terroriste a un potentiel critique. En traçant une généalogie des romans qui abordent le terrorisme et la vie domestique, cette thèse présente une continuité entre les représentations du terrorisme antérieures et postérieures au 11 septembre, en mettant l'accent sur une approche à la fois transnationale et locale de la fiction terroriste à l'intérieur de limites génériques familières.

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Introduction

Terrorism is a violent attempt to bring about radically new circumstances as rapidly as possible. This desire for radical change also emerges within the familial sphere, where children either fulfil parental expectations or break with the values, traditions, and commitments of generations past. In this regard, the British domestic novel finds new resonance from the 1980s through the twenty-first century insofar as the international threat of terrorism eclipses familial, local, or national concerns. In this thesis, terrorism is broadly defined as "the use or threat of violence for political, religious, or ideological ends" (Gooch and Williams np.) Theorists and lawmakers alike concede that a universal definition of terror "has proved elusive for the international community" (Grant and Barker np.). "While 'terrorism' is rarely used positively" within literature, "the term does not imply something so horrible and novel that it escapes language. Instead, aside from the specific references of the French Terror, 'terrorism' broadened into a synonym for any kind of oppression and intimidation, no matter how great or small" (Herman, *Unspeakable* 36). Three novels that develop a new language for describing terror are Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist* (1985), Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), and Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017). Lessing's, McEwan's, and Shamsie's novels situate terror within the home via their invocation of classically domestic or familial genres. Whereas the terrorist is often understood as the "[enemy] of all institutions," each writer's generic experimentation engenders a commentary on the individual's belonging to a family or nation-state (Ó Donghaile, *Shock, Politics, Literature* 7).

This thesis marries scholarship derived from the nascent field of critical terrorism studies and genre studies in its analysis of terrorist fiction in the contemporary British novel. Just as it

examines fusions of genre, my analysis pairs domestic or familial genres with emerging critiques of terrorism and literature published in the years following 9/11. Franco Moretti's *The Way of the World: The* Bildungsroman *in European Culture,* Sarah Cole's *At the Violet Hour: Modernism and Violence in England and Ireland,* and Deaglán Ó Donghaile's *Blasted Literature: Victorian Political Fiction and the Shock of Modernism* each highlight the contradictory function of genre as both a limiting and a liberating principle. Moreover, these theorists study genre, form, and style as products of history, which shape texts and their readers alike. Despite their varying subjects, Moretti, Cole, and Ó Donghaile all synthesize historical and formal analysis and emphasize how genre lends us a language for voicing writerly and readerly responses to terror. Critical terrorism studies offers a more sustained insight into the arc of terrorism's emergence as a literary subject. Theorist Peter C. Herman's edited volume *Terrorism and Literature* and his monograph *Unspeakable: Literature and Terrorism from the Gunpowder Plot to 9/11* lend this thesis historical and political context for the slowly developing culture of terror from seventeenth century to the present. Herman's work neglects to draw a distinction between terrorism in the British or American spheres, making it particularly applicable to novels that concern the power of terrorism to transform the nation and the world in distinct ways.

Terrorism reasserts itself in the novel following September 11th. Novels that represented terrorism and its aftershocks—both within and beyond the United States—were published alongside diverse forms of popular media that analyzed ideological violence. Four days following the attacks on the World Trade Center, Ian McEwan published an opinion piece in the *Guardian* in which he claimed that "among [the hijackers'] crimes was a failure of the imagination" (np). McEwan lamented the terrorist's inability to understand their victims and realize their humanity. Conversely, this failure of imagination extends to representations of

terrorism in the novel. In the years that followed, contemporary fiction that engaged with terrorism was siloed by the labels "9/11 fiction" and "post-9/11 fiction." Given the meaningful connections between various terrorisms across both time and space, this explicitly US-centric approach to the categorization of terrorist fiction bears a striking similarity to depictions of such violence presented by mainstream politicians and journalists alike. As Richard Jackson suggests, "it can be argued that the current literature dealing with terrorism functions to reproduce (rather than challenge) the dominant cultural mythography of terrorism" ("Sympathy for the Devil" 377). This thesis attempts to broaden the spatial and temporal markers of terrorist fiction, by drawing a continuity between terrorist novels written before and after September 11th. In doing so, I analyze interaction and exchange between the British and American novel and take issue with the expressly American designation and twenty-first century periodization of "9/11 fiction." Not only was terrorism a novelistic concern before 2001: an interplay across global, national, and local jurisdictions has been a central theme of terrorist fiction from the dynamite era to the present.

Prior to 9/11, novels that featured terrorism were primarily categorized by their nation of origin and the local circumstances that inspired them. What now may be termed a "terrorist novel" was instead called Victorian or Edwardian dynamite fiction, or French, Irish, and Russian revolutionary fiction, each of which corresponded to a distinctly national reality. Edwardian dynamite fiction emerged following Alfred Nobel's invention of dynamite in 1866 (Bell np). Inspired or "shocked" by political movements such as Fenianism and anarchism, which harnessed dynamite for political ends, novelists themselves began integrating the new technology into their storytelling. Cole argues that these "dynamite novels spoke to a public infatuation with the specter of political violence that began in the 1880s and continued into the modernist era"

(85). In turn, authors of dynamite fiction interpreted seemingly senseless violence for their readers through storytelling. Despite the shocking quality of terrorist acts, such novelists affirmed and theorized terrorism's power to communicate coherent political positions. Moreover, these fictions varied in their political valence; they at once "justified or criticized subversive political violence" by depicting a "confluence of ideological and literary expression" that distinguishes the genre (Ó Donghaile, "Parliament Is Burning" 213). The "canonical foreignness" of the anarchist, which underpins their violent acts, threatens the stability and legitimacy of nationality (Cole 104). The highly symbolic public gestures of these peripheral figures lend themselves to literary representation by British novelists. Notable Anglophone dynamite novels include Henry James's *Princess Casamassima* (1886), Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), and G.K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), many of which "freely employed elements common to such nineteenth-century conventions as the detective novel, the industrial novel, (proto)science fiction, fantasy novels of invasion or world war, and melodrama" (Cole 85). Evidently, these proto-terroristic events, such as instances of anarchist violence, and their mechanics, engendered generic play that pushed the limits of a novel's "Britishness." The historic development of the dynamite novel raises three central concerns of this thesis: (1) whether "terrorist fiction" can be considered a discrete genre; (2) how an interplay between the global, national, and local is expressed via terroristic violence; and (3) whether the terrorist character can be situated within an alternate system of meaning, i.e. the domestic or familial sphere.

Following the rise and decline of dynamite violence and in turn, the dynamite novel, the relationship between terrorism and genre becomes more ambiguous. In the British Isles, the enduring conflict between Irish and British nations continued to inspire terrorist fictions that

dramatized the IRA's struggle for Irish independence. According to Peter C. Herman, "despite the earlier association of terrorism with unspeakability, post-colonial terrorism seemed to many a sane military tactic intended to achieve a comprehensible goal (political independence)" post 1945 (*Unspeakable* 65). The literature of the ensuing Troubles then "speaks" through representations of terroristic violence, just as terrorists themselves do. As opposed to the vaguely foreign, often Eastern European revolutionary of the dynamite novel, the IRA revolutionary quite literally speaks the same language as the British citizen. In his discussion of literature and the Troubles, Simon Prince argues that "individual and group narratives bleed into each other, especially in the telling of Irish stories" (140). He contends that "a group narrative…can impose constraints and directives upon the actions of its recipients…narratives have endings as well as beginnings and middles" (Prince 140). The prescriptive nature of a historical, national, or political group narrative functions similarly to genre, which situates literary works within a preexisting discourse. He continues: "is not just about historical events being read in radically different ways," but rather Irish and British "narratives would have arrived at this shared site from different starting points in the past and would have headed off in different directions toward the future" (Prince 141). While terrorism is indeed speakable in the post-anarchist era, it remains undefinable. Prince alludes to a relationship between crisis and genre pinpointed by Lauren Berlant, who describes a historical moment "in which a relation of persons and worlds is sensed to be changing but the rules for habitation and the genres of storytelling about it are unstable, in chaos" (*Cruel Optimism* 6). In an effort to "reinvent… new idioms of the political, and of belonging itself," authors of terrorist fiction have both retreated into preestablished genres and fashioned new ones (Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* 262). Just as political disunity engenders a kind of

generic chaos, it also lends itself to formal fabulation that integrates seemingly oppositional perspectives and styles.

One such "new idiom" is that of "homegrown terrorism." In the wake of the 2005 London bombings known as 7/7, growing fears over "homegrown terrorism" became widespread. The term emerges from a greater discourse surrounding "domestic terrorism," or acts of terrorism committed within the country where the perpetrator legally resides. Homegrown terrorism then refers to violence enacted by those "born and raised in the West or have a strong attachment to the West…[who] are acting on their own behalf and not taking orders from a group abroad" (Zekulin 48). While the phrase is oxymoronic, combining the seemingly oppositional concepts of "home" and "terror," it signals a deeper association between the terrorist and their home environment, be it a household or nation. I suggest that this association is best expressed in terrorist novels that foreground family life. Lessing's, McEwan's, and Shamsie's invocations of domestic or familial genres (the *bildungsroman*, modernist day-long novel, and Greek tragedy) better enables them to portray terror as a legible act, rather than a single shocking event. In turn, terrorist interventions into domestic genres provoke a revaluation of their normative conclusions and contribute to timely, creative innovations of each form.

By choosing to focus on British representations of terrorism, this thesis analyzes novels that conform to "domestic" or "familial" conventions with a degree of critical distance from the violent act of terrorism itself, and in particular, the events of September 11. In a widely cited article titled "Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis," critic Richard Gray states that "the crisis [of September 11th] is, in every sense of the word, domesticated" by the American novel (134). He critiques a "retreat into domestic detail" which "[reduces] a turning point in national and international history to little more than a stage in a

sentimental education" (Gray 134). Gray draws a connection between "formal" and "political failure" (Rothberg 153). Gray, paraphrased by Rothberg, is of the opinion that "the *form* of their works does not bear witness to fundamental change; rather, these works 'assimilate the unfamiliar into familiar structures'" (Rothberg 152). This thesis identifies this debate as a critical point of departure and asks how genre, as a "familiar structure" can yield new readings of terroristic violence. Inspired by Gray's invocation of "domestic detail" and "sentimental education," I compare novels that present the family's interaction with the state and its enemies as an organic whole. Moreover, I argue that formal innovation is possible within familiar generic boundaries. Indeed, domesticity sheds light on our shared humanity and enables us not only to speak or define terrorist violence, but further, voice more articulate, focused criticisms of the British state and its policies and institutions. Thus, this thesis proposes a reciprocal relationship between generic and historical criticism, with one informing the other and vice versa.

Domestic novels that contend with terrorism have historically not only reproduced a national "mythography," but also contributed to what is now termed the "terrorist taboo" (Frank 355). The terrorist novel written after 9/11 is characterized by an overwhelming authorial anxiety towards what Zulaika and Douglass term "the unspeakable act of terrorism," which deems the "very attempt to 'know' how the terrorist thinks or lives…an abomination" (149). This taboo may cause the "retreat into domestic detail" that Gray criticizes. Richard Jackson highlights the "agonistic potential" of the terrorist novel; he notes that "allowing the terrorist to speak not only acts to resist and undermine the terrorism taboo and generate empathetic projection, but potentially also creates an agonistic moment in which the violent subaltern can speak on an equal footing directly to the counterterrorist—and by extension, to the reader" ("Terrorism, Taboo, and Discursive Resistance" 396). Rather than only focusing on terrorists as empathetic or subaltern

subjects, I further position them as figures of critique. I analyze novels in which the terrorist is preemptively humanized through their relationship to the family or domestic sphere. Therefore, the agonistic potential in the texts I focus on derives from forms of interpersonal conflict that resound with greater political, historical, or social significance. Domestic conflict is not merely a metaphor for "real" strife; rather, the conflicts depicted in the novels featured demonstrate literal interactions between terror, families, and institutions.

Each chapter of this thesis interprets a novel in light of its generic inheritances and locates an institutional critique that arises from the mingling of domesticity and terror. These include (1) *The Good Terrorist*, which incorporates elements of dynamite fiction and the *bildungsroman* to comment on the impacts of housing policy; (2) *Saturday*, which draws on modernist aesthetics in its examination of psychology and healthcare; and (3) *Home Fire*, which contemporizes Greek tragedy to depict the misapplication of the law and precarity of citizenship.

Chapter 1 of this thesis addresses Lessing's *The Good Terrorist*, which bears similarity to both dynamite fiction and the *bildungsroman* in its characterization of homemaker-terrorist Alice Mellings. Lessing's novel interrogates the teleology of both genres, which are oriented towards narrative apotheosis, either in the form of an explosion or the culmination of self-formation (*bildung*). When Alice moves into a squat with a band of revolutionaries seeking to join the IRA, she labours instead to transform their dilapidated house into a livable home. Throughout the novel, Lessing compares the seemingly constructive act of homemaking to the destructive power of explosivity, localizing the terrorist threat by situating it within the home. Written during an era of austerity, epitomized by the privatization of council housing in Britain, *The Good Terrorist* adopts its own austere style to represent anticlimax and personal regression. Despite the global concerns of Alice's radical found family, Lessing demonstrates how their organization's true

object of scrutiny is British domestic policy, and in particular, housing scarcity. Undermining literary and political notions of progress, Lessing depicts the difficulties of coming of age in crisis and the mundanity of terror.

Building on the explicitly national critiques present in *The Good Terrorist,* Chapter 2 examines overseas terrorism's influence over neurosurgeon Henry Perowne's psyche in McEwan's *Saturday*. Written in the wake of September 11th, McEwan's novel initially depicts terrorism as a global threat, emphasizing the transnational alliance between the United States and Britain during the mounting War on Terror. Taking place over the course of a single day and narrated in a stream of consciousness style, *Saturday*'s structural similarity to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* allows McEwan to foreground the quotidian terrors that impress themselves on the mind. The chapter draws upon Simone Weil's theories of attention and reading to describe how Perowne's cognitive processes reconcile themselves to the reality of terror. Perowne's reliance on scientific ways of knowing are contrasted with McEwan's own emphasis on the mind as a creative instrument. McEwan's interdisciplinary approach to the mind furthers his exploration of our ethical obligation to the other, be they a terrorist or member of our family, patient or literary creation.

Chapter 3 depicts the influence of law and citizenship in maintaining or dissolving family bonds in Shamsie's *Home Fire.* As a contemporary retelling of Sophocles' *Antigone*, *Home Fire* deals directly with a disunited nuclear family. Whereas *The Good Terrorist* and *Saturday* which are local in their scope, Shamsie's novel is multigenerational and transnational. The novelist's representation of a spatially and temporally fragmented family undermines the classical unities of Greek tragedy. The global scope of Shamsie's novel enables her to present a multitudinous system of overlapping laws that bear on the family unit and dictate relations between its

members. Within this precarious legal zone, Shamsie's characters reevaluate their bonds and reckon with the emotional and political ramification of radicalization on the family. Through her invocation of Sophocles, Shamsie moves beyond the terrorist taboo and instead shifts her focus to problematic institutional responses to terrorism, such as the conditionality of citizenship under British law.

The Good Terrorist, Saturday, and *Home Fire* disengage from terrorism as its own genre, and instead reorient domestic fiction towards institutional and formal critique. Outlining a more robust history of contemporary terrorist fiction, this thesis sheds light on the terrorist novel's myriad generic influences, paying particular attention to its association with domestic or familial forms. Contrary to claims that a "retreat" into the domestic indicates contemporary novelists' inability to truthfully represent terror, I demonstrate how domesticity and terror can merge productively and innovate established forms. In turn, this thesis seeks to explain how the domestic terrorist novel reveals the hidden connections between individuals, states, and their institutions, as it seeks to obliterate them.

Coming of Age in Crisis: Housing, Explosivity, and Austerity in Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist*

In a 2007 interview granted to a Spanish newspaper, Doris Lessing remarked that events of 9/11 were "neither as terrible nor as extraordinary as [Americans] think" in light of the Irish Republican Army's history of violence in the United Kingdom (Siddique np.). As the Nobel Laureate that year, Lessing's poorly received comments were reprinted across the Atlantic by publications like the Guardian and New York Times. Her statement is significant considering her novel *The Good Terrorist* (1985), published sixteen years prior to 9/11 and twelve before the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Despite the great difference in ideology between al Qaeda and the Irish Republican Army, Lessing's comments nonetheless draw a parallel between the two in typically dry language; they gesture towards a greater culture of terror that is at once international and local. The novelist, in similarly "nondescript, dispirited sentences," represents the terrorist as neither terrible nor extraordinary in *The Good Terrorist* (Donoghue np). Instead, the novel centers on Alice Mellings, a thirty-six-year-old, well-educated, middle-class Londoner, who renounces the comforts of her upbringing for an itinerant existence. Along with her unfeeling companion Jasper, Alice moves into a squat that houses several leftist wanderers, and quickly devotes herself to its maintenance. While her comrades, members of the newly founded Communist Centre Union, debate joining the IRA, Lessing's readers accompany Alice in her endeavour to make the squat habitable. Seeking affirmation in her identity as a revolutionary, Alice becomes involved in a plot to bomb a Knightsbridge hotel, an act that kills five civilians, including one of her housemates.

The Good Terrorist has been subject to numerous critical classifications since its

publication. It has been labelled both a political and satirical novel, as well as a *bildungsroman* and a work of domestic women's fiction. Historically, Lessing's engagement with these forms demonstrates a meaningful interplay between the local and the global in her novel, which houses revolutionary politics within a former council house. Nonetheless, *The Good Terrorist* is not only a novel about women's positionality in radical spaces. It is also a text that explores why and how revolutionary organizations with global aims critique the home nation's failing social institutions. While critics have acknowledged the novel as belonging to a genealogy of "explosive" fiction typified by Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, they have yet to consider *The Good Terrorist* as a work of pastiche. For this reason, this chapter considers *The Good Terrorist* as the child of two genres: dynamite fiction and the *bildungsroman*. By reading the novel as a "dyno-roman," I suggest that Lessing mobilizes literary strategies drawn from these two genres, each of which anticipate a narrative summit that signals the culmination of a political or personal project. To this end, I build upon arguments made in Sarah Cole's *At the Violet Hour: Modernism and Violence in England and Ireland* and Deaglán Ó Donghaile's *Blasted Literature: Victorian Political Fiction and the Shock of Modernism*, each of which detail the history of explosive events in the British literary imagination. My analysis of the twentieth-century *bildungsroman* is informed by Franco Moretti's *The Way of the World: The* Bildungsroman *in European Culture.* Rather than achieving narrative apotheosis, *The Good Terrorist* calls into question what it means to come of age in crisis and presents the terrorist as the archetypical figure of crisis.

Genres of Crisis

Both the Anglophone *bildungsroman* and the dynamite novel were Victorian forms that

found new resonances in the twentieth century. As the title of Moretti's, *The Way of the World* suggests, the *bildungsroman* once modeled how individuals reconciled themself to the norms, customs, and expectations of their environment. If "youth is the 'material sign' of modernity and the *bildungsroman* its 'symbolic form,'" then "to understand the *bildungsroman* is to understand modern culture" (Ginsburg 79). A young character thus "accentuates modernity's dynamism and instability" by virtue of youth, which has great symbolic currency due to its ephemerality (Moretti 5). Moretti, comparing the "classical" nineteenth-century *bildungsroman* to its modern counterpart, draws a distinction between their endings in "closure" and "rupture," respectively (Ginsburg 82). Whereas the form imposes a "sense of an ending" on its readers, its instability makes it a fundamentally contradictory genre, as Moretti notes (8):

> Youth is, so to speak, modernity's 'essence,' the sign of a world that seeks its meaning in the future rather than in the past to be sure, it was impossible to cope with the times without acknowledging their revolutionary impetus: a symbolic form incapable of doing so would have been perfectly useless. But if it had been able to do *only this*, on the other hand, it would have run the risk of *destroying itself as form.* (Moretti 5).

Moretti's invocation of revolution and his emphasis on the *bildungsroman's* "protean" quality suggest that the genre lends itself to some degree of formal experimentation. Nonetheless, the form is bounded by a strong "teleological rhetoric" which dictates that "the meaning of events lies in their finality" (Moretti 7). For example, both a novel ending in marriage (closure) or adultery (rupture) both foster that very "sense of an ending" that defines the genre (Moretti 23). For all its contradictions, the *bildungsroman* presents an organic relationship between the individual and the world as inseparable co-creators of modernity.

The parallel teleologies of the *bildungsroman* and the dynamite novel both emphasize

forms of fatedness. Nineteenth-century writers exploited "a potent new element to the modern imaginary": dynamite violence (Cole 84). Novels such as Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) and G.K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908) explored whether "the guiding principle in figuring political and social change" was indeed "the power to destroy" (Cole 85). Cole contends that dynamite "[swept] the world into its modern shape" and generated "flamboyant plots and styles" on newly levelled literary ground (Cole 84). At the level of narrative, the explosive event similarly figures as the culmination of the perpetrator's ideological convictions. Often an anarchist, the subject of a dynamite novel is characterized as "a complete loner who "is enjoined to foreswear all ties of personal alienation, [and] indeed to relinquish his very humanity in the name of the cause" (Cole 97). As opposed to the hero of the *bildungsroman*, whose self-quest lends the novel its structure, the anarchist becomes synonymous with a cause outside themself. They transcend the self through acts of explosive violence, as their "expendable body is subsumed by [their] cause" (Cole 98). Explosivity, like youth, signals new possibilities sparked by fleeting moments with lasting significance. In both genres, modernity is synonymous with crisis, be it internal or external; the forms differ, however, at the level of characterization. At this juncture, Lessing's novel emerges as a significant descendent of both the dynamite novel and the *bildungsroman*. Written after the rise of IRA violence but prior 9/11, *The Good Terrorist* charts new generic territory by domesticating the terrorist and undermining the radical potential of explosions. In doing so, Lessing develops an alternate approach to crisis, which focuses on what is local, domestic, and mundane.

Homemaking, Housing, Plumbing

Lessing's mundane approach to crisis in *The Good Terrorist* is perhaps best illustrated

through her characterization of Alice, a revolutionary who thrives in orderly circumstances. Homemaking and housing correspond to alternate elements of Alice's development as a terrorist character. As she labors to transform the Communist Centre Union squat into a home, she simultaneously asserts her own value as a member of the organization. Gayle Green argues that "in Alice the personal and political are most drastically at odds in that her personal energies go to creating while her political efforts go to destroying. Creative and nurturing on the one hand, and destructive and murderous, on the other, she is at cross-purposes with herself – hence the oxymoron 'good terrorist'" (213). This oxymoronic desire to practice tidiness in service of explosive, revolutionary ends, corresponds to *bildungsroman's* dialectic of "dynamism and limits" (Ginsburg 80). Alice's vocal desire to participate in a global reckoning with the ruling classes, whom she deems "fascist swine," remains localized in the home (Lessing 5). The home functions as an extension of Alice, an externalization of her *bildung* that casts the contradictions at the heart of "good" terrorism into sharp relief. Whereas Margaret Scanlan and Greene argue that the squat figures as metaphor for "the nation" and the "household as microcosm of English society," I think that Alice and the property are more closely compared (Scanlan 88, Greene 309). In doing so, she explores the concept of development in the *bildungsroman* at both personal and political levels.

While a novel's beginning and conclusion "circumscribe" a narrative's "field of possibility," Moretti nonetheless argues that our "fascination, as with any true journey, seems instead to lie 'in the middle'" (28). In the middle of *The Good Terrorist* lies Alice's engagement with the local Housing Council. Her struggle to legitimize the squat via institutional means creates a grey area in the politics of the novel, insofar as Alice pursues legal means to radical ends. The near-oxymoronic phrase "agreed squat" implies a relationship between the state and

the revolutionaries who call for its abolition—a tenuous legal compromise that lends the novel its central problem. Louise Yelin relates Lessing's preoccupation with housing to Thatcher's "policy of privatization…[which] enabled some in the middle class to purchase council houses they had previously rented, while rendering many homeless" (93). Thus, another "circumscription" on Lessing's narrative is the threat of homelessness. Given that Alice's *bildung* relies upon the squat's development, Thatcher's housing policy imposes limits on her self-formation as the subject of a typically domestic *bildungsroman*.

The availability of housing, and by extension, running water, is contingent on Alice's ability to placate the Local Housing Council. Warning that "nothing should be done to arouse that implacable beast, the bureaucrat," she relies on her university education and "basic BBC correct, flavourless" accent to advocate for the legality of the squat (Lessing 22, 26). Yet Alice's negotiations with the Council may not represent a reasoned political stance. As Yelin claims, "Lessing's CCU claims to be occupying the squat in protest against the housing shortage created by Thatcher's policies. But its protest, like most political discourse in the novel, is more an eruption of sheer rage than a substantive demand for justice" (93). Nonetheless, the novel stages many interactions between multiple state institutions, such as the university, Housing Council, and police, by positioning the home as their nexus. In her early years as a university student, Alice lives in "a house full of [nearly twenty] students" that "started off as a squat…[and] ended up as a student house" after "the Council came to terms" (Lessing 11). Later, when "Old Bill" constantly knocks on the squat door and threatens its closure, she orders a "statement, in writing" from the Housing Council to placate the police (Lessing 21). In all these instances, Alice acts as conduit between public entities, ironically acting as one of those "nasty little bureaucrat[s]" she so reviles (Lessing 87). Understanding that the "fate" of a squatter "had always been determined

by means of papers, reports, [and] official letters," Alice cooperates with the state, while vocally advocating for its demise (Lessing 26).

In the tradition of both the classical and modern *bildungsroman*, *The Good Terrorist* presents the home as the locus of character development, as the "genre depicts…a relationship with the social totality permeated with that 'intimate and sweet well-being,' with that serene and trustful *feeling-at-home*" associated with domesticity (Moretti 23). The house is described as "set back from the noisy main road in what seemed to be a rubbish tip. A large house. Solid. Black tiles stood at angles along the gutter, and into a gap near the base of a fat chimney a bird flew, trailing a piece of grass several times its length" (Lessing 3). Although 43 Mill Road appears like a typical house, the overgrown grass indicates a level of neglect that distinguishes it from the "similar comfortable houses" that line the "little side street full of suburban gardens" (Lessing 3). Alice, in possession of a "a heart full of pain" at the "capacious, beautiful, and unloved" property, forges an emotional bond with the decrepit building (Lessing 3-4). The almost juvenile prose of the novel's introduction mirrors Alice's childlike response to the house itself. "[Dragging] her backpack by its strap after her," the thirty-six-year-old assumes residence in the squat, despite its near-uninhabitable state (Lessing 4). By beginning the novel *outside* the home, rather than *in it*, Lessing models the self-splitting that is necessary to an individual's *bildung*. Espagne suggests that "*Bildung* is a process that both produces and alienates individuality. In order to accede to *Bildung*, individuality distances itself from its Self" (np). While Alice is alienated by the squat's "desolation," she is nonetheless drawn to the challenge of its transformation. In crossing its threshold and cultivating "passionate identification with the criticized house," Alice assumes the genre's narrative path and pursues her own development (Lessing 23).

Lessing depicts Alice's self-alienation at an affective, bodily level. When she and Jasper arrive at the squat, their senses are stupefied by its dilapidation. Alice laments that "the Council, to prevent squatters, had sent in the workmen to make the place uninhabitable" leaving live wires exposed and filling its toilets with cement (Lessing 5). Without functional toilets, the squats inhabitants fill two bedrooms with "plastic buckets, topped" with excrement (Lessing 5). Rather than "retching" like Jasper, Alice is "stern and proud," as she takes on the task of restoring the building's plumbing (5). Robert Boschman writes that Alice is "caught between two opposing kinds of kitsch: between the British middle-class kitsch that in her mind represents decency and cleanliness, and the terrorist kitsch that in her mind stands for the ruthless destruction of that middle-class" (88). If "kitsch excludes everything from its purview which is essentially unacceptable in human existence" (Kundera qtd. Boschman 87), then Alice's desires to assume the role of terrorist and homemaker are diametrically opposed. Moretti also invokes kitsch as an element that "'domesticates' aesthetic experience. It brings it into the home, where most of everyday life takes place…and raids all sorts of aesthetic material to construct what will be the typical household of modern times" (36). Indeed, Lessing refers to feces, both literally and figuratively, hundreds of times. These "obscenities substitute for analysis," as Alice's body responds to her environment and filthy language becomes one with her filthy surroundings (Greene 209). Rather than using one of the repurposed buckets, Alice performs her bodily functions away from the squat; she escapes to a family friend's home, where she "emptied herself, again carefully washed her face, and brushed her hair…and cut herself a lavish sandwich" (19). Moreover, while she attempts to oppose her parent's "typical, bourgeois arrangement," she avails herself of the comforts they provide (Lessing 188). Despite her age, her reliance on her elder's lavatory recalls a state of infancy in which adults tend to the body.

Lessing's insistence on the body, and its failure to thrive in the squat, demonstrates that the home is not only a microcosm or metaphor for the nation. It is also a representation of an individual at odds with herself and the ideology that governs how she occupies space.

Beyond the critical emphasis on excrement in *The Good Terrorist*, Lessing mobilizes plumbing as a central motif that unites the body, community, and state. Lessing's scatological language belongs to a greater system of meaning, a kind of literary plumbing upon which the narrative rests. Alice frequently bursts into tears at the slightest provocation. In fact, phrases such as "Alice burst into tears," "[blubbered]", or "sobbed Alice" crowd Lessing's prose (226, 17, 89). The novelist's unimaginative, repetitive vocabulary may seem like an unfortunate authorial tic; nonetheless, it fosters an uncomfortable experience of reading that calls to mind the less "explosive" elements of revolutionary living. Lessing's emphasis on wetness, be it in the form of tears, running water, or tea, contrast with the explosion to come and the fiery imagery that animates radical fiction. Lessing writes:

> Again she went up to the bathroom and stood naked in desolation, while the bath filled with cold water to the level of the grime mark that showed where she had done all this earlier that day. And again she stood in cold water endeavouring to rid herself of the dirt, her mother's daughter, thinking viciously of the four years she had lived inside her mother's house, where hot water came obediently at a touch. They don't know what it costs, she was muttering, furiously. It all comes from the workers, from us. (Lessing 55-56)

For Alice, bathing is not an act of personal purification, either bodily or affective. Whereas her environment affirms her revolutionary identity, the body insists on its class, inspiring rage in Alice the "worker." Rather than presenting waste and water as opposing motifs, Lessing presents

Alice's contradictory development through plumbing, which uncomfortably unites her past and present.

The Good Terrorist's scenes are frequently bookended by Alice and her comrades, sitting together around the squat's "big wooden table," as if they were sitcom actors returning to Story A (122). They drink gallons of tea. Alice frequently "[aches] for tea" and her bickering comrades are "companiable and happy" when served hot beverages (42, 60). They pack steaming Thermos full of tea to participate in overnight "demos" (demonstrations) and "pickets" the Communist Centre Union endorses (Lessing 59). The novelist's inclusion of tea-time gestures towards the contradictory dynamics of her novel. At a superficial level, Lessing's inclusion of tea-time is another subtle dig at the liberal-bourgeois habits of wannabe revolutionaries. As Boschman notes, phrases like "have a cup of tea and forget it," are repeated by Alice as a form of denial, neutralizing the squat's problematic politics. Kate Thomas's study of tea and the "imperial sensorium" suggests that "tea-drinkers want to be beholden to the tea hour" by which "tea becomes both the cause and the curative of being bound to empire" (171). Amidst this sensorium, tea binds together constituent elements of society, including the "colonizer and the colonized" who are dually oriented towards "rest and refreshment" (Thomas 170, 173). While Lessing's prose lacks sensory flourish, tea still figures as another element of kitsch. Rather than merely "excluding" all that is "unacceptable," residents of the squat squabble over ideological disputes and devise violent plans over cups of tea brewed by Alice. Whereas their topics of conversation may include "long [speeches] about fascist imperialism," tea-drinking, in Moretti's words, "domesticates" the radical, as opposed to illuminating history (Lessing 192, Moretti 36).

At the level of narrative, tea-time both corresponds to and undermines the linearity of the *bildungsroman*, and in particular, Alice's *bildung*. As metaphor, Alice's development can be

likened to a cup of tea, which takes time to brew. “Steeped” in her environment, she correlates her own development with the success of the Communist Centre Union. During one conference held by the Union and their affiliates, Alice spends “all afternoon and evening” “serving soup, and sandwiches and tea and coffee,” missing the event’s content (226). The conference’s “tea [breaks] [take] a long time, because so many people were busy with conversations… not, in fact, about the CCU,” as comfort takes precedence over politics once more (Lessing 224). Indeed, tea breaks add an element of circularity to the novel, creating tension between its progression towards the ultimate terrorist act and the completion of Alice’s *bildung*. Just as the novel begins with Alice trying not to commit acts of radical violence, but rather to access hot water to make tea, it closes with her “smiling gently, a mug of very strong sweet tea in her hand, looking this morning like a nine-year-old girl who has had, perhaps, a bad dream” (Lessing 375). Like her literary forbear, Alice in Wonderland, Alice’s “arrested development” combines linear and circular storytelling strategies. No matter how it is figured, her *bildung* is animated and constrained by the home (Lessing 35).

Playing House

Elements of the *bildungsroman* and the dynamite novel develop in tandem through Lessing’s representation of new patterns of family life that arise amidst crisis. Ó Donghaile, notes that the anarchist figure in the dynamite novel exists as the “[enemy] of all institutions,’” and the harbinger of “chaos and ‘the ruin of the community’” (*Blasted Literature* 7). The family is largely absent in dynamite fiction, which centers on the “marginal, “lone,” and often “foreign” anarchist (Mulry 100). In contrast to the *bildungsroman*, which exalts the establishment of a family as “the conclusive synthesis of maturity,” *The Good Terrorist* critiques marriage as an

imperfect outcome (Moretti 19). In a 1979 broadcast informally known as the "Winter of Discontent" speech, Thatcher proclaimed that "despite our problems and our failures this is still a good land to live in and bring up a family" (MTF np). In another 1980 broadcast, she championed her government's housing policy, which granted "millions of council tenants the right to buy their own homes" through privatization initiatives (MTF np.) Thatcher invokes the family as a unity of atemporal solidarity: "There is not a generation gap in a happy and united family. People yearn to be able to rely on some generally accepted standards. Without them you have not got a society at all, you have purposeless anarchy. A healthy society is not created by its institutions, either" (MTF np.). Thatcher's language creates an opposition between the family and anarchy and a unity between home ownership and order.

In *The Good Terrorist*, Lessing illustrates how Thatcher's privatization policy renders a cultural shift towards the individual. Whereas intimations of collectivity, such as strikes, squats, and pickets gesture towards a nascent collective consciousness, Lessing envisions a more cynical populace. She depicts individuals becoming more insular and self-centered, despite the growing need for a cooperative ethic. Thus, private dynamics persist in public spaces like a squat. While "Roberta and Faye, Mary and Reggie, Philip and Jim, Pat and Alice sat around all evening, compelled into being a family by the magic of that soup, and the red wine that Reggie had contributed, and the good bread, healthy wholemeal, and the frivolous white that Faye insisted on," their interpersonal relations are fundamentally fraught (Lessing 183). Jasper is the first to undermine Alice's familial instinct by reminding her that, "while you play house and gardens, pouring money away on rubbish, the Cause has to suffer, do without" (Lessing 150). Indeed, "the different groups represented in *The Good Terrorist* have little in common except for the fact that they all see themselves as victims of a system that they cannot explain" (Yelin 94). In the

absence of familial bonds, victimhood and sacrifice foster a dynamic of dependence that problematically unites members of the squat.

At first glance, Lessing's cast of characters constitute a kind of found family in opposition to Alice's "dispossession from the home of her parents" (Greene 311). Cedric and Dorothy Melling's divorce signals the end of "good times, the easy jobs, even, it seemed, the accomplishment, the friends, affection, [and] money" (Lessing 203). Lessing writes:

> Cedric and Dorothy had seemed a centre, even an essential one; so many well-known people had been in and out with their politics, books, causes, marches for this and that, demonstrations. There had seemed to be a shine or gloss on Cedric and Dorothy, an aura or atmosphere about them, of success, of confidence. But then … what had happened to all that? Cedric with Jane was a very different matter! For one thing, a much smaller house…Cedric and Jane's house did not have that elusive but unmistakable atmosphere of ease, of success. Dorothy, left in the bigger house, alone for a time and later with Alice and Jasper, seemed to have fewer friends. Certainly those who came for a meal with Dorothy Mellings—while Alice was there, with Jasper—tended to come in ones or twos, mostly women, perhaps needing Dorothy's advice, or even to borrow money; divorced friends—so many of the couples that had been to the Mellingses' in the good days, had split up…If Dorothy gave a party, and it was only a small party, it was an effort, and she appeared to be tired of it all, to have forgotten how, in the sixties and early seventies, parties just happened. (Lessing 203)

Informing Alice that the middle classes "are suffering from the recession, too," the enterprising Cedric represents another contingent of the British population subject to shifting market dynamics. These include the economic troubles of the 1970s, marked by a stock market crash,

banking crisis, and a series of strikes belonging to the 1978-79 Winter of Discontent. Alice's mental association between her parents and the family home becomes meaningful in relation to private property. As the very "centre" of her existence comes apart, she is once again split between the "smaller" and "larger" houses of her divorced parents. Lessing presents divorce as state of economic and emotional dispossession. Gillian Bright relates the trauma of divorce to Alice's "violent derision" towards "suburban affluence and calm" which she encounters as a "secret threat" (Bright 202, Lessing 23). The glimmerings of anarchy appear inwardly in Alice before they achieve outward expression. Evoking both rage and "longing," Bright argues that Alice's violent impulses are the cries of a wounded child as opposed to a bonafide revolutionary. n. Thus, Lessing portrays the home and family as twin, unaligned sites of political contestation. In turn, divorce operates as a literary strategy, enabling the author to split the concepts of "family" and "home" to better analyze the interplay between privatization and interpersonal relationships.

Without a stable familial base, Alice orphans herself from her parents, who refuse to serve as the squat's guarantors. Indeed, Alice's inability to find a guarantor for the squat gestures to a larger crisis of genre in *The Good Terrorist.* By exchanging the *bildungsroman's* marriage plot for a search for a guarantor, Alice undermines the genre's "'pact' between the individual and world, that reciprocal 'consent' which finds the double 'I do' of the wedding ritual an unsurpassed symbolic condensation" (Moretti 22). Alice's romantic feelings are invested in her gay companion Jasper, who rebuffs her emotional and physical advances with derision and ridicule. Their partnership oscillates between recognizable, normative parings: mother and child, husband and wife:

In the house in Manchester she had shared with four other students she had been

> housemother, doing the cooking and shopping, housekeeping…She was still in the house when the next batch of students arrived, and she stayed to look after them. That was how Jasper found her, coming in one evening for supper. He was not a student, had graduated poorly, had failed to find a job after halfhearted efforts. He stayed on in the house, not formally living there but as Alice's "guest." After all, it was only because of Alice's efforts that the place had become a student house: it had been a squat. And Jasper did not leave. She knew he had become dependent on her. But then and since he had complained she was nothing but a servant, wasting her life on other people. As they moved from squat to squat, commune to commune, this pattern remained: she looked after him, and he complained that other people exploited her. (Lessing 14)

In their "fourteen, fifteen years" as companions, Jasper shrinks from Alice's overt "[appeals] to intimacy" (Lessing 14). They sleep apart in the many homes they share, including, most notably, Dorothy's home, where they "lived soft for four years" (Lessing 4). When they are forced to share a room at 43 Mill Road, Alice entertains the naïve hope that their relationship will progress romantically. As they "lay companionably silent" she thinks to herself: "we are together.… This is like a marriage: talking together before going to sleep. I hope he starts telling me what happened today" (Lessing 82-83). It is evident from their first night at the squat that the pair cannot fulfill any kind of marriage plot, legal or emotional. Despite a decade of companionship, their partnership lacks any formal recognition from the state because they lack an official address.

Lessing contrasts Alice and Jasper's partnership to Mary and Reggie's more typical romantic arrangement, which includes cohabitation, shared finances, and physical affection. Mary is a Housing Council employee who cooperates with Alice to register the house as an

agreed squat on the condition that she and her partner Reggie gain a room in the property. Alice believes that "if Mary [is] any good, she would be prepared to guarantee the account" and relies on the happy couple to lend some legitimacy to the unruly house (Lessing 125). As opposed to Alice and Jasper, Mary and Reggie share a "large bed" and their room is decorated with "tidy furniture [and] carpets" (Lessing 240). Alice likens them to a "mother and father" and forgives their less radical political beliefs in exchange for the protection their presence offers (Lessing 283). For Mary and Reggie, reciprocity is an alternate strategy of resistance to economic injustice. By integrating themselves within the state structure—employed as a council worker and lawyer respectively—the pair demonstrate a more focused attempt to better their circumstances.

As opposed to Alice, Mary, and Reggie, who thrive on emotional connection, Jasper bears more similarity to the "lone" anarchist of the dynamite novel, who trades emotional commitments for political ones. Indeed, "uninterested in Alice, Jasper gets his kicks by … attaching himself to selfstyled revolutionaries, to the Irish Republican Army, or to real Communists from the Soviet Union" (Yelin 96). The archetypical "enemy of all institutions," Jasper's aggression towards processes of integration are channeled through his treatment of Alice. Their interactions are colored by physical violence; despite his "very thin" build, he asserts physical dominance over Alice in an unassuming fashion (Lessing 10). Whenever Alice contradicts Jasper, she is met with his "expected" "bony grip" around her wrist, a "tight and hurtful" reminder of the lack of tenderness between them (Lessing 150, 146). The threat of force, coupled with their physical isolation, limits their revolutionary potential: the pair's physical distance has political resonances. Whereas Mary and Reggie's investment in state institutions aligns them with England at large, Jasper longs to join the IRA, much to Alice's displeasure.

Without including Alice in a pivotal CCU vote, Jasper moves to "make approaches to the IRA leadership" and KGB to "offer [CCU] services as an England-based entity" (Lessing 8). His desire to transcend national laws and offer himself to the Irish revolutionaries or Soviets signals further dissociation from his relationship with Alice, who is left out of decision-making talks. In a final undoing of the marriage plot, he rejects the pact between the individual and the world, choosing instead to oppose the very idea of a state, be it Soviet, British, or Irish.

A Good Terrorist is an English Terrorist

Lessing critiques the revolutionary ideal of statelessness through her depiction of ethnic minorities in *The Good Terrorist.* More than a loner, "anarchists in the British imagination were always understood as foreign…for anarchism was fundamentally international in spirit" (Cole 104). To that end, Ó Donghaile argues that "just as terrorism lies at the heart of the imagination of urban chaos, so too does its corresponding characteristic—invisibility. The imperceptibility of the stateless anarchist is underlined by his or her trans-national character" (*Blasted Literature* 11). One such character is Jim, a young Black man who lives in the squat and resists [CCU] efforts of colonization, and rejects "the discipline of the group" (Yelin 94). Lessing also points to the voiceless, foreign, or racialized characters that populate the Western *bildungsroman*: maids, governesses, and raving ex-wives. Tucked away in an upper room of the squat, Jim recalls Brontë's Bertha Mason, whereas Alice perceives him merely as "jolly black boy who looked like an advertisement for an attractive holiday in the Caribbean" (Lessing 4). At one point, Alice even procures him a job at Cedric's prosperous printing firm. When penning him a recommendation, they share an exchange:

"What's your name, Jim?"

"Mackenzie."

"I have a cousin who married a Mackenzie."

"My grandfather was Mackenzie. Trinidad."

"Then perhaps we are related."

A small gust of laughter blew through him, and left him smiling. (Lessing 171-172)

Totally peripheral, Jim remains "the passive victim of impersonal social forces that disempower and dispossess him" (Yelin 95). As opposed to the foreigner in the dynamite novel, Lessing brings to light the transnational Other who suffers at the hand of the state *and* anti-state revolutionaries. His joking illustrates the unique status of the English colonies, which are at once estranged from and intimately close to the mother country.

As the members of the CCU squat deepen their contact with other revolutionary organizations, Alice becomes implicated in their plans, acknowledging that "Britain [is] full of foreigners" (Lessing 230). In the property next door, "inhabited by a mysterious Russian, possibly a Soviet agent," Lessing stages a global radical movement, that houses not only international comrades, but explosive materials (Yelin 97). In this regard, the novel corresponds to dynamite fiction, which "often figured an English protagonist who lands himself immersed, for one reason or another, in an anarchist organization created and dominated by foreigners" (Cole 104). While Cole shies away from drawing a sharp distinction between anarchists and terrorists, she argues that terrorist is distinguished by their "determination to send a message" (100). She implies that terrorism is affiliated with communication, whereas anarchism is less legible, in part because of its attachment to foreigners and foreignness. A man of indeterminate nationality next door known as "Comrade Andrew" exploits Alice's curiosity and loneliness. He "[impresses] her at once as being foreign" as Alice experiences "a little frisson of satisfaction" at

knowing "he [is] a Russian (Lessing 114). During furtive chats, Andrew counsels her on the life of a true revolutionary:

> He wanted her to sever herself from "all that lot there; you are made of much better stuff than they are"; and to embark on a career of—respectability. She was to apply for a job in a certain firm with national importance. She would get the job because he, Andrew, would see that she did, through contacts that were already established there. He referred several times to 'our network'…Meanwhile, she would live in a flat, not a squat, lead an ordinary life, and wait. (Lessing 165-166)

In contrast to Jasper, who opposes the state, Andrew encourages Alice to enmesh herself in its structure by performing model citizenship. He also associates terrorism with an intimate connection to one's country of origin. By trying to recruit Alice as a Russian spy, he figures as a kind of politically subversive rake, preying on Alice's domestic tendencies and characteristic Englishness. Lessing thus associates the "foreign" figure of her novel with order and British nationalism, in a reversal of the norms of dynamite fiction. In rejecting Andrew's romantic and political overtures, Alice remains firmly planted in the national sphere, dismissing his proposal as "bourgeois" and "middle class" (Lessing 166). Instead, she and the CCU decide to pursue their own terroristic aims without foreign influence. Alice re-christens the Union the "Freeborn British communists," signaling their independence from extra-national groups, repeating "we are British, you understand? British communists" (Lessing 355). As they plan a bomb attack, members of the squat argue that they "don't have to ask permission of foreigners": "who *were* the IRA to tell us what to do in our own country?" (Lessing 288). By asserting their nationality, the CCU implies that a good terrorist is an English terrorist. With brutal irony, Lessing demonstrates how Cold War prejudices take root in the squat. More broadly, her depiction of

ethnicity illustrates a turn towards the domestic at the level of the nation.

Explosivity and Austerity

Lessing's preoccupation with the condition of England is communicated through an austere style. As Alice and her comrades begin building bombs, the reader anticipates a dramatic climax that signals the completion of her *bildung* and the fulfillment of the dynamite novel's explosive promise. Alice anticipates the pleasure of destroying "something that deserves to be blown up" (Lessing 296). Her excitement, like her tears, recalls the melodramatic mood of dynamite fiction as well as the emotional volatility of the *bildungsroman*, both genres of radical transition. Cole contends that "melodrama and dynamite fiction continually overlap and express each other," with novelists mirroring explosivity and hyperbole at the stylistic level (Cole 86). Yet critics pan Lessing's prose as "unimaginative" (Donoghue np.). A review of the novel in the *New York Times* attitude towards language: "Mrs. Lessing is not a stylist. Perhaps because she hasn't decided whether words can be trusted or not, she is sullen in their company" (Donoghue np). The "sullen" quality of Lessing's prose perhaps reflects the economic climate of the times. As an economic policy, austerity refers to the "reduction or tightening of state spending," in response to "increasing budget deficits, swelling state debt, and, in some cases, sovereign debt crises" (Stanley np.). Most often used to describe policies put into place following the 2008 recession, the term nonetheless "developed an extended meaning as a way of denoting and characterizing the slowdown of economic activity, reduced living conditions, and general pessimistic public feeling that characterized the post-crisis period" (Stanley np.) Austerity also refers to "severe simplicity," a "harshness" or "bleakness" that characterizes a person, place, or thing (OED). Lessing's brutal sentences, particularly her allergy to modifiers, and her use of

anticlimax all contribute to a distinctly "restrained," austere aesthetic that mimics the content it describes (OED).

Her aversion to hyperbole comes to the fore during the novel's anticlimax. During CCU deliberations, Alice becomes aware that "the bombs would be timed to go off, not set off by some electronic control" (Lessing 350). Feeling "appalled" by this technology, Alice laments that she will be unable to see the state of affairs in the street and on the pavement" or to "[choose] an exact moment" for the explosion" (Lessing 350). She feels "as if she were not really a participant in this great enterprise, not considered a partner" in the CCU's plan to bomb a Knightsbridge hotel (Lessing 349). Briefly removing herself from the action, Alice visits Dorothy at her new address, a "paltry and ugly" unheated room, where the two engage in an argument (Lessing 325). Dorothy chastises her daughter for "playing about revolutions," claiming she "can't talk to [Alice] any more" because she is prone to incessant "weeping and wailing" (Lessing 334, 340). Yelin associates Dorothy with Thatcher, both of whom embody "personification of British power and … punitive motherhood" (100). She argues that "by assimilating Thatcher to Dorothy as the object of Alice's rage, Lessing short-circuits anger at Thatcherism—that is, at the policies that can be said to have caused, or exacerbated, the situation the novel describes" (Yelin 100). During Alice and her mother's explosive, final row, Dorothy's fighting words are communicated "without emotion. Almost indifferently. All passion spent" (Lessing 328). Lessing's language is both explicitly and implicitly austere. The novelist's spare prose, coupled with Dorothy's affectless speech acts, resist the emotionality associated with both the *bildungsroman* and the dynamite novel. As the novel's mounting bomb detonation is spliced by Alice and Dorothy's fraught exchange, Lessing once again undermines the teleology of genre. As opposed to presenting Alice as an orphan at the beginning of the novel, as is traditional in

coming-of-age narratives, Lessing orphans her protagonist at the close. This narrative reversal aligns austerity and explosivity with anticlimax. Alice and Dorothy's estrangement cheats of an emotional apotheosis and provides a critique of the very economic policies that transform families and language.

Alice's return to the squat in anticipation of the bomb's detonation is marked by a return to British kitsch. At "one 'clock. Just the right time," CCU members "[race] into the kitchen, for tea, for sandwiches" (Lessing 347). As the group readies itself for an explosion, panicky Alice calls the Samaritans' helpline and issues a bomb threat, in hopes that civilians can be evacuated from the area. Rather than implicating the CCU, she pins the attack on the IRA: "It's the IRA. Freedom for Ireland! For a united Ireland and peace to all mankind!" (Lessing 358). In shirking responsibility for the explosion, which kills five and injures twenty-three, Alice reasserts her British heritage. In a total disavowal of socialist solidarity, she thinks to herself, "Well, it didn't matter what the IRA said; it was not for them to decide what comrades in this country did" (Lessing 347). Taking "a long shuddery breath, like a small child," Alice refuses to believe she has "any real reason to feel bad; she hadn't *really* been part of it," and retreats once more into the recesses of childhood (Lessing 371). In the aftermath of the bombing, she reflects:

> And at this moment, into this scene of disorder, of destruction, which had remained more or less the same for the last five minutes since the explosion, erupted Society, erupted Law and Order, in the shape of a wailing of ambulance sirens, and the police, who suddenly were everywhere, hundreds of them, it seemed. The ambulances, parked nose to tail up the street, began their sober, careful job of collecting casualties and corpses from the pavement. But the police were in a state of panic, out of control, rushing about, shouting orders, hustling the onlookers, who of course had arrived by now, and who were

generally adding to the confusion. (Lessing 361)

Rather than staging a revolution, in the sense of an upheaval, Lessing produces a revolution in the sense of a return or orbit. She presents Society and Law and Order as a counter-explosive element that transform the bombing into a report that "the midnight news devoted more than five minutes to" (Lessing 369). The mere five minutes of British attention fixed on Alice and her comrades neutralizes the "voice of dynamite" that articulates "violence as a form of language" (Cole 95). Indeed, Lessing drains the *bildungsroman* and the dynamite novel of their transformative potential. By placing explosivity at odds with hyperbole, Lessing undermines the falsely global aims of the CCU. IRA violence was "designed to shatter imperial prestige, capture the popular imagination and, ultimately, shock the British public into conceding to their demands" by combining "sensory shock with political impact" (Ó Donghaile, *Blasted Literature* 4). Lessing, via her austere aesthetics, excludes shock from her narrative. By doing so, she stages a return to a mundane nationalism, a more problematic iteration of "arrested development."

In *The Good Terrorist*, Lessing draws upon multiple generic traditions to produce an innovative representation of coming of age during crisis. Written amidst the upheavals of Thatcher's premiership, in a new age of economic austerity, Lessing's novel presents the family and home as sites of political contestation. *The Good Terrorist* bears resemblances to both the *bildungsroman* and the dynamite novel each of which produce a "sense of an ending" expressed through narrative apotheosis. Taking up the genres' investment in development and explosivity, respectively, Lessing charts Alice Melling's personal and political *bildung*. In a distinctly mundane, austere prose style, she explores divorce, partnership, ethnic tensions, poverty, and violence, staging a return to the domestic, national context. As Alice's development concludes in anticlimax, Lessing undermines revolutionary, as well as literary illusions of progress,

radicalism, and personal fulfillment. Rather than merely domesticating the terrorist threat, Lessing portrays the terrorist as the product of national crises, and a figure that mobilizes institutional and literary critiques of the domestic.

Reading Terror: Modernism, Consciousness, and Ethics in Ian McEwan's *Saturday*

In his 2003 novel *Saturday,* Ian McEwan presents terrorism as a challenge to peace of mind and peace in the nation. Bearing formal similarities to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, McEwan's novel focuses on the day-long exploits of Henry Perowne, a neurosurgeon who believes he has witnessed an airplane hijacking in the early hours of the morning. His anxious preoccupation with the threat of terrorism and the nascent War on Terror finds no meaningful outlet. Perowne's busy *Saturday* is marked by both quotidian and outlandish terrors that trouble his rational, secular mind. Indeed, McEwan's formal and thematic emphasis on the workings of the mind and his engagement with neurology challenge the claim that "what we want most from the terrorist novel is to know and experience why someone chooses terror" (Jackson, "Sympathy for the Devil" 388). The author sidesteps our immediate desire to "be inside the mind of the terrorist" and critiques the notion that "such knowledge is clearly taboo due to its potential to create sympathy" ("Sympathy for the Devil" 388). *Saturday* inverts this readerly dynamic by centering on the psychology of a false witness to terrorism, as opposed to a terrorist themself. In this chapter, I argue that McEwan explores greater and lesser forms of attention to others, as well as the human capacity to interpret events in the world. He contends with consciousness of terror at multiple levels, asking how terror initially shocks the individual and what kind of consciousness (historical, political, or artistic) can develop in its aftermath. Because of its timely subject matter and McEwan's public commentary on foreign affairs throughout the War on Terror, *Saturday* has been subject to a great deal of critical analysis. This chapter draws on Simone Weil's theories of reading and attention, as well as contemporary scholarship on modernism and McEwan's fiction, which touches upon cognitive science, ethics,

and politics. In *Saturday*, engagement with the mind as the subject of literary and medical treatment (particularly in a highly institutional, socialized healthcare system) enables McEwan to produce a "post 9-11 novel" that is self-critical.

Saturday opens with an epigraph taken from Saul Bellow's 1964 novel *Herzog* that asks "what it means to be a man. In a city. In a century. In transition. In a mass. Transformed by science. Under organized power" (McEwan 1). In this quick succession of sentences, Bellow captures an expansive view of the individual, who shrinks in association with the generality, or "mass." Indeed, both Bellow and McEwan ponder whether a man and mass can be understood as discrete or inseparable arenas of existence. The authors suggest that an individual man is necessarily bound by his relationship to the whole; in Bellow's words he must be "a child of this mass and a brother to all the rest. Or else an ingrate, dilettante, [or] idiot" (1). For Perowne, this mass is a blurry, confused, and *illegible* horde; the self is more legible. In response to the terrorist threat, Perowne turns inward. This is not because of a lack of concern, but on account of his inability to expand his perceptions beyond what it immediately knowable.

In her brief text, "An Essay on the Concept of Reading," Weil compares perception to an act of reading:

> Thus at each instant of our life we are gripped from the outside, as it were, by meanings that we ourselves read in appearances. That is why we can argue endlessly about the reality of the external world, since what we call the world are the meanings that we read; they are not real. But they seize us as if they were external; that is real. Why should we try to resolve this contradiction when the more important task of thought in this world is to define and contemplate insoluble contradictions, which, as Plato said, draw us upwards? (Weil, *Reading* 22)

Weil describes a process by which our perceptions become meaningful through acts of interpretive reading. Just as "it is impossible not to read; we cannot look at a printed text in a language we understand that is placed in front of us and not read it"; therefore, "what we call a correction of a sensory illusion is actually a modified reading" (Weil, *Reading* 23). Throughout *Saturday*, Perowne exercises a form of "modified reading," in which successive observational statements are accompanied by corrections, and ultimately, judgments. His insistent mental revisions do not necessarily bring him to new understandings; they merely affirm preexisting beliefs.

Modernism and Neurology

Saturday affirms the creative potential or terrorism to render new readings of individual and collective memories. At the level of narrative, McEwan is concerned with how cognitive function is represented formally. According to Thom Dancer, "psychoneurological realism [in the novel] is not an end in itself but a means to question the dominant assumptions about how brains and bodies and culture work" (213). McEwan's neuro-novel is one that acknowledges the centrality of narrative to mental functioning. Although Thraikill argues that the topic of terrorism hovers around the novel, terror manifests itself as a psychological condition or preoccupation that fundamentally alters Perowne's ability to "read" reality. This question was a central preoccupation of modernists such as Woolf and Joyce, whose experimentations with the day-long novel structure lend *Saturday* its narrative scaffolding. By limiting duration of events to a single Saturday, McEwan represents banal and consequential events in detail. Terrorism thus disrupts two characteristic elements of the modernist novel: stream of consciousness monologue and day-long structure.

As a literary technique, stream of consciousness storytelling emphasizes the creative potential of cognitive processes. While *Saturday* is narrated via Perowne's stream of consciousness, the neurosurgeon himself is resistant to creativity. Of all the medical professions that study the brain and its functioning, Perowne practices the specialty that most resembles a trade or craft. Quite unlike a psychiatrist, Perowne is often wrist-deep in grey-matter, incising, grafting, and sewing. While, by his own admission, Perowne chooses to "live without stories," his profession is nonetheless a creative enterprise (McEwan 68). Within the "enclosed world of his firm, the theatre and its ordered procedures…he experiences a superhuman capacity, more like a craving for work" (McEwan 11). McEwan's depiction of the surgical theatre is indeed *dramatic*, complete with its own soundtrack ("Bach partitas") and cast of players, of which Perowne is the star (McEwan 22). In doing so, he employs a formalist approach to the creative surgical act. For him, the practice of neurosurgery is a highly aesthetic experience, through which he encounters beauty, complexity, and ugliness daily. For example, McEwan's sly narration describes an "exposed tentorium—the tent—a pale delicate structure of beauty, like the little whirl of a veiled dancer, where the dura is gathered and parted again," in an elegant marriage of technicality and metaphor (McEwan 11). His ability to "excise almost all of [an astrocytoma] without damaging any eloquent region," illustrates Perowne's subtle role as a nurturer of art and artists (McEwan 11). Despite, for example, his claims that "even a first line [of a poem] can produce a tightness behind his eyes" and that attempting to "read and understand a poem is like trying to acquire an old-fashioned skill like drystone walling or trout tickling," suggests that a similar dogged craftsmanship is involved in surgery and writing alike (McEwan 129). Through Perowne, McEwan mobilizes free indirect discourse to highlight the interconnectedness between mind, body, doctor, and patient.

Throughout *Saturday,* McEwan draws parallels between Perowne and Clarissa Dalloway as narrators. *Mrs. Dalloway* opens, with free indirect discourse: "What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air" (Woolf 3). Similarly, *Saturday* begins with Perowne gazing through his bedroom window and marveling at the vista it offers: "his vision—always good—seems to have sharpened" (McEwan 4). Perowne's heightened powers of vision are framed by the four corners of the window. London embraces each Londoner, as life-reviving gusts of wind reawaken Clarissa and Henry and make them aware of the fullness of the day that lies before them. Jane F. Thraikill suggests that in McEwan's opening lines "we witness the conditions under which both works of fiction and consciousness as such unfurl: first as motion, then as feeling, and finally as active awareness" (183). Whenever Perowne stands at the window, "poised on a hinge of perception," we become aware of how his sight is fundamentally limited (McEwan 272). As in *Mrs. Dalloway,* the window acts as a guiding metaphor in *Saturday*: just as it shields him from the reality of terror, it nonetheless provokes his terrorist fantasy. If indeed "*Saturday* reflects the susceptibility of the nation to assaults by predatory forces sited both within and far removed from its increasingly porous borders" as Michael L. Ross suggests, Perowne's imagination is yet another target for terror to strike (82).

McEwan experiments with terror's power to consume Perowne's conscious mind and his memory. When Perowne arises before sunrise "it's not clear to him when exactly he became conscious, nor does it seem relevant," primed as he is for another day of professional and personal certainty (McEwan 3). The neurosurgeon luxuriates in feeling like "he's materialised out of nothing, fully formed, unencumbered" without his "conscience troubled" (McEwan 3).

Perowne “sees the paving stone mica glistening in the pedestrianised square, pigeon excrement hardened by distance and cold into something almost beautiful, like a scattering of snow,” demonstrating the rational mind’s ability to transform ugliness into beauty (McEwan 4-5). McEwan communicates this instantaneous recreation through his use of metaphor; in this regard, the human mind submits visual stimuli to a kind of literary treatment. Despite the unconscious, “literary” workings of Perowne’s mind, he himself “wonders about this sustained, distorting euphoria” as a “habitual observer of his moods” (McEwan 5). He muses that “perhaps down at the molecular level there's been a chemical accident while he slept …prompting dopamine-like receptors to initiate a kindly cascade of intracellular events; or it’s the prospect of a Saturday, or the paradoxical consequence of extreme tiredness” (McEwan 5). Green notes that “the protean nature of free indirect discourse succeeds in aligning the narrator and character voice and in constructing a ‘continuum from pure narrative words to pure character words’” (62). In turn, Perowne’s reliance on the language of science and his overestimation of his own rational faculties are all undermined by McEwan’s godly presence, which satirizes his protagonist’s narcissistic tendencies.

For Perowne, the medical process of observation, analysis, and diagnosis manifests itself beyond the walls of the hospital. This tendency is typified by Perowne’s mistaken witnessing of an airplane hijacking. Both Dancer and Green characterize Perowne as a kind of educated brute, yet his creative potential is present throughout the novel, especially during his act of false witness:

> He doesn’t immediately understand what he sees, though he thinks he does. In this first moment, in his eagerness and curiosity, he assumes proportions on a planetary scale: it’s a meteor burning out in the London sky, traversing left to right, low on the horizon,

> though well clear of the taller buildings. But surely meteors have a darting, needle-like quality. You see them in a flash before their heat consumes them. This is moving slowly, majestically even. In an instant, he revises his perspective outward to the scale of the solar system: this object is not hundreds but millions of miles distant, far out in space swinging in timeless orbit around the sun. It's a comet, tinged with yellow, with the familiar bright core trailing its fiery envelope. He watched Hale-Bopp with Rosalind and the children from a grassy hillock in the Lake District and he feels again the same leap of gratitude for a glimpse, beyond the earthly frame, of the truly impersonal. And this is better, brighter, faster, all the more impressive for being unexpected. (McEwan 13-14)

In this passage, the language of science is doubly poetic; far removed from the highly technical descriptions of brain surgery that punctuate *Saturday*, Perowne's initial description of the "hijacking" is rich in metaphor and simile. The reference to the Lake District, redolent of Wordsworth and his poetry inspired by nature, confirms that poetic impulse. Whereas Green suggests that Perowne suffers from a lack of imagination, it is more likely, as Thraikill claims, that "the simplest act of perception…produces a cascade of small stories" (184). Perowne's hyper-rationality does not prevent him from fashioning his own narrative, almost as if he were life drawing in an attempt to capture an elusive subject. His rapid-fire impressions are decidedly un-clinical and imprecise, in addition to being infused with a sense of Romantic sublimity. A chasm between Perowne-the-literary-creation and Perowne-the-rationalist persists throughout the novel, as we readers become aware of a central paradox at the heart of his characterization: his hyper-rational analyses of his surroundings are communicated in highly literary terms.

Perowne's capacity to "read" the scene unfolding outside his window is shaped by his prior awareness of September 11th. As a Jewish-Christian philosopher and mystic, Weil's

theorization of reading necessarily relates to the recognition of a higher power. Rather than being "drawn upwards," towards something higher, Perowne suddenly realizes he is witnessing a plane hijacking (in reality, a mechanical malfunction ending in a safe landing) as "the spectacle suddenly has the familiarity of a recurrent dream" (McEwan 15). In contrast to the God-oriented reader championed by Weil, Perowne is essentially drawn downwards, forced to consider the reality of fundamentalist terrorism, as opposed to the mind-expanding descent of a rogue comet. He thinks to himself that "even the denial of God… is a spiritual exercise, a form of prayer"; he believes that "the best hope for the plane is that it's suffered simple, secular mechanical failure" (McEwan 18). According to Dancer, Perowne ascribes to a "religion of science," that fosters the same feelings of "certainty" and "objectivity" associated with religious belief (Dancer 215). Weil writes that "a man, a head of state, declares war, and new meanings rise up all round forty million people," suggesting that violence yields new readings, especially those that are state sponsored (*Reading* 26). Fittingly, Perowne's new reading of the scene outside his window is informed by its similarity to the events of September 11th:

> It's already almost eighteen months since half the planet watched, and watched again the unseen captives driven through the sky to the slaughter, at which time there gathered round the innocent silhouette of any jet plane a novel association. Everyone agrees, airliners look different in the sky these days, predatory or doomed. (McEwan 16)

Still rooted at his bedroom window, Perowne draws upon second-hand memories to make sense of the scene. His experience is a common one, as "the phenomenon of 9/11 was perhaps the supreme example of a catastrophe that was experienced globally via digital technologies (Internet, cell phone) as well as by television and radio," thus creating an instance of mediated trauma, in which each technology constitutes its own "window" into mass violence (Michael

206). In the absence of all "he can't see," Perowne experiences the airplane episode almost as an art object, a source of stimuli that is purely visual, imagining "the fight to the death in the cockpit, a posse of brave passengers assembling before a last-hope charge against the fanatics" (McEwan 16). The "horrors" of September 11th are so familiar that Perowne can anticipate the terrorist act and its aftermath, as if they are occurring according to some sort of narrative cliché complete with a set of stereotypically "brave passengers" and "fanatics." His "obliging imagination" engages in a repetitive mental fantasy that reproduces and neutralizes terror (McEwan 16).

Quotidian Terrors

Whereas the day-long novel typically centers the everyday, the events of 9/11 indicate that our entire personal and political imaginary can be transformed over the course of twenty-four hours. Bryony Randall, quoting James Hafley, argues that Virginia Woolf "'used the single day … to show that there is no such thing as a single day,'" and demonstrate the fragility of "[preserving] continuity" (131). In *Saturday*, McEwan adopts day-long temporality to showcase a post-9/11 intermingling of banality and terror. As a work of terrorist fiction devoid of true terrorism or terrorists, McEwan shifts his focus, within the first few pages, to the quotidian terrors that bear on the Perowne household. This domestic turn shifts the focus in *Saturday* from the international to the national and domestic. Clemens Spahr notes that *Saturday* "constantly raises questions of terror and war, but these topics are never linked to the main conflict, a conflict that remains unsolved," with the result that "politics remains an uncanny presence" in the text (235). This political ambivalence is expressed explicitly by McEwan. After his early morning act of false-witness, Perowne recalls: when "forgetting a word or name; a tantalising,

empty shape remains, almost but not quite defining the idea it once contained. Even as you struggle against the numbness of poor recall, you know precisely what the forgotten thing is not" (McEwan 58). In *Saturday*, terrorism is operating *sous rature*, or "under erasure"; despite its non-occurrence, the terrorist act continues to assert itself throughout the novel in less obvious, everyday ways.

These micro-terrors often take the form of interpersonal disputes, which threaten Perowne's sense of mental stability. The first of these disputes takes place during Perowne's commute to his weekly squash game with his colleague. En route to the court, Perowne comes across a hoard of protestors blocking Tottenham Court Road and "feels the seduction and excitement peculiar to such events; a crowd possessing the streets, tens of thousands of strangers converging with a single purpose conveying an intimation of revolutionary joy" (McEwan 72). The surgeon reflects upon how "it is in fact the state of the world that troubles him most, and the marchers are there to remind him of it" (McEwan 69). He is at once seduced by the indication that the day may be momentous and sobered by the fact that the reality of terrorism has fundamentally altered the state of the world. When Perowne's Mercedes collides with a young man's car, resulting in a violent altercation between them, the relationship between terror, neurology, and medical institutions becomes clearer.

Expecting a civil exchange of insurance information, Perowne is met with resistance by the driver, Baxter, who rejects his pleasantries and uses physical intimidation to solicit money from him. The crash is prompted by the protests taking place along a major street; Perowne's detour and subsequent collision is a kind of satirical casualty of war, which merely damages a luxury car. At this point in the novel, it is only his Mercedes that bears the brunt of crisis. In turn, Baxter is not a "real" terrorist, as he lacks any ideological motivations. He is Perowne's visual

opposite. He has "thick eyebrows and dark brown hair" and a mouth "set bulbously, with the smoothly shaved shadow of a strong beard adding to the effect of a muzzle. The general simian air is compounded by sloping shoulders, and the built-up trapezoids suggest time in the gym, compensating for his height perhaps" (McEwan 88). He wears a strange outfit, a "sixties-style suit [with] tight cut, high lapels, flat-fronted trousers worn from the hip" as if he has travelled from a bygone era and landed in Perowne's path (McEwan 88). Whereas Perowne generally categorizes terrorists according to ethnicity or religion, Baxter's background is decidedly ambiguous. It is unclear whether his animalistic description is meant to highlight a racist streak within Perowne or not; nevertheless, there is something inherent to Baxter that creates a sense of opposition between the two men. Whether or not a difference in race or class aggravates this already adversarial encounter, Ross writes that the "grazing collision between Perowne's sleek Mercedes and the louche Baxter's aging BMW suggests…an anti-idyllic dissonance ingrained in the fabric of contemporary London life" (85). There is something distinctly "other" about Baxter, but McEwan's ambiguous character sketch defies any classic terrorist type (Irish or Islamist, for example) that preoccupies the British imagination. Just as terrorism itself operates as an absence in *Saturday*, the novel's most terroristic character lacks any radical signifiers that may explain his violent behavior. In fact, Baxter's look-alike Britishness gestures to the growing threat of "homegrown terrorism" taking root at the time of the novel's publication.

Rather than acting as a symbolic performance of the terrorist act, Baxter's clash with Perowne inadvertently satirizes one of the greatest cliches of the terrorist novel: the terrorist as "message generator" (Frank 341). Drawing on his analysis of Don Delillo's *Falling Man* and Martin Amis's *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta,* Michael C. Frank describes the typical terrorist character "as caricatures of what we imagine them to be – fanatical, extremist,

aggressive, hateful, dysfunctional, [and] damaged" individuals who nonetheless perform a "communicative or rhetorical" role in the novel (355, 343). He suggests that "actions that we classify as 'terrorist' do not speak for themselves; they are symbolic messages that require interpretation (in the dual sense of 'translation' and 'explanation'), and this interpretation is a key element of the cultural response to terror," arguing that a fixation on the "why" element of terrorism lends itself to literary representation (Frank 342). In Baxter's case, Perowne identifies a neurological "why" for the younger man's aggression and weaponizes his medical knowledge to make his escape. During their altercation, Baxter's "persistent tremor also draws Perowne's professional attention" as he is quickly able to recognize symptoms of Huntington's Disease in the younger man (McEwan 87). Taking note of the tremor, Perowne undermines Baxter's intimidation by stating only "your father had it. Now you've got it too" (McEwan 94). In highlighting the genetic element of Baxter's disease, Perowne denies his agency:

> Here's biological determinism in its purest form. More than forty repeats of that one little codon, and you're doomed. Your future is fixed and easily foretold. The longer the repeat, the earlier and more severe the onset. Between ten and twenty years to complete the course, from the first small alterations of character, tremors in the hands and face, emotional disturbance, including—most notably sudden, uncontrollable alterations of mood, to the helpless jerky dance-like movements, intellectual dilapidation, memory failure, agnosia, apraxia, dementia, total loss of muscular control, rigidity sometimes, nightmarish hallucinations and a meaningless end. This is how the brilliant machinery of being is undone by the tiniest of faulty cogs, the insidious whisper of ruin, a single bad idea lodged in every cell, on every chromosome four. (McEwan 93-94)

Perowne's interpretation of the situation is diagnostic, rather than holistic. By pathologizing Baxter's actions and assigning them a biological cause, Perowne's creative powers once again fashion a new narrative, or "reading" of the scene at hand. In a metafictional move, McEwan's use of the phrase "small alterations of character" and his likening of a faulty chromosome to a "bad idea," highlight Baxter's existence as a literary creation subject to political analysis.

By rendering the scene politically neutral and the terrorist mentally compromised, McEwan critiques the terrorist novel's aesthetic and ethical failure to represent the terrorist subject well. Frank notes that "according to Richard Jackson, public perception of terrorists is based on a faulty epistemology: "we look at what they do and extrapolate from there: they commit inhuman acts, therefore they must be inhuman" (355). Novelists, operating according to a terrorist taboo, "[deny] 'them' a complex subjectivity as ours" (Frank 355). McEwan reverses this cliché by presenting a subjectivity that is ruined by genetic happenstance. During their interaction, Perowne buys himself time by offering Baxter medical information when he notices "in [his] agitated features a sudden avidity, a hunger for information, or hope. Or simply a need to talk" (McEwan 97). Not only does Perowne deny Baxter's subjectivity via diagnosis, but also his actions gesture towards a greater failure of care and attention at the institutional level. When Baxter subsequently breaks into the Perowne residence and threatens the entire family, McEwan expands his critique of a national medical industrial complex that exists in tandem with its military counterpart.

McEwan further illustrates a turn towards the domestic by foregrounding familial interactions that shape his Saturdays. At the start of *Saturday*, the Perowne family's nuclear structure is just beginning to breakdown, as Theo and Daisy prepare to leave the family fold and pursue lives apart. In *The Anti-Social Family*, Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, drawing a

strong connection between individualism and familism, describe a society in which "children are a private possession" (50). "Though they are to join society and be its future members, they are produced by and for their parents," despite the generational differences that may set parent and child apart (Barrett and McIntosh 50). In Perowne's case, his children Theo and Daisy distinguish themselves from their more conventional parents by pursuing artistic careers in blues music and poetry, respectively. Their commitment to the arts—funded almost entirely by Perowne and his wife, Rosalind—mystify the surgeon, who is nonetheless supportive of their creative talents. McEwan depicts children attempting to "produce themselves" against their parents via artistic means. In doing so, McEwan continues to compare literary and scientific ways of contending with terror, as it becomes a regular feature of twenty-first century life within the context of the family.

After his encounter with Baxter and squash game, the surgeon makes a perfunctory visit to his mother. A less studied character in *Saturday*, Perowne's elderly mother Lily, is a former swimmer who lives in a care home due to her advanced dementia. Set apart from the domestic bliss of the Perowne residence, Suffolk Place exists as an uneasy combination of a home and hospital, in which care is administered by professionals. Thraikill argues that the older woman "suffers from a narrative disability that unravels her sense of self, compromises her memory of others, and disrupts her moment-to-moment existence" (Thraikill 187). As opposed to Perowne, who intentionally endeavors to "live without stories," Lily sacrifices stories to her dementia. Thraikill, adopting her own diagnostic tone, writes that "the root of Lily's disability lies in the damage to parts of the brain responsible for integrating affect and memory"; without the capacity to retain memories, she "lives in perpetual surprise verging on terror" (Thraikill 189, 186).

Although Thraikill does not link this feeling of terror to the novel's commentary on terrorism, her choice of words is apt. Perowne recalls his mother in terms of another historical crisis:

> On Sunday morning, September the third 1939, while Chamberlain was announcing in his radio broadcast from Downing Street that the country was at war with Germany, the fourteen-year-old Lily was at a municipal pool near Wembley, having her first lesson with a sixty-year-old international athlete who had swum for Britain in the Stockholm Olympics in 1912 - the first ever women's swimming event. She had spotted Lily in the pool and offered to give her lessons for free, and coached her in the crawl, a most unladylike stroke. Lily went in for local matches in the late forties. In 1954 she swam for Middlesex in the county championships. (McEwan 156)

Perowne associates the various high points of her career as a swimmer with consequential moments in the English past, in particular the outbreak of the Second World War. When the surgeon "made his dutiful attempts on Daisy's undergraduate course in the nineteenth-century novel, he recognised all his mother's themes" and concedes that "there was nothing small-minded about her interests. Jane Austen and George Eliot shared them too" (McEwan 156). He draws a connection between her "daily routines of polishing, dusting, vacuuming and tidying" and his own profession: "surely it was because of her that [he] feels at home in an operating theatre" (McEwan 154, 155). Perowne's unconscious linkage between British history, English literature, Lily's career, and his professional life, all of which are rooted in a shared, canonical history, contribute to a sense of order. If the family home is a "sanctum of cultured enjoyment and affection," Suffolk Park is an institutional simulacrum of the home, in which cultural memory is archived away or forgotten entirely (Ross 79). Just as the shock of contemporary terrorism has altered our perception of what Randall terms "dailiness," Lily's sense of the

dailiness is marred by dementia, and thus, she is excluded from the Perowne family's rhythm of everyday life (Randall 1).

This sense of everyday order is threatened by the ongoing protests taking place miles away in Hyde Park in anticipation of another century-defining war:

> On the screen above her head Perowne sees the march—Hyde Park still, a vast crowd before a temporary stage, and in the far distance a tiny figure at a microphone, then the aerial shot of the same, and then the marchers in columns with their banners, still arriving through the park gates…There's a shot of the newsreader at her space-age desk, then the plane as he saw it in the early hours, the blackened fuselage vivid in a lake of foam, like a tasteless ornament on an iced cake. Now, Paddington police station—said to be secure against terrorist attack. A reporter is standing outside, speaking into a microphone. There's a development. Are the Russian pilots really radical Muslims? Perowne is reaching up for the volume control, but Lily is suddenly agitated and trying to tell him something important. (McEwan 166-167)

Perowne's field of vision is split between his mother and the news, each of which command his attention. While Lily draws him towards order, normalcy, and domesticity, terrorist imagery continues to lay claim on Perowne's imagination. Indeed, the terrorist threat is a convenient distraction from Lily's illness and both physical and emotional separation from the family unit. Perowne promises to be "ruthless with himself in pursuit of boundless health," cutting out "coffee, cheese, whole milk, and eggs" from his diet, lowering his cholesterol levels to "avoid his mother's fate" of "mental death" (McEwan 165). These preventive measures are merely bodily and intensely individualistic; they attend only to the neurological, rather than social fact of degenerative illness, which often results in institutionalization. His inattention to his mother's

needs is an ethical failure, in which what were once familial duties are assumed by the medical system. In this light, Perowne's political concerns seem intensely superficial, mere distractions from his personal responsibility to his aging mother.

Perowne himself subconsciously notes his own inattention towards Lily, complaining that "once they're established together, face to face, with their cups of dark brown tea, the tragedy of her situation will be obscured behind the banality of detail, of managing the suffocating minutes, of inattentive listening" (McEwan 152-153). Whereas Perowne assumes that his and his mother's inability to read one another amounts to tragedy, Weil instructs us that attention to the other is not only predicated on understanding. Weil's concept of reading is linked implicitly to her idea of attention, an expansive theory that posits a new kind of mutuality between the self and other predicated on renunciation of the ego. Kazuaki Yoda argues that "attention to other people, hence love of others, is reframed as 'reading better.' We read better not simply by purifying our reading through detachment and self-negation, … but by incorporating multiple perspectives (readings) and finding balance among them" (663). For Weil, attention constitutes a "[suspension of] our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object…ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it" ("School Studies" 111). Through acts of attention, we are forced to rethink our practiced, routine treatment of the other. Critics, including like Tammy Amiel-Houser, have drawn on models of self and other in their analysis of *Saturday*. She suggests that McEwan proposes an ethic of "responding to and taking care of that Other who seems the most strange, threatening, incomprehensible, illogical, and absolutely different to me, never to be understood or accepted" beyond "empathetic understanding" (150). True attention, in the context of degenerative disease (both in Baxter's and Lily's cases), is blocked by Perowne's medical rationalizations for such incomprehensible behavior.

Inattention and Bad Reading

These twin failures of inattention and bad reading combine when Baxter and his partners break into the Perownes' Fitzrovia home and take Rosalind and Daisy hostage. At this climactic moment, McEwan fashions what Green terms a "'web of partially interpenetrating consciousnesses' as the separate minds of Henry, Rosalind, Theo, Daisy and Grammaticus work together to communicate meaning to each other for their survival" (66). Baxter himself quickly realizes how love animates the Perownes as a unit. After father-in-law Grammaticus is beaten and incapacitated, it is the nuclear family that bands together to defeat Baxter. McEwan draws attention to the constructed nature of the scene. He describes how "with infinitesimal tracking movements of the head [Baxter's] gaze switches from Theo and Grammaticus at the far end of the room, to Daisy, and finally to Perowne just in front of her," as the reader inhabits the intruder's almost cinematic gaze (McEwan 205). Perowne thinks to himself that "it is, of course, logical that Baxter is here. For a few seconds, [his] only thought is stupidly that: of course. It makes sense. Nearly all the elements of his day are assembled; it only needs his mother, and Jay Strauss to appear with his squash racket" to complete the theatrical reassembly of the cast of characters (McEwan 206-207). As Baxter continues to terrorize the Perowne family, Daisy responds in a similarly performative register. After she sheds her clothes at Baxter's request and reveals her hidden pregnancy, McEwan subtly introduces a new, unnamed character, whose presence shifts the tenor of the whole scene. To "[conceal] his own confusion or unease at the sight of a pregnant woman," Baxter mockingly asks her to recite one of her own poems (McEwan 206-207). McEwan presents Daisy's pregnancy as physical condition quite unlike Perowne's neurological specialties. Still clinging to his immodest credentials, Perowne reflects

that “within the hour he… might understand a lot more about Baxter; and after a lifetime's routine procedures would be among the wisest men on earth,” while unsure he is “wise enough to understand Daisy” (McEwan 243). His “[refusal] to accept that she might have chosen to be pregnant” illustrates his belief that Daisy’s body has been intruded upon, just as his home has. This adjacent bodily intrusion threatens the nuclear family, a fortress which once protected the Perownes from oncoming terrors.

The novel’s many explicit and implicit allusions to canonical works of literature culminate in this final, decisive intertextual reference. Rather than reading an original work, Daisy instead recites Matthew Arnold’s “Dover Beach,” which neither Baxter nor Perowne recognize. Critics of *Saturday* have devoted great attention to the significance of “Dover Beach” in relation to the novel’s themes. Many have highlighted the poem’s reparative effect and questioned its power to edify the individual and draw them towards more profound interpersonal understanding. These analyses of McEwan’s intertext leave room for further discussion of Arnold’s work in relation to *Saturday* as a terrorist novel. Green suggests that “‘Dover Beach’ functions in *Saturday* as a metaphor for revelation, for a new way of thinking and knowing” (67). Her emphasis on the poem’s ability to inspire newness (potent in tandem with Daisy’s pregnancy) is ironic considering its canonicity. By contrast, Michael argues:

> The novel invalidates the similarly simplistic binary opposition between victim and perpetrator. By portraying Baxter and Perowne as inhabiting both positions at different times and for different reasons, the narrative implicitly acknowledges what Simpson describes as the Western ‘history of complicity and mutuality,’ which reveals that, at times, ‘We too are the torturers.’ While in no way excusing the home invasion, the novel works to explain it as a means of trying to understand the 9/11 terrorist attacks. (233)

Frequently anthologized as an instructive poem in school curricula, “Dover Beach” functions instead as a kind of literary sedative to tranquilize Baxter. The young man feverishly repeats, “‘You wrote that.’ And then, hurriedly, ‘It’s beautiful. You know that, don’t you. It’s beautiful. And you wrote it’” (McEwan 222). McEwan highlights the weaponization of beauty, which does more to chasten than to humanize Baxter. Lynn Wells criticizes “the fact that Baxter is so easily subdued by the blandishments of the English literary tradition” (Amiel-Houser 37). Where McEwan blurs the boundaries between “victim and perpetrator,” the distinction between canonical and contemporary literature remains firmly set. Writing a new kind of terrorist novel, he endeavors to write about a topic about which, in Arnold’s own words, there is no “certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain” (McEwan 281). “Dover Beach” acts as a kind of intervention like the one organized by anti-war demonstrators: a symbolic action with material consequences perpetrated against a common enemy.

Perowne’s own analysis of the poem is of some note here: he considers the “poem’s melodiousness” which is “at odds with its pessimism” (McEwan 222). As opposed to Baxter, who is taken with its beauty and the fact that it “makes [him] think about where [he] grew up,” Perowne considers himself a better reader of Arnold’s words (McEwan 222). Whereas he senses dissonance between form and content, Baxter finds a unity that transforms his state of mind. At this moment, Baxter is indeed “drawn upwards” in an act of true Weilian reading. His emotional volatility, despite being a symptom of Huntington’s, makes him a more curious reader, open to new understandings. While McEwan may satirize the “power of literature,” his characterization of Baxter subtly praises acts of generous reading.

However, literature does not re-form the individual in a vacuum. Spahr writes that, in *Saturday*, “literature can engender an ethical encounter with the other, but this is no guarantee

that it will not simultaneously obscure the structural conflicts that shape these individuals' lives" (234). After Baxter is transfixed by the poem, he becomes manic and begs Perowne to share with him the fake medical trials that might cure his Huntington's. His brief transformative moment is coupled with a desire to heal his illness, despite its quasi-spiritual effects. When Perowne rushes to retrieve the nonexistent paperwork from his upstairs office, he and Theo work together to push him down the stairs and incapacitate him before calling the police. Once again, McEwan presents the mind as property of healthcare institutions like the National Health Service. For example, the operating room is where Perowne first becomes acquainted with his wife Rosalind. This is where he has presumably witnessed the birth of his children and where he interacts with patients every day for the past twenty years. In his personal life and practice, Perowne's circle of attention expands to include those beyond the nuclear family. In his analysis of Weil's ethics and palliative care, Aldis H. Petriceks notes that "the mind is constantly at work projecting its own imagination and valuations on itself and the world around it, and that these projections inhibit true knowledge" (1). "A clinician is always at risk of projecting their assumptions and biases, implicit and explicit, onto the patient," an act of bad reading which Weil likens to "enslavement" (Petriceks 1, Yoda 668). In turn, "attention is itself an ethical act because it grants dignity and autonomy to a person who exists independent of my own mental constructs" as more than a medical subject (2). Moreover, this responsibility towards the clinical Other is complicated by the increasingly bureaucratic socialized medical system, which is evolving to handle national, rather than personal crises. Perowne laments that "simple train crashes are no longer all that are envisaged, and words like 'catastrophe' and 'mass fatalities,' 'chemical and biological warfare' and 'major attack' have recently become bland through repetition" (McEwan 11-12). Operating under a terrorist threat, the healthcare system must expand its role as an arm of the state, as

Perowne quickly becomes “aware of new committees and subcommittees spawning, and lines of command that stretch up and out of the hospital, beyond the medical hierarchies, up through the distant reaches of the Civil Service to the Home Secretary's office” (McEwan 12).

After Baxter’s tumble, the hospital contacts Perowne to perform surgery, a responsibility that he accepts. In choosing to operate on Baxter himself, Perowne incorporates his Other into this very system. If “fictional engagement with terrorists must be considered in relation to a larger cultural process of meaning-making,” then Baxter’s operation reintegrates the “terrorist” into an institutional apparatus (Frank 342). As Perowne rushes to the hospital to operate on Baxter’s “unmendable brain,” he reflects that “the limits of the art, of neurosurgery as it stands today, are plain enough: faced with these unknown codes, this dense and brilliant circuitry, he and his colleagues offer only brilliant plumbing” (McEwan 255). In reducing what was once a creative act to “brilliant plumbing,” Perowne demonstrates a final failure to read well. Baxter lies, unconscious and anesthetized, as his “helpless body is revealed in a hospital gown and looks small on the table” (McEwan 256). The human brain, once “as known to him as his own house,” appears totally illegible to Perowne (McEwan 254). “The extent of his ignorance, and of the general ignorance” about the “truth about consciousness” is impossible to grasp (McEwan 255). Although the physical structure of the brain is comprehensible, the mind remains a mystery. This unknowability corresponds to the terrorist taboo once more. Indeed, “what is taboo…is not the topic of terrorism as such” but rather the “subjectivity of the perpetrator of terrorism, whose motives cannot be acknowledged and are thus literally unspeakable” (Frank 355). Baxter lacks any of the motives so easily assigned to terrorist characters: he is physically, mentally, and politically inert. The absence of terror in *Saturday* is further obscured by this degeneration of the novel’s faux terrorist. In turn, McEwan presents anesthesia and degenerative disease as twin

symbols for terror's unspeakability. He ultimately shows us that what the terrorist character and the human mind share is a similar illegibility that animates both literary and medical work.

As the novel ends, McEwan returns to the opening metaphor of the window. As Perowne "quietly…raises the window" of his bedroom, he pictures "his small part of" London "[lying] wide open, impossible to defend, waiting for its bomb, like a hundred other cities" (McEwan 271, 276). With resignation he accepts that "the authorities agree, an attack's inevitable," returning to a feeling of anticipation, this time without promise (McEwan 276). Awaiting Sunday, McEwan, like Perowne anticipates a new era defined by terror. The novelist takes on formal elements of the typical modernist novel, namely its stream of consciousness style and day-long structure, to better represent how terror our imagination and reshapes our thinking. By representing the absence of terrorism, McEwan composes a new terrorist novel that illuminates how terror draws attention to and away from both current events and personal preoccupations. McEwan's characterization of Perowne as a "bad reader" highlights flaws in strictly scientific or literary ways of knowing and his engagement with literature and neurology enables him to present the mind as both a biological and literary object under attack. At this nexus, the novelist asks readers to consider ethics in light of terrorism. Finally, his twin literary and ethical explorations engender a critique of the post 9/11 terrorist novel that probes the genre's cliches.

Restaging *Antigone*: Time, Citizenship, and Twinship in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*

Kamila Shamsie's 2017 novel *Home Fire* contemporizes Sophocles' *Antigone* and restages the ancient drama in a newly global context that spans multiple continents. The novel revolves around a British-Pakistani Pasha family, of which the father and the son are radicalized by and join Islamic fundamentalist organizations with terroristic aims. The two men die while taking part in these activities: Adil Pasha, the father, on his way to Guantanamo, and Parvaiz Pasha, his son, while attempting to escape the Islamic State. A simultaneous subplot concerns Karamat Lone, the British Home Secretary of Pakistani descent and his son Eamonn, who pursues a romantic relationship with Parvaiz's twin sister Aneeka, much to his father's disapproval. After Parvaiz is shot dead attempting while attempting to escape ISIS, he is denaturalized by the British government and buried, against his twin sister Aneeka's wishes, in Pakistan. When she travels to Pakistan and calls upon the British government to repatriate her brother's body, the British media engages in a smear campaign against her; journalists attack her romance with Eamonn as well as her unpatriotic call for the reclamation of her brother's body by the British state. In the culmination of the tragic arc of the novel, Eamonn travels to Pakistan to reunite with Aneeka and the pair die in a staged suicide bombing.

As opposed to *The Good Terrorist* and *Saturday* which are local in scope, *Home Fire* represents a fractured domestic sphere that is distinctly transnational. The novel is organized into five sections, each of which is narrated by a character located in the United States, Britain, Syria, and Pakistan. The novel patterns *Antigone,* which poses a dichotomy between one's familial and civic loyalties. Shamsie reimagines this apparent incompatibility in an age of nation states, as opposed to city states. While retaining the elements of the play that pertain to citizenship, family,

and law, she breaks with the spatial and temporal conventions of ancient dramatic form. In this new spatiotemporal zone, Shamsie uses twins to compare an aspirational homeland (Islamic State) versus home state (Britain), each of which ultimately fails its citizen. The conditionality of citizenship produces new patterns of family life organized around the state. This chapter draws upon family theory, citizenship studies, and contemporary scholarship on both Shamsie's fiction and the terrorist novel in its analysis. It also integrates Seamus Heaney's translation of *Antigone* as an intertext that bears upon Shamsie's exploration of modern citizenship.

Written during an ever-lengthening War on Terror, *Home Fire* was published at a moment when Greek tragedy experienced a resurgence of popularity on the stage and screen, as well as in print (Weiss 241). W.H. Auden remarked that the "historical discontinuity between Greek culture and our own, the disappearance for so many centuries of any direct influence" enables "each nation to fashion a classical Greece in its own image," with the result that there is "a German Greece, a French Greece, an English Greece" that takes root in the respective cultural imagination of each nation (1). One such adaptation is Heaney's 2004 translation of *Antigone*, which lends *Home Fire* its epigraph: "The ones we love . . . are enemies of the state" (Shamsie np.). Whereas Heaney's translation is most often read as a commentary on the efficacy of "civil disobedience" and "radical action" in a Northern Irish context, Shamsie's retelling is more global in scope (Kenny 207). Rather than committing to a fixed national setting within her text, Shamsie splits her novel into five parts narrated from the perspective of a different character, each of whom is situated in a unique location, be it another country or another London neighborhood. Thus, *Home Fire* takes up Sophocles' debate between "the government's laws opposed to the family's rights" in the context of a tangled international legal system burdened by differing approaches to the War on Terror (McDonald 93). Shamsie's novelistic version of

Antigone fashions neither a Greek, American, or Islamist "Greece" in Auden's terms, but rather a newly global one composed of competing and multitudinous laws that bear on the Pasha family. In doing so, she presents a conceptualization of the family that is unbounded by the domestic (whether a physical home or a homeland), and instead, held together problematically by the rule of law.

Classical Resonances

Shamsie employs several elements of classical theatre in *Home Fire* to represent the Pasha family's dysfunction. Weiss argues that *Home Fire* is replete with "political import" tied to its "multimedia theatricality" in which form "produces…a contestation of multiple voices for its audience (or reader) to hear, critique, and put against their own" (243). She goes on to consider how Shamsie's text casts her readers as both members of the chorus and audience who are encouraged to consider their "role as citizens" (Weiss 253). Bearing in mind Weiss's theorization of *Home Fire* as a choral or polyphonic "play-turned-novel," I argue that Shamsie also exploits the spatial and temporal dynamics of Greek tragedy (such as classical unities) to critique both British domestic and foreign policies. The rules of unity of time, space, and action, adumbrated by Aristotle in *Poetics*, were elaborated by French and English dramatists in the Renaissance. In his analysis of Sophocles and other classical tragedians, Aristotle noted only that "tragedy endeavours, as far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun" (Kennedy np.). Following this hint, Boileau argued that a tragedy must take place "in a single place, and a single day" where "the working-out of a single event must hold the audience captive" (Kennedy np.). *Home Fire* defies these unities of time and space; while Shamsie's

tragedy opens in the middle of things, her novel deviates from formal expectations by staging tragedy across multiple continents and time zones.

The Pasha family's spread across continents is typical of the "transnational family" that is "spatially dispersed and seemingly capable of unending social mutation" (Bryceson and Vuorela 3). While Shamsie focuses primarily on the family's second generation contingent, the threat or promise of movement animates all her characters, whose mobility is central to their narrative role. Bryson and Vuorela add that, "on the one hand, within the residential home, certain family members are physically absent thereby reducing the range and depth of *in situ* emotional and material need fulfilment. On the other, the expanded locational spread of family members affords greater spatial scope for need fulfillment," although those who share a physical home do not automatically inhabit an environment of mutual support and care (14). Fittingly, a debate over selling the Pasha's childhood home, purchased by their absent jihadi father, Adil Pasha, figures as a potential trigger point for Parvaiz's radicalization. Isma suggests advertising the property following her acceptance to an American PhD program:

> When she'd first come to the twins to discuss the letter Dr. Shah had written to her, with its suggestion—almost a command—that she apply for the PhD program, Parvaiz had said, "What's the point?" And Isma had immediately agreed yes, he was right. Neither Parvaiz nor Isma had come right out and actually said it was the unlikelihood of a visa that made the whole thing futile, but they all recognized well enough when their father was subtext to a conversation. (Shamsie 120)

In turn, Parvaiz reflects on his sisters' departures:

> Aneeka would leave them…After university she had no intention of continuing to live in this house and remain a sibling rather than anything else that a law degree made possible.

> "You can't just decide this for us," Parvaiz said to Isma. But the "us" carried no weight with his twin helping her sister set the kitchen table, refusing to meet his eye.
>
> "Traitor," he said, pushing away from the counter. (Shamsie 122)

During this brief encounter, recounted from his own perspective, Parvaiz unknowingly alludes to his own fate. Shamsie's use of the pronouns "us" and "them" highlights not only the tension building between the Pashas, but also the persistent influence of their father's actions on the trajectory of their lives. As his sisters pursue their respective degrees in sociology and law, Parvaiz draws a sharp distinction between Aneeka's remaining a sibling or becoming a practitioner of the law, a decision that he perceives as traitorous. In doing so, he upholds Sophocles' distinction between "the government's laws and the family's rights," echoing Heaney's Antigone, who implores Ismene: "Are we sister, sister, brother? /Or traitor, coward, coward?" (8). Nevertheless, Adil Pasha's terrorist activity binds his children together. If Isma's visa is denied, the Pashas will continue to inhabit the family home as an "us." Not only does this critical scene provide some reasoning for Parvaiz's subsequent actions, but it also illuminates exactly how Shamsie contemporizes the central question of *Antigone*: do we first belong to a family or a state? *Home Fire* acknowledges complexities that arise from drawing distinctions between the state and the family as independent "institutions"; instead, the novel demonstrates how the state and its bodies interact with normative familial structures via citizenship, passport, and visa policies.

Home Fire opens *in media res*, after Parvaiz's radicalization but prior to his death en route to the British consulate. Isma, the oldest Pasha sibling, is modeled on the dutiful Ismene who obeys Creon's decree in *Antigone*. Isma is detained at Heathrow before flying into Logan Airport in Boston, where, coincidentally, members of al-Qaeda boarded American Airlines

Flight 11 and United Flight 175 on September 11th, although Shamsie shies away from making the reference explicitly. At Heathrow, Isma is subject to a sustained interrogation:

> "Do you consider yourself British?" the man said.
>
> "I am British."
>
> "But do you consider yourself British?"
>
> "I've lived here all my life."
>
> She meant there was no other country of which she could feel herself a part, but the words came out sounding evasive. The interrogation continued for nearly two hours. He wanted to know her thoughts on Shias, homosexuals, the Queen, democracy, *The Great British Bake Off*, the invasion of Iraq, Israel, suicide bombers, dating websites. (Shamsie 5)

This interrogation is more than a comment on Islamophobia experienced by visible religious minorities during the War on Terror. Nor is the airport a liminal space, where individuals pass between cultures or transcend real or imagined borders, as commonly theorized. Instead, Isma's experience at Heathrow and Logan airports signals the first tension between American and British sovereignty. After the questioning, the officer merely remarks that they "just had to wait for America to wake up and confirm some details about [Isma's] student visa" before validating her ticket (Shamsie 7). The content of the interrogation is merely a distraction from the legal negotiations that underpin international travel, such as the granting of student visas to those linked to subversive activities by blood alone. The farcical nature of the conversation is best illustrated by the absurdity of the topics discussed, each of which act as points for or against Isma's British nationality.

Weiss adds that "the compactness" of "the story's chronological scope" contributes to "a strong sense of…the weight of the past—especially the father—on the present" (Weiss 12). Isma remains ambivalent about the actions of the Pasha men. Her retreat into the American academe shelters her from the precarity of her familial situation; cushioned by the insularity of her graduate program, Isma's deep psychic wounds are transformed into publication fodder. As she begins writing an article entitled "The Insecurity State: Britain and the Instrumentalization of Fear," she finds "her suppressed anger distilled and abstracted into essays about the sociological impact of the War on Terror…which took [her] experience in the interrogation room and made it research" (Shamsie 40). Shamsie situates the academy as a non-space, a temporary haven from the political and personal exigencies of her life in London.

Nevertheless, various communication technologies keep her invested in the lives of her twin siblings, Parvaiz and Aneeka, as they digitally rear their heads through Skype and WhatsApp. In her discussion of the relationship between communication technologies and the postcolonial novel, Toivanen suggests that, in the "global era, all places are somehow connected to others so that there are no 'islands'" (137). Isma "[checks] if her sister is online" on Skype "as a matter of morning routine," as the platform provides a feeling of closeness across the Atlantic (Shamsie 11). One day, Isma notices Parvaiz's active status on her online contacts list:

> Isma lifted her hands off the keyboard, set them down on either side of the laptop, and looked at her brother's name. She hadn't seen it here since that day in December when he'd called to tell them the decision he'd made for his life without any consideration of what it would mean for his sisters. Now he would be looking at her name, the green check mark next to it telling him she was available to chat. The Skype window was positioned so that her mother's lips were touching it. Zainab Pasha's slim, fine-boned

> features had skipped Isma and passed on to the twins, who laughed with their mother's mouth, smiled with their mother's eyes. Isma maximized the Skype window so it filled the entire screen, encircled her throat with the palms of her hands, and felt her heart's reaction to the sight of his name in the high-speed propulsion of blood through her arteries... She kept watching the screen, just as she knew he was watching his, both for the same reason: waiting for Aneeka. (Shamsie 11)

Isma's laptop is a problematic surrogate for the home, where each of the Pasha siblings and their deceased mother are brought together digitally. The platform unites and separates the Pashas, who can isolate each other by going offline as they choose. The past (symbolized by Isma's laptop wallpaper, featuring her smiling, deceased mother) and the present (the online names of her estranged siblings) distress Isma. She laments that "'touch' was the one thing modern technology didn't allow, and without it she and her sister had lost something vital to their way of being together" (Shamsie 13).

Valerie Francisco suggests that webcam technologies in particular "produce an effect of integration, presence and surveillance" in the transnational family context (181). Video and audio capabilities create a sense of intimate normalcy that is tempered by the ever-present threat of surveillance. Indeed, Isma's communications with Aneeka and Parvaiz are dually subject to state counterterrorism legislation, namely the 2001 Patriot Act in the US and its British equivalent, the 2004 UK Civil Contingencies Bill, which legalized "enhanced surveillance procedures" such as phone and computer tapping without a legal warrant (Patriot Act 8). In Isma's case, her internet activity is benign; the airport official who examines her laptop may only find "that she was interested in the marital status of an actor from a popular TV series; that wearing a hijab didn't stop her from buying expensive products to tame her frizzy hair; that she

had searched for 'how to make small talk with Americans'" (Shamsie 6). Nevertheless, the "weight of the past" and the "figure of the father" bear on the present via the modern surveillance apparatus, which compiles an archive of the individual that is scannable for suspicious or subversive material. In this sense, the surveillance state, via minor unnamed characters such as airline officials, emerges as a kind of Tiresias-like figure in *Home Fire*: ubiquitous and many-bodied. While fairly brief and removed from the action of Shamsie's tragedy, Isma's chapter charts the spatially and temporally expansive world its characters inhabit.

Terrorist Time

Shamsie's experimentation with nonlinear storytelling resonates with Hadji Bakara's theorization of "citizen time" versus "refugee time." Bakara suggests that refugee writers "have represented time as plural and non-sovereign, revealing the multiplicity of temporalities and futures lost to a singular modernity of the nation" (443). Moreover, Bakara argues that "the citizen is not the future of the refugee," in the sense that "more and more refugees do not become citizens…humans can no longer be imagined as only ever moving toward a sovereign state" (445). While Bakara's essay focuses almost exclusively on the refugee, his emphasis on temporal "multiplicity" lends itself to Shamsie's depiction of the transnational family. Shamsie bends time as a narrative strategy: indeed, the Pasha siblings inhabit multiple temporalities by virtue of their distance, which, for example, necessitates the use of communication technology. Beyond her manipulation of time zones, Shamsie also represents plural time by engaging with Islam as the property of the past and future, through her characterization of Home Secretary Karamat Lone and Farooq, a young ISIS officer who makes first contact with Parvaiz.

"Home Secretary," as a title, designates an individual who tends a home rather than a state. Domestic politics are a home, if not an actual domicile. In this regard, Shamsie's use of names is of note. Whereas Creon translates simply to "ruler" or "prince" in Ancient Greek, Karamat's name is illuminating with regard to his powers as Home Secretary, as opposed to say, monarch or prime minister. Whereas Weiss compares Karamat to former Prime Minister Theresa May, the pair share few similarities beyond a stance on citizenship rights. *Karamah* refers to "grace," or "charismatic gifts or the capacity to perform miracles, as evidenced by the temporary suspension of the natural order through divine intervention" (Esposito np.) A *karamah* is "in possession of *barakah* (God's blessing)" and shares it with the general population (Esposito np.). Shamsie presents her Home Secretary as an individual who possesses something of value that he bestows on those whom he chooses: citizenship. In a chilling rearticulation of Creon's decree, his acts of grace have the power to suspend "the natural order." In *Home Fire,* Karamat makes clear "his intention to expand the home secretary's power to revoke British citizenship so that it applied to British-born single passport holders," a policy that "[determines] someone's fitness for citizenship based on actions, not accidents of birth" (Shamsie 226). In Bakara's words, the Home Secretary espouses "a conception of time and futurity projected in the image of a single political subject (the citizen) and state form (the nation-state)" (443). Karamat's desire to rescind passport holders' citizenship is a kind of negative *karamah,* a governmental prerogative weaponized against citizens. Not only does he "[defer] rights and equality to some imminent future citizenship" as a keeper of citizen time, he seeks to revoke them entirely (Bakara 443).

In turn, Karamat frequently tries to conjure a Britain of the future—a colorblind utopia where the rule of law is celebrated and obeyed. In the press, he is described as "a man from a Muslim background," with Isma adding that "Muslim-ness was something he had boldly stridden

from" (Shamsie 35). He is known for "taking on the backwardness of British Muslims" and giving rousing speeches that transform his personal and professional trajectory into an aspirational message for young Britons (Shamsie 36). During a speech presented "at a predominantly Muslim school in Bradford" of which he is an alumnus, Karamat instructs students in conformity to British behaviour:

> There is nothing this country won't allow you to achieve—Olympic medals, captaincy of the cricket team, pop stardom, reality TV crowns. And if none of that works out, you can settle for being home secretary. You are, we are, British. Britain accepts this. So do most of you. But for those of you who are in some doubt about it, let me say this: Don't set yourself apart in the way you dress, the way you think, the outdated codes of behavior you cling to, the ideologies to which you attach your loyalties. Because if you do, you will be treated differently—not because of racism, though that does still exist, but because you insist on your difference from everyone else in this multiethnic, multireligious, multitudinous United Kingdom of ours. And look at all you miss out on because of it. (Shamsie 89-90)

The minister's speech espouses pure citizen time, in which every British listener, regardless of "ethnic" or "religious" background belongs to a single, national temporality. Karamat's "Britain" is one that accepts citizens on the basis of conformity to a monolithic state. He echoes Heaney's Creon, who commands Thebans, "Never grant traitors and subversives / Equal footing with loyal citizens" (17). Creon proclaims that "equally to blame / Is anyone who puts the personal / Above the overall thing, puts friend or family first… / For the patriot, / Personal loyalty always must give way / To patriotic duty" (16). Karamat's emphasis on the "outdatedness" of certain thoughts, dress, behaviours, and ideologies is a veiled reference to the large population of British

Muslims who "set [themselves] apart" from the generality. Following his speech, "the phrase 'future prime minister' was everywhere" in the press, as an indication that Karamat's nationalist rhetoric lends itself to progressive, rather than regressive thinking (Shamsie 90). Thus, the Home Secretary's ability to give and take citizenship grants him power beyond foreign policy. It enables him to undermine the natural law that underpins an individual's reasons to seek citizenship, such as a desire to reunite with family members or to build a home in Britain.

Whereas Karamat views Islam as an outdated belief system that threatens Britain's bright future, Shamsie's fundamentalist characters present an alternative futurity based in the false promises of the Islamic State and its actors. Paravaiz's first ISIS-affiliated contact is a slightly older man from Preston Road named Farooq, who is well versed in both British and Islamic history. He chooses to introduce the concept of a caliphate to Paravaiz, after the younger man mentions a library fundraiser he has assisted with since he was young. Farooq explains:

> 'The library,' Farooq said. 'Of course it matters. Same as what they're doing to the NHS, welfare benefits, all the rest of it. You know this country used to be great.'
>
> 'When was that?'
>
> "Not so long ago. When it understood that a welfare state was something you built up instead of tearing down, when it saw migrants as people to be welcomed not turned away. Imagine what it would be like to live in such a nation. No, don't just smile. I'm asking you to do something: imagine it…There is a place like that we can go to now. A place where migrants coming in to join are treated like kings, given more in benefits than the locals to acknowledge all they've given up to reach there. A place where skin color doesn't matter. Where schools and hospitals are free, and rich and poor have the same facilities. Where men are men. Where no one has to enter haram gambling shops to earn a

> living, but can provide for his family with dignity. Where you could speak openly about your father, with pride, not shame. (Shamsie 146-147)

While Karamat's vision of Britain's future is highly individualistic, Farooq's is ostensibly communitarian. He frames the Islamic State as a kind of welfare state that attends to the spiritual and material needs of its population, complete with institutions that safeguard the morality and dignity of individuals. He draws comparisons between a pre-austerity Britain and the society he and his comrades intend to build overseas, a society that collapses past and present into an entirely new utopia. Indeed, in this imaginary state, Parvaiz is invited to honour his father, and discuss him openly, as he and his sisters are unable to while they are supervised by MI5.

As opposed to Karamat's desire for Britons to forget the past, the past plays a significant role in the future of the Islamic State. The glory of its slain architects, like Adil Pasha, animates the banalities of the bureaucratic administrative affairs of a modern state; to Farooq, Islam finds its truest expression in the form of a caliphate, complete with schools and hospitals like any secular nation. Farooq's reference to the Islamic State's open borders policy towards migrants is a significant departure from the Home Secretary's nativism. Living in 2015, during the ongoing European migrant crisis in the wake of numerous political and economic upheavals in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean, Farooq considers *jihad* as a world-building activity that necessarily takes contemporary crises in stride. Michael Gilsenan writes that *jihad* is central to "the expansion and protection of the Muslim community…[and] closely linked with *hijra*, or emigration from non-Muslim society" (np.). He adds that "the sins of a person making *jihad* are remitted, and death "'on the path of God' is martyrdom which secures immediate entry to paradise" (np.). If the Home Secretary exercises *karamah* by offering or denying citizenship as a means of affirming Britain's sovereignty, the Islamic state mobilizes *jihad* and *hijra* to establish

its own authority. Shamsie implies that fundamentalism, especially jihadist violence, does not offer "a plausible (or even utopian) [alternative] to the modernist projects of decolonization and national sovereignty," as Bakara suggests refugee writers often envision in their work (137). Rather, the Islamic State conjures its own "terrorist time" that only includes migrants if they are willing to tread the "path of God." Notably, Farooq neglects to describe what pathways to citizenship, or even belonging, are available in this newly fashioned Islamic welfare state. When Parvaiz moves to Raqqa to join ISIS's ranks, Farooq strips him of his passport: "*Relax…If you ever need it back I'll get it for you. But you won't need it back. You're now a citizen of al-Dawla—the State*" (Shamsie 161). Thus, Parvaiz is stripped of his citizenship by the Islamic State months before he is denaturalized by the British government. Living in "terrorist time," he becomes an imaginary citizen of al-Dawla, with restricted movement and rights. The question remains as to how an individual, whether citizen or non-citizen, can belong in either the present or future envisioned by Karamat and Farooq. Breaking with the spatial and temporal norms of Greek tragedy, Shamsie situates the terrorist novel in a global context, where various states lay claim over the individual's citizenship, mobility, and freedom of expression. The "compactness" of tragic form takes new shape in *Home Fire*; rather than imposing spatial or temporal boundaries on her characters, Shamsie incorporates law enforcement and national security as new limits in her contemporary *Antigone*.

Twin Studies

Breaking with Sophocles's original, Shamsie presents Antigone/Aneeka and Polynices/Parvaiz as twins rather than siblings alone. This change in family structure plays a pivotal role in Shamsie's exploration of the "homegrown terrorist" phenomenon. In the field of

behavioral genetics, "twin studies" are often conducted to measure the impact of various genetic and environmental factors on human development. The amount of shared genetic material, as well as the unique experience of equivalent age, makes twins prime subjects for the study of the "nature versus nurture" dichotomy. In *Twins in Contemporary Literature and Culture: Look Twice*, Juliana de Nooy analyzes the figure of twins in narratives concerning nationhood. She traces the destiny of various fictional twins, including Romulus and Remus in Rome and Polynices and Eteocles in Thebes. De Nooy claims that "the rivalry and antagonism of… twins suggest a fundamental division threatening societies at their very origin, an obstacle that needs to be overcome—usually by the death of one twin—in order for social cohesion and order to be achieved" (115). In *Home Fire*, Shamsi mobilizes the figure of twins to illustrate a distinction between a homeland and a home state, and in doing so, demonstrates how each ultimately fail the citizen. The twins manifest popular conceptions of the terrorist as a fringe figure, who commits unspeakable crimes in the service of extreme religious or political ends.

At first glance, Shamsie's depiction of Aneeka and Parvaiz's twinship is conventional; the pair perform "sameness and difference as they slip in and out of resemblance with each other (de Nooy 5). According to Isma, twins exist in a "self-enclosed universe" that excludes those around them; in this unusual circumstance, "self" is used to describe two people, rather than an individual (Shamsie 13). She recalls that, "as an infant, Aneeka was bathed and changed and fed and rocked to sleep by her grandmother and nine-year-old sister while Parvaiz, the weaker, sicklier twin, was the one who suckled at their mother's breast (she produced only enough milk for one) and cried unless she was the one to tend to him" (Shamsie 13). Parvaiz's illness signals an imbalance between the twins, a failure to thrive in the location he is born into; he appears to require more care than his healthy sister. This tension towards the female members of the Pasha

clan, especially in the absence of their patriarch Adil Pasha, is later exploited by those who radicalize him. Whereas the mother often acts as a surrogate for the state, fatherlessness creates feelings of homelessness even before Parvaiz is officially denaturalized:

> He had always watched boys and their fathers with an avidity composed primarily of hunger. Whenever any of those fathers had made a certain kind of gesture toward him—a hand placed on the back of his neck, the word "son," an invitation to a football match—he'd retreat, ashamed and afraid in a jumbled way that only grew more so as the years passed and as the worlds of girls and boys grew more separate; there were times he was not a twin but rather the only male in a house that knew all the secrets women shared with one another but none that fathers taught their sons. (Shamsie 129)

Parvaiz's "hunger" for a male presence recalls his earlier infant state and signals an instance of differentiation from Aneeka, who belongs to a more "secret" world populated with women. Shamsie's characterization of the young man verges on what Michael C. Frank designates as one of the classic clichés of the terrorist character: "the misguided youth – who, in his desire to belong, is corrupted by the combined effects of indoctrination and peer pressure" (355). Coupled with the vision of the Islamic State as a modern nation mentioned previously, Shamsie's fundamentalists also stress its status as a potential homeland for Muslims across the world, especially those living in secular or Islamophobic societies. Parvaiz responds to a beheading video, likely that of James Foley or Steven Sotloff, American journalists whose executions were transformed into widely shared ISIS propaganda in 2014, varies over time:

> One day Farooq showed him a photograph that he recognized. A white man kneeling in the sand just prior to his execution, an image that encapsulated for the world the barbarity of the caliphate. When he'd first seen it he'd felt sorrow for the man with the courage to

> try to look brave with a blade at his throat, whose only crime was the nation he'd been born into. But this time what struck him most powerfully were the man's clothes, the same shade of orange as the prison jumpsuit in which his father had died. His vision expanded; he saw beyond the expression of the individual kneeling in the desert to the message the caliphate sent with his death: What you do to ours we will do to yours. So this was how it felt to have a nation that wielded its sword on your behalf and told you acquiescence wasn't the only option. Dear God, the vein-flooding pleasure of it. (Shamsie 151-152)

Parvaiz's interaction with the photograph demonstrates a striking interplay between paternity and homeland. By seeing his father in the dead American's place, his allegiance is finally transferred from Britain to the Islamic State. His sensation of "vein-flooding pleasure" signals a newfound vitality that was lacking in his early years among the Pasha women, as he becomes enraptured by the idea of a nation and family as a singular entity.

While the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) fails to provide a definition of "homegrown terrorism," the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) defines the phenomenon broadly:

> Those who encourage, endorse, condone, justify, or support the commission of a violent criminal act to achieve political, ideological, religious, social, or economic goals by a citizen or longterm resident of a Western country who has rejected Western cultural values, beliefs, and norms. Homegrown violent extremists are a diverse group of individuals that can include U.S.-born citizens, naturalized citizens, green card holders or other long-term residents, foreign students, or illegal immigrants. Regardless of their citizenship status, these individuals intend to commit terrorist acts inside Western countries or against Western interests abroad. (DOJ 1)

In lieu of defining Western "values, beliefs, and norms," the Department of Justice chooses to characterize Westerners by their legal status. This sentiment is echoed in various analyses of British instances of homegrown terrorism, which stress the "ability for homegrown terrorists to travel freely throughout the European Union, and the flexibility of terrorist operations" (Honeywood 48). Conversely, terrorists are frequently characterized as "self-recruited," "self-trained," "self-radicalized," and "self-started" (Crone and Harrow 552). They emerge as contradictory figures, who are both the beneficiary of the state and its major enemy.

The emphasis on the "self" severs terrorists from whatever social or political networks they may belong to, even though such individuals are often radicalized through their interaction with local or online communities. In *Home Fire,* British Home Secretary Karamat Lone tells his son Eamonn:

> I know all their names. Where they come from. Who they were before they went. There's only one from Preston Road. It's the last place in England I'd expect to find that kind of thing happening. But that one, he had exceptional circumstances. Terrorism as family trade. Illustrative of how much you need to do to root out this kind of thing. I mean, literally, grab by the very roots, and pull. Pull the children out of those environments before they're old enough for the poison to seep in. (Shamsie 110)

As Karamat alludes to a nonexistent "terrorist gene" that has expressed itself in the Pasha family line, he mentions how unlikely radicalization is in their Preston Road neighborhood. Crone and Harrow chart homegrown terrorism on an axis of "belonging and autonomy." *Belonging* refers to a homegrown terrorist's "attachment to the West," while *autonomy* is a "matter of independence from Islamist militants abroad" (524). Notably, these two concepts apply to twinship itself. Parvaiz' and Aneeka's differing trajectories are rooted in their degrees of belonging to Britain

and their process of becoming autonomous from one another for the first time in their lives as they age.

Whereas Parvaiz pursues the Islamic State as an alternative homeland that restores his vision of belonging to a family and a nation, Aneeka tries to re-integrate her family within a home state. Whereas Isma appeases the British government by praising her brother's denaturalization, Aneeka attempts to weaponize the law to reclaim the Pashas' right to life within British borders. Parvaiz even chastises her for her seemingly naïve faith in the British legal system: "Why is that what you've decided to do with your life? What does the law count for? How did the law help our father?" (Shamsie 144). Shamsie's Antigone is not attempting to reform draconian citizenship policies through legislative or activist means. Instead, Aneeka works to recreate the law by using more immediate, emotional strategies.

One such strategy is her romantic relationship with Eamonn, whose proximity to his father, the Home Secretary, lends her greater visibility during her plea for Parvaiz's repatriation. Eamonn is initially horrified by Aneeka's revelation that she hopes their partnership can rescue her brother, who is attempting to escape the Islamic State after becoming disenchanted with their false promises. He decries "A love that's entirely contingent on what hope can do for [her] brother"; by contrast, Aneeka believes that "the home secretary's son could help [her] brother come home and avoid charges" (Shamsie 99). Aneeka's desire for Eamonn, and the potential for Eamonn to bring about Parvaiz's return are not mutually exclusive. Shamsie is representing, with brutal accuracy, the emotional calculations that take place in a family with a precarious legal status. Whereas Lau and Mendes suggest that "politics, as Shamsie points out, disrupts not only blood bonds, but also bonds of romance and friendship, forcing would-be lovers to stand on different sides of divides that have become increasingly entrenched post-9/11," I argue the very

opposite (63). Aneeka and Eamonn's relationship is ridiculed in the press, who print headlines like "HO-JABI! PERVY PASHA'S TWIN SISTER ENGINEERED SEX TRYSTS WITH HOME SECRETARY'S SON" and "INSIDE: DAUGHTER AND SISTER OF MUSLIM TERRORISTS, WITH HISTORY OF SECRET SEX LIFE—THE EXCLUSIVE STORY OF 'KNICKERS' PASHA" (Shamsie 214, 215).

Eamonn's promise to marry Aneeka, is not just a vague romantic gesture; rather, it is a legal proposition that can afford her a greater degree of security as a British citizen. Turner notes that "Rather than define citizenship within a static framework of rights and obligations, it is important to conceptualize citizenship as a set of processes," especially in the context of transnational marriage, wherein couples become "reproducers of the nation" (48). For the last time, Shamsie nuances the conception of the "natural law," which not only applies to siblings, but also to the institution of marriage. Eamonn suggests that "love" must be enshrined in the law to have actual transformative power: "Is Britain really a nation that turns people into figures of hate because they love unconditionally?...While her brother was alive that love was turned toward convincing him to return home; now he's dead it's turned to convincing the government to return his body home" (Shamsie 258). In Pakistan, when Aneeka throws herself over Parvaiz's body, she speaks to Karamat both as Home Secretary and a future father-in-law. While her plea is ostensibly directed towards the prime minister, she speaks directly to the home secretary:

> In the stories of wicked tyrants, men and women are punished with exile, bodies are kept from their families—their heads impaled on spikes, their corpses thrown into unmarked graves. All these things happen according to the law, but not according to justice. I am here to ask for justice. I appeal to the prime minister: Let me take my brother home. (Shamsie 237).

Even thousands of miles away in Pakistan, in a live stream shown across the world, Aneeka expresses herself within the context of a family, seeking reconciliation between love, justice, and the law.

Passport Trouble

As a physical object *Home Fire* bears similarity to a passport, each section being "stamped" with a name and location; its table of contents promises a cosmopolitan story that spreads across continents. Jesper Gulddal claims that "the passport system" is "productive as a structuring device, thereby establishing an interface between a specific regime of control and a specific mode of novelistic writing" (142). When Aneeka travels to Pakistan to retrieve Parvaiz's remains, she uses her Pakistani passport, originally obtained by Isma so that the Pasha's could more easily visit their extended family. She does so because Parvaiz is repatriated to what the British government deems his "home nation" as an "Overseas Pakistani" in possession of a "National Identity Card" (Shamsie 212). Her journey, first to Istanbul, where Parvaiz is shot, and later Pakistan, where he is buried, provokes the confiscation of her British passport. Karamat thinks to himself:

> There was no need to do anything so dramatic as strip her of her citizenship, a move that could be traced back to personal motivations. She couldn't return to the UK on her Pakistani passport without applying for a visa, which she was certainly welcome to do if she wanted to waste her time and money. As for her British passport, which had been confiscated by the security services when she tried to join her brother in Istanbul, it was neither lost nor stolen nor expired and therefore there were no grounds for her to apply

> for a new one. Let her continue to be British; but let her be British outside Britain. (Shamsie 242-243)

Unlike Parvaiz, who is deemed wholly un-British, Aneeka is disciplined like the "silly girl," Karamat believes her to be (Shamsie 237). Like a parent "grounding" a child, the Home Secretary limits her mobility, forcing her to stay in her own "room," so to speak. Moreover, her own Pakistani family chastises her for her actions: "did you or your bhenchod brother stop to think about those of us with passports that look like toilet paper to the rest of the world who spend our whole lives being so careful we don't give anyone a reason to reject our visa applications?" (Shamsie 220). Their ire is not unfounded. The "strength" of a given passport can determine the limits of an individual's world.

Shamsie couples Aneeka's passport-less immobility with an intensely "local" shift in style. As her characters become rooted to a single spot and die, Weiss suggests that "we can no longer reach the interior world of Eamonn and Aneeka: they are simply '[a] man in a navy-blue shirt' and 'the woman he's come for" (257). The novel's debates over British "us-es" and terrorist "thems" is subsumed by this sudden impersonal, proper-noun-less prose. Told from Karamat's, or the State's perspective, Shamsie's final scene presents a family that is quite literally shattered, only after they are wholly dispossessed as citizens and passport holders.

The final act of *Home Fire* trades globalism for what is immediate, brief, and deeply felt. As Aneeka's mobility is limited, the novel's scope narrows in proportion. In stark contrast to the opening scene poised between Britain and the United States, the novel suddenly contracts at its close, as Aneeka and Eamonn embrace and explode. Who or how a bomb is attached to either of Shamsie's characters remains ambiguous, but her sudden shift in form and tone is striking. Karamat narrates the novel's final sentences: "And run she does, crashing right into him, a

judder of the camera as the man holding it on his shoulder flinches in expectation of a blast. At first the man in the navy shirt struggles, but her arms are around him, she whispers something, and he stops. She rests her cheek against his, he drops his head to kiss her shoulder. For a moment they are two lovers in a park, under an ancient tree, sun-dappled, beautiful, and at peace" (Shamsie 274). Karamat's usually acerbic tone becomes poetic to describe a scene beyond the state.

In taking up *Antigone's* ancient debate between the family's and the state's rights, Kamila Shamsie considers a tangled set of institutions that lay claim on the individual. In her contemporary retelling of the tragedy, Shamsie makes key departures from the conventions of Aristotelian drama, choosing to stage her novel across a larger expanse of time and space. In doing so, she more accurately represents a transnational family and, thus, engages with matters of citizenship in a global, rather than merely national, context. In this global context, Shamsie positions Aneeka and Parvaiz as twins on separate but intertwined aspirational paths towards a welcoming homeland and home state, both of which are ultimately unattainable. Living as a family marred by fundamentalism, the State (through legal, administrative, and surveillant means) problematically unites the nuclear unit, until an act against it destroys them entirely. Shamsie's investment in the family and the State as twin sites of belonging enables her to explore discourses surrounding homegrown terrorism, citizenship policy, and national belonging in an inventive treatment of Sophocles's original.

Conclusion

After 9/11 era, critics and readers alike describe a "historical and experiential abyss, a yawning and possibly unbridgeable gap between before and after" the attacks (Gray 130). This thesis proposes a literary genealogy of Anglophone terrorist fiction that bridges past and present. From the turn of the twentieth century to the present, a hovering terrorist threat has reshaped relationships among families, nations, and global communities. Radical acts of terror transform the very "terms of consciousness" just as they reshape fiction (Gray 129). Before American novelists' experiments in "9/11/post-9-11 fiction," British writers took up the challenge of representing shocking, explosive, and anarchic violence at the turn of the prior century. They also engaged with genres such as the *bildungsroman*, day-long novel, and Greek tragedy in their contemporary terrorist fiction. This thesis compares three British novels, written before and after 2001 and asks (1) whether "terrorist fiction" can be read as its own genre, (2) how radical violence illuminates the interconnections between the global, national, and local (3) if the terrorist character can belong to a family. Rather than merely commenting on radical ideologies, each novel analyzes the interplay between family life and terror and thus produces a commentary on the association between the individual and the state via its institutions. This thesis responds to the claim that terrorist novels' "retreat into domestic detail" is rooted in political, historical, or critical ambivalence (Gray 134). It assumes a position of critical distance from the "9/11 novel" in two crucial ways. Firstly, by centering British works of terrorist fiction, dislocating terrorism from a US-centric paradigm, and secondly, by engaging with its generic predecessors. In this regard, I additionally interpret the terrorist character as an agent of literary and social critique.

Genre is a bridge that grants both writers and readers a sense of continuity between the past and present; it forges bonds between seemingly disparate ideas and concepts. In *The Good Terrorist*, *Saturday*, and *Home Fire*, each novelist manipulates genre to make the shock of terrorism legible to readers. Lessing's, McEwan's, and Shamsie's generic play enables them to move beyond the terrorist taboo by situating the terrorist character within familiar literary territory. In turn, the writers innovate with the forms from which they borrow. In *The Good Terrorist*, Lessing's experiments in narratology draw upon the traditions of dynamite fiction and the *bildungsroman*, genres that prescribe a teleological "sense of an ending" (Moretti 8). Alice Melling's personal and political *bildung* ends in anticlimax, stymieing the readerly desire for narrative culmination. Trading explosivity for austerity at the level of narrative, style, and content, Lessing represents the family and nation in crisis. McEwan's *Saturday* also borrows from genres of the mundane, most notably the modernist day-long novel, which foregrounds what is quotidian, fleeting, and subjective. Rather than liberating and expressing consciousness, modernist aesthetics illustrate a narrowing of worldview, as terrorism eludes Henry Perowne's understanding in *Saturday*. Contemporary fiction that features terrorism also finds ancient resonances in Greek tragedy, as seen in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire.* Shamsie's restaging of *Antigone* demonstrates how terrorism reanimates a seemingly archaic debate between the government's laws and the family's rights. The novelists' reliance on form indicates that terrorist fiction need not be read as its own genre, much less as pre- or post-9/11 writing. Rather, literary experiments in representing terrorism reanimate preexisting genres and orient them towards emergent political questions.

Lessing, McEwan, and Shamsie are intimately concerned with the role of terrorism in rearticulating notions of globality, nationality, and locality. The fixed spatial and temporal

setting of Lessing's and McEwan's novels signals a return to the nation; their novels are written against the grain of an increasingly "global" era. While Alice and her radical comrades oppose global imperialism in *The Good Terrorist*, their revolutionary activities inadvertently target domestic policy. Similarly, McEwan's Perowne retreats further, into his own neighborhood and ultimately into his own mind, when confronted with a foreign terrorist threat. Whereas McEwan's novel is hyper-local, taking place on one day, in one city, through one man, Shamsie's is voiced through multiple characters scattered across the world. While Britain remains *Home Fire's* geographic base, Shamsie's breaking with the classical unities of ancient tragedy enables her to depict a family subject to the competing laws of various states, each of which impose their own sovereignty on the Pashas. Each novel then demonstrates a renegotiation between the national, global, and local concerns stimulated by terrorism's status as a dual domestic and foreign threat.

The *bildungsroman*, day-long novel, and Greek tragedy all emphasize the primacy of familial bonds. The domestic sphere and family life are intimately tied to the state and its institutions, which impose their own logic on what is considered private, or inner. Lessing, McEwan, and Shamsie highlight the integrative and disintegrative effects of policy and governance on the nuclear family. Terror therefore becomes a means of revealing the dynamic interactions between the state and family as constituent parts of a national and global whole. In *The Good Terrorist*, Lessing does indeed indulge in domestic detail, although her representation of domesticity is anything but a retreat from the reality of austerity. Lessing instead asks whether such a home exists and whether it offers a haven in an era of economic volatility. Her characters propose a notably dispassionate critique of housing privatization engendered by the depiction of deplorable conditions in council properties. In *Saturday*, McEwan employs neurological

language to contrast scientific and literary methods of understanding the other, be they a terrorist or a family member. Perowne's failure to read and attend to terror raises the question of interpersonal and medical ethics after September 11th. Finally, *Home Fire* presents citizenship as a binding element that legitimizes familial bonds. The organization of Shamsie's novel, split between alternating narrators situated across continents, illustrates the precarity of transnational kinship. This literary "twin study" probes the topic of homegrown terrorism, not in terms of nativist panic but in terms of citizenship as the birthright of every Briton.

Lauren Berlant maintained that "a situation becomes-genre, finds its genres of event" ("Austerity, Precarity, Awkwardness" 2). Lessing's, McEwan's, and Shamsie's novels belong to a diverse succession of terrorist novels, that "find their genre" in familiar domestic forms. Within these conventional confines, each novelist stages an advance, rather than retreat into domesticity. Bending narratological, aesthetic, and formal norms, *The Good Terrorist, Saturday*, and *Home Fire* cast the terrorist as a critical figure in domestic novel. In these novels, the terrorist reimagines the family and state as strange bedfellows, and ultimately illuminates the very bonds that terrorism seeks to destroy.

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