Wissenschaftliche Beiträge

Anglistik | 8

Nina Liewald

Initiating a Dialogue Through 'the Global Community on your Bookshelf'

Narrative Representations of 'Islamic Fundamentalism' in Selected Novels from the 1990s to the Present

Tectum

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

WISSENSCHAFTLICHE BEITRÄGE AUS DEM TECTUM VERLAG

Reihe Anglistik

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

WISSENSCHAFTLICHE BEITRÄGE
AUS DEM TECTUM VERLAG

Reihe Anglistik

Band 8

Nina Liewald

Initiating a Dialogue Through 'the Global Community on your Bookshelf'

Narrative Representations of 'Islamic Fundamentalism' in Selected Novels from the 1990s to the Present

Tectum Verlag

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Nina Liewald

Initiating a Dialogue Through 'the Global Community on your Bookshelf'. Narrative Representations of 'Islamic Fundamentalism' in Selected Novels from the 1990s to the Present

Wissenschaftliche Beiträge aus dem Tectum Verlag:
Reihe: Anglistik; Bd. 8

© Tectum – ein Verlag in der Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden
2018 Zugl. Diss. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn 2017
eISBN: 978-3-8288-6902-8
(Dieser Titel ist zugleich als gedrucktes Werk unter der ISBN 978-3-8288-4072-0 im Tectum Verlag erschienen.)
ISSN: 1861-6859

Umschlagabbildung: © beeboys | Shutterstock.com

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Besuchen Sie uns im Internet
www.tectum-verlag.de

Bibliografische Informationen der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Angaben sind im Internet über http://dnb.ddb.de abrufbar.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

In Dankbarkeit meinen Eltern

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Danksagung

Viele Menschen haben durch Rat, Austausch und Unterstützung zur Entstehung dieser Arbeit beigetragen.

Allen voran möchte ich meiner Promotionsbetreuerin, Frau Prof. Dr. Marion Gymnich danken. Sie hat mir über die ganze Zeit hinweg mit Rat und Tat zur Seite gestanden. Trotz aller eigenen Arbeitsbelastung hat sie sich stets Zeit für mich genommen und mir äußerst fundiertes und konstruktives Feedback gegeben. Das Gefühl von Verlässlichkeit, Vertrauen und guter Beratung hat in erheblichem Maße dazu beigetragen, dass ich auch über schwierige Phasen hinweg motiviert war meine Arbeit kontinuierlich zu verbessern. Für diese Unterstützung bin ich sehr dankbar!

Ferner möchte ich Herrn Prof. Dr. Uwe Küchler, Frau Prof. Dr. Schmidt-Haberkamp und Herrn Prof. Dr. Uwe Baumann dafür danken, dass sie sich bereitwillig als Mitglieder der Prüfungskommission zur Verfügung gestellt haben. Auch Prof. Küchler hat mir als Zweitgutachter wertvolle Ideen mit auf den Weg gegeben, was dazu beigetragen hat zentrale Fragen besser herauszuarbeiten. Herzlichen Dank dafür!

Mein Dank gebührt ebenso der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) und ihrem Vertrauensdozenten Prof. Dr. Günther Schulz. Die finanzielle und ideelle Unterstützung der KAS hat sehr zum Gelingen des Projektes beigetragen und mir darüber hinaus zahlreiche interessante Blicke über den disziplinären Tellerrand ermöglicht.

Nicht zuletzt danke ich allen guten Geistern hinter den Kulissen. Hier sind vor allen Dingen meine Eltern zu nennen, die mich immer unterstützen und an mich glauben, ganz gleich um welche Vorhaben es geht. Sie haben mir meine Ausbildung ermöglicht und mir stets den Rücken gestärkt. Auch meinem Mann gebührt mein aufrichtiger Dank. Dafür, dass er bereits mehrere Mal für mich umgezogen ist um mir eine berufliche Weiterentwicklung zu ermöglichen, für seelischen Rückhalt, Geduld und Verständnis für meine zahlreichen Wochenenden am Schreibtisch.

Auch der Austausch mit und Support durch Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler anderer Fachdisziplinen – allen voran Dr. Jean-Yves Tano – war sehr wertvoll für mich. Generell gebührt all meinen Fachkolleginnen und Fachkollegen, Freundinnen und Freunden (insbesondere Anja Drautzburg und Miriam Halfmann) mein aufrichtiger Dank. Persönliche Erfolge erwachsen aus einer Motivation, die ohne die unterstützende und inspirierende Kraft der Freundschaft nicht gedeihen kann.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Contents

1) Introduction 1

1.1) Topic and aim of this study 1

1.2) Theoretical framework, methodology and structure 10

1.3) On the choice of works and central terms 13

2) 'Islamic fundamentalism', multiculturalism and identity in a globalised world 17

2.1) Point of departure 17

2.2) Defining 'fundamentalism' 19

2.2.1) Findings of interdisciplinary research projects 21

2.2.2) Family resemblances between different forms of religious fundamentalism 22

2.2.3) Reasons for the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism 25

2.3) Literary studies on the interrelationship between literature and fundamentalism 30

2.4) Major media topics and political debates 32

2.4.1) A 'Clash of Civilizations'? 32

2.4.2) Fundamentalist Islam against Western secularisation? 36

2.5) Migration, integration and identity 40

2.6) Controversial discourses 48

2.6.1) 'Orientalism' and 'Occidentalism' 48

2.6.2) 'Western liberalism' as point of criticism 56

2.6.3) Stereotypes and fears 59

3) Ethical criticism and authorial responsibility 69

3.1) Ethics 69

3.2) Aesthetics 71

3.3) A turn towards the ethical in literature and a "turn to the literary within ethics" 74

3.4) Main tendencies in ethical criticism 80

3.5) Man as "a story-telling animal" 81

3.6) Towards a humanist approach: Martha Nussbaum's *Love's Knowledge* 85

3.7) Towards a political approach: Issues of identity, hybridity and multiculturalism 92

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

3.8) The role of the author 97
3.8.1) The 'intentional fallacy' and author vs. reader-oriented criticism 97
3.8.2) The authors' background: Khadra, Hamid, Kureishi, Faulks 102

4) Towards a synthesis of form and content 107

4.1) Potential functions of literature and ethics in literature 107
4.1.1) Cultural and historical context 107
4.1.2) Literature as 'cultural ecology' 110
4.2) Current trends in narrative theory 115
4.3) Cultural and postcolonial narratology 118
4.4) Genette's typology as a toolbox for a cultural interpretation 122
4.5) Potential functions of selected narrative techniques and stylistic devices 126
4.5.1) Point of view/perspective and multiperspectivity 126
4.5.2) Relationships of contrast and correspondence and the use of irony 134
4.5.3) Directing the readers' sympathy 135

5) Analyses 143

5.1) 'Soldiers of the truth' and 'Fantasy Finance': Sebastian Faulks' *A Week in December* and the different guises of fundamentalism 143
5.1.1) The representation of 'Islamic fundamentalism' 145
5.1.2) Economic libertarianism as fundamentalist phenomenon 157
5.1.3) Directing the sympathy of the reader 164
5.1.4) *A Week in December* in the light of ethical criticism and 'literature as cultural ecology': the power of literature to change our perspective 169
5.2) ... "there must be more to living than swallowing one old book": Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* as a declaration of love for the freedom of the individual 174
5.2.1) Fundamentalism as a bulwark against "drug-inspired debris" and "banal fantasies"? ... 175
5.2.2) "Everybody's free to feel good": Consumerism and the pleasure principle 189
5.2.3) "[T]he world was swirling, its compasses spinning": Identity formation and crisis 199
5.2.4): "[T]here must be more to living than swallowing one old book": *The Black Album* in the light of ethical criticism and literature as 'cultural ecology' 207
5.3) A story of disappointed love and nostalgia: Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the power to subvert stereotypes by engaging the reader 216
5.3.1) Islamic fundamentalism, the subversion of stereotypes and the creation of narrative ambiguity 218
5.3.2) American nostalgia, Christianity and capitalism 229
5.3.3) A "modern-day janissary" who refuses to "focus on the fundamentals": identity and 'fundamentalism' 244

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

5.3.4) *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the light of ethical criticism and literature as cultural ecology ... 258

5.4) The responsibility to transcend hatred: Yasmina Khadra's *The Sirens of Baghdad* as expression of an indelible love for humanity ... 263

5.4.1) "The sirens echoed in the silence of the night": The lure of Islamic fundamentalism ... 264

5.4.2) A war against "dim-witted cowboys": Bedouin traditions vs. U.S. politics ... 281

5.4.3) The protagonist's turn to fundamentalist ideas ... 291

5.4.4) *The Sirens of Baghdad* in the light of ethical criticism and literature as cultural ecology ... 297

6) Outlook: "We seek attachments, however unfortunate" ... 305

6.1) Islamic fundamentalism and its antipoles ... 308

6.2) Explaining fundamentalism: the role of identity in radicalisation processes ... 324

6.3) Ethical criticism and the importance of literature, art and the intellectual ... 328

6.4) Potential functions as culture-critical metadiscourse, counter-discourse or reintegrative interdiscourse ... 332

7) Conclusion ... 337

Bibliography ... 353

Primary sources (cited) ... 353

Primary sources (referred to) ... 353

Secondary sources ... 353

Appendix ... 387

Interview with Sebastian Faulks, London, 14 October 2012 ... 387

Interview with Mohsin Hamid, Bonn – Lahore, 16 August 2012 ... 395

Deutsche Zusammenfassung ... 405

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

1) Introduction

1.1) Topic and aim of this study

> We are from Allah and to Allah we shall return. I am informing all brave Muslims of the world that the author of The Satanic Verses, a text written, edited, and published against Islam, the Prophet of Islam, and the Qur'an, along with all the editors and publishers aware of its contents, are condemned to death. I call on all valiant Muslims wherever they may be in the world to kill them without delay, so that no one will dare insult the sacred beliefs of Muslims henceforth. And whoever is killed in this cause will be a martyr, Allah Willing. Meanwhile if someone has access to the author of the book but is incapable of carrying out the execution, he should inform the people so that [Rushdie] is punished for his actions. Rouhollah al-Mousavi al-Khomeini [1]

The fatwa against Salman Rushdie issued by the Iranian Shiite religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini on 14 February 1989 was an affair with global repercussions that proved the power and enormous explosive potential of fictional literature. Rushdie was sentenced to death, because his novel *The Satanic Verses* was seen as an insult against Islam and the prophet. Never before had a fatwa been issued against a citizen of a non-Muslim, foreign country. Subsequently, numerous book burnings took place around the world, and several people were killed, including a Norwegian and an Italian publisher of the novel, a Japanese translator, and 37 people during the attempted murder of the Turkish translator of the book. Rushdie has since been dependent on police protection and lived in hiding under a false name for several years to protect himself against violent attacks. On the 25th anniversary of the fatwa, in 2014, the Iranian cleric Ahmad Khatami used the occasion to underline the undiminished importance of Rushdie's death and increased the bounty on his head to 3.3 million dollars (cf. de Graaf 16.02.2014: n.p.).

Similar to the Rushdie Affair, the publication of twelve caricatures showing the prophet Mohammed in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005 triggered violent reactions in several countries and led to passionate discussions about religious values and the freedom of art.[2] In January 2015, Islamic fundamentalists forced their

1 Reidy (2014: n.p.)

2 There have been various examples for incidents which clearly aimed at a destruction of forms of art that were regarded as an insult to Islam. In June 2012 riots broke out in Tunisia that left over 100 people wounded and one man dead after Salafists had stormed a gallery in Tunis and destroyed pieces of art that were considered to be 'un-Islamic' (AFP 21.06.2012: n.p.). Salafists also sabotaged music concerts and other events, clearly focusing on culture and art with their attacks (Megdiche Meziou 22.08.2012: n.p.). In February 2013, the Iranian Ambassador banned the Iranian artist Jafar Panahi from attending the Iranian Film Festival in Germany and protested against an award for the Iranian director who was under house arrest for his supposed dissidence (Child n.p.). In 2014, several young female singers in Pakistan and Afghanistan were brutally attacked because of their 'blasphemous' art

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

way into the offices of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris and killed 12 people, because the magazine had repeatedly published cartoons showing the prophet (BBC 07.01.2015: n.p.). In the aftermath, the slogan "Je suis Charlie" became a proverbial chant for the freedom of speech and an expression of solidarity in various countries worldwide. Events like these illustrate the danger artists may have to face as public figures. As developments in the wake of the Arab Spring have furthermore shown, messages with subversive potential can spread across the globe via the internet and social media in seconds, endowed with the potential to spark opposition against both oppressive governments and fundamentalist groups. In the present political climate, critical comments on Islam in literature and other forms of art appear to be more dangerous than ever. Time and again, art has been perceived as an insult, threat or even heresy which has to be banned and destroyed. However, despite threats, writers and artists often defy attempts at intimidation and keep addressing the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism in various ways.

The phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism has become a prominent topic in literature and the arts in the course of the last twenty years. Many authors have pursued the objective to question, undermine or mock fundamentalist ideologies. The study at hand focuses on narrative representations of 'Islamic fundamentalism' and its 'antipoles' in novels from the 1990 s to the present. It features an analysis of contemporary fictional approaches to the complex relationship between 'Islamic fundamentalism' and the economic, political, religious or social systems Muslim fundamentalists criticise. Within this area of tension, the study explores the potential of literature as a special discourse to open a dialogue between different positions and worldviews. Historical evidence shows that creative literature has exerted a large influence on public discussions and has been taken very seriously by fundamentalist Muslim circles – despite its fictional nature and often humorous tone.

Factual as well as fictional literature can fulfil several important functions as vehicle of social, political and religious criticism. According to Stähler and Stierstorfer, fundamentalism "generates fear and intolerance, thus creating a vicious circle of insecurity and deep angst"; and literature or literary interpretations can fulfil two diametrically opposed purposes in this respect: they can function as "instruments of control" or "means of resistance in fundamentalist contexts" (Stähler/Stierstorfer 2009: vii and ix). Stierstorfer holds the opinion that fundamentalism can serve as a stimulus to authors "which can propel their plots and challenge their tolerance and openness", "a problematic of the modern world with which they can engage", or "a challenge or even barrier for creative work for the fear of oppression and persecution" (Stierstorfer 2008: 10-11).

Although there is an extensive amount of literature in Islamic studies or political and social sciences concerned with the topic of Islamic fundamentalism, it is surprising that relatively little research on the interrelationship between literature and these phenomena has been done so far. Interpretations of literature dealing with this topic

and behaviour. The Afghan singer Gulnaz was even killed by her enemies in June 2014 (*Pakistan Today* 19.06.2014: n.p.).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

have mostly been insulated occurrences focusing on a specific author or work, with little consideration for comparative approaches or a more detailed contextualisation. A remarkable exception is the *Project Fundamentalism*, launched by scholars around Klaus Stierstorfer. The four volumes of *Project Fundamentalism* published so far all focus on the relationship between fiction and fundamentalism. *Fundamentalism and Literature in English: An Assessment* (2007), *Literary Encounters of Fundamentalism: A Casebook* (2008), *Writing Fundamentalism* (2009) and *Burning Books: Negotiations between Fundamentalism and Literature* (2012) constitute the corpus of the most notable research project in recent years that specializes in the depiction of fundamentalism in literary texts. The volumes of the *Project Fundamentalism* offer a broad range of diverse, interesting close-reading chapters of high quality, but differ in terms of their focus from the major points of interest of this study. The project neither solely focuses on the portrayal of religious fundamentalism in general or Islamic fundamentalism in particular, nor does it consider the phenomenon as such. While articles in the collection have contributed important insights into certain aspects of the respective authors' work, most of them do not incorporate the broader political or religious background to the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism. Recent volumes on the representation of fundamentalism in literature either adopted a quite large focus, taking into account literary representations of many different forms of fundamentalism or – driven by the necessity to explain and come to terms with the results of 9/11 and other attacks – concentrated on the phenomenon of terrorism (cf. Frank/Gruber eds. 2012). Moreover, most secondary literature on this topic either only focuses on the ethical content (i.e. situating literary texts within an ideological context of Orientalist or Occidentalist discourses) or on an analysis of their narrative form and structural peculiarities.

This study, in contrast, follows an approach which allows an embedding of fictional literature into a broader political context. A closer examination of novels dealing with the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism from an interdisciplinary point of view is beneficial because it widens the scope of English literary studies and pays tribute to the above-mentioned global political dimension of literature dealing with such complex issues. Linking theories from the field of ethical criticism to specific narrative criteria, this study embodies an innovative analytical synthesis of form, content and its ethical dimension, which can provide a balanced approach to the analysis of functions of literary texts. This exploration of potential functions of literature is then integrated into Hubert Zapf's triadic model of 'literature as cultural ecology'. The present study offers a new application of this model, which thus far has mostly been applied to novels in the context of ecocriticism. Following this broad and multifaceted design, the study seeks to forward an understanding of the force and social relevance of literary references to Islamic fundamentalism. The study is concerned with the exchange between diverse literary, religious, political and cultural discourses, and seeks to open a dialogue between different disciplines. It focuses on literary representations of the complex relationship and possible tensions between 'Islamic fundamentalism' and its 'antipoles' in fictional texts by British and postcolonial authors of different cultural backgrounds and denominations. The four works constituting a foundation for

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

this endeavour are Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* (1995), Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Yasmina Khadra's *The Sirens of Baghdad* (2007) and Sebastian Faulks' *A Week in December* (2009).[3] This literary corpus offers a heterogeneous spectrum of literary representations of Islamic fundamentalism.[4] Three central points of interest run through this study like a golden thread, however:

The **first focus of this study** concerns the representations of potential antipoles Islamic fundamentalism might address and the question whether religious fanaticism really tends to be the sole or main target of criticism. To my mind, the constant tensions between fundamentalism and its 'others' or between different forms of fundamentalism are central for the chosen literature in this study. Works on Islamic fundamentalism (that focus on the 'fundamentalist perspective') come in multiple forms regarding content, style and structure. One can assume that many literary representations of Islamic fundamentalism also level criticism against an 'other', which is depicted as an alternative life plan, antagonistic ideological system, or a major catalyst for fundamentalist radicalisation. Central questions deriving from this first hypothesis are the following ones:

1. What is described by the authors as the relevant 'antipole' against which fundamentalists react?
2. What religious, political, military, economic or cultural criticism is addressed at 'Islamic fundamentalism' and its antipoles and how is this criticism reflected in the present literary corpus?
3. Which role does religion play as a reason for fundamentalism?

To identify these tensions and lines of conflict, this study (even though its approach is not empirical) addresses heterogeneous works: The selected authors have diverse eth-

3 With regard to Khadra's novels I will only refer to and cite from the English translations of his works.

4 One point, however, where this heterogeneity is not given in full extent is the fact that the major authors under discussion, with the exception of Tahmima Anam, whose novel *The Good Muslim* will be part of the outlook, are all male. This imbalance is caused by the circumstance that female writers addressing the topic of Islamic fundamentalism seem to be tending more to other genres like autobiography or political writing. *Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here: Untold Stories from the Fight Against Muslim Fundamentalism* (2013) by the Algerian-born international human rights activist and lawyer Karima Bennoune is an impressive example of political writing. The author interviewed 300 people from 30 countries for her book highlighting the struggle of courageous people worldwide against Islamic fundamentalism. Most of these works by female writers are autobiographical and focus on the role and plight of women in Muslim societies and their suffering under practices such as polygamy, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and an absence of political, economic and judicial rights. These practices are often religiously justified but shaped by culture and tradition. Examples for autobiographical accounts from various countries are, for instance, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (1995) by the Moroccan writer Fatima Mernissi, *Do They Hear You When You Cry* by Fauziya Kassindja (with Layli Miller Bashir, 1998) from Togo, *My Forbidden Face. Growing up Under the Taliban: A Young Woman's Story* (2002) by Latifa, *Married by Force* (2006) by Leila, *The Imam's Daughter* (2009) by the Pakistani writer Hannah Shah, *Daughters of Shame* (2009) by Jasvinder Sanghera and *Betrayed* (2014) by the Iraqi Latifa Ali. Their works are as impressive and noteworthy as the novels selected for this literary corpus. However, they belong to genres outside the focus of this study and are therefore not analysed.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

nic, cultural and religious backgrounds and their works feature a broad range of different settings, key aspects as well as structural and narrative elements.

The **second goal of this study** is to analyse the different literary explanations for the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism. In this context, I will explore the role of identity and the depiction of catalysts for fundamentalist radicalisation. Key questions in this context are:

1. Do fictions of migration tend to put a stronger emphasis on issues of identity, alterity and belonging than other texts?[5] Is the conversion to Islamic fundamentalist beliefs connected to a conflict or crisis of identity or to a conflict of political, economic or military interests?
2. Do the texts feature ethnic or religious stereotypes, stock characters and monolithic groups or do they avoid generalisations and subvert essentialist categories?
3. Do the works affirm transcultural and religious elements or do they underline dividing factors?

It is an aim of this study to explore the role ascribed to identity and religion for the radicalisation of fundamentalist characters in relation to the role of political and economic factors. Fictions of migration strongly underline the experience of diaspora and the cultural and religious tensions between Muslim migrants and 'Western' societies. Many of the works in the present literary corpus focus on inter-cultural and inter-religious encounters in a context of migration and were written by authors who themselves are familiar with this ethnic or cultural hybridity. This is significant since, as Sanga notes,

> migration is a displacement or a disruption that affects the total identity of a person. […] Migration thus functions as a metaphor that refers to larger questions of nation, nationalism, nativism, and narration. Metaphorically, migration also forces a reconsideration of the national question within the Western countries that have now to rethink and syncretize their national consciousness. […] I see translation and hybridity as results of migration, as processes that reinscribe individual and collective identity (Sanga 2001: 5-6).

The key terms 'migration', 'identity', 'hybridity' and 'multiculturalism' gain centre stage in the texts at hand – topics which are inherently political and closely connected to the tensions between 'liberal' world views and Islamic fundamentalism this study is focusing on. Furthermore, the fluidity of identity takes a key position in this analysis. As the study will show, identity is generally presented as complex and multifaceted – not reducible to its ethnic or religious components. In contrast, identity is described as a complex web, determined by an individual's biography, self-concept and memories as well as their social interactions and the role of collective identities influenced by gender, class, ethnicity, race, religion or nationality (Sommer 2001: 62-63).

5 Central issues which are addressed by many texts are for instance coming-of-age processes, the longing of the individual for orientation and spiritual guidance, unrequited love or inner conflicts as the result of migration and contradictory cultural demands. The topic of alterity and hybridity in the context of globalisation plays as large a role for the negotiation of religious issues in this study.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The **third major point of interest** of my work consists of an analysis of the potential social and aesthetic literary functions of the texts at hand. Drawing upon Hubert Zapf's triadic model of 'literature as cultural ecology' it is my endeavour to explore in which ways the works may fulfil the three core functions of literature as 'culture-critical metadiscourse', 'counterdiscourse' or 'reintegrative interdiscourse' Zapf identifies (cf. Zapf 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 (a), (b), (c)). First, he claims that literature may be a culture-critical metadiscourse in that it represents deficits and contradictions inherent to dominant systems of power. Second, it may function as imaginative counterdiscourse through which marginalised, neglected or suppressed elements of a culture are expressed. And third, he claims that literature may serve as a reintegrative interdiscourse, since challenging the centre through the integration of marginalised elements causes conflicts, which may ultimately lead to cultural renewal and an integration of segregated discourses (cf. Zapf 2005: 67-71). Zapf observes in his seminal studies on literature as cultural ecology that

> literature is a form of cultural knowledge which stages, in the medium of language and discourse itself, complex dynamical processes of life on the boundary of the culture-nature interaction. It is a 'reintegrative interdiscourse' in which the dichotomies of mind and body, intellect and emotion, culture and nature are overcome, and different areas of knowledge such as politics, history, science, art, philosophy, religion, music, and literature are brought together in ecosemiotic networks of signs that transgress the separation between disciplines and cultures (Zapf 2008: 865).

All works in their diversity seek to open up a dialogue between antagonistic worldviews and thereby show the great potential of fictional literature as a special discourse. As the study will demonstrate, the novel as a medium is very suitable for the representation and negotiation of ethical questions and the promotion of empathy and compassion towards people of other cultures and creeds. The question however remains if the works in the present literary corpus really promote the view of a possible reintegration of antagonistic discourses or if these systems remain irreconcilable in the end. Literary involvements with fundamentalism necessarily touch upon a variety of topics and disciplines. My endeavour is to analyse in which ways fictional literature might bring different discourses and worldviews together and whether they focus on the frictions or commonalities between these discourses.

The study is based on several presuppositions and reflexions on potential functions of literature as cultural ecology.

A **first presupposition** determining this study is my understanding of literary studies as cultural studies:

> From the point of view of cultural studies approaches, the literary text is not to be conceived as outside, above, or below, but rather as an integral part of its cultural context. Literary narrative can not only articulate collective experience, values, and concepts of identity, but also restructure the symbolic order of a given cultural formation. Narrative forms are 'forms of expression' in specific cultures; they are solutions (or 'answers') provided to challenges (or 'questions') arising in specific cultural contexts. Like all properties of culture, narrative forms are neither trans-historical nor trans-cultural entities, but mutable forms of human expression (Erll 2005: 91).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The study strives to forward an understanding of how textual elements or internal functions work towards an understanding of these texts and how they contribute to the potential external functions of each text. Connected to an understanding of literature as a part of cultural studies is the belief in the necessity of a context-oriented approach and the potential of literature to recontextualise and reinvent cultural knowledge. Hallet, for instance, underlines the impossibility of a 'close reading' without a 'wide reading' in the sense of an inclusion of a text's cultural context (cf. Hallet 2006: 64). As Neumann and Nünning accentuate, these approaches examine and integrate the intra-, inter- and extratextual contexts of literature and take into account more than just one dimension of culture, stressing the material, mental and social dimension of literature (Neumann/Nünning 2006: 12). A context-oriented approach implies an interest in the mental and social dimension of texts, in a text's relationship to historically biased cultural knowledge, its contexts of reception, possible connections between textinternal elements and potential literary functions, as well as a focus on intertextual, intermedial and interdiscursive elements (Neumann/Nünning 2006: 22). Neumann points out that literature is never only a *representation* of existing cultural knowledge but that it produces *new* cultural knowledge. Literature uses different forms of expression and puts what is known into new contexts, which is then received by an audience that interprets the information according to their own specific cultural and historical background (Neumann 2006 (a): 48-49).

A second presupposition influencing this work is the conviction that literary representations of political topics are so important because they also serve to shape cultural memory and collective identity. As Sommer observes, cultural studies – and thus also literature – is closely linked to cultural memory, the uses of the past to shape the present, and the (conscious or subconscious) formation of collective identities (cf. Sommer 2007: 165). Thus, it is of special interest how the selected novels deal with these topics. Which past events do they conjure up and with which results? From which perspective do authors of fiction describe major political events? And how do we, as literary scholars, deal with the challenge that "English studies are not an empirical discipline and thus never concerned with cultural processes *as such*, but a textual science concerned with the analysis and interpretation of *representations* of those processes" (Sommer 2007: 179-180)? Novels do not contain any mimetic representation of reality. However, the authors discussed in the present study seize on real events, comment on and evaluate the reality they perceive and sometimes also strive to contribute something to changing this reality.

The third presupposition guiding this study relates to the conviction that literary works can unfold a strong ethical potential and change readers' views and opinions. To do justice to the ethical dimension of the present literary corpus, I draw on works by the American moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum. She focuses on the interrelationship between ethics and aesthetics and embraces a humanist position. Nussbaum regards the novel as a particularly suitable medium for discussing moral questions and claims that

> [t]he novel as form is deeply involved in the presentation of […] conflicts, which spring straight from its commitment to non-commensurating description and to the ethical rele-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> vance of circumstances. […I]t is only by following a pattern of choice and commitment over a relatively long time – as the novel characteristically does – that we can understand the pervasiveness of such conflicts in human efforts to live well (Nussbaum 1992: 37).

With the help of novels as a sort of 'case-study', the individual may begin to grasp how dependent on context, personality, personal (hi)story, surprising events and particularities ethical decisions generally are. Nussbaum does not deem rationality to be a sufficient explanation for human motivations and firmly believes in the "ethical value of the emotions" (Nussbaum 1992: 40). Novels typically appeal to the emotions, which she considers to be vital because emotion is closely linked to belief, and a change in one of the two basic parameters may lead to a modification of the other. Despite the subjectivity of emotions, Nussbaum holds that they "embody some of our most deeply rooted views about what has importance, views that could easily be lost from sight during sophisticated intellectual reasoning" (Nussbaum 1992: 42). Thus, novels may use this form of experiential learning and the link between emotions and beliefs or value judgments to unfold their full ethical potential.

> So literature is an extension of life not only horizontally, bringing the reader into contact with events or locations or persons or problems he or she has not otherwise met, but also, so to speak, vertically, giving the reader experience that is deeper, sharper, and more precise than much of what takes place in life. […] Since the story is not ours, we do not find ourselves caught up in the 'vulgar heat' of our personal jealousies or angers or in the sometimes blinding violence of our loves (Nussbaum 1992: 48).

Nussbaum's holistic approach to literature is also shared by Jürgen Link, which leads to the **fourth presupposition** of this study: the potential function of literature as interdiscourse which negotiates other discourses. In his seminal article "Literaturanalyse als Interdiskursanalyse", Link develops a model of literature which underscores the potential of literature to integrate diverse specialised discourses and stage the negotiations and tensions between these discourses. In his theoretical framework, Link distinguishes three different axes that influence literature. The first one is what Link calls the 'axis of stratification', which refers to the socio-political milieu which produces the discourses that are negotiated in a literary work. These milieus represent diverse, often antagonistic world-views and interests and are characterised by different approaches to history, politics and value systems. (Link 1988: 285). The second major point of interest in Link's theory is the 'axis of the division of labour'. Here, it is of importance which cultural elements and segregated discourses are negotiated or give meaning to a literary work. Link lists subdiscourses such as non-industrial economy, industrial economy, industrial technology, military, justice, religion, etc. (Link 1988: 298-299) as exemplary specialised discourses that can be interdiscursively integrated by literary means. Because specialised vocabularies are not necessarily suitable to achieve a dialogue, there is also the less institutionalised and specialised realm of common knowledge which is much more selective and characterised by a vast number of different clichés, stereotypes and associations (Link 1989: 288-289). The (third) axis of 'discourse-specialisation' describes different blocks of specialised discourses belonging to a specific topic area, such as natural sciences or the humanities. All of these influential dimensions may be picked up and commented on in literature. Their

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

interplay can, according to Link, produce an interdiscourse that negotiates diverse, often antagonistic and ambivalent positions and creates a complex web of collective symbols whose connotations and evaluation as positive or negative may vary from discourse to discourse (cf. Link 1988: 286). Collective symbols are typically ambivalent and closely connected to specialised discourses and the stereotypes and presuppositions related to them. Literature can, however, achieve a reintegration of these specialised discourses (Link 1988: 299-301).

A phenomenon like 'Islamic fundamentalism' feeds on diverse specialised discourses and is discussed in politics, history, theology, comparative religion, Islamic studies, social sciences and psychology, to mention but a few fields. Due to the fact that the phenomena which are presented in the novels selected for this study as sources of or antagonistic forces and 'others' to 'Islamic fundamentalism' are at least equally diverse, my literary corpus also includes references to economic subdiscourses. Even though I cannot do justice to all of these fields, it will still be valuable to analyse in which ways they are shown to interact with or contradict each other in literary representations. Furthermore, the literary corpus reflects a wide range of social stratification, since the characters chosen in the works at hand represent diverse social milieus and points of view that range from hegemonic to anti-hegemonic positions. They feature the destitute, uneducated and radicalised Afghani orphan as well as the wealthy and successful London hedge fund manager and many positions in between. This important background of stratification naturally influences the conception and connotation of collective symbols, and characters often symbolically become representatives of group-specific social problems and views. All novels function to show the tensions between these different views and subdiscourses and serve to reintegrate them on a meta-level by connecting specialised discourses, thereby raising ethical questions that are of more general concern.

The **fifth and very central presupposition** of this study rests upon Hubert Zapf's notion of 'literature as cultural ecology', which serves as central benchmark for an assessment of the core functions of the literary corpus. Zapf regards literary works as 'imaginative biotopes' in which different discourses can be negotiated, and culturally suppressed elements can be voiced:

> In the light of such affinities between the discourses of literature and ecology, literary works of art are two things at the same time: they are laboratories of human self-exploration, in which, as it were, basic assumptions of prevailing systems of cultural self-interpretation are 'tested' in the medium of simulated life processes; and they are imaginative biotopes in which the dimensions and energies of life neglected by these systems find the symbolic space to develop and express themselves (Zapf 2007: 155).

Gymnich demonstrates that works in the realm of postcolonial literature are virtually predestined to function as culture-critical metadiscourse and imaginative counterdiscourse, which is achieved by an interplay of form and function that can subvert dominant essentialist systems (Gymnich 2008: 105-114). Social and aesthetic potential functions are closely linked and both contribute to an assessment of a text in terms of 'cultural ecology'. According to Gymnich, even in cases where a reintegrative interdiscourse is not possible on the story-level due to an insuperability of differences

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

and conflicts, the idea of reintegration can still be expressed by other means, such as the use of hybrid or transcultural characters that transcend binary oppositions, stylistic strategies that contain a transgressive potential, or the modification of genre conventions which may foster a dialogue between different cultural traditions (Gymnich 2008: 114-116). The four analytical chapters feature an engagement with the question of whether the texts in the literary corpus – on the level of content as well as structure – can be integrated into Zapf's model and how this can be linked to ethical questions. This study does not focus on postcolonial literature in the narrow sense, but strategies of 'writing back' and 'rewriting' are not confined to the postcolonial context (Gymnich 2006: 83). As the study will show, culture-critical and counter-discursive elements lie at the heart of this literary corpus even though the objects of criticism vary widely. In this context, the role of literature and the intellectual, again, gain centre stage.

1.2) Theoretical framework, methodology and structure

This study does not and cannot aim at an extensive examination of the manifold religious and political facets of Islamic fundamentalism. Instead, it clearly positions itself within the domain of literary and cultural studies. As a result, I do not assume a mimetic relationship between the phenomena which are addressed in the present literary corpus and real-world movements. Nevertheless, historical events which form the background and frame of reference for the works under discussion are inextricably linked to religious and political phenomena. This necessitates a working definition of some central terms as a starting point for the study of literary works.

Chapter two is therefore entitled "'Islamic fundamentalism', multiculturalism and identity in a globalised world" and is meant to position the study within a larger political context. The chapter starts with an exploration of relevant discourses in political science and public opinion, which are important to understand the phenomena described in the major works at hand. This provides a basis for an analysis of the ways in which religious, political and cultural influences are shown to mingle, intersect or contradict each other in the present literary corpus. The chapter is based on the findings of the influential *Fundamentalism Project*, an international, interdisciplinary research project (1987-1995) directed by Martin Marty and Scott Appleby and sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.[6] In addition to a brief description of the major characteristics of Islamic fundamentalist movements, I give an overview of approaches to describing the reasons and catalysts for the emergence of religious fundamentalist movements in general and the rise of Islamic fundamental-

6 The collection still is the most comprehensive, international and long-term scientific project on the topic. Later studies draw on the definitions developed by this project, are much more limited in scope and mostly represent conglomerates of independent case studies which are too specialised to be beneficial for the present study. Moreover, the project represents the most noteworthy attempt to define the phenomenon of fundamentalism and its ideological characteristics and to identify major commonalities between different forms of fundamentalism.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ism in particular. Furthermore, the chapter addresses the interrelationship between literature and fundamentalism and explores how the topic is discussed in literary studies. Since they are issues that are constantly referred to in discussions about the relationship between Islam and supposedly liberal, 'Western' countries, the chapter also features a brief overview over major political debates concerning a supposed 'clash of cultures' or the 'secularisation of the West and desecularisation of the Muslim world'. As mentioned before, the context of migration is central for some of the works. Thus, I include empirical data from the *PEW Global Attitudes Project*, a section of the Washington-based fact-tank *PEW Research Center*, which sheds light on issues of migration, integration and identity in several Muslim and non-Muslim countries around the world. The findings illuminate common stereotypes and prejudices, which exist in 'Western' countries with respect to Muslims and vice versa – stereotypes that might be reproduced or subverted by the works at hand. In line with this concern, theories on the topic of 'Orientalism' and 'Occidentalism' help to evaluate potential stereotypes of 'Islam' or 'the West' within a broader framework of literary discourses.

Chapter three deals with central approaches to ethical criticism and authorial responsibility. Theories from the field of ethical criticism form the basis for combining the analysis of literary form and content on a meta-level. The study proceeds from the assumption that literature negotiates and reflects value judgements and that important links between form and content can be established. I explore how moral value judgements can be constructed or dismantled by means of content, style and structure or interactions between ethics and aesthetics. In a second step this can be linked to theoretical concepts of alterity, hybridity and the discourses focusing on the chances and challenges of multiculturalism. Highlighting some of the major developments in ethical criticism during the last decades, I outline which aspects of pragmatist and rhetorical as well as political approaches to ethics are particularly relevant to this study. My work is mainly indebted to the humanist approach by the American moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum as well as to political approaches focusing on issues of identity and alterity, including the one by Stuart Hall. Nussbaum's work fits the purpose of this study very well, because the author believes in the function of literature as a powerful medium to create empathy, facilitate change and negotiate oppositional positions. Furthermore, she describes concrete stylistic criteria deemed to be important for the negotiation of ethics in literature, which I develop in the chapter on narrative theory and pay attention to in my analyses. Political approaches to ethics are vital for the analysis because they help to examine power structures, hierarchies, antagonisms and the role of individual identity in the literary corpus. Stuart Hall's concept of cross-cutting identities is particularly suitable to shed light on identity formation in fictions of migration. As the processes of defining self and 'other' are central aspects of radicalisation processes described in the works at hand, identity concepts are important for this study. Since all authors have openly declared political opinions and adopted an ethical stance towards the topic they are writing about, I furthermore give a brief insight into their position. As already mentioned, I am interested in the potential functions of the literary corpus that raises so many intrinsically ethical questions. For all literary analyses I draw on Zapf's model of literature as cul-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

tural ecology and his claim that texts can function as culture-critical metadiscourse, imaginative counter-discourse or reintegrative interdiscourse.

Chapter four focuses on potential functions of literature and central trends in narrative theory. The narrative form, structure and style of each text also determine how different forms of fundamentalism are represented. The fourth chapter consequently focuses on the narratological methodology used for the detailed literary analyses in chapter five. Using Gérard Genette's well-established narrative categories as a basis, I concentrate on the choice of voice, perspective and multiperspectivity. For the analysis of the impact the form of a novel may have on its content, I am interested in how the construction of and relations between narrators and focalisers influence our perception of the values they represent. These details are important in order to find out how the empathy or even sympathy of the reader is directed by structural features and which consequences this might have for the potential functions of a text. The construction of characters and of contrasts and correspondences between them is as central for my analyses as the representation of consciousness and the use of language. It is of central importance whether we get only one or more perspectives on a topic and whose point of view we get. In this regard, I further analyse whether plots feature a high degree of eventfulness (which often coincides with heightened emotionality) or mainly focus on the depiction of religious and ideological arguments, to mention but a few aspects. All of these topics are picked up in four major analytical chapters and revisited in a longer final outlook chapter and the conclusion.

Chapter five features readings of a few selected novels which draw upon the theoretical and methodological considerations developed in chapters two to four and serve to illuminate the three central concerns of this study.

The outlook in **chapter six** is supposed to give insight into some further literary approaches to this topic concerning form, style and content to stress the multifacetedness of narrative representations of Islamic fundamentalism. Furthermore, it will include a work by a female author. As has been outlined, novels by female authors on the topic of Islamic fundamentalism are rather rare, even though we find a variety of works by women writers in other genres, such as political writing or autobiography. The outlook will thus serve to broaden and diversify the literary corpus, in order to work out which elements are rather author-specific and where we can detect common tendencies.

In order to analyse the works in a broad political context, I conducted interviews with Sebastian Faulks and Mohsin Hamid which are used as reference throughout the study and can be found in full in the **appendix**. Since all four authors in the focus of this study are interested in politics and have repeatedly, in various non-fictional texts as well as in interviews and articles, commented on the phenomenon of 'Islamic fundamentalism' and their ethical stance towards essentialisms, I consider it justified to incorporate their views in an interpretation of their works. These comments are included – certainly not as *the* key to understanding the texts but as valuable background information and *one* possible access to the interpretation of the literary corpus.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

1.3) On the choice of works and central terms

This study does not confine itself to identifying common denominators of works which show a similar content and tenor. On the contrary, the chosen approach is supposed to encourage communication between culturally and religiously diverse voices and to undermine dichotomies: The structure of my work seeks to serve as much to open up a dialogue between different positions as the works in the present literary corpus do themselves. The choice to focus on works whose writers have very different cultural and regional backgrounds makes a comparative analysis more demanding but also more rewarding in that it treats the depiction of Islamic fundamentalism as the global and interdisciplinary phenomenon it really is. Kureishi's and Hamid's works focus on the topic of migration, whereas migration only plays a minor role in Faulks' novel and none in Khadra's. However, each of the authors mentioned above is what Frawley calls a "global novelist [...] whose work not only goes beyond the boundaries of their 'home' nation, but who is also concerned with global processes of war and migration, and with globalization generally [...writing] for a global – and not a narrowly local – audience" (Frawley 2013: 442).

Furthermore, some authors have personal experience with the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism and others do not. While Sebastian Faulks (Christian and British born and bred) engages with the phenomenon from an outsider's view, Yasmina Khadra (whose real name was uncovered to be Mohammed Moullessehoul in 2000) used to be a Muslim Algerian army officer who actually fought in a war against Islamic fundamentalists. Kureishi and Hamid occupy a middle-ground between these two examples, the first having grown up in London as a child of a British mother and a Pakistani father and the second a Muslim born in Pakistan but educated in England and the United States and living between different countries. It is of interest to me how these authors with their different cultural heritage, experience and intensity of religious belief depict the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism and its supposed roots, causes and catalysts.

The situatedness of each author in their own historical, national, ethnic, religious and personal background necessarily induces a certain limitation of viewpoints. Since all authors share a strong anti-fundamentalist attitude, however, this study cannot show a realistic 'inside perspective' of Islamic fundamentalism. The authors can invite us to imagine this perspective by letting us see the world through the eyes of fictional members of Islamic fundamentalist movements. However, they do not share these views and this attitude influences the works at hand. In his study *Islam and Postcolonial Narrative* Erickson observes:

> While their [the Muslim writers he focuses on in his study] narratives vary too greatly to suggest a single model of oppositional writing, the tendency and emphasis of their writings give evidence of a common aim – to refute totalizing, universalizing systems and reductive processes, in whatever society or form they may be found, which threaten to marginalize individual and minoritarian dissent, and to create a dominant cultural discourse that is univocal (Erickson 1998: 1).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

I argue that this claim also holds true for the works in the present literary corpus – regardless of the authors' background. Likewise, my own personal circumstances – as a white, female German, who cherishes her Muslim friends but grew up as a Christian in a rather secular environment in Europe – influence my perception of Islamic fundamentalism.

The cultural and religious background of the authors also influences the terminology used for their literary works. Debates about the right term for the kind of literature that is exemplified by Kureishi's or Hamid's works are ongoing and controversial. As Sommer's insightful monograph illustrates, a variety of terms has been applied in this context, such as 'immigrant fiction', 'black British literature', 'trans-cultural British literature', 'fictions of (in)betweenness' or 'black fiction' (Sommer 2001: 3). Sommer is right in pointing to the inadequacy of political as well as sociological terms as either presupposing a homogeneity that does not exist ('What is black?' etc.[7]) or necessitating endless sub-differentiations (cf. Sommer 2001: 4). As a consequence, I follow Sommer's suggestion to use the term *fictions of migration* for trans- and multicultural literature. He outlines that 'migration', in this context, also refers to a general oscillation – not only geographically – but also between different cultural poles, different immigrant generations, as well as between different minorities or between minorities and the majority culture (cf. Sommer 2001: 6). Furthermore, I deem the term to be very productive since it focuses not on the writer, but on the topic. Accordingly, all novels which address intercultural topics and the consequences of migration can be called 'fictions of migration'– no matter whether the author shares a background of migration or not (cf. Sommer 2001: 7). As Stein notes, "the diaspora condition can comprise many generations [...since] the rift between belonging and residence is culturally mediated, communally remembered, and potentially reconstructed from one generation to the next" (Stein 2004: 63). The nexus of migration and diaspora is particularly important for an analysis of the works by Kureishi, Hamid and Aslam (an author I am going to include in the final chapter). What is more, inter-generational conflicts play a very large role in Faulks' *A Week in December* and Updike's *Terrorist*, which will also be part of an extensive outlook.

Beyond issues of nationality and ethnicity, the Muslim background of some of the authors is an important issue, which has led to other attempts at categorisation. Recently, works by authors such as Hamid, Aslam or Anam have been subsumed under the label 'Muslim writing'. This, however, is a difficult and diffuse category. Does it only refer to a cultural Muslim background? Does it mean that an author comes from a Muslim country, or does it presuppose that this author is also a believing and observing Muslim? As already indicated, the authors of the texts at hand are diverse with respect to these questions, just as Muslim belief is exercised in totally different ways in different schools, countries and regions of the world and even within one community and family. Yaqin for instance describes diasporic Muslim identity as "transnational,

7 Most key terms in this field are very elusive and nearly impossible to define as a variety of volumes including Fenton (2010) have shown. For an insightful discussion of the label 'Black British Literature' and what it entails see Stein (2004).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

deeply riven by the experiences of race, class and ethnicity" (Yaqin 2012: 103). She explains that something like a common 'Muslim' identity often refers to a joint feeling of being an 'other' or outsider who is stigmatised by 'the West' rather than to a feeling of shared belief. The reinforcement of Muslim heritage thus may "not represent an increasing faith-based spirituality but instead utilizes Islam as a powerful ideological tool of resistance in a climate of continuing colonial and neo-colonial policies against Muslim societies, accompanied by an intolerant atmosphere in the new country of residence" (Yaqin 2012: 103).

The political phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism has been widely debated in recent years. In this regard, the discussed authors and the reception of their works had a considerable impact and exemplify the force of literature. The ethical impact of literature and the role of intellectuals is also a topic directly addressed by most works at hand and also by some of the authors. In this context, Yasmina Khadra describes literature as a powerful and important tool that may become dangerous for an author who uses it to expose inconvenient grievances, but that may also be an anchor in his life: "Moi, je dois aux livres de m'avoir sauvé de la résignation. J'ai écrit six livres pendant la guerre, qui m'ont permis de transcender mes angoisses, de surmonter l'horreur, de rester lucide, de ne pas devenir un tueur" (Douin 2001: n.p).[8]

8 I owe it to books that they saved me from resignation. I wrote six books during the war, which allowed me to transcend my anxieties, to overcome the horror, to retain a lucid perspective, not to become a killer (my translation).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

2) 'Islamic fundamentalism', multiculturalism and identity in a globalised world

2.1) Point of departure

Given the fact that this study does not belong to the research fields of Islamic studies or political science, I cannot provide a comprehensive overview over the current state of research on the phenomenon of 'Islamic fundamentalism' in these disciplines. However, the fact that all works draw on specific historical and political backgrounds necessitates a working definition of some central terms and an awareness of current controversies that provide a larger framework for my analyses.

Modern Islamic fundamentalist movements emerged in the 1920 s and 1930 s. Looking at the reasons for their emergence, we can detect important parallels with the current rise of Islamic fundamentalist groups. The early movements were a reaction to radical changes within nation states, foreign intrusion and a perceived deterioration of moral standards. Notably, religious and political armed conflicts (such as the conflict in Israel/Palestine), secular reforms within states and a perceived wilful neglect of national, regional or religious identities were regarded as central catalysts for the emergence of Islamic fundamentalist groups. The radicalisation of these groups during the 1990 s and the spread of global terrorist networks increasingly alarmed Western democracies. The hidden threats of terrorist networks and the associated asymmetrical conflicts around the globe upset many societies and fundamentally changed warfare strategies. Furthermore, the phenomenon of 'home-grown' terrorism that found its terrible culmination in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 and the so-called 'London bombings' in 2005, renewed attention to aspects of ethnicity, religion and violence in multicultural 'Western' societies (cf. Eckstein et al. 2008: 15). Moreover, the destruction of authoritarian regimes in many Middle Eastern and North African countries during the so-called 'Arab Spring', beginning in December 2010 and lasting till the present day, exacerbated anxieties in various countries. Many people around the world were concerned about the uncertain role of Islamist movements in the uprisings and with foresight feared a gain in power of fundamentalist currents in the emerging governments. The conquest of larger territories by groups such as the Islamic State not only involves the violation of human rights but also the destruction of historical cultural assets, which again points to the difficult relationship between fundamentalism and art.

'Fundamentalism' as well as 'liberalism' – as one of the ideas fundamentalism seems to reject – are bold terms which encompass a large variety of different ideological connotations, historical manifestations and movements. Though they have become commonplace in the media in recent decades and have mostly been used quite

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

provocatively, both terms have been interpreted in different ways and seem to be so elusive that one runs the risk of getting tangled up in endless discussions about definitions, political correctness and the risk of oversimplification. On closer consideration, a phenomenon such as Islamic fundamentalism requires a case-by-case approach[9], which cannot be the aim of this study, though. Being aware of this inevitable difficulty, I will try to outline the basic connotations of these terms and give an overview of central controversies surrounding the relationship between religion and culture, Islam and 'Western-style modernity'. A large variety of theories and contradictory opinions exists regarding the definition of fundamentalism in general and Islamic fundamentalism in particular. In this study, I will mainly draw upon the findings of *The Fundamentalism Project*. This interdisciplinary, international research project, directed by Martin Marty and Scott Appleby and sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences from 1987 to 1995, is, despite its completion in the mid-1990 s, still a valuable starting point for defining the term. It stands out due to its broad focus on parallels and differences between various religious fundamentalisms from all over the world, the in-depth research for more than eight years and the involvement of two hundred international scholars from different cultures, religions and disciplines. The findings of this seminal research project give some indication of family resemblances of diverse fundamentalisms and the reasons for the emergence of Islamic fundamentalist groups. Having outlined the basic implications of the term 'Islamic fundamentalism', it is of interest thereafter how the field of literary studies deals with the depiction of fundamentalism in literature. I will consult the volumes edited by Klaus Stierstorfer's *Project Fundamentalism* to approach an answer to this question.

Pertinent to this study are also subjects of controversial public discussion, such as Samuel Huntington's theory of a 'clash of civilizations', assumptions about the secularisation of the West and a supposed desecularisation of Muslim societies and the potential interrelationship between fundamentalism and the downturns of globalisation.[10] In a third subchapter I will briefly summarize some of these political debates forming the background of my literary corpus. In this context, it will be interesting to see if some of the selected novels indirectly comment on these discourses.

9 Due to this reason, to go into detail concerning different currents within Islamic fundamentalism would take us too far afield. Olivier Roy, for instance, makes an ideological distinction between Islamism/ political Islam (which has as its main aim the founding of an Islamic state), neo-fundamentalism (which marks a social and cultural bottom-up approach that first and foremost strives to enforce compliance with Sharia law) and jihadism (building up transnational terrorist networks to fight the enemy with violent means) (cf. Roy 2006). Every categorization can, however, only offer reference points but does not enable clear distinctions due to regional differences and differing degrees of radicalism, which are not always easy to determine. Moreover, further differentiations have to be made within each current. With regard to political Islam, for instance, we can distinguish between integrationist groups which strive to achieve their political aims through an active participation in the respective political systems and isolationist groups which proclaim the necessity of regime change and reject the coexistence of different value-systems (Wentker 2008: 41).

10 For a multifaceted introduction to the important role of religion in our age and a description of the different reactions of religious movements to secularisation and globalisation, consult *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (Turner 2010).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The above-mentioned globalisation processes are particularly visible through world-wide migration, which is not a genuinely modern phenomenon but is still perceived as a great challenge. In that regard, I will use a fourth subchapter to briefly outline the situation concerning secularisation, religiosity, integration and multiculturalism in Great Britain and the United States as countries which serve as a setting for three of the four novels in my major analyses. Furthermore, both countries are or have been the home of the majority of the selected authors and are thus part of their horizon of experience. What is more, it will be worthwhile to have a look at the political, economic and social catalysts of Islamic fundamentalist radicalisation in order to evaluate which conflicts are addressed by the literary corpus and how they relate to the prominent topic of individual and communal identity.

My fifth major subchapter is dedicated to "the perception of 'the other'" and concerns itself with issues of identity, alterity and potential stereotypes and misconceptions. Its aim is to explore how the depiction of 'Islam' and 'Western liberalism' may be influenced by concepts of 'Orientalism' and 'Occidentalism'. There are certain characteristics attributed to 'the West' that are criticized by Islamic fundamentalist movements and partly caricatured by the novels at hand. Three projects of the Washington based and non-partisan *Pew Research Centre* fact tank, established in 2004, provide useful statistical data concerning public attitudes on issues central to this study.[11] The poll ratings examine the interrelationship between predominantly Muslim and Western countries and point out prejudices that might be perpetuated or undermined by the literary corpus.

2.2) Defining 'fundamentalism'

Islamic fundamentalism is an elusive and highly controversial concept. Thus far, there is neither a consensus about the correct names for various factions of Islam nor about clear distinctions between different groups. There is no unified form of Islam. Due to the lack of a comprehensive body of legislation and rules as well as of an authority that has the definitive privilege of interpretation, the shape of Islamic practice varies, depending on historical and economic conditions, governmental forms, regional specifics, and different religious schools. In addition to the major split between Sunnis (who constitute approximately 90% of all Muslim people worldwide) and Shiites there are many further internal divisions. Muslim groups differ in their opinion on central questions concerning the role of a government and political parties, the power of an Islamic judicial system, the means through which a Muslim *Ummah* (nation/ community) can be achieved and the interpretation of the Koran and other sources, to

11 The surveys conducted by *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, *The Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press*, as well as *The Pew Research Global Attitudes Project* give interesting insights into prejudices and values in countries all over the world. The polls cover a broad range of subjects and questions, shedding light on public attitudes towards religion, politics and prevalent resentments and fears.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

mention but a few controversial points.[12] It is thus beneficial to look at the concept of 'fundamentalism' and its roots, implications and core characteristics, independent of its religious manifestations.[13]

Consulting *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* as a starting point, one can find the following definition:

> **fundamentalism**, conservative movement in American Protestantism arising out of the millenarian movement of the 19th century and emphasizing as fundamental to Christianity the literal interpretation and absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures, the imminent and physical Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Birth, Resurrection, and Atonement. Fundamentalism came into its own in the early 20th century in opposition to modernist tendencies in American religious and secular life. […] The millenarian movement began to grow within America when confidence in America's destiny began to wane among some Protestant leaders, faced as they were with labour unrest, social discontent, and the rising tide of Roman Catholic immigration. […] At the end of World War I, the millenarians, alarmed by the growth of liberalism and disturbed over what they conceived to be social degeneracy, held a number of conferences in New York City and Philadelphia that were successful enough to encourage the formation of a larger and more comprehensive organization in 1919, the World's Christian Fundamentals Association […] (*The Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 5 2005: 51).

This short paragraph makes us aware of several conditions, which should be kept in mind for the subsequent analysis:

1. Fundamentalism originally used to be a Christian phenomenon. However, at least since the end of the 20th century, religious fundamentalisms can be found in nearly all world religions (cf. Tibi 2000: 160, Emerson/Hartman 2006: 128). Thus, the phenomenon is far from being endemic to Islam, as some media portrayals in recent years might have suggested.
2. Christian fundamentalism emerged in opposition to modernist tendencies. Modernisation, industrialisation, societal change and a supposed moral decay have often in history been triggers for radicalisation. Most scholars agree that fundamentalism in some way reacts to modernisation processes, which are perceived as threatening and thus promote the subordination under an inerrant, apocalyptically-laden religious revelation (cf. Fischer 2009: 82). Radical Islamic movements also react to economic, political and social problems.

12 For interesting insights into the commonalities and differences among Muslim beliefs and practices in different societies cf. the two latest comprehensive surveys of the Pew Research Center. The report "The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity" (2012(2)) focuses on beliefs, practices and religious identity. The survey "The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society" (2013 (2)) presents data samples from 39 (predominantly Muslim) countries and examines attitudes towards Sharia law, democracy, morality, religious extremism, women, science, popular culture and interfaith relations, to mention but a few aspects.

13 For useful general introductions to the topic of religious fundamentalism in general and Islamic fundamentalism in particular consult *Understanding Fundamentalism. Christian, Islamic and Jewish Movements* by Richard Antoun (2008), *Fundamentalism. A Very Short Introduction* by Malise Ruthven (2007), *Islamic Fundamentalism. The Story of Islamist Movements* by Youssef Choueiri (3rd ed., 2010) and *Islamic Fundamentalism. An Introduction* by Lawrence Davidson (2013).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

3. 'Liberalism' in its multiple forms seems to be perceived as a threat by fundamentalist circles. Thus, it will be of interest how the novels address the interrelationship between different forms of essentialism and more liberal views and lifestyles.

On the whole, the current emergence and thriving of New Religious Movements all over the world and Christian Evangelicalism (especially in the US) show that fundamentalism is not peculiar to Islam but can be found on a global scale. While the long-established institutionalised religions seem to be losing their appeal in modern secularised states, fundamentalist currents are thriving since "[f]undamentalism is the religious form that is most suited to globalization, because it accepts its own deculturation and makes it the instrument of its claim to universality" (Roy 2010: 5). While many people are increasingly in search of stability and certainty in our globalised world, religious fundamentalisms not only offer the comfort of providing a simple truth and straightforward rules but also summon people to condone cultural, ethnic or national differences for the sake of a common religious belief. Scholars disagree concerning the unique features of fundamentalism. Due to the large number and variety of definitions that I cannot discuss in this study, I mainly refer to the findings of *The Fundamentalism Project* as one of the most comprehensive, international projects on the topic.

2.2.1) Findings of interdisciplinary research projects

The seminal studies of *The Fundamentalism Project* offer valuable insights into the differences and commonalities between various forms of religious fundamentalism. Although not uncontested[14], the findings may serve as valuable background information for the subsequent literary analyses. Notable later studies (such as the two-volume compilation *Fundamentalism in the Modern World* from 2011) also refer to the findings of the *Fundamentalism Project* and often proceed from the project's outline of 'family resemblances' between different fundamentalist religious movements. These more recent volumes provide interesting case studies with the first volume focusing

> on the implications of fundamentalism for community, nation and state formation [...and the second volume dealing with] the communication of fundamentalism in the public sphere, which means that the general theme of community, nation and state formation is

14 Richard Martin, for instance, praises *The Fundamentalism Project* for its many convincing and well-documented case studies and its encyclopedic scope. However, he animadverts the description of fundamentalism as an anti-modern phenomenon and criticises the interpretation of fundamentalist currents from an allegedly biased Protestant point of view (Martin 1994: 194-196). Saba Mahmood, moreover, passes criticism on a supposed failure to address the role of Western states, geopolitics and the capitalist economy for the development of religious and political fundamentalist movements. This concerns an alleged simplification of the large diversity of Islamic fundamentalist visions in different states, a rather uncritical endorsement of secular ideals and a supposedly strong reliance on Western European concepts (Mahmood 1994: 29-30). For a summary of criticism concerning the findings of *The Fundamentalism Project* and a useful review of research on religious fundamentalist movements during the last decades, see Emerson/ Hartman (2006: 127-144).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> approached with regard to how national and cultural identities are publicly communicated and debated (Mårtensson et al. 2011 (b): 2).

However, the volumes are not designed to identify major characteristics of fundamentalist movements or commonalities and differences between different groups. They rather present a conglomerate of independent case studies, which are very interesting but too specialized to be beneficial for the present study.

The five volumes of *The Fundamentalism Project* show that it is acceptable to use the term 'fundamentalism' despite its wide range of different historical, political, ideological, religious, economic, cultural, ethnic and regional determinants and variations, as long as one has a closer look at specific examples and seeks to make precise distinctions. The term is contested and ideologically charged. Many (Muslim as well as non-Muslim) critics reject the label 'Islamic fundamentalism' due to its origin in Christianity and its application to Islam by outsiders (cf. Heilman 1995: 71; Emerson/Hartman 2006: 131-132).[15] Nevertheless, there seems to be no appropriate uncontroversial alternative.[16] To use the term is certainly no endeavour at simplifying the diversity of movements but an attempt at tracing "family resemblances" (Marty/Appleby 1991(1): ix) between different forms of essentialism. Besides, 'fundamentalism' does not necessarily carry only negative connotations. As Zeidan argues, it is even adopted by some leaders of Islamic movements themselves "as denoting the profound devotion to the fundamentals of religion as a basis for reform" (Zeidan 2003: 8).

2.2.2) Family resemblances between different forms of religious fundamentalism

Marty and Appleby outline that although fundamentalist currents in the three major monotheist religions of Islam, Judaism and Christianity have different ideas concerning "a just social order, they adopt similar attitudes toward secular sciences and anthropocentric notions of 'progress' and 'development.' Fundamentalists seem to have more in common with one another across traditions than they do with their nonfundamentalist coreligionists" (Marty/Appleby 1993 (1): 5). According to the findings of *The Fundamentalism Project* there is a variety of recurring patterns or "family resemblances" which are shared by quite diverse forms of religious fundamentalism.[17] These features include the creation of personal and communal identity on the basis of religious idealism (817), the belief in unified truths (818), the separation of true believers

15 Gemein and Redmer illustrate that this controversy about terms is embedded in political polemics between two American schools. One of these criticises the presentation of Islam as a monolithic block (e.g. Robin Wright, John Esposito and Leon T. Hardar), and the other focuses on the phenomenon of Islamist terrorism and underlines the incompatibility of political Islam with democracy (e.g. Bernard Lewis and Walter Laqueur) (cf. Gemein/Redmer 2005: 12-13).

16 For reasons why the term 'fundamentalism' is still the best alternative cf. Marty/Appleby (1991 (a): viii-ix). The authors, for instance, take the view that terms such as 'orthodoxy' or 'traditionalism' do not carry the same connotations as fundamentalism does. Moreover, they mention the advantage of using a term which politicians, publics and journalists from many different cultures have already settled on over trying to create alternatives that are as difficult to define as 'fundamentalism.'

17 The next two paragraphs are essentially a summary of Marty/Appleby (1991 (b): 817-830).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

and outsiders (818) as well as the use of dramatic eschatologies (819). Fundamentalism is described to base its logic on the citation of special historical moments (819) and to engage in the creation of a conception of the world that uses dramatisation to pinpoint and exclude its enemies (820). Fundamentalist movements engage in boundary setting for the preservation of an alleged purity (821), resort to doctrines as ideological weapons (826) and are guided by authoritarian, charismatic male leaders (826) who are followed by supporters with missionary zeal (822). As will be outlined in the following chapters, many of these dimensions are addressed and partly also caricatured in the selected novels.

Apart from focusing on institutional commonalities, *The Fundamentalism Project* also draws conclusions about the potential roots and causes of fundamentalisms. Marty and Appleby explain how fundamentalisms gain prominence in times of actual or perceived crises (822), which may trigger a crisis of identity (823) and may lead to a mass appeal (830) of fundamentalist beliefs. The topics of identity formation and belonging are central concerns of all novels in this literary corpus. Furthermore, *The Fundamentalism Project* describes a common totalitarian impulse that is visible in the intended creation of a comprehensive economic, social, political and religious framework (824). With respect to modernity, fundamentalisms are assumed to share the commonality that they are at the same time modern and traditional (825). They are supposed to share a stronger affinity to modernity since they use modern organisational structures and methods (828), but they simultaneously envy and resent modernity (827).[18]

As Tehrani notes, the resentment of modernity is only one aspect or model to explain the major driving forces of various fundamentalist movements: They have also been interpreted as responses to the forces of secularism, elitism, imperialism, communism, decadence or feminism (1993 (1): 315). What is striking about this summary is the fact that all of these forces erupted forcefully during the 19th and 20th century. Countering diverse developments that are perceived as drawbacks, fundamentalist movements across all denominations on the one hand "attract their share of charlatans and manipulators who cloak themselves in religious orthodoxy for the sake of political or financial gain" (Marty/Appleby 1993 (3): 624). On the other hand, they also seem to meet people's basic needs for compassion and altruism which "finds concrete expression in the thousands of health care clinics, orphanages, hospitals, schools, and service agencies" (Marty/Appleby 1993 (3): 626) that are provided by fundamentalist groups in many countries.

Drawing a conclusion from a whole range of comparative studies, Almond, Sivan and Appleby also identify central ideological and organisational commonalities between different forms of religious fundamentalism. As ideological characteristics they point out 'reactivity to the marginalization of religion', 'selectivity', a 'dualistic, Manichean worldview, the belief in 'absolutism and inerrancy', as well as 'millennialism and messianism' (Almond/Sivan/Appleby 1995 (1): 405-407). Organizational

18 See for instance the complex relationship of fundamentalists towards modern science and technology, as explained by Tibi (1993).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

similarities are spotted in an 'elect, chosen membership', the drawing of 'sharp boundaries', 'authoritarian organization' and 'behavioral requirements' (Almond/Sivan/Appleby 1995 (1): 407-408). In my literary analyses I will come back to these basic determinants to discuss which of these aspects feature in the respective narratives and how they are related to each other.

A central political issue raised by Islamic fundamentalism is the question concerning its relationship to the concept of democracy. Especially the endeavour of political Islam to establish Islamic law and regulations on a governmental basis and its problems with coming to terms with pluralist, democratic practices (which are rejected as 'imported solutions') are markers of difference to other currently successful forms of fundamentalism.[19] This is not meant to claim that Islam is incompatible with democracy. Yet, it has to be conceded that many Muslim states only took over instrumental elements of modernisation but not the secular and cultural foundation that was entwined with modernity in the West. Garvey (1993: 13) as well as Marty and Appleby stress the comprehensive approach of many modern fundamentalisms and their rejection of a division into the public and private spheres:

> Unlike many of their nonfundamentalist coreligionists, fundamentalists demand that the codes of behaviour be applied comprehensively – not only to family life and interpersonal relations but to political organizations and international economies as well. [...] The observances of a religious community should permeate the whole of life, an organic unity that the agents of secular modernity have wrongly segmented and compartmentalized. The boundaries that matter are not between the 'private' and the 'public,' but between the believer and the infidel (Marty/Appleby 1993 (3): 621).

From the perspective of people who grew up in Western democracies, fundamentalist ideologies in general are often perceived as rather negative since they restrict personal liberty and development. Moreover, they are regarded as disadvantageous for the economic and political advancement of the societies that are ruled by their maxims. However, fundamentalist ideologies are based on assumptions that do not ground on a liberal, humanist worldview:

> From the perspective of a nonfundamentalist, fundamentalisms are often scandalous. They appear to stand in the way of individual self-determination, to violate basic human rights, and to impede material advancement, progress, and prosperity. But this is precisely the point of fundamentalisms: they and their God are not to be judged according to human standards. One cannot evaluate social behaviour along strictly humanistic lines; behavior is good if it conforms to God's will (Marty/Appleby 1993 (b): 7).

As a result, Islamic fundamentalists themselves do not apply the same tenets to their actions as the authors of the literary corpus under discussion. None of the writers

19 Conservative Evangelicalism, for instance, which has celebrated an incredible success in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia in recent years, supports the separation of church and state. According to David Martin, a leading researcher on the Evangelical upsurge in these parts of the world, Evangelists try to gain influence through political pressure groups, but share a quite individualistic understanding of the political realm, lack a legal body of norms, and are familiar with a competitive religious economy: Therefore, their cultural characteristics such as "participation, pragmatism, competition, [and] personal discipline" tend to foster rather than undermine democracy (Martin 1999: 49).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

hold fundamentalist views. On the contrary, they all seem to be passionately committed to humanism, which naturally influences their evaluation of the phenomenon and makes them biased in favour of certain values.

The media often presents fundamentalist movements as aggressive and proactive. In this context, the project's emphasis on fundamentalism as a reactive phenomenon is an interesting point to consider. According to Tehranian, fundamentalism constitutes an answer to several developments and influences. She notes:

> In summary, fundamentalism appears primarily as a reactive phenomenon – to the unsettling effects of rapid social change [...], to marginalization [...], to relative material or psychological deprivation [...], and a commodity fetishism as an antithesis to its own identity fetishism. It may be a passing social phenomenon as it seizes power [...], or is frustrated by the superior power of the state [...], is gradually integrated into the mainstream of cultural life [...], or is allied to the ruling elites in preserving the status quo [...]. Its alternative strategies thus consist of revolutionary *militancy* (for total power), *withdrawal* (from mainstream society), *accommodation* (with the rest of society), or a relentless *conservation* of traditional religious values and norms (Tehranian 1993: 318).

The developments to which fundamentalist movements in general and Islamic fundamentalism in particular react are manifold. Nevertheless, a short overview will facilitate orientation.

2.2.3) Reasons for the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism

A variety of reasons promoted the rise of different kinds of religious fundamentalisms during the last centuries. Interestingly, the pattern of events and responses is very similar – at different times as well as within different religions. Fundamentalisms apparently embody a reaction to historical upheavals, political and economic changes and social grievances that trigger a search for meaning, identity and stability in times of great transformations. Like Communism and National Socialism, Islamic fundamentalism underlines its aim to save the world from fragmentation and inequalities – a claim shared by many ideologies at different times.[20] Long-standing certainties are undermined by the ramifications of modernity, which renders fundamentalist currents more attractive given the fact that they promise straightforward answers and an all-encompassing frame of orientation.[21] Marty and Appleby see the nineteenth and

20 Nolte, for instance, stresses the similarities of Islamism, Communism and National Socialism as radical resistance movements, concerning their universal aspirations, the presence of fear and apocalyptic visions, the polemic stylization of an absolute enemy and a shared anti-Americanism (Nolte 2009: 347-359).

21 However, we should not forget, as Mårtensson et al. point out, that fundamentalism also has a religious and much older core which cannot only be evaluated in its relationship to modernity but also "to ideologically-grounded strategies and methodologies related to community, state and nation formation. [...] The basic premise of fundamentalism is medieval through and through, namely that the political, social and moral order must be grounded in religion, in order for it both to assert its legitimacy and to gain real power. [...] *Fundamentalists practise 'casting out' at all times, even when the order they challenge is religious.* From this point of view, there is nothing qualitatively unique about the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

twentieth century as period of great transition – especially for countries that were previously dominated by colonial powers. The period is described as

> unstable era in which rapid urbanization, modernization, and uneven rates of development occurred during the withdrawal of Western colonial forces – if not Western administrative, judicial, educational, and political structures and philosophies – from much of the third world. The vulnerability of masses of people to totalitarian dictators and military regimes in this era, the social and economic dislocation and deprivation attendant upon migration to the cities, the conditions of misery and exploitation experienced by millions of subject peoples – these have been copiously documented in our generation [...] (Marty/Appleby 1991 (b): 823).

In many Muslim countries urbanisation was and still is accompanied by poverty, the lack of social cohesion and moral corruption, providing a fertile ground for the emergence of Islamic fundamentalist movements (Hoffman 1995: 211). Moreover, some critics describe a close connection between the resurgence of fundamentalist movements and anti-imperialism. The failure of other ideological means of resistance, such as liberalism, communism and nationalism, gave rise to fundamentalist movements advocating cultural survival, social transformation, national independence and a fight against dictatorship (Tehranian 1993 (a): 315 and 1993 (b): 342). The advent and rise of new movements was also accelerated by the end of the Cold War, which disappointed all hopes for more globalism. Cataclysms and insecurity seem to be important catalysts for the emergence of religious fundamentalism.

The major disruptions people experienced during the last two centuries thus encompass all walks of life – from the economic and political sphere down to the structure of the family. Rapid changes and uneven development caused major crises for the individual and the community. In consequence,

> the experience of dislocation fosters a climate of crisis. In this situation people are needy in a special way. Their hunger for material goods is matched by a thirst for spiritual reassurance and fulfilment. If these needs are integrated and integral, so must be the power offering fulfilment. Religion presented as an encompassing way of life suggests itself as the bearer of that power (Marty/Appleby 1993 (c): 620).

People constantly have to adapt to new circumstances and environments, and they suffer from a disruption of traditional communities, values and lifestyles. As we will see, Khadra impressively describes these disruptions as well as the vast discrepancies between more traditional rural communities and the forces of urban 'Westernisation.' Hardacre outlines how people may react with shock to the loss of traditional loyalties, controls and community structures. Particularly people who cannot benefit from the wealth and opportunities connected to modernity are in danger of turning to fundamentalist beliefs that supposedly offer a meaningful life, a new family and a divine aim for the nation (Hardacre 1993: 136 and 138).

Besides, the rise of Islamic fundamentalist ideologies was also influenced by an inability of many Muslim countries to actively shape modernisation processes:

---

post-Enlightenment liberal and secular order which might have given rise to fundamentalism" (Mårtensson et al. 2011 (a): 10, emphasis in original).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> Islam encountered modernity indirectly. The Islamic world responded to the *consequences* of modernity – to its political (i.e., colonialism), education (i.e., new school systems and modern institutions of learning), and ideological (i.e., the ideologies of nationalism, democracy, and socialism) by-products. […] Muslims emulated the West and justified it by Islamic principles. However, the more Muslims of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emulated the West, the less they were able, paradoxically, to free themselves from a 'state of backwardness.' By the mid-twentieth century Muslim intellectuals began questioning the validity of the assumption that imitating the West would lead to prosperity. Such reevaluation gave rise to the notion of the 'return to the self' (Rajaee 1993: 103).

This feeling of backwardness and an inability to adapt beneficially to Western modernisation are topics raised in the novels by Khadra and Hamid. Hamid describes the shame and anger his protagonist feels when comparing the desolate current state of his home-country Pakistan that is impoverished and threatened by war to his life in America. Khadra, in addition, also addresses the social changes within Muslim countries due to the pressures of globalisation, urbanisation and capitalism. These outer influences are so strong that they provoke reactions, which, in the absence of possibilities to adapt, are often hallmarked by resistance. McNeill states: "More than anything else, reaffirmation of Islam, whatever its specific sectarian form, means the repudiation of European and American influence upon local society, politics, and morals" (McNeill 1993: 569). Calls for an Islamisation of society in Muslim countries are thus often linked to a wish to return to an original social structure and morality, grounded in a communal identity that seems to be threatened and diluted by foreign influences (Mayer 1993: 111).

Hoffman, furthermore, describes how Islamic fundamentalist movements profit from the psychosocial alienation of many young people that originates not only in political or economic problems but also in the tensions between a traditional background and a modern secular education. She outlines:

> Islamic fundamentalism is primarily a revolt of young people who are caught between a traditional past and a higher secular education with all its implications of Western intellectual impact and contact with the materialistically oriented culture of the modern urban environment. The contradiction between the values learned from the past and the realities of the present confront young people with bewildering contradictions and often a multitude of moral choices that create a sense of anxiety, loneliness, and disorientation. Some authors have termed Islamic fundamentalism a 'youth revolt,' reflecting the particular anxieties created by the necessity to find one's own identity in a world of confusing choices. Issues of identity are most acute in areas where Western cultural impact is strongest: in the cities, in the universities, and perhaps most particularly in the faculties of science, where the embrace of Western learning is most complete (Hoffman 1995: 210).

What comes to mind here are the well-known media images of unobtrusive and bright young Muslim people who studied at European or American universities and seemed to be well-integrated but still turned to fundamentalist ideas and violence. This feeling of alienation, of tension between one's roots and one's surroundings and the burning need to truly belong is a central topic in all novels under discussion.

While different forms of Islamic neo-fundamentalism primarily focus on religious practice and are characterised by an alienation from politics and an increasing

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

deculturation,[22] most Islamist movements, with the prominent exceptions of Al-Qaida and the Islamic State, are bound to a specific political cause and a limited territory. While these two jihadist movements follow a global strategy and use transnational networks to achieve a universal Islamic rule by terrorist means, there are also groupings within political Islam that consider gaining power by peaceful means and try to establish their aims within the political process and institutions of their respective countries. Social programmes are important elements in this strategy. The social agenda of these groups can be seen as an expedient to gain public support, but it is also inherent to Islamic notions of social justice. Islamic fundamentalist groups not only mobilise their supporters in the name of religion, but also in the name of global justice – a topic that is often neglected by the global economic establishment.

As Schäfer insightfully outlines, Islamic fundamentalists manage to transform the topic of social justice from a goal conflict into an identity conflict, while US-American policymakers often disregard global justice in favour of American political and military dominance (Schäfer 2008: 226). This conflict between social justice and hegemony also features prominently in the literary corpus. Social, political and economic problems are discussed by the novels as root causes of Islamic fundamentalism. Especially the ongoing conflict in the Middle East (Israel/Palestine) and the 'war on terror' in Afghanistan and Iraq are addressed by the literary corpus, and the following analyses will look at the reasons that are presented for fundamentalist violence in the context of war and foreign occupation. As mentioned above, religion is facing increasing deterritorialisation and deculturation. However, in countries where violent struggles over land, power or self-determination are fought, religion might become again closely aligned with culture and nationalism. Ruthven explains this phenomenon with reference to regions that experienced colonialism and used the mobilising potential of religion for the fight for self-determination and the construction of national identity (Ruthven 2004: 197). Taking a closer look at the narrative corpus, it becomes evident how important notions of community and belonging are for the selected literary attempts to explain Islamic fundamentalism. Radicalisation is presented by many works as an endeavour to restore an Islamic identity and dignity that seems to have been lost through foreign influences and to counter the passive endurance of economic and political dictates. In this context, the following analyses will show whether the selected works ascribe a large role for the rise of Islamic fundamentalism to religion or rather focus on political interests and violent conflicts. All selected novels feature relatively young protagonists who are drawn to Islamic fundamentalist ideas despite the fact that they are well-educated, sensitive and idealistic. They suffer from the felt backwardness of their countries of origin and the clashes between

22 Olivier Roy claims that the older ties between cultural, geographical regions and a specific religion have weakened. In our globalised world, religion increasingly becomes disconnected from cultural factors, which on the one hand lends it a more universal appeal, but on the other hand sometimes also creates a gap or conflict between religious adherents and their secularised cultural surroundings. Roy subsumes: "Deculturation is the loss of the social expression of religion. Believers feel themselves to be minorities surrounded by an atheist, pornographic, materialistic, secular culture which worships false gods: money, sex or man himself" (Roy 2010: 8).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

traditional systems of morality and meaning with new forces. The problematic entanglement of culture and politics is presented as an important catalyst for the escalation of radical ideas.

Additional to these various economic, political and social reasons, the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism is also motivated by a religious aspiration to retrieve the 'original' core of Islamic scripture and to purify it from foreign philosophical influences (Arjomand 1995: 179). However, as Hoffman notes, this religious dimension frequently recedes into the background concerning the fact that the leaders of Islamic movements often do not primarily focus on theological but social issues and use a distinctly political vocabulary (Hoffman 1995: 207). The diversity between different Islamic fundamentalist movements is very large. These differences especially manifest themselves when it comes to the deduction of rules and principles from religious scripture. As Arjomand notes, all fundamentalist movements believe in and invoke the scriptural foundations of Islam but their opinions clash when it comes to the question of concrete behaviour to be embraced or rejected according to these foundations (Arjomand 1995: 182).

As has been shown, the reasons for, the development of, as well as the manifestations and goals of religious fundamentalist movements are manifold. Even within Islamic fundamentalist currents there are far-reaching differences. These differences are attributable to very heterogeneous memberships (in terms of economic, cultural, social and educational background) and the diversity of political regimes, which determines the degree to which these movements might integrate themselves into a state (Arjomand 1995: 187-190), to mention but a few factors. Nevertheless, I will use the following assessment of 'family resemblances' compiled by *The Fundamentalism Project* as a useful summary of basic characteristics. The project addresses the traditional as well as modern elements of fundamentalisms and their attempt to satisfy the social as much as spiritual needs of their followers. According to their definition, fundamentalism

> manifests itself as a strategy, or set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group. Feeling this identity to be at risk in the contemporary era, they fortify it by a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs, and practices from a sacred past. These retrieved 'fundamentals' are refined, modified, and sanctioned in a spirit of shrewd pragmatism: they are to serve as a bulwark against the encroachment of outsiders who threaten to draw the believers into a syncretistic, areligious, or irreligious cultural milieu. [...Religious identity is seen as] exclusive and absolute basis for a recreated political and social order that is oriented to the future rather than the past. By selecting elements of tradition and modernity, fundamentalists seek to remake the world in the service of a dual commitment to the unfolding eschatological drama (by returning all things in submission to the divine) and to self-preservation (by neutralizing the threatening 'Other'). Such an endeavor often requires charismatic and authoritarian leadership, depends upon a disciplined inner core of adherents, and promotes a rigorous sociomoral code for all followers. Boundaries are set, the enemy identified, converts sought, and institutions created and sustained in pursuit of a comprehensive reconstruction of society (Marty/ Appleby 1991 (2): 835).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

2.3) Literary studies on the interrelationship between literature and fundamentalism

Though Islamic Fundamentalism is a widely researched and discussed topic, its relationship to literature is thus far a relatively virgin terrain. One project, which has however more broadly explored the depiction of fundamentalism in literary texts, is the *Project Fundamentalism*, launched by scholars around Klaus Stierstorfer. The four excellent volumes *Fundamentalism and Literature in English: An Assessment* (2007), *Literary Encounters of Fundamentalism: A Casebook* (2008), *Writing Fundamentalism* (2009) and *Burning Books: Negotiations between Fundamentalism and Literature* (2012) offer a broad range of highly diverse, interesting close-reading chapters of high quality. The volumes of this project will be used in the subsequent chapter to focus on the literary representations of Islamic fundamentalism and its 'other', while simultaneously encompassing an interdisciplinary approach to include other issues, most notably political ones that were not addressed by the *Project Fundamentalism* due to its much broader focus on a variety of different fundamentalisms.

In the introduction to the second volume, Stierstorfer makes some general and very important comments on the interrelationship between literature and fundamentalism. The author writes that fundamentalists regard literature as scripture. Religious scripture is seen as unalterable and holy, while much non-canonical writing is viewed at the very least as a waste of time and often even as evil threat to religion in its power to criticize religious doctrines and utter dissenting opinions that have to be opposed (Stierstorfer 2008: 10). The possible ramifications of this suspicious or even hostile attitude towards fictional literature have been exemplified by the Rushdie affair. While fundamentalists often keep an eye on literature, literature naturally in turn observes fundamentalist phenomena. The power of the writer and his ability to unsettle fundamentalist believers by means of questioning alleged certainties is at the heart of the present literary corpus. As has been briefly mentioned in the introduction and shall be quoted in more detail at this point, Stierstorfer describes literature as

> a particularly productive field for negotiations of and with fundamentalisms, which in turn calls for ethical considerations to be included. […] From the point of literature, fundamentalism can be seen as a stimulus to literary authors who may find an impressive suggestiveness and dramatic power in fundamentalist figures and tenets which can propel their plots and challenge their tolerance and openness: a problematic of the modern world with which they can engage and […] a challenge or even barrier for creative work for the fear of oppression and persecution, growing from many fundamentalists' inbred fear and suspicion of literary persons, whom they naturally categorise as secular or even profane (Stierstorfer 2008: 10-11).

Literature and fundamentalism interact and comment upon each other. For fundamentalists, however, commentary is closely aligned with a strict demarcation against deviant ideas. This demarcation may take totalitarian forms and result in the targeting of literature as a dangerous temptation that has to be eliminated:

> Fundamentalists feel they belong to a whole, pure community of beliefs, which strictly excludes the (impure) Other, whatever form that Otherness may take. Fundamentalists are against any form of 'integration' of otherness [. …] The more extremist, activist fundamentalists are in fact totalitarians, seeking to impose and maintain the totality of a belief

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> system destined to organize and control both the public and the private realms. They are eager to let what they perceive as 'God's laws' overrule the human legislations, especially in democratic, secular countries. Like the leaders of totalitarian regimes, fundamentalists are wary of human reason and free thought, and prefer to shun the carefully elaborated productions of human brains – i.e., books – that might confuse and contaminate the followers of their faith. Instead, they encourage people to concentrate on a strictly limited number of texts, believed to be the very Word of God (Pesso-Miquel/Stierstorfer 2012: viii).

This exclusion and rejection of the 'impure Other', as Stierstorfer calls it, takes on manifold forms in the present literary corpus. Indeed, 'the other' is presented as economic libertarianism, capitalist maximum utility, consumerism, racism, cultural essentialism and a political and social climate which seems to be hostile towards Muslim immigrants and their hopes and needs. In other novels it takes on the form of hedonism and the lack of moral codes in Western societies obsessed with pleasure.

These antipoles to Islamic fundamentalist principles, in some novels under discussion, share many fundamentalist characteristics with their religious censors. Kureishi, for instance, delineates the fundamentalist potential of both: religious and political ideologies as well as 'Western' lifestyles. In portraying both extremes as shallow and detrimental alternatives, Kureishi traces essentialist similarities between different forms of radical thinking. Moreover, he points to potential reasons for the luring attractiveness of both extremes: the loneliness of the individual and their search for identity and belonging. In the search for answers, Islamic fundamentalist movements may provide an escape from the confusing multitude of meanings and lifestyles. Nevertheless, in the end all systems of ostensible security are questioned and dismantled by this literary corpus.

Concerning the abovementioned hostility of fundamentalisms towards non-canonical literature, the *Project Fundamentalism* claims that books have always been targets of fundamentalist attacks for two different reasons. First, because literature functions as a vehicle for criticism, as already mentioned, and second, because fictional literature emanates from radically different premises than religious fundamentalism. Pesso-Miquel and Stierstorfer characterise fundamentalisms as systems of belief which embrace their holy scripture as only truth and reject plural interpretations. The example of Muslim fundamentalism shows how questionable this claim is in the light of so many essentially different interpretations of the Koran, betraying irreconcilable differences even between fundamentalist circles – let alone between radical and more moderate readings. Each group claims to possess the prerogative of interpretation and to know the 'real' literal meaning of the holy texts.[23] This 'literalness' inevitably has to clash with the concept of 'literariness' which draws on multiple readings and meanings, takes the possibility of rewritings for granted and plays with diverse notions of reality and versions of truth (Pesso-Miquel/Stierstorfer 2012: xii). I

23 The British author Suhayl Saadi, whose works have been inspired by Biblical and Koranic accounts, doubts the possibility of a strictly literal interpretation of religious texts. In the fourth volume of the *Project Fundamentalism* he explains that metaphor is not also a central element in imaginative writing but also in religious texts. He claims that to "deny or repress metaphor is to deny the very essence of prophetic revelation, the need for spirituality, which is at the heart of what it means to be human" (Saadi 2012: 4).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

am going to argue that exactly this discord between the fundamentalist belief in a single truth and human reality with its plethora of meanings, individual experiences and multitude of different identity markers is at the heart of the present literary corpus. The novels under discussion defy essentialism and show the multitude of reasons human beings might have for their turn towards fundamentalist ideas – most of which are not in the least religious.

2.4) Major media topics and political debates

2.4.1) A 'Clash of Civilizations'?

The so-called 'Huntington debate' has surely been one of the most long-lasting and influential scholarly discussions in recent years and also one which has inspired questions, doubts and closer examinations. In his seminal article "The Clash of Civilizations?" (published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993) the American political scientist Samuel Huntington claimed that since the demise of communism, cultural antagonisms are superseding traditional conflicts within the Western civilization that were first decided between kings, later on between nation-states and finally (with the rise of fascism, national socialism and communism) between opposing ideological systems. Huntington summarized his view as follows:

> It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future (Huntington 1993 (a): 22).

Huntington distinguishes eight civilizations[24] (Western, Confucian, Islamic, Japanese, Slavic-Orthodox, African, Latin-American, Hindu), which supposedly hold fundamentally "different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, […and] the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy" (Huntington 1993 (a): 25). This fixed scale naturally bears essentialist assumptions and generalisations. Moreover, it very much singles out religious orientation as a factor that represents a fundamental dividing line between different parts of the world. According to this theory, identity and the conflicts arising from different cultural preconceptions play a much larger role for the development of world-politics and the emergence of future conflicts than simple differences in political or economic

24 For a useful discussion of Huntington's definition of the term 'civilisation' and the criticism of his use, see Matlock (1999). First and foremost, he questions Huntington's claim that civilisations are coherent entities which generate intense loyalty and that cultural differentiation was supposed to be increasing. Moreover, he criticises Huntington's undifferentiated use of civilisation and culture as interchangeable terms (see Matlock 1999: 432-433).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

interest. Huntington characterises a civilisation as the broadest level of cultural identity to which people feel a sense of belonging. People within the same civilisation supposedly feel united by elements such as common institutions and customs, a common history, language and a religious orientation that is shared by the majority of its members (Huntington 1993 (a): 24).

The author argues that cultural characteristics are less likely to be an object of compromise than simple economic or political decisions. Despite the power of Western states and the global dissemination of Western lifestyles, economic regionalism and an indigenisation of non-Western elites are argued to be gaining ground. In this context, Huntington singles out religion as special distinguishing mark, since a person may even have two different ethnic backgrounds but can only belong to one religious community. "What ultimately counts for people is not political ideology or economic interest. Faith and family, blood and belief, are what people identify with and what they will fight and die for" (Huntington 1993 (b): 194), Huntington believes. The incompatibility of political ideas is ostensibly partly rooted in the fact that political and economic values are closely linked to one's religious belief and cultural background. In this context, Huntington sees a problem in the increasing disconnection of people from their local identities through social change and economic modernisation, which triggers a retreat into regionalism. He lists various political events taking place at the beginning of the 1990 s that are supposed to prove his civilization paradigm. Huntington claims that his theory "accounts for many important developments in international affairs in recent years, including the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the wars going on in their former territories, the rise of religious fundamentalism throughout the world […]" (Huntington 1993 (b): 187).

Various critics argue that Huntington ignores the responsibility of the West for this assumed 'clash of civilizations' and does not give satisfactory definitions of the terms he works with – especially the concept of 'civilisation', 'ethnicity' and 'culture' (see Rubenstein 1994: 117-119). Moreover, he is criticised for being silent about the fact that some of the most brutal wars of the 20th century have been fought within countries – be it Stalin's political purges, Pol Pot's genocide or the Holocaust (cf. Schwan 2001: 28-34). The weaknesses concerning the falsifiability of Huntington's argumentation is also attested by Fox, who expresses doubts concerning the empirical basis of Huntington's claim that cultural conflicts are on the increase since the end of the Cold War. He argues that civilisational conflicts in general and conflicts between Islam and the West in particular constituted a minority in the first decade after the Cold War and did not increase in intensity in comparison to other forms of conflict. (Fox 2002: 415).[25] The rise of Islamist movements such as the *Islamic State* again seem to reinforce Huntington's theory. In the light of increasing tensions and conflicts be-

25 For more empirical evidence backing this thesis, see Henderson/Tucker (2001) and Chiozza (2002), who also underlines the predominance of intra-civilisational conflicts over inter-civilisational conflicts. For a similar argumentation, see Russett et al. (2000). They proceed from the assumption that "military, political, and economic interests measured by our realist and liberal variables provide a substantially better account of interstate violence than does Huntington's theory" (Russett et al. 2000: 602). Huntington, in turn, defends himself in a reply criticising his castigators for their focus on the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

tween 'Western' and 'Muslim' countries, we nevertheless have to take into consideration that the most current conflicts occur within states. The crucial boundary line at the battlefront is not located between 'the West' and 'Islam' (whatever these catchphrases may denote) or supposedly incompatible 'civilisations'. Many of these present-day conflicts unfold between adherents to violent forms of Islamic fundamentalism striving to gain power and fellow citizens with diverse creeds, languages and political opinions who are willing to fight against oppression and religious dictatorship. On a related note, Senghaas adds that there is no "inherent link between the cultural characteristics of civilizations and the actual behavior of core representatives of such civilizations" (Senghaas 1998: 127). Thus, he also questions the empirical validity and verifiability of Huntington's claims. He reasons that these cultural factors are not the root of disputes but are often subsequently superimposed as an explanation and argues: "The culturalization of such conflicts is, as a rule, a relatively late phenomenon in an escalation process, turning socio-economic conflicts into identity conflicts once the level of collective frustration becomes high" (Senghaas 1998: 127). This claim also hints at the emotional quality of cultural issues in the development of conflicts.

This observation will serve as an interesting argumentative context for an analysis of the present literary corpus. It is rewarding to elicit which stance the novels under discussion explicitly or implicitly take towards the relationship between political or economic interests and religion or culture. Which identity markers or issues are presented to be central for the protagonists? Where do their values derive from? And are the main conflicts based on a clash of interests or identities? I would argue that cultural or ethnic differences often only come to play a major role when economic, political or military conflicts put so much pressure on individuals that they are forced to take a stance and choose a side. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the protagonist's home-culture offers retreat, identity and the feeling of belonging but only becomes a major factor when conflicts arise that cause discrimination against him on the grounds of his religious and cultural background and reinforce his loyalty towards his home country. In *The Sirens of Baghdad*, in contrast, the depiction of cultural differences is very pronounced. Khadra's novel, which is set in Iraq, describes a Bedouin cultural system that is very demanding, all-encompassing and irreconcilable with the conduct of the American invaders. Nevertheless, the emergence of conflict is not seen in cultural differences but attributed to political, military and economic motives.

Despite the widely debated shortcomings of Huntington's thesis, the American media coverage of the September 11 terrorist attacks strongly focused on Huntington's theory, resorting to the framework of Islam and culture as an explanation for the current crisis, therewith triggering suspicions against Muslims in general.[26] At the same time, a survey conducted by the PEW Research Center demonstrated that in

Cold War period (which is true for all empirical studies mentioned above) and a limited dataset, which, as he claims, does include only quite unrepresentative interstate conflicts (cf. Huntington 2000: 609-610).

26 For an interesting study of the reasons for and the implications of this unprecedented recurring fame of Huntington's hypothesis see Abrahamian (2003). Hunt also discusses the renewed interest in Huntington's position after 9/11 and the nationalist and ideologically laden American vocabulary in con-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

2005, 60 % of Americans were of the opinion that "recent terrorist attacks represent only a conflict with a small radical group rather than a major clash between the West and Islam" (Pew Research Center 2005: 3), which seems to offer a more nuanced picture. A recent *Global Attitudes Survey*, published by the Pew Research Center in July 2014, also clarifies that most Muslim people in Islamic countries in the Middle East and elsewhere are also very worried about the increase in Islamic extremism and share the negative opinions and concerns of 'Western' critics (Pew Research Center July 1, 2014: n.p.). In recent years, many critics thus counteracted stereotypical media images, animadverting Huntington's depiction of Islam as inherently violent and fundamentalist.[27] Especially his claim that "Islam has bloody borders" (Huntington 1993 (a): 35) and that the main future conflicts will arise along the antagonisms between the West and the Islamic-Confucian states elicited heated discussions. The only 'civilisation' Huntington describes in detail is the Western civilisation that is granted a unique status. As core characteristics he lists the Western Classical legacy, Christianity, the variety of European languages, the separation of spiritual and temporal authority (or church and state), the rule of law, social pluralism, civil society, representative bodies and individualism (Huntington 1996: 30-34). These elements have, according to Huntington, not developed in the Islamic civilisation, which allegedly leads to mutual incomprehension, disputes and conflicts.

Many critics have since been trying to find empirical evidence against Huntington's claim that the West and Islam are most likely to enter confrontations due to very different, irreconcilable political values.[28] Fox, for example, provides valuable empirical research showing that the perception of the conflict between 'the West' and 'Islam' may depend on which side we stand on and whether we look at the broader picture or not.[29] He accentuates that from a Western perspective there has been a notable increase in conflicts with Islamic groups after the end of the Cold War. From an Islamic as well as from a global perspective, however, civilisational conflicts have remained a minority since the end of the Second World War and this mentioned increase was the result of a general rise in ethnic conflicts – Islamic ethnic groups were neither partici-

nection to the 'War on Terror'. He sees in it the continuation of a "grand narrative of American confrontation with heterodox ideologies from fascism to totalitarianism to fundamentalism" (Hunt 2002: 420).

27 Metzinger refers to some of the main arguments of Huntington's critics concerning this point: cf. Metzinger (2000: 50-52).

28 Inglehart/Norris interestingly support Huntington's hypothesis concerning the fundamental cultural differences between 'Western' and 'Muslim' countries but argue that these differences do not necessarily concern political ideas but traditional moral values. Whereas many Muslims embrace democratic ideals, they may still have radically different opinions on topics such as gender equality, abortion, homosexuality or divorce (see Inglehart/Norris 2003).

29 The dataset Fox uses only comprises fault-line conflicts within states and not conflicts between different states. However, it includes a multitude of countries and provides a valuable reference point for further research on other types of conflict. Moreover, the empirical study by Tusicisny also includes data on interstate conflicts, which seems to back Fox' observations. Tusicisny concludes: "The majority of intercivilizational conflict-years during the post-Cold War period have involved Islamic groups. Nevertheless, the frequency of conflict between the Islamic and Sinic (Confucian) civilizations and the West remains marginal" (Tusicisny 2004: 485).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

pating in the majority of these conflicts nor were they primarily engaged in conflict with the West (Fox 2001: 466-467). Recent events during the 'Arab Spring', to my mind, confirm that most current conflicts involving Islam are fought within Muslim states between people of different backgrounds with diverging political and religious ideas. Conflict often ignites between moderate Muslim believers or defenders of secularism and orthodox or fundamentalist currents (cf. Bilgrami 2003: 89). Another justified point of criticism is Huntington's pessimistic attitude and his negligence of the common concerns of people from different civilisations and the many areas of peaceful cooperation and interchange (see Rubenstein/Crocker 1994, O'Hagan 1995).

Notwithstanding, it is also notable which conclusions Huntington draws from his projected scenario. Despite the fact that Huntington particularly strives to promote the success of the Western civilisation and predicts ongoing hostilities and boundaries between different cultures, he still underlines the importance of restraint, non-interventionism, civilised behaviour, joint mediation and a search for unifying values and principles (cf. Huntington 1993 (a): 48-49). This is a point the novels in the present literary corpus also advocate and embrace even though they proceed from radically different assumptions, as I will outline in detail in the following chapters.

2.4.2) Fundamentalist Islam against Western secularisation?

> Especially in the Northern and Western parts of Europe, religion has become a private matter. During the 1970s and 1980s, many people stopped going to church weekly, church membership dropped, and praying in public became a rarity. Without 'public support', the churches' authority and influence in society and governance declined. Clergymen were no longer considered important moral guides. Today, only a small minority of Europeans agree with the statement that the church provides adequate answers to present-day problems in society. This withdrawal of religion from the public space is known as secularization and is considered to be a progressive, inevitable step in modernization that is accompanied by rationalization and individualization (Halman/ Sieben/ Zundert 2012: 71).

As mentioned in chapter 2.2.3 societal problems arising from today's global economic and political order seem to be of special importance for the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Radicalisation is often explained with economic inequalities, political controversies and an increasing alienation of the individual, resulting from the fragmentation of traditional value systems that used to provide orientation, identification and social support. Religion represents one of these value systems, allegedly supplanted by secularisation processes[30] in Western democracies. The selected novels also deal with the effects of these developments on society. They attest a spiritual vacuum that needs to be filled to meet basic human needs.

30 David Hall justifiably argues that it is often ignored how many forms, local varieties and facets of meaning 'secularisation' might develop. The category is just as difficult to define and determine as the term 'modernity'. Thus, we have to be aware that the debates surrounding secularization easily become political or ideological (Hall 2011: 287).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Charles Taylor, for instance, argues for the existence of 'A Secular Age':

> [A]s we function within various spheres of activity – economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational – the norms and principles we follow, the deliberations we engage in, generally don't refer us to God or to any religious beliefs; the considerations we act on are internal to the 'rationality' of each sphere – maximum gain within the economy, the greatest benefit to the greatest number in the political area, and so on. [...] The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest embrace (Taylor 2007: 2-3).

While public spaces and even the realm of morality seem to be devoid of religious content in Western societies, belief is, according to Taylor, still more important in Muslim societies. In Western democracies believers increasingly have to justify themselves whereas people adhering to a secular humanism do not. Ironically, religion in many respects becomes profane while secular elements are sacralised:

> [M]odern secularization entails a certain profanation of religion through its privatization and individualization and a certain sacralisation of the secular spheres of politics (sacred nation, sacred citizenship, sacred constitution), science (temples of knowledge), and economics (commodity fetishism). But the truly modern sacralisation, which constitutes the emerging global civil religion is what Durkheim already announced at the beginning of the 20th century as 'the cult of the individual' and the sacralisation of humanity through the globalization of human rights (Casanova 2010: 12).

Studies of European values provide a similar picture. Western democracies are perceived as by and large secularised, which leads many people to the belief that God, religion and spirituality do not play a large role for enlightened, modern societies.

However, even secularised Western democracies do not experience a wave of atheism or irreligiosity. The assumption that modernity always entails secularisation is a distinctively Western European theory. The so-called 'secularisation thesis' does not hold for most parts of the world, at least not in every respect. As Casanova points out, we have to distinguish three different levels of secularisation: Firstly, the institutional differentiation of the state and the economy from religion, secondly, the privatisation of religion as a foundation of democracy, and thirdly, the decreasing importance of religious practices and beliefs (Casanova 2010: 1). The separation of church and state in most countries does not necessarily denote a marginalisation of religious practices and beliefs. What we find in Europe is a decline in religious practice and the role of institutions, but not a lack of belief. To say it with Davie's words, "we might more accurately say that Western Europeans are *unchurched* populations, rather than simply secular", which leads to a "situation of 'believing without belonging'" (Davie 1999: 68).[31]

This theory is supported by the findings of the *European Values Study* from 2008, which is the most comprehensive, transnational long-term study concerning the reli-

31 Even though Davie is right in her opinion that the Western European form of secularism is rather the exception than the norm, Casanova justifiably qualifies this notion by arguing that there are also indications of this trend in non-European societies such as China or Japan (cf. Casanova 2010: 7).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

gious views and values of European people, with a focus on the question which values are shared among European nations and in which ways these values change. The study refers to European religious practice as 'cafeteria religion' or 'church-free spirituality', since religious elements are selectively picked and mixed and many people consider themselves as religious or spiritual without taking an active part in institutionalised churches (Halman/Luijkx/Zundert 2005: 61). Thus, many people who do not belong to a church still feel religious, pray and believe in a supreme being. Individualism increasingly seems to take hold of all walks of life, including religion. The 2012 *European Values Study* also confirms that the majority of Europeans – even though they might not practice their religion actively – still belong to churches, which creates a state of "belonging without believing" (sensu Grace Davie, cited in Halman/Sieben/Zundert 2012: 59).

As we can see, religion has not ceased to be of importance in Western secular states even though its influence seems to be much stronger in predominantly Muslim countries. The global distribution of Western consumer goods or the sharing of similar youth-culture, promoted by the internet, social media, fashion and music in many parts of the world does not necessarily reflect a shared basis of values or a supposed irreligion. The import of Western models in Muslim countries was often accompanied by highly unsatisfactory results. A structural embrace of secular concepts that was not followed by a societal adaptation left many Muslims disappointed with these concepts. As Tibi explains, early acculturation processes to Western models failed because "secularism, as an attitude of mind, cannot thrive if unaccompanied by the secularization of societal structures and institutions" (Tibi 1993: 79). The adoption of science and technology without socioeconomic and cultural change did not engender progress in Muslim countries but rather promoted a rejection of Westernisation. I agree with Berger in that the alleged inextricable alliance between modernity and secularisation has proven wrong. The structural secularisation of a state does not imperatively imply that an individual also embraces secular ideas (Berger: 1999 3). This holds true for Muslim as well as 'Western' countries. What we have to keep in mind is the diversity of different levels of belief in every country and also the existence of an élite culture which is globalised but cannot be easily compared to the views held by average citizens:

> There exists an international subculture composed of people with Western-type higher education, especially in the humanities and social sciences, that is indeed secularized. This subculture is the principal 'carrier' of progressive, Enlightened beliefs and values. While its members are relatively thin on the ground, they are very influential, as they control the institutions that provide the 'official' definitions of reality, notably the educational system, the media of mass communication, and the higher reaches of the legal system (Berger, Peter 1999: 10).

Just as we cannot assume that the views adopted by an intellectual élite can be viewed as a global standard, we should not think that culture and religion in other countries get increasingly levelled and Westernised just because of the global dissemination of Coca Cola, fashion and other emblems of Western consumerism and popular culture. As Tibi remarks, the Western belief in the impact of mass culture blocks the view for

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

the concomitance of structural globalisation and cultural fragmentation (Tibi 1999: 91).

In this larger context, Islamic fundamentalist movements try to bridge these tendencies of increasing regionalism and cultural fragmentation by offering an overarching frame of reference that people can commit to, independent of their cultural backgrounds. In this regard, Roy's hypothesis about the increasing deterritorialisation and deculturation of fundamentalist beliefs seems to me an interesting approach. Especially radical forms of Islam, like neo-fundamentalism or jihadism, are understood as all-encompassing value systems that are not based on a specific cultural framework but a universal truth that can and should be embraced by believers worldwide. Roy views radical Islam not primarily as a reaction of traditional cultures to pressures from the outside but sees the forces of globalisation, cultural uprooting and secularisation as major causes (Roy 2006: 7). Radical groups increasingly work through globalised terrorist networks with members from totally different cultural backgrounds. It is interesting to see how many followers Al Qaida – and in recent times also the Islamic State – has in genuinely Western cultures, not only among members of migrant communities.

Roy's study of these developments sets out this central argument and questions Huntington's essentialist notion of a deep link between culture and religion as an obstacle for the integration of migrants from a different creed into the majority culture of other countries. The French professor and former consultant to the French Foreign Ministry and the United Nations claims:

> Christianity and Islam respectively had an undeniable Westernizing and Arabizing effect, even if new syntheses between religion and culture gradually emerged which made it possible to divide the world into cultural regions (Persian or Ottoman culture, Latin American Christianity). […] But nowadays, 'religion' circulates outside all systems of political supremacy. […] Two factors play a key part in the transformation of religion today: deterritorialization and deculturation. Deterritorialization is not only associated with the movement of people (which only affects a small percentage of the global population), but also with the circulation of ideas, cultural objects, information and modes of consumption generally in a non-territorial space. But in order to circulate, the religious object must appear universal, disconnected from a specific culture that has to be understood in order for the message to be grasped. Religion therefore circulates outside knowledge (Roy 2010: 5-6).

Thus Islamic fundamentalist groups not only dissociate themselves from many cultural elements because they are seen as profane and heretic, but also because they strive to address the need for a comprehensive frame of reference and provide religion as an identity marker beyond cultural differences.

As a consequence, we should at least question the supposed amalgamation between culture and religion, when analysing the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism. Roy cuts right to the chase of the matter when he states that the exercise of religion is shaped by a culture and its traditions, ethnicity and customs but that fundamentalism is different in that it understands itself as pure religion with a well-defined ideology, which is autonomous and detached from any specific culture (Roy 2007: 9). In this context, it is worthwhile to examine how the novels deal with the interrelation-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ship of religion and culture and how much value they place on the influence of cultural tradition for the exercise of religion and a turn towards fundamentalist ideas.

2.5) Migration, integration and identity

The novels by Kureishi, Hamid and Faulks are set in England and the United States and address issues of identity and integration. Ghettoisation, socio-economic problems and the failed integration of Muslim migrants into Western societies are widely-discussed topics with respect to 'home-grown' terrorism and fundamentalist radicalisation in Western countries. The three authors, however, depict protagonists who are well-educated, successful and far from living on the margins of society. Throughout the study I will especially heed to the given reasons for fundamentalist radicalisation. Since all novels in this literary corpus that explicitly deal with Islamic fundamentalism do so in a very personal way, focusing on the plight of an individual and their turn to radical ideas, the following paragraphs shall give a brief insight into studies dealing with potential motives and psycho-social profiles of fundamentalist radicalisation in or in relationship to Western countries. Hoffman explains that most fundamentalist leaders tend to come from a traditional, often rural background but know Western countries very well and often received a Western-style education. She explains:

> With the exception of Iran, where clerical leaders played a leading role in the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, the leaders and founders of Islamic fundamentalist movements have had a secular education. […] Maududi originally made his career in journalism. Hasan al-Banna was a schoolteacher. Sayyid Qutb was a writer and literary critic. 'Ali Shari'ati, often called the 'ideologue of the Iranian Revolution,' received a Ph.D. from the Sorbonne. […] Banna, Qutb, Shari'ati, and Ghannushi, among others, were all raised in villages, where traditional values continued to prevail. […] This combination of traditional cultural roots, often with an early religious education, and later secular education in urban settings where the impact of the West is felt most keenly, has often been cited by scholars seeking an explanation for the birth of fundamentalist movements (Hoffman 1995: 201).

The selected four major works all trace the lives of young, well-educated protagonists and portray their inner struggle between traditional cultural roots and Western lifestyles and military intervention in other countries. Especially Khadra dramatises this conflict between rural cultural and religious concepts and forceful Western intrusion which leads to the collapse of the individual. Hamid, Khadra and Kureishi describe individuals who experienced a traditional background and later on have to accommodate themselves with totally different values and social structures.

Apart from political and economic dissatisfaction, Hoffman underlines the centrality of a certain psychosocial alienation that may promote a turn to violence. An alienation from one's roots then combines with an anxiety of impending "social chaos" and "moral amorphousness" (Hoffman 1995: 218), which Western countries seem to epitomise. This moral decay is supposedly embodied, among other things, in a seemingly unrestricted predatory capitalism and sexual licentiousness. People who live in Western countries and then turn to Islamic fundamentalist ideas seem to undergo a

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

much different radicalisation process than people living in Muslim countries. An NYPD report on the radicalization of Muslims in the West states:

> The trans-national phenomenon of radicalization in the West is largely a function of the people and the environment they live in. Much different from the Israeli Palestinian equation, the transformation of a Western-based individual to a terrorist is not triggered by oppression, suffering, revenge, or desperation. Rather, it is a phenomenon that occurs because the individual is looking for an identity and a cause and unfortunately, often finds them in the extremist Islam. [...] Europe's failure to integrate the 2nd and 3rd generation of its immigrants into society, both economically and socially, has left many young Muslims torn between the secular West and their religious heritage. This inner conflict makes them especially vulnerable to extremism [. ...] Despite the economic opportunities in the United States, the powerful gravitational pull of individuals' religious roots and identity sometimes supersedes the assimilating nature of American society which includes pursuit of a professional career, financial stability and material comforts (Silver/Bhatt NYPD 2007: 82).

On a related note, Schirrmacher examines various reasons why young people in Western countries may convert to Islam or undergo a radicalization in their Muslim belief. She explains that Islam in times of great disorientation and arbitrariness gives the individual clear behavioural patterns and instructions, as was pointed out above. Contrary to Christian belief, Islam would necessitate not first and foremost an examination of one's conscience but the adherence to rules and rites which give more unambiguous answers to the question of acceptable behavior (Schirrmacher 2010: 5). Apart from the experience of a community, a conversion to Islam seems to give young people in the West stability, may provide the individual with a system of identification and can also be regarded as a form of protest (expressed by habits and dress) against the more secularised parental generation or the wider society, by which they feel excluded or not fully accepted (Schirrmacher 2010: 5). A British MI5 report from 2008 also confirms that fundamentalist groups often function as a kind of "'fictive kin', replacing lost ties to family or community" (Travis 2008: n.p.). What is more, it is apparently not an intensive involvement in Islamic studies which makes people susceptible to radicalization and violence but the opposite. According to Schirrmacher, jihadists tend to have no real theological interest, knowledge or education (Schirrmacher 2010: 6).

Apparently, there are two groups that are exceedingly in danger of falling prey to jihadist cells. The first group supposedly consists of students under the age of 35 who came to Europe as adults and believe to be outsiders. They suffer from the anonymity and felt lack of solidarity in Western countries and feel confused by the multitude of freedoms and choices, thus finding recognition and a feeling of belonging in radical circles (Schirrmacher 2010: 8). The protagonist in Kureishi's novel (and partly also in Hamid's work) resembles the profile examined by Schirrmacher, as we are going to see in the following chapters. The second group consists of young people from middle-class families from the second or third migrant generation, who grew up in Europe but still feel excluded and turn to radical groups – not for primarily political, economic or religious reasons but in search of their own identity and their place in society (Schirrmacher 2010: 9). Sebastian Faulks depicts such an adolescent search for

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

identity in his novel *A Week in December*, and it will be interesting to analyse if and in which respects his portrayal differs from Kureishi's and Hamid's versions.

All novels of this literary corpus feature 'disjunctions' and 'crises' which individuals try to resolve. The protagonists, however, have different backgrounds: some of them were raised in Western environments, others come to the West for their education, and a third group only comes in contact with Western influences through war and foreign invasion. It will be worthwhile to have a look at how background, according to the novels' tenor, influences a protagonist's embrace of violence. I believe I will be able to argue on good grounds that the novels strive to remind people of something fundamentalist networks deny, namely "that they have other identities too and that they have to decide on many important political and moral matters and take responsibility for their decisions" (Sen 2006: 83). Religion is only one of many allegiances and individuals have to deal with many divided loyalties and identity markers.

With the topic of integration and multiculturalism, the experience of migration and the impact of nationality, ethnicity, culture, and religion on personal identity move into the focus. Khan explains how through migration, religion might become a more important marker of identity when racial and ethnic differences move to the forefront:

> In traditional Muslim societies, nationalism has become a potent force, with tribalism still retaining its influence [...]. These sources of identity provide some secular basis for the construction of the self in Muslim narratives. But when Muslims migrate to the West, where their ethnic and racial differences are highlighted through institutional forms of discrimination, Islam becomes the most important source of identity marker and the vehicle that connects their past (in the Muslim World) to their future (in the West). Muslims in Europe and America are still negotiating their place within the dominant political philosophical narratives of the West (Khan 2011: 298).

Public debates about religion and the role of Islam in a society are important for the horizon of experience of the authors under discussion. Moreover, recent studies, such as the Open Society Foundations Study *Muslims in Europe* (2010), have shown that values and opinions of Muslims in European countries depend not only on religious belief but also on the milieus they live in, the political and cultural framework conditions and their treatment by the majority society.[32] In this context, a PEW survey (not surprisingly) discovered in 2002 that many people are still critical of immigration and think that immigrants have a bad influence on their country. In the United States this number amounted to 43%, in Great Britain and France it was even higher with 50% (Pew Research Center 2002: 44). It will be interesting to see how these numbers develop in the next years in view of the refugee crisis currently keeping Europe in suspense. What is more, people in the US according to a recent survey from 2013 are very dissatisfied with immigration policies. Even though there is no general agreement on specific approaches, 75% of those polled believed that major changes have to be made, and 35% even claimed that US immigration policy has to be rebuilt com-

32 See also Almond/Sivan/Appleby 1995 (4) on the influence of ethnic composition and political regime on the growth and methods of fundamentalist groups.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

pletely (Pew Research Centre 2013 (3): 1). However, it is also important to state that views on immigration do not seem to be predominantly shaped by religious assumptions. In the U.S. for instance, only 7% of the sample claimed that religion has the biggest influence on their attitude towards immigration (Pew Research Centre 2010 (3): 5). Some contextual commentary about the 'state of the nation' in Great Britain and the United States concerning the role of religion in society and the integration of Muslim migrants will enable us to analyse the novels in a broader framework.

A look at England seems to back the theory of a large-scale privatisation of religion. In contrast to Northern Ireland, where religion is inextricably interwoven with political and economic issues, English people show rather low levels of active exercise of religion connected to the large churches. The United Kingdom is shaped by its long colonial history, being home to millions of Muslim migrants from former colonies such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. While the government policy towards migrants is a marked multiculturalist stance and embraces cultural and religious diversity, an increasing number of critics problematise the development of parallel societies. Furthermore, despite the official embrace of multiculturalism, there have been several events since the Second World War that denoted serious problems – both nationally as well as internationally. The Brighton Riots in 1981 and the following Scarman Report, for instance, pointed to the fact that the demanded integration of migrants was apparently impeded in many cases by "state-sanctioned discrimination" (Brighton 2007: 7). Moreover, the fate of the rather secularised Muslim people in Bosnia and Kosovo during the genocide in Yugoslavia in the 1990 s furthermore seemed to prove that integration or even assimilation is no guarantee for protection and security. The topic of Islamic fundamentalism naturally hit the headlines when Great Britain, as a close ally of the United States, joined the US in its 'War on Terror'. As Brighton points out, increasing Muslim radicalisation and home-grown terrorism in Britain, which became painfully visible with the London-bombings in 2005, not only originated in a supposed lack of integration of the terrorists but also in a reaction to British foreign policy (Brighton 2007).

As recent findings of the "Open Society Foundation" on "Muslims in London" from 2012 underline, racial discrimination is still felt as an acute problem by both Muslim and non-Muslim participants in the survey. Interestingly, Muslims perceive discrimination on the grounds of religion much more acutely. The survey summarises:

> Experiences and perception of racial discrimination were felt to be high in the UK with over 70 per cent of both groups believing there was a lot or fair amount of racial discrimination in the country. This stands out in contrast to the perceptions of religious discrimination which was felt by 86 per cent of Muslims respondents to be a lot or a fair amount compared with only 21 per cent of non-Muslims (Open Society Foundations 2012 (a): 2).

This perception seems to be in line with the results of a 2008 European Values survey on immigration in Europe. Whereas in France, for instance, between 52 and 59 % of the people were of the opinion that immigrants from less developed countries are always welcome (at least as long as there are enough jobs) and in Spain even more than 70 %, only 30-39 % of British citizens supported this view – making Britain (together

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

with Hungary) take last place of all European countries (Halman/Sieben/Zundert 2012: 109). Furthermore, between 55 and 69 % of Britons think "that there are too many immigrants in their country today" (Halman/Sieben/Zundert 2012: 111), and the expectation that people from other countries should adjust or assimilate completely to their new country is now as strong as it is in France (Halman/Sieben/Zundert 2012: 112).

What is more, economic issues and media representation were identified as problematic issues. The report states that in the surveyed borough, Muslims suffered from the highest unemployment rates (Open Society Foundations 2012 (a): 3). Moreover,

> Muslims noted that the national and local media had vastly different ways of reporting and representing Muslims. Some felt that the local media were willing and engaged with them on stories as residents whereas the national media were constant in their portrayal of Muslims as terrorists and generally more negative and hostile (Open Society Foundations 2012 (a): 5).

Faulks' *A Week in December* as well as Kureishi's *The Black Album* are set in London. In this respect, it is important to see whether the two novels tend to reinforce or undermine these negative media portrayals. The political situation in Britain is also relevant because it shaped the horizon of experience of the mentioned authors. Faulks is British born and raised. Kureishi also grew up in Britain but has a Pakistani background, just like the protagonist of his novel. Hamid moved from the United States to London and now possesses a British citizenship, dividing his time between Pakistan and England. Accordingly, many of the authors can adopt a double perspective on the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism, since they acquired an insight into two or more cultural and religious backgrounds.

The situation in the United States is particularly important for Mohsin Hamid's work. Hamid is a Muslim and was born and partly raised in Pakistan. Nevertheless, England and the United States have equally become centres of his life, the latter of which is the major setting of his novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. In the US, religious belief and practice is much more pronounced than nearly everywhere in Europe. As Casanova notes, the secular institutional differentiation neither involved a decline in religious beliefs nor a privatisation of religion, which leads to the circumstance that politics and religion often commingle despite the strict separation of church and state (Casanova 2010: 2). This interaction also becomes visible in the public rhetoric of American politicians surrounding the 'war on terror' and other questions of national interest.[33] In general, the electoral behaviour of American citizens seems to depend much more on their form of religiosity than this is the case in countries such as England or France. Paraphrasing Ostendorf's analysis of the reasons for these developments, one could say that the first amendment of the American constitution, which codifies the strict separation of church and state (anti-establishment clause) and si-

33 Many newspaper articles in recent years have been dealing with the American religious rhetoric in speeches concerning the 'war on terror', which encountered unease even by other Christians in European countries. See, for instance, Ford (*The Christian Science Monitor*) 19.09.2001, Goodstein (*The New York Times*) 9.02.2003 or Daloglu (*Washington Times*) 23.10.2006.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

multaneously guarantees individual religious exercise (free exercise clause), creates a dialectic tension between a secular state and its religious citizens, and facilitates a free market of religious denominations that came to be the cornerstone of American grass roots democracy (Ostendorf 2010: 69).

Concepts such as the 'City upon a hill', 'God's own country', and 'Manifest Destiny' hint at the fact that "religion has always been a major force in U.S. politics, policy, identity and culture [...and that religion] explains both Americans' sense of themselves as a chosen people and the belief that they have a duty to spread their values throughout the world" (Mead 2006: 24). As Ostendorf illustrates, 'moral authenticity' and religious credibility seem to be more important for Americans than class affiliation and political programme, so that these identity markers have to be instrumentalised by politicians in order to be politically successful (Ostendorff 2010: 81). However, we have to state that despite the alliances between conservative evangelicals and the US government under George W. Bush which

> created the impression outside the United States of a nation rallying around a single religious faith and devoted to spreading it across the globe [...] religious heterogeneity and a large number of religious practices and holy scriptures – as well as resistance to such religiosity – are incongruously interwoven with American culture and history (Cortiel et al. 2011: xi).

One of the concepts that facilitated this development was the concept of civil religion[34]. The U.S. also experienced a separation of church and state, but this did not relegate religion from the public sphere. As Horning emphasises, Muslim migrants traditionally enjoyed more acceptance in the United States than in most European countries due to a long history of religious tolerance and dialogue, which has been taking place in the US early on, while Europe was still caught up in religious wars within the Christian faith in the wake of the Reformation as well as against Jews and Muslims for power and territorial gain (Hornung 2011: 286). These different historical preconditions and developments facilitated what Boyer calls a "freewheeling, entrepreneurial religious environment" (Boyer 2011: 293), which seems to be beneficial for immigrants of different faiths.

This background also provides a positive initial situation for the inclusion of Islam. According to recent surveys by the PEW Centre, Muslims in the United States seem to be well-integrated and on average quite content with their lives. Furthermore, they seem to be able to identify quite well with being American and believe in the advancement opportunities the United States has to offer. They are described in a survey as

> largely assimilated, happy with their lives, and moderate with respect to many of the issues that have divided Muslims and Westerners around the world. Muslim Americans are a highly diverse population, one largely comprised of immigrants. Nonetheless, they are

34 Civil religion is described by Beiner as the alternative to liberalism. He describes the concept as "the appropriation of religion by politics for its own purposes. […] *Civil religion is the empowerment of religion, not for the sake of religion, but for the sake of enhanced citizenship* – of making members of the political community better citizens, in accordance with whatever conception one holds of what constitutes being a good citizen" (Beiner 2011: 1-2, emphasis in original).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> decidedly American in their outlook, values, and attitudes. Overwhelmingly, they believe that hard work pays off in this society. This belief is reflected in Muslim American income and education levels, which generally mirror those of the general public (Pew Research Center 2007: 1).

As we are going to see, Hamid draws a similar picture in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The novel features a protagonist who is not only well-integrated but also successful and, at the beginning, is eager to seamlessly blend into American society. According to the Pew reports, this appreciation of the United States by Muslims is also mirrored in low levels of support for Islamic fundamentalism, even though the younger generation seems to become slightly more susceptible to radical ideas. A 2007 poll revealed that younger American Muslims show a stronger sense of religious identity and more sympathy for the idea that terrorist acts such as suicide bombings might be justified in certain cases than older U.S. Muslims; but in general, American Muslims show one of the highest levels of rejection of Islamic extremism worldwide (Pew Research Center 2007: 1-2).

Apparently, Muslims are also better off in US-American society than they are in many other countries where they constitute a minority. Nevertheless, 9/11 triggered distrust and anxiety on both sides that still prevail. According to the abovementioned report, more than 50 % of American Muslims felt singled out for surveillance after 9/11 and think their lives have become more difficult due to widespread stereotypes and distrust, job discrimination and public harassment (Pew Research Center 2007: 2, 4 and 35-36). But more than actual harassment, Muslim Americans fear discrimination, prejudice and racism as well as the feeling of being classified as terrorists (Pew Research Center 2007: 36). The stereotype of Islam as being inherently violent seems to have gained new vigour in the wake of the war on terror despite consistently low levels of support among Muslim US-Americans for Islamic extremism and suicide attacks (Pew Research Center 2011 (3): 1). Nonetheless, a tense atmosphere often resulted in verbal or physical attacks:

> Roughly four-in-10 (42%) Muslims under the age of 30 say in the past year they have experienced verbal taunts, been treated with suspicion, been physically threatened or attacked, or been targeted by police because they are Muslims, compared with 29% of Muslims who are 30 years old or older. […] While younger Muslims appear to encounter more intolerant acts, they also are more likely to have had positive encounters: 40% say someone has expressed support for them because they are Muslim, compared with 29% of those 30 or older. (Pew Research Center 2007: 38-39).

Verbal abuse and stigmatization – even of fully integrated and appreciated members of society – is a topic Hamid takes up in his novel. As we are going to see in the following chapters, 9/11 marks a turning point in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in that it not only changes people's perception of the protagonist but also forces him to reconsider his own loyalties and role in Western society. This feeling of tension and distrust is also confirmed by the views of non-Muslim Americans. A survey from 2009 shows that 58 % of all polled Americans think that Muslims have to face a lot of discrimination – more than any other religious group (Pew Research Center 2009: 1 and 5). The report, furthermore, suggests that this might be linked to the fact that only 45 % of

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Americans in 2009 actually personally knew a Muslim (Pew Research Centre 2009: 8) and that Islam is also the religion which is viewed by the majority of American people as somewhat or very different from their own creed (Pew Research Center 2009: 3-4). Again, suspicion, or even rejection seems to be linked to a lack of insight and knowledge[35] as well as to the feeling of alienation and extraneousness. It will be worthwhile to analyse through which content and by which structural and narratological means the novels promote or undermine these feelings. In the chapter on ethical criticism I will elaborate on the positive potential of literature to open up new ways of understanding by showing perspectives we might not encounter or be familiar with in real life.

On the whole, the overall attitudes of Muslims to the U.S. and its political course seem to be more positive now than they were during the presidency of George W. Bush. The performance of President Obama was approved by 76% of the American Muslim population whereas only 15 % approved of George W. Bush's policies (Pew Research Center 2011(3): 2-3 and 71). Concerning the media portrayal of Islam it can be assessed that reports about Islam and the respective controversies made up for most of the media coverage about religion in 2011, but that religious issues at the same time only accounted for 0,7 % of mainstream media coverage that year (Pew Research Center 2012 (1): 1). This shows that while Islam is still an important and controversial topic, religion as such does not get the attention by the media anymore that 9/11 seemed to herald.[36]

The American and British contexts are again totally different from the preconditions Yasmina Khadra experiences in France. Algeria, where he comes from, was a French colony for a long time. Approximately 99% of the population in Algeria is Muslim. After independence from France in 1962, Sunni Islam could be established as state religion, and the Sharia was introduced as legal basis over time. The Algerian Civil War between the Algerian government and various Islamist groups from 1991 to 2002 caused an estimated 150, 000 to 200, 000 casualties. The defeat of the *Armed Islamic Group* and the surrender of the *Islamic Salvation Army* ended a war that had been triggered by huge economic problems, high unemployment rates and the brutal suppression of any public dissent by the government. The conflict escalated into grave human rights violations and massacres on both sides. The state of emergency was only lifted in February 2011. France, where Khadra lives in exile, forms a strong contrast

35 To quote an example for the measurement of knowledgeability: Remarkably, in 2009 only 41 % of the polled Americans were able to identify 'Allah' as the Muslim name for God and the Koran as the holy book of Islam. In 2002 only 33 % knew this. People who have only low familiarity with the Muslim faith are ostensibly much more likely to see Islam as a violent religion (Pew Research Center 2009: 9-11).

36 It will be interesting to investigate in the next few years to which extent the topic of religion will again gain centre stage in the context of discussions about the religious roots of ISIS and the proxy war between Sunnis and Shiites in Syria. What we also see in the wake of the current 'refugee crisis' in Europe are affirmations of a 'Christian core culture' in diverse media. To my mind, a renewed interest in religion as such seems to be in the ascendant, even though one could argue that this focus is often informed by highly dubious slogans and motivated by the endeavour to establish boundaries and safeguard supposed national interests.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

to Algeria, concerning the role of religion in state politics, since it is characterised by a legal and ideological *laïcité*. Roy explains that

> France may be the only democracy that has fought religion in order to impose a state-enforced secularism. In France, *laïcité* is an exacerbated, politicized, and ideological form of Western secularism […which] defines national cohesion by asserting a purely political identity that confines to the private sphere any specific religious or cultural identities. Outside France, this very offensive and militant *laïcité* is perceived as excessive, and even undemocratic, since it violates individual freedom (Roy 2007: xii-xiii).

With the development of its own form of secularity, France can be regarded as an exceptional case even in Western Europe. In contrast to its neighbouring countries, 18 % of the population claim to be atheist (Halman/Sieben/Zundert 2012: 71).

In this regard, Khan utters harsh criticism of the European politics of secularisation and a supposed lack of tolerance for people who do practice their belief openly and wholeheartedly:

> The mask of secularity that Europe wears is basically the mischaracterization of a very low degree of religious observance in Europe as philosophical secularism. Indeed, although a European is not likely to obey the Ten Commandments, he or she will nevertheless vote to include or exclude persons based on their religious identity (i.e.; Turkey from the EU). Communalism without the Ten Commandments is not secularism; it is religious politics without religiosity (Khan 2011: 296).

The entanglement of religion with politics, nationalism, culture and other factors necessarily creates difficulties for an analysis of the novels, since religious phenomena are never described as exclusively religious. The politicisation of religion promoted a similar distrust for prevalent media images of Muslims in France as it did in England and the United States. Respondents of the 'Muslims in Paris' survey blamed the media "for the hostile representation of Muslims and the creation of Islam as a threat" (Open Society Foundations 2012 (b): 5). Apparently, we can find similarities concerning a perceived bias of media portrayals, which may fuel negative stereotypes and prejudices against Muslim people. It is one of my hypotheses that all authors I am going to discuss in detail strive to subvert exactly this one-sided representation by giving us an insight into the fictive lives of individuals, which makes them human and facilitates a change of perspective.

2.6) Controversial discourses

2.6.1) 'Orientalism' and 'Occidentalism'

The relationship between 'Islam' and 'Christianity', 'East' and 'West' or 'Orient' and 'Occident' is a topic of lasting fascination for artists but also a field that engendered a plethora of scientific criticism. A variety of seminal works is especially concerned with the ideological implications of representation, which relates to important issues in this study. Representations of the 'Orient' and Islam have often been accused as being influenced by stereotypes, prejudices and misconceptions. However, 'Orientalism'

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

has not always carried the negative connotations it conjures up today, when the term is mostly linked to imperialism and a depiction of the Orient that recalls negative stereotypes and mirrors unequal power relations. The word originally denoted a positive and sympathetic interest of Western scholars in the culture, language, philosophy and religion of Eastern countries (cf. MacKenzie 1995: xii, Al-Dabbagh 2010: 15). As Jung and Warraq underline, Orientalists of several centuries deserve merit for their curiosity, which drove them to explore foreign cultures – often at the risk of their own life. By sharing their knowledge, they built bridges between peoples. As Warraq notes, Orientalists often worked and lived outside the Western colonial empire, rejected the Western claim to power in the East and did not display racism but veneration, love and respect for the Orientals (Warraq 2007: 407, see also Jung 2011: 30). This positive picture remained meaningful until decolonisation set in after the Second World War, when the picture of 'Orientalism' changed rapidly with the independence of many former colonies:

> Then, in a little more than twenty years, it came to mean not only the work of the orientalist and a character, style or quality associated with the Eastern nations, but also a corporate institution, designed for dealing with the orient, a partial view of Islam, an instrument of Western imperialism, a style of thought, based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between orient and occident, and even an ideology, justifying and accounting for the subjugation of blacks, Palestinian Arabs, women and many other supposedly deprived groups and peoples (Macfie 2000: 2).

This altered perception was shaped and promoted by scholars, such as Anouar Abdel-Malek.[37] A.L. Tibawi[38], Bryan S. Turner[39], and, most prominently, Edward Said,

37 Abdel-Malek is an Egyptian scholar. In 1963 he published his famous article 'Orientalism in Crisis', in which he claimed that the objectification of Orientals has come to an end through decolonization. He made a significant contribution towards describing the common conceptions, methods and instruments of traditional Orientalism. Abdel-Malek's typology thus predates Said's description of the characteristics of Orientalism. Abdel-Malek primarily animadverts the construction of an essentialist 'Oriental' character by using stereotypical ethnic descriptions of countries and people. He criticises the Western focus on the religion and language of other cultures disregarding their social evolution, the ostensibly racist nature of most Orientalist source material as well as the disrespect and neglect of Oriental scholars by the West (Abdel-Malek 2000 [1963]: 50-53).

38 Tibawi is a Palestinian Arab historian, partly educated in London. As a Muslim believer, he focuses on the Orientalist depiction of Islam and criticises it as stereotypical and led by wrong assumptions about the Koran. Tibawi traces the long history of Christian-Muslim power struggles and claims to identify an "active co-operation between the academic orientalist and the evangelizing missionary […both relying on the basic assumption] that Islam might be transformed through 'westernization' or 'modernization', or 'reformation'" (Tibawi 2000 [1964]: 60). He deplores that many Orientalists "tend to create ill-feeling among Muslims […] having on the whole rejected the Muslim doctrine of the divine origin of Islam, and having moreover decided that Muhammad the man, and not any divine agency, was responsible for the composition of the Qur'an" (Tibawi 2000 [1964]: 64). For a response to Tibawi that underlines the positive achievements of Orientalists see Gabrieli (2000 [1965]: 79-85).

39 Bryan S. Turner is a dual citizen of Britain and Australia and a distinguished Marxist sociologist with a strong research interest in globalisation and religion. In 1994 – 16 years after the publication of Said's *Orientalism* – his seminal work *Orientalism, Postmodernism, and Globalism* was published. In contrast to Said, however, he draws a more nuanced picture of Orientalism, which he understands as a discourse "about the origins of the West, not the origins of the East" (Turner 1994: 100). He also

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

whose standpoints I am going to outline briefly,[40] also had a very large influence. Said's seminal study *Orientalism* (first published in 1978) deeply influenced postcolonial debates about the perception and depiction of the 'East' or the 'Orient' by the 'West'. Said claimed that representations of the Orient by Western scholars, scientists and artists have been distorted by stereotypes and misgivings which reflect the mechanisms used to legitimize (colonial) power and domination. Said sees Western representations of the East as inherently flawed, hostile and racist, serving a colonial system of exploitation and oppression, which still continues to have effect. The Orient is thus defined as "a European invention" (Said 2003 [1978]: 1), one of Europe's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (Said 2003 [1978]: 1) and its "surrogate and even underground self" (Said 2003 [1978]: 3). This construct helped to strengthen European identity by means of dissociation of an allegedly different 'East'. Orientalism is consequently labelled as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 2003 [1978]: 3). According to Said, Orientalism can be manifest or latent. The manifest form signifies an attitude that is articulated openly; the latent form is much more subconscious and is visible in underlying assumptions that are not questioned any more. Said argues that despite changes in the manifest forms of Orientalism "the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent Orientalism is more or less constant [... visible in the unspoken but unchanging perception of] the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability" (Said 2003 [1978]: 206). With respect to Islam, Said decries the allegedly ongoing stigmatization of 'the Muslim' as "despised heretic" and "anti-Zionist" (Said 2000 [1976]: 105).

As McLeod summarises[41], Said criticises Orientalism mainly for being a Western fantasy that is not based on facts but fabricated in order to construct binaries or irreconcilable differences between a superior Occident/West and an inferior and 'other' Orient/East (McLeod 2000: 41). Said sees Orientalism as way of thinking which managed to transform constructed, subjective views into allegedly scientific facts, which then became institutionalised. These supposed facts spread across various disciplines from philology and novel writing via biology and history to political and economic

tries to identify possible ways to avoid essentialism. He writes: "Four lines of development are important as an alternative to orientalism. The first is to abandon all reified notions of 'Islam' as a universal essence in order to allow us to study many 'Islams' in all their complexity and difference. […] Second, we need to see these Islams within a global context of interpenetration with the world-system. We need to understand Islamic debates in a deeply global context. […] Third, sociology itself has to break out of its nationalistic and parochial concerns with particular nation-states from a society-centred perspective. […] Fourth, the anthropological gaze should be also directed towards the otherness of Western culture in order to dislodge the privileged position of dominant Western cultures" (Turner 1994: 104).

40 As motivation for the rejection of Orientalism by the abovementioned scholars Macfie sees "a hatred of colonialism and imperialism (Abdel-Malek); a dislike of what was perceived by some to be the lack of respect, shown by many English orientalists, for Islam (Tibawi); a personal sense of loss and national disintegration (Said); and an aversion to the workings of the capitalist system (Turner)" (Macfie 2000: 3).

41 The following two paragraphs summarize McLeod's interpretation of Said's major points (Mc Leod 2000: 40-46) and are solely based on his ideas.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

theory and were used to legitimise systems of political domination, such as the Western colonial rule (McLeod 2000: 42-43).

McLeod outlines six major stereotypes about 'the Orient' that Said criticizes in his work. First, the Orient is presented as timeless, unchanging and cut off from Western scientific and historical progress. Secondly, the Orient is perceived as strange (abnormal, eccentric, bizarre and irrational) and, thirdly, it has a racist dimension. Western representations of Orientals, according to Said, often contain generalizing racial stereotypes and stock characters such as "the murderous and violent Arab, the lazy Indian and the inscrutable Chinaman" (McLeod 2000: 44). As a fourth point, Orientalism is supposed to promote gender stereotypes and a picture of Oriental men and women as abnormal and in conflict with Western moral codes and role expectations. Thus, Oriental males were often portrayed as effeminate and females as sexually promiscuous. In line with this depiction, Said's fifth point of criticism refers to the symbolical gendering of the Orient as feminine, which was equivalent to "passive, submissive, exotic, luxurious, sexually mysterious and tempting; while the West becomes 'masculine' – that is, active, dominant, heroic, rational, self-controlled and ascetic" (McLeod 2000: 45). Sixthly, Said passes censure on the representation of the Oriental as degenerate and the focus on stereotypical weaknesses connected to immorality and a lack of civilisation and self-discipline such as "cowardliness, laziness, untrustworthiness, fickleness, laxity, violence and lust" (McLeod 2000: 46).

In his later essays such as "Orientalism Reconsidered" (Said 1997 [1985]: 126-144), Said presents a more nuanced picture of his original theory. Nevertheless, he continues to emphasise his major points, focusing on misrepresentation and power relationships. Till the present day, his theory continues to provoke criticism that addresses methodological as well as theoretical inconsistencies[42]. His critics find fault with Said's neglect of the historical development of Orientalism and his quotation of incorrect historical facts, and they point out that Said ignores the resistance against essentialist images by Eastern as well as Western scholars, to mention but a few points. Moore-Gilbert summarises the inconsistencies of Said's representations of Orientalism and his methods as follows:

> [I]t is unclear whether Orientalism is the cause, or consequence, of imperialism. It is equally unclear whether Orientalism can be seen as a misrepresentation or ideological distortion of the East if 'reality' is itself, in fact, constructed by discourse. Nor is it easy to see how any alternative to Orientalism is possible if 'truth' is always a fictive construct authorized by relations of power. [...] At times, as in his treatment of literature and of gender issues in Orientalism, Said's analysis is undoubtedly homogenizing in precisely the way he accuses Orientalism itself of being. Said's accounts of resistance to Orientalism are equally conflictual. On the one hand he concedes the existence of 'good' Orientalists (and there are a surprising number in *Orientalism*) who challenge the totalizing 'vision' of the discourse. On the other he suggests that no resistance from within the dominant formation was possible [...] (Moore-Gilbert/Stanton/Maley 1997: 24-25).

42 For a valuable synopsis of Said's studies in relation to the theories by Foucault and Gramsci on which he bases his work see Childs/Williams (1997: 97-121). For a useful exploration of the theoretical inconsistencies and contradictions in Said's approach see Ahmad (2000 [1991]).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

As Irwin mentions, Said, beyond that, narrowly concentrates on the Arab heartland even though most Muslims worldwide live outside this region, strongly denunciates Jewish Orientalists and produced a work that focuses on an exclusively Western readership (Irwin 2006: 282). Irrespective of his supposed anti-Jewish standpoint, Said also had many Arab critics who attacked his work for misrepresenting Islam, stereotyping Orientalism and disrespecting contemporary Arab critics (Irwin 2006: 299-300). One of the most fervent 'Oriental' critics is probably Ibn Warraq[43], who presents a close reading and comprehensive account of criticism in his work *Defending the West.* Additional to the criticism mentioned above, he scorches Said for 'intellectual dishonesty' and intentional misinterpretation, notorious anti-Westernism as well as a lack of understanding of the West and an indulgence in self-pity and victimhood, which not only prevents an appreciation of the Orient as an independent actor but also supplies false excuses (Warraq 2007: 18-45). Warraq uses very harsh words when judging Said's book. According to him, *Orientalism*

> taught an entire generation of Arabs the art of self-pity – 'were it not for the wicked imperialists, racists and Zionists, we would be great once more' – encouraged the Islamic fundamentalist generation of the 1980 s, bludgeoned into silence any criticism of Islam, and even stopped dead the research of eminent Islamologists who felt their findings might offend Muslim sensibilities and who dared not risk being labeled 'Orientalist.' The aggressive tone of *Orientalism* is what I have called 'intellectual terrorism,' since it seeks to convince not by arguments or historical analysis, but by spraying charges of racism, imperialism, and Eurocentrism from a moral high ground [...] (Warraq 2007: 18).

Warraq's surprising association of the rise of Islamic fundamentalist currents with Said's reasonings, again, underlines the interweaving of literary and political discourses and the power intellectuals might have in producing ideological reference systems political actors may draw upon.

Another case in point attracting criticism was the changing historical background and motivation of Orientalist research that was denied by Said. The Islamic region he focuses on has not always been determined by imperialism. As Lewis, Said's most fervent and well-known adversary, notes, in the Middle Ages the study of the Orient and Islam in European countries had a defensive purpose and pursued the objective of investigating a conqueror – not a victim (Lewis 2000 [1993]: 261). The undertones and purposes of Orientalist scholarship may have changed over time but cannot be solely described as a means of domination and oppression. At all times, there existed a multitude of different voices and diverse images of the Orient, often generated through mutual cultural exchanges at eye level, as Melman demonstrates in her analysis of the accounts of women travellers in these regions (Melman 1992). Richardson, similarly, deplores that Said cements the status of Orientals as objects in describing Orientalism

43 Ibn Warraq is a pen name and means 'son of a papermaker' – an allusion to the Muslim sceptical scholar Muhammad al Warraq who lived in the 9th century. Warraq was born in India, grew up in Pakistan and later went to school in Britain. He is known for his harsh and controversial criticism of Islam and thus hides his real name and identity for fear of assaults. He considers himself to be a humanist and an agnostic, but he works together with liberal Muslim scholars and is founder of the Institute for the Secularisation of Islamic Society (ISIS).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

as a one-way process that attaches meaning to an object. This object supposedly does not contribute anything to the discussion and cannot defend or represent itself by creating alternate pictures, but passively endures its own stigmatization through powerful external forces (Richardson 2000 [1990]: 210-211).

What is more, many critics argue (as Said also concedes in his later statements) that Orientals themselves stereotype the West in the same ways (cf. Halliday 1993: 160-161, Jung 2011: 27) – a phenomenon that was later on labelled 'Occidentalism' by Buruma and Margalit. In their eponymous study, they examine the deep-rooted prejudices towards Western countries and different reasons for a rejection of Western modernity. At the outset of their work lies a criticism of essentialist assumptions that can also be found in Said's work. What is deplored, first and foremost, is not the repudiation of 'the other' but an inherent anti-humanism, which leads to excessive contempt, disparagement and hatred that in last consequence may even deprive other human beings of the right to live. Buruma and Margalit underline that there is a huge difference between repudiating certain Western influences (such as capitalism or perceived moral decay) and a declaration of war on the West for these reasons that comes along with a complete demonisation of the enemy:

> This [Occidentalism] is not about policies, but about an idea, almost a vision, of a machinelike society without a human soul. So anti-Americanism plays a large role in hostile views of the West. Sometimes it even represents the West. But it is only part of the story. [...] The view of the West in Occidentalism is like the worst aspects of its counterpart, Orientalism, which strips its human targets of their humanity. [...] Occidentalism is at least as reductive; its bigotry simply turns the Orientalist view upside down. To diminish an entire society or a civilization to a mass of soulless, decadent, money-grubbing, rootless, faithless, unfeeling parasites is a form of intellectual destruction (Buruma/Margalit 2005: 9-10).

Buruma and Margalit neither see the United States as the sole target of anti-Western criticism nor do they ascribe a promotion of Occidentalist views to specific regions or religions. They identify several targets of Occidentalist attacks that go beyond the common rejection of globalisation and capitalism. They believe to have recognised

> a chain of hostility – hostility to the City, with its image of rootless, arrogant, greedy, decadent, frivolous cosmopolitanism; to the mind of the West, manifested in science and reason; to the settled bourgeois, whose existence is the antithesis of the self-sacrificing hero; and to the infidel, who must be crushed to make way for a world of pure faith (Buruma/Margalit 2005: 11).

Political and religious leaders can instrumentalise these essentialist images in the same way as Orientalist stereotypes have been used by the colonial élites to justify their power claims and devalue their subordinates. As Halliday notes, the use of essentialist images serves to decry the enemies in their entirety, which would not be possible with more diverse and nuanced notions of 'the other'. The term 'the West' epitomizes all that is to be rejected. Pointing to the example of Islamists, Halliday examines several tendencies that seem to underline this claim, analysing the hate speeches of Middle Eastern politicians against unbelievers, Zionists and other proclaimed enemies (cf. Halliday 1993: 161).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Notably, Orientals also partly embraced Orientalist assumptions if the representations served their own aims. Arab nationalists as well as Islamist currents incorporated some images into their own identity, such as the portrayal of Islam as "all-encompassing, determinant, and unchanging cultural entity" (Jung 2011: 7, see also al-Azm 2000 [1981]: 230-237). The 'Orient' has never been just the silent victim of Western oppression. Jung argues that it is contemporary Islamist movements who live up most to Orientalist stereotypes by stressing Sharia norms and emphasizing Islam as 'law religion', calling upon Islamic unity against imperialism, accentuating dichotomies between the West and a presumably 'authentic' Islamic tradition and equating jihad with social activism, therewith reinforcing the stereotypical image of Islam as violent religion (Jung 2011: 266-267). As a result, Western and Muslim essentialist images influenced each other, leading to an aggravation of prejudices. While Islamists presented essentialist pictures and rigid moral norms as positive points of orientation,

> Western observers comprehend Islamist agitation as a continuation of the orientalist narrative about Islam as a backward, anti-modern and essentially violent religion. [...] Facilitated by the technologically advancing communicative means of the global public sphere, orientalist and Islamist semantics reinforced each other throughout the twentieth century, establishing the hegemony of an essentialist global public knowledge on Islam (Jung 2011: 268).

Said has often been criticised for his theoretical inconsistencies and contradictions. I believe, however, that this has to be understood in a political framework. Said is not only an eminent comparative literary scholar, whose observations on British literature in the 18th and 19th centuries are quite pertinent, but also a practitioner and has always been interested in politics (with a strong focus on the Palestinian struggle in Israel).[44] What he criticizes with respect to Orientalists, he also criticizes about generalising and distorted negative pictures of the West in the East (Alessandrini 2000: 445). In his 2003 preface to his work *Orientalism*, for instance, Said not only criticises US policies and the widespread stigmatisation of Islam in the wake of 9/11 and the war on terror but also the unreflecting anti-Americanism and repressive regimes in many Muslim countries. He underlines his endeavour to subvert essentialisms from a humanist position and appeals to his readers:

> The point I want to conclude with now is to insist that the terrible reductive conflicts that herd people under falsely unifying rubrics like 'America,' 'The West' or 'Islam' and invent collective identities for large numbers of individuals who are actually quite diverse, cannot remain as potent as they are, and must be opposed, their murderous effectiveness vastly reduced in influence and mobilizing power. [...] Rather than the manufactured clash of civilizations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap,

44 Even though Said was born in Egypt, only spent a few months in Jerusalem and was for most of his life educated and based in the United States, studying at Princeton, doing a doctorate at Harvard and teaching at Columbia University in New York, he considered himself a Palestinian. As Irwin states not without sarcasm, Said "certainly thought of himself as a Palestinian and passionately identified with their sufferings […even though h]e grew up in a wealthy household in which Arabic was used only to speak to the servants" (Irwin 2006: 278). As his autobiography *Out of Place* (cf. Said 2000 [1999]) attests, Said nevertheless always saw himself as an outsider who does not belong.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow (Said 2003: xxii).

I would argue that the above-cited aim is shared by many authors of the present literary corpus, who ascribe great importance to humanism and a conception of the world that is based on an understanding of the diverse fate of individuals that cannot be explained with simple political, cultural or religious categories.

In this context, Al-Dabbagh reaffirms the positive aspects of literary Orientalism in building bridges and fostering mutual understanding. Putting forth the examples of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Walter Scott, he underscores the potential role of the writer as cultural ambassador and argues that creative artists often helped with their imaginative sympathy to spread images of common, unifying characteristics between East and West that promoted a rejection of essentialist notions (Al-Dabbagh 2010: 16). In that regard, it will be interesting for our analysis to have a closer look at whether the authors under discussion emphasise the distinctions and conflicts between 'the West' and 'Islam' or the commonalities and moments of mutual understanding. As Moore-Gilbert highlights, Said is often pessimistic about the future relationship between Western and non-Western countries but nevertheless appeals "to a transnational, transcultural and transethnic, even transcendental, notion of 'human experience'" (Moore-Gilbert/ Stanton/ Maley 1997: 24). The questions he raised remain of major importance.[45]

Furthermore, Dabashi highlights the role of the 'exilic intellectual' as a moral authority and his responsibility and importance for the creation of counter-knowledge against violent, hegemonic discourses (Dabashi 2009: xiii). Images of 'the East' as well as 'the West' may be distorted till the present day, and often misrepresentation serves political purposes. The central question, now, is how these stereotypes are addressed and countered. In Said's theory, the fixation of stereotypical images is closely linked to the process of writing. In "Shattered Myths" he outlines:

> A still more implicit and powerful difference posed by the Orientalist as against the Oriental is that the former writes about, whereas the Oriental is written about. [...] The Oriental is given as fixed, stable, in need of investigation, and in need even of knowledge about himself. There is no dialectic either desired or allowed. There is a source of information (the Oriental) and a source of knowledge (the Orientalist): in short, a writer and a subject matter otherwise inert. The relationship between the two is radically a matter of power, for which there are of course numerous images (Said 2000 [1975]: 92-93).

The passage links knowledge and writing with power and hierarchy. In this respect, it will be interesting to determine with respect to the present literary corpus who writes about whom and in which way. Hamid, for instance, plays with the notion of speech, perspective and power in a very extraordinary and forceful way. Important questions in this context are: Are the novels under discussion dialectic or do they only present one view? Is knowledge about the 'other' presented as fixed and objective or as subjective and questioning? Are questions or answers at the heart of the works?

45 For more positive criticism of and support for Said please cf. Schaar (2000 [1979]).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Even though Said's theory is not part of the main theoretical foundation of my work, it still forms an important ideological background for novels that deal with Islam. I am thus going to address stereotypical Orientalist and Occidentalist descriptions only where they may come up in specific novels to analyse in which ways they are used and to which ends. Central questions in this context are: Are these stereotypes presented unquestioned or are they undermined and ironically counteracted? Are they subtle or exaggerated? Do the novels feature stock characters or do they present characters and events in a more detailed and nuanced way? Do they depict 'East' and 'West' as polar opposites or underline commonalities?

2.6.2) 'Western liberalism' as point of criticism

The Western capitalist system and the 'liberalism' of its societies are described by the works as important triggers for fundamentalist radicalisation. Since this 'liberalism' features in all novels under discussion as polar opposite of Islamic fundamentalist thought and is also displayed in more detail by Hamid and Faulks, I am going to summarise briefly some topical points of criticism. What is known as 'liberalism' in Western countries today entails many diverse concepts, beliefs and ideals such as "open markets, international institutions, cooperative security, democratic community, progressive change, collective problem solving, shared sovereignty, [and] the rule of law" (Ikenberry 2), to mention but a few elements. At the same time, colloquial uses of the word 'liberal' may mean 'tolerant', 'generous', 'unprejudiced' or denote someone of a liberal political creed. These different facets of the term 'liberal' indicate three major concerns that are uttered against the West – not only by Muslim fundamentalist groups.

What is so harshly criticised is mostly 'economic libertarianism', as Faulks highlighted in my interview with him. Whereas the original meaning of liberalism and even libertarianism carries many positive notions, current manifestations of greed, exploitation and a very unequal distribution of wealth and resources exacerbate criticism of liberal economic approaches as such. Describing the basic principles of 'libertarianism', which has its historical roots in 19th century liberalism and the ideas of Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment, one can state that it is a philosophy that regards the liberty and rights of the individual as central value and pleads for a rigorous constraint of government interventions:

> While the word 'libertarian' had been used by anarchists to describe their own views since the nineteenth century, it was apparently not used in its now current sense until the 1960 s. As used in this new sense, it has been defined in a number of ways. It has at times been defined as the idea that the only value that is relevant to the political realm is freedom. Perhaps more lucidly, it has also been defined as a view about the legitimate functions of the state: that they are limited, if indeed the state has any legitimate functions at all, to protecting the individual from force and fraud, the enforcement of contracts, and defense against foreign aggression. [...Libertarianism] clearly rules out two categories of state coercion as impermissible. One is paternalistic coercion, in which the individual is forced to do or refrain from doing something because this is thought to be for the same

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> individual's own benefit [...]. The other is redistributive coercion: a libertarian would contend that if property is in the hands of its rightful owner, it would be wrong of the state to take it simply in order to make the distribution of property fairer (Hunt 2013: 3022).

The initial definition of the concept was built on the trust in the individual and their willingness to alleviate possible economic inequalities by charity and mutual aid, in absence of governmental interventions.

In the light of the world economic crisis, however, more and more people share considerable doubts concerning the likelihood of solving the problems caused by greed and exorbitance. Criticism nowadays comes from people all over the world, and protests primarily focus on the economic excesses of a globalised capitalist economy, which is – often in an undifferentiated way – associated with libertarian principles. Nieuwenhuys describes in her critical article on the social effects of 'neo-liberal globalism' that international economic institutions such as the World Bank or the IMF together with Western countries such as the United States propagate a potential alleviation of poverty through market liberalisation, privatisation and global laissez-faire (Nieuwenhuys 2006: 57). These conceptions, however, form a stark contrast to the figures Nieuwenhuys quotes and the conclusion she draws from this reality:

> Figures from the World Bank indicate that the present world is so out of balance that *twenty percent of world's population* – those who live in the approximately 30 richest countries – *consume eighty-five percent of the goods and services. Half of the world's population* – almost 3 billion people – *live on less than two dollars a day* and *approximately 1.2 billion people live in extreme poverty on less than one dollar a day.* [...G]lobalisation in its present form is too biased towards neo-liberal globalism. [...]As a result, this paradigm leads to globalisation of the economy, but not to globalisation of welfare, freedom, society, politics, democracy, environmental awareness, culture and morality. Ethically and socially responsible globalisation, however, cannot be based exclusively on economic values, but must build on ethical values and values of sustainability, such as respect for human life, for nature and its flora and fauna, and for justice and the right to development (Nieuwenhuys 2006: 59-60).

In this context, it is important to note that some of the novels in this literary corpus underline a strong link between radicalism and social grievances. Thus, it is important to bear in mind the bad preconditions many Muslims have to face, when we encounter stereotypes concerning the supposedly inherently violent nature of Islam. Many novelists underline the interconnection between religious radicalism, politics and economics. This is an interesting claim concerning the fact that 96 percent of the worldwide 1.57 billion Muslims live in developing countries (Armajani 2012: 2).

However, as protest groups like the 'Occupy' movement have recently shown, many people who live in rather wealthy countries and supposedly benefit from the global capitalist system also start questioning its sustainability and moral justification. Advocates of 'global business ethics' all over the world argue that globalisation provides multinational companies with much more power than they used to have. They exert power on governments as well as on individual living conditions and thus should also accept their increased responsibility for human rights and social conditions (see Frederick 2013: 2138). Starting in September 2011 with the 'Occupy Wall-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

street'[46] movement, the global financial system and large corporations, which own a disproportionate share of the global wealth, were publicly criticized in over 82 countries. The movements reacted to the latest peak of the global financial crisis and were inspired by the grassroots protests of the Arab spring. The media reported about demonstrations and protest camps in many big cities all over the world. Participants seemed to "regard themselves as being involved in a spontaneous process of democratic, egalitarian self-fashioning that has the potential to remake social life" (Nugent 2012: 281). The last protest camps in Washington D.C. and London were broken up by the authorities in February 2012. However, the 'Occupy' movement has introduced new ideas of resistance that continue to inspire people worldwide. Despite the diversity of the movement and its lack of concrete goals or suggestions for improving the system that is criticised, its emergence still marks a considerable turn away from sheer political apathy towards more civic activism and involvement. This is reflected in the slogan "We are the 99 %" (as opposed to the 1 % of earners who control so much of the global economic capital). People bethink themselves of their democratic rights and unite to utter their dissatisfaction, which – despite all criticism[47] – will linger in the memory of publics worldwide. As Nugent observes,

> [t]he sense of rupture that pervades these movements is not just temporal, social structural, and moral–ethical. It is also profoundly economic and political. Implicit in the words and actions of movement participants is a quite specific temporality of capitalism and representative democracy. […] There appears to be something close to consensus among movement participants about the forces that have given rise to Occupy. These are the twin crises of global capitalism and representative democracy—crises that have resonated across multiple spheres of social life (Nugent 2012: 281).

The wins of Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece and the widespread popularity of Bernie Sanders in the United States suggest that the social, political and economic consequences of the global capitalist system are regarded with concern worldwide. The works by Hamid and Faulks forcefully assert this concern.

In addition to the social downturns of the capitalist system addressed by Muslim fundamentalists, a second point of criticism addresses the ethical basis of the Western economy. Islamic ethics are firmly grounded in divine law. Virtue, truth and justice are wedded to the obedience to God's commands as exemplified in the life of the prophet Muhammad (see Kelsay 2013: 2801-2803). Despite the diverse approaches to ethics, duties and virtues within Islam, fundamentalist circles cannot accept laws that were made independently of religious principles. Rules that do not rely on fear of God and obedience to God's laws as laid down in (their interpretation of) the Koran are not considered to be just and rightful. At the core of fundamentalist economic theo-

46 Since the different facets of the Occupy movement cannot be discussed in this context, refer for further information to Juris (2012).

47 See for example Kersting (2010: 145-162). Kersting criticises the often undifferentiated reduction of liberalism to market radicalism and the fact that the prevalent critics of neoliberalism so often moralise without offering alternative concepts. He deplores that, to his mind, critics of capitalism use populist rhetoric and instrumentalise resentments. Furthermore, he argues that concepts like the welfare state in comparison to the capitalist economy equally encourage human selfishness and contribute nothing to educating people towards a more moral or ethical behaviour.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ries is a holistic approach and the belief that the economy cannot be separated from religious, political and social concerns (Kuran 1993 (a): 299). Islamic economic doctrines, according to Kuran, agree on the claim that a more moral behaviour in economics is needed which considers social interest, promotes sustainability and ideally rests on the precondition that "successful development requires imbuing society with a communitarian morality of self-sacrifice, altruism, and brotherhood" (Kuran 1993 (b): 326-327). Islamic banks try to implement several of these principles, for instance by their support for interest-free banking. As Marty and Appleby add, fundamentalists may be keen on dissociating themselves from secular society and are often seen as backward, but they are still able to adapt to current strategies and participate in the discourses on the modern political and economic developments they would like to change (Marty/Appleby 1995: 2).

A third point of criticism connected to a criticism of neo-liberal globalism refers to the strong individualism in Western societies. The individual moved into the focus whereas the importance and influence of the community waned in many Western societies. In several Muslim countries the importance of religious community and the ties of family and tribe are still stronger than in Western countries like Great Britain or the United States, where people tend to live in nuclear families and embrace notions of personal fulfilment and individuality. Indeed, novels such as Sebastian Faulks' *A Week in December* or Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* not only criticize the social downturns of 'neo-liberal globalism' but also the alienation, loneliness and atomisation of the individual connected to these processes.

2.6.3) Stereotypes and fears

In order to further understand the outlined stereotypes about 'Western liberalism' and 'Islam', the use of statistical evidence from surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center fact tank will serve as interesting background information for the following chapters. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Survey from spring 2011, which includes 23 nations, there are still certain tendencies and stereotypes connected to the perception of Islam in the West and the West in Islamic countries that are reflected to higher or lower degrees in the works at hand. According to the Pew Surveys, Western as well as Muslim publics perceive their mutual relationship to be poor (Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 11-12). The latest survey on prevalent prejudices, in July 2011, found that mutual negative stereotypes and pessimist attitudes concerning the relationship between 'Islam' and 'the West' still persist. Interestingly, 56 % of the surveyed French blame this deterioration of good relations on Muslims just as 34 % of the British and 40 % of U.S. citizens (Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 13). In Muslim countries we can see the mirror-image of this phenomenon with up to more than 70% of people in countries like Pakistan who give 'the West' the sole responsibility for the tense relationships (Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 13).

While Americans and Europeans see the main reasons for the economic disadvantages of Muslim countries first and foremost in widespread corruption and a lack

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

of democracy, Muslim publics see the influence of U.S. and Western policies as more detrimental (Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 14-15). However, people in Western as well as Muslim countries felt much stronger in 2011 than they did in 2006 that a lack of democratic structures could be a decisive reason for the lack of prosperity in Muslim countries (Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 16). Egypt, for instance, featured an even larger increase in people sharing this belief than Britain and the US, which is notable in the context of the developments related to the Arab Spring.

Why the Lack of Prosperity in Muslim Nations?

	Muslim publics	Western publics
	%	%
U.S. & Western policies	53	14
Government corruption	49	54
Lack of democracy	42	50
Lack of education	36	36
Islamic fundamentalism	12	32

Median % naming each item most or second most responsible across seven Muslim publics (Palestinian territories, Indonesia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan and Turkey) and across six Western publics (U.S., Spain, Germany, France, Britain and Russia).

Asked only of those who say Muslim nations should be more economically prosperous than they are today.

In predominantly Muslim countries, figures are for Muslims only.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q41 & Q42.

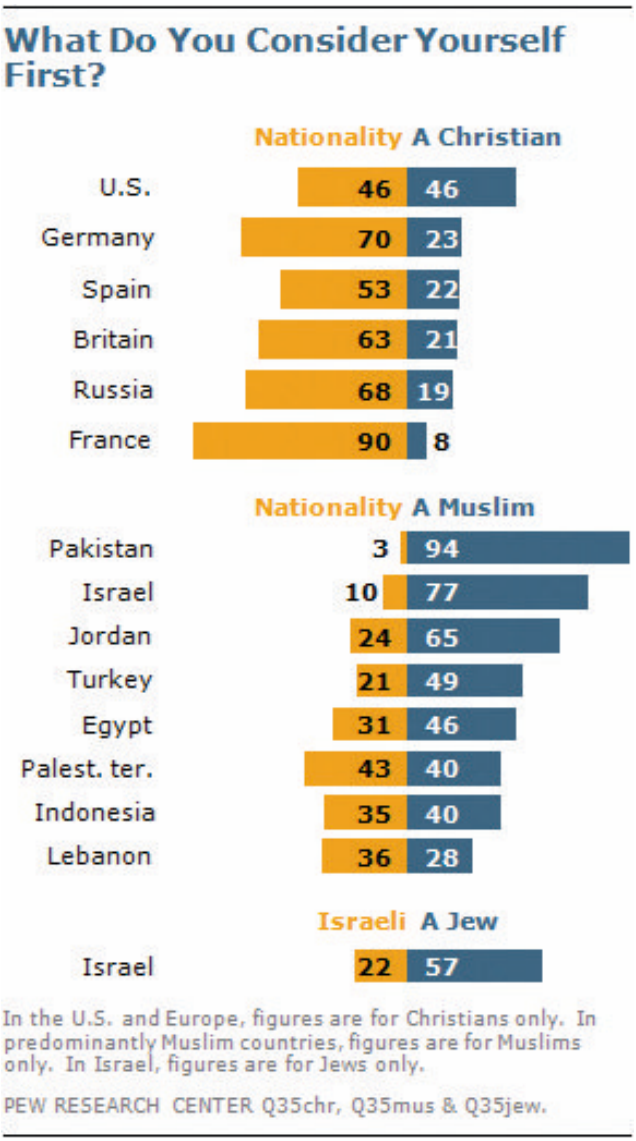
Pew Research Center 2011(b): 2

http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2011/07/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Muslim-Western-Relations-FINAL-FOR-PRINT-July-21-2011.pdf [18.09.2015].

As the last PEW surveys have demonstrated as well, the issue of identity formation has to be discussed quite differently in the Muslim world than in the predominantly Christian West. Whereas people in Western democracies supposedly identify more with their nationality than with their religious affiliation, religion seems to be a much stronger marker of identity for Muslims. In Britain 63% identify first with their nationality, in France even 90%. As opposed to this, 94% of Pakistanis see themselves first as a Muslim. In the United States, as a third case, numbers are equally divided

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

with as many citizens seeing themselves first as American as there are people who underline their Christian identity (all numbers Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 28-29).



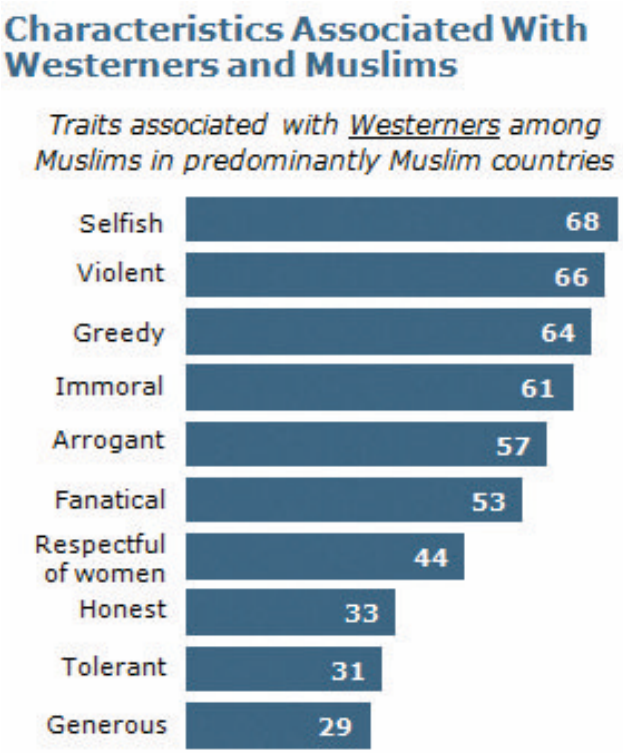
Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 5

http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2011/07/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Muslim-Western-Relations-FINAL-FOR-PRINT-July-21-2011.pdf [18.09.2015].

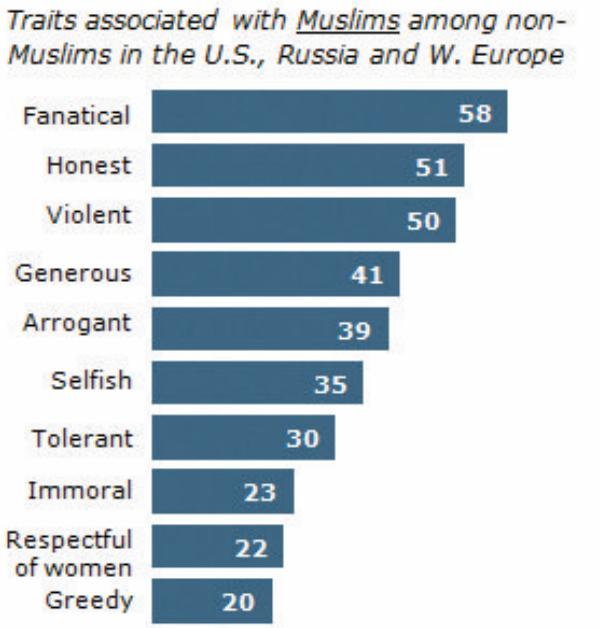
https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Concerning the topic of stereotypes, the Pew Surveys identified several specific attributes that are connected to Western or Muslim countries in the average public opinion:

> Muslims associate a number of negative traits with Westerners. Across the Muslim publics surveyed, the median percentages saying people in Western countries such as the U.S. and Europe are selfish, violent, greedy, immoral, arrogant and fanatical exceed 50%. By contrast, the median percentages of those who say that Westerners are respectful of women, honest, tolerant or generous range below 50%. […] Non-Muslims in Western Europe, the U.S. and Russia offer somewhat more positive assessments of Muslims than Muslims do of Westerners. Relatively few, for example, say Muslims are greedy or immoral. However, a median of 58% label Muslims as fanatical and a median of 50% believe Muslims are violent. And few think Muslims are respectful of women. (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2011: 4)



https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.



Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 4

http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2011/07/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Muslim-Western-Relations-FINAL-FOR-PRINT-July-21-2011.pdf [18.09.2015].

It is striking that in Pakistan, which constitutes the cultural background for the protagonists in Kureishi's as well as in Hamid's work, the image of the West seems to have gone from bad to worse during the last couple of years:

> Muslims in Turkey and Pakistan are the least likely to associate positive traits with Westerners. Fewer than one-in-five Pakistani Muslims say people in Western countries are generous (17%), honest (16%), respectful of women (16%) or tolerant (12%). […] Pakistani Muslims express far more negative views of Westerners than they did in 2006. For example, 64% of Muslims in Pakistan now say people in Western countries are greedy, compared with 44% who shared this view five years ago; the percentage saying Westerners are immoral, selfish or fanatical has also increased by double digits (16, 14 and 13 percentage points, respectively). More Pakistani Muslims also say Westerners are violent (58% vs. 49% in 2006) and arrogant (61% vs. 53%). Fewer Pakistani Muslims now say people in Western countries are generous (down 7 percentage points), respectful of women (down 6 points) or honest (down 5 points) (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2011 (b): 25-26).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

This fact highlights even more the centrality of both authors as people who are able to adopt a double vision, question stereotypes and mediate between different cultures, countries and religious backgrounds. Naturally, the two novels are older than the surveys just quoted and thus cannot relate to recent developments. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how they present relationships and prejudices and whether they try to achieve a conciliatory message or not.

Furthermore, the survey found out that a large majority in many non-Muslim countries felt that Islam was the religion which tends most towards violence (Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 19). In the U.S. 70 % believe that Islam is the most violent religion, in Great Britain the number is 75 % and in France even 90 % (Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 23).[48] Thus it will be interesting to see how the novels in the present literary corpus deal with this prejudice and how violence is presented, if it is shown at all.

Which Religion Most Violent?

	Christianity	Islam	Judaism	Hinduism	None (Vol)/ DK
	%	%	%	%	%
U.S.	9	70	2	3	16
Britain	5	75	2	3	16
France	2	90	4	1	3
Germany	7	79	2	3	10
Spain	3	87	4	1	5
Russia	10	67	10	3	9
Israel	3	91	3	0	3
Turkey	45	2	41	2	10
Egypt	4	1	93	1	0
Jordan	2	1	97	0	0
Lebanon	20	0	77	1	2
Palest. ter.	1	0	88	10	1
Indonesia	6	32	56	1	6
Pakistan	9	3	54	29	5

Asked only of those who say some religions are more prone to violence than others.
In predominantly Muslim countries, figures are for Muslims only.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q32.

Pew Research Centre, 2011 (b): 23.

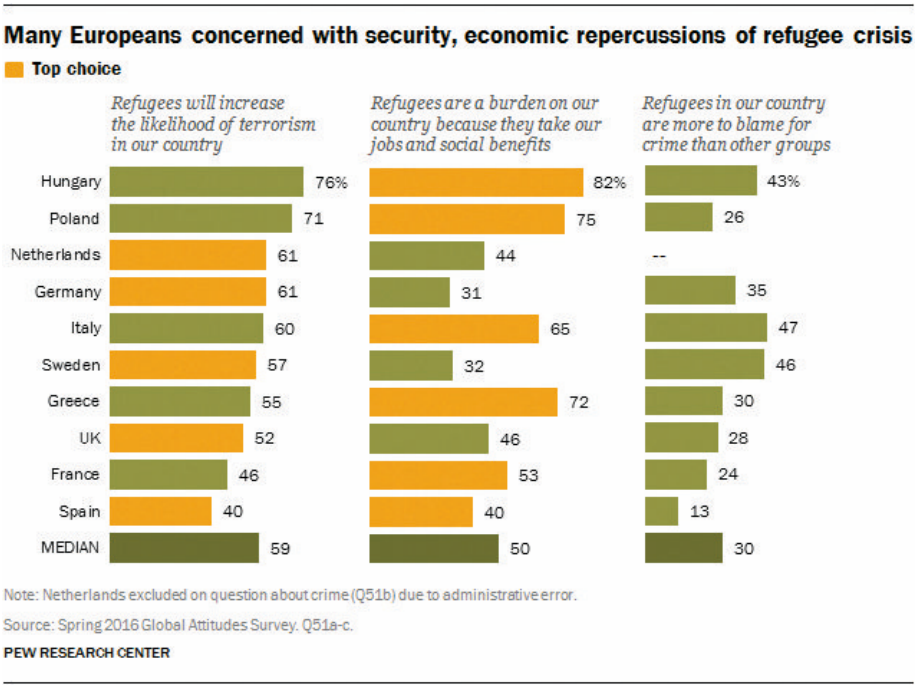
http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2011/07/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Muslim-Western-Relations-FINAL-FOR-PRINT-July-21-2011.pdf [18.09.2015].

48 As the example of the U.S. shows, the population, however, is often divided about the degree to which Islam is perceived as violent. Numbers vary over time, according to political orientation and age (cf. Pew Research Center 2011 (a): 1-2).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Despite adamant anxieties and prejudices, there are also positive developments. Younger people in the West, for instance, tend to have more positive opinions of Muslims than older people (Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 21). In addition, the attribution of positive and negative traits also seems to be dependent on the level of education of the people that were surveyed. The report from 2011 states, for example, that "non-Muslims with a college degree are more likely than those with less education to say Muslims are generous and honest; by comparison, those without a college degree in these countries are more likely than the more educated groups to say Muslims are violent, greedy, fanatical, immoral and selfish" (Pew Research Center 2011 (b): 27, similar findings in Pew Research Center 2010 (b): 2).

The current migration of refugees with a Muslim background to many European countries, however, seems to renew distrust and prejudice in a way the novels that are discussed in this study were not able to foresee at the time of their publishing. As a recent survey on the refugee crisis shows, Europeans are very concerned with the repercussions of migration on security and economic stability. More than 50% of the people asked in the ten countries that were part of the survey fear that the incoming refugees will increase the likelihood of Islamic terrorist attacks in their country (Pew Research Center 2016: 3).



Pew Research Center 2016: 3.

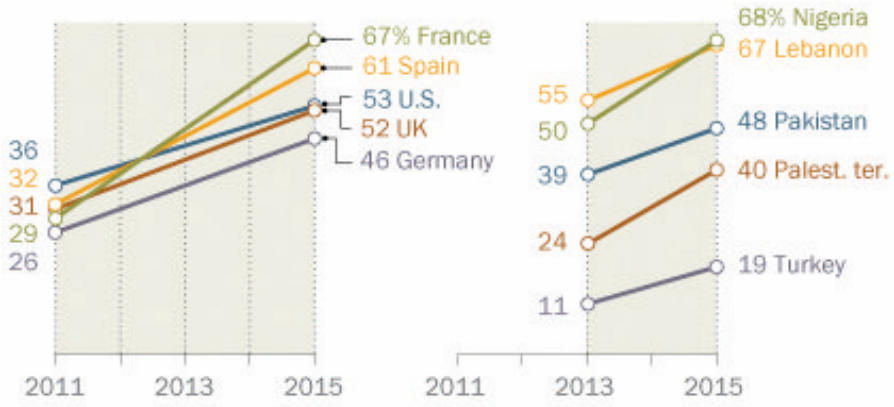
http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/negative-views-of-minorities-refugees-common-in-eu/ [18.09.2015].

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

However, we have to note that Muslim as well as non-Muslim publics alike are highly concerned about Islamic extremism. As a study from 2013 shows, the vast majority of people in Muslim countries say that suicide bombings are never justified as a means to defend or promote Islam (Pew Research Center 2013: 29). Thus, terrorism as a global threat elicits fear and rejection in Muslim and non-Muslim societies alike.

Concern about Islamic Extremism Rising in Many Western and Muslim Countries

Very concerned about Islamic extremism in our country



Note: Question was last asked in Western countries in 2011. In countries with significant Muslim populations, 2013 is used as a reference point because it was the last time the question was asked prior to ISIS becoming a widely known terrorist organization.

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q23.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

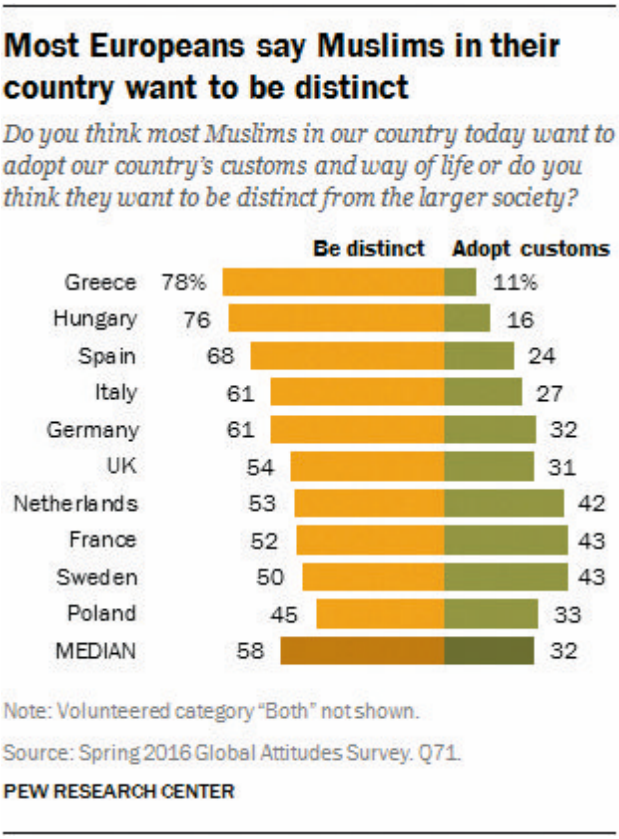
Pew Research Center 2015: 2.

http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/07/16/extremism-concerns-growing-in-west-and-predominantly-muslim-countries/ [18.09.2015].

The surveys in recent years have displayed interesting links between fear and a lack of familiarity and communication with Muslim people, underlining the overall importance of language skills and communication for successful integration and an increased understanding between people with different religious and cultural backgrounds in a country. In this context, European publics seem to share the feeling that Muslim people tend to lack interest in exchange with people from other cultures and

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

religions and do not integrate well because they prefer not to adapt to other cultures and customs.



Pew Research Center 2016: 5.

http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/negative-views-of-minorities-refugees-common-in-eu/ [18.09.2015].

Failed communication and a lack of interaction seem to be major reasons for a deterioration of relations and an increased distrust between Muslim and non-Muslim people all over the world. As I will demonstrate in the present study, novels can promote a dialogue by initiating communication about the above-mentioned prejudices and fears. In the analytical chapters I will comment on these stereotypes whenever they are picked up to inquire whether these ideas are confirmed, questioned or undermined by the literary corpus.

The elaboration of political background in this chapter shall provide us with a solid basis to answer several guiding questions concerning the depiction of Islamic fundamentalism in the literary corpus, such as:

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

1. Which ideological characteristics are attributed to different forms of fundamentalism?
2. Which historical backgrounds and political conflicts are drawn upon?
3. Is Islamic fundamentalism presented as serious threat or ridiculed?
4. Do the texts draw a clear distinction between Islam and its fundamentalist forms?
5. Is the degree of familiarity of an author with Islam and 'Islamic fundamentalism' reflected in the novels? And is the most fervent criticism addressed at what is well-known to an author or at the unknown and possibly feared 'other'?

In this context, it is of special importance how much significance is given to religion. As we have seen, it is often the confusion between religious, cultural and political elements which complicates the perception of 'Islam' and its relationship to non-Muslim countries. Therefore, I will try to heed to the distinction of these factors in my analysis. It is central in this context which motives are presented for terrorist acts or fundamentalist practices and how different religious, political and cultural influences are shown to mingle, intersect or contradict each other.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

3) Ethical criticism and authorial responsibility

As we have seen, the topic of the selected novels involves a plethora of ethical questions, which renders the long-held claim for a separation of aesthetics from ethics and political issues in literary analysis unsuitable for this study. A short introduction to ethical criticism will serve to provide an understanding of the interrelationship between ethics and aesthetics and the shifting attitudes of different movements in literary criticism towards a connection between literary form and ethical content. The status of ethics, morality and aesthetics and their supposed interrelation or disconnection always depended to a certain extent on particular anthropological assumptions. These assumptions are naturally susceptible to change due to political and historical circumstances and the orientation of philosophical currents, which have put a very different amount of trust in humanity's ethical potential.

3.1) Ethics

For thousands of years, philosophers have been striving to find answers to the questions of 'How should one live?', 'What is good and just?' and 'How do we decide what is good, just and worthwhile?' Political thinkers have given various interpretations of the nature of man and his moral capacity. Aristotle saw man as *animale sociale*, who is meant to live in a community with others and has got (despite all vices and flaws) an innate capacity for ethical reflection and behaviour. A dissociation of morality from issues of legality did not exist in attic democracy (cf. Saage 2005: 41), where ethics, aesthetics and morality formed a unified trias. Nussbaum, furthermore, substantiates that in the fifth and early fourth centuries B.C. dramatic poetry also primarily addressed the question of the 'good life':

> The idea that art existed only for art's sake, and that literature should be approached with a detached aesthetic attitude, pure of practical interest, was an idea unknown in the Greek world, at least until the Hellenistic age. Art was thought to be practical, aesthetic interest a practical interest – an interest in the good life and in communal self-understanding (Nussbaum 1992: 16).

The arts were regarded as possessing an educational dimension. Through a piece of literature an author could communicate with an audience or a readership and convey certain ethical value judgments and moral codes. Consequently, tragedy, according to Aristotle, fulfilled the function of arousing "pity and fear, emotions which should allow the spectator simultaneously to identify with the protagonist's fate on stage and to condemn the atrocity of the deed" (Hornung 1996: 209).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

An anthropological antithesis to Aristotle's image of humanity was, for instance, brought forth by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). His conception of the world left little room for ethics and community. *Homo homini lupus est, homo homini lepus est, bellum omnium contra omnes:* Man is driven by greed and fear, which leads to a state of incessant warfare of each individual against their neighbour. This natural state can only be overcome by means of an all-encompassing power-principle, an almighty *Leviathan*, who enforces the necessary rules of coexistence. As an eyewitness of the English Civil War, Hobbes had no real trust in democracy and preferred security and stability to freedom.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), on the other hand, saw man in his state of nature as a solitary being who is neither good nor bad and only corrupted by sociation, which destroys freedom and peace, produces inequality and triggers *amour propre* – a selfishness that goes against all commiseration and community spirit (cf. Maier 2001: 65). To restrict these developments, Rousseau, who was deeply pessimistic about the development of modern individualist and capitalist society, envisioned in *Du Contrat Social* (1762) a political order based on radical popular sovereignty and a *volonté générale* which always aims at the corporate/common good and was to protect the freedom of the individual. Ironically, this political philosophy was abused later on for despotic aims by the Jacobean terror during the French Revolution.

History has seen a long succession of different moral philosophies – of concepts that place trust in the ethical capacity of human beings as well as concepts that are deeply pessimistic and suspicious of this capacity, of concepts oriented towards the individual as well as communal concepts. As a unifying element, however, these ideas are all 'products of their times' in that they react to the experience of diverse societal upheavals and crises, which conjured up the necessity to respond to ethical dilemmas. Human beings have always been fascinated by virtues and vices, the pursuit of justice and equality, questions concerning the nature of man and their moral capacity as well as the best polity to regulate communal life. Religion, politics, science – our life is full of domains that are inextricably ethical and reach well into our private lives and day-to-day decisions.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, questions of ethics always intersect with the age-old question of how to lead a 'good' life – an issue that seems to be omnipresent in popular culture today, from media-shows to self-help guides. If 'good' life stands for choices that are good for an individual, then there is no unambiguous guideline and no clear right or wrong but a thousand different options depending on individual circumstances and personalities. One can live a life that is a 'good life' for oneself, but might be called morally misguided by others, just as one can be morally virtuous at the detriment of one's own happiness. A vital question in this respect is from which sources ethics can or must be derived. Harpham summarises this conceptual problem as follows:

> **Where, exactly,** does an 'ethical' obligation come from – from the face of the other, human nature, the consensual view of the good life, the natural *telos* of the species, our nature as rational beings, the subject's deepest self-interest, prevailing community standards, our

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> duty as God's creatures? Does it come from the inside or the outside? The history of ethical discourse consists of oscillations, vacillations, negotiations, and compromises between the given and the created, the nonnegotiable and the negotiable (Harpham 1992: 27-28, emphasis in original).

Newall elucidates which great difference it makes whether ethics are derived from human or divine sources and must thus be negotiated or can (in the case of a belief in unchanging, religious truths) be retrieved. If people believe that ethics are created by some divine force, then the logical conclusion is to search for these already existing principles and obey to them; if ethics, on the other hand, is understood as manmade, then principles have to be discussed, agreed upon and can be changed and adapted according to practical considerations (Newall 2005: n.p.).

As a last point the question of agency is of major importance: how we decide on (or negotiate) the importance of values and also who decides on values (a question prominently raised by postcolonial theorists in connection to a criticism of the colonial prerogative of interpretation and judgment). This entails the controversial issue of who is granted certain rights on the basis of ethical considerations and who might be excluded from these rights due to race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class or other factors, which have historically determined the application of ethics to specific groups.

Having briefly outlined different parameters that are important when we talk about ethics, we must not forget the necessary dissociation of ethics from morality. Ethics or moral philosophy is naturally connected to the realm of morality but does not in and of itself denote moral judgments. Instead, it works on a meta-level and is employed to describe how we come to apply moral standards in the first place:

> In simple terms, *morality* is the right or wrong (or otherwise) of an action, a way of life or a decision, while *ethics* is the study of such standards as we use or propose to judge such things. Thus abortion may be moral or immoral according to the code we employ but ethics tells us why we call it so and how we made up our minds. As a result, ethics is sometimes called *moral philosophy*; we use it to criticise, defend, promote, justify and suggest moral concepts and to answer questions of morality […] (Newall 2005: n.p.).

Similarly, ethical criticism of literature does not seek to pronounce verdicts on the morality of a work's content, but tries to analyse how moral values are constructed through a text and its textual characteristics.

3.2) Aesthetics

Having briefly sketched the difference between ethics and morality, I will now focus on its relationship to the realm of aesthetics. As I am going to outline in the next subchapters, many literary movements and critics for several reasons voted for a strict separation of ethics and aesthetics. One of these critics is Richard Posner, who does not deny the potential ethical value of literature but assumes that the criteria for literary analysis should not be ethical but aesthetic. This opinion rests upon three main arguments: First, Posner doubts that the reading experience necessarily enhances the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

readers' moral capacity; second, he votes for aesthetic principles as the right criteria for evaluation and rejects the potential devaluation of a literary work just because of its supposedly morally offensive content; and third, he believes that our appreciation of literature should not depend on the moral opinions of its author (Posner 2005: 64).[49] However, I strive to show in the next paragraphs how ethics and aesthetics can after all enter a fruitful synthesis for literary analysis.

With reference to various theorists, Grabes outlines a complementary approach to explain the link between ethics and aesthetics, which promises to be very fruitful.[50] Whereas a first group of theorists brings both terms closer to each other by redefining them in a broader sense ('approximation via re-definition'), a second group solves the problem by subordinating aesthetics to ethics or vice versa ('approximation via subordination'), and others point to analogies, linking ethics with aesthetics "through the idea of freedom" (Grabes 1996: 17) ('approximation by analogy'). A fourth group is convinced of the incommensurability of the "various spheres of value in science, morality, and art under the aegis of modern differentiation" (Grabes 1996: 17-18), but is positive about a possible fruitful exchange between these separate spheres ('approximation via communication'). Complementary approaches, by contrast, start from the premise that

> the rise of aesthetics in the period of modernity is the result of excess – an excess, namely, of ethical thinking, beginning with the rigorous demand of Enlightenment philosophy that all and everything be justified before the court of reason. This 'Übertribunalisierung' (over-tribunalization) has created a demand for relief that can only be met by the aesthetic, for taste needs no justification (Grabes 1996: 16).

To my mind, this assumption made by complementary approaches highlights an important connection between societal developments and the human need for aesthetics (and thus also literature): All human beings have different needs and an emphasis on reason alone might not suffice to trigger ethical reflections. People at all times felt attracted to art, and at all times artists also tried to convey messages with their art that were important to them.

Societal changes which bring about an excessive emphasis on one extreme not uncommonly provoke counter-movements – in aesthetic as well as cultural, social and political terms. Classicism was opposed by Romanticism. From the experience with Fascism, the Second World War and the Vietnam War emerged the anti-authoritarian, anarchistic 68 generation in Germany and other movements worldwide, embodying a reaction against political repression, old bureaucratic elites and military conflicts. Presently, corrupt (and mostly Westernised, secular) Northern African regimes are falling prey to an 'Arabellion', which among a magnitude of aims, different to each group and country, fights for less nepotism and more access of the people to the governance of their country and its economic wealth. Similar to the claim that the

49 For more information on the controversy between Posner and Nussbaum or Booth, see Tanner (2005).

50 The next paragraph essentially summarises Grabes' remarks on different approaches concerning the relationship between ethics and aesthetics (1996: 13-19).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

emphasis on reason during the Enlightenment period may have caused a turn to the aesthetic, the discontinuation of universal values and categories offering orientation in our globalised world can be said to have prompted a yearning for ethical considerations and humanist or religious values.

What we see nowadays in the media and on the internet are increasingly emotionalised (and sometimes also very one-sided) reactions to factual developments, by followers as well as adherents to essentialist believes. Islamic fundamentalist movements such as ISIS make use of specific aesthetic forms to stage their religious doctrine. Whereas Al-Qaeda, for instance, strongly focused on moral content in its video messages that often consisted of long religious and political sermons, ISIS employs different aesthetic strategies to attract attention. On the one hand, ISIS' media specialists use an aesthetics of brutality for messages to its enemies, focusing on martial scenes of massacres and the destruction of cultural heritage.[51] On the other hand, the movement knows how to address young people in order to gain new followers. The many multilingual videos and messages posted by its media specialists on Youtube, Twitter, Instagram and Whatsapp every day, represent an amalgamation of Arabic symbolism with a skilful employment of elements of Western pop culture. ISIS' media specialists perfidiously mix rap and an aesthetic reminiscent of popular video-games with scenes radiating comradeship, self-esteem, masculinity and adventure in order to recruit new fighters.[52] With this aesthetic strategy, particularly geared to the needs of young people in Western countries, they manage to attract and convert young people from all over the world, without ever discussing the religious basis of Islam in detail.

Fundamentalist movements use an aesthetics of destruction and emotion that is clearly linked to their political and religious worldviews. So, maybe, we do need aesthetics and the subjective force of art to fight this propaganda with its own weapons and make people aware of the danger of essentialist ideologies and the importance of individual choice. Neither ethics or moral philosophy nor aesthetics alone will be enough to engage people's interest in the long run. But a fruitful synthesis of ethics and aesthetics may facilitate an exchange of different views which has the potential to bridge divides, as literature does through its potential empathic appeal.

As mentioned above, ethics and aesthetics not necessarily work towards the same goal. Some critics even propagate a compulsory split of art from ethics, which is thought to be necessary to unleash its full liberating potential. Bredella summarises the core of this position as follows: "Only if aesthetics stands outside of ethics is it possible to gain irresponsible freedom. The break with ethical immanence is the risk and the opportunity of the aesthetic experience. What is good aesthetically is not identical with what is good ethically" (Bredella 1996 (a): 31). This might be true for

51 Harmansa describes how the destruction of cultural heritage and its "high-tech mediatic representation accomplished many goals at once: from humiliating the local communities to broadcasting a radical ideology of religious fanaticism in order to recruit new transnational militants all the way to defying the common values attached to cultural heritage in the globalized world" (Harmansa 2015: 171).

52 For more information on ISIS and its media strategies, see Shane/Hubbard (2014).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

some works of fictional literature that mainly aim at the creation of suspense and entertainment and less at engaging the readers in ethical contemplations about the content. The literary corpus at hand is different, however. It is clear, from the novels' historical and political embedding, the heated debates surrounding the topics they draw on and the manifold interviews the authors gave on the relationship of their works to real political events and religious controversies, that this kind of writing was not created only for entertainment purposes. Thus, we might enjoy the aesthetic, artful elements of language and style, but we cannot edit out the ethical dimension. What we encounter in these novels are references to real contemporary events with vast repercussions for large parts of the world, which are also anchored in people's minds through worldwide media distribution. Some authors, such as Faulks and Hamid, skilfully conjure up exactly the emotionally loaded media images of events most readers will be able to remember. These images are evoked in order to exaggerate them (as in Faulks' novel) or to display reactions to these pictures that might be radically different from the readers' own experience (as Hamid does).

3.3) A turn towards the ethical in literature and a "turn to the literary within ethics"[53]

As various critics have highlighted, the relationship between ethics and morals, as well as ethics and literature, is historically determined and constantly changing (Zimmermann 2006: 10). Similarly, the practice of ethical criticism has been embraced as well as rejected by different movements in literary theory. In 18th-century Germany, authors such as Johann Christoph Gottsched emphasized the ethical functions of literature. The 20th century saw a shift of the debate to Anglo-Saxon countries. Movements such as *New Criticism* (which defended a formalistic approach) rejected an inclusion of extra-textual moral standards for their literary analyses, while critics such as F.R. Leavis aimed at a combination of ethical and aesthetic questions (Antor 2013: 193). Ethics has long been discredited by postmodernist or Marxist theorists as being an ideology that is used to legitimise unjust political power-structures (cf. the overview provided by Zimmermann 2006: 13; Bredella 1996 (b): 101-104). However, the late 20th century was hallmarked by a perceived crisis of values in a world changed by multiculturalism, globalisation and a multitude of meanings, which induced a renegotiation of ethical criticism and increasingly prompted individuals to search for orientation and ways to define their own identity (Antor 2013: 193-194).

Despite the currency of ethical approaches to literature at the beginning of the 21st century, the intellectual climate was, nevertheless, for long periods from the 19th until the late 20th century characterised by a distrust of ethical readings of art and a dissociation of the spheres of ethics and aesthetics. A short summary of major developments will provide an overview of different currents and turns in ethical criticism.

53 Parker (1998: 14).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Russian formalism,[54] for instance, drew a line between literature and its cultural dimension, which led to the claim that "the opposition, implicit in formalism, between form and content does not allow for a conception of literature as a *cultural* as well as an aesthetic phenomenon" (Schleifer 1994: 698). Deconstructionism[55], likewise, rejected hermeneutic approaches and viewed aesthetics and ethics as concepts that are opposed to each other:

> Since deconstruction, which claims to demonstrate that language is unreliable and cannot refer to the outside world, leads to a radical relativism and scepticism, it has often been accused of being 'nihilistic.' [...] Deconstructionists regard hermeneutics as naive and uncritical because it believes that language can refer to something else beyond language. [...] Deconstructionists accuse hermeneutics of being metaphysical because it presupposes a 'transcendent signified,' but hermeneutics is based on the insight that readings are provisional and limited and can never be final because the meaning of the text is the result of an interaction between the text and the reader. But it is true that according to hermeneutics, a limited understanding of the text is possible so that the text can speak to us and make us see the world in a different light. [...] A deconstructionist reading [on the other hand] is ethical when we realize that reading for meaning is impossible but continue reading (Bredella 1996 (a): 42-43).

Deconstruction, thus, embodied a separation of ethics and aesthetics very different from my approach to the topic under discussion, even though one could argue to which extent even deconstruction can be said to have an ethical side.[56] Whereas formalism, structuralism or deconstruction focused on the text, reader-oriented criticism from the 1970 s on viewed the construction of meaning from a different angle, but neither attempted a combination of style, content and context. In subjectivism the reader as the main generator of meaning gained centre stage. One of its main proponents, Stanley Fish, supposes that the reader, as part of an interpretive community,

54 Russian formalism was developed at the beginning of the 20th century and was characterised by a strong interest in linguistics and the identification of structural principles in language. This focus was accompanied by the disregard of socio-historical contexts and other factors outside the text and language itself (cf. Barsch 2013: 668-670).

55 Deconstructionism was initiated in the late 1960 s and early 1970 s by Jacques Derrida and later on associated with scholars such as J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman or Paul de Man. As Kneale summarises, Derrida's approach "has subsequently become synonymous with a particular method of textual analysis and philosophical argument involving the close reading of works of literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics, and anthropology to reveal logical or rhetorical incompatibilities between the explicit and implicit planes of discourse in a text and to demonstrate by means of a range of critical techniques how these incompatibilities are disguised and assimilated by the text" (Kneale 1994: 185).

56 See Bredella's outline of the argument (Bredella 1996:4 2-49), drawing on the works of Paul de Man, Hillis Miller or Simon Critchley, who defended the ethical motivation of deconstructionist theories due to their recognition of difference and their proclaimed anti-totalitarian stance. Hillis Miller, for instance, promotes that to accept the undecidability of a text is an ethical decision in itself. However, he proposes a strict segregation of different disciplines. He rejects "the attempt to transfer ethical themes directly from literature to life" and recommends that literary studies should concentrate on "the rhetoric of literature", while the "rest should be left to departments of history, philosophy, religion, American studies, Victorian studies, programs in 'modern thought' and so on, where that rest belongs" (Hillis Miller 1989: 99).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

creates all meaning in a text. Meaning is thus not dependent on textual characteristics or authorial intentions but on the interpretive performance of the reader.

However, ethics has – even at the height of postmodern ethical theory – not been neglected by all critics. Anglo-American moral realism, for instance, continued to address the potential truthfulness of moral judgments, countering the supposed relativism of post-modern ethical theory. Carroll describes moral realism as a "robust, flourishing movement, armed with powerful arguments against relativism, noncognitivism, prescriptivism and existentialism, whose existence is ignored by postmodern historiographers and whose claims are ignored by postmodern moralists" (Carroll 1996: 89).[57] Furthermore, ethical questions were not regarded as completely irrelevant by the literary theory of the 1970 s and 1980 s, since the post-structuralist and political criticism (apart from Fredric Jameson's Marxist approach) at that time can be regarded as "at the very least implicitly ethical" (Parker 1998: 3), as for example the debates surrounding multiculturalism exemplify (cf. Heinze 2006: 268). Thus, the abovementioned developments can only be regarded as tendencies, which also feature exceptions.

The 1990 s saw however the emergence of new forms of ethical criticism which are central to this study. The 1990 s brought about a rejection of deconstructionist approaches and an increased interest in the interrelationship between ethics and aesthetics and their historical and cultural contexts. Whereas formalism strictly concentrated on the text as sign-system, and reader-oriented criticism (by Stanley Fish and others) focused on the role of the reader as creator of meaning, ethical criticism seeks to bring together form, content and reader. The skyrocketing interest in ethical criticism was partly triggered by the heated discussions surrounding the discovery of anti-Semitic essays by Paul de Man in 1987,[58] which caused considerable perplexity and roused questions concerning the necessity of ethical evaluation in certain circumstances (cf. Heinze 2006: 268). The subheading "A turn towards the ethical in literature and a 'turn to the literary within ethics'" also points to the fact that this increased interest in the ethical aspects of literature often did not come from literary critics but from moral and political philosophers (including Martha Nussbaum, Richard Rorty and Charles Taylor). The literary turn reached disciplines that had been relatively untouched by the topics of literary theory before. Even in anthropology, critics started to heed not only to the content of ethnographic reports but also to the literary and stylis-

57 The more radical forms of moral realism, however, differ from the present renewal of interest in ethical criticism in that they claim some moral judgments to be "objective" and "true transculturally" (Carroll 1996: 90) – a claim which would be contradicted or at least relativised by most theorists discussed in this study.

58 Paul de Man was one of the most distinguished proponents of poststructuralist theory in North America and had sympathised with National Socialist ideas when he was younger. While "critics of deconstruction pointed out that he had a personal reason to prove that texts cannot be read, and that ethical decisions cannot be made", de Man's friends claimed that because "he had been seduced to believe in anti-Semitism, he spent his later life in deconstructing texts so that we should no longer be seduced by them" (Bredella 1996 (b): 106). Questions of authorial intention, authority and accountability again moved to the centre of attention. For more information about the controversy see Burke (2008: 1-7).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

tic representation of other cultures and realised that the form of ethnographic depictions was not value-free but could also contain ideological biases, which had to be deconstructed (cf. Gottowik 1997: 20).

What is more, Hadfield, Rainsford and Woods point to the concurrence of the ethical turn with political developments in the US and Britain that were characterised by a shift to the right, during Ronald Reagan's and Margaret Thatcher's terms of office (Hadfield/Rainsford/Woods 1999: 2). The resurgence of ethics in many disciplines was among these developments in domestic politics also fostered by world politics, catalysed by the influence of written and audiovisual media images:

> Certainly, the Gulf War has been a strong, recent stimulus to this debate, with many cultural theorists finding themselves impelled to comment on an event that was real, political, massively destructive and intensely violent, but which was also a cultural performance, mediated for the vast majority of us by a great deal of calculated manipulation of texts and images (Rainsford/Woods 1999: 7).

These interrelations hint at the political dimension of literature and literary criticism, which not only seems to influence the content of literary works in defining points of artistic interest, but also promotes the formation of artistic intellectual counter-movements against a prevalent official ideology or policy. Referring to American literary history, Fluck argues in this context that literary post-war liberalism was partly a reaction against the propagandistic exploitation of literature for ideological purposes during the Second World War, which resulted in an anti-ideological stance, a stress on the role of the individual and a proclamation of an alleged autonomy of art against cultural orthodoxy and political instrumentalisation (Fluck 1996: 211-214). Liberalism then again made way for a cultural radicalism which questioned liberalism's egalitarian ideals. It criticised "the actual economic, social, and cultural limits posed to individual choice [...] and the continuing cultural presence of racism, sexism, or homophobia, which stigmatize 'other' forms of identity [...]" (Fluck 1996: 214-215).

The topic of ethical criticism might have faded into the background during certain decades that were dominated by movements with other primary critical concerns. Opinions have always been conflicting, but the topic never ceded to attract scholarly attention. The renewed interest in theoretical approaches to the interrelationships of ethics and aesthetics from the 1980 s on resulted in a skyrocketing number of monographs, anthologies and special journal issues on the topic of ethical criticism.[59] The surge in theoretical approaches might partly be ascribed to an increasing lack of consensus about certain principles. However, this should, according to Bode, not be seen as "the symptom of a crisis in literary studies" or a "sign of decadence" but as a sign of a positive self-reflection and questioning of the fundamentals of literary criticism that sustainably enhanced its complexity (Bode 1996: 98). Ethical criticism was also regarded with scepticism which might originate in the lack of concreteness of many

59 Phelan (ed.) (1989); Gamm/Kimmerle (eds.) (1990); Toker (ed.) (1994); Hoffmann/Hornung (eds.) (1996) and (1996 (2)); Ahrens/ Volkmann (1996); Früchtl (1996); Adamson/ Freedman/ Parker (eds.) (1998); Rainsford/ Woods (1999); Mieth (ed.) (2000).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

theories that contented themselves with philosophical considerations on a more general level without offering possible applications to literary works.

These developments, which also informed different currents of a post-classical narratology, were later on labelled with terms like 'cultural turn' and 'ethical turn'. However, these classifications do not denote a homogenous movement, so that we may justifiably ask ourselves "whether any two people writing under this designation are actually referring to the same thing" (Toye 1999: 203). The term refers to several overlapping developments, which Korthals Altes summarises as follows:

> a pointed interest in narrativity and narrative literature from the side of moral philosophy [...]; an increased reflection, from within narratology itself, on the relation between ethics and the novel; and the corresponding growth of criticism focussing on ethical issues in narrative fiction, such as the encounter with otherness, self-fashioning, values, responsibility, and violence (Korthals Altes 2004: 142).

Links between form and function were re-established on a conceptual level and analysed. Social, political and historical literary contexts mattered again. This was also a result of an increasing pluralisation of societal value judgments, the establishment of ethics commissions and the growing complexity of human rights issues and ethical controversies due to the problems caused by fast-developing globalisation. Ethical questions increasingly gained importance as religious beliefs, traditions and other ideologies lost their dominant power on interpretation and society became increasingly individualised (Lützeler 2011: 9). Apart from the economic and cultural dynamics of globalisation, Heinze also mentions political (the demise of the Eastern bloc), technological (the invention of the internet, virtual reality and biotechnology) and humanitarian factors (such as the emergence of HIV/AIDS) as driving forces, which posed new ethical questions and demanded a development and adaptation of ethical standards (Heinze 2006: 268-269). In this context, the 'ethical turn' was frequently viewed as a symptom of postmodernism and the fact that values were becoming increasingly relative and arbitrary. This renewed interest in the ethical value of literature was not only a phenomenon of the 1980 s and 90 s but continues to the present day as several new research projects and collections published in recent years have shown.[60]

Erll outlines this renewed interest in the semantic dimension of narratives as follows:

> From the point of view of cultural studies approaches, the literary text is not to be conceived as outside, above, or below, but rather as an integral part of its cultural context. Literary narrative can not only articulate collective experience, values, and concepts of identity, but also restructure the symbolic order of a given cultural formation. Narrative forms are 'forms of expression' in specific cultural contexts. Like all properties of culture, narrative forms are neither trans-historical nor trans-cultural entities, but mutable forms of human expression (Erll 2005: 91).

As Schmidt-Haberkamp notes, the close connection between ethics and aesthetics that was prevalent during the 18th century is being revitalised today. However, this

60 See, for instance, Onega (2008), Lützeler/Kapczynski (eds.) (2011), Baumbach/Grabes/Nünning (eds.) (2009), George (ed.) (2005).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

happens with the vast difference that the Enlightenment trust in the rationality of the individual as a fundamental basis for tolerance, freedom and (self-)criticism seems to have vanished (Schmidt-Haberkamp 2000: 11).[61] This scepticism is very palpable in the novels under discussion, as I am going to outline in the next chapters. Criticism of political circumstances or different forms of fundamentalism is always connected to the role of the individual and their search for identity and belonging. In order to achieve a society that is oriented towards common ethical values, the individual – according to this literary corpus – has to overcome personal flaws (like greed in the case of Faulks' protagonist) as well as societal pressures (in the case of Khadra's protagonist). It has to assert a conscious decision in favour of humanist values and the concomitant protection of human life and dignity against all odds. But the novels reflect doubts about the strength and ability of the individual to do so. Some (like Faulks' character Hassan who contemplates carrying out a terrorist attack) are presented as finally acknowledging the force of ethical, humanist ideas. Others (like his character Veals – a ruthless and purely profit-oriented hedge fund manager) are so deluded and caught in their own absurd system of rationality that the above-mentioned self-criticism does not seem to be possible.

Having briefly sketched the main arguments for a close connection of ethics and aesthetics, I will now take a look at the ways in which both concepts may be connected.[62] Heinze outlines four main approaches to explain how the two categories may be related to each other. The first (proposed by critics such as Welsch, Antor, Düwell and Mieth) assumes that aesthetics possesses an inherently ethical quality. The second current stresses the instructive role of literature that may be exercised by confronting the reader with different worldviews and norms, which stimulates a reflection about their own norms (promoted by neo-Aristotelian and neo-pragmatic critics such as MacIntyre, Booth, Nussbaum and Rorty, as I will outline in detail in the following parts of this chapter). The third form of ethical criticism reverses the argument of the first in underlining the aesthetic quality of the ethical (an argument that can be found in the works of many different theorists). Finally, Heinze mentions as a fourth uniting element an increasing focus on the act of narration and the ethical relevance of specific stylistic criteria (elaborately discussed by Booth, Newton or Gibson). Here the topics of perspective/point of view, focalization, etc., which I am going to outline in the next chapter, come into play. The second and the fourth mode of connection between ethics and aesthetics will be of special interest for my analysis, since both mod-

61 Gamm notes that apart from a diminished trust in the rationality of the individual, perspectivism has from the 19th century onwards also cast doubt on the belief that different cultures and 'the other' can be described by means of an independent rationality: "Jede Kultur, jede Ethnie, jede Epoche hat ihren Standpunkt und ihre Perspektive, und jeder Einzelne erst recht, und möglicherweise sind sie alle auf ihre Weise gleichermaßen bedeutsam und legitim" (Gamm 2009: 209).
"Every culture, every ethnicity and every epoch has its own point of view and its own perspective, and even more so every individual, and possibly all of them are equally important and legitimate in their own way" (my translation).

62 This paragraph is a short summary of the different categories introduced in Heinze (2006: 270-275).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

els underline the potential of literature to bridge divides and to enable a fruitful synthesis of form and function.

3.4) Main tendencies in ethical criticism

Opening the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* for a first overview of a field in which literature has multiplied exponentially during the 1990 s, we can assess a division into three main tendencies in ethical criticism. There is the humanist tradition of 'pragmatist and rhetorical ethics' (influenced by Nussbaum, Booth, Parker and Phelan among others), counter-movements consisting of an 'ethics of alterity' (Levinas) and deconstructive approaches (Derrida, Blanchot, Lyotard, Paul de Man) and, as a third form, 'political approaches', among them feminist[63] and post-colonial ethics (Bhabha, Spivak) (Korthals Altes 2004: 142).

Valuable for this study are first and foremost humanist and political approaches. From the first field I will predominantly draw on theories by the American moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum. She highlights the role of novels to rouse emotions and prompt an empathic ability, which can promote the ethical education and development of readers. Furthermore, I will revert to specific aspects of the works by Booth and Phelan and their analysis of narratological devices where applicable. I strive to find out how the novels under discussion seize ethical terms and which stylistic means inherent in the text may influence or generate value judgements. Do the novels reflect a humanist vision or do they reject the possibility of a common humanist core? As we will see, Khadra, for instance, embraces a humanist vision, whereas Kureishi's novel reflects a highly ambiguous stance on this topic. Faulks seems to advance that there is a common humanist core, which, however, is dependent on the individual and his strength to face reality and the challenges of our globalised age.

Concerning political approaches to ethics I am mainly interested in the construction of identity and alterity, and, closely related, the challenges of hybridity and multiculturalism. As I delineate later in this chapter, the depiction of identity and identity conflicts is an important issue in this study. As a starting point I will refer to Stuart Hall's concept of cross-cutting identities to determine potential factors that influence the formation of identity. These factors might reflect a liberal or a communal concept of the self, which is an important distinction concerning the question of agency and responsibility in the context of fundamentalist radicalisation.

63 Important feminist philosophers include, for instance, Sandra Bartky, Elizabeth Spellman, Marilyn Friedman, Seyla Benhabib, Alison Jaggar, Linda Nicholson, Virginia Held, Susan Moller Okin or Sara Ruddick (cf. Baier 1998: 249). They all pursue different goals and share distinct political persuasions, but are often interested in interdisciplinary, broader approaches to literature, ethics and moral philosophy.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

3.5) Man as "a story-telling animal"[64]

Coming back to literature as such and its connection to ethical concerns, I would initially like to elucidate potential answers to the question why literature matters in the first place – from a humanist, as well as a postcolonial perspective. Haines ascribes to critics such as Williams, MacIntyre, Diamond, Taylor, Nussbaum or Gaita a tendency to counteract the Kantian Enlightenment tradition in that they bring together apparently conflicting terms and insist on a reintegration of reason and emotion (Haines 1998: 31). And literature, in this respect, is as indispensable to ethics as moral philosophy with an even greater potential to emotionally and intellectually influence our commitments (Toker 1994: xviii). "[A]ll works of literature belong in a sense to the genre of the life story. To be human is to tell stories about ourselves and about other human beings", Siebers (1992: 7) claims. He thus establishes a pivotal link between literature and our fundamental nature as human beings, accrediting literature with an inherently ethical quality. Düwell, furthermore, specifies that the relationship between literature and ethics is threefold: firstly, literature can thematise moral or immoral behaviour; secondly, it may trigger moral reflection in the reader, and thirdly, it might even deploy a manipulative, ideological potential by appealing to the readers' emotions and rousing moral indignation (Düwell 2000: 11-12). Bredella's reference to an ideological potential of literature in this case points to the fact that literature can gerrymander people to distract them from real-life social injustice and political abuse. However, literature can also fulfil a revolutionary function "not by supporting revolutionary movements but by questioning 'the monopoly of established reality'" (Bredella 1996 (b): 103) and counteracting dominant discourses by making people aware of alternatives. Thereby, aesthetics is perceived to reflexively mirror concrete wordly experience. It expresses, distorts, concretises or caricatures this experience and enables us to look at it with a reflective distance – irrespective of the question of whether the realm of experience that art illustrates is perceived to reflect reality in an adequate manner or not (Düwell 2000: 17-18). Especially this creation of distance to our own experience and views on life grants us an insight into alternative perspectives, scopes of action and human needs which is unique to the aesthetic (Düwell 2000: 26-27) and may even influence the concepts we create of ourselves and others.

Haker, for instance, explains that narrative is central for the constitution of our moral identity. He mentions that self-concepts are influenced by life-stories, which are in turn not only determined by the specific events, actions and experience that shape our lives but also by the form of stories we use to narrate about these things (Haker 2000: 49). "I am, what I narrate" (Günther 1990: 14), Günther concludes with recourse to Alasdair MacIntyre's[65] seminal study *After Virtue* (1981). In this context,

64 MacIntyre (2011: 250)

65 Just as Martha Nussbaum, MacIntyre is an important representative of a humanist approach which is indebted to the Aristotelian tradition. Bruns summarizes his main ideas as follows: "What MacIntyre proposes is a moral theory based on concepts of character and virtue as opposed to a theory based on the idea of a disengaged moral agent who calculates what ought to be done (or, more often, *not* done) on the basis of universal, or universalizable, maxims. What is it to be a certain kind of person, and

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

we understand an action through its narrativity and the complex relationship between a story and its references to intention, responsibility or identity:

> Eine Geschichte lässt sich nicht erzählen, ohne auf konkrete Ereignisse, besondere Umstände, Absichten, Zielsetzungen und Gefühle, historische Bedingungen der handelnden Personen mehr oder weniger ausführlich einzugehen. Das Selbst, das sich aus einer Erzählung versteht, bezieht sich nicht auf eine abstrakte Identität, sondern auf eine individuelle Biographie, die in eine konkrete Gemeinschaft eingebettet ist. Im Umkreis der Struktur der Erzählbarkeit tritt der Begriff des Selbst in Kontakt mit anderen, ethisch relevanten Grundbegriffen: den Begriffen der Handlung und des Handlungsverstehens, Intention, Motiv, Verantwortlichkeit, Rechenschaft und schließlich personale Identität (Günther 1990: 16).[66]

I agree with Günther in that I see the narratives under discussion as inextricably linked to their historical and political context and the construction of personal identity.

Nevertheless, to establish a link between literature and philosophy can also be regarded as difficult, as Adamson notes, because philosophy aims at the description of concrete and goal-directed categories, whereas literature is often not that clean-cut but is interested in human experience which is always fluid and multifaceted (Adamson 1998: 87). However, I do not perceive this as a contradiction or hindrance but a positive potential and tension that can also be found with regards to other areas of this study. Whereas narratological approaches aim at defining and identifying specific narrative devices and clear analytical categories, the literary analysis of content and meaning as such is similarly subject to the reader's subjectivity and individual interpretation. Nevertheless, this does not mean that both fields of study cannot form a fruitful synthesis towards a holistic reflection of literature. Similarly, analytical philosophy might be interested in lucid definitions and conclusions, but the content and questions with which it is concerned then again defy any classifications or objectifiable answers. I agree with Shusterman and Locatelli in that the "metaethical dimension" of a work of art might be very important, because the complexity of art can challenge us to interpret, to evaluate and to develop a sense of responsibility (Shusterman 2009: 64, Locatelli 2009: 73).

As already indicated above with reference to three of the authors under discussion, an argument for the ethical potential of literature is that it "is a matter of imagi-

---

what constitutes the good, or excellence, of that kind – that is, when has a person fulfilled the ideal or goal or purpose (*telos*) of a certain way of life? The critical point of MacIntyre's argument is that questions of this sort cannot be framed in universal terms; they are intelligible only against the background of a particular culture in which specific characters and virtues are socially embodied […]. There is no such thing as morality as such, only local and contingent forms of life" (Bruns 1994: 247). For a good detailed account of MacIntyre's moral philosophy also see Murphy (ed.) 2003.

66 "A story cannot be told without going into more or less details concerning concrete events, special circumstances, intentions, aims and emotions, and historical conditions of an acting person. The self, which generates itself by the narrative, does not refer to an abstract identity, but to an individual biography, which is embedded in a concrete community. Within the structure of what can be narrated, the notion of the self enters into contact with other, ethically relevant fundamentals: the concepts of action and the understanding of action, intention, motive, responsibility, accountability and finally personal identity" (my translation).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

natively becoming a different I: a changed self, a different character, with a different *gestalt*, other values and beliefs, another sense of reality" (Adamson 1998: 90). Haker, therefore, described literature as an experimental form in dealing with reality (Haker 2000: 63). Literature may not grant us definite answers or analytical schemes but sometimes the journey can be the reward. Exploring literary texts means experiencing and getting involved with different ways of how to live, with a variety of different possibilities, hypotheses, questions and conditionalities (Adamson 1998: 103). The focus on 'how to live' and the questions different texts pose in this context is exactly what Martha Nussbaum and other proponents of a humanist approach are interested in.

This enhanced capacity to call upon the readers' imagination and emotion and to invite them to put themselves in someone else's place, to see the world with different eyes and empathise with views and problems which are not necessarily their own, is to a special degree ascribed to the literary form of the novel. Much ethical criticism has been focusing on the narrative form of the novel with the common reason

> that the novel through its form and its thematic material represents precisely what ethics is about, namely: a reflection on human action and character; conflicting drives, desires, and choices evolving in time, offered for the reader's appreciation or judgement from different perspectives (Korthals Altes 2004: 142).

The experience of being able to relate to something and to get an insight into the mindset of characters from other cultures or creeds one maybe would not meet in real life may also alter someone's rational judgment about a specific case in point and lead them to see political controversies or media debates from a different angle. Hamid, Khadra (and partly also Faulks) repeatedly conjure up media images and reports most readers are likely to know (such as 9/11, the capture of Saddam Hussein or in Faulks' case exaggerated scenes from reality TV). However, these images are in this literary corpus perceived by predominantly non-Western characters who entertain views that might differ fundamentally from our own first reaction to these pictures. Thus, a fictional account of real historical and political events from a culturally or religiously different vantage point may lead us to a more nuanced evaluation and an understanding of the motives and needs of 'the other'. Ethical criticism emanates from the assumption that this engagement with the needs and motives of 'the other' can have a transformative effect on readers. Concerning the narrative corpus at hand, the novels allow us to look at society and simultaneously take an introspective glance at our own emotions and prejudices, which might "help us see not only who we are but what we might become" (Gregory 2005: 61). This is why Richard Rorty even calls the novel a

> genre of democracy [...in that it] can help forge a democratic moral community of citizens attuned to suffering and more likely to see those different from themselves as 'one of us.' Because it is instrumental in fostering an ability to identify with the suffering of others, literature can be linked to the pursuit of justice, understood as a form of loyalty to other human beings (Voparil 2006: 61).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

To summarise shortly why especially the novel is considered to be of high ethical relevance for humanist literary theorists, I will quote a longer passage from Nussbaum's essay "The literary imagination in public life". She starts by establishing a link between the genre of the novel and rationality "in its insistence on the fundamental role, in its own construction, of a general notion of the *human being*" (Nussbaum 1998: 241). To Nussbaum, the novel simultaneously manages to acknowledge our common ground of human feelings and nature, while at the same time taking specific historical, cultural or social circumstances into account and highlighting the uniqueness of the individual:

> It forges a complex relationship with its reader in which, on the one hand, the reader is urged to care about concrete features of circumstance and history, and to see these as relevant for social choice; but is, on the other hand, urged always to recognize that human beings in different spheres do have common passions, hopes, and fears, the need to confront the mystery of death, the desire for learning, the deep bonds of the family. Its hypothetical reader is explicitly addressed as one whose sphere of life is different from that of the author – with different concrete choices and possibilities. And yet it is assumed that the reader can still identify with the characters and events of the novel as with possibilities for human life in general, and think how 'such things' can be instantiated in his or her own concrete life. This complex movement of imagination and reason, from the concrete to the general back to the concrete, through both sympathy and identification, is built into the genre […] (Nussbaum 1998: 242).

With this aptitude to shine a light on the general as well as the personal sphere and engage the reader in a personal involvement with different points of view, the novel is attributed a mediatory function. Furthermore, it can intellectually bridge divides because

> it recognizes human needs that transcend boundaries of time, place, class, religion, and ethnicity, and it makes the focus of its moral deliberation the question of their adequate fulfillment. Its criticism of concrete political and social situations relies on a notion of what it is for a human being to flourish, and this notion itself, while extremely general and in need of further specification, is neither local nor sectarian (Nussbaum 1998: 242).

This potential of literature in general and the novel in particular to remind individuals of the experience which is common to everyone, and which can function as a guideline for their behaviour, is similarly addressed by Raimond Gaita. What is more, he also underlines the subjectivity of truth and moral thought inspired by literary reflection and our dependence on extremely difficult and elusive concepts such as 'sincerity', 'authenticity' or 'integrity' (Gaita 1998: 284). This means that we might be moved by fictional characters and altered in our judgment on certain topics and ethical questions. But this must necessarily depend on our own subjective interpretation of, as well as involvement and identification with, a literary piece of art. The use of the term 'authenticity' in this context highlights the overall controversial quality of the parameters involved in the discussion of ethical criticism.

Possible answers to the question of why literature matters from a postcolonial perspective border on the political. As various critics have outlined, questions of ethnic, racial or religious identity – whether individual or communal – are always connected to ethical questions (cf. Hadfield/Rainsford/Woods 1999: 6-7). Gymnich high-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

lights the potential of literature to 'rewrite' or 'write back' (*sensu* Salman Rushdie) to dominant discourses. Literature can question and undermine hegemonic claims and make marginalised voices heard – a potential function that is common in but not confined to postcolonial literature (Gymnich 2006: 72-73 and 83). The present literary corpus does not focus on the relationship between colonisers and colonised but deals with very similar issues since it is closely connected to questions of power, the construction of identity and alterity and the political and ideological dimensions of literature. Like revisionist historical novels the works under discussion pick up political and religious issues and try to show a view of the topic that is different from the views predominantly promoted by Western mass media. They embody a criticism of topical issues from diverse perspectives that might represent counter-discourses to dominant representations. At the time of their publication the novels reacted to recent events that were probably still very present in the minds of readers. Having outlined briefly the general relevance of literature from humanist and postcolonial perspectives, I am now going to give a short insight into specific approaches that are useful for my analysis and the connections they establish between form and content.

3.6) Towards a humanist approach: Martha Nussbaum's *Love's Knowledge*

Humanist approaches to ethics "share their confidence in *common sense* ('our' sense of life), in language as a reliable vehicle of meanings, and in texts as the expression of an ethos that can be reconstructed" (Korthals Altes 2004: 142). Martha Nussbaum has published on a variety of diverse topics. What unites her works is the belief that philosophy needs to "address concrete human needs; it must be responsive to human perplexities, sufferings, joys; it must instruct us on how we as human beings ought to live if we are to live well" (Hall 2000: 175). Nussbaum repeatedly underlined the close relationship between ethics and aesthetics and believes that literature complements philosophy in many ways. Her interpretation of a text proceeds from the assumption of "an organic connection between its form and its content" and the idea that "[c]ertain thoughts and ideas, a certain sense of life, reach toward expression in writing that has a certain shape and form, that uses certain structures, certain terms" (Nussbaum 1992: 4). In her opinion, the specific stylistic choices of an author determine the possible range of interpretation and the guidance of their readers. She elaborates:

> A view of life is *told*. The telling itself – the selection of genre, formal structures, sentences, vocabulary, of the whole manner of addressing the reader's sense of life – all of this expresses a sense of life and of value, a sense of what matters and what does not, of what learning and communicating are, of life's relations and connections. Life is never simply *presented* by a text; it is always *represented* as something. This 'as' can, and must, be seen not only in the paraphrasable content, but also in the style, which itself expresses choices and selections, and sets up, in the reader, certain activities and transactions rather than others (Nussbaum 1992: 5).

In this respect, she gives special prominence to the novel as a medium that is suitable to guide readers and engage their moral capacity. Nussbaum claims that the novel

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> is a morally controversial form, expressing in its very shape and style, in its modes of interaction with its readers, a normative sense of life. It tells its readers to notice this and not this, to be active in these and not these ways; it leads them into certain postures of the mind and heart and not others. […] But if literature is dangerous from the political economist's viewpoint, this implies as well that it has the potential to make a distinctive contribution to our public life (Nussbaum 1998: 224).

For her analytical endeavour, Nussbaum mixes humanist interpretative approaches with narratological categories in order to facilitate a link between form and function and to assay by which structural means ethical contents can be shaped:

> My question, then, will be not just about what the novel represents, what goes on inside it. I want to ask, as well, what sense of life its form itself embodies: not only how the characters feel and imagine, but what sort of feeling and imagining is enacted in the telling of the story itself, in the shape and texture of the sentences, the pattern of the narrative, the sense of life that animates the text as a whole (Nussbaum 1998: 225-226).

Especially the novel by Khadra seems to prove Nussbaum's claim that the representation of emotion is a core function in prompting the reader to relive situations he otherwise probably would not experience. Readers may thus see the world from a different perspective and even potentially scrutinise their own values. Among other scholars (cf. Yehoshua 2005: 19, Booth 2005: 33), Nussbaum stresses the potential of literature to create empathy which goes beyond a mere reflection of moral values by touching the soul of the readers and giving them the capacity to identify and feel with literary characters, be involved in conflicts and judge on the difficult choices, virtues and vices presented in the story. In that regard, I am not only interested in the question of which 'postures of the mind and heart' the novels encourage, but also how they achieve this structurally. I share Nussbaum's view that a single focus on form or content alone does not do justice to the complexity of literature (Nussbaum 2005 (b): 151) – especially not for the topic under discussion.

One of the reasons for me to consider Nussbaum's theory is that she discusses concrete narratological categories, applies them to novels, and then tries to work out some of the possible structural implications for a content-based literary analysis. Despite the shortcomings of her approach I am touching upon later, Nussbaum's attempt at ethical criticism goes beyond a pure declaration of intent, which distinguishes it from a lot of other works in this field. I agree with Parker, who welcomes Nussbaum's idea of imaginative literature as ideal vehicle for certain views which

> tend to stress either the mutually antagonistic nature of important values, or the ethical importance of contingency or the passions, or the priority of particulars over generalities – all of which tend to resist systematic theoretical statement of the kind attempted in the available styles of conventional philosophy (Parker 1994: 35).

In *Love's Knowledge* Nussbaum outlines six major fields of interest and gives us a list of formal features and diagnostic questions covering content, structure and stylistics that we may apply to a text to help us understand its potential ethical dimension.[67] The major points of interest for an analysis are according to this study voice and the

67 The following passages summarise Nussbaum (1992: 32-44) and are exclusively based on her ideas.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

status of each voice, point of view, the parts of the reader's personality a text involves (as she calls it) as well as the overall organisation of a text and the question if it gives pleasure.

The category 'voice' here refers to the total set of overt narrators and characters present in a novel, their way and tone of narrating, their projected personality as well as their interrelationships with other characters and the reader. I will come back to this point by applying Gerard Genette's model of narratological analysis, which enables a closer examination of narrators and focalizers. A very interesting issue Nussbaum raises in this section is the question: "Is there in each of the texts, taken as a whole, an implied consciousness distinct from that of each of the characters and speakers?" (Nussbaum 1992: 32). This point hints at the controversial debates surrounding the category of an 'implied author'[68] (*sensu* Wayne Booth), which I will come back to in the following paragraphs. In need of avoiding a field which is too vast and a category that is quite elusive and lacks specific criteria, I would like to, on the one hand, focus on features immanent in the text. On the other hand, I would like to draw on interviews I conducted with two of the major authors, because they made specific comments on the 'spirit and consciousness' embodied in their work. To identify possible incongruences between the 'implied consciousness' of the text and the thoughts and utterances of narrators and characters, I am going to consult Wolf Schmid's model of textinterference. Schmid distinguishes between a 'spatial', 'ideological', 'temporal', 'linguistic' and 'perceptual' point of view, which is especially helpful in detecting a difference in ideological stance (Schmid 2010: 101-104). This is the case, for instance, in Faulks' *A Week in December*, which features a rather covert narratorial voice, but also the employment of irony that cannot be attributed to any character within the plot. The meaning of these categories will be discussed in the next chapter on narratological categories.

By the subheading 'points of view' Nussbaum does not mean the corresponding narrative category but refers to content-related issues. 'Point of view' here denotes the characters' or narrators' relationship to the plot – their (temporal or emotional) detachment from or involvement in the actions, potential changes of opinion and the central question if a text invites the reader to see the world through different eyes. If this is the case, it becomes central through whose eyes this is done. I endeavour to refer to this point by analysing the perspective structure of the novels under discussion. A strong effect on the direction of the reader towards empathising and feeling with a specific character or not can partly be attributed to the relationship between showing (mimesis) and telling (diegesis). The visibility of the narrator as an intermediary between the implied reader and the characters is an important factor for the degree of immediacy, the reality effect and the directness of consciousness-representation that shapes our reading experience.

The third point, which Nussbaum calls 'parts of the personality involved', denotes the feelings a text might rouse in the reader, which may be different from the emo-

68 For an introduction to the topic and a good overview over controversies surrounding the concept of the 'implied author' see Kindt/Müller (2006).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

tions described in the plot. "What is active, or rendered active, in each case? Intellect alone? Or also emotions, imagination, perception, desire?", Nussbaum (1992: 33) asks. As we will see, the texts often represent one emotion but potentially trigger different feelings in the reader. Whereas, for example, the tone of the descriptions in Yasmina Khadra's novel very much corresponds to their emotional and often sad and shocking content, this is different in Faulks' novel. *A Week in December*, on the contrary, partly presents outrageous contents in a very neutral and matter-of-fact tone, which has a quite different effect on the reader. Whereas some works aim at drawing the reader into the emotional world of a specific character, others rather distance readers from a closer emotional attachment, for instance by use of irony. In my narratological analyses I will come back to this point by examining the impact of irony/satire, gaps/indeterminacy or value judgements and other stylistic elements on the direction of the readers' sympathy and the evocation of emotions.

Point four, the 'overall shape and organization of the text', is more difficult to include, in my opinion. Nussbaum here wants to know "what type and degree of control does the author present himself as having over the material?" (Nussbaum 1992: 33). Although I consider it important to analyse how a text is constructed, it remains vague in which way Nussbaum here involves the person of the author. I will take up the question of structure in locating climaxes and turning points and determining the degree of eventfulness of a story (as outlined by Schmid). Furthermore, perspectivisation plays a large role for the overall structure of the text, which becomes visible when we, for instance, compare Faulks' novel (featuring multiple focalisers) with Hamid's work (consisting of the dramatic monologue of one single narrator).

Point five addresses the status of the voices displayed. Nussbaum's central questions in this category are:

> What is shown to be the basis of the knowledge or belief? Are the truths claimed to hold for all time, or for some period of time? And over the entire universe? Or only the human world? Or just certain societies? [...] How far, and in what ways, does the text express perplexity or hesitation? (Nussbaum 1992: 33)

On the one hand, this relates to issues of reliable or unreliable narration. This, however, does not play a large role in the selected narrative corpus. Nevertheless, these questions are central on the basis of content. It is of interest to me which values are attributed to different voices and which status they get. Is there talk of humanist, religious or culturally connoted values and are these values called into question by the narrative or not?

Nussbaum's last point focuses on the possible type of 'pleasure' (intellectual, entertaining, etc.) a reader might get from reading the text. She claims that

> by forming with the reader a relationship rich in pleasure, as well as in moral reflection, it [the novel] shows the reader a style of human relating in which deliberation is nourished by the exuberance of fancy, and moral attitudes are made more generous by the play of the imagination (Nussbaum 1998: 234).

I agree with this point in that I believe that potentially more emotional text-forms like the novel may exert a stronger influence on the mindset of readers than more matter-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

of-fact genres. However, I will exclude this last point from my considerations because of its subjectivity and the impossibility of linking this elusive concept to any concrete textual criteria.

As important formal features, Nussbaum moreover lists 'consistency', 'generality', 'precision' and 'explanations'. These terms address the presence or absence of contradictions in the plot, its determinacy or vagueness. Nussbaum is interested in how nuanced and from which vantage point the phenomena presented in the text are explained, and whether characters, contexts or places might represent more general principles. Here, again, questions of reliability or unreliability and indeterminacy or gaps in the plot move into focus. In addition, Nussbaum poses a central question (I also proposed to the authors I interviewed), namely: "What does the text in question seem to say, or show, *about* human life, *about* knowledge, about personality, about how to live?" (Nussbaum 1992: 35). Coming back to this central Aristotelian question, she confirms her belief in the inextricable link of literary and ethical content that most authors in this literary corpus embrace. Thereby, she heeds especially the possibility that "a text can make claims while its style makes rather different claims", that "texts may, in their form and manner, in the desires they express and nourish, actively subvert their own official content, or call its livability into question" (Nussbaum 1992: 35).

Finally, Nussbaum mentions structural questions concerning "the role of the hero or heroine, the nature of the reader's identification, about the way in which the authorial consciousness is present in the text, about the novel's temporal structure" (ebd.) as well as stylistic questions concerning metaphors, vocabulary or sentence structure. I will pay attention to all of these suggestions in my analysis. In the context of 'fictions of migration', language use (the use of strategies of abrogation or appropriation, the utilisation of slang or foreign vocabulary) is, without doubt, a central stylistic issue I am going to parse where applicable.

Nussbaum has been criticised for some aspects of her theory. Eaglestone, for instance, animadverts her reading of texts, which he finds at times incorrect or overdetermining (Eaglestone 1999: 79). In addition, he critiques Nussbaum's stress on the potential of literature to support specific communal identities. He is uncomfortable with her theory because, according to his interpretation,

> it represents an approach to language and literature that aims to create a strong notion of homogenous shared communal identity which overrides individual or cultural differences in the construction of a 'we'. Bakhtin goes on to argue that this monoglossic understanding of language and the novel leads to enslavement and control, and that the novel and a free society are both based on shifting viewpoints expressed by different language uses. In this light, the ethical good of the construction of a 'we', of a communal identity, may be open to question (Eaglestone 1999: 80).

Furthermore, the above-mentioned stress on the capacity of novels to give pleasure has been criticised because of the fact that Nussbaum attributes a moral dimension to this pleasure as such (Nussbaum 1998: 239). Critics argue that 'delight' is no objectifiable category and strongly depends on personal taste. Moreover, the validity of Martha Nussbaum's approach to literature has often been doubted, because she main-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ly refers to authors like Dickens, who wrote with a highly moralistic agenda, which arguably is different from most literary works today. Nevertheless, I believe that it is exactly this tension between individual and society, between the forces of individual consciousness and cultural/religious/societal norms which lies at the heart of the literary corpus under discussion. Equally Nussbaum's focus on tragedy roused the question whether this genre was still relevant and suitable to serve as an example of everyday moral dilemmas, since it most often deals with extraordinary events and borderline situations (Früchtl 1996: 326). To these doubts she counters, however, that the collision of moral norms and the possibility to learn through harrowing experience, as core elements of tragedies, are also relevant for everyday moral decisions (Früchtl 1996: 329) – a claim I would agree with.

Another point of criticism regarding Nussbaum's approach is the insecurity about how she deals with the category of the author and his importance for a work. As a starting point, she distinguishes between different categories and underlines that she is only interested in the text itself:

> It is important to distinguish here, three figures: (1) the narrator or author-character (together with this character's conception of the reader); (2) the authorial presence that animates the text taken as a whole (together with the corresponding implicit picture of what a sensitive and informed reader will experience); and (3) the whole life of the real-life author (and reader), much of which has no causal relation to the text and no relevance to the proper reading of the text. The first and the second pair are what will concern me here: that is, I will be concerned with intentions and thoughts that are realized in the text, and that may appropriately be seen in the text, not with other thoughts and feelings the real-life author and reader may find themselves having. [...] Thus nothing I say about the author here implies that critical statements made by the writer have any particular authority in the interpretation of the text. [...] I am interested, then, in all and only those thoughts, feelings, wishes, movements, and other processes that are actually there to be seen in the text. On the other hand, [...] the text, approached as the creation of human intentions, is some fraction or (9) element of a real human being – even if the writer manages to see what she sees only in her work (Nussbaum 1992: 9-10).

As we can see, Nussbaum also distinguishes between author, implied author and narrator and focuses on the last two categories, which are inherent to the text. Her interpretation of the implied author as 'authorial presence that animates the text', however, reminds us that all these categorisations are the product of subjective interpretation. The inclusion of the interviews I conducted with some of the authors adds an additional dimension to the interpretation of the literary corpus and similarly underlines the subjectivity and polyvalence of possible meanings of a given text. The last sentence of the quote above already embodies some kind of qualification and an acknowledgement that a text is always made by human beings with their own special interests, intentions and passions. Nussbaum also includes in her interpretations prefaces written by the authors she analyses, which, at first sight, sounds contradictory to her stress on a purely text-centred strategy. She justifies this approach by claiming that she does not treat these sources as infallible, that these documents are "closely linked to the authorial consciousness of the novels" and that "an author need not be a bad judge of what has in fact been realized in his text" (Nussbaum 1992: 10).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

In this respect, I agree with the third claim. The information taken from my own interviews with the authors under discussion is not supposed to be THE key to understanding, but it contains one of many possible interpretations of the meaning conveyed through the content and structure of the texts themselves. Authors may express with the content and style they choose a personal ethos (shaped by their habits as well as by social commitments and general principles), which is then concretized by the reader. Recognising this ethos, we notice which normative questions are seen as relevant in a depicted situation, which individual circumstances we have to consider when applying moral principles, and how we might, at times, even have to modify norms to adjust them to these specific circumstances (Günther 1990: 26-27). In this process, author and reader share the same responsibility in constructing a work's ethical core. This, however, means more than sharing or adopting the expressed views of fictional characters, but asks both, author and reader, to really observe and experience the – oftentimes contradictory – ethical questions which gain central importance in a given, described situation (Günther 1990: 28). By implication, Nussbaum believes in the necessity to adapt universal principles and to include the 'particularity' of every case by allowing the formation of more specific rules (Diamond 1998: 57).

Despite all justifiable criticism, Nussbaum still developed an approach that is progressive and overcomes supposed dichotomies between literary writing and moral thinking. She counters stances which confuse the consideration of ethical dimensions to a text with making moral judgments. I agree with her regret about the long silence of literary theory concerning social and ethical questions. Nussbaum believes in the power of literary theory "to confront reigning models of political and economic rationality with the consciousness of ...[literature]" (Nussbaum 2005 (a): 105). To scrutinize dominant models of interpretation and offer other choices or views on a problem – often by subverting ubiquitous economic and political ideologies – is an intention uttered by all authors under discussion. Polyvalence and ambivalence are omnipresent in this literary corpus and unlock our potential to reconsider our own stances on different topics. How could we better learn to see a topic in a differentiated way than by reading novels which present us a wide range of different perspectives, historical, cultural or religious backgrounds as well as different issues and ways of looking at problems? These novels can serve as some kind of "moral laboratories" (Rosenstand 2005: 162), which invite us to think through various solutions and to contemplate the possible application of ethical principles. The more cases we are concerned with, the more we learn about the specificity of each case and may hesitate more to make generalisations, no matter if we are led to agree with the view of the protagonist and the tone of the novel, or not. This stress on individual consideration, however, also explains why it is not possible to construct a catalogue of stylistic elements in correspondence to certain effects, even though Nussbaum draws on narratological elements to build a bridge between form and function. My interpretations in the four analytical chapters show overlapping points of reference but also draw on different instruments, adjusted to the individual focus of each novel, aloof from any 'form-to-function mapping'.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

3.7) Towards a political approach: Issues of identity, hybridity and multiculturalism

A second field that is vital for my analysis is the realm of political approaches to ethics in literature. With the advent of post-colonial literary criticism (but also with the prevalence of feminist or Marxist approaches) literary texts came to be regarded as ideological constructions that could be employed and also instrumentalised by different political and social forces or centres of power (Coady/Miller 1998: 201). But despite recurrent thematisations of power structures, hierarchies and relationships of domination and submission, post-colonial criticism has also highlighted the role of individual identity with its cognate subjects surrounding the terms of alterity/'otherness'[69] and hybridity[70]. Migration, displacement and its consequences for individual and communal identities are issues which continue to be frequent subject matters of contemporary fictional writing and criticism.[71]

An important critic promoting a political approach to ethical criticism is Richard Rorty.[72] Rorty's contemplations on narrative and philosophy are not only interesting because he is a moral philosopher with great respect for fictional literature who rejects a reduction of narratives to their aesthetic value. He is also a highly political writer who showed an interest in topics related to religion and multiculturalism. His views emanate from the assumption that all human beings have a moral identity. Villains just have a different moral identity and thus follow different rules (Rorty 2006 (b): 96). He ascribes great importance to fictional literature as a medium which might help us "to enlarge ourselves by enlarging our sensitivity and our imaginations" (Rorty 2006 (d): 124).

Rorty developed two conceptions of literature that refer to the role of novels in the construction of identity. First, he claims that "narratives provide a means of collective self-criticism [...which enables a community to become] more tolerant, more inclusionary, and more just" (Voparil 2006: 63). Secondly, Rorty assumes that novels "serve to solidify a common moral identity and inculcate a liberal morality" (Voparil 2006: 63). In my opinion, these claims are not ungrounded. Viewing the pride with which Shakespeare is seen as the embodiment of English heritage and a figurehead of English language and culture[73] – a phenomenon which can similarly be found in all

69 According to Harpham, this "'otherness' applies equally [...] to the obligations of the individual, the structure of ethical terms, the subject as constructed by ethics, and even to the position of ethical discourse with respect to other discourses" (Harpham 1992: 2).

70 For a very good introduction to different concepts surrounding the term of 'hybridity' such as 'syncretism', 'mestizaje', 'transculturalism', 'créolité' and 'négritude' see Kraidy (2005).

71 Cf. Kenneally/Richman/Zach (2014) as introduction to current trends in ethical and cultural literature and theory and Kim 2014 for a discussion of diaspora, transnationalism and transculturalism in postcolonial literature and theory.

72 Cf. Rorty (1995, 2003, 2006 (a), 2006 (b) and 2006 (c)). For interesting insights into Rorty's political philosophy and his stances on humanism, language and literature see Steele (1993), Clarke (2000), Ryu (2001), Bernstein (2008), Dazhi/Yunhua (2008) and Leypoldt (2008).

73 Shakespeare even provided the theme and introductory quote for the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics, which was later on humorously commented by the media concerning the fact that Shakespeare's works suggest that he did not like sports at all (cf. *The Guardian* 27.07.2012).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

text-based cultures – shows that literature is in a way seen as an expression of a specific nation or culture. It binds together people of a similar heritage. Likewise, in a post-colonial context there are various writers which have been hailed or criticised as 'voices' of specific ethnic minorities or religious creeds and have been partly judged and interpreted along these lines. Their novels have inspired debates about collective (minority) identities, about hybridity, multiculturalism, colonial conflicts and diaspora. Additional to the potential of narratives to promote the construction of communal identities, Rorty, similar to humanist critics, also underlined the instructive force of both philosophical and literary works and their contingent effect on personal change and self-development:

> As I see it, the value of the books studied in both literature and philosophy departments is that they serve the same function as archaic torsos of Apollo, paintings by Vermeer, and Grateful Dead concerts. They occasionally suggest to people that they must change their lives, and perhaps even suggest how they might do so. All things being equal, we should not teach books unless they have changed our lives, or the lives of people we know, or the lives of large numbers of people in the past, or unless we have some other reason to believe that studying them may change some of our students` lives (Rorty 1994: 578).

In his seminal work *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* he describes solidarity as being created – not discovered. Solidarity develops by seeing the humiliation and pain of other human beings, which helps us become aware of their problems and feelings and may render it impossible for us to see them as alien, to exclude or marginalise them (Rorty 2008 [1989]: xvi). The novel can teach us about unfamiliar people as well as about ourselves and can effect moral change.

The forces of individual as well as collective identities are important factors implicitly discussed by most novels in this literary corpus. As Bredella notes, it may be dangerous to reduce people to their collective identities, but we still have to admit that human beings always relate to their collective identities – whether they affirm or reject this identity (Bredella 2010: XXVI). Some authors criticise their own cultural/religious background by literary means, others try to strengthen it in defence against outer influences, calling upon the common ground of a distinctive identity. In this context the recognition or misrecognition of a given community is vital for the self-definition of an individual. The possible tensions between individual and communal identity (which may be culturally, religiously or politically determined) play a large role in the works under discussion. According to the liberal, subjectivist concept of the self (promoted by Charles Taylor and others) "the self decides which culture it wants to live in and what groups it wants to be a member of" (Bredella 2010: 109). Communitarians (like Alasdair MacIntyre), on the other hand, argue that we "do not possess an individual identity first and then enter into interactions with others and construe political institutions. Intersubjectivity is not something which is added to subjectivity; it is its presupposition" (Bredella 2010: 113). As we will see in the following analytical chapters, the novels by Faulks or Kureishi display a rather liberal concept of the self, since the protagonists try out and consciously choose different communal identities, whereas Khadra's work, for instance, is emphatic about the strong

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

pressures of a community and its self-given values on the individual and their decisions.

The cultural theorist Stuart Hall is known for a "radical contextualism" (Grossberg 2007: 98), which fits in well with the interdisciplinary and broad approach of this study and shall serve as a further example of a political approach to ethics and literature. Hall has written much about the topics this thesis is concerned with: about the development of British society under Thatcherism and beyond, processes of cultural and political globalisation, the rise of global financial capitalism, new constructions of ethnicity and local as well as global identity in our age (cf. Hall 1994 (a)). He draws a very close connection between literature and identity by claiming that "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall 1995 [1990]: 435). He reacts with his writings to the works of post-colonial theorists who see cultural identity as the major factor constituting the basis for all other points of orientation:

> [This] position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history (Hall 1995 [1990]: 435).

Hall expresses doubts about the possibility of a unified identity or experience that is based on race or culture. Instead, he proposes a concept of 'cross-cutting identities' and underlines the importance of many different parameters in the construction of individual identity. Surmounting the long-time accentuation of ethnicity or race, he claims that "[t]he end of the essential black subject also entails a recognition that the central issues of race always appear historically in articulation, in a formation, with other categories and divisions and are constantly crossed and recrossed by the categories of class, of gender and ethnicity" (Hall 1995 [1989]: 201)[74]. He highlights the discontinuities and fractions that are inherent to all group identities and underlines that cultural identity is no stable or unchangeable core but a fluid and manmade construct. Cultural identity is no 'essence' but a 'positioning' and therefore linked to a politics of identity (Hall 1994: 30). It is not inherent but constructed on the basis of difference towards an ambiguous 'other', which is included or excluded by the people in power of representation (cf. Hall 2004 (b): 171-172, Brah 2007: 81). Recurrently referring to Said's Orientalism, Hall discusses in his work the relationship between discourse and power and the formerly dominant role of Europe or 'the West' to define

74 Hall here proposes a new concept of ethnicity which is not connected to exclusivist, aggressive forms of national identity and does not suppress difference but more positively refers to the fact that identity is always culturally, historically and politically constructed. He explains that "the term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual" (Hall 1995 [1989]: 201).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

the rest of the world by stereotyping images reflecting difference and ambivalence (Hall 1994 (c): 137-179).

In his essay "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity", Hall makes extended references to the concept of 'Englishness', which neglected differences of class, religion or gender striving for a homogenous representation of national identity[75] – an endeavour that was increasingly undermined by the process of globalisation (Hall 1994 (a): 47). Increasing migration after the Second World War, as well as political, economic and social changes transformed traditional notions of 'Englishness', which is an important background for an analysis of the novels by Faulks and Kureishi. Migration generated increasing ethnic hybridity, which, according to Hall, promoted the emergence of 'new ethnicities' since migrants even to the second or third generation are influenced by a plethora of different cultural forces (Rustin 2007: 41). He maintains that assimilation will always coexist with differences that are lasting and believes that our age is characterised by a simultaneous increase in racism and multiculturalism (Hall/Maharaj 2001: 49).

On the whole, identity formation as well as crises of identity and belonging play a large role in all novels under discussion and are mostly connected to a turn towards religious fundamentalist ideas. Whereas traditional theories in the context of postcolonial studies (such as the ideas promoted by Edward Said that have been outlined briefly in the previous chapter) had their focus on race and ethnicity as main denominators of individual and group experience, Hall sympathises with the anti-essentialist notion that modern identities are increasingly decentred, dislocated and fragmented (Hall 1994 (a): 180). A short summary of Hall's main points will explain the importance of his work in this context. [76]

He distinguishes three main theories of identity: the Enlightenment concept of a unified identity that was based on notions of reason and an essentialist core of the person; a sociological concept of identity in which the core of the subject was not seen as autonomous but created in interaction with the surrounding society and culture; and thirdly a postmodern concept of identity which is characterised by fragmentation and changing as well as conflicting identifications and loyalties (Hall 2000 [1996]: 597-598). Hall sketches the increasing diversification of modern societies and the process of globalisation as main catalysts for the development of the 'postmodern subject'. Our age is characterised by the discontinuity of old traditions and long-held beliefs, a variety of different centres of power as well as antagonisms and societal schisms. The decreasing ability of the nation state to uphold myths of national unity and a homogenous national culture results in a lack of orientation and a vacuum that can be filled by the allegiance to other facets of identity formation. According to Hall, especially the four major former sources of collective social identities were beginning

75 See also Hall's essay "The Spectacle of the 'Other'" in which he describes how representation of 'the other' can be a means of exerting symbolic power and achieve an inclusion or exclusion of other people from a national or communal identity (Hall 2004 (a)).

76 The three following paragraphs summarise Hall's argumentation in his article "The Question of Cultural Identity" (Hall 2000 [1996]: 595-634) and are entirely based on his ideas.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

to wane: race, class, axiomatic gender roles and the belief in the superiority of the Western world slowly lost their power (Hall 1994 (c): 69-70).

This fragmentation or pluralisation of identity has also political consequences, since no single identity marker is able to override all other allegiances. Different factors of influence (such as ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender, ideology, religion etc.) increasingly compete with each other (Hall 2000 [1996]: 601 and 617). This led to the founding of new social movements and the development of 'identity politics'. The division between the private and the public realm has been questioned and processes of identification have turned into political matters. In the late modern framework, man is conceived as individual and autonomous subject, and identity is not viewed as a closed system but an ongoing process of identification. According to modern psychoanalysis, we are constantly in search of our identities. We seek to connect the different parts of our fragmented selves to form a whole in order to construct for ourselves a coherent biography. This becomes, according to Hall (who refers to Foucault), increasingly difficult in the late modern age, which is characterized by full-blown collective institutions who control the individual, on the one hand, and the subject's increasing individualisation and isolation, on the other hand. National cultures as 'imagined communities' (*sensu* Benedict Anderson) remain the main sources of cultural identity. However, it can, according to Hall, be doubted that national identity really manages to fabricate a unifying identity because all modern nations consist of disparate cultures with their own languages and traditions, different social classes and ethnic groups as well as sexual identities. National cultures are thus always subjected to inner tensions and rifts and only unified through the exercise of state power. All modern nations are culturally hybrid, and 'race' can equally be regarded not as a discursive category that has been disqualified by political abuse (Hall 2000 [1996]: 617).

National allegiances are further undermined and weakened by global integration and a concomitant cultural homogenisation (in the form of consumerism, international media, etc.). Identity formation is influenced by tensions between the local and the global, but increasingly also by local or particularistic opposition against globalisation (Hall 2000 [1996]: 621-623, see also Hall 2001 (a): 21). Another argument against a general cultural homogenisation is the very unequal distribution of globalisation in many parts of the world and the fact that its homogenising effects are growing mainly in Western societies. In general, Hall holds the view that the pluralisation of new identities also brought about a stronger polarisation between these positions. In defence against the perceived threats of globalisation and an increasing cultural homogenisation, more and more people retreat to minority identities which come along in the form of religious orthodoxy, political separatism, cultural traditionalism or regionalism. In this context, Hall underlines the importance of people who belong to 'cultures of hybridity', because they are familiar with different cultural backgrounds, histories, languages and traditions, and can thus function as 'translators'.[77]

77 See, for instance, Hall's remarks on the necessity of translation between different worldviews and mind-sets due to the 'cultural relativism' that determines representation, the recurring lack of correla-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

These are all issues which are essentially ethical and at the core of the present literary corpus. Hybridity, alterity and the multiplicity of influences that affect the protagonists' decisions are palpable throughout all novels. Grabes notes the same shift towards alterity and multiplicity in the development of modern aesthetics as such and mentions that in

> postmodern aesthetics, the centre of gravity has shifted so much towards multiplicity and alterity that unity is no longer 'given' (or, as in the perspectivism of modernist art, at least suggested), but has to be established by the beholder, listener, or reader with all the arbitrariness and provisional validity of a momentary subjective synthesis (Grabes 1996: 25).

In this respect, it is interesting to explore how different facets are evaluated. Is cultural hybridity presented as a positive potential or as a cause for identity conflicts and a resort to radical ideas? Is a resort to Islamic fundamentalism described as the result of an individual identity crisis or is it seen within a broader political and economic context as a fight against the abovementioned threats of globalisation? Which forces are specifically highlighted as contributing to a fragmentation of individual identity? Which tensions between local and global forces as well as communitarian and individual factors are seized on? In this context, the development of characters will be of major importance for my study. In the analytical chapters I am going to investigate the relevance of identity and alterity and revert to Hall's ideas where applicable. The application of ethical criticism to the analytical chapters shall serve to answer the question how the texts evoke empathy for the plight of the individual and if they underline individual responsibility or communal pressures.[78]

3.8) The role of the author

3.8.1) The 'intentional fallacy' and author vs. reader-oriented criticism

Having outlined the points, I consider most important concerning structure and content, the role of the author is a third significant reference-point. As I have an interest in the political and religious statements made by the authors of the novels under discussion, I am first going to briefly introduce the controversial debates surrounding 'authorial' intention before elaborating on the biographical background of the writers. The importance of the author for a work of fiction has been debated for centuries. Schönert outlines how

> [s]ince the 18th century, there has been a culturally significant need to fall back on the author for interpretative processes and value judgments of an artistic work based on the creative act, authenticity, individuality, originality, unity of the work and its depths of mean-

tions in other languages or cultural context as well as the constant change of meanings and concepts (Hall 2013: 45).

78 Scanlan claims that till today the 'post-9/11 novel of terrorism' focuses more on trauma and the pain of the survivors than on the terrorists and their motives and perspectives (Scanlan 2012: 142). As I am going to argue, this does not hold true for the works at hand and their engagement with Islamic fundamentalism that goes beyond jihadism and the events of 9/11.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> ing. […] An author-related reception focuses on the intention, attributed to the author, to convey a particular understanding of his work. In this sense, the work can also be seen as an expression of the author's personality (including his feelings, opinions, knowledge and values). In particular, differing conceptions of author and authorship determine, alongside the concerns of historiographic, classificatory and editorial practices, ascription of meaning to literary texts […] (Schönert 2009: 2-3).

Criticising this view as "intentional fallacy"[79] there have been numerous approaches insisting on the claim that all relevant information for any interpretation can be found in a work itself without consulting any other sources that might add some meaning to the information inherent to a text. Schönert subsumes under this label some of the currents already addressed in this chapter, such as structuralist, formalist or text-semiotic approaches, close reading and New Criticism (Schönert 2009: 7). Authorial 'intention' remains a highly controversial subject, not only since Barthes' famous thesis of "The Death of the Author" (Barthes 1967).

The role of the author for an analysis and interpretation of fiction is not only controversial but also highly dependent on historical circumstances. As Burke notes, the rejection of an authority embodied by an author might also have wider socio-political reasons:

> The death of the author might be said to fulfil much the same function in our day as did the the [sic.] death of God for late nineteenth-century thought. Both deaths attest to a departure of belief in authority, presence, intention, omniscience and creativity. For a culture which thinks itself to have come too late for the Gods or for their extermination, the figures of the author and the human subject are said to fill the theological void, to take up the role of ensuring meaning in the absence of metaphysical certainties. The author has thus become the object of a residual antitheology [...] (Burke 2008: 21).

According to this hypothesis, the 'death of the author' proclaimed by Barthes can be called the result of a conglomerate of different historical, political and philosophical processes that emanated from an increased scepticism towards authorities and dominant discourses. In that regard, Biriotti subsumes six main influences that have contributed to a diminished role of the author for the interpretation of fiction for several decades. He holds responsible for this turn "a discrediting of the concept of intentionality", "structuralism", "the birth of the reader" or "a general move towards reader-based studies of texts", "Deconstruction" and other text-centred approaches, "political concerns" aiming at canon formation and its embedded implications of "racism, sexism and imperialism", as well as "developments in linguistics" that questioned the "notion of a single intending psyche" (Biriotti 1993: 2-5). In the next paragraphs I will briefly explain these major influences of firstly, an intentional fallacy, secondly, the basic assumptions of structuralism and deconstructivism and thirdly, the shift towards reader-centred approaches.

Concerning the first and second point of interest, it can be stated that adherents to the movement of New Criticism between the 1940 s and 1970 s uttered consider-

79 Approaches which underline the need for a clear dissociation of author and narrator and reject the recurring scholarly interest in authorial intention include Wimsatt/Beardsley (2009: 84-101), Kayser (2009: 124-137) and Barthes (2009: 185-193).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

able doubts concerning the so-called "intentional fallacy" (cf. Wimsatt/ Beardsley 1946: 468-488). They rejected biographical interpretations in favour of analyses which concentrated solely on the content and structure of the text itself. Roland Barthes followed a similar approach when in 1968 he wrote his seminal article titled 'La mort de l'auteur' (cf. Barthes 2000: 185-193). Biriotti points to the overall historical developments at the time Barthes wrote his article, when he describes how "[t]he traditional, humanist concept of a single, human source of all meaning was discarded amid the clamour of disturbances and manifestations against authority all over Europe" (Biriotti 1993: 1). As Hornung puts it, New Criticism, structuralism, deconstruction and poststructuralism brought forth "a radical shift in perspective from a man-centred to a text-centered universe" (Hornung 1996: 210). These text-centred approaches implicated a belief in the sign as sole generator of meaning while the role of the author was renounced. Ironically, it is especially deconstructionist critics such as Foucault, Barthes or Derrida who have themselves been the object of a large corpus of secondary literature, as the boundaries between creative writing and criticism increasingly blurred (Burke 2008: 170-171). The disregard for the role of the author during this period is in a way also surprising since the writer's "responsibility to avoid language that is racist, sexist, homophobic, etc., has never been articulated more insistently" (Biriotti 1993: 9).

As a third factor working towards a diminished importance of the author, Biriotti mentions the rise of reader-response criticism. Reader-centred approaches start from the assumption that the reader is the sole generator of meaning. Everything depends on the subjective lens of the reader and their way of interpreting a given piece of work. Thus there are no lesser or more valid interpretations of texts, if we refuse to analyse textual characteristics or look at the intentions an author might have uttered. According to this approach, there would be no use for dialogue or an exchange of different opinions, because all opinions would have the same validity or justification. However, as McCann notes, "progress in all spheres of life occurs through the clash of conflicting opinions [...and] the development of knowledge is dialectical, it is a *social* process, and appeal to the text under discussion is part of that process" (McCann 1993: 75). McCann deplores the one-sidedness of reader-centred as well as text-centred approaches. He believes that a renunciation of contextual interpretations "produces not more and richer meanings [...] but no meaning at all" (McCann 1993: 74).

Because of this reason, potential authorial functions have never been fully ignored and their denial was even contested by such eminent critics as Foucault, who raised the question "What is an author"? (Foucault 2000: 198-229).[80] Furthermore, the 'death of the author' did not affect all movements. For instance, it barely influ-

80 While critics such as Terry Eagleton advocate that 'the death of the author' has often been overstated and Foucault just saw authorship "as a legal, political and historical category rather than as some transcendental source of meaning" (Eagleton 1993: 42), others claim that "[d]espite his questioning of the Death, however, it is Foucault's evocation of an authorless world, rather than his insistence that we have not yet arrived at it, that dominates readings of the essay" (Biriotti 1993: 1). For a more elaborate discussion of Foucault's theoretical achievements and shortcomings with respect to this article see Wilson (2004).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

enced feminist critics, since this would have undermined their raison d'être (Miller 1993: 24). Feminist criticism as well as intercultural and postcolonial criticism stressed the centrality of the author's gender, class or ethnicity for an adequate judgement of the conditions under which texts emerge and the perspective they reflect, and therewith gave the category of the author new social acceptance. The author 'returned', as Jannidis put it so memorably in 1999. Jannidis notes that an inclusion of the concept of the author has often been seen as problematic due to general considerations of cultural criticism and not due to the experience of literary criticism (cf. Jannidis et al. 2000: 9). Furthermore, criticism of an authorial intention derives from the well-established distinction between author and narrator, proposed by Käte Friedemann as early as 1910 and underlined by Wolfgang Kayser (cf. Kayser 2000: 127-137) in the 1950s (Jannidis 2000: 18). This, however, did not inhibit the development of new models of authorial presence.

In 1961 Wayne Booth developed the concept of the implied author in response to the widespread discussions concerning authorial intention:

> The concept of implied author refers to the author-image contained in a work and constituted by the stylistic, ideological, and aesthetic properties for which indexical signs can be found in the text. Thus, the implied author has an objective and a subjective side: it is grounded in the indexes of the text, but these indexes are perceived and evaluated differently by each individual reader (Schmid 2009: 161).

The concept thus combines text-immanent and reader-oriented approaches in that it highlights the interplay of textual signifiers with individual interpretation. The 'implied author' was constructed as mediator between author and narrator, which more or less corresponds to the cumulative meaning of a text. Booth draws an analogy between the 'implied author' and a companion who offers us friendship and gifts that might give us pleasure and value for our own life or not. These gifts, or stories vary in their degree of intimacy, coherence, familiarity with or distance to our own world as well as in the responsibility or room for interpretation they grant us and the range and type of activities they suggest (Booth 2005: 91-96). Similar to our interaction with real people, our reactions to stories are subjective and vary from reader to reader. But according to Booth, this does not change the fact that the offer itself and all the content and structure determining the story can be considered as a conscious act.

The concept has often been criticised as misleading or superfluous (cf. criticism by Genette 2000: 233-246). However, I believe the concept to be a useful starting point to account for phenomena such as narratorial irony, which is an important feature of many of the novels under discussion. There has to be some standard against which we interpret the seriousness or reliability of narratorial comments. And these choices of characters, world-views or perspective can definitely have an ideological side. I will therefore come back to the concept in the chapter on narratological methods. In general, I do not claim that any of the authors under discussion simply converted his political stance into a novel, making an 'implied author' express his views and beliefs. But I do believe that they did choose specific stylistic and aesthetic features for their works, which may guide readers (of course depending on their individual backgrounds and beliefs) to interpret the plot in specific ways. The 'implied au-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

thor' is said to function as a bridge between author and narrator, who "chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices" (Booth 1969: 74-75). Through these choices the author is somehow contained in a literary work. The main relevant features

> include the fabrication of a represented world; the invention of a story with situations, characters, and actions; the selection of a particular action logic with a more or less pronounced world-view; the deployment of a narrator and his or her perspective; the transformation of a story into a narrative with the aid of techniques such as flattening simultaneous events into a linear progression and rearranging the order of episodes; and finally, the presentation of the narrative in particular linguistic (or visual) forms (Schmid 2009: 161-162).

Even though Booth's theories seem partly outdated, I can nonetheless subscribe to his opinion that "inside views can build sympathy even for the most vicious character" and that "properly used, this effect can be of immeasurable value in forcing us to see the human worth of a character whose actions, objectively considered, we would deplore" (Booth 1969: 378). And this possible effect is of great significance for our topic.[81] As outlined by Nussbaum, the direction of sympathy is, moreover, linked to concepts such as 'poetic justice', which I have briefly outlined in this chapter.

In my opinion, reader- and author-based models should not compete and exclude each other but can be combined in a fruitful way to shed light on a text from different angles. There are textual characteristics suggesting specific clues, but there is also the reader's freedom of interpretation. As Schmid rightfully highlights,

> it must be remembered that, like the readings of different recipients, the various interpretations of a single reader are each associated with a different implied author. Depending on the function a work is believed to have had according to a given reading, the implied author will be reconstructed as having predominantly aesthetic, practical, or ideological intentions (Schmid 2009: 162).

To my mind, the implied authors of the selected novels follow predominantly ideological intentions. Even though some works might reflect opinions on specific topics that the real-life author does not hold, this does not seem to be the case in this respect. May it be due to the fact that Islamic fundamentalism is such a sensitive issue that does not encourage experimental treatment, or because some authors (like Hanif Kureishi) are also politically active and have no interest in expressing through their works an ideological stance different from their personal position: The tenor of most novels corresponds to the public statements on the central topic made by the authors themselves. In this context, I also address their personal background but without recourse to psychoanalytical theories. I only consult official political statements uttered

81 It is important in this respect, though, that Booth modified his views proposed in *A Rhetoric of Fiction* in favour of a more open and differentiated approach that does not emanate from a direct correlation between narrative techniques and ethical effects, anymore (Booth 1989: 57-78). For a clarification of Booth's concept of 'rhetoric' see Chatman (1989: 40-56). In this article Chatman discusses the distinction between the ideological and aesthetic functions of narrative techniques and makes a valuable contribution to specify and develop Booth's categories.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

by the authors themselves and do not strive to overinterpret the role of their biography. The background is primarily relevant where an author underlined the importance of specific historical or personal events for the creation of his or her work.

3.8.2) The authors' background: Khadra, Hamid, Kureishi, Faulks

The selected novelists come from different backgrounds, which had a greater or lesser influence on their various works. Yasmina Khadra (or Mohammed Moulessehoul) is a former Algerian army officer who had to resort to his female nom de plume in the early 1990 s due to increasing censorship. At first focusing on the political and social conditions in Algeria, he wrote a series of crime novels before publishing a trilogy set in Afghanistan, Israel and Iraq, of which *The Sirens of Baghdad* is the last part. The single novels are not interrelated by content but all deal with regional circumstances that promote a thriving of Islamic fundamentalism. All three works set out to illuminate the reasons why ordinary people may resort to violence and radical religious ideologies. Without falling prey to intentional fallacy, I believe that it is important to acknowledge that the author was born into a Bedouin family and entered a cadet school at the age of nine. Since then he served the Algerian army, also during the civil war from December 1991 till February 2002, in which the government fought against different Islamist rebel movements like the Armed Islamic Group. He was first praised by Western academia for his works and later on attacked and shunned for his military past.

After the revelation of his identity in 2000, Khadra has frequently been giving interviews. In these interviews, he criticises violent currents in Islam as well as Western politics and Western interpretations of Islamic fundamentalism. The author is himself a Muslim but underlines, above everything, his position as a humanist, which clearly shines through his writing. He has recurrently been stressing that he wants to give an insight into different facets of the phenomenon from a point of view Western readers might be unaccustomed to. He endeavours to accentuate shared human values and to rouse empathy for the plight of other people and their motives for violence. Thus, Khadra's background has to be considered for an analysis of *The Sirens of Baghdad*. Without interpreting the novel from a biographical viewpoint, I will still refer to the author's opinion on political and religious issues where applicable.

What is more, the disclosure of Yasmina Khadra's real name and identity in 2000 and the ensuing resentful debates surrounding his personality and military past, which resulted in the withdrawal of a writer's scholarship and a literary prize, exemplify the immense influence of biographical facts on the reader-response to a given work. The literary achievement remained the same after Khadra's revelation. However, the reading, and sometimes even appreciation and academic valuation of his work changed in many circles. We all – consciously or not – draw conclusions from an author's gender and their ethnic, social, political or religious background and project these assumptions on the text itself with respect to choices involving language,

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

style and content.[82] Strictly speaking, the author in this way even plays a role in reader-oriented analytical models.

Hanif Kureishi's career similarly indicates the crucial role of a writer's name for the reception of his works. Once established, an author also sells many books with his name – especially if he is regarded as 'the voice' of a specific community. In this respect, Kureishi has long been hailed as a representative of Asian immigrants in Britain, who is able to give readers an insight into migrant identity (cf. Buchanan 2007: 12-13). This potential was ascribed to him even though he never claimed to represent Pakistani people. Neither did he experience migration, nor suffer from language barriers, economic deprivation or other common problems newly-arrived migrants from different cultural backgrounds might face when coming to Great Britain. However, the experience of racism does not seem to be unknown to him.

Hanif Kureishi (born 1954) grew up in London as the son of an English mother and a Pakistani father. In his essay "The Rainbow Sign" he explains how he experienced a wave of racism, especially directed against Pakistani immigrants, during his youth. He describes how he was disappointed by the hatemongering of Enoch Powell and other politicians, by the daily assaults on immigrants on the streets, the prejudices, distrust and insults he had to face because of his skin colour and the anger he had to swallow. Kureishi sketches how he himself had to undergo some sort of identity crisis, not knowing where he belonged. Thus, his writing has to be understood in the context of his experience in Great Britain under Thatcher, which was characterised by a climate of "anti-unionism, individualism, nationalism, as well as the increasing tendency to associate national identity with whiteness" (Hammond 2007: 224).

Having written pornography during the 1970 s, he published various plays, short stories and novels during the 1980 s and 1990 s. *The Black Album* and the story "My Son the Fanatic" are the only works dealing with the topic of Islamic fundamentalism. Kureishi very much focuses on questions of identity, nationality, race, class, sexuality and issues of belonging and hybridity in its various different facets. Just as Faulks' novel *A Week in December* was called a 'state of the nation novel' by many critics, Kureishi also named *The Black Album* "a 'state of Britain' narrative" (Kureishi 2011: 112).

Interestingly, he holds race and religion to be the main fields of conflict in present-day British society, whereas Sebastian Faulks, for instance, identifies economic and class divisions as major roots of social unrest. In "The Word and the Bomb" (originally published in 2005) Kureishi outlines:

> During my childhood and youth, differences in British society were always based around class and the conflicts they gave rise to. [...] Now people are not even divided over politics, as there is only one party, and the opposition is fragmented, disorganised and without pas-

82 Diment highlights that making a connection between the real-life author and his work is a positive process, because a strict separation between author and implied author or morality and art has often in history served totalitarian ideologies. Single authors were thus able to disseminate their radical and often morally reprehensible ideas and be excused by the public under the guise of artistic freedom (Diment 1994: 143-167).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> sion or direction. The real differences in Britain today are not political, or even based on class, but are arranged around race and religion, with their history of exploitation, humiliation and political helplessness (Kureishi 2011: 99).

The author narrates how he became fully aware of the force of Islamic fundamentalist ideas during his stay with his father's family in Pakistan in 1982, where he saw an advancing Islamisation taking place, and after the Rushdie affair in 1989. He wanted to understand the appeal of religious fundamentalism to young people in Pakistan as well as back home in Britain and looked at the issue with increasing perplexity:

> Forgetting how zealous we had once been about our own description of equality – socialism – we could only be shocked by their commitment and solidarity, and by their hatred of injustice, as well as their determination to bring about social change. We had not seen religious revolutionaries for a long time. [...] For us, religious commitment, particularly if it was political too, entailed not emancipation but a rejection of the Enlightenment and of modernity. How could we begin to deal with it? You respect people who are different, but how do you live with people who are so different that – among other things – they lock up their wives? (Kureishi 2011: 100-101).

Being a Muslim but not very religious, Kureishi has frequently been criticised by Muslim and especially Pakistani communities for his blunt and provocative depiction of sexual excesses and his criticism of religious dogma. Nevertheless, his works are carefully researched. The writer has got contact with Muslim communities and did a lot of research specifically on Muslims in Britain. In this context, he also spoke with young Muslim people who had been drawn to fundamentalist religious beliefs and were involved in the planning of terrorist attacks. In that regard, he realized which central role questions of identity, belonging and moral orientation played for the young radicals he spoke with. In *Dreaming and Scheming* Kureishi concludes about this issue:

> Fundamentalism provides security. For the fundamentalist, as for all reactionaries, everything has been decided. Truth has been agreed and nothing must change. For serene liberals on the other hand, the consolations of knowing seem less satisfying than the pleasures of puzzlement, and of wanting to discover for oneself. But the feeling that one cannot know everything, that there will always be maddening and live questions about who one is and how it is possible to make a life with other people who don't accept one, can be devastating. [...] Enlightenment values – rationalism, tolerance, scepticism – don't get you through a dreadful night; they don't provide spiritual comfort or community or solidarity. [...] Muslim fundamentalism has always seemed to me to be profoundly wrong, unnecessarily restrictive and frequently cruel. But there are reasons for its revival that are comprehensible (Kureishi 2002: 220-221).

Apart from the many political statements Kureishi has given throughout his career, this is also a very personal evaluation of 'home-grown British' Islamic fundamentalism and its potential roots and driving forces. The author has at all times been very straightforward in his political commentary, which is clearly reflected in *The Black Album*.

Mohsin Hamid was born in Lahore in 1971 and spent roughly half of his life in Pakistan. He attended school in the United States from three to nine, while his father was a university professor at Stanford, before going back to Lahore. At 18 he returned

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

to the US and studied at Princeton with writers such as Toni Morrison and Joyce Carol Oates. After graduating from Princeton, Hamid attended Harvard Law School and worked for several years for McKinsey and Company in New York. In 2001 he moved to London and became a dual citizen of Britain in 2006. For some years now, he's been living with his wife and daughter between London, New York, Lahore and other cities. While his first novel *Moth Smoke* (2000) is set in Pakistan, his second novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* focuses on the position of a Muslim, Pakistani immigrant in the United States and his adaptation to and final rejection of the Western capitalist economy. Often asked about the many parallels between his own life and the life of the protagonist, Hamid answered that he did not write his own story. Nevertheless, he admits that he does not do a lot of research but that he draws on his experience and only writes about things he also believes in.

Hamid is a Muslim but emphasises that religion is a very private matter for him:

> When I came back from college with all these radical ideas, and I was talking to one of my aunts about religion she said to me: 'Look, I don't want to answer your questions.' I asked: 'Why don't you answer my questions? Don't you have enough faith to stand my questioning?' And she said: 'Look: It's not about that we have faith or don't have faith. It's that it's personal. It's between me and my God!' And I think that is a really good answer. As far as my own sort of spirituality is concerned, I avoid speaking about it, because I think it is something personal (interview with Mohsin Hamid 16.08.2012).

He underlined in conversation with me that he would call himself a humanist, but that this does not automatically imply irreligiousness. Furthermore, he claimed to be a 'liberal Pakistani'. Being asked what this means with respect to his value system and attitude to life he explained:

> When you ask generally what I mean when I say that I am a 'liberal Pakistani' (which is also a very clumsy term), I can say, from a political outlook that I certainly believe in equal rights for women, homosexuals, different races, ethnicities, religious groups. I believe in the protection of minorities and in freedom of expression. I support the legalization of drugs. I support a world where nobody ever had to carry a passport. I am a believer in any kind of equality between human beings that should not be denied on the basis of citizenship, or sexuality, or religion, or expression, or race (interview with Mohsin Hamid 16.08.2012).

These comments already set a useful framework for an interpretation of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which reflects this ethos.

Sebastian Faulks (born in 1953 in Donnington) studied English at Cambridge and is also a journalist. Like Kureishi he has been appointed *Commander of the Order of the British Empire* (CBE). He wrote various historical novels – many of them set in France and dealing with the First World War. *A Week in December* is his only work that thematises the issues of Islamist beliefs and the downturns of the Western capitalist economy. Faulks is not too convinced of the role of the author in fiction. He is a diligent researcher who claims that all of his characters and stories are entirely fictitious. He concedes that necessarily novels have a strong connection to reality through "common human experiences of the phenomenal world" (Faulks 2011: 4), but warns against the "runaway truck of biographical reductionism" (Faulks 2011: 6). Faulks sees literature as a creative work of art, which is the gift of the writer. On the one

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

hand, he acknowledges that the increase in biographical emphasis during the last twenty years "re-humanised the way that people looked at books: it made novels appear once again to be about people and experience, not structural linguistics" (Faulks 2011: 2). On the other hand, he criticises the ubiquity of gossip concerning the novelists' background and the tendential connection between an autobiographical dimension of a work and its success, or popularity. To my mind, this is an interesting aspect. Oftentimes, a literary work has been severely criticised after its alleged 'authenticity' had been dismantled (e.g. in 1992 when the indigenous ancestry of the Australian Aboriginal author Mudrooroo – or Colin Johnson – was publicly discussed and questioned).

A further remarkable aspect is his statement about his motivation to write about Islamic fundamentalism. Faulks observes:

> Of course, 9/11 and the bombings in London roused my interest. Furthermore, I know some Muslim people. I wanted to better understand this. If you are a responsible grown-up human being living in the Western world in this decade, you have a kind of responsibility to try to understand what's going on in the world. [...] However, my interest isn't really in Islam. My interest was in finding something that would fit in with my novel. To me, I'm an artist first. If you think of a painter and part of his painting is the portrait of a dog you can state that sure, he's interested in dogs and sure he's trying to get the dog right, but he's really interested in what the dog can contribute to the painting. I had quite a religious upbringing myself. I'm not a very religious person, but I know a lot about Christianity and I was just interested to find out what this very popular world-wide religion of Islam offered to all the millions of people who subscribed to it (interview with Sebastian Faulks 14.10.2012).

Accordingly, Faulks starts from a very different vantage point than Khadra, whose life-story has been inextricably enmeshed in issues of religion, politics and a military fight against Islamic fundamentalism.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

4) Towards a synthesis of form and content

4.1) Potential functions of literature and ethics in literature

4.1.1) Cultural and historical context

> Literature would lose its significance and its disquieting effect if it gave up its claim to knowledge. And it would be cynical if we were to declare that literary texts which present cruelties, humiliations and injustices do not comment on the world outside the text. [...L]iterary texts do not intend to redeem us from reality but rather encourage us to face it (Bredella 2010: 50).

If fictional literature had no ethical dimension or political significance, there would never have been any need for censorship or book burnings. However, these phenomena have often occurred in history and still do. As an anthology by van Laak impressively shows, fictional literature has not only a historical dimension because it reflects the spirit of its age, but also due to the political engagement of authors and their timely anticipation of historical developments. Fictional literature has a historical and political validity since it may in fact trigger social, political, cultural or legal developments and therewith influence the course of history (cf. Van Laak 2011: 9-10). Van Laak argues, for instance, that the anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe was conducive to the American Civil War, that Solzhenizyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973) contributed to the decline of the Soviet Empire, and Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988) provoked a new form of civil courage and a world-wide renewed engagement with the fatwa, Islamic fundamentalism and Islam in general (Van Laak 2011: 9 and 26). Even though I consider Leggewie's article on the fatwa in the above-mentioned volume to be too judgmental, it still actualises the political implications of Rushdie's publication. *The Satanic Verses* caused international political and diplomatic tensions, violent attacks on publishers and translators as well as book burnings during the early 1990 s (which are addressed in Kureishi's *The Black Album*), self-censorship of many publishing houses, blasphemy-prohibitions in several countries, the Iranian termination of diplomatic relations with Great Britain in 1989, and extensive conflicts and debates within the Muslim world lasting till the present day (Leggewie 2011: 268-282).

Consequently, my analysis emanates from the belief in a necessary cultural[83] contextualisation of literary criticism, as put forward by Gymnich, Neumann and

83 I understand culture in this context as a semiotic concept that can be described as "entire manmade complex of beliefs, ways of thinking, perceptions, values and meanings, which is materialised in symbolic systems" (my translation). "Demzufolge wird Kultur als der von Menschen erzeugte Gesamtkomplex von Vorstellungen, Denkformen, Empfindungsweisen, Werten und Bedeutungen aufgefasst, der sich in Symbolsystemen materialisiert" (Neumann and Nünning 2006: 11). Culture is

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Nünning in their edited volume on cultural knowledge and intertextuality. This view is shaped by a belief in the equal validity of intra-, inter- and extratextual contexts and a view of literature as symbolic and social system, in which cultural context and literary form enter a fruitful interplay (Neumann and Nünning 2006: 6-9). Approaches in this field refer to the central concept of cultural knowledge, understood as the entirety of the shared assumptions about reality, about topics, norms, values as well as images of the self and the other which are prevalent in a given society (Neumann and Nünning 2006: 6). Cultural knowledge has an implicit and an explicit dimension. Both forms are interrelated and react upon each other. Explicit cultural knowledge denotes knowledge about real places, events, people or societal issues, whereas implicit cultural knowledge refers to normative systems and the hierarchy of values within a given community, which inevitably influences how we evaluate explicit cultural knowledge (Neumann 2006 (a): 44).

Literature takes effect in the realms of this system of cultural knowledge, works with its categories, reflects on them and fulfils specific societal functions bringing together a wide range of different discourses. Consequently, the constant exchange between literary texts and their cultural contexts is shaped by intertextuality[84], intermediality and interdiscursivity (Neumann and Nünning 2006: 16). Literary texts are not only shaped by cultural influences and reflect them but also contribute to the emergence of new cultural knowledge. However, it has to be kept in mind that no generalising assumptions can be made due to the historicity and plurality of cultural knowledge. The standards we impose on the contextualisation of literature always depend, as Hall highlights, not only on the culture from which we derive our knowledge but also on other factors such as gender, class, religion, age, ideology or other individual and group-specific markers of identity.

Already more than a decade ago, Nünning proposed a turn towards a 'cultural and historical narratology' that combines narratological analyses with cultural history and literary criticism. This view of literature is beneficial for my approach since it incorporates many elements which 'classical' narratology neglected. Among these characteristics we can find the just mentioned context-orientation, an emphasis on dynamic reading processes, a focus on ethical issues and thematic readings, interdisciplinarity, and above all the fact that such a cultural approach is highly application-oriented and looks at the effects of specific narrative strategies and forms (Nünning 2000: 358). One of the concept's major advantages lies in this insistence on cultural and context-oriented interpretations, which at the same time rejects the belief in a mimetic relationship between literature and reality. Nünning asserts that

> [q]uestioning the traditional assumption that the relationship between fiction and reality is based on mimesis, cultural narratology proceeds from the assumption that it is more rewarding to conceptualize narrative fiction as an active force in its own right which is in-

thus defined as an interrelationship of material, social and mental phenomena (ibid. 12). Furthermore, a perception of 'culture as text' has from the 1990 s increasingly been criticised as too static and paved the way for more fluid models of culture and an emphasis on performativity and a notion of literature as 'symbolic action' (Neumann 2006 (b): 87-88).

84 On different dimensions of intertextuality see Hallet (2006: 53-70).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> volved in the actual generation of ways of thinking and of attitudes and, thus, of something that stands behind historical developments. [...] Conceptualizing narrative fictions as active cognitive forces in their own right, cultural narratology explores the ways in which the formal properties of novels reflect, and influence, the unspoken mental assumptions and cultural issues of a given period. [...] Such an approach implies, of course, that formal techniques are not just analysed as structural features of a text, but as narrative modes which are highly semantized and engaged in the process of cultural construction (Nünning 2000: 360).

Literary criticism began to re-engage with and theorise the possible cultural and societal functions of literature from the 1960 s and 1970 s onward. Some of the pioneering approaches are, as Gymnich and Nünning outline, reader-response criticism (conceptualised by Iser among others), which explores the interrelationship of author, reader, text and context, Winfried Fluck's contributions to effect aesthetics as well as Hubert Zapf's reflections on 'literature as cultural ecology' (Gymnich and Nünning 2005 (a): 6-7). As has been illustrated by these cultural approaches to narratives "their ideologically loaded forms […] are able to exert considerable influence on and even reconfigure the narratives' underlying existent collective memories", since "[n]arrative forms are 'forms of expression' in specific cultures; they are solutions (or 'answers') provided to challenges (or 'questions') arising in specific cultural contexts" (Erll 2005: 91). Thus potential functions of literature are always culturally but also historically determined.

Realising the impossibility of a 'form to function mapping', critics, however, have not even reached a consensus concerning the term 'function' and what it implies. Despite the importance of the authorial dimension, as outlined in the previous chapter, the potential functions of literary works do not correspond to their intended impact/ authorial intention or real historical impact, because texts are always invested with semantic openness and ambiguity (Gymnich and Nünning 2005 (a): 8-9). As Sommer observes, one of the central problems of the term 'function' is that it has been used to describe diverse phenomena such as textual effect, authorial intention or historical reception processes (Sommer 2000: 321-322). The potential function ('Funktionspotential') of a literary work of art is not identical to any of these categories but comprises all of them. Sommer summarises:

> Mit der Wirkungsabsicht, dem Wirkungspotential und den verschiedenen Formen historischer Wirkung und Rezeption lassen sich drei zentrale Aspekte des Funktionsbegriffs unterscheiden und differenziert beschreiben. Funktionsgeschichtliche Hypothesen stellen im Nachhinein einen Zusammenhang zwischen diesen Aspekten her. Dieser ist stets abhängig von den jeweiligen theoretischen Annahmen und Erkenntnisinteressen, da Funktionen nicht Wesensmerkmale der zu untersuchenden Phänomene, sondern Beobachtungskriterien sind (Sommer 2000: 333).[85]

85 With the terms 'intended effect', 'potential function' and various forms of historical effect and reception we can distinguish and describe in a differentiated way three central aspects of the term function. Hypotheses about the historical functions of texts connect these aspects retrospectively. This connection is always dependent on the respective theoretical assumptions and epistemological interests, since functions are no essential features of the phenomena that are to be analysed but criteria of observation (my translation).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Thus functions are not inherent to a text but are constructed and ascribed to it by readers in the form of hypotheses.[86] This is the challenging task I will undertake in the following analytical chapters. The functions I ascribe to this literary corpus may not correspond to the functions other people from different cultures or religious backgrounds may assign to the same works. Furthermore, not only the text as a whole but also its different parts and narrative elements can have specific internal as well as external functions.

The term 'internal function' refers to the potential of textual elements or narrative techniques within a text, whereas 'external functions' denote the relationships between texts and text-external factors, pointing to the social and cultural functions of literature (Nünning 2008: 223). Nünning also emphasises the close connection between internal and external functions, because many narrative devices also have an effect on the reception process (Nünning 2008: 224). To take into consideration the possible internal and external functions of a given narrative text, we have to look at the work-immanent narrative structure as well as its political and cultural context, or its aesthetic and social functions. The same text can trigger a variety of functional hypotheses according to the readers and their ideological point of view. The ascription of literary functions is to a high degree determined by the interrelationship of genre and function, their cultural specificity and historicity as well as the complex interplay of internal and external functions and their relationship to narrative structures (Gymnich and Nünning 2005 (a): 23-24). However, a close linkage of ethical criticism with a narratological analysis can help to limit the number of plausible hypotheses and avoid speculations about anything we cannot find in the text itself. Furthermore, a close look at the aesthetic and stylistic elements of texts forces us to pay more attention to details, question first impressions and slow down our perception, which, according to Grabes, becomes ever more important in our fast-paced age (cf. Grabes 2009: 51).

4.1.2) Literature as 'cultural ecology'

Despite the fact that we can always attribute a range of possible functions to literary works, I will focus on Hubert Zapf's model of 'literature as cultural ecology'. The model is geared to the needs of analysing the social functions of literature – but, to my mind, without a one-sided reduction of meaning to the aspect of 'counter-discourse' as can often be found in postcolonial readings. Zapf examines the ambiguity of literature in the age of modernity. He describes this ambiguity as the position of literature between a participation in the process of modernity and enlightenment, on the one hand, and a criticism of the downturns and problems of modernity, on the other hand (Zapf 2005: 56). This observation holds true for all novels under discus-

86 In order to distinguish function from 'intention' and 'effect', Fricke defines the term as verifiable disposition to create specifiable textual relations and reader responses – irrespective of the question whether these responses coincide with the authorial intention or not (Fricke 1997: 643).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

sion. They deal explicitly with the advantages and devastating effects of our modern age: be it the influence of globalisation on communal and individual identities, systems of political domination, the downsides of international capitalism and economic libertarianism or the influence of modern media on social life.

What is not suitable for my analysis is Zapf's strong stress on ecology with respect to content, which is also reflected in the choice of the novels he analyses. *Moby Dick* or *Huckleberry Finn*, for example, are novels to which the divide between 'wilderness' and 'civilisation' or 'nature' and 'society' is integral. They do not bear many points of comparison with the literary corpus at hand. However, Zapf draws some interesting analogies between ecology, literature and aesthetics. These analogies refer to specific structural paradigms such as the link between intellectual and sensory perception, idea and matter, mind and body; the conviction that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, the idea of 'multeity-in-unity' (which underlines individuality and diversity as well as interrelationships and interactions), and the belief in the complexity of all systems (cf. Zapf 2005: 64-66; Zapf 2007: 154-155; Zapf 2008 (b): 32). Thus, literature is seen to "transform conceptual logocentric processes into energetic processes" (Zapf 2006: 3). Both literature and ecology assume "an interrelatedness of culture and nature", follow a "complex, holistic, and yet pluralist form of thinking" and promote transdisciplinary approaches and "an open, pluridimensional concept of culture and literature" (Zapf 2006: 4-5). Furthermore, Mayer and Nungesser show that Zapf's triadic model is very suitable for an analysis of intercultural literature that focuses on identity and alterity, cultural tensions and the negotiation of different systems of reality (Mayer and Nungesser 2005: 247-262). The interdisciplinarity of Zapf's approach is one of the major strengths of his triadic model.

According to Zapf, ecology and literature share specific stances towards modernity in that "they radically question the modernist ideology of the autonomous, entirely self-constituting subject" (Zapf 2007: 155). This holds especially true for the narrative corpus at hand. All novels show the interrelatedness and dependence of the individual on larger frameworks – cultural, religious or economic. They stress the notions of "individuality-in-interrelationship" (Zapf 2007: 155), which can have positive but also negative effects where the driving force and power of the whole endangers the physical and psychological integrity of its parts. Zapf observes that a reference to 'ecological principles' is not only possible at the thematic level, but also concerning the functions and structures of literary texts. He suggests

> that imaginative literature, in comparison with other textual genres and types of discourse, can be described in its functional profile in such a way that it acts like an ecological force within the larger system of cultural discourses. This function varies, of course, according to period, genre, author, and the historical conditions of production and reception. It has gained heightened significance through the process of modernization since the 18th century, in which the tension between linear, progress-oriented economic, technological and scientific developments and the nonlinear holistic world models of literary art has become one of the characteristic shaping forces of the literary evolution (Zapf 2007: 147-148).

Zapf here points out the potential of literature to build bridges to other sub-discourses in the cultural field, possessing a capacity to work as reintegrative interdiscourse.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Furthermore, he concedes that this potential of literature depends on place and is historically determined. This, however, has promoted the emergence of 'literature as cultural ecology' since the beginning of modernisation processes. Increasingly, the contestation of progress and the criticism of the downturns and essentialist facets of this progress orientation is observable in contemporary literature. For Zapf the functions of literature move between poles of deconstruction and regeneration. As a result, literature not only serves to hint at the downturns of our modern age and makes suppressed voices heard, but also undermines essentialist ideologies by highlighting the plurality of meanings and perspectives:

> On the one hand, literature appears as a sensorium and imaginative sounding board for hidden problems, deficits, and imbalances of a larger culture, as a form of textuality which critically balances and symbolically articulates what is marginalized, neglected, repressed or excluded by dominant historical power structures, systems of discourse, and forms of life, but what is nevertheless of vital importance to an adequately complex account of humanity's existence within the fundamental culture-nature-relationship. On the other hand, by breaking up closed world views and exclusionary truth-claims in favor of plural perspectives, multiple meanings and dynamic interrelationships, literature becomes the site of a constant, creative renewal of language, perception, communication, and imagination. As a transdiscursive form of textuality, it restructures the material of language and of the prevailing cultural sign systems in such a way that its forms of self-organization resemble the processes in which, in an ecological view, life organizes itself (Zapf 2007: 148-149).

Underlining the importance of literature as unique creative process generating 'cultural energy' (Zapf 2008 (c): 259-260), Zapf sets forth three dimensions of literary functions, which form a valuable basis for the kind of approaches that seem natural for this analysis. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, he claims that literature is a 'cultural-critical metadiscourse' (in that it represents deficits and contradictions inherent to dominant systems of power). Second, it can be understood as 'imaginative counter-discourse' through which marginalised, neglected or suppressed elements of a culture are expressed. And third, he describes literature as a 'reintegrative interdiscourse', since the challenging of the centre through the integration of marginalised elements causes conflicts, which may ultimately lead to cultural renewal and an integration of segregated discourses (Zapf 2005: 67-71).

According to Zapf, the **cultural-critical metadiscourse** means

> the staging of typical deficits, blind spots, imbalances, deformations, and contradictions of dominant systems of civilizatory power. On this level, the dynamics of the texts follows a cultural-critical impulse which characteristically presents these systems as structures of severe external or internal constraint, as traumatizing forms of negating individuality, difference and multiplicity in the name of totalizing cultural ideologies, which lead to chronic states of self-alienation, failed communication and paralyzed vitality. [...] The deep-rooted civilizatory self-alienation which these images suggest is often seen to result from dominant conceptions of human reality based on dogmatized hierarchical oppositions, such as mind vs. body, intellect vs. emotion, order vs. chaos, culture vs. nature, thus frustrating fundamental communicational and 'biophilic' needs of human beings (Zapf 2007: 155-156).

To some extent all novels under discussion can be said to function as cultural-critical metadiscourse, in varying degrees. The works by Faulks and Hamid, for instance, crit-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

icise the totalising ideology of international finance; Kureishi's novel addresses the fundamentalist potential of religious fanaticism as well as Western hedonism, and Khadra discusses the force of dominant cultural as well as international political systems, which disrespect the worth of the individual. All forms of criticism expose contradictions and double standards and visualise traumatising clashes between and within the systems under scrutiny. This leads to the alienation of individuals from diverse communities as well as from themselves. The systems displayed are always deficient and do not meet the full needs of the individual. Pictures which are often conjured up in the context of this form of literary function are images "of death-in-life, waste land, stasis, blindness, uniformity, vicious circles, and psychic or physical imprisonment" (Zapf 2007: 156; Zapf 2008 (b): 33). Many of these images and mental states occur concerning the development of the protagonists in several of the major works under discussion. Many of them undergo severe identity crises to which the system they live in is at least a contributory factor if not the main cause.

Under the heading **imaginative counter-discourse** Zapf summarises

> a counter-discursive staging and semiotic empowering of what is marginalized, neglected or repressed in the dominant cultural reality system. [...Literature] activates the culturally excluded as a source of its own creativity by transforming it, in ever new forms, from its amorphous alterity onto the level of language and cultural communication. That way, the culturally excluded is foregrounded and charged with special aesthetic energy (Zapf 2007: 157).

Some of the selected novels also go beyond a portrayal of the deficits of a dominant (religious, political, cultural or economic) system, showing perspectives which cannot be reconciled with this system. The question, however, arises, if these voices are always 'marginalised' or 'suppressed' voices. This can assuredly be claimed for *The Black Album*, which highlights barriers of class and race and shows characters that are driven to extremes by the lack of acceptance as well as economic prospects in the majority society. To some extent, we can find a similar case in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, in which the protagonist is neither economically nor culturally excluded, but still feels marginalised and reduced to his religious alterity in the wake of 9/11 and increasing prejudices against Muslims.

However, the case is different for *A Week in December* and *The Sirens of Baghdad*. In Khadra's novel centre and margin seem to be transposed. Whereas in Kureishi's novel the emergence of Islamic fundamentalist groups results from the plight of marginalised people in Britain and is constructed as a counter-discourse against the perceived misconduct of the majority society, the motivation for jihadist actions in Khadra's novel springs from the cultural centre of society. It is not a majority that is presented to embrace violence, but the majority is familiar with traditions that react to the violation of honour with violence. The novel is rather a vivid negotiation of different forces within one cultural centre than an empowering of neglected voices from the margin. At the same time, it represents this empowerment on an international basis in that it criticises the manner of the American military interference in Iraq and exclusively presents us with the perspective of 'the invaded other'. In Faulks' novel, as a fourth example, human society as such seems strangely shifted to the mar-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

gins, dominated by global finance and lulled by promises of alternate realities which prevent people from fighting their marginalisation. Despite these differences, all of these novels doubtlessly open up communication. They show us different perspectives more or less distant from a dominant cultural system and our own points of view.

Thirdly, Zapf underlines the potential of literature to bring the system and the elements it excludes together and to function as a **reintegrative interdiscourse,** in that it can achieve a

> reintegration of the excluded with the cultural reality system, through which literature contributes to the constant renewal of the cultural center from its margins. This reintegration does not mean any superficial harmonization of conflicts, but rather, by the very act of reconnecting the culturally separated, sets off conflictory processes and borderline states of crisis and turbulence. The alternative worlds of fiction derive their special cognitive and affective intensity from the interaction of what is kept apart by convention and cultural practice – the different spheres of a society characterized by institutional and economic specialization and differentiation, public and private life, social roles and personal self, intellect and passion, the conscious and the unconscious, and pervading them all, the basic ecological dimensions of culture and nature. It is particularly the process or moment of bringing together the culturally separated spheres or discourses which, even if it results in failure and catastrophe on the level of action, on a symbolic level often appears as a process or moment of regeneration and the regaining of creativity (Zapf 2007: 158-159).

All novels indeed portray 'conflictory processes', 'crisis' and 'turbulence' and bear similarities with the typical images of 'fear and liberation', 'catastrophe and catarsis', 'paralysis and creative renewal' or 'destruction and regeneration' (Zapf 2008 (b): 35). They all bring together different cultural, religious or economic spheres in one book which are normally separated. Certainly, all novels offer different answers to the question of whether the conflicts represented can ever be resolved and individuals can be reconciled with themselves and wider society. Whereas the end of Faulks' and Khadra's novel chart a rather dark picture which expresses doubts concerning the possibility of change, Hamid's and Kureishi's works remain undecided. Thus, all novels can be said to contain elements of a reintegrative interdiscourse concerning a structural level but not the level of content.

Following the question to which degree and in which ways texts promote a conciliation of a system with its outsiders, Zapf distinguishes three functional subcategories of 'reintegrative interdiscourse'. Literary texts may reintegrate diverse cultural discourses and therewith counteract the increasing specialisation and one-sidedness of cultural knowledge; they may form structural analogies between aesthetics and life-processes; and they can fulfil a regenerative function in that literature becomes the medium of coming to terms with individual and collective traumata leading to revitalisation and cultural renewal (Zapf 2008 (b): 36-37). My literary corpus particularly deals with individual and collective traumata. Zapf assumes that the three-partite structure he describes is inherent in the text itself, which implies certain analytical consequences:

> Erstens ist ein gegebenes und vom Autor thematisiertes historisch-kulturelles Bezugssystem charakteristischerweise der Ausgangspunkt für die Entfaltung der Literatur. Zweitens entwirft Literatur aus den Ausgrenzungen dieses Bezugssystems heraus implizite oder ex-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> plizite symbolische Gegenwelten, in denen Alternativen zu den dominanten Realitätsmodellen imaginiert werden. Drittens entspringt die spezifische Erkenntnis- und Regenerationsleistung der literarischen Imagination daraus, dass sie die entworfenen Alternativen in komplexer Weise auf das kulturelle Realitätssystem zurückbezieht, die kreativen Energien also, die sie mobilisiert, immer wieder in den Gesamthaushalt der Kultur und der sie tragenden Diskurse einspeist (Zapf 2005: 74-75).[87]

My aim is to discover how this literary corpus displays, interacts with, affirms or rejects the socio-historical background it is based on and which possible alternatives the novels design. Subsequently, I will examine potential literary functions of the selected works and try to integrate them into Zapf's triadic model, where applicable.

4.2) Current trends in narrative theory

Due to several developments during the last decades, narratological research is still (or again) a topical field of study. As Nünning observes, narratology and cultural approaches have for a long time rarely been connected. A revival of narratology which ceased to concentrate solely on the text came with the cultural turn during the 1980 s and 90 s. Of special interest to my analysis are first and foremost what Nünning calls 'Contextualist Narratology' (as promoted by Seymour Chatman) and 'Ethical and Rhetorical Narratologies' (e.g. by Wayne Booth, James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz) (Nünning 2000: 351). To a lesser degree 'Reader-response-oriented Meta-Narratologies' such as cognitive narratology (Manfred Jahn, Herbert Grabes) and interdisciplinary approaches such as 'psychonarratology' (eg. David Herman and Manfred Jahn) (Nünning 2000: 351-352) provide valuable food for thought.

Current narrative theory has profited from an increased interdisciplinary interest in literature, the appeal of analytical categories that are not only precise but can be applied to different epochs and disciplines, the realisation that not only structuralist but also poststructuralist methods and models need refinement, and the thriving of hybrid research areas (Nünning/Nünning 2002: 2).[88] Moreover, significant changes in the academic landscape such as the so-called 'moral', 'narrative', 'historical', 'ethical', 'anthropological' or 'cultural' turns have revived the scholarly interest in narrative as such (Nünning 2003: 240). On that account, fields of interest broadened and narratology has now also become increasingly concerned with textual elements such as character, point of view, psychological insight or comic effects, which are not specific to narrative (Prince 2003: 3-4).

87 First, a given historical-cultural framework thematised by the author is typically the starting point for the development of literature. Secondly, literature creates from the exclusions of this framework implicit or explicit symbolic counterworlds, in which alternatives to the dominant models of reality are imagined. Thirdly, the specific recognitional and regenerational achievement of literary imagination arises from the fact that it, in a complex way, relates the created literary alternatives to systems of cultural reality and thus constantly injects the creative energy it is mobilized by into the overall cultural budget and the discourses which it is based on (my translation).

88 For an overview of older models cf. Herman (2005: 19-35) and Fludernik (2005: 36-59).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Furthermore, recent volumes on current trends in narratology have shown that most of the traditional concepts vital for my analysis (such as 'author'/'implied author', 'focaliser', 'narrator' and 'perspective'/ 'point of view', etc.) are all "context-dependent and historically variable" (Fludernik/Olson 2011: 3). Time-honoured concepts are questioned and reconceptualised and new branches are elaborated. New theories range from context- and topic-oriented approaches such as 'Marxist', 'Feminist', 'Post-colonial' or 'Cultural and Historical Narratology' via 'Pragmatic Narratology' to reception-oriented forms, such as 'Cognitive Narratology', and 'Natural Narratology'[89] (Nünning/Nünning 2002: 2 and 10-13).[90] Rejecting the traditional view of narratology as being "not concerned with interpreting individual texts, but with determining the general characteristics of narrative" (Kindt/Müller 2003: 206), Susan Lanser, Ansgar Nünning, Marion Gymnich, Manfred Jahn, David Herman and Monika Fludernik, to mention only a few, have made valuable contributions to developing contextualist approaches in order to link structural analysis with an interpretation of content. Due to this huge diversification of the field, David Herman even proposed speaking of 'narratologies' (cf. Herman 1999).[91] This development was accompanied, especially during the last ten years, by the foundation of new research centres (such as the "Zentrum für Transkulturelle Narratologie" at the University of Bonn or the "Zentrum für Erzählforschung" established at the University of Wuppertal). Furthermore, various handbooks, encyclopedias and cross-disciplinary research volumes enriched this field of study.[92] However, value-construction and ethics are, in comparison to other topics, still undertheorised in narratological research, which leaves room for the development of more explicit frameworks and approaches. Notable exceptions in this field are the studies by Berning (2013) and Korthals Altes (2014) on the negotiation of ethical aspects in non-fiction and fiction.

89 Natural narratology, as drafted by Fludernik, "is a cognitive project which integrates the frames and concepts of ordinary storytelling and experience into an encompassing theory of narrative" and "is interested in the question of how human embodiedness in the environment is reflected in categories and schemata that enter into the reading process" (Alber 2005: 394). Fludernik views 'experientiality' as the main characteristic of narrativity. Experientiality is defined as "the quasi-mimetic evocation of 'real-life experience'" correlating "with the evocation of consciousness or with the representation of a speaker role" (Fludernik 1996: 12-13).

90 These areas of research open up new directions in that "cognitive research expands on classical research by shifting the focus of narratological interest from narration in tests to the narrating mind; transmedial scholarship extends the purview of narrative analysis by (infinitely) expanding the category of what is considered to be narrative and thereby presenting fresh objects for analysis. […] Finally, critical historical work, by contrast, picks up on the problems and issues that classical narratology brought into focus and examines them in new, creative, and […] potentially frame-shattering ways" (Fludernik/Olson 2011: 7-8).

91 Nünning, however, argues that most contextualist, ideological and thematic approaches "are not really 'narratologies' in that they are merely applications of narratological models and categories to specific texts, genres, or periods." He therefore criticises the usage of the plural and proposes a distinction between narratology and "narratological criticism" to prevent the term from becoming bereft of content (Nünning 2003: 251 and 262-64).

92 For a concise overview of different approaches to the conceptualization of narrative during the last decade see Nünning (2013: 1-19). Important handbooks and encyclopedias were, for instance, published by Phelan/Rabinowitz (eds.) (2005), Herman/Jahn/Ryan (eds.) (2005), Hühn et al. (eds.) (2009) and Olson (ed.) (2011).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

I agree with Kindt/Müller in that we should not have "to choose between a semantically restrained structuralism and a contextualism brimming with interpretive promise between 'classical' and 'postclassical' narratology", but should embrace "the idea of narratology as a heuristic for interpretation" (Kindt/Müller 2003: 215). On the basis of descriptive categories, different contextual interpretations can be built, thereby matching the advantages of both branches. This synthesis is invariably important for topics, such as the one at hand, which are located at the intersection between ethics and aesthetics and are therefore inevitably multidisciplinary. Using Gérard Genette's structuralist categories as analytical tools, cultural approaches are fruitful to build a bridge between structure and content and point to the relationship between narrative categories and cultural contexts, highlighting the semantic dimension of literature. So, strictly speaking, I do not only draw on narratological models defined in a narrow sense (which are strongly associated with structuralist approaches of the 1960 s and 70 s), but on models of narrative theory in general (which comprises both 'classical', structuralist narratology and content-based models of textual interpretation).[93] However, due to the lack of scholarly consent concerning this terminology[94], I will follow Fludernik (Fludernik 2005: 37) in using the terms narratology and narrative theory interchangeably.

These new developments in the shift from classical, structuralist narratology to more diversified approaches and the deconstruction of erstwhile established categories admittedly make the field of narrative theory more complex. However, this shift also leads to the inclusion of dimensions that are of central interest to the topic of this study, namely ideology, ethics and aesthetics, interpretation as well as historical context and the sociocultural dimensions of class, race and gender (Nünning/ Nünning 2002: 20), which are vital components of my analysis.[95] This study is primarily content-based and sees text-centred structural analysis only as a means of textual interpretation. It takes a great interest in the socio-historical background and ideological context of the works under discussion. Thus, it cannot be considered 'narratological' in a strict sense. I will mention the main controversies, where the terms I use have been disputed, but will not be able to elaborate on issues of definition. My choice of vocabulary will mainly be based on the criteria of common practice, clarity and applicability.

93 Nünning/Nünning hint at the connotative differences between 'narrative theory', 'narratology' and 'narrative analysis or interpretation'. They state that not all forms of textual interpretation are narratological. Only few models (such as cognitive narratology) actually belong to classical or postclassical narratology, whereas many other theories are situated at the borderline between narrative theory and narrative analysis/interpretation (Nünning/Nünning 2002: 18).

94 For an elaborate discussion of the longstanding theoretical controversies concerning the "relationship between the Theory of the Novel, Narrative Theory, and Narratology" in a German context see Cornils/ Schernus (2003).

95 It has to be stated here that I link the terms 'ethics' and 'ideology' to the description of issues such as religion, humanism and ideas concerning a good political and economic order. I do not intend to utter ideological criticism of narrative, as has been done, for example, by Fredric Jameson who advocated a Marxist approach to literature (see Jameson 1981 and 1998).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

4.3) Cultural and postcolonial narratology

Since the classical narratological studies by Genette as well as the prominent works by Seymour Chatman, Mieke Bal, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Gerald Prince or Dorrit Cohn disregard historical and cultural contexts (cf. Erll/Roggendorf 2002: 76), this study will additionally draw on frameworks developed by cultural and postcolonial narrative theory. Cultural narratology is built on the assumption that "[t]he specific forms of narrative voice, focalisation, and plot hint at pre-existing cultural constellations as well as at possible effects and social functions of the fictional narrative", which is why "literary narrative can not only articulate collective experience, values, and concepts of identity, but also restructure the symbolic order of a given cultural formation" (Erll 2005: 91). Explaining the cultural potential of literature in detail, the following passage subsumes the core issues quite lucidly:

> Literarische Texte vermögen kollektive Erfahrungswirklichkeit zu artikulieren, beispielhaft zu restrukturieren und nicht zuletzt einen bedeutenden Einfluß auf die symbolischen Sinnwelten einer Kultur auszuüben. […] Denn fiktionale Texte greifen in hohem Maße auf Elemente zu, die der Vorstellungswelt, Erfahrungswirklichkeit und dem Wissensstand einer Kultur entstammen […] Ausgehend von der Annahme, daß literarische Texte eine aktive Rolle bei der Herausbildung, Subversion und Transformation kultureller Machtverhältnisse spielen, wird im Rahmen der feministischen und postkolonialen Narratologie der Frage nach ethischen oder ideologischen Implikationen narrativer Formen nachgegangen. Eindeutige Korrelationen zwischen präexistenten kulturellen Formationen, literarischen Formen, deren Bedeutung und tatsächlicher kultureller Wirkung sind allerdings nicht anzunehmen. Die Mehrdeutigkeit literarischer Formen steht in engem Zusammenhang mit kontextuellen Faktoren zum Zeitpunkt der Produktion und Rezeption (Erll/Roggendorf 2002: 80-84).[96]

The passage exemplifies several factors that are of special interest in this regard: First, it underlines the interdependence between concrete cultural knowledge/experience and literature, which draws on that experience with an often political dimension. In reverse, literary products can influence public discourse in that they might gain public support and channel political criticism or in that they are banned and fought as subversive to a dominant ideology. The quote, secondly, highlights this ideological and ethical dimension of literature, which is very visible concerning politically laden topics such as the one of Islamic Fundamentalism and Western liberalism. As outlined in the previous chapters, works of fiction can have clear ethical and ideological connotations as well as political impact. However, and this is the third important

96 Literary texts help achieve the articulation of true collective experiences, to restructure it through examples and not least to exercise a significant influence on the symbolic meaning of a culture. [...] Because fictional texts rely heavily on elements derived from the imagination, true experiences and the state of knowledge of a culture [...] Based on the assumption that literary texts play an active role in the development, subversion and transformation of cultural power relations, the question of ethical or ideological implication of narrative forms will be pursued within the framework of feminist and postcolonial narratology. Clear correlations between preexisting cultural formations, literary forms, whose significance and actual cultural action are, however, not to be accepted. The ambiguity of literary forms is closely related with contextual factors relating to the time-point of the production and reception (my translation).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

point, there is no such thing as 'form-to-function-mapping'. We find a whole range of stylistic characteristics that can fulfil a large number of functions and may be perceived differently by diverse reception-groups in different cultural, social and political contexts or at different points in time.

Cultural critics claim that narrative techniques may reflect variable patterns of sense and interpretation to offer orientation in increasingly complex societies. Thereby, they function as a cultural expression which makes it possible to draw conclusions about social mentalities of a specific epoch and the topics which are important, marginalised or tabooed at a certain point in time (cf. Erll/Roggendorf 2002: 100; Neumann/Nünning 2006: 12).[97] In this respect, it is telling, for example, that there has been a large number of English works dealing with Islamic fundamentalism during the last two decades, but that at the same time the choice of topics and forms seems to be confined to specific genres and foci. Terrorism and the ways of coping with traumatic experience are topics that seem to stand out in this respect. On the one hand, we find a large number of autobiographical works, mainly dealing with the 'War on Terror' and its implications for the soldiers and the population in the affected countries, as well as mainly American trauma literature dealing with the 9/11 terrorist attacks.[98] On the other hand, we find political thrillers which concentrate on 'Islamist terrorist threats', using the topic in a genre-specific way.[99] The size of the literary corpus clearly signals that our topic possesses political and social relevance in large parts of the world at this point in time. However, its functions and narrative strategies vary to a large degree. The works that I analyse constitute a minority, because they mostly focus on the perspective of fictional Islamic fundamentalists and also concern themselves with religious and ideological issues. This literary corpus contains texts with a high degree of complexity, which, according to Locatelli, "promotes judgment by calling upon both the emotions and the intellect [...and] sophisticated, rather than linear identifications with, and distancing from different subjects" (Locatelli 2009: 70). It will be challenging but also rewarding to explore the potential correlation between social function and aesthetic structure of a literary text and to analyse with the help of specific textual examples which narratological elements may promote certain literary functions.

97 In this context, Roland Posner shaped the field of cultural semiotics ("Kultursemiotik"). His works illustrate that culture has a social, material and mental dimension. Literary texts feature mental dispositions (convictions, values and beliefs that reflect cultural processes). Since all three dimensions are inextricably linked, the selection of literary forms may be indicative of the mental dispositions of a specific epoch. Culture is perceived by Posner as a system of texts. Texts may serve to shape cultural identities, serve specific rituals (e.g. religious texts) and are used to construct a specific view of reality and crucial guiding principles. In this regard, they also contribute to the collective memory of a culture (Posner 2003: 39-72).

98 Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2006) and Chris Cleave's *Incendiary* (2006), for instance, are concerned with memory and trauma in the wake of 9/11. The harassment of migrants with an Arabic background after the September 11 terrorist attacks is addressed in Laila Halaby's novel *Once in a Promised Land* (2007).

99 Among the various examples of thrillers dealing with Islamic terrorism are e.g. *Black Sunday* (1975) by Thomas Harris, *Blow the House Down* (2007) by Robert Baer, *The Fundamentalist* (2007) by David Hay, and *The Afghan* (2007) by Frederick Forsyth.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

In the field of 'Cultural and Historical Narratology' Vera and Ansgar Nünning, Monika Fludernik, Bruno Zerweck and Carola Surkamp have done considerable work, as have Roy Sommer, Marion Gymnich, Birgit Neumann, Hanne Birk, and, again, Fludernik in the field of 'Postcolonial Narratology'. This branch of study focuses on the structural means through which postcolonial concepts such as identity, alterity or hybridity are reflected in literature. Such approaches evidently have to be linked to the formative content-related works by Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, Stuart Hall, Abdul JanMohamed, Robert Young and others on key topics of postcolonial theory, some of which have already been addressed in the previous chapters. Above all, the vision of society reflected through different novels will be of interest to me, regarding the potential tensions between 'Islamic fundamentalism' and 'Western liberalism' or other antagonistic concepts. It is central whether the works picture the social coexistence of different cultures and religious beliefs as positive potential or whether they underline the problems, fissures and incompatibilities. Speaking of coexistence, it will be important which kind of coexistence is presented to be possible, realistic or desired in this respect. Is it a model of an assimilation of cultures (such as in the traditional American notion of the 'melting pot') or a vision of abiding cultural diversity made possible by mutual tolerance (as embodied in the metaphor of the 'salad bowl' and most multicultural agendas, such as the one promoted under Tony Blair's Labour Government until the end of the 1990 s)? Both ideas have increasingly come under attack in Britain and the US, but especially the latter concept has lost much of its popularity in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the London Bombings of 2005. Audible calls for an assimilation of other cultures and religions to the majority societies take questions of identity, alterity, hybridity and multiculturalism to the political and literary centre stage.[100] In my opinion it is significant whether the novels under discussion endorse a dialectic model of hybridity as promoted by Salman Rushdie, who believes that different cultures and identities "combine to produce a new, third, term" (Moore-Gilbert 2001: 195), or whether they are rather in line with Homi Bhabha's vision of hybridity as "the moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its coherent grip on meaning [...] because hybridity undermines the single voice of cultural authority and foregrounds a double-voicing process that includes the trace of the other" (Edwards 2009: 141). Bhabha thus does not believe in a real synthesis of cultures but rather underlines the productive tension between distinct groups, celebrating "hybridity's ability to subvert dominant discourses and reappropriate them" (Kraidy 2005: 58). A third possibility would be Stuart Hall's model of 'cross-cutting identities', which highlights that culture or religion is only one allegiance among others, such as gender, sexuality or class, which define individual identity and affiliation to the same extent. As has been summarised

100 For an elaborate discussion of concepts such as culture, alterity, hybridity, multiculturalism, transculturalism, personal and collective identity, see Sommer's insightful monograph on contemporary British fictions of migration, which also features an analysis of Kureishi's novel *The Black Album* in the context of these categories (cf. Sommer 2001: 114-122).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

in the previous chapter, Hall underlines that identities "are never unified, and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured" (Hall 2003 [1996]: 4).

Without further delving into this subject, which would render enough material for another study, it is still central to keep these terms and issues in mind during an analysis of textual structures and narrative devices. In this respect, for instance, it will be an issue from which cultural contexts protagonists draw meaning and elements of speech and whether narratives use strategies such as heteroglossia, metanarrative comments or a 'foregrounding' of language as such. Gymnich points to the special role of foreign-language parentheses, the depiction of a reduced language competence in English, or the use of neologisms and the regional or social varieties of English in intercultural novels (Gymnich 2007: 3) for the potential impact of language on concepts of identity and alterity and the subversion of power hierarchies. As Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin outlined in their seminal study *The Empire Writes Back*, the use of 'abrogation' or appropriation of language can have an important impact on power-relationships in literary discourse. "Abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words" which "involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication" (Ashcroft/Griffith/Tiffin 1989: 38). 'Appropriation', on the contrary, marks the use of a foreign language that "is adopted as a tool and utilized in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences" (Ashcroft/Griffith/Tiffin 1989: 39).

Obviously, it is not my aim to trace colonial heritages and Western influences. Nevertheless, postcolonial theory provides valuable strategies for my analysis due to its context-oriented understanding of literature (as reflecting sociocultural and historical constructions of reality), its merging of structuralist analytical categories with poststructuralist theoretical concepts, and its urge to reveal the ideological presuppositions and political implications of narrative texts (Birk/Neumann 2002: 117-118). The construction of 'alterity', cultural and religious stereotypes, ethnicity, gender, class or multiculturalism are equally valid topics for a discussion of the literary treatment of 'Islamic fundamentalism' and 'Western liberalism', as it is for an analysis of postcolonial implications. Both individual and cultural identity are perceived as non-essentialist constructs or discursive formations that are fundamentally moulded by narratives, which suggests a fruitful exchange with narrative theory (Birk/Neumann 2002: 119-121).

In that regard, it is pivotal, as Birk/Neumann highlight, which roles are attributed to different fictional characters due to their religion, ethnicity and other factors, which narrative strategies such as the description of characters, narratorial comments, the quality of the perspective structure, the representation of consciousness, relations of contrast and correspondence between different points of view etc. are used to depict stereotypes or value judgments about 'the other' and potential binary oppositions (Birk Neumann 2002: 122-127). With the structure of perspective/point of view, multiperspectival narrative techniques, and relationships of contrast and correspondence I already mentioned central terms, all of which I am going to delineate further, focusing on the main analytical categories and topics relevant to this study. Important areas

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

for the constitution of meaning are also the ways in which the readers' empathy is influenced or even manipulated by means of gaps or indeterminacy and an appellative structure. These concrete textual features shall be the basis of the following interdisciplinary interpretation.

4.4) Genette's typology as a toolbox for a cultural interpretation

Following the reasons outlined, I will use the basic categories defined by Gérard Genette as a starting point for a discussion of central narratological features on the level of story and discourse.[101] Story-oriented narratology concerns itself with the content of a literary text. On the story-level it is, among other things, of importance how the novel starts and ends. Does it start ab ovo with a detailed description of antecedents, in medias res, or in ultimas res, developing a story from its ending in the form of flashbacks? Is the ending closed or open, leaving the reader with unresolved conflicts? The most central points of interest for my analysis on this level are the characters, their perspectives and relationships towards each other. Relationships of correspondence and contrast between different characters are as important as the events depicted. As Schmid delineates, 'eventfulness' is a core characteristic of narratives. Certain features that an event can fulfil mark an increase in eventfulness or the general importance of an event as a 'change of state'. Among these are "relevance" to the plot, "unpredictability" (or breach of norms of the narrative world and the readers' expectations), "persistence" (or "consequences for the thought and action of the affected subject in the framework of the narrated world"), "irreversibility of the new condition which arises from a change of state", and "non-iterativity" (Schmid 2003: 25-29).

Thus, on the story-level, I will heed the degree of eventfulness of the main plot-elements. Central questions are: Do the plots feature major dramatic events and turning points, or do they mainly give an insight into religious and ideological arguments without displaying much action? Do these events and turning points (for example the decision to carry out a terrorist attack or refrain from doing so) come as a surprise to the reader, contradicting the outlined norms of the fictional world, or do they just mark the culmination of the expected course of the novel? Which consequences do events have for the characters, their roles, actions as well as their perception and mind-frames? Do fictional worlds and beliefs become irreversibly shaken? Do important events repeat themselves or are we confronted with a large variety of new actions, developments and trains of thought?

On the level of discourse, Genette distinguishes three main categories: tense, mood and voice. Tense concerns itself with the order of events in a story, as well as

101 Admittedly, Genette's model has provoked numerous volumes of criticism. Modifications or alternative theories have been brought forth, among others, by Mieke Bal (cf. Bal 1985), Franz Stanzel and Susan Lanser, who have added valuable specifications and case studies to the theoretical foundation of perspective. Nevertheless, the use of these categories is beneficial for this study, since the terms are established, stringent and can be combined freely.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

their duration and frequency. The second category, 'mood', can be subdivided into 'distance' and 'perspective'. Genette assumes with respect to the subcategory of 'distance' that "the narrative can furnish the reader with more or fewer details, and in a more or less direct way" (Genette 1980: 162). Thus, a narrative can occupy a position of greater or lesser distance and can regulate information according to the knowledge of one or another character or group in the story, taking a specific perspective (cf. ibid.). Narrative distance is determined by a wide range of factors, such as the relationship between 'showing and telling'. The ratio of transposed speech as opposed to immediate speech, which pushes the "mimesis of speech to its extreme, or rather to its limits, obliterating the last traces of the narrating instance and giving the floor to the character right away" (Genette 1980: 173), is constitutive for the degree of distance in a piece of writing. Or, expressed more simply: Novels can be set somewhere on a continuum between dominating modes of telling/diegesis or showing/mimesis. "A mimetic novel usually contains a lot of action and dialogue. In strongly diegetic texts, on the other hand, the narrator does come to the fore, so that he ostentatiously places himself between the related scenes and the reader" (Herman/Vervaeck 2005: 15). On that note, I will heed the reality effect and degree of immediacy in the works under discussion. Particularly the depiction of perceptions and emotions of different characters gives significant clues to an interpretation of the story level. The same applies to effects of thought representation, which I will come back to with regard to the narrative direction of empathy.

Relating to the second subcategory, Genette, furthermore, distinguishes different perspectives ('Who sees'?[102]). Drawing on such different sources as Todorov, Pouillon and Lubbock, Genette in 1972 introduced the term focalisation to replace the more traditional terms of 'point of view' or 'perspective' to "distinguish between narrative agency and visual mediation" (Niederhoff 2009 (a): 115-117) and facilitate a free combination of different types of focalisation and narration. Generally speaking, the term "may be defined as a selection or restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge of the narrator, the characters or other, more hypothetical entities in the storyworld" (Niederhoff 2009 (a): 115). We speak of external focalisation if the narrator says less than the character knows and describes all characters from a supposedly neutral outside perspective. In a situation of fixed internal focalisation, the narrator only tells what a given character knows.

If the perspective shifts between different focalisers, we have a case of variable focalisation, or multiple focalisation when different focalisers perceive the same event. The third category outlined by Genette is zero focalisation (or nonfocalisation). In this case, the narrator knows more than the characters and can choose due to his or her omniscience to give the narratee every piece of information and insight into the feelings and thoughts of the character he or she likes (Genette 1980: 189-194). This, however, does not mean that the narrator cannot withhold information to increase suspense or create gaps in the plot, thus leaving room for individual interpretation. In

102 Like the traditional theories by Percy Lubbock and Jean Pouillon on the topic of 'point-of-view', Genette bases his approach on a visual understanding of perspective (Fludernik 2008: 116-117).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

general, different forms of focalisation usually alternate within a narration and perspective is not always easy to determine. As Genette notes, "external focalization with respect to one character could sometimes just as well be defined as internal focalization through another" and "the division between variable focalization and nonfocalization is sometimes very difficult to establish, for the nonfocalized narrative can most often be analyzed as a narrative that is multifocalized *ad libitum*" (Genette 1980: 191-192).

Remarkably, Genette himself slightly changed his opinion from his first to his second volume. Defining focalisation as perception in *Narrative Discourse*, he stresses "the transfer of information between author and reader" (Jesch/Stein 2009: 60) in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* and changes the question "who perceives?" into "what can the reader know?":

> So by focalization I certainly mean a restriction of 'field' actually, that is, a selection of narrative information with respect to what was traditionally called *omniscience*. […] The instrument of this possible selection is a *situated focus*, a sort of information-conveying pipe that allows passage only of information that is authorized by the situation (Genette 1990 [1988]: 74).

On a related note Jesch/Stein propose a useful differentiation between 'perspective' as 'focus of perception' and 'focalisation' as 'selection of narrative information', "[f]or it is always possible […] that the fictional perceiving subject does not see (realize, comprehend, understand, etc.) something of which the reader is made fully aware" (Jesch/Stein 2009: 61). It is interesting to analyse which effects can be achieved by the selection of information with respect to this topic. Does the reader get the full amount of information through the perceptions, thoughts and feelings of the focalisers, or is this information more restricted? The question we have to ask is twofold. First: 'Which information is presented or withheld?', and second: 'Whose subjective view on the world do we get?'. Thus, the claim raised by Jesch/Stein for a differentiation between focalisation and perspectivisation sounds quite plausible:

> […] we recommend that focalization be defined as the author's temporary or definitive withholding of information from the reader. Under the term 'perspectivization', on the other hand, we understand the representation of something from the subjective view of a fictive entity (narrator or character). At the same time, this mode of viewing is always a part of that which the author depicts for the reader. A connection between focalization and perspectivization can exist to the extent that perspectivization often serves to account for a restriction of information within the fictional world. As such, perspectivization can become a way to achieve focalization. Once again, however, perspectivization is not focalization, for a text can contain (implicit) information that transcends the figural and/or narratorial capacities of knowledge (Jesch/Stein 2009: 65-66).

Since I do not consider the term 'focalisation' incompatible with the older terms, I will – despite realising the need for clarifications and distinctions – also use 'points of

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

view', referring to all three focalisation types, and 'perspective' when speaking about multiperspectivity.[103]

Apart from the diverse possibilities of focalisation, alterations (paralepses and paralipses) also belong to Genette's analytical category of 'mood' and the subcategory of 'perspective'. Paralipsis (or omission) can for example constitute "the omission of some important action or thought of the focal hero, which neither the hero nor the narrator can be ignorant of but which the narrator chooses to conceal from the reader" (Genette 1980: 196). Paralepsis, on the contrary, "can consist of an inroad into the consciousness of a character in the course of a narrative generally conducted in external focalization" or "in internal focalization, of incidental information about the thoughts of a character other than the focal character, or about a scene that the latter is not able to see" (Genette 1980: 197).

The third category is called 'voice' and refers to the narrator or answers the question of 'Who speaks?'. We distinguish 'person' and 'level'. A narrator can thus be absent from the story he tells (heterodiegetic), present in it as a character (homodiegetic) or he can even be the 'star' of his story and more than a mere 'bystander' (autodiegetic) (Génette 1980: 245). The narrative can be subsequent (written in past tense), prior, simultaneous or interpolated, with the first form as the most common choice. Moreover, the narrator can be situated on an extradiegetic or intradiegetic level (as a part of the narrated story).

Noteworthy for an analysis of voice is also the scale between the two extremes of overt and covert narrators, introduced by Seymour Chatman in his seminal study *Story and Discourse* (1978). Whereas overt narrators may show their presence through

> a spectrum of features, ranging from least to most obtrusive markers: from set descriptions and reports of what characters did *not* say or think, to the various kinds of commentary interpretation, judgment, generalization […;i]n covert narration we hear a voice speaking of events, characters, and setting, but its owner remains hidden in the discursive shadows (Chatman 1989: 197).

It is vital for this study to investigate in which ways narrators interfere with the story and to which degree they offer interpretations and value judgments. Do they offer commentary on the actions or characters explicitly or implicitly? Do we perceive a strong guiding and evaluating voice, or do we have a neutral narrator who recedes behind the focalisers' viewpoints? These are interesting questions, especially when narratorial comments or conceptions contradict figural perceptions or reflect different attitudes and interpretations. Chatman notes that in these cases "the narrator's conceptual point of view (except when he is unreliable) tends to override the character's despite the fact that the latter maintains the center of interest and consciousness" (Chatman 1989: 156). As we will see, this happens quite often, especially in works in which narrators are very ironic, therewith creating a distancing effect towards the focalizers' positions (e.g. in the works by Kureishi, Updike and Faulks).

103 Much conceptual work has been done to further define and distinguish these terms (e.g. Jahn 1996), as well as to reformulate current focalisation theory (e.g. Hühn/Schmid/Schönert eds. 2009), to which, however, this study cannot contribute.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Comparisons in this field will be fruitful, since the works chosen exemplify a wide range of narratorial strategies, from the use of autodiegetic, very overt narrators (as in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*) to heterodiegetic narrators with rather anonymous voices that do not become highly individualised (as in Faulks' *A Week in December*). It is productive to examine, for instance, which effects elements of overt narration such as explanations, judgments, interpretations, generalisations or a referral to general truth and norms (Margolin 2009 (a): 356) may have with respect to the readers' empathy with the characters, or the aforementioned creation of irony. Do texts with more covert, neutral narrators claim to offer a more objective, or at least, less emotional view on such controversial topics as Islamic fundamentalism? Narratologists have suggested the "degree and kind(s) of knowledge possessed; reliability; relation to various components of the speech act performed; articulateness; attitude towards the narrated (straightforward, ironic, sympathetic, etc.); projected teller role" (Margolin 2009 (a): 358) as major aspects of a narrator's image. Especially attitude (neutral or judgmental, positive or negative, matter-of-fact or emotional etc.) is of interest for my analysis.

The preceding reflections on the importance of narrative form will serve as a basis for the following analytical chapters in order to answer central questions connected to the impact of form on the potential functions of the texts at hand. Central questions in this context are:

1. Which effects does multiple focalisation potentially achieve in this literary corpus in contrast to works featuring only one focaliser?
2. In which ways do narrators interfere with the story and offer commentary, interpretations or value judgments?
3. Do the texts feature strongly evaluating or rather neutral voices and does a specific perspective dominate?
4. Which cultural and religious context does the choice of language reflect?

4.5) Potential functions of selected narrative techniques and stylistic devices

4.5.1) Point of view/perspective and multiperspectivity

As already mentioned, an examination of perspective is an advantageous starting point for a synthesis of a structural analysis and an interpretation of content. Theories of 'point of view' were induced by Henry James' synchronic works concerning narrative perspective at the beginning of the twentieth century and were later on developed through classical, postclassical and diachronic/historical studies (Klepper 2011: 12-22). As Herman skilfully outlines in his seminal volume *The Emergence of Mind*, dealing with the fictional representation of consciousness from a diachronic perspective, writers at the beginning of the last century started to direct their attention to mental processes and therewith promoted an 'inward turn' to the human mind and

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

soul away from the sheer description of external processes (Herman 2011 (a): 22).[104] He proposes that this "focus on worlds-as-experienced" cannot necessarily be called unworldly or anti-realist since

> the upshot of modernist experimentation was not to plumb psychological depths, but to spread the mind abroad to suggest that human psychology has the profile it does because of the extent to which it is interwoven with worldly circumstances. The mind does not reside within; instead, it emerges through humans' dynamic interdependencies with the social and material environments they seek to navigate (Herman 2011 (b): 254).

This is exactly the emphasis of the kind of narrative under discussion: Most of these narratives feature long passages in free indirect discourse and thought or interior monologue, granting insights into the abysses of individual psychology. However, this exploration of consciousness is inextricably linked with the description of social, political and economic environments shaping the characters' perspectives. In some novels or genres these 'social and material environments' may be mere backdrops and embellishment for character-analyses but this is not the case in the present narrative corpus. The representation of consciousness hints at deficits and important issues in the story-world (which reflects real-life historical backgrounds) and fleshes out the main topics surrounding religion, ethics and politics – not vice versa.

Congenial to my topic is the interesting fact that Klepper perceives "[t]he ability to deal (and experiment) with mediacy and perspective [...] to be a key feature of Western modernization" (Klepper 2011: 24). He describes the focus on individual perspectives as a means of self-reflection in an increasingly fragmented world:

> Literature creates models of how observers observe in various subsystems of society. The discovery of point of view, the emergence of figural narration and internal focalization, the development of stream of consciousness and the invention of peripheral narrators turn out to be techniques of a functionally differentiated society, which needs to reflect its own modes of perception (Klepper 2011: 39).

This potential of literature is the central concern of my analysis and is, in my view, more important and topical than it has ever been – despite the various new forms of gaining insights into alien perspectives in a generation used to share their views and perceptions on Facebook and Twitter.

In narrative theory semantic approaches on multiperspectivity have often been neglected in favour of discourse-oriented, structuralist theories. For this work, however, an analysis of 'how' the respective authors constructed patterns of narration and focalisation has to be inextricably linked to an investigation of 'what' is represented by a narrator or through the eyes of a focaliser. I will use Genette's established terminology as a basis and develop my argument of perspective structure with the help of more recent approaches by Wolf Schmid, Ansgar Nünning and Carola Surkamp.

104 Herman adopts a cognitivist approach which goes beyond this simplification of an 'inward turn' and highlights that "modernist techniques for representing consciousness can be seen as an attempt to highlight how minds at once shape and are shaped by larger experiential environments, via the particular affordances or opportunities for action that those environments provide. Modernist narratives, in other words, stage the moment-by-moment construction of worlds-as-experienced through an interplay between agent and environment" (Herman 2011 (b): 249-250).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The perspective structures of the identified narrative corpus are not easy to determine because of the variety of terms and concepts, and the ambiguity of many examples, as has already been mentioned. According to Niederhoff's basic definition, perspective or 'point of view' can be seen as the way in which the 'values', 'position' and 'personality' of characters and narrators influence representation (Niederhoff 2009 (b): 384). The term 'point of view', which is not seen as equivalent to perspective by all scholars, already hints at the many facets of the concept: perspective can be spatial but does also imply ideological and emotional stances. Perspective is a controversial concept that has provoked a large number of different terms such as "'reflector' (James [1908] 1972 […]), 'focalisation' (Genette 1972), 'slant', 'filter,' and 'interest-focus' (Chatman 1990), or 'window' (Jahn 1996; Fludernik 1996)" (Niederhoff 2009 (b): 385).

'Multiperspectivity' is a term as controversial as 'point of view' but is an important literary means of reflecting the different modes of perception within our increasingly differentiated and individualised societies. However, the phenomenon has long been ignored by narrative theory and there has not even been much scholarly consent about a general definition of perspective and multiperspectivity, yet.[105] It is disputed, for instance, if one can speak of multiperspectivity when different narrators do not refer to the same events but narrate independent stories or when there are many focalisers but only one narrator (Strasen 2004: 135). However, Nünning/Nünning have offered valuable clarifications concerning different categories and parameters constituting multiperspectivity. Like Genette, they distinguish between narration and focalisation and include focalisation into the phenomenon of multiperspectivity:

> Multiperspektivisches Erzählen liegt in solchen narrativen Texten vor, in denen das auf der Figurenebene dargestellte oder erzählte Geschehen dadurch facettenartig in mehrere Versionen oder Sichtweisen aufgefächert wird, daß sie mindestens eines der folgenden drei Merkmale (oder eine Kombination von mehreren dieser Merkmale) aufweisen:
> (1) Erzählungen, in denen es zwei oder mehrere Erzählinstanzen auf der extradiegetischen und/oder der intradiegetischen Erzählebene gibt, die dasselbe Geschehen jeweils von ihrem Standpunkt aus in unterschiedlicher Weise schildern;
> (2) Erzählungen, in denen dasselbe Geschehen alternierend oder nacheinander aus der Sicht bzw. dem Blickwinkel von zwei oder mehreren Fokalisierungsinstanzen bzw. Reflektorfiguren wiedergegeben wird;
> (3) Erzählungen mit einer montage- bzw. collagehaften Erzählstruktur, bei der personale Perspektivierungen desselben Geschehens aus der Sicht unterschiedlicher Erzähl- und/oder Fokalisierungsinstanzen durch andere Textsorten ergänzt oder ersetzt werden (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (a): 18).[106]

105 The term 'perspective' as such is used to denote such different aspects as the totality of narrative perspective, figural perspective and the difference between internal and external focalisation (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (a): 10). Many scholars equate the term 'perspective' with the concept of 'point of view', which, however, disables a distinction between narrator and focaliser.

106 Multiperspective narration is present in such narrative texts in which the events depicted on the level of the character are fanned out facet-like into several versions or perspectives, because they comprise at least one of the following three features (or a combination of several of these features):
(1) narratives in which there are two or more narrators on the extradiegetic and/or the intradiegetic narrative level describing the same event in different ways from their respective point of view;

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Multiperspectivity is evaluated as particularly relevant when there is a friction between different views and judgments of the same characters, topics, events or beliefs (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (a): 19), which is the case in all but one of the novels under discussion. The described approach to multiperspectivity is also valuable for this study, since it underlines (apart from the formal, the syntactic, the pragmatic, the functional, the cultural and the diachronic dimension of multiperspectivity) the semantic and ideological dimensions of the phenomenon. Multiperspectivity may reflect a weighing of diverse norms and values. It thereby includes issues inherent to ethical criticism and raises questions about the normative implications of multiperspectivity that have mostly been neglected by scholarly study.

Concerning the potential methods of giving prominence to a specific ethical or ideological stance, Nünning/Nünning take Pfister´s distinction between closed and open perspectives and extend it to the figure of the narrator. In a closed perspective structure, different perspectives support one another. In an open structure, however, perspectives are so diverse that they are difficult for the reader to reconcile (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (b): 60-61). It is important to notice that this model of open and closed perspective does not focus on perspective as something inherent in specific structural combinations, but focuses on the recipient who has to coordinate and bring together different perspectives. The joining of these perspectives might be more or less difficult depending not only on sheer textual characteristics, but also on narrative strategies which foster or inhibit a synthesis of perspectives (Strasen 2004: 137).

Whereas traditional narratives often contained a narratorial perspective which was privileged and closed, modern texts often feature an open perspective. These texts play with the fact that it becomes very difficult to pinpoint and reconcile different perspectives when it is impossible for the reader to distinguish opinions or thoughts of the narrator from those of the characters (Fludernik 2008: 50). Elements that generally hinder a synthesis of perspectives are according to Nünning/Nünning a high number of different perspectives (narrators and focalisers), a broad range of perspectives in which we find contradictory, extreme positions and a hierarchical order, a low degree of narratorial presence, an open ending and a lack of explicit narratorial direction of reception and empathy (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (b): 65). As I will outline, most of the novels I am going to examine tend to be located closer towards an open perspective, due to a large number of focalisers, the rendering of many contradictory opinions and systems of belief, as well as narrators whose presence tends to be rather covert (with irony being one of the elements qualifying this statement). I will try to answer the question of how forms of 'Islamic fundamentalism' and 'Western liberalism' are represented: Do we get only one or more views on these topics? Does a specific perspective dominate the novel, to which extent and for which aim? Do the pro-

(2) narratives in which the same event is rendered alternately or sequentially from the point of view of two or more focalisers or reflector figures;
(3) narratives with a collage structure in which a personal perspectivisation of the same events from the perspective of different narrators and/or focalisers are supplemented or replaced by other text types (my translation).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

tagonists share many similarities or can we perceive an extended use of contrasts which grant us an insight into contradictory points of view?

Of further interest are potential inconsistencies or contradictions between the statements or perceptions of different focalisers and the stance a narrator may take on these views. As Margolin notes,

> [a]ll human focalization is active and transformational, and contains an element of interpretation. Any individual act of focalization is just one particular perspective on the story world, and is always fallible and often skewed, distorted or at least partial. […] In narrative fiction, however, there is the assumption that one can know states of affairs *hors de toute focalisation*, fully and with absolute certainty, through the discourse of an impersonal anonymous narrating voice, usually in the third person past tense. Each individual take can thus be assessed relative to this full objective truth. And this in turn enables the reader to evaluate different takes regarding the same data, and also infer back from the nature of the take to the nature of the focalizer behind it (+/- limited, reliable etc.) (Margolin 2009 (b): 49-50).

This is a viable thought especially with regard to novels such as Faulks' *A Week in December* that present us with the challenge of negotiating a multitude of focalisers who represent conflicting attitudes and diverse interpretations and value systems. These novels may or may not feature a rather overt narratorial figure employed to comment on or evaluate this polyphony of voices.

Carola Surkamp highlights in her convincing study on the theory and history of structures of perspective (drawing on Pfister's theory of perspective in drama and Nünning's seminal study on multiperspectivity) that multiperspective techniques can be carriers of meaning, since a common denominator of diverse perspectives suggests the existence of a unified view of reality, whereas contrasting points of view may express the subjectivity and relativity of perception (Surkamp 2003: 2). Thus, the potential meaning of a text derives from the complex interplay of single perspectives, which correct, complete, modify or contradict each other, can be equal or integrated into a hierarchy and may or may not reflect a plurality of worldviews that runs counter to possible beliefs in an objective truth (Surkamp 2003: 3-4). It is of interest to me in this respect whether the beliefs embodied in different focalisers are presented as possessing some kind of 'common denominator', indicating a chance for a peaceful recollection of shared values, or whether they seem to be totally incongruous.

Stating this interest, it has to become clear, however, that many of the abovementioned points may be difficult to determine. With the exception of the novels by Hamid and Khadra, which are narratives with an autodiegetic narrator, all works discussed can be subsumed under the category of intradiegetic 'multiperspectival focalised texts' (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2000 (b): 42-44). To determine a character's figural perspective, we have to analyse his or her level of information, psychological disposition and ideological orientation/norms and values (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (b): 48). With regard to the narratorial perspective, these parameters may, however, be very difficult to determine – especially when the narrator is rather covert. Generally, the distinction between mood and voice can, despite the clarity of structuralist vocabulary, be very problematic. It is often – particularly in passages written in free indirect discourse – not possible to tell whether statements reflect the consciousness of a char-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

acter or of the narrator in a piece of art. On that note, Mieke Bal presents a short and very useful collection of signals relating to personal vs. impersonal language situations. Apart from differences in personal pronouns, grammatical person and adverbs of place and time, personal language situations are characterised by the use of emotive and conative words (oh!, please, etc.) and aspects as well as modal verbs and adverbs indicating uncertainty (perhaps, probably, might, etc.), which are mostly absent in narrators' texts (Bal 2009: 52). Many sentences still remain ambiguous with narratorial and actorial/figural perspective dominating in varying proportions. Consequently, we have to make case-by-case distinctions. To simplify this process, Bal proposes to "only distinguish free indirect discourse from the narrator's text when there are positive indications that there is indeed representation of words of an actor" (Bal 2009: 54). As indications she lists:

1 The signals of a personal language situation, referring to an actor.
2 A strikingly personal style, attributable to an actor.
3. More details about what has been said than is necessary for the course of the fabula[107] (Bal 2009: 55).

Wolf Schmid, moreover, developed a model of perspective/point of view which will be used as an addition to the approach by Nünning. It contains highly flexible categories that are very suitable to delineate the complex facets from which the term is constructed and to illustrate the difficulty of distinguishing between the perspectives of characters and rather covert narrators. Schmid identifies five parameters of point of view, which may either belong to a figural or a narratorial perspective or can be split between both: space, time, language, ideology and perception. The "spatial point of view" refers to "the location from which the happenings are perceived, with the restrictions of the field of vision that result from this standpoint" (Schmid 2010: 101). The other parameters are connotations of perspective in the figurative sense and are defined as follows:

> The ideological perspective encompasses various factors that determine the subjective relationship of the observer to an occurrence: knowledge, way of thinking, evaluative position and intellectual horizons. [...] Temporal perspective denotes the interval between the original comprehension and the later acts of comprehension and representation [...as well as] between the various phases of processing and interpretation. [The linguistic point of view manifests itself in] expressions and intonations that correspond to [...a narrator's or character's] knowledge and evaluation, their internal condition at the time, or also forms of expression in which a changed internal condition or altered knowledge and evaluation are revealed. [...The perceptual point of view] is the prism through which the occurrence is perceived (Schmid 2010: 101-104).

Correspondingly, we might have a "compact" (alignment of parameters) or a "diffuse point of view" (dissociation of parameters) (Schmid 2010: 116). According to Schmid's model, the perspective can also be seen as narratorial when the narrator ap-

107 Bal uses a different terminology. She employs the term actor (instead of Genette's 'focaliser') and fabula for the term 'story'.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

pears objective and shows only a small degree of overtness.[108] Since there is no room in this study to go into a detailed analysis of point of view, I will come back to the main dimensions of perception ("Who is responsible for the selection of elements in a given textual section?"), ideology ("Which is the *evaluating* entity in the relevant section?") and language ("Whose *language* (lexis, syntax, expression) shapes the section?") where applicable (Schmid 2010: 117). It will be a vital question of my analysis if and where we can find examples of a diffuse point of view. Which effects may descriptions have on the reader, which reflect a character's point of view regarding time, space and language but seem to represent the narrator's ideological perspective? What happens when we identify figural language in a seemingly narratorial comment? Are these instances obvious or are they subtle? Do they create distancing, moralising or humorous effects?

For the role of narrators as well as focalisers, several paradigmatic/structural as well as syntagmatic factors are of importance. On the paradigmatic scale, distribution (with respect to social, cultural, ethnic, religious...diversity), concretisation, individuality vs. collectivity (or the degree of representativity of a perspective), the degree of authority as well as the configuration of the narrator and his degree of reliability can be considered as central factors for a determination of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of perspective (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (b): 52-54). My hypothesis for all the multifocalised works under discussion is that they tend to employ rather heterogeneous, but concrete figural perspectives. These perspectives are presented by narrators with a high degree of reliability, who tend to be more covert than overt and become explicit only through the employment of irony.

On the syntagmatic scale, the quality of relating perspectives in their hierarchical, quantitative, syntagmatic, temporal, local, informational, normative and contentwise dimension gains centre stage (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (b): 55-60). An incompatibility of world-views may just qualify each system of belief as one opinion among others. As has been noted above, this multiperspectivity can also be used to construct a (quantitative and qualitative) hierarchy of perspectives. Thus, multiperspectivity does not necessarily undermine the notion of some kind of 'objective truth' (Surkamp 2003: 4). The relationship between, as well as the content and structural patterning of different perspectives, can also be regarded as a central means of directing the sympathy of the reader. Generally, a plurality of dissonant perspectives may lead to a larger number of gaps that have to be interpreted and filled by the reader, if there is no superior, privileged point of view (Bode 2011: 253).

On that note, it is of major importance for my topic whether there are hierarchies and information advantages of specific perspectives over others and what this entails for the portrayal of norms and values. My impression is that novels that employ alternating perspectives, which continuously comment upon each other, dominate the narrative corpus. They are the objects of a hierarchical relationing, which ultimately leads to the relativisation and critique of certain perspectives and the norms and be-

108 Contrary to Nünning, Schmid does not involve the concept of a neutral perspective or 'zero focalisation' in the sense of Genette.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

liefs represented by them. I suppose that there is a tendency towards non-equivalent multiperspectival structures which privilege perspectives that reflect general humanist values, at the detriment of beliefs associated with 'Islamic fundamentalism' or extreme forms of 'Western liberalism'. This, however, needs to be verified through case-by-case analyses.

Coming back to the initial remarks on the potential functions of this literary corpus, we can see the multitude of possible implications that the internal functions of specific narrative structures and elements relating to perspective or 'point of view' may have for an interpretation of the texts at hand. As Nünning/Nünning and Gymnich have shown, multiperspectivity can create suspense and emphasise specific morals through a didactic repetition of one point by various narrators or focalisers. It may yield a social or moral balancing, raise normative and ideological questions or reflect an epistemological scepticism. Additionally, it may also fulfil metahistoriographical, metanarrative or metafictional functions (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (a): 29-30). As I am going to argue, the selected narrative corpus first and foremost reflects the moral-social, ideological and epistemological dimensions of literature as such and multiperspective narrative techniques in particular. This emphasis on ideological and socio-political functions of literature is quite characteristic of postcolonial criticism (Gymnich 2005: 122). In the reverse sense, literature can be used not only to undermine dominant ideologies but also to promote imperialist mind-frames, which, however, is not the case in the novels under discussion. Drawing on Zapf's model, Gymnich argues for the case of postcolonial rewriting that literature cannot only be a means of resistance but also "an integrative interdiscourse which imaginatively combines different traditions and different views of the world without denying […] painful tensions" (Gymnich 2005: 137). This is also part of the function the novels under discussion fulfil. Even though they are not concerned with the legacy of colonialism per se, they illuminate the frictions between different centres of cultural authority, between dominating and dominated voices and ultimately try to combine these different traditions and views by emphasising a humanist common ground.

Most of the novels exemplify the fragmentation of beliefs and value-systems within Western societies, make marginalised voices heard and reflect a form of social criticism which expresses scepticism towards simple truths – be they religious, economic or political. In this context, narrative technique could even be seen "not simply as a product of ideology but as ideology itself", embodying "the social, economic, and literary conditions under which it has been produced" (Lanser 1992: 5). Gymnich remarks in this respect that multiperspectival techniques are often used by minorities or 'dominated peoples' to hint at underlying hierarchies and inequalities. By means of this kind of polyphony underprivileged voices may get a hearing and social criticism may be uttered (Gymnich 2000: 243). The question of a possible correlation between perspective structure and the aim of social criticism is a starting point which should prove beneficial for the following interpretations.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

4.5.2) Relationships of contrast and correspondence and the use of irony

As already mentioned, I will especially heed the depiction of different characters and their perspectives. Surprisingly, the depiction of characters has not received much attention in many classical narratological studies, even though there are various parameters which determine a literary character and which can be employed for directing the readers' sympathy and giving a more or less lifelike portrayal. Prince for example states:

> Whether they are protagonists or not, senders or receivers, heroes or villains, mainly defined by their actions or by their feelings, characters can be dynamic (when they change and grow) or static (when they do not); they can be consistent (when the predicates associated with them do not result in seeming contradictions) or inconsistent; and they can be round or flat, that is, complex or simple, multidimensional or unidimensional, capable of surprising us or incapable of it (Prince 1982: 72-73).

Jannidis underlines the great influence of characterisation on the relationship of a reader with and his evaluation of a given literary character. He identifies a close interplay between a character's displayed mental and emotional state, the implicit or explicit presentation of these emotions and the readers' own predispositions, evaluations and conclusions that determine his reaction to the displayed character and events (Jannidis 2009: 15).

Central in this regard are relationships of contrast and correspondence. The potential of a text to direct the readers' emotion and sympathy tends to be very pronounced when stark contrasts are depicted, which may lead to value judgments about beliefs, ideas or traits a character seems to stand for. Jannidis' study distinguishes six main determining factors for the analysis of literary characters: the readers' knowledge of the world and cognitive predispositions (which is often subsumed under the keyword 'folk psychology'), rendition-techniques (e.g. direct vs. indirect characterization), the character's role for plot-developments, constellation- patterns such as protagonist vs. antagonist, the possible identification of the reader with the characters, and their importance for the plot as a whole (Jannidis 2004: 238-239).

In this context, cognitive reception theories have tried to describe how fictional characters are shaped by individual readers and have identified multifaceted cognitive factors, relevant for the perception of characters. Important determinants are

> mental schemata, knowledge of social roles and narrative conventions, images of man, implicit personality theories, and individual psychological factors such as attributive tendencies, the influence of attention and memory, emotional reactions, the primacy effect, the halo effect, and the tendency to explain actions as due primarily to the properties of a character (Eder 2003: 294).

Naturally, narrative conventions and social roles differ from culture to culture, which means that one and the same fictional character may cause different reader responses in diverse cultural contexts, as well as from individual to individual. Because of the elusiveness of cognitive theory, I will focus on the analysis of textual characteristics and approaches dealing with multiperspectivity/point of view, the possible role of gaps and relationships of contrast and correspondence, which can play a part in di-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

recting the reader. As Eder notes, the mental models we create of characters are constructs based on textual evidence, which we can classify "as realistic, multidimensional, or stereotypical", while at the same time they are "analogous to real people […] and a mimetic system of physical and personal qualities (fictional qualities such as physical size, intelligence, and sense of humour)", which enables us to consult psychological theories (Eder 2003: 294-295). However, all of the above-mentioned facets are part of what constitutes the term 'perspective structure', which is an aggregate of the relationships of contrast and correspondence between the different individual perspectives, as well as their relationship towards the narratorial perspective and the perspective of the fictitious reader (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (b): 51).

Another way of making the reader aware of potential ambiguities or incongruence in a story or of employing a means of implicit criticism is the use of irony. The ways of criticising social, political or religious conditions are multifaceted and can range from very grievous and stern to humorous approaches. Zerweck demonstrates with respect to Martin Amis and Will Self that multiperspectival narrative techniques are very suitable for satire (cf. Zerweck 2000: 276-281). As the works by Faulks, Kureishi and Hamid show, satire (in a humorous but biting form) can be regarded as a core function of the novels under discussion. *A Week in December*, for instance, is a pastiche of societal grievances and moral decay, described by merciless, cynical exaggerations that do not reflect reality but are not that far-fetched, either. In this respect, the use of irony plays a central role as stylistic device. According to the different functions of irony as conceptualised by Hutcheon, I would argue that irony in this narrative corpus is not used in a distancing, complicating, assailing or self-protective way, but to reinforce the communication of attitudes and to show opposition in a humorous way (for the categories cf. Hutcheon 1995: 47-55). Necessarily, this can be daring and provocative since "what is approved of as polemical and transgressive to some might simply be insulting to others; what is subversive to some might be offensive to others" (Hutcheon 1995: 52). However, in my view, this is part of the strategy's appeal and potential. I share Lanser's belief that "the act of writing a novel and seeking to publish it […] is implicitly a quest for discursive authority: a quest to be heard, respected, and believed, a hope of influence" (Lanser 1992: 7). I believe this statement to be true for the present narrative corpus, because it predominantly addresses questions of authority in a religious, cultural and political dimension.[109]

4.5.3) Directing the readers' sympathy

Bredella holds that "ethics needs art in order to prevent us from becoming imprisoned in rigid and stereotypical concepts of reality and from becoming insensitive to the claims of the other" (Bredella 1996 (a): 51). The quote refers to the important role of emotions and empathy as well as to the problems of stereotyping and the percep-

109 For an elaborate discussion of the interrelationship between aesthetic techniques and political topics in contemporary American literature see Claviez/Haselstein/Lemke (2006).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

tion of otherness – phenomena that are equally important to humanist as well as postcolonial approaches to ethical criticism. In his volume, *Das Verstehen des Anderen*, Bredella underlines the dialogic structure of intercultural and literary understanding: We need 'an other' and the change between inside and outside perspective to be able to understand ourselves (cf. Bredella 2010: XXII-XXIII). He claims like Düwell and Rorty that the aesthetic experience does not want to make us forget ethics. Instead, it enables us to adopt a reflexive distance to our own way of life and, therewith, gives us the chance to imagine, try and reflect on other views and behaviours (Bredella 2010: XXXI). In this respect, literature may not only serve to make us understand the world from the perspective of other people, but it may also lead us to a better comprehension of our own world, because literary texts can function as an advancement of role playing games: They articulate and visualise wishes and anxieties and therewith enhance our understanding of our own emotions (Bredella 2010: 19-20).[110]

As Iser adds, literature might not serve its traditional functions (of information, entertainment, documentation, etc.) any more in our medial age, where nearly every piece of information can be looked up at Wikipedia or watched on the news. Television, social media and computer games increasingly supersede books for entertainment purposes. Interestingly though, literature nevertheless seems to have preserved and even enlarged its importance with regards to its ethical dimension. Iser argues that literature continues to have an important function in three different ways:

> Politically, it embodies the cultural capital coveted by social groups who struggle for recognition. Systemically, it embodies the 'noise' of culture highlighting the open-ended game of cultural conversation. Anthropologically, it fans out human plasticity into a panoply of shapes, each of which is an enactment of human self-confrontation (Iser 1996: 14).

One might point to the fact that the role of literature as cultural capital is confirmed by "the ongoing struggle for canon-formation along the lines of race, gender, and class" (Ahrens/ Volkmann 1996: 3) and the fact that minorities often use literature as a means to subvert and question dominating discourses.[111] This is a central concern to post-colonial literary scholars who "regard literature primarily as a site of conflict, where collective identities as well as power structures involving the colonizer and the colonized are negotiated" (Gymnich 2005: 121). Even though the colonial context does not play a major role in this literary corpus, it still highlights the political and ideological importance of literature and displays the tensions between majorities and minorities, individual and collective identities that are so prominent in postcolonial approaches.

110 For an insightful essay on "The Significance of Empathy in the Moral and Aesthetic Experience" and a concise overview of the major points made by Rorty, Nussbaum and others on this topic, see also Bredella (2009: 19-42).

111 Kirchhofer in this context points to the fact that religion increasingly moves into the focus of literary critics. He outlines that many contemporary novels deal with religious topics. This trend challenges popular secularisation theses und suggests a 'religious turn in literary and cultural studies' (cf. Kirchhofer 2009).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

As I already mentioned, the recurring use of literature in the process of identity formation is partly grounded in the dynamics of our globalised, post-modern age and the human need for "a framework within the coordinates of which one can determine one's own place in the universe and thereby create one's own self" (Antor 1996: 68). Antor recognises the deep anthropological human need for interpretability and orientation. This orientation is closely related to the formation of (national, cultural, personal...) narrative identity and ethical frameworks, since to "know who one is also is to take a distinct position with regard to ethical questions" (Antor 1996: 68). Literature embodies these tensions between many different frameworks. It represents a "meeting of horizons, a coming together of the frameworks of author and reader" (Antor 1996: 69). Since every individual possesses different ethical assumptions, we are always encountering alterity when we grapple with a text. This process might even alter our own mental frameworks and perceptions. There is no ultimate authority to decide about truth or the validity of ethical values, but there are different approaches and attempted explanations that can interact, be negotiated, discussed, weighed against each other and engage in a fruitful communication through literature.

These different approaches are negotiated through a variety of narrative techniques. Indeterminacy or the existence of gaps in the discourse may, for instance, have a great influence on directing the readers' sympathy. In this regard, it is of importance whether these gaps are "permanent" or "temporary" (with a later revelation of the missing data) and whether they concern the "unnarrated" ("gaps in information to which narrators call attention in the discourse") or the "disnarrated" ("events that narrators include in the discourse but describe as not having occurred in the narrative world") (Kafalenos 2005: 241). Other textual characteristics that are likely to create indeterminacy are doubts "about the quality of the lens", the use of free indirect discourse that might "blur information about whose vocabulary the reported words reflect" and, related to this point, the impossibility to properly define the focaliser (Kafalenos 2005: 241).

Another central element for directing the readers' sympathy is the representation of consciousness. In her seminal study *Transparent Minds* Dorrit Cohn distinguishes three basic methods for presenting consciousness in fiction: psycho-narration, quoted interior monologue and narrated monologue or free indirect discourse. First, psycho-narration as "the narrator's discourse about a character's consciousness" (Cohn 1978: 14) is described as narrative method that can fulfil "ironic or lyric, reductive or expansive, sub- or superverbal functions" (ebd. 12). Second, quoted interior monologue is seen as "a character's mental discourse" (ebd. 14), characterised by the lack of an intermediary authority in longer passages which clearly reflect the associations of a specific character in his or her own typical language (ebd. 12-13). Thirdly, narrated monologue/free indirect discourse can be characterised as "a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's discourse" (ebd. 14), which creates the illusion of a more immediate and subjective insight into the characters' thoughts and feelings. Whereas psycho-narration is still indicative of a higher authority standing between the character and the narratee, free indirect discourse and interior monologue (or stream-of-consciousness techniques) reflect a high degree of immediacy, which may

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

be vital for rousing empathy. Furthermore, the advantage of Cohn's study for my analysis lies not only in the fact that it is "more literary than linguistic in its attention to stylistic, contextual and psychological aspects" (Cohn 1978:11), but also in its structure, which distinguishes the fundamental differences between representation of consciousness in first-person narratives from third-person texts and will thus enable a closer scrutiny of the novels by Khadra and Hamid. As Cohn notes, a first-person narrator is limited by the extent of his memory, his credibility, the plausibility of his perception etc. and may consequently have "less free access to his own past psyche than the omniscient narrator of third-person fiction has to the psyches of his characters" (Cohn 1978:144).

Herman's edited volume draws on Cohn's work, applying it to a diachronic perspective and drawing upon approaches of attribution theory. On a related note, Palmer outlines that

> [a]ttributions [of mental states] tend to be discursively constructed as apparently factual and objective, but they often contain self-interested attributions of motives. Pure mental descriptions are rare. A mental state or event will be described in a certain way and not in other ways for particular purposes, and these alternatives can vary greatly as to how they ascribe agency, impose responsibility, justify behaviour, explain motivations, assign praise, deflect criticism and blame, and so on (Palmer 2011: 279).

As Jannidis observes, especially the depiction of value judgments in fiction is a field which has not attracted much attention yet, even though evaluation is seen, besides situation, expression and the position of a character compared to the reader (as better, equal or worse in whatever respect), as one of the key issues for the creation of empathy (Jannidis 2004: 242-243).

Even though the direction of sympathy also belongs to the field of effect aesthetics and consequently lacks empirical validation, certain hypotheses about the potential effects of textual markers and passages of indeterminacy may, nevertheless, be offered. I will argue in the following analyses that the creation of empathy and even sympathy is a central function of the present narrative corpus. Even though the novels do not reflect strictly moralistic verdicts, they still raise the readers' awareness of specific moral dilemmas and rouse sympathy for the role of the individual and their disjointedness between communal obligations and inner conflicts. Moreover, the novels contribute to the cultural memory of historical events such as the Rushdie affair (*The Black Album*), 9/11 (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*) or the war in Iraq (*The Sirens of Baghdad*). Their function is partly to memorise these political incidents and reassess them by showing readers viewpoints or perceptions of the events that are different from those they might have had on first contemplation. Therefore, they might in a way also fulfil counter-discursive functions through a depiction of events from different angles, which can contribute to the creation of a counter-memory.[112] Ethics and literature can enter a fruitful interrelationship on the basis of a literary potential to rouse empathy in the reader for certain positions, which may broaden people's knowl-

112 On the function of literature as counter-memory (using the example of revisionist historical novels) see Gymnich (2005: 135).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

edge and enhance their ability to question stereotypes and other essentialist beliefs. The creation of empathy and sympathy is visible in the narrative structure of each text. Moreover, this claim has also been made by various authors in conversation with me.

Mohammed Moulessehoul had a very personal experience with the political and social impact of literature. Due to his position in the Algerian Army and the laws of censorship, he had to write in concealment for eleven years. Having adopted the *nom de plume* 'Yasmina Khadra' he took great risks by publishing novels that openly criticised the grievances and abuses of the Algerian political system. However, he not only sees the potential of literature as a political or social force, but also emphasises its aesthetic as well as educational and humanist merit that may bring people together. Writing is for Khadra an expression of love, a reflection of the hopes and flaws of human beings and an act of communication with the reader:

> Je n'ai jamais cessé d'aimer. Et jamais la haine n'a réussi à inoculer ses toxines en moi. Je ne me souviens pas d'avoir souhaité du mal à quelqu'un, encore moins lui faire du tort. Je suis constamment tourné vers ce qui pourrait m'émerveiller, bercer mon âme et m'aider à surmonter les frustrations et la bêtise humaines. Chaque livre que je commets est un élan vers les autres, une sonde que je lance dans le cosmos des êtres en quête d'un écho. […] La littérature n'est qu'un miroir qui nous renvoie à ce que nous sommes, et nous ne sommes pas toujours des anges, et pas toujours des démons.[…] Je suis responsable de chaque mot dans mes livres. Je peux me tromper, mais je ne triche pas. J'explique ce que je crois avoir compris, raconte ce que je crois savoir. Mon expérience sur le terrain m'a éveillé aux absurdités que je dénonce dans mes livres. Je connais trop bien la guerre pour ne la souhaiter à aucun peuple. (Khadra 2013: n.p.)[113]

Khadra links the pleasure of aesthetic experience to an ethical dimension and underlines that his writing is based on experience. The author does not pretend to have a monopoly on the truth, but he stresses that his works express his convictions. He strives to explore the dark sides of human existence but also the things that unite all human beings.

Mohsin Hamid emphasises even more strongly the central role of literature to arouse empathy in the reader and therewith to set in motion positive processes of self-reflection as well as a reflection on one's conception of other people and circumstances. In my interview with him, he explained:

> For me, my whole writing is an act of empathy. My job is to imagine being other people, so that I can write about them. And what I sell to other people, my audience, my readers, is for them to imagine other lives. Empathy is the business that I'm in and I tend to think that it is an important business. It is a good business. It is a very human need. […] I feel

113 I never stopped loving. And hatred has never succeeded in inoculating me with its toxins. I do not remember wishing anybody ill, let alone hurting somebody. I am constantly focused on what could amaze me, move my soul and help me overcome human frustrations and stupidity. Every book that I write is an impetus towards others, a probe that I launch into the cosmos of beings in search of an echo. […] Literature is only a mirror that shows us what we are, and we are not always angels, and not always demons. […] I am responsible for every word in my books. I could be wrong, but I am not trying to mislead people. I explain what I think I understood, tell what I think I know. My experience in the field has awaked me to the absurdities I denounce in my books. I know war too well to wish it to any people. Would that make me express a conscience? I do not know (my translation).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> that connecting to other beings and transcending your own self is interesting. In terms of the power, the potential of literature: I wouldn't know the answer to the question how powerful literature is and what it does. And I do not think that anyone knows. […] But acting in whatever way you deem to be right, as often as you can, seems to be a good guideline for conducting oneself. We all fail at that, but it seems to be a basic standard that many of us like to hold ourselves to. And I think literature is doing exactly the same thing. It's trying to put out into the world something that you think has some degree of good in it (Interview with Mohsin Hamid 16.8.2012).

Hamid does not seem to be convinced of a concrete educational mandate for arts. Literature for him is no form of instruction ("I do not think we have to do anything that we read", Interview with Mohsin Hamid 16.8.2012). Nevertheless, he underlines its capacity to arouse empathy, which he describes as "a very human need", and to disseminate thoughts into the world that generally are supposed to carry "some degree of good". Like Martha Nussbaum, he embraces the positive potential of literature to make readers see the world through different eyes, enable a change of perspective and enhance their empathy for others.

Sebastian Faulks, as a third example, affirms both claims concerning the above-mentioned nexus between literature and ethics. Being asked if he wants to instil an empathic quality in the reader and if he also believes in the political and social influence of literature as a weapon against essentialist ideologies and beliefs, he answered:

> Very much so! And although *A Week in December* is a rather angry and rather satirical book. I mean, if you take the character of Hassan, for instance: If you read about him in a newspaper you'd say: 'Who is this guy who's about to murder people?' But if you follow him through the book, you might think: 'Who is this nice boy who's been led astray by these bad people?'
> [...] And that's what life is and about what novel-writing is. It is to try to explain to people: He's not a headline in a newspaper! Every individual has a life and a drama. They are neither good nor bad, they are what they are. [...] I think that is a big contribution towards people's understanding. If you don't read novels, you are never going to get that (Interview with Sebastian Faulks, 14.10.2012).

Faulks very much underlines the potential of literature to make readers aware of subjects they might not have occupied themselves with otherwise. This holds true for the whole range of economic topics Faulks addresses in *A Week in December*. He stresses that he also wants to use his writing to trigger ethical considerations in the readers, to enhance their awareness of specific problems, make them angry and maybe even prompt them to act and try to do something to remedy shortcomings.

> Simply what happened is that people like Veals, and people working in banks, have effectively bankrupted this country and several other countries. And a lot of people say: 'Oh – it's all very complicated. I can't be bothered to understand this!' And I'm trying to explain to them that it's not THAT complicated. It's a little bit complicated, but it's not THAT complicated. And if someone – heaven forbid – set fire to your house, I don't think you would say: 'Oh – it's all complicated. I don't know who did it…' NO! I think you'd say: 'Let's find out who did this! Let's get him put in prison. Let's find out WHY he did it and try to make sure it doesn't happen again!' And this book in a way is trying to do that. [...] I would hope that it would have given some information to people and would have increased their anger, but also would have increased their knowledge about how it was done. All you can do is contribute to these things and then we will all be more aware, and it won't happen so

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> much in the future. – Except that people are lazy and they can't be bothered. So it may happen again, but I hope not. All one can do as a citizen, let alone as a writer, is try to help (Interview with Sebastian Faulks, 14.10.2012).

In a way Faulks alludes to a kind of educational mandate for literature, which he likes to implement despite his assertion that he sees himself primarily as an artist whose ideas are solely based on fiction, not personal experience. Even though his characters and their stories are fictional, the world he creates is not. He describes and criticises in his work (which has often been described as a 'state-of-the-nation' novel) economic and social downturns of our globalised age that are real, and that Faulks wants people to recognise and change. This is what Bredella means when saying "literary texts do not intend to redeem us from reality but rather encourage us to face it" (Bredella 2010: 50). Despite the fact that *A Week in December* has often been criticised as being too exaggerated and unrealistic, it still draws on a very real core. Faulks does not want to promote escapism but activism. He calls for a heightened sensibility of readers to the topics which lie at the heart of his work and urges to remedy shortcomings.

Hanif Kureishi notes in his famous essay "The Word and the Bomb" that white British writers did not engage with the topics of Islam, immigration, race or identity at the time when he published *The Buddha of Suburbia* and later on *The Black Album* (Kureishi 2011: 96). He describes that he did not find much British writing that seemed to express his own experience. This nourished his wish to write his own account of the country he lives in and to address questions of class, sexuality, immigration and ethnic identity he did not see addressed by other authors. Kureishi's essays often deal with the political situation in England but also with life in Pakistan. He comments on the painful tensions in a country that, on the one hand, gave him a sense of security, community and strong family-bonds, but, on the other hand, suffers from economic underdevelopment, authoritarian regimes and ethnic and religious conflicts. In this context, Kureishi links the increasing success of Islamic fundamentalism in the region not only to corruption but also to the cruel suppression of any dissent and the lack of free speech. Kureishi seems to be well aware of the gift of free speech given to him as a writer and utilises it to broach difficult and controversial topics. The author sees his works as a means to explore boundaries, utter criticism, question politics and undermine simple answers by showing the complexity of individual circumstances and processes of identity formation. In doing so, he is fully aware of his influence on readers and the potentially dangerous consequences of this influence:

> The attacks on Rushdie show us, at least, that the Word is dangerous, and that independent and critical thought is more important than ever. In an age of propaganda, political simplicities and violence, our stories are crucial. Apart from the fact that the political has to be constantly interrogated, it is in such stories – which are conversations with ourselves – that we can speak of, include and generate more complex and difficult selves. It is when the talking and writing stops, when the attempt is to suppress human inconsistency by virtue, that evil takes place in the silence. The antidote to puritanism isn't licentiousness, but recognition of what goes on inside human beings. Fundamentalism is dictatorship of the mind, but a live culture is an exploration, and represents our endless curiosity about our own strangeness and impossible sexuality: wisdom is more important than doctrine;

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> doubt more important than certainty. Fundamentalism implies the failure of our most significant attribute, our imagination (Kureishi 2011: 103).

Kureishi underlines his power as a writer to counter these 'political simplicities' and describe reality in its fragmented, inconsistent and fallible facets. His novels radiate a curiosity for an exploration of life with all its human shortcomings. The content and style of his works as such has an anti-essentialist quality: Not only the tendency to direct the readers' sympathy towards humanist positions and the ridiculing satirical depictions of Islamic fundamentalism openly provoke adherents to religious essentialisms. Kureishi's unwillingness to accept any restrictions on free thought, his determination to comment on controversial and difficult issues, his strategy to grant insights into many different positions in a conflict and his interest in the topic of sexual self-discovery, which is often presented in quite explicit terms, are irreconcilable with essentialism of any kind. On this basis, the next chapters will help to elucidate the interrelationship between form, content and potential functions and further our understanding of fictional works as important cultural assets that may have the power to influence individual readers as well as public discourses.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

5) Analyses

5.1) 'Soldiers of the truth'[114] and 'Fantasy Finance'[115]: Sebastian Faulks' *A Week in December* and the different guises of fundamentalism

A Week in December (WID) gives us a glimpse into the perspectives of seven major and some minor characters, struggling with their lives in contemporary London. Witnessing 'a week in December' 2007 through the eyes of diverse characters gives the readers a glimpse into the complex mosaic of contemporary worldviews represented in global cities. The novel starts *in medias res* with the description of the specific actions undertaken by the main characters on December 16. The reader does not get a block exposition, but is introduced to the different characters and settings by smaller, highly informative passages and frequent changes of perspective, until the main protagonists are described. We get acquainted with a wide range of characters, the most important of which shall be sketched briefly to facilitate orientation:

Gabriel Northwood is a mid-thirties barrister and civil law practitioner from Chelsea, who always seems to be short of money. He tries to grapple with the Koran in order to defend a local education authority being sued by a Muslim family for not allowing their daughter to wear her traditional dress at school. After work, he regularly visits his schizophrenic brother Adam, who has been living in the ward of Glendale hospital for the last five years. Furthermore, he spends the week doing research to prove the innocence of a public transport provider in a case of a suicide attempt in which the parents of the injured person claimed negligence in the provision of safety precautions. In this context, he meets the tube driver Jenni Fortune and falls in love with her.

Jenni Fortune is a very sensitive, shy and insecure woman who loves her job as a tube driver, although it does not enable her to tap into her full potential. Having been raised by a single mother (her father from Trinidad left the family when she was eight months old) who "had barely owned a book and had been suspicious of Jenni's reading habits" (WID 4), Jenni grew up in a working-class environment in which high aspirations seemed to be out of the question. Good-heartedly, she cares for her unemployed half-brother Tony, who is a lazy 'sponger' and does not contribute much to her happiness. Nevertheless, she seems satisfied with her life even though it smacks of loneliness and monotony. Jenni enjoys her daily routine and is searching for a change from her life in her books and games of virtual reality from which only Gabriel awakens her.

114 WID 345.
115 WID 184.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

John Veals is clearly one of the most fascinating characters of Faulks' novel. Not only because of the fact that his perspective takes up much space, but also because of his position as a hedge-fund manager juggling with sums of money that are unimaginable for most people. He is sharp, ascetic, confident and successful, since he knows every ruse in his business. Yet, he is also strangely colourless and dispassionate for everything apart from his job: He has no hobbies or free-time, and neither cares much about his family, nor about the ramifications of his actions on a higher level. We are introduced into a seemingly totally rational world in which everything is target-oriented. However, Faulks describes this rational world as a 'parallel society' that is highly debatable on moral grounds. International finance seems to have lost touch with the lives and problems of real people and the enormous ramifications of its unscrupulous actions for thousands of people worldwide.

Finbar Veals, John's fifteen-year-old son, elucidates the downturns of his father's life in the private sphere. Used to a lack of parental restrictions and rules and nearly unlimited access to money and luxury goods, his life seems empty and devoid of any aims and teenage dreams. Addicted to reality TV, junk food and marihuana he has apparently lost all interest in his family, hobbies, school, girls, sports or any other activities and topics that normally affect the daily life of fifteen-year-olds. At the end of the week, he ends up in hospital with a severe psychotic attack, resulting from his uncontrolled drug consumption.

22-year-old Hassan al-Rashid is the son of the chutney magnate Farooq al-Rashid, who migrated from Pakistan in 1967 to work in the textile mills of Bradford, and finally built up his own company with a lot of diligence, passion and hard work. Despite his good education and comfortable upper-middle class life, Hassan finds himself increasingly disillusioned with life and public moral in London. After being a dedicated leftist student activist for some time, he has now found guidance in the company and instruction of the Islamist group *Husam Nar* (Burning Sword). In his search for purity and truth, he studies the teachings of Sayyid Qutb and prepares himself for a terrorist operation, in which he is supposed to install bombs in a hospital. His inner struggle to embrace and finally reject terrorism is ironically counteracted by his father's appointment as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) at Buckingham Palace the same week.

Ralph Tranter, a professional book-reviewer, shows himself from his most misanthropic and nihilistic side. He is described as "a connoisseur of disappointment, a voluptuary of disgrace" (WID 30). Profiting from the 'chic' of reading circles and the deterioration of the English educational system, he earns his living with moderating book-club discussions for rich, bored housewives and with correcting grammar and syntax mistakes in school reports. Constantly searching for ways to discredit his much-hated but incredibly talented, young and praised competitor Alexander Sedley, Tranter shuns no lies and efforts to achieve his goal.

Spike Borowski, a Polish footballer, now plays with a London club. He completed a university degree in economics and politics before taking up football professionally and is a very eager student of languages. Spike just starts to settle into London society

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

and is very attached to his Russian girlfriend Olya, who hides her past as a nude model for cheap web pages.

All of these diverse characters are connected to alternating plot lines. These plot lines at times intersect and in the end converge at a dinner party to which all characters are invited. The novel is an ulterior or subsequent narration that spans the relatively short time-frame of one week, presented on approximately 550 pages. Accordingly, the textual pace is rather slow and the story time restricted to a short episode in the lives of the characters, as it is common for a 'slice of life novel'. Every chapter corresponds to one day and gradually builds up an arc of suspense towards the end of the week with its culminating events. There is no information about the narrator's temporal relation towards the plot. The novel is chronological but multilinear, which involves the use of simullepses: Events that happen at the same time in different places have to be narrated one after the other.

A Week in December features a heterodiegetic narrator that is not bound to his own subjective point of view since he[116] is, as an extradiegetic entity, not involved in the story. On the whole, the novel is a very polyphonic text, which contains a wide range of characterial voices that create tension by forming contrasting relations. All of the above-mentioned characters serve as focalisers in Faulks' novel and therewith illuminate contrasting lifestyles, world-views and values. The most salient contrast is visible between the characters of John Veals and Hassan al-Rashid. Their plot lines do not cross and their lifestyle and perception of reality could not be more different, as I am going to outline in more detail in this chapter. Furthermore, it is interesting to analyse the relationships of contrast and correspondence between the two adolescent protagonists, Hassan and Finbar, who choose such different ways to cope with their coming of age and their teenage search for identity and belonging.

5.1.1) The representation of 'Islamic fundamentalism'

Before analysing narrative techniques and embedding Faulks' work in a larger political and literary context, an interesting starting point would be to examine the content of the novel to understand which form of fundamentalism is depicted and in which way. *A Week in December* deals with the jihadist variety of Islamic fundamentalism. Faulks employs the picture of a fictitious fundamentalist group that attracts Hassan's attention and gains his trust and loyalty. Its leader tries to convince the young protagonist to carry out a suicide attack and plant a bomb in a London hospital. The jihadist group *Husam Nar* carries all ideological and organisational characteristics of fundamentalism that have been delineated by the Fundamentalism Project, summarised in the first chapters. The group is described as reacting to the marginalisation of religion, employs moral dichotomies, draws sharp boundaries, is based on a leader-follower organisation and underlines the absolutism and inerrancy of its own belief, to men-

116 Without confusing author and narrator, I will employ Lanser's rule, according to which the personal pronoun appropriate to the author's sex is employed if the narrator's sex cannot be determined.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

tion but a few characteristics. However, other elements typical of Islamic fundamentalism are not described in detail. Behavioural requirements (such as dress, rituals, etc.) as well as a political vision or a specific theology are left vague by the novel. This conveys the impression that purely religious or ideological questions are not of primary importance for the novel's message and suggests that the Islamic fundamentalist group is outlined in rather generic terms.

Faulks rather prioritises the development of his young protagonist through the influence of the fundamentalist group he sketches. At first, the jihadist group reinforces 22-year-old Hassan al-Rashid's view of English society, which he already perceives to be morally degenerate. From his perspective, the increasing irreligiousness in England, which was mentioned in the opening chapters of this study, has to be noticed with regret and disgust:

> It was Sunday, Hassan thought; most of these people should have been in church, but these days Christians viewed cathedrals as monuments or works of art to be admired for their architecture and paintings, not as the place where they could worship God. Their final loss of faith had happened in the last ten years or so, yet in the *kafir* world it had passed with little comment. How very strange they were, he thought, these people, that they had let eternal life slip through their hands. Where Hassan had grown up in Glasgow, the Christians (he hadn't by then adopted the word '*kafir*') blasphemed and drank and fornicated, though most of them, he knew, still more or less believed. They were unfaithful in hotel rooms, but they got married in churches. [...] Now you could read statistics in newspaper surveys which confirmed what anyone could see: that they'd given up God. And barely a *kafir* seemed to have noticed (WID 21).

What is interesting in Hassan's approach is that he is not repelled by Christianity, but by a complete lack of a religious worldview. Even though he plans a deadly bomb attack on a hospital, Hassan is not presented as a person blinded by hatred. His motivation seems to be moral rather than social, since he is not disadvantaged by a lack of education or chances in life. Furthermore, his belief is not presented as a tradition passed on by his father to the next generation but as a personal choice, a conscious decision and commitment, which, according to Zebiri (2008: 37), is an element that unites second- or third-generation Muslims with converts to Islam. Religious values are not handed down but learned anew, chosen and emphasised with particular vigour. With this representation the novel challenges the claim that terrorism first and foremost originates in poverty and a lack of education and integration into mainstream society. As Schirrmacher notes in an article on the radicalisation of Muslims in Europe, the phenomenon whereby second or third generation migrants suddenly turn to an intensive or even radical practice of Islam is often connected to a search for identity and one´s roots as a reaction against the perceived rejection by the majority culture and a deep feeling of insecurity (Schirrmacher 2010: n.p.). She demonstrates that jihadists in Western countries (especially the leaders of radical groups) are mostly neither poor nor uneducated but often belong to the middle or even upper-middle class with good prospects to be successful in life and well-integrated into society (Schirrmacher 2010: n.p.). Hassan is not driven by political motives, feelings of revenge or despair about economic disadvantage: He is just a young man searching for friendship and most of all a meaningful way of life.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Hassan's friend Shahla stresses "his passion and his soft manner" and sees behind his certainty "someone who had at some stage in his life been wounded" (WID 24). The general description of Hassan's upbringing and personality, as well as the fact that he had been searching for answers in other beliefs (such as socialism) before, suggests that his motivation can be found less in absolute religious certainty or a lack of social and economic prospects, but in a search of meaning, belonging and identity. He does not seem to know where he belongs, but it becomes clear that he does not feel a sense of being part of contemporary youth culture with its latest fashions. Taking the example of an online dating platform, which grants young people innumerable possibilities to connect, Hassan contemplates how this system of seemingly endless opportunities is at the same time characterised by loneliness, fast pace and sexual randomness:

> YourPlace [an internet site for lonely teenagers] was one of the most boring things he had ever seen. Pictures of millions of grinning *kafirs* whose lives were so empty it was fun for them to know that someone had 'jabbed' their photograph. Dear oh dear. It was almost a relief to know that the main practical use of the site was for sex; at least it had *some* function – for paedophiles to cruise, for teenage boys to rope in likely-looking girls for sex parties or for older *kafirs* to find 'fuck buddies' (WID 67).

The passage not only displays disillusionment with a common moral laxity but also ironically hints at Hassan's entrenchment in the culture he criticises. For example, the use of the term *kafirs*[117] in the same paragraph as the exclamation 'dear oh dear', a very English expression, acts contrastively and thus has a humorous effect. The use of language throughout the novel indicates the different influences that determine the protagonist's coming of age. On the one hand, he articulates himself more eloquently than many of his peers, which hints at his upbringing, good education and the rhetorical practice he gained from discussions in left-wing political circles. He does not use much colloquial teenage slang and unintentionally slips in typically British exclamations, which makes him sound quite mature for his age. On the other hand, the vehemence with which he defends his sometimes generalising and not very thought-through ideas about the world during discussions with his friend Shahla or his father at times counters this maturity. The use of language, again, underlines Hassan's defiance and desperation ("Well fuck them, he thought. He was close to tears", WID 163). These passages, in contrast, are rather reminiscent of teenage behaviour than his eloquence or the serious topics he is interested in. There is a boyish and a manly side to the protagonist and it is not clear, yet, which side is going to win in the end. Simultaneously, British and radical Muslim terms influence his language and it is not decided until the end of the story which part is going to assert itself.

The Muslim words Hassan uses and the views he exerts from the start, however, do not convey the impression of genuineness. The way the narrator describes his thoughts leaves the reader with the impression that his newfound belief is like a new suit he tries on – something that does not really fit. The protagonist looks at Britain

117 The term *kafir* is a very derogatory term which is used to describe all 'infidels' or non-believers in Islam. The term, however, is also vastly criticised throughout the Muslim world for inflaming unnecessary tensions and inhibiting dialogue by stating a monolithic rejection of other religions and ways of life.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

from an outsider point of view, even though he was born there and does not know any other society. His upper middle-class parents brought him up in a 'Western' way. His education was not excessively religious, but value-oriented and characterised by pride in the worth of their Muslim roots. His parents seem to be good at balancing both influences and cultural potentials, whereas their son wavers between different extremes in his teenage rebellion and search for his place in life.

This irritation caused by Hassan's sudden turn to radical Islam may partly be evoked by the rather essentialist but common assumption (that has also been made by Huntington and others) that religion is inextricably linked to culture, and that therefore 'Britishness' and Islamic fundamentalism do not form a believable combination at first sight. This supposed contradiction is also embodied in the fact that the future suicide bombers from Hassan's cell all have distinct accents from other British regions and give each other typically British nicknames (such as Jock, Gary, Seth or Elton) as a disguise. Even Hassan admits, thinking about a Hindu convert in the circle, that it "did seem odd to him that someone not born Muslim should be engaged on jihad, but he couldn't explain why" (WID 70). This slight feeling of irony and a 'lack of authenticity' directs the attention of the readers to their own preconceptions about the relation between culture and religion and hints at the thesis by Olivier Roy, who claims that religious fundamentalism is nowadays shaped by increasing deterritorialisation and deculturation. Roy, however, underlines that jihadist movements (with the exception of Al-Qaida and at present the Islamic State, which operate globally) are in most cases dedicated to a specific political cause or conflict in a confined territory. But Faulks' novel does neither address international terrorist networks and asymmetric warfare nor any of today's various religious conflicts in more depth. *Husam Nar* does not seem to distribute more than political stereotypes and commonplaces to justify the intended attack. No information on a religious or political conflict is used to contemplate catalysts for jihadism. This is different in Khadra's novel, which embeds Islamic fundamentalism in a psychologically plausible ideological and political framework and is set in a concrete military conflict. While the deterritorialisation of the belief represented by *Husam Nar* and the lack of description concerning the motives of its other members seem to diminish its political and psychological plausibility, Roy's definition of 'deculturation' might serve as an apt description for the feelings that appear to torment the young protagonist. Roy claims that "[d]eculturation is the loss of the social expression of religion. Believers feel themselves to be minorities surrounded by an atheist, pornographic, materialistic, secular culture which worships false gods: money, sex or man himself" (Roy 2010: 8). Hassan's drive to join the jihadist group seems to be less an act of embracing religion than a rejection of certain forms of Western liberalism.

In line with this observation, the narrator recurrently creates doubts about the genuineness of Hassan's belief. As mentioned above, the young protagonist seems to be to a large degree informed by the British culture in which he grew up and is also described as a former "dedicated left-winger at student rallies" (WID 24). This development emphasises the protagonist's sense of justice and willingness to fight for his moral values, but also indicates a wavering between extremes that can be interpreted

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

as a rebellion against a society in which he still has not found his place. In some passages, it is explicitly described how he takes on different identities in his search for meaning and belonging, once he has realised that he is somehow different:

> Hassan spoke Glaswegian-English like the native he was. Much as he liked his parents, he didn't want to make a fetish of them and their culture; he didn't want to be singled out and stared at, in the way he and his friends gawped at the Jewish children who left early on a Friday in order to be home in Giffnock before dark. Hassan tried on different disguises. At fourteen he was all Scottish and atheistic: he exaggerated his interest in football and girls; he drank cider and beer from the off-licence and was sick in the park. He derided the women in hijab, calling out insults after them: 'Bloody penguins!'; 'Daleks!' He enjoyed the sense of release and belonging, but the specific boys that he was obliged to spend his time with all repelled him. [...] By the time he was seventeen, Hassan had come to despise these friends and was looking for another cloak to wear (WID 152-153).

In this respect, Hassan's story is not simply about religion or Islam but more about his coming of age and typical teenage problems with sexuality, disorientation, rebellion against the parental generation and the search for identity that shows many parallels to Shahid's development in Kureishi's *The Black Album*, as we are going to see in the next chapters. At the same time, this passage, again, demonstrates Hassan's British socialisation: The term 'Daleks' refers to the British TV series *Dr Who*. British popular culture constitutes the background of experience from which the protagonist draws his references. Concerning his quest for identity, Islam supposedly offers the protagonist easy answers just as socialism did before. He is drawn to left-wing ideologies because "the LSG seemed to have an answer to all these uncertainties – a unified explanation of everything. In this way, he thought, it was itself a bit like a religion" (WID 158).

The novel here suggests parallels between ideology and religion in that both phenomena still people's hunger for orientation in our globalised world. However, the slightly ironic tone, and the fact that socialism is already discredited as a system able to offer grand solutions to societal problems, implies that Islam – and other persuasions – might also be mistaken in their claims to possess the absolute truth. It is telling in this respect that references to real historical events, such as the invasion of Iraq, are not made in a religious, but in an ideological context. The common truisms often connected to the justification of Islamic fundamentalist groups ('Bush and Blair only invaded Iraq to guarantee their access to cheap oil' and so forth) are first put into the mouths of the socialist group leaders. This criticism, though, uses the same essentialist categories it claims to criticise. As Hassan notes:

> It was an odd thing [...] that although all the LSG people were atheists, they were often concerned for the religious freedoms of others. The Mormons of North America were Creationist bigots, but the Shias of Mosul, it seemed, had their rights. [...] Sometimes Hassan worried that this was a perverted kind of colonialism – little better than the French Empire which, long after it had ditched religion at home, was concerned to send nuns and missionaries to the people it colonised in Africa and Indochina (WID 161-162).

Double standards seem to be ever-present in *A Week in December* – on a religious, ideological, economic and private level.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Hassan defiantly turns to Islam after his disillusionment with socialism due to the fact that he still feels like an outsider in the group, despite all talks of brotherhood and multiculturalism. Thereby, he stresses a difference he has been trying to deny for years. The character describes an attempt at assimilation which finally results in aversion:

> I lost interest in religion when I was at school because I felt it was divisive. It was pushing me away from my friends and making a foreigner of me. My experience of politics at college underlined this. It made religion look kind of tribal and a drag on progress which was to get people to understand how exploitation works, how economic systems are geared, how the US runs the Middle East, etc. [...] Then I had a sort of road to Damascus – road to Mecca, more like – moment. I saw that identity was more important than economic power (WID 164).

Again, his mention of the "road to Damascus"[118] ironically underlines Hassan's upbringing and socialisation in a predominantly Christian country, which subtly counteracts his claim to be strongly influenced by Islamic thought. There are several passages stressing Hassan's longing for friendship and belonging as central motivation for his turn to Islamic fundamentalism. In this regard, religion seems to be a stronger determinant of belonging and identity than culture, and the novel strives to give an insight into the potential 'emotional foundation' of radical beliefs.

The power of Islam to unify people from different cultural, national and ethnic backgrounds is stressed by the multicultural composition of the Islamic fundamentalist group presented in the novel. The boundlessness of religion must seem a comfort for people with 'hybrid identities', for whom it is difficult to identify with a specific culture. Distinct from Christian and Jewish empires, which supposedly stand for a nationalist and racially bound 'Western imperialism' striving for territory, power and money,

> Islam did not conquer people, it freed them. This was not 'imperialism'; it was the gift of liberation. [...] 'Arabs, Persians, Indians, Africans and Asians joined together in freedom. Islam was not defined by race or nation or colour. It was never an Arabic civilisation, not for a single day. It was never a nationality, always a community of belief. Islam raises no man above another; it has no truck with kings, or tyrants, archbishops or dictators (WID 342).

The passage not only shows Hassan's sympathy for egalitarian principles and the idea of unity and solidarity but also exemplifies his adoption of easy answers. He is still young and his knowledge of the world and political ideas are not very nuanced. Complex historical developments become reduced to an idealised black-and-white painting of the early stages of Islam. Most readers will know that Islamic groups (as most other religions) also used conquest and forced conversion as methods to enlarge their empires. Furthermore, it is not only the result of a corruption of an originally pure Islamic society that people in predominantly Muslim countries are as vulnerable to

118 The term alludes to the conversion of Paul the Apostle, who became fundamentally changed and faithful through an encounter with the Christian God on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus. According to the New Testament, he subsequently became a follower of Jesus and ceased to persecute early Christians.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

fall prey to discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality or colour as people from other cultural circles. At the same time, the novel also mentions the disenchantment with the disappointing reality in supposedly 'real' Muslim countries, such as "Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq [and] Saudi Arabia" (WID 344).

A Week in December contains many forceful passages. But Faulks' sense of humour, on the whole, constrains an earnest analysis of jihadism and its advocates. Hassan asks, for instance, if the bombing could not be postponed to another day, since he has to attend the ceremony at Buckingham Palace for his father to get the OBE. Various funny scenes and the fact that jihadism makes the impression of being superimposed on an environment and people that neither seem fit for the task nor match any expectations the average reader might have leave much room for irony and lightness:

> Hassan had a sudden and terrible desire to laugh – at the thought of roly-poly Elton John with his diamanté glasses and his boyfriend and his platform heels having unwittingly given his name to a solemn would-be terrorist...Salim had occasionally had cause to rebuke him for his descent into laughter: it showed spiritual immaturity, he said. Hassan did believe in purity and truth with all his might; but he had been brought up in a godless country where television and newspapers mocked the social structures night and day... (WID 71-72).

Apparently, Britain may be 'godless' but also provides a political culture open to public discourse and humorous challenge. Jihadism, in contrast, clearly lacks flexibility. Moreover, it is not described as an emblem of morality, but is shown to comprise double standards. Cell-leader Salim, for instance, arranges last-minute instructions for the attack to be coded and covertly embedded in the private parts of a nude model on the porn site 'babesdelight.co.uk'[119], which understandably causes doubts in the group:

> Seth coughed. 'Is it right to be looking at these pictures? I know that in the name of the Prophet...' Salim looked at Seth sorrowfully. 'There is nothing in life that is moral or immoral, there is only the command of God. If Allah has forbidden something, then it is wrong. I am not aware that he has forbidden us to look at women. In fact, there is an early scriptural source in which devout men look at the reflection of a naked woman as she is preparing to bathe. Another authority tells us a man may inspect his wife before marrying her, to make sure she is without blemish that might harm their children.' 'But I don't intend to marry Olya,' said Elton. [...] 'I think I'd feel uneasy.' 'Islam does not recognise "feeling uneasy", it only cares about what God has commanded. You're talking like a Christian, some ridiculous Catholic. In any event, Seth, the important issue is not whether your eyes have rested for a moment on a naked woman, but whether you can play your part in ushering in the new caliphate' (WID 75-76).

The scene exemplifies the major problem that Islam has no final authority to decide on the meaning or range of religious documents but very much depends on the interpretation of the Holy Scripture by diverse political and religious fractions. Besides, it is telling that the novel here presents the jihadist movement as a group which is instrumentalised by a leader, who bends religious sources into shape according to his

119 While the jihadist group *Husam Nar,* the reality TV-show *It's Madness* and the virtual reality game *Parallax* are Faulks' inventions and entirely fictitious, the mentioned porn site actually exists.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

own aims and follows the alleged wisdom that the end justifies all means. What is more, the correlation between Islam and sexual morality is not presented in a very positive light. At one point it is described how "[o]ne of the boys at college, who had a large collection of top-shelf magazines, told Hassan it was fine if the girls in the pictures were *kafirs*. Hassan thought this was making a virtue of necessity, since Muslim women simply didn't pose nude" (WID 78).

The protagonist shows a lot of moral integrity, which, however, is innate to his personality and not bound to his religious views. Hassan's parents are the embodiment of a happy marriage, his mother being an emancipated woman. In general, Hassan's parents stand for a very positive model of Islam and a hopeful multiculturalism that neither leads to a fusion of different cultures nor to the development of parallel societies. It is described how Farooq ('Knocker') al-Rashid did not discard his culture or religious practice when he first arrived in Scotland, but still made friends in no time since "his demeanour appealed to the old Scots. He couldn't join them in the pubs, where the true intimacy was forged, but he wasn't squeamish about their profanity, their football or their godlessness, and they found his devotion to Islam easy enough to ignore" (WID 84). In the case of Hassan's parents, mutual tolerance seems to enable a communal life which allows the acting out of differences without calls for cultural or religious assimilation. This acquiescence of differences is achieved simply by not focusing on them and not judging others by one's own religious standards. The enlightened belief of his father Farooq is supportive, offers tolerance and does not force Hassan to choose between a 'Western' and a 'Muslim' way of life. The young protagonist does not undergo an identity crisis because he is torn between his Muslim roots and Western influences, between two value systems or between two different demands for loyalty. Thus, the initial situation is very different from the starting point of the other novels in which political conflicts or dominant cultural and religious pressures and communal identities force individuals into a situation in which they have to make a choice in favour of one system or the other. Hassan, in contrast, leads a rather comfortable life, free from pressure, war and poverty. He simply feels that the 'Western' way of life has nothing to offer to him.

In this respect, Faulks' novel draws a positive picture of Islam as such, stressing the possibility of peaceful coexistence, integration and friendship between people of different cultures and creeds, but satirically criticises extremist forms as an aberration. Farooq's belief is of a very optimist and tolerant kind, stressing Allah's compassion and mercy.

> He was like a Church of England Christian who paid lip service to the Bible as a whole, but only believed in the New Testament [...] The pith of Islam was likewise to be found selectively, Knocker thought, not so much in the hellfire-for-infidel Koran as in the gentle teachings of many generations of wise and kind old men. Knocker's spiritual belief was secure: he had trust in the omnipotence of Allah and no doubt that a place in paradise awaited him, so long as he remained strong in his devotions and pure in his behaviour. His faith enabled him to ride over financial turbulence and local hostility, because he knew there was a truth that lay beyond cash flow and VAT, deeper than the prejudices of some of the people he dealt with. He could always detach himself from them; and most business associates found that his soft answers turned away their suspicions (WID 150-151).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

One might provocatively suggest that religion should – according to *A Week in December* – better be relegated to the private sphere to cause less 'disturbance' and irritation for the majority society. This assumption might be exaggerated, but it can at least be argued that the novel underlines that Muslim belief can still be genuine if Muslims stick to their religious ideals and practices, without possessing missionary zeal and an aspiration to proselytise people of other denominations. Therewith, the novel seems to counter the idea that Islam with its strict sole claim is no religion that could be acted out in private.

However, secularism driven to its extremes and accompanied by an all-encompassing loss of values can also have fatal consequences. English society, as it is represented by Faulks' novel, is predominantly secular concerning all three dimensions that have been distinguished by Casanova: We have institutional differentiation, religion is privatised, and there also seems to be a decline in religious beliefs and practices – at least for the non-Muslim characters. It is striking that only the Muslim characters are described as having religious beliefs and considering them important for their personal life and ethical foundation. Whereas the European Values Study, mentioned in the second chapter, confirms this scenario of declining religious practice for the case of England, the tenor of *A Week in December* exceeds these findings, concerning a supposed lack of spirituality, in general. The above-mentioned survey attributes 'church-free spirituality' to Western-European societies. But in the novel spirituality, or the belief in some transcendent truth beyond the manmade world, seems to be of no concern at all for most characters. In this hedonist reality, belief is not presented as "one option among others" (Taylor 2007: 3), but is not even considered as an option at all by the non-Muslim characters.

However, 'Knocker' al-Rashid is the living proof in *A Week in December* that Islam is not necessarily a 'fundamentalist' religion – a common claim which is vicariously brought up by the figure of Gabriel Northwood during his research. The barrister points, for instance, to the undisputable position of the Koran as the ultimate truth:

> Once an early theological debate had decided for all time that the Koran was literally and in every syllable the unmediated word of God, then all Muslims became by definition 'fundamentalist'. It was by its nature unlike Judaism or Christianity; it was intrinsically, and quite unapologetically, a fundamentalist religion. There was, of course, a world of difference between 'fundamental' and 'militant' – let alone 'aggressive'; but the intractable truth remained: that by being so pure, so high-minded and so uncompromising, Islam had limited the kind of believer it could claim (WID 276).

Contrary to the picture of Islam embodied by Hassan's parents, the picture of Islamic fundamentalism we get in *A Week in December* is characterised by exactly this lack of compromise. The jihadist leaders profess that Islam represents a lack of contradiction: "Everything has been explained. [...] Islam is not a religion like Judaism or Christianity. It is a sublime, single and transcendent truth" (WID 341).

It becomes visible that the novel contains a conflict between humanism and fundamentalist religiosity, between the ability to promote tolerance and compassion and a strict adherence to religious ideals. Gabriel Northwood as one of the most appealing

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

and likeable characters in the novel seems to reject all holy books which are based on punishment and cruelty. In one scene he compares the Koran to the Old Testament, professing his dislike for both scriptures:

> He had always thought of the Old Testament as giving the most implacable and unsympathetic portrayal of a divinity. [...] Jahweh the god of exile, punishment, bloodshed, plagues and slaying of the firstborn...He had surely set a standard of intransigence. Yet compared to the Koranic divinity, he was beginning to feel, old Jahweh was almost avuncular. The god of the Koran brought with him neither the great stories of the Old Testament [...] nor the modern life-guide of the New. [...T]he principal message seemed a simple one: believe in me or burn for all eternity. Page after page (WID 273).

Strikingly, the character describes the Koran in a similar way as Faulks once did in an interview which earned him considerable criticism. In 2009, Faulks gave an interview with the *Sunday Times* about his research for *A Week in December* in which he described his opinion about the Koran as follows:

> With the Koran there are no stories. And it has no ethical dimension like the New Testament, no new plan for life. It says 'the Jews and the Christians were along the right tracks, but actually, they were wrong and I'm right, and if you don't believe me, tough – you'll burn for ever'. That's basically the message of the book (Freeman 24.08.2009: n.p.).

Apart from doubting the existence of an ethical dimension in the Koran, Faulks supposedly also called the holy book of Islam the "rantings of a schizophrenic" (cf. Flood 24.08.2009: n.p.) and earned harsh criticism for his words. A short time later, the author apologised and explained that his intention was never to offend anyone or to instil prejudice, but that he only wanted to understand the phenomenon 'Islamic fundamentalism'. He underlined that he respects Islam and that *A Week in December* is a satirical novel which also features Muslim characters who are peaceful and loveable, shedding a positive light on their religion (Faulks 24.08.2009: n.p.). However, the controversy did not fail to attract considerable attention – mostly from voices that did not contribute much to a reconciliation between Faulks and his critics. The British yellow press, for instance, reported about the reaction of the radical cleric Anjem Choudary, who postulated that Faulks' deed should be judged by a Sharia court (which can consider execution as potential penalty in matters of blasphemy) (cf. Jeory 03.09.2009: n.p.).

This controversy triggered by Faulks' statements illustrates the close link between religion and politics, which is also addressed in the novel even though the plot is not embedded in a specific political conflict**.** While Muslims such as Hassan's parents strictly separate both spheres, the terrorist cell their son joins emphasises the necessity to fight for a pure Islamic state. The protagonist surprisingly follows this claim even though he should know better:

> Hassan al-Rashid knew the Koran very well. [...] So when he went to his first meeting with Salim at the Pudding Mill Lane Mosque he quickly saw that he was among people who either hadn't read the book or who'd moved on from it. This surprised him. He'd expected the group to be scripturally-based. [...] There was nothing in the Koran about the politics of building an Islamic state; the Prophet had not concerned himself with such things. So, as the discussion grew heated around him, Hassan found himself become detached from it. These young men reminded him of the members of the Left Student Group at college;

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> there was a competition going on among them to see who could be more radical in his alignment (WID 233-234 and 236).

Again, a central reason for a turn to ideology, or in this case religion, is rebellion (against the parental generation or a country to which a real sense of belonging is difficult to develop). This basis is aggravated in many cases by a lack of genuine religious and political knowledge. Ironically, Salim as leader of the group puts a slant on truth just as he pleases. His promise "It's all based on scripture, not on interpretation" (WID 168) quickly turns into "Religions move on [...] Even the word of God evolves through human interpretation" (WID 237). That Hassan in the end shies away from carrying out the planned attack does not come as a surprise to the reader. Less psychologically plausible is that he seizes upon ignorant stereotypes and falls for fundamentalist plans in the first place, despite his frequently demonstrated self-reflection.

A central issue is also the lack of differentiation and knowledge about different concepts such as religion, culture and ethnicity. These concepts are recurrently mixed, confused and politically instrumentalised in public discourse – for, as well as against Islam. Criticism of Islam, which is usually religious in nature, nowadays frequently runs the risk of being labelled racist criticism. Groups fighting for minority rights do so quite often without the necessary amount of distinction. Faulks picks up this phenomenon in a humorous way in connection to Hassan's brief engagement with the Left Student Group at University. In one scene the members of this group proclaim during a meeting:

> We must fight homophobia wherever it appears. It is a virus as vicious as racism. In fact, homophobia *is* racism. [...] ...and such views are symptomatic of a much wider and deeper hostility and intolerance of otherness. Only last week, a London evening paper felt able to sponsor a debate entitled 'Is Islam good for London?' Do another substitution here and imagine the reaction if Judaism had been the subject. Are Jews good for London? You just can't picture that question being posed in a civilised society. Yet there are still those who claim that Islamophobia can't be racist, because Islam is a religion not a race! They're fooling themselves. A religion is not only about faith but also about identity, background and culture. As we know, the Muslim community is overwhelmingly non-white. Therefore Islamophobia is racist – and so is anti-Semitism.' Hassan was aware that a kind of slip of logic had taken place in the last two sentences – perhaps that a part and a whole had swapped places, or that an implied 'moreover' had become a 'therefore' – but he couldn't put his finger on it (WID 156-157).

What the novel highlights in this passage is the circumstance that a lack of knowledge combined with the demands of political correctness and the activism of starry-eyed idealists does as little to promote a productive interreligious dialogue as the sweeping statements of many critics of religion. Moreover, this conception counters the claim made by the characters advocating Islamic fundamentalism, since they underline the role of Islam as a comprehensive, colour-blind force uniting people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds.

On the whole, there is no comprehensive delineation of central political conflicts that play a large role for Islamic fundamentalists. The brief references to the role of the United States in world politics or conflicts such as the occupation of Iraq constitute arguments used by Hassan to defend his stance, but they are not presented as

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

central driving forces of the action or used to explain the protagonist's turn to fundamentalist attitudes. A bit more room is dedicated to the writings of several Islamist writers, such as Ghulam Sarwar, Maududi and Sayyid Qutb, who are read by Hassan. His father Farooq puts the common critique of their concepts in a nutshell, calling Sarwar "a lousy business management consultant with his own agenda, not a proper Muslim", Maududi a "rabble-rouser" and Qutb a "terrorist" (WID 362). He deplores that "his beautiful religion had been perverted by demagogues for their political ends" and defends his stance that "Islam has never had a political home. It's a state of mind" (WID 363). The writers mentioned are all leaders who epitomise a 'charismatic-prophetic style' that appeals to people's emotions and do not belong to the most sophisticated or nuanced fundamentalist writers.[120]

Countering his son's willingness to fight for an idealist utopia, Knocker takes a rather pragmatic and realist stance on religion when he argues that Islam has never been able to develop truly Islamic societies, even though this might be desirable. He points to the gap between ambition and reality and defends America, which is criticised most harshly by his son for its policies and godlessness, as a country he values even though he does reject some of its downsides.

> 'But I like America!' said Knocker. 'I like its movies and its TV. [...] I admire its science and its ...Its friendliness! [...] They were welcoming and generous to a stranger with brown skin and a funny accent. I don't have to get drunk or grow fat on their junk food or watch their pornography [...]' 'And how will you liberate them?' said Knocker. 'Fly another plane into a building? Kill all their politicians, break their army, then say. "Now we will create God's true Islamic society from California to New York though we haven't yet worked out how to do it in practice because we've never done it before"?' (WID 364-365).

Unlike Muslim fundamentalists, he believes that one does not have to fully embrace or reject a culture, but that one has the right to recognise it in its positive as well as negative parts and choose selectively – in line with what is realistic to achieve and with what one can reconcile with one's conscience. Knocker may not embrace everything Western societies entail, but he rejects utopian ideas, violence and the presentation of political agendas as religious causes.

Hassan's friend Shahla even more vigorously defends this stance. In her opinion radicals such as Wahhabis are worryingly anti-modern; "a nineteenth-century throwback to the Middle Ages who wanted to pretend scientific advance had never taken place" (WID 370). The jihadist group *Husam Nar* is indeed described as rejecting not 'institutional modernity' but 'cultural modernity' (Tibi). It uses modern technology but embraces totalising notions, in subordinating the individual and its worth and freedom of action to religious principles. The human right to life and integrity is not seen as inherent and sacrosanct, but shall be sacrificed to the religious end of a 'purely Islamic society', which supposedly justifies all means.

Hassan's final decision to recoil from his plans is, however, not the result of a contemplation of the arguments brought forth by his father and his friend Shahla or an

120 See Zeidan (2003: 280) on different forms of fundamentalist discourse and intellectual approaches by writers such as Ghannushi, Mas'ari or al-Turabi.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

intense introspection. His sudden shift of opinion is presented as the consequence of an epiphany, which leaves the reader with a tinge of lacking plausibility. The protagonist gets lost in the city and suddenly wakes up to reality when a person on an unlit bicycle nearly crashes into him. The event is clearly exaggerated, described as bringing him to "the edge of death" (WID 535), which makes him suddenly change his mind and throw the detonators into the Thames. The climax towards which the plot has been building up is surprisingly banal and unspectacular. There is no more contemplation of religion, ideology or politics: they are substituted by basic human needs for life and love. Hassan decides in favour of his family and his love for his friend Shahla. The development of Hassan's character makes the reader question potential prejudices concerning the character of jihadists. Thus, the novel individualises a topic we often only encounter in sensational newspaper headlines. Faulks says about his desire to sketch the individual side to the topic and counter generalising opinions:

> If you read about him [Hassan] in a newspaper you'd say: 'Who is this guy who's about to murder people?' But if you follow him through the book, you might think: 'Who is this nice boy who's been led astray by these bad people?' And: 'How good that he finds it in himself!' Probably, because of the strength of his parents to change his mind. And that's what life is and about what novel-writing is. It is to try to explain to people: He's not a headline in a newspaper! Every individual has a life and a drama. They are neither good nor bad, they are what they are (Interview with Sebastian Faulks 14.10.2012).

5.1.2) Economic libertarianism as fundamentalist phenomenon

The extreme form of Islamic radicalism Hassan awakes from in the last minute is countered by another form of fundamentalism: that of the neoliberal capitalist economy. As the readers follow the plotline around Hassan and the planned attack, they also get more and more information on 'the other' against which Muslim fundamentalist views react. Importantly, we do not get this information through the views of the Muslim circle but first and foremost through the narrator's description of actions by characters who serve as representatives of the kind of 'Western liberalism' Hassan deplores. 'Western liberalism' comes in many forms in Faulks' novel: It is presented to the reader in the shape of the capitalist economy, modern popular culture and entertainment, as well as a youth culture that is hallmarked by open sexuality and drug abuse. John Veals seems to embody the downturns of capitalism in the novel, just as his son Finbar and the tube driver Jenni Fortune can be regarded as emblems of the insubstantiality and delusion connected to modern popular culture. All of these three characters are portrayed as 'lost souls' acting in parallel realities. They do not seem to have more in common with each other than the fact that they actually prefer to live in systems of virtual reality because of the unlimited power they enjoy within these systems – with the important distinction that Veals' actions actually trigger disastrous consequences for real people worldwide.

Jenni Fortune retreats into the world of the virtual reality game *Parallax* on a regular basis, since "it was like being a star in your own improvised film" (WID 190). Her

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

everyday-life is one of routine and a lack of excitement. Jenni is a rather shy and plain person. In *Parallax*, however, she can try things she would not dare to do in reality, have as much money, success and any outer appearance she might choose. "The economy of Parallax derived from the real world, but with a lesser sense of responsibility. [...] The financiers' gains were theirs to keep, but their losses were democratically shared" (WID 41). This reality forms a stark contrast to the predatory capitalism, which defines John Veals' working environment. Notably, *Parallax* is also presented as a retreat for people who feel powerless and oppressed by today's reality, which is shaped by the demands of globalisation, increasing pace and competition on all levels. In virtual reality these people win the respect, power and admiration they lack in real life and can utter any opinion, without the omnipresent restrictions of political correctness.

The TV show *It's Madness*, to which John Veals' son Finbar is addicted, takes the satire of reality TV to its extremes. The narrator describes a setting where people with mental illnesses are herded together into some kind of big brother container, entertaining the viewers with their pain and outbreaks. This spectacle ends with the suicide of one participant. The baseness and lack of dignity ascribed to these forms of entertainment is described quite explicitly. The blunt passages depicting the pain of the resident patients together with the description of Finbar's loneliness and drug abuse have a shocking effect and express a clear moral judgment. Comparing Finbar with Hassan as the second young protagonist of the novel, both characters could not be more different but at the same time have a lot in common. Their relationship is simultaneously characterised by contrasts and correspondences. Finbar indulges in any guilty pleasure Hassan despises but is very similar to him in his loneliness and need for guidance, companionship and love. Both characters have not worked out their place in society yet. What distinguishes them from each other is, first and foremost, their family background. Hassan has a family he can rely on and loving parents who take an interest in him, which might be one of the factors that save him in the end. Finbar's family-life is characterised by disinterest and estrangement. Consequently, he tries to avoid his parents and reduce contact to a minimum: "Talking to them was an ordeal. His father never knew what to say and seemed anxious that he might betray some ignorance of Finn's life; neither had quite recovered from the moment the year before when John Veals inadvertently revealed that he thought Finn had already taken his GCSEs" (WID 61). In every scene in which he needs his parents the most (e.g. when he panics because of the bad side effects of a drug, cf. WID 139-140) he is left alone with no one there to help him. Finbar is defined more by his actions than by his words or attitudes. Whereas we get to know a lot about Hassan's ideas and values, we do not become familiar with Finbar. His constant attempt to block out any nagging or painful thoughts through the use of drugs is reflected in the passages narrated from his perspective. The reader thus gets a more detailed description of the TV shows he watches than of his actual thoughts and feelings.

The characters not only lose touch with reality but also with education and incentives to change something in their everyday life. They seem to have lost all energy to stand up and defend their interest on a personal as well as a societal level. Modern-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

day entertainment and technologization are presented as an anaesthesia that numbs people emotionally and makes them stupefied and dull. They retreat into their private dreams and illusions while the powerful use exactly this lack of knowledge and public interest to shape the world in a way that suits their own goals and enhances their profit. Gabriel Northwood deplores:

> I was lucky enough to be educated at a time when teachers still thought children could handle knowledge. They trusted us. Then there came a time when they decided that because not every kid in the class could understand or remember those things, they wouldn't teach them any more [sic] because it wasn't fair on the less good ones. So they withheld knowledge. Then I suppose the next lot of teachers didn't have the knowledge to withhold. [...] I think my generation will be seen as a turning point. From now on there'll be a net loss of knowledge in Europe. The difference between a peasant community in fourteenth-century Iran and modern London, though, is that if with their meagre resources the villagers occasionally slipped backwards, it was not for lack of trying. But with us, here in England, it was a positive choice. We chose to know less. [...] I think what's happened is that because they themselves know less than their predecessors, innovators and leaders today have remade the world in their own image. Spellchecks. Search engines. They've remodelled the world so that ignorance is not really a disadvantage (WID 428 and 430-431).

Even art, which is usually supposed to reflect education and sophistication, seems to bow to economic rationality. Paintings are an investment, education a skill to sell and literature a means to make money and a marker of social standing and prestige. This lack of education, combined with the increasing complexity of a globalised world, leads to the development of parallel societies average people have no insight into or understanding of.

Faulks places the world of finance and capital at the centre of these parallel societies. As Saadi notes, London is a setting which in itself contains many ambiguities and large social disparities. It is the seat of government and the place of one of the largest and most powerful stock markets in the world, characterised furthermore by a large degree of deregulation. London is a focal point of wealth and power but simultaneously also a city with outskirts encompassing working class milieus, crime, social problems and racial tensions. These 'parallel worlds' within the same city seem to be dominated by the unwritten rules and the image of success radiating from the centre – a phenomenon Saadi calls 'metropolitan fundamentalism':

> There is no doubt that the city of London is synonymous with an inordinate and pathological concentration of power and money. Furthermore, not unlike certain aspects of US culture, in order for the multiculturalism to work it seems to have to be exclusive, so that often the relationship of the über-classes, regardless of ethnicity, creed, gender, sexual orientation, of London with those (the majority) of us who dwell outside the M25 ring-road feels like that of center and periphery, ruler and subject. [....] One is seldom permitted to rise above the regional. Somewhat impishly, we might call this 'metropolitan fundamentalism' (Saadi 2012: 8-9).

In line with this claim, the beginning of the novel *in medias res* directly throws the reader into a scenery which is dominated by the symbols of capitalism (the building site of Europe's largest future shopping centre) and globalisation (symbolised by a football stadium):

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> This was not a retail park with trees and benches, but a compression of trade in a city centre, in which migrant labour was paid by foreign capital to squeeze out layers of profit from any Londoner with credit. At their new 'Emirates' Stadium, meanwhile, named for an Arab airline, Arsenal of North London were kicking off under floodlights against Chelsea from the West, while the goalkeepers – one Czech, one Spanish – jumped up and down and beat their ribs to keep warm (WID 1).

Portraying John Veals' life as a hedge-fund manager, the narrator introduces us into a world which is seemingly logical and the product of hard work and huge success. But this world also smacks of loneliness, dullness and ruthlessness. The first picture we get is one that is lacking any joy of living. In Veals' 'empire', managers work "in soundproof offices with solid doors" and write "their reports on silent keyboards", all of them thin since "Veals couldn't stand fatness" (WID 13). Fearing an information leakage, conversations are limited to the minimum and John's life on the whole seems to be devoid of warmth. He has "no hobbies and no interests outside work" (WID 16) and "regards social life as a waste of time" (WID 143). Driven by the urge to make as much profit as possible, Veals holds the view that "income tax is voluntary" (WID 16). He is unwilling to make any commitments "until he was sure that his motives were pure – driven in other words only by an unemotional and rigorous assessment of profitability" (WID 19). The reference to 'pure motives' in connection with blunt cost-effectiveness considerations already carries a sarcastic undertone and leaves us with the uneasy feeling that two fundamentally different levels have been blended: namely the sphere of morality and the sphere of profit. The same happens at the end of the novel. The arc of suspense is built towards "the greatest financial coup of his life", which makes him feel a "sense of satisfaction – of having fulfilled the purpose of his life" (WID 434-435). People have been asking for centuries: What is the purpose of my life? 'To make money' seems to be a very cynical answer. As Shaw notes, Faulks offers us "representations of a two-world capital, jointly populated by those who occupy and those who service city space" (Shaw 2014: 45).

Apparently, everything is justified for the protagonist as long as it is successful and does not bring him into open conflict with the law. Morality or the repercussions of his actions on a larger scale do not seem to be of interest in his system of thinking. *A Week in December* exemplifies this stance through quite drastic examples related to the world economic crisis starting in 2007. Veals' business stands for a parallel world of greed and maximum utility:

> High Level's reputation would suffer when it emerged that they had made a killing from the demise of a bank; the plight of the pensioners in particular would keep the story in the newspapers for weeks. [...I]n his own world his reputation for skill and ruthlessness would be enhanced. If he took care to ensure that the majority of the trading was conducted in non-regulated instruments, outside the jurisdiction of the Financial Services Authority, there wasn't much they could do to stop him (WID 52).

The world of hedge funds and high finance is a Hobbesian setting, dominated by "greed and fear" (WID 92), in which even security mechanisms are ironically turned into gambling instruments. *Homo homini lupus est. Homo homini lepus est.* The financial world is represented as guided by basic and selfish instincts, with money as the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ultimate ruling principle that people worship. Veals' company *High Level Capital* specialises in trading in debt and other fields that are characterised by low levels of regulation. This business generates high revenues but at the detriment of those who have the least means to protect their livelihood: pensioners, small house-owners and developing countries.

> If ARB [the Allied Royal Bank] suddenly found itself short of money it would look for quick savings. It couldn't hammer its pensioners or its UK mortgage holders because that would cause a riot; but who would care about a few Third World farmers? If ARB decided to suspend its credit lines to distributors, exporters and shippers, then the producers of cocoa, coffee and so on would find the value of their crops plunge – they would wither in the field; but by contrast the price of what they had presold, of what was already in the warehouse, would rocket – and the profit from that could go to John Veals. [...] He had suddenly remembered what fun trading could be (WID 177).

There are numerous passages like this, which point to the difference between 'legal' and 'moral'. Even though Veals seems to act in accordance with the law, his trade is presented as morally dubious and at times even reprobate. Nonetheless, the "distinction between 'legal' and 'ethical' was of no concern to him – or to anyone he'd ever met" (WID 98-99).

Apart from this lack of religious or humanist values, the protagonist's lack of joy and humour is conspicuous. The only jokes he makes are rather cynical in content, and the circumstances in which he uses them cause the laughter to stick in your throat. At one point his wife Vanessa deplores her husband's complete lack of emotion, confessing to a friend: "'I could forget the lack of fun, [...] or his dread of parties or holidays or romance, I could forget everything if I just once see him laugh'" (WID 143). This lack of humour is a trait often associated with religious fundamentalisms. It is intriguing in which ways *A Week in December* draws parallels between followers of Islamic fundamentalist beliefs and worshippers of the neoliberal economic order, hence indicating the fundamentalist potential of the latter. Veals and his circle are described in terms that could also be used to characterise religious fanatics. They inhabit a "semi-virtual world", detached from the life of average citizens, "take precautions to minimise the possibility of any contact with reality" and are "convinced they needed nothing and nobody beyond their own fantastic circuitry" (WID 146 and 147). Their single-mindedness is even outlined in religious terms:

> They could have no qualms about the effects of what they did; no cares for the collateral impact [...] And in addition to this, there must be a passionate faith: they had to believe that theirs was the true system and that earlier beliefs had been heretical. Where there were doubts, they had to be excised; where there were qualifications, they needed to be cauterised. A breed of fanatic was born [...] (WID 146).

This economic system is described as a closed community of insiders: a community that demands blind allegiance and does not tolerate a closer examination of existing rules, just as the group of jihadists Hassan turns to. Beyond this simile, the novel also addresses the point of psychological profile and changing societal framework conditions with respect to both forms of fundamentalism:

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> What intrigued Vanessa about John was how easily he had fitted into the required psychological profile. [...] his school performance was unremarkable and his family had neither 'spoiled' nor bullied him. There were no 'formative' incidents that made him set his face against the world, no early loss or trauma for which he needed to compensate. [...] What there was, in her view, was a simple and unmotivated collision of two things: the way these new financiers were by nature, and the way the world, for the first time ever, had indulged them. [...T]he key was that society as a whole in London and New York had so lost its bearings that it was prepared to believe, with these analysts, that cause and effect could be uncoupled. To her, this social change, the result of decades of assault on long-accepted norms, was far more interesting than the quasi-autistic intellects of the people, like John, who worked in the new finance (WID 147-148).

Like Hassan's development, John's steering towards fundamentalist positions cannot be explained by family background or the like. But whereas Hassan's beliefs are still changing and reshaping in his coming of age process, the reader neither gets an explanation for the context which shaped Veals' ideas and motives nor any indication that the character might reconsider his choices.

In this respect, *A Week in December* leaves the reader with no easy answers concerning the reasons for fundamentalist beliefs. Whereas a teenage search for belonging and identity seems to be a plausible driving force in Hassan's case, which makes him a very life-like character with whom readers may be able to empathise, Veals' motives are not told. His character remains quite ungraspable and opaque, which generates less sympathy for his position. Since every emotion (of fear, anger or enjoyment) is always directed at trade-related matters, the figure of John Veals remains a stranger to us and fails to trigger empathy. His deliberations and thoughts are as matter-of-fact as his whole business. This emotional void is also reflected on the level of language, which simultaneously makes the character alien to the reader. The long, detailed passages about business environment and economic dynamics are very well-researched. But at the same time, they might have a distancing effect on many readers of the novel, for whom the specialised terminology may not be easy to comprehend without much economic background-knowledge.

The narrator, furthermore, enhances this distancing effect. He is hardly visible in some scenes and implies ethical judgments by presenting specific characters in a negative light in other scenes. It is not easy to determine if the narrator can be regarded as rather overt or covert. On the one hand, he is very present, since he frequently comments on the characters and actions not in a neutral, but a highly ironic tone. On the other hand, he does not comment on the storytelling itself and remains rather hidden. The reader gets to know nothing about his personality or motivation to tell the story. He remains sexually indeterminate and does not acknowledge any addressees, although he gives a clearly addressee-oriented exposition, in which he provides the most important aspects of the characters' past and present. The narrator gains visibility through recurrent descriptive passages and shorter flashbacks, but he mostly concentrates on the perceptions of the experiencing focaliser, which creates an illusion of immediacy. Moreover, he lets the story events unfold in a natural tempo and order and does not interfere in the sequence of events. The characters of John

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Veals and Ralph Tranter, however, are examples where the narrator becomes visible through the use of irony.

Noticeably, the figure of John Veals not only constitutes an emblem of the dark sides of 'economic fundamentalism' but also functions as a kind of commentator, who lectures about his tricks of the trade. Therewith, he informs the readers of nexuses they might not know. What is disturbing is the fact that he does not only fail to pay attention to the fatal consequences of his deeds, but that he is beyond shame, as if everything was just a game that rouses your ambitions, without having any effect on the real world. Just like the people whose pain is exploited in the reality TV show *It's Madness* his son Finbar is addicted to, and Jenni Fortune, who prefers to escape to the surreal world of her virtual reality game *Parallax*, Veals lives in a world where normal rules are suspended. All of these worlds promise seemingly boundless possibilities but are characterised by artificiality, soullessness and a disconnection from reality. The difference, however, between *Parallax* and the world of finance is that actions performed in a computer game do not hurt anyone in reality. Veals, on the contrary, acts as if he was playing a computer game in spite of the disastrous consequences his actions have for many people worldwide.

> ['] This is Fantasy Finance. It wasn't enough to have poor people borrowing money they couldn't repay to buy houses they couldn't afford. By writing credit default swaps, the banks could leverage the real market many times over. That's why the overall losses are going to be so much greater than the losses on the actual mortgage loans they reference. And of course that's how the hedgies could make a killing on the losses.' Wetherby had turned white; tiny bubbles of sweat stood in a line on his freshly shaved upper lip. Veals smiled inwardly when he noticed: this was the younger man's way of showing shame. [...] 'But what about the investors in all this?' 'Oh, for Christ's sake, Simon.' Veals was beginning to tire of this interview. 'The bank doesn't give a fuck about the investors. [...] They do it because they can. They do it because the government encouraged it. They do it [...] because they're a bunch of cunts.' (WID 184 and 186).

Feelings of guilt are something Veals does not seem to know or only associates with weakness and a lack of experience. Turning to the surrogate God of money, he neither is interested in religion nor ethnicity or other markers of identity and belonging.

> In any case, he was allergic to anything that smacked of the religious. His family was Jewish, but he had no interest in their God or their traditions; in fact he was himself consistently anti-Semitic in what he presumably imagined was an inoffensive way, talking feely of 'Hooray Hymnies' Jews who in his view tried to ingratiate themselves with upper-class Gentiles – or referring to his chief trader as O'Bagel or O'Shlo [...] (WID 377-378).

As has been described above, the two main plots build up tension until the climactic resolution of the question whether Hassan al-Rashid carries out a terrorist attack and John Veals succeeds in his great financial coup. Surprisingly, the final resolution is rather unspectacular and anticlimactic. As outlined in the preceding paragraphs, Hassan's story ends with an epiphany[121] and his decision to refrain from carrying out the terrorist attack. Veals, in contrast, succeeds with his project, but the consequences for

121 An epiphany is described by Jahn as a "moment of intense insight, usually occasioned by the perception of a more or less ordinary object or event" (Jahn 2005: N3.3.10).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

himself are left open to debate. Shaw, who concentrates in her analysis on the depiction of London and the financial crisis, notes that

> Faulks began writing A Week in December with a vision that it would be a 'modern Dickensian novel' interrogating notions of social injustice and offering political commentary through a cast of characters from markedly different areas of London. […] *A Week in December* articulates a concern with growing levels of inequality and extremes of good and bad fortune in the contemporary capital. […] Drawing many parallels with Victorian London as a place where characters go to 'make their fortunes', Faulks's novel interrogates the state of 'the London dream' in the new millennium (Shaw 2014: 48).

I would argue that the novel succeeds in voicing social concerns by giving the reader a glimpse into the very diverse realities and problems citizens of 21st century London have to face. It becomes evident that their hopes and dreams are very diverse, but that many of them are united by the disappointment of their 'London dreams'.

5.1.3) Directing the sympathy of the reader

The negative depiction of Western economic libertarianism and loss of solidarity and community, of which Veals seems to be the epitome, is underlined and reinforced by the figure of the narrator. The heterodiegetic narrator is quite ironic and his laconic and sarcastic tone can be perceived throughout the novel. This is especially visible in passages that feature explicit characterisations, such as the following:

> Veals was not interested in women. He did the deed, as they called it, to stop his colleagues from gossiping and because he thought it might be good, in some undefined way, for his health. His heart was never in it. [...] Vanessa Whiteway was different. She was good-looking enough, Veals thought, that other men would envy and respect him [...] Veals calculated that even if in cash terms she would be expensive to run, the maintenance of Vanessa would in other ways be low: she wouldn't sap his energy [...] that it would take his mind off making money (WID 331-332).

The passage indicates that we are confronted with a judgmental narratorial voice. Many characterisations are rather negative, in some cases even quite merciless. The narrator interferes with his characters, comments on their actions and also implicitly judges them by his sarcasm, as in the following insertion, used to describe the literary critic Tranter:

> There was a time when the sharpest young newcomer had been one RT, but now this youngster was making him look old hat – or *vieux chapeau* as he would doubtless have put it (Tranter didn't speak French and thought it affected to use phrases from another language. '*Nostalgie de la boue,* my aunt Fanny,' as he'd told the readers of *The Toad*) (WID 124).

Comments like this have a comic effect, serve to caricature certain characters and stand in contrast to these characters' self-perception, which is evidently based on their specific knowledge, norms and values. In this respect, the novel takes the fundamental difference between what is 'plausible' or 'rational' and what is 'just' or 'ethical' to the centre stage. Since all characters act in psychologically plausible ways according

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

to their principles of rationality many decisions are comprehensible but still remain morally debatable.

Since the narrator persona remains oblique to the reader, we do not know anything about his psychological disposition or knowledge. Considering the fact that there do not seem to be major omissions in the plot-lines, and the narrator is omniscient without emotional involvement in the story, we could conclude that the narrator possesses an all-encompassing insight into characters and events, shares this knowledge with us without major restrictions, and possesses no obvious reasons to be biased or deliver unreliable information. However, as the above-cited characterisation of John Veals demonstrates, the high degree of sarcasm has a distancing effect, which does suggest a resonance of specific norms and values. In this case, the presentation of a chain of thought, which must strike the reader as weird or even bizarre, as totally reasonable and self-evident, directs attention to the values reflected in Veals' attitude. First, we laugh, and then we start questioning. By means of an ironic tinge, the narrator seems to distance himself ideologically from the stances he presents. Nonetheless, this tone also connotes a certain kind of empathy towards his characters. As long as one is able to smirk about the story, shock or disgust about the characters' deeds or attitudes fail to materialise.

Many of the ambiguities of the text result from the difficulty to determine clearly whether the novel can be regarded as an example of zero-focalisation or variable focalisation. The fact that the narrator gives the reader an insight into the thoughts and feelings of twelve different focalisers (six of whom are central characters) creates an illusion of omniscience (or zero-focalisation). However, when more than one of these focalisers is present in a scene, he always just chooses one perspective from which the scene is described with all its inherent limitations and predispositions. Furthermore, we get parentheses with flashbacks that illuminate the conditions of a present action, but there is no indication of knowledge about the future or other events that are not known to the respective focal character.

Additionally, there is often confusion about the allocation of perception to a figure (internal focalisation) or the narrator (external focalisation). Especially the use of personalised vocabulary indicates that decisive passages in which strong emotions and important inner conflicts are presented tend towards figural perception. This is, for instance, the case when Hassan's inner struggle concerning the planned attack is narrated: "He couldn't give up now. He couldn't stop. What he had to do was somehow to make the world hear – not the profane nonsense of rap and rock, not the garbage of *kafir* phone calls, but the truth and beauty of another voice […]" (WID 534). The sentence uses the third person pronoun, but works almost like a stream of consciousness, reflecting Hassan's ideological stance and showing also in the choice of words ("profane nonsense", "*kafir* calls") what passes through the protagonist's mind at that moment.

However, concerning the presentation of John Veals, we can sense a stronger tendency towards a narratorial perspective. According to Schmid (2010: 101-104), five dimensions are essential for determining whether a passage is predominantly figural or narratorial in perspective, as outlined in the previous chapters (see chapter 4.5.1):

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

the perceptual point of view, ideological perspective, spatial perspective, temporal perspective and linguistic point of view. All dimensions can concur to a 'compact' point of view or may diverge. *A Week in December* features many passages with a distributive perspective or diffuse point of view. Frequently, we conclude that a passage can be considered externally focalised. Yet, the question of ideological perspective cannot be answered clearly in those passages in which the dimension of language reflects a figural perspective. This is due to the fact that the ironic tone the narrator mostly adopts is so similar to the sarcastic stance of characters like Tranter and Veals. At the dinner-party, for example, Veals' mood is described as follows: "But why the fuck would Lance Topping invite such a grimy little hack? Was Lance trying to wind him up? As if this was not enough to spoil his dinner, there was the further irritation of the Russian bimbo" (WID 520). The disdainful and vulgar vocabulary clearly indicates Veals' perspective. But what about the sentence starting with the ironical comment "As if this was not enough to spoil his dinner…"? It could simply reflect Veals' disrespect for everyone or everything that does not suit him, or it may be a comment by the narrator, who uses Veals' vocabulary to mock his contemptuous stance. The irony might be a means to hint at the distortion of Veals' perspective.

Particularly the extended use of free indirect discourse creates incidents of text interference (Schmid) in which oppositions between the narrator's texts and a character's text are partially neutralised and different parameters are difficult to clearly assign to either a character's or a narrator's text.[122] Such hybrid forms may serve an appellative function, since they encourage the reader to reflect on the similarities and differences between the norms and values of narrator and focaliser. Whereas the stylistic device of internal focalisation seems to create an empathetic view on Hassan, it apparently provokes an ironic stance towards John Veals. This distancing effect is intensified by the fact that his thoughts – contrary to Hassan's – never touch any personal or emotional topics. Whereas the boy is always referred to by his first name, the narrator mostly refers to John Veals by his last name, or at least his full name. There is no informal mention, which might denote a little intimacy. The only other character to which this applies is 'Tranter', who is also described in predominantly negative ways.

Relating to the concepts outlined in the opening chapters, it becomes clear that the frontlines in *A Week in December* do not run between different 'civilisations', as Huntington claims, but between different norms within one civilisation. The conflict emerges between two world pictures, one of which emphasises the necessity of moral values (bound to religious beliefs but also to humanist values), and another approach to life which disregards ethical considerations. The first world picture is embodied in Hassan al-Rashid and his family, the second epitomised by John Veals and his family. The first embodies Muslim piety, humanist beliefs and family ties; the second atheism, an image of humanity based on neoliberal cost-effectiveness considerations and the fragmentation of the family and other social frameworks.

122 For more information on the interference of characters' text and narrator's text, structure, opposition and the neutralisation of opposition see Schmid (2010: 137-170).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

This antagonism is not presented as a clash of different cultural or religious identities, but of individuals who have found different sources to derive their aims and values from. What we are presented with is a clash of 'interests', not of identities, and there are moral figures and unscrupulous characters in every group. Nevertheless, *A Week in December* tends to stress the downturns of Western modernity such as the fragmentation of the family, increasing economic inequality and alienation. These developments nurture political apathy and the retreat of average citizens into the private realm, as well as an increase in subcultures that feed on the disorientation of the individual. The novel does not blame the realm of 'modern' culture for these side effects, but the dynamics of capitalist modernisation, which seem to dominate all walks of life – from development policies to the entertainment industry. By addressing the attraction of jihadism as an identity marker beyond cultural differences and an overarching framework of reference and all-encompassing value system, the novel also squints towards the problematic concurrence of 'structural globalisation and cultural fragmentation', outlined by Tibi. *Husam Nar* in Faulks' novel tries to fill this vacuum.

As we are going to see in the next chapters, novels set in zones of war and conflict often present 'goal conflicts', or various economic, political and social reasons as catalysts for the eruption of fundamentalist violence. In *A Week in December*, however, these goal conflicts are absent from the direct motivation of the young protagonist. Hassan's turn to a radical Muslim group is triggered by a search for identity, even though the society Faulks describes is one full of economic and social inequalities and fractures.

The two extremes shown in *A Week in December* are in line with the persistent stereotypes about 'Westerners' or 'Muslims', as outlined by the Pew Global Attitude Survey. Many Western characters are described as greedy, immoral, selfish and arrogant, whereas the Islamic fundamentalist figures are portrayed as predominantly fanatical and violent. Nevertheless, these images are counteracted by very positive characters. What brings particularly Shahla's and Knocker's points of criticism nearer to the reader is their balance and empathy for both sides. Shahla is presented as a very moral character who does not reject religion just because it is easier to live without its constraints. She has really set her wits to Islam and its role in our globalised society and has decided for herself that Hassan's idealist Muslim society is an illusion one has to bid goodbye to. Thereby, she occupies a middle ground between realist and idealist notions of religion and society. She argues:

> 'I know how much it hurts [...] But I'm sure there is a future for true Islam, but in a quiet, religious way. Modernization will come. People will have more choice and will live more individual lives and that will secularise them. They can still be devout in private, but they'll live their lives in smaller units. Fragmented. Atomised. [...] There's nothing grand about the modern world, is there? "Consumer choice"' (WID 372).

The picture she draws reflects the mentioned trend in Western European countries towards societies which are spiritual but predominantly 'unchurched'. Her reaction to this prognosis simultaneously reflects weltschmerz about the banality and fragmentation of a world in which everything seems to be reduced to 'consumer choice', and a relief about the positive rights of intellectual and personal freedom.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Striking to me is the fact that *A Week in December* features such a strong focus on moral issues. Jihadism is clearly attacked as a brutal and futile strategy: a few exploit others either less educated or searching for identity and belonging for their own political goals. Nevertheless, the criticism of 'Western liberalism' is the most essential to the novel. Islamic fundamentalism is but one aberration stemming from the fragmentation of a hedonist and materialist society, which can only deliver vicarious satisfaction but cannot still people's longing for fullness.

At its core the novel seems to hint at the conclusion that man, in fact, might not be able to live happily without some kind of belief in a higher force. Faulks' depiction of TV shows, virtual reality games or drug abuse reflect the characters' desperate search for a transcendent reality. Even Farooq or Shahla, who adopt a very moderate and tolerant religious stance that has much in common with general humanist values, gain their stable personality and inner strength from belief. Stating his respect for Islam, the author himself explains in an article that their "kindness and good citizenship spring not just from being naturally good eggs but from their devotion to the Koran" (Faulks 24.08.2009). Charles Taylor's seminal study *A Secular Age* emanates from the assumption that human nature yearns for fullness "to which we orient ourselves morally or spiritually" (Taylor 2007: 6). This longing seems to be inherent to human nature. While for believers 'fullness' is inextricably linked to God, unbelievers strive to find it within, in an autonomous human morality and rationality. This struggle for a 'sense in life', as one could say more simplistically, grants orientation but can also have negative effects

> where we experience above all a distance, an absence, an exile, a seemingly irremediable incapacity ever to reach this place; an absence of power; a confusion, or worse, the condition often described in the tradition as melancholy […]. What is terrible in this latter condition is that we lose a sense of where the place of fullness is, even of what fullness could consist in; we feel we've forgotten what it would look like, or cannot believe in it any more (Taylor 2007: 6).

This seems to me like a pretty exact description of the state of society outlined by *A Week in December.* The characters search for a sense of fullness by various means, but most of them fail. "A certain awe still surrounds reason as a critical power, capable of liberating us from illusion and blind forces or instinct, as well as the phantasies bred of our fear and narrowness and pusillanimity", Taylor (2007: 9) notes and adds: "The nearest thing to fullness lies in this power of reason, and it is entirely ours, developed if it is through our own, often heroic action" (ibid.). The character of John Veals in Faulks' novel, however, seems to be the living proof that reason and rationality do not necessarily liberate. Veals ironically perceives his coup to be heroic and thinks he has achieved 'fullness' or the purpose of his life. However, the novel does not invite us to share this view but to feel sorry for the emptiness of his existence and incomprehension concerning his narrow-mindedness and unscrupulousness.

At least with respect to Western economic libertarianism, the tenor of the novel rather seems to support the criticism made by different religious fundamentalisms that "the evidence of modern secular society demonstrates that freedom from constraint is not true liberty, but rather libertarianism and license to pursue self-interest

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

regardless of the cost to others" (Hill 1986: 74-78, cited in Zeidan 2003: 121). Without some higher spiritual force that functions as a societal corrective, it seems to be difficult for human beings to develop an innate morality and suppress their greed and ambitions in favour of humanist values.

In a way Gabriel's schizophrenic brother is as clear-minded or deluded as any other character in Faulks' work. His schizophrenia is described in nearly religious terms: "Adam saw himself as the leader of Wakely, its chosen and most senior inhabitant. With his beard and shaggy hair, he might have been a prophet" (WID 524). Just like Hassan, he believes in an ominous threatening 'God' or power that will punish 'infidels'. "'It's better to shed blood than not to believe,' he said. 'You have your chances to believe. You make the choice. And you choose not to...' Adam's fingers made a gesture of rising flames" (WID 137). The characters in *A Week in December* follow many different beliefs that assume their own fundamentalist shapes. They all live in their own niches, searching for their place in alternative realities. However, all of these creeds are unmasked and exposed as hollow, destructive and delusional.

> Veals went out into the main meeting room of the office and looked down at the city of London below him. Worlds of which he knew nothing were contained within the darkened streets, where febrile realities competed for attention: YourPlace, Parallax and Husam Nar; True Life, Stargazer and Dream Team...The words of Axia and the Disaster-Maker, as well as those of the Prophet and Lisa on *It's Madness*, might ring disembodied in the ears of millions. What John Veals saw was buildings only, silhouettes on a river, units of economic function (WID 547).

The picture Faulks draws is one of emptiness and nihilism, leaving us with a cold world that is only occasionally lit up by the warmth and humanism embodied in characters like Farooq al-Rashid or Gabriel Northwood.

5.1.4) *A Week in December* in the light of ethical criticism and 'literature as cultural ecology': the power of literature to change our perspective

As I am going to explore in the next chapters, many authors of this literary corpus – including Faulks – regard literature as something which can give us a glimpse of the humanism and warmth that human beings yearn for. As outlined in the chapter on ethical criticism, Faulks believes in the power of fictional literature to make people understand other worldviews, contexts and correlations they may not be accustomed to. Furthermore, he underlines his responsibility towards society as a writer and his power to make his readers contemplate topics they might not have thought through without his books. In my interview with him, he spoke about his wish to rouse more indignation about what happened during the world financial crisis, as already outlined in chapter 4.5.3. With *A Week in December* he wanted to raise more awareness and deliver people from the restraint of an inner blockade and the inaction caused by problems which seem to be too alien, complex or frightening.

Thus, the author as well as the characters in the novel pick up several potential effects of fictional literature. First, as Faulks underlines, novels may educate, rouse

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

awareness and cause strong emotions, potentially leading to actions and societal change. Secondly, as his character Jenni Fortune tells us, novels have the power to grant us momentary relief from our sorrows by allowing us to escape reality. And thirdly, they can also open our eyes for the plight of others and enable us to see things from the perspective of people we do not have any contact with in real life. This is something Faulks' protagonist Gabriel Northwood tries to teach Jenni Fortune:

> 'Books explain the real world. They bring you close to it in a way you could never manage in the course of the day. [...] People never explain to you exactly what they think and feel and how their thoughts and feelings work, do they? They don't have time. Or the right words. But that's what books do. [...] Of my total understanding of human beings, which is perhaps not very great ... I'd say half of it is from just guessing that other people must feel much the same as I would in their place. But of the other half, ninety per cent of it has come from reading books. Less than ten per cent from reality – from watching and talking and listening – from living' (WID 278-279).

This tenor is not only in line with Faulks' above-cited commentary on the character of Hassan but also with Martha Nussbaum's belief in the potential of novels to rouse empathy. This empathy is generated or prevented by skilful narrative techniques – from characterisation via relationships of contrast and correspondence to the employment of ironic narratorial comments which achieve a distancing effect. The content and tenor of the novel is underlined and intensified by the narrative pattern, the use of vocabulary and "the sense of life that animates the text as a whole" (Nussbaum 1998: 226). Whereas authors such as Yasmina Khadra (as we are going to see in the next chapters) trigger the sympathy of the reader by describing horrible events and feelings in unsparing detail, Faulks directs the sympathy of his readers by the total absence of any emotion on the part of some characters. Thus, the evocation of emotion, which Nussbaum sees as a core function of literature that forces the reader to relive and thus understand other points of view, is employed by Faulks in a different but just as effective way. As has been outlined in the previous paragraphs, the employment of irony and the uses of text interference between narrator's and characters' perspectives suggest certain value judgments, which gives us the feeling that the text as a whole contains "an implied consciousness" (Nussbaum 1992: 32).

Interestingly, an author does not necessarily intend this kind of implied consciousness that generates a moral undertone. Faulks, for instance, claims that his story was supposed to reflect only the points of view, feelings and thoughts of the different characters without any interference by a judgmental narrator persona:

> I don't really think of there being a narrator in *A Week in December*. [...] I would like the narrative voice to be neutral, but merely expressing the story through the feelings and the situation of each character. Of course, this is difficult to do. You may well sense that I am more sympathetic to Gabriel, the lawyer, than I am to Veals, the hedge-fund manager. And I think, a little bit of leaking is okay. But by and large, I tried to see each scene wholeheartedly from the perspective of the character I am talking about (Interview with Sebastian Faulks 14.10.2012).

The statement demonstrates that an author's view of his own work is a valid starting point for an interpretation but only reflects *one* possible way of interpreting a work of

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

fiction. A novel may always also include many facets unconsciously employed by an author.

Moreover, Faulks' intention reflects a strong focus on 'point of view', which Nussbaum perceives as central element for the creation of empathy. The frequent shift between different perspectives and the quite direct representation of consciousness create a high degree of immediacy and an enhanced reality-effect, which draws us into the world of the characters. Concerning Nussbaum's question which parts of our personality *A Week in December* involves "Intellect alone? Or also emotions, imagination, perception, desire?" (Nussbaum 1992: 33), the answer depends on the character we look at. As has been outlined above, the novel features a large number of focalisers who all give us an insight into their perspective. However, not all of these perspectives also prompt our feelings. Whereas most characters may gain our sympathy by exposing their feelings, which makes them human and likeable, Veals' perspective is completely matter-of-fact and unemotional, which prevents the reader from bonding with this character and creates a distancing effect. Furthermore, considerable doubts are raised about the validity of his beliefs. As described in the chapter on ethical criticism, Nussbaum is interested in the kind of knowledge and beliefs represented in novels and the question whether these values are presented as universal or rather limited. On the one hand, Veals and his colleagues perceive their rationale to be a universal principle with which they can rule nearly every society. But on the other hand, the novel makes it clear that this opinion is an epitome of a distorted worldview and that the basis of this belief is pure greed and ruthlessness. These driving factors are called into question through precise explanations of economic circumstances with the ultimate purpose to instruct the reader.

Faulks agrees with Nussbaum's view that novels tell us a lot about human life and about how to live. Transferred to the world of *A Week in December* this means:

> What *A Week in December* tells us about how to live is that you cannot live in a virtual world. You have to make the effort to relate to other people in a real way. It tells us that you can't retreat from reality by using skunk or by just dealing in imaginary financial instruments – because that way leads to disaster. You have to engage with other people face to face in a real way. Sometimes this is painful, difficult and frequently boring, but it's the only way that human beings have a future. That doesn't mean that I'm against using email or do not watch television. We all do. But – it's not a substitute for life (Interview with Sebastian Faulks 14.10.2012).

The novel addresses our illusions and points to our societal responsibilities. Furthermore, it also hints at the responsibility of intellectuals to use their influence in a good way. Ralph Tranter, the nihilistic and cynical critic who takes a perverse delight in excoriating other writers and witnessing their failures and downfall, is the emblem of a group of public figures who neither meet their responsibility nor recognise their delusion.

Concerning Zapf's approach to literature as cultural ecology, *A Week in December* reflects the belief in the complexity of all systems and questions "the modernist ideology of the autonomous, entirely self-constituting subject" (Zapf 2007: 155). Many of the characters in the novel believe that they can be alone and escape reality by turning

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

their backs on the real world and other people. They immerse themselves in reality TV, computer games and drugs or refuse to value society in their drive for profit. All of these characters, however, are not presented as leading happy, healthy and fulfilled lives. They believe to be autonomous but they are not. First, their actions have repercussions for others, and second, they cannot experience joy and fulfilment without love, friendship and family ties. All individuals depend on larger economic, cultural and societal frameworks – no matter how defiantly they try to ignore this fact. The novel also shows how the downturns and dysfunctional aspects of some individuals in this system can have disastrous consequences for the functioning of society as a whole. As has been outlined in the chapter on ethical criticism, Faulks' work is a contestation of what is often seen as 'progress' by pointing to the essentialist facets of this progress orientation. About fundamentalism and the fundamentalist requirement of modern finance, Faulks states:

> '[F]undamentalist' does not equal 'bad', or 'aggressive', or 'wrong'. It just means 'fundamentalist'. [...] The fundamental requirement of modern finance is that there is only one thing that counts and that is profit. There are no contingent thoughts. You exist in a world of profit and loss, which is in a bubble apart from the rest of society. And that is the fundamental requirement of that world. If you believe that what you do is connected to other parts of society and that you have a responsibility for other parts of society, then you are not really going to be able to function in that world (Interview with Sebastian Faulks 14.10.2012).

As a 'cultural-critical metadiscourse' the novel hints at the contradictions inherent to a system of power which dominates us – in this case economic libertarianism. The economic system presented in Faulks' novel leads to many problems described by Zapf, such as "traumatizing forms of negating individuality, [...] chronic states of self-alienation, failed communication and paralyzed vitality" (Zapf 2007: 155). The society Faulks describes is paralysed in a 'Biedermeier-like' state of 'death-in-life', characterised by the turning away from political problems and a retreat of the individual into the distractions of the private sphere.

In terms of an 'imaginative counter-discourse' the novel also stages the marginalised elements (like communal values, family ties or friendship) which are repressed by the dominant system but desperately needed. Memorable in this respect is the fact that the characters themselves are neither socially, nor culturally or economically disadvantaged. This, however, does not grant them the status of autonomous individuals because they marginalise themselves! They enjoy positive preconditions to lead conscious and self-determined lives and positively influence society, but they refuse to use their potential and instead plunge into disaster with their eyes open. Thus, the majority is described as strangely shifted to the margins, since it does not realise its actual power and potential to fight their marginalisation.

It remains vague to which degree *A Week in December* also functions as 'reintegrative interdiscourse'. On the one hand, Zapf claims that "bringing together the culturally separated spheres or discourses which, even if it results in failure and catastrophe on the level of action, on a symbolic level often appears as a process or moment of regeneration and the regaining of creativity" (Zapf 2007: 159). This symbolic level is

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

clearly achieved by the structure of the novel, which at the end unites most characters in one geographical location. The final dinner party connects the lives of nearly all focalisers, after their plotlines have been followed individually and isolated from each other. In the end, these characters meet, even if this does not mean that conflicts are resolved or differences settled. On the other hand, the great societal problems described by Faulks persist and even seem to triumph, when Veals' great coup succeeds – at the cost of the people who cannot defend themselves, such as pensioners and people in developing countries. There is no indication of world-shaking changes. Hope, however, lies in the small details and individual stories.

In recent years since the publication of Faulks' novel people in many countries have begun a process the author called for with his novels and public statement. People all over the world start to awake from their states of silent acceptance and disinterest and unify for a common aim. As has been outlined, protest groups like the 'Occupy' movement have recently shown that also many people who live in wealthy countries and benefit from the global capitalist system start to question its sustainability and moral justification. This process of awakening, however, is only indicated by the end of Faulks' novel. For both, Hassan and John, the story ends with laughter. In Hassan's case his breaking into laughter signifies that he realises the futility of the plans he does not really want to carry out. He reconciles with his friend Shahla and refrains from carrying out the attack. The end implies a regeneration of love and family ties and a supposed end of his teenage search for identity. Furthermore, the slowly developing relationship between Jenni Fortune and Gabriel Northwood indicates positive changes – away from virtual reality towards personal relationships. In Veals' case, however, the story is left open. We get an indication of a shadow of doubt but his self-righteousness and sense of power do not seem to be shaken. His final laughter is not one of joy or relief but one of megalomania, verging on insanity:

> Millions around the globe would lose their jobs; other millions would go without food, or at least see their modest lives stripped of comfort. But I have mastered this world, thought John Veals, passing his hand over his newly shaved chin. To me there is no mystery, no nuance and no complication; I am a man alive to the spirit of his time, the one who hears the whispers on the wind. A rare surge of feeling, of something like vindication, came from the pit of his belly and spread out till it sang in his veins. As he stood with his hands in his pockets, staring out over the sleeping city, over its darkened wheels and spires and domes, Veals laughed (WID 548).

A Week in December shows that Faulks is a master of displaying and questioning different concepts of reality. What is reality and why does it seem to be so unbearable that people strive to escape it by means of drugs, reality TV or virtual reality computer games? Did we arrive at a stage at which we prefer to construct new lives for ourselves in which we can be richer, more beautiful, successful and popular than we can ever be in reality, instead of trying to improve what we really are? Even though this world is fake and an illusion? 'Are we so devoid of substance that we have to worship juggernauts just to fill our emptiness and to calm down our self-doubts and fears?', Faulks seems to ask us with his novel. These false Gods assume various shapes in *A Week in December*: they come in the guise of capitalism, profit and consumerism,

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

popular culture with its shallow entertainment, drugs and hedonism, or the promise of spiritual cleansing through religious fundamentalist practices.

In the end they all turn out to be empty promises. The only thing that seems to give a little hope is love, family ties and the recollection of humanist values. These values might not bring wealth and power and often seem to contradict the fast pace of our times. But they also enable us to place the individual and their worth in the centre, again. Faulks invites us to engage with a broad range of perspectives and reminds us of the danger of retreating into 'parallel societies' of any kind. Both forms of fundamentalism might make the world seem less complex and overwhelming and create an illusion of mastery and orientation. But at the bottom this is a hollow promise, and fundamentalism seems psychologically plausible, but remains immoral.

5.2) … "there must be more to living than swallowing one old book": Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* as a declaration of love for the freedom of the individual

In Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* (BA), set in 1989 London, a young Pakistani college student finds himself torn between two opposed value systems and ways of life. Shahid Hasan explores the joys of the city's entertainment industry, which is presented as an emblem of hedonism and shallowness, characterised by drug abuse, nihilism, as well as sexual promiscuity and licentiousness. Deedee Osgood, his lecturer and lover with whom he is also connected through their love for music, arts, literature and intellectual joys, introduces him to this world. Simultaneously, Shahid makes friends with a circle of radical Muslims around the religious leader Riaz Al-Hussain, who tolerate no deviating opinions and religious views, but give him a feeling of belonging, security and moral sustenance instead. Squirming between the luring pleasures and freedoms Deedee's concept of life promises him and his Muslim friends' uncompromising and violent search for purity and righteousness, Shahid experiences a severe crisis of identity. The story thus not only contrasts the extreme poles of religious hatred and shallow hedonism, but it is also a novel of adolescence, closely linked to the topics of identity formation and belonging.

Kureishi is an author who does not hesitate to express his political opinions. He is interested in the socio-cultural background and the many antagonising forces such as class, race, ethnicity, gender or religion which have shaped England over the last few decades and thereby also the characters in his novels that are set in this country. The work at hand also reflects this interest. *The Black Album* is a narrative featuring internal focalisation in which Shahid Hasan is not only the protagonist but also the main focaliser and centre of perception. The story begins *in medias res*, inviting the reader into the world of a young college student who is unsure of his position in life in terms of class, religion and culture. The novel does not provide the reader with much detailed background information. However, nearly all information presented is of high significance.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

5.2.1) Fundamentalism as a bulwark against "drug-inspired debris"[123] and "banal fantasies"[124]?

The Black Album is set in London in the late 1980 s – a decade that started with the unexpected victory of the Conservatives led by Margaret Thatcher over the Labour government in 1979. The difficult economic situation in the 1970 s had been characterised by runaway inflation, high unemployment rates, international debts and the need to take out extra loans with the International Monetary Fund, which called for fiscal retrenchment. The Labour government had to take steps which led to nationwide strikes, a loss of support from the unions and finally a vote of no confidence against James Callaghan's Labour Party. The 1980 s were shaped by a political course which did not emphasise the European idea but the strength and leading position of Britain in the world. Thatcher relied on 'Victorian values' such as self-help, individualism, freedom, monetarist economic policies and a retreat of the government from the economy (cf. Maurer 2005: 466). She questioned the welfare state, strove to constrain the power of labour unions and wanted to reinforce Britain's former glory and strength, as demonstrated in the Falkland War in 1982. Widely known as 'iron lady', Thatcher managed to decrease inflation but was also harshly criticised for fostering greed and an economic climate in which only the 'fittest' were able to survive.

Furthermore, the 1980 s were a time of increasing tensions between white British citizens and immigrants from other countries of the British Commonwealth.[125] As Kim outlines, the 'New Right' did not challenge "the Victorian ethic of religious, racial, and sexual conformity" (Kim 2011: 56). Instead, it sought to strengthen governmental authority in order to establish its two central but simultaneously conflicting principles of "libertarian individualism and republican one nation-ism" (ebd.). Thatcher's 'one nation' concept had at its core the ideal of cultural and ethnic homogeneity. In this ideological system neither the influences of youth culture and marginal groups nor of the many ethnic minorities living in Britain seemed to have a place. One year before her election in 1979, Thatcher held a famous speech in which she invoked the danger that England by the end of the century "might be rather swamped by people with a different culture" (Thatcher 27.01.1978: n.p.) due to the large influx of immigrants from Pakistan and the new Commonwealth. In this early interview, she already outlined the principles that would influence Conservative policies for the next decade: "[I]f you want good race relations, you have got to allay people's fears on numbers [… and] have to hold out the prospect of an end to immigration" (Thatcher 27.01.1978: n.p.).[126] The 1980 s brought stricter immigration controls and a simultaneous empha-

123 BA 130

124 Ibid.

125 For an interesting introduction to the influence of post World War II-immigration on the construction of British national identity and British politics, see Doty (1996) and Messina (2001).

126 For a comprehensive compilation of more than 8000 statements and speeches by Margaret Thatcher, consult the history webpage of the Margaret Thatcher Foundation which offers a large online archive of documents, multimedia-material and secondary sources: http://www.margaretthatcher.org/.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

sis on personal responsibility: Every citizen was supposed to be able to prosper economically irrespective of ethnic and religious background or social class. This ideal, however, only proved to be true for a small minority. These policies resulted in racial tensions in many British cities, increasing divides between different social classes and an increasing gap between a prospering South and an increasingly impoverished North. For immigrants especially, the 1980 s in Britain were a period of great insecurity. They were subject to increasingly restrictive policies and suffered from a social climate geared to assimilation instead of an acceptance of cultural diversity:

> As the New Right citizenship discourse helped the government extend its coercive arm in a combat against the perceived threat of an emerging underclass, ethnic minorities became the major target of this offensive because they were stereotypically regarded as poor, potential troublemakers, and welfare beneficiaries. […] The 1981 British Nationality Act finally set the stage for the abandonment of Britain's imperial ties and identity in favor of an exclusionary notion of Britishness. Under this Act, only those who met the partiality rule could be British citizens […] In the 1988 Immigration Act, the Thatcher government went further to remove the family reunion right […] In the 1988 Education Reform Act, Thatcher firmly opposed positive action to aid integration or to encourage multicultural diversity. Emphasizing the importance of British history, standard English, and Christianity, this Act gave a warning that cultural pluralism was to be accommodated only within the boundary of Britishness. […] The New Right argued that erasing rather than recognizing difference brings better justice for minorities as well as majorities. Therefore, the New Right intentionally ignored the agony and desire of minorities for cultural survival. […] It thus hardly mentioned that inequality might have more to do with ethnicity and cultural difference than with individual ability in the free market (Kim 2011: 75).

This is the socio-political context of the novel through which Shahid Hasan guides the readers and gives them a glimpse of two diametrically opposed world-views. As I am going to explore in this chapter, the political situation of Britain in the 1980 s is not only used as a background for the story but is central to the whole novel.

'Shahid' (or 'Shaheed') is a word used according to some definitions as a Muslim term for 'martyr' (cf. Moore-Gilbert 2012: 189). The name of the protagonist, thus, already hints at the topic of Islamic fundamentalism. However, as I am going to outline in this chapter, this word-play is subverted by the content and the protagonist's final rejection of Islamic fundamentalist ideas. Shahid serves as a fixed internal focaliser. Thus, we see the world through his eyes and get next to no information about the thoughts of other characters. In this respect, it is important how Islamic fundamentalism as well as the Western way of life is filtered through his consciousness and conveyed to the reader. It is intriguing and will be further outlined in this chapter at a later stage that the Islamist leader Riaz Al-Hussain seems to be the most enigmatic character. This is partly attributable to the quality of the narrator. The voice established is a hetero-, extradiegetic narrator who is not very individualised and remains rather covert. He shows no signs of unreliability, such as information gaps or an emotional involvement in the plot, and he passes no explicit judgments on the characters' thoughts and actions. Thus, the narrator does not give the reader any more insight into the characters representing Islamic fundamentalism than the protagonist does. Humorous effects or criticism that may lead to a bias in the readers' sympathy are not created by means of biting narratorial comments, but are either implicitly evoked by

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

the ridiculousness of events themselves or by Shahid's oftentimes satirical musings. Apart from the large amount of quoted dialogues, *The Black Album* features an extended use of free indirect discourse, which gives the novel a high degree of subjectivity and immediacy. Crucial passages are mimetic rather than diegetic. And this subjectivity is restricted to the protagonist's point of view. Consequently, the lack of information about Riaz' whereabouts, thoughts, feelings, motives and aims is responsible for a likely lack of identification with and empathy for his position, as will be outlined further in this chapter. However, before focusing on the leader, I will briefly outline the depiction of the Muslim brothers in Kureishi's novel and the function the group performs for the protagonist.

At first sight, the Muslim brothers seem to perform a very positive task, caring for Shahid as well as for many other immigrants in the neighbourhood. They give people legal and religious advice and offer them friendship and a sort of familial community. This support and friendliness is something many immigrants, including the protagonist, do not receive from the majority society. The Muslim brothers are described as a backstop and a different kind of social security. At the same time, the group is depicted as fundamentalist in that it perceives liberalism as threatening, absolutises its beliefs, endeavours to rule private and public life with its norms and politicises all facets of life, including music and youth culture. Concerning the ideological and organisational characteristics of fundamentalism outlined by Almond/Sivan/Appleby, Riaz' circle shows signs of moral Manicheanism and a belief in its own inerrancy. It establishes behavioural requirements and a clear outward demarcation. However, the membership is not presented as very select, but looks like a conglomerate of people who are somewhat unsuccessful and lost in life since they are foreigners, socially disadvantaged or have had a hard time in their youth. Moreover, the organisation cannot really be called authoritarian: Even though Riaz' pre-eminence seems undisputed, there is no clear system of rules and regulations and no entity to punish breaches of the common moral code. Sometimes the leader even seems quite indifferent towards his followers, who are left to fulfil their tasks on their own. Especially towards the end of the novel, during an assault on Deedee Osgood's house, the group's indecision and lack of plan as well as the cowardice and weakness of its leader become apparent (cf. BA 266-268).

On the whole, a mimetic relationship between real political and religious formations and Kureishi's fictional exploration of the topic cannot be assumed. Kureishi at no point seems to aim at a realistic and detailed description of jihadist groups. None of the authors under discussion give elaborate political, religious or ideological analyses which indicate a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and an urge to educate the reader about these issues. Moreover, it is difficult to determine whether the novel presents Islamic fundamentalism as a cultural, religious, ideological or economic problem. In *The Black Album*, we can detect elements of all of these facets of the phenomenon even though the economic explanation is predominant. In general, the novel seems to underline the notion that the nation state has lost its former role as the principal source of identity. Similar to Faulks' protagonist, Hassan al-Rashid, Shahid is confused and feels a void, which the Western lifestyle and consumerism alone can-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

not fill. Kureishi's characters search for supposedly simple truths because they do not know where they belong, and religion promises to fill this gap. Both protagonists are young and still in the process of defining their identity, as will be outlined in subchapter 5.2.4.

A major difference to *A Week in December* is, however, Kureishi's emphasis on racial prejudice, the formation of subcultures and parallel societies and the fact that immigrants in Britain are often economically disadvantaged. The members of the Muslim circle described in *The Black Album* are without orientation and economic prospects and feel alien in Britain. The reason for their rejection of a Western lifestyle can neither be clearly attributed to a clash of interests nor a clash of identity. Socio-economic problems and the feeling of being excluded by the majority society seem to coalesce with processes of identity formation that have not been concluded at that point in time. The group members derive their values from a conglomerate of ideas – concrete references to religious sources or verses in the Koran are not made. In one scene in the middle of the novel, Shahid gives his interpretation of the reasons people might have for clinging to fundamentalist ideas. The passage is so telling because it refers to many points that have been outlined in the introductory chapters:

> All this believing wasn't so much a matter of truth or falsity, of what could be shown and what not, but of joining. He had noticed, during the days he'd walked around the area, that the races were divided. The black kids stuck with each other, the Pakistanis went to one another's houses, the Bengalis knew each other from way back, and the whites too. Even if there were no hostility between groups – and there was plenty, if only implicit; his mother, for instance, liked to make derogatory remarks about blacks, saying they were lazy, while middle-class whites she revered – there was little mixing. And would things change? Why should they? A few individuals would make the effort, but wasn't the world breaking up into political and religious tribes? The divisions were taken for granted, each to his own. But where did such divides lead to, if not to different kinds of civil war? More pressingly, if everyone was so hastily adhering to their own group, where did he belong? (BA 133-134).

The protagonist simultaneously mentions racial segregation and prejudices, cultural differences and stereotyping, which lead to group dynamics that foster a cold social climate, the forming of parallel societies and the need for every individual to define their identity by means of inclusion and exclusion. The Muslim brotherhood in the novel attempts to alleviate the downturns of the British economic and political system, and at first seems to grant support and a positive focal point for identification. However, the reader soon perceives striking differences between their claim and reality. The brothers' claims, which are presented as virtuous in many respects, are constantly opposed by their actual behaviour or undermined by the irony involved in the situations that are presented.

The leader of the Muslim brotherhood, Riaz Al-Hussain, is the character that remains most enigmatic to us. Riaz studies law and gives legal advice to poor and underprivileged people in his area. He seems to sincerely engage himself in reading religious sources, writes poetry and works a lot to improve the social situation in his neighbourhood. He is presented as a mixed character, featuring positive and negative attributes, but remains unfathomable to the reader. We do not get any insights into his consciousness. His motivations, emotions, thoughts and feelings remain hidden to us.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Despite his many positive actions, a darker undercurrent can be perceived concerning Riaz' demeanour, which is devoid of charity and humour and full of bitterness and contempt:

> Shahid had taken it for granted that his smile indicated humour, a love of humanity, patience. Yet if you looked closely, it was disdain. Riaz not only thought Brownlow was a fool, but thought him contemptible too. 'People must decide good and evil for themselves,' Brownlow said. Riaz laughed. 'Man is the last person I would trust to such a task!' (BA 98).

Despite or maybe because of this attitude Shahid admires him. He realises that 1980 s pop culture is full of self-appointed rebels, so that maybe virtue becomes the new way of swimming against the tide:

> Riaz, however, in an era of self-serving ambition and careers, had taken on a course and maintained his unpopular individuality. In the end he was more of a nonconformist – and one without affectation – than anyone Shahid had met. Where everyone else had zigged, Riaz had zagged (BA 109).

Hence, individuality is perceived as a value as such. Generally, the reader is given enough information to comprehend the possible reasons of other group members for following Riaz (which I will outline later in this chapter), but not to understand the leader himself. Despite the fact that he cares for the community, which seems to be very positive at first glance, our sympathy is undercut by the discrepancy between certain claims and actual achievements. The Muslim brothers' loud rejection of luxury goods and symbols which might elevate one person over another becomes visible from the beginning, when Riaz prides himself that the restaurant he chose would make Shahid feel at home since it offered simple food to "ordinary people" (BA 4). However, these references to decency and modesty are constantly undermined by the protagonist's contradicting and often quite humorous thoughts presented in free indirect discourse: "How did Riaz know he would feel at home in a place with five Formica tables and screwed-down red bucket seats, all as brightly lit under white neon as a police cell?" (BA 4). Apart from Shahid's oftentimes sarcastic thoughts, the narrator creates no further distancing effect by ironic comments but remains sympathetic to all standpoints. The readers are invited to judge for themselves, but are still directed by the action, which inevitably triggers comic effects and undermines the readers' potential sympathy with any form of fundamentalism. Especially Riaz' speeches in the mosque serve as a source of biting satire:

> They [Riaz' Sunday talks] were well attended by a growing audience of young people, mostly local cockney Asians. Not being an aged obscurantist, Riaz was becoming the most popular speaker. He must have tasted the atmosphere of his time without drinking it in, for he entitled his talks 'Rave to the Grave?'[127], 'Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve', 'Islam: A Blast from the Past or a Force for the Future?' and 'Democracy is a Hypocrisy'. [...] No subject could hold him. He may have begun his talk under the guise of discussing Islamic identity, for instance, but soon he would be expatiating on the creation of the universe, the

127 Ironically, 'Rave to the Grave' is the subtitle of a film-version of *Return of the Dead.* The movie was rated R for containing sexuality, nudity, strong violence, language and drug use – everything that is criticised by Riaz. However, this version was only released in 2005 – ten years after Kureishi's novel was published.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> persecution of Muslims world-wide, the state of Israel, gays and lesbians, Islam in Spain, face-lifts, nudity, the dumping of nuclear waste in the Third World, perfume, the collapse of the West, and Urdu poetry. Even if he'd opened by wryly saying, 'Today I'm not going to blast anything,' he would start to rage, fist in the air, throwing down his pen, creating a frisson of humorous agreement in his audience. Then, pretending to be contrite, he'd beg the brothers to apologize to anyone they might have argued with, and to love those of other religions (BA 80-81).

This scene makes several statements about the kinds of fundamentalist beliefs developed throughout the novel. First, it shows Riaz' clientele to consist mainly of immigrants with a lower social status. Second, the leader partly derives his fame from a lack of inspirational alternatives. Thirdly, his talks are highly polemical and use derogatory catch-phrases, which, by the way, seem to draw on conservative Christian slogans such as 'God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.'[128] His lectures are a crude mixture of all kinds of fundamentalist attitudes with his own subjective interpretation of Islam. By using a highly ironic compilation of topics, the novel, fourthly, exposes Riaz as an armchair politician who lacks a clear religious concept as well as expertise, and constantly seems to draw on the cultural codex he rejects so fervently. The simultaneous discussion of perfume and nuclear waste and his demagogic ranting against Western decadence and unbelievers, while at the same time preaching benevolence towards other religions, all serve to discredit him and the system of belief he represents. The group's endeavour to protect an assaulted Muslim family likewise slides into parody when their "cleansing jihad" (BA 138) suddenly faces very harmless enemies. It turns out that a woman and two very young children harass the family. They are driven by blind hatred and despair but pose no serious threat to anyone.

The only sympathy potentially evoked for Riaz' point of view is roused by Shahid's contemplations about his potential motives and shortcomings. His musings are based on speculation but still grant the Muslim leader a humane touch:

> Riaz had little physical presence. Shahid imagined him in a corner of the school playground, his hands across his face, shying from the bully blows. [...] Shahid watched the man he had wanted as his friend and who, like him but with less reason, seemed strangely out of place here. Riaz loved 'his people', but, unless offering assistance, he appeared uncomfortable with them. Riaz had little: no wife or children, career, hobby, house or possessions. The meaning of his life was his creed and the idea that he knew the truth about how people should live. It was this single-mindedness that made him powerful and, to Shahid now, rather pitiful (BA 172-174).

This feeling is intensified by the fact that Riaz seems to have no real home. To Shahid's question if he likes living in England he responds: "This will never be my home. [...] I will never entirely understand it" (BA 175). The protagonist, in contrast, seems equally confused but was born in England and has much stronger attachments to the country. While Riaz apparently finds it hard to bond and build up relationships with other

128 The phrase became known as a conservative Christian slogan during a large rally against equal rights and abortion in Houston, Texas, in November 1977. Later on, it was recurrently picked up, for instance in a *Christianity Today* report (1979), in the American playwright Paul Rudnick's comedy *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told* (2000) and in the British House of Commons debate on same-sex marriage (2013).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

people, Shahid is an open character for whom it seems to be easy to socialise. Shahid's relationship to Britain and other British people has often been conflictual, but he has always been in contact with people from many different backgrounds and interacted with them. While Riaz cannot regard Britain as his home, Shahid ascertains: "There's nowhere else I will feel more comfortable" (BA 175).

Riaz' radical stance is partly described as a reaction against the feeling of marginalisation. Conscious of the international distribution of political power and economic resources, Riaz seems to feel intellectually as well as culturally humiliated. In his eyes, Western modernity is inextricably linked to imperialist domination:

> 'Your liberal beliefs belong to a minority who live in northern Europe. Yet you think moral superiority over the rest of mankind is a fact. You want to dominate others with your particular morality, which has – as you also well know – gone hand-in-hand with fascist imperialism. [...] This is why we have to guard against the hypocritical and smug intellectual atmosphere of Western civilization. 'Brownlow dabbed sweat from his forehead and smiled. [...] 'That atmosphere you deprecate. With reason. But this civilization has also brought us [...l]iterature, painting, architecture, psychoanalysis, science, journalism, music, a stable political culture, organized sport – at a pretty high level. And all this has gone hand-in-hand with something significant. That is: critical enquiry into the nature of truth. It talks of proof and demonstration. [...] Questions and ideas. Ideas being the enemy of religion' (BA 98-99).

In this scene, the novel portrays Islamic fundamentalism as containing an anti-modernist current in that Riaz does not seem to be open to critical enquiry and the questioning of his beliefs and values**.** However, the reader gets the feeling that this is rather due to a perceived lack of achievement than to a real rejection of modern institutions and developments. As will be outlined in the next paragraphs, the author makes extended use of stereotypical characterisations as well as of relationships of contrast and correspondence to polarise and contrast Islamic fundamentalism and Western liberalism.

Kureishi seeks to present a variety of reasons for a turn towards Islamic fundamentalism. These reasons are embodied by the characters he presents. As has been outlined above, Shahid searches for community and a source of meaning and identity. The character Chad is driven by different motives, even though all characters are in a way united by their loneliness. The Muslim group seems to give him an opportunity for acceptance and respect despite a lack of education and future prospects. For a long time, Chad has been violating all moral codes and now takes a rather anti-intellectual stance, reacting with hostility to Shahid's eagerness to read and study. He seems to have had a hard time growing up and enjoys having a little authority for the first time in his life by being Riaz' obedient follower and profiting from his publicity. In his view, books and education are only means by which "intellectual people elevate themselves above ordinary ones" (BA 21). Several passages in the novel suggest a lack of education and upward social mobility as well as prevalent racism as reasons for falling prey to supposedly easy answers in the form of fundamentalist beliefs. Shahid's lover Deedee tells him that Chad's actual name used to be Trevor Buss:

> He was adopted by a white couple. The mother was racist, talked about Pakis all the time and how they had to fit in. [...] Chad would hear church bells. He'd see English country

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> cottages and ordinary English people who were secure, who effortlessly belonged. [...T]he sense of exclusion practically drove him mad. He wanted to bomb them. [...] When he got to be a teenager he saw he had no roots, no connections to Pakistan, couldn't even speak the language. So he went to Urdu classes. But when he tried asking for the salt in Southall everyone fell about at his accent. In England white people looked at him as if he were going to steal their car or their handbag, particularly as he dressed like a ragamuffin. But in Pakistan they looked at him even more strangely. Why should he be able to fit into a Third World theocracy? [...] Trevor Buss's soul got lost in translation, as it were. Someone said he even tried the Labour Party, to try to find a place. But it was too racist and his anger was too much. [...] It was fermenting and he couldn't keep it under (BA 106-108).

As a result, Trevor first slides down the social ladder, losing himself in drug abuse, promiscuous sexuality and entertainment and finally turns to the diametrically opposed direction, denouncing his own parents for deficits in religious practice and changing his name to 'Muhammad Shahabuddin Ali-Shah'. His turn to Islam can thus be explained by his feeling of alterity and estrangement and his wish to belong. Chad neither feels at home in the Pakistani nor in the British culture. "I am homeless", he says, "I have no country" (BA 108).

What is actually a sad and serious topic becomes an element of satire in the next paragraph, when Deedee outlines how Trevor came to be known as Chad:

> 'He changed his name to Muhammad Shahabuddin Ali-Shah. [...] He'd insist on the whole name. He played football and his mates got fed up saying, "Pass the ball, Muhammad Shahabuddin Ali-Shah," or, "On me noddle over here, Muhammad Shahabuddin Ali-Shah." No one passed to him. So he became Chad' (BA 108).

Riaz is for him the pillar of orientation he can cling to and derive meaning and respect from, since "his mixture of kindness and discipline sorted him out better than any rehabilitation centre could have" (BA 110). Without the leader, Chad is "a dog without a master" (BA 218), which underscores the importance of guidance and leadership but simultaneously renders the sort of leadership interchangeable. Not Islam as a spiritual source of inspiration and guidance itself is what gives Chad the security he needs. Religion is presented as a vehicle for security and guidance, a vessel that can be filled with meaning to justify Riaz' claim for leadership. *The Black Album* does not present Islam itself as a religion that saved Chad. It is the potential of guidance and the feeling of belonging, which is important for the character. This feeling manifests itself in the Muslim circle but could also exist in a different context.

On the whole, we cannot find any elaborate comments on religion that would leave the impression that the novel aims at seriously addressing religious belief and Islamic fundamentalism. The core of Kureishi's work is – as in most of his other works – migrant experience and the possibilities of hybridity and multiculturalism in a globalised world. Additionally, *The Black Album* features recurring references to the inequalities and social alienation brought forth by the British economic system. Carey Oppenheim indeed asserted in a study at the beginning of the 1990 s that "every indicator of poverty shows that black people and other ethnic minority groups are more at risk of high unemployment, low pay, poor conditions at work and diminished social security rights" (Oppenheim 1993:130). Nevertheless, ethnic divisions do not seem to have overridden older economic class inequalities, which seem firmly fixed

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

despite the changing formation of political groups in Britain (cf. Westergaard 2001: 68-79).

There are recurrent hints at a fusion of religious and political issues. An incident which embodies this fusion and, furthermore, serves as another satirical element to denounce the Muslim circle, is the veneration of an eggplant. Members of the Muslim brotherhood believe that God has written on it. Shahid does not defend the veneration of this supposedly holy aubergine with religious but with social and political arguments. The fight about this issue between him and Deedee slowly becomes one about influence and dominance.

> 'God has written on it, hasn't he?'
> 'That's what some people are saying. But they're simple types. Unlike you, they can't read the French philosophers. A few years ago they were in their villages, milking cows and keeping chickens. We have to respect the faiths of others – the Catholics say they drink Jesus's blood and no one jails the Pope for cannibalism.' [...]
> 'Is it your culture? Is it culture at all?'
> 'You're being a snob. [...] We're third-class citizens, even lower than the white working class. Racist violence is getting worse! Papa thought it would stop, that we'd be accepted here as English. We haven't been. We're not equal! It's gonna be like America. However far we go, we'll always be underneath!' [...]
> 'I don't give a damn. [...] I'm not going to respect a communicating vegetable and I'm not going to compete with one either' (BA 209).

Shahid's stance is anti-racist and politically – not religiously – motivated. The scene exemplifies the close connection and blurred borders between religion, culture and politics and the danger of falling prey to the same mechanisms one strives to criticise. As Brah notes:

> In their need to create new political identities, dominated groups will often appeal to bonds of common cultural experience in order to mobilize their constituency. In so doing they may assert a seemingly essentialist difference. Spivak (1987) and Fuss (1989) have argued in favour of such a 'strategic essentialism'. They believe that the 'risk' of essentialism may be worth taking if framed from the vantage point of a dominated subject position. This will remain problematic if a challenge to one form of oppression leads to the reinforcement of another (Brah 1995: 144).

Riaz similarly connects the defence of a family against racism to the overall need for Muslims to fight against oppression:

> 'We're not blasted Christians,' Riaz replied with considerable aggression for him, though the effect was rather undermined by the fact that he was, as usual, carrying his briefcase. 'We don't turn the other cheek. We will fight for our people who are being tortured in Palestine, Afghanistan, Kashmir! War has been declared against us. But we are armed' (BA 82).

He confounds a religious cause with a domestic fight against racism and an international political and military struggle for influence and territory. The example of 'turning the other cheek' refers to the well-known part in the gospels of Matthew and Luke that has often been interpreted as the essence of the Christian ideal of non-confrontation and nonviolence. Apart from this interpretation there is, however, also a school of thought which underlines the historical context. In the times of Jesus, slapping

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

someone on his cheek with the back of one's hand was used for slaves and other people perceived to be inferior. To turn the other cheek actually meant that the attacker had only one chance: to slap with the open hand (since the left one could only be used for unclean purposes). This, however, was a sign of equality. 'Turning the other cheek' thus, can also be understood as a brave and upright challenge, an assertion of human dignity and a rebellion against injustice, which is carried out peacefully without the use of violence. Riaz does not seem to be aware of this semantic dimension, though. His defence consists of organising a squad supposed to defend an assaulted family with the help of machetes and meat cleavers from the local butcher.

Nonetheless, the violent and fanatic potential of Riaz' circle never assumes a really threatening quality, since it is constantly undercut by comic relief, as the following scene exemplifies:

> While Chad enthusiastically demonstrated the best way to handle a meat cleaver, Hat checked the layout of the flat for entrances, exits and vulnerable junctures, just like a television cop. Then, to Chad's amazement and Tahira's giggles, he unpacked the overnight bag his mother had packed for him, putting his toothbrush and dental floss in the bathroom and hanging his red baseball cap in the hall (BA 91).

The followers of fundamentalist systems of belief (be they religious, political or ideological) seem to possess a strange childlike quality. The same is visible in the parody surrounding the worship of the aubergine with the supposedly holy inscription, which triggers naive enthusiasm among Riaz' followers and a pilgrimage to the house where it is displayed. In the scene the Muslim brothers are described like children, who are treated, without even realising it, in a very derogatory, patronising way by George Rugman Rudder, a local Labour leader who shows up at the scene only to attract voters and positive media coverage.

Contradicting these parodies, which render a rather harmless picture of Islamic fanaticism, a bomb blast at London's Victoria station introduces the dimension of terrorism into the story. Nonetheless, this event is not used to illuminate any reasons for or particularities about the attack. It only serves to shed light on the reactions of ordinary people, filtered through Shahid's perception:

> People went without prompting to the nearest hospitals, queuing silently to give blood [...]. Churches were opened and the perplexed waited in buildings they hadn't entered for years. The cafés and pubs were full; apparently they were being drunk dry. Illicit lovers, adulterers and opportunists took advantage. [...] Such a tragedy was the closest a city like London could come to communal emotion. What did they feel? Confusion and anger, because somewhere outside lurked armies of resentment. But which faction was it? Which underground group? Which war, cause or grievance was being demonstrated? The world was full of seething causes which required vengeance – that at least was known. While inside the city, gorging on plenty without looking up, were the complacent. And today 'the lucky ones', those with mortgages and jobs, wandering the streets in search of a working phone, were meant to know they could be stalked, picked off, besieged. For they were guilty. They would have to pay and pay (BA 103).

The protagonist observes and evaluates these scenes when he strives to attend a meeting with Deedee and suddenly finds himself in the middle of chaos at Victoria station after the bomb blast. People in this scene react very differently: some of them see how

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

they may help the injured; some seem to be under shock and try to forget the terrible scenes and others use the general turmoil to take advantage of being unobserved. Shahid himself can only guess about the motives of victims and perpetrators alike. However, he seems to promote a quite nihilist worldview and holds the opinion that many of these people in their complacency and Godlessness are guilty anyway and thus deserve this fate. Apart from this subjective view, the reader gets no further explanations on the context. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the bombing is fictitious or if it at least alludes to a real incident. There were various terrorist attacks (most of them carried out by wings of the IRA) in London during the 1980 s and 90 s, but the only incident at Victoria Station was an IRA bomb that exploded in a litter bin in February 1991, which injured 38 people and killed one man. Since the novel is set in 1989, it cannot refer to this incident, though.

The second drastic event in the plot is the Rushdie affair[129], which is followed by a book burning and a petrol bomb assault on a local bookshop. As outlined in the introductory chapters, the fatwa against Salman Rushdie in reaction to the publication of *The Satanic Verses* in 1989 was a shocking experience for Kureishi, which motivated a deeper engagement with the topic of Islamic fundamentalism. In a larger societal context, the Rushdie affair was, as Virdee notes, besides the Honeyford Affair in Bradford and the Gulf War, one of the major events at that time which attracted extended media coverage, served to amplify racial and religious prejudice and triggered increasing 'Islamophobia' (Virdee 2001: 130). Surprisingly, not many words are lost about the exact religious justification of the fatwa or different views within Islam on this matter: "The feeling was unanimous. Riaz had informed Chad they were rejoicing in the Ayatollah's action, and Chad had passed this on to the group" (BA 169). That was that. Period. Anyone who expects the novel to take a stance on the Rushdie affair or give more detailed insights into the controversy will be dissatisfied. Kureishi similarly disappointed the critics who had hoped for a more balanced presentation of different Islamic standpoints and more moderate currents. The characters in Riaz' circle are rather flat and uniform. They never really contradict his opinions or introduce new political views or ideological nuances into the discussion. Most of the time, "it wasn't that they were afraid to speak, they had nothing to say" (BA 183).

The attitudes concerning the Rushdie affair and the following book burning are primarily crucial points for an unsympathetic portrayal of Muslim fundamentalist stances. Islamic fundamentalism is presented as an unquestioned embrace of simple truths. The portrayal of the book burning directs the reader to draw a similar conclusion as the protagonist, who decides for himself in the end that he prefers uncertainty to this kind of firmness:

> If anything, he felt ashamed. [...] He never wanted his face to show such ecstatic rigidity! The stupidity of the demonstration appalled him. How narrow they were, how unintelligent, how...embarrassing it all was! [...] This destruction of a book – a book which was a

129 A short overview of the violent criticism against the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel has already been given in previous chapters. For more in-depth analyses of Rushdie's work and the controversy surrounding his novels, see Blake (2001), Sanga (2001), Morton (2008) and Gupta (2009).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> question – had embodied an attitude to life which he had to consider. […] Maybe wisdom would come from what one didn't know, rather than from confidence (BA 225-227).

Thus, the novel stays vague concerning the ideological, religious and political details of the matter but underlines that fundamentalism embodies a rejection of intellectual openness and humanism.

Apart from its lack of religious and ideological particulars concerning the fatwa, the novel does not give many details about other controversial issues, such as the role of women in Islam, either. The fact that Islamic fundamentalist currents have been criticised so widely for disregarding gender equality and the rights of women is not a topic in *The Black Album*. When the role of women is addressed, the novel presents only strong and independent Muslim women. Chili's wife Zulma, for instance, is not described as religious. She is very fashionable, intelligent and strong-willed. With his description of strong women and weak men, Kureishi turns common gender stereotypes upside down. Furthermore, Zulma judges religious and cultural concepts against the economic and social standards of her time. When she talks about her intention to get a divorce, she humorously turns the concept of shame around, claiming that Chili himself was "raining shame" (BA 189) on the reputation of his family by being such a failure and therewith attracting the gossip of all acquaintances back in Pakistan. Zulma's position is extremely emancipated, and she uses the concept of shame not as a religious construct but with a cultural connotation. Chili is perceived as bringing shame on his family, because he runs down the family business and does not manage to be successful and care for his family. Shame here has nothing to do with moral or religious conduct. Zulma neither seems to fear reprisals concerning her affair with another man, nor does anyone question her right to sole custody for their daughter Saphire – a right which Islam only adjudicates to the father in case of a divorce. Islamic law and Islamic conduct play no role for these two characters. They both violate the two fundamental components of Islamic prenuptial agreements (based on sura 4,34 and 2,228), which stipulate the husband's obligation to pay maintenance and the wife's duty to obey as central principles (Schirrmacher and Spuler-Stegemann 2004: 15). Chili turns this relationship upside down and is clearly the weaker part in the relationship, unsuccessfully throwing himself at Zulma's feet and begging her to take him back and give him money.

Furthermore, Zulma can be seen as a paramount example of Thatcherite economic policies in the 1980 s. She is a successful businesswoman, who can fly an aircraft, wears the trousers in her marriage and is focused on money and success:

> He [Chili] felt put down by her. He was supposed to know more than she did, and he didn't. [...] Shahid's mistake was to try to have political discussions with her, for, like Chili, she was an arch-Thatcherite. She would patronize and incense him, personalizing everything, saying, 'It's typical, you're living off a business family, this isn't a commune, is it? Your father's a businessman, you're a hypocrite, aren't you?' Zulma could reduce him to near-tears of frustration if he talked about fairness or equality or opportunity, or the need to reduce unemployment. She'd laugh; the world couldn't be like that. What was needed was the opposite – enterprising people (like her and Chili, presumably) – who weren't afraid to crush others to get what they wanted. He argued she was a dupe, explaining what racists the Thatcherites were. She might imagine she was an intelligent, upper-class wom-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> an, but to them she'd always be a Paki and liable to be patronized. She appreciated the truth of this, but it was a colonial residue – the new money knew no colour (BA 86-87).

The quote not only demonstrates Zulma's independence and strength. It also points to the major political controversies and social problems during the conservative government under Margaret Thatcher, outlined in the first paragraphs. While the protagonist takes on an almost 'female' and defensive role, nearly breaking out in tears and appealing to humanist values and equality, Zulma seems unperturbed and self-confident, basing her strategies on principles of maximum utility in line with the prevailing spirit of the time.

The notion that money is 'colour-blind' is a recurring thought in Kureishi's works and also a reference to the economic policies advocated by the British Member of Parliament Enoch Powell. As Kim outlines,

> Powell saw the possibility of integrating immigrants into the exceptional British society through a free market force. He believed in the undiscriminating play of market forces as the motor of integration. He insisted that money was color-blind and that economic forces would help the work of integration (Kim 2011: 59).

At the same time, Powell came to be known as a populist politician who confined national identity and openly declared his scepticism of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society, striving for a more limited definition of British identity and citizenship. Even before the Conservatives won the elections, Powell gained dubious fame with his 'river of blood speech', which was widely criticised as racialist.[130] The above-cited quote from *The Black Album* singles out the central issues of race and class and their potential influence on economic success. Zulma defends her opinion that she can gain economic success and upward social mobility irrespective of her ethnic background. Shahid, on the other hand, argues that race still fundamentally determines social standing and success in Britain. While Powell defined British national identity by means of exclusion, Thatcher did not exclude other cultures or creeds from her vision of Britain but based her policies on the belief in the necessity of cultural assimilation. She focused on the personal responsibility of the individual and a market economy which was supposed to be colour-blind. This ideological stance included that success

130 In this speech on April 20, 1968 Powell criticised Commonwealth immigration with a very controversial wording which gained him the dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet of the Conservative Party but at the same time widespread public support. Powell states his concern about immigration numbers in the following words: "We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre. […] As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see 'the River Tiber foaming with much blood'. That tragic and intractable phenomenon which we watch with horror on the other side of the Atlantic but which there is interwoven with the history and existence of the States itself, is coming upon us here by our own volition and our own neglect. Indeed, it has all but come. In numerical terms, it will be of American proportions long before the end of the century. Only resolute and urgent action will avert it even now" (*The Telegraph* 6.11.2007: n.p.). Especially the quote from the Aeneid, used to express an anxiety about the rising number of immigrants from other countries of the Commonwealth, caused long-lasting political debates.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

was not to be dependent on gender, class or race (Kim 2011: 67). This promise, however, did not sustain comparison with the economic reality.

As I am going to discuss in the next sections on the representation of Western liberalism, Kureishi introduces the notion that class-issues might have become an even more powerful determinant of individual identity and a trigger of social and political conflicts than issues of race and ethnicity. Zulma refers to the Thatcherite economy, which was widely criticised due to its detrimental effects on groups that were not able to succeed in the system. Green summarises conservative economic policies in 1980 s Britain as follows:

> Margaret Thatcher and her administrations […] saw their main aim as being to 'roll back the frontiers of the State'. This was to be achieved by replacing the mixed economy with a private-sector dominated market economy. This in turn was to be complemented by a reform and reduction of the welfare state, by a lowering of direct personal taxation and the encouragement of wider property-ownership. Institutions which hampered the operation of the market, in particular trade unions, were to have their powers and legal privileges curbed. Finally, low inflation rather than full employment was to be the central goal of economic policy. In short, Thatcherism saw its task as being to challenge and ultimately to dismantle the institutions, practices and assumptions which underpinned what had come to be known by the mid-1970 s as 'the post-war consensus' (Green 1999: 19).

These policies aimed at creating an enterprise culture and marked an abrupt rejection of the post-World War II politics which were targeted at income redistribution, full employment and welfare provision. Furthermore, many contemporary critics hint at the socially as well as regionally very unequal distribution of wealth, neoliberal conservative politics generated. Worcester, for instance, describes in a résumé on ten years of Thatcher's government that those

> who have benefited most from Thatcherite economic policies are the ultra-rich (through generous tax breaks), the professional and managerial class, and some skilled workers. [...] At the same time, there has been a rise in the rate of poverty and an unresolved crisis of mass unemployment, leading some to observe that Britain has become a three-tiered society of 'haves,' 'havenots,' and 'havelots' (Worcester 1989: 304-305).

Shahid's father and family apparently belong to the small group that has benefited from conservative economic policies and thus defends this approach. Zulma claims that the family's success – or class – makes them insiders of the system, overriding the fact of their Pakistani background. Shahid, however, believes that the forces of race or ethnicity are still stronger than money and class. In his opinion, they will never achieve real equality and recognition just by earning money.

In his essay "Newness in the World", Kureishi himself refers to the mechanisms of colonialistic 'othering' that are turned around by Islamic fundamentalists. The author explains how Islamist agitators nowadays use similar strategies to set Muslim people against the West, (such as the fuelling of prejudices and fears) that were formerly used by the West to stress the inferiority of other cultures and creeds:

> Riaz, the solemn, earnest and clever leader of the small group which Shahid joins, understands that hatred of the Other is an effective way of keeping his group not only together but moving forward. To do this, he has to create an effective paranoia. He must ensure that the image and idea of the Other is sufficiently horrible and dangerous to make it worth

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> being afraid of. The former colonialistic Western Other, having helped rush the East into premature modernity, must have no virtues. Just as the West has generated fantasies and misapprehensions of the East for its own purposes, the East – this time stationed in the West – will do the same, ensuring not only a comprehensive misunderstanding between the two sides, but a complete disjunction which occludes complexity (Kureishi 2011: 117-118).

Kureishi unmasks the stereotypes and essentialist assumptions on both sides. The strategies of exclusion and scapegoating which the West has so long exercised over its Eastern immigrants are now reversed and used against the majority culture, rejecting dialogue and promoting a very simple picture of the world. Kureishi warns his readers that religions may become "corrupt and stultifying […] if they fetishise obedience, if they are not renewed and re-thought" (Kureishi 2011: 119). He underlines his belief in the necessity of dialogue and a diversity of voices and opinions, coming to the conclusion that the blasphemy Riaz strives to eradicate and punish is a necessary component for society – and also for religion as such: "Without blasphemy religion has no potency or meaning" (Kureishi 2011: 119). The next subchapters will serve to analyse the 'Western ways and principles' which at the same time attract and repel the protagonist as well as Kureishi's discussion of identity and societal conflict.

5.2.2) "Everybody's free to feel good"[131]: Consumerism and the pleasure principle

The picture of Western society Kureishi draws seems inextricably linked to his portrait of London as an epitome of all Western achievements and abysses. The first impression the reader gets when London (especially the district Shahid has to live in) is described is not very pleasant, but unsettlingly mixed and characterised by "mundane poverty" (BA 3). It makes the protagonist wonder "whether a nearby asylum had been recently closed down, since day and night on the High Road, dozens of exhibitionists, gabblers and maniacs yelled into the air" (ibid.). Considering his new surroundings, Shahid "had never felt more invisible" (BA 5). Consequently, I disagree with Kaleta, who claims that *The Black Album* presents a "romantic" portrayal of London (Kaleta 1998: 133). Kureishi's portrayal of London is as unsparing as Faulks' description of the metropolis. Concerning the question of radical groups which feel threatened and excluded due to racial prejudice and a lack of upward social mobility, Kureishi's novel expresses even more scepticism concerning London's ability to integrate its citizens.

The vast discrepancy between the immigrants' hopes and needs and the social and economic reality they are facing is a central theme in *The Black Album*. The novel mentions this divide as an essential reason for the disenchantment with Western liberal culture. As Shahid talks to people waiting for Brother Riaz' counselling, a man bares his soul to him:

131 BA 62. This line refers to the famous pop song by the Zambian-born Zimbabwean singer Rozalla, who had a huge hit with the single in Britain in 1991.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> 'These boys, please, sir, are coming to my flat and threatening my whole family every day and night. As I told you, they have punched me in my guts. For five years I have lived there, but it is getting worse. Also my sister and my brother and his wife are writing me saying, have you forgotten us, you are living in luxury there, why don't you send the money we need for the medicine, the money for the wedding, the money for our beloved parents…' […] 'Sir, I am already having two jobs, one in the office during the day, and the restaurant until two in the night. I am flaked fully out, and the entire world is leaning on my head –' (BA 36-37).

Kureishi captures a snapshot of the reasons why many immigrants are coming to Britain: in a hope to move up and therewith to honour and financially support their families in their countries of origin. After some years, however, they often have to realise that they are denied this eagerly awaited upward social mobility; that others look down on them and sometimes even exclude and harass them. They thus come to regard "the white élite culture as self-deceiving and hypocritical" (BA 134). One might argue that this character is quite stereotypical and the scene could be used as an ironic subversion of the 'immigrant stereotype'. However, neither the situation presented nor the tone of the previous and following paragraphs indicates an ironic treatment of the topic.

Apart from the confrontation with an economic reality characterised by injustice and a superficial lifestyle that seems to be devoid of personal joy and real warmth, the life in London also confronts the protagonist with latent racism. Resentments seem to be there but not always acknowledged. Shahid's mother, for instance, was unable to face the truth and used to reprimand her son for writing about his experience with racism at school:

> More than anything she hated any talk of race or racism. Probably she had suffered some abuse and contempt. But her father had been a doctor; everyone – politicians, generals, journalists, police chiefs – came to their house in Karachi. The idea that anyone might treat her with disrespect was insupportable. Even when Shahid vomited and defecated with fear before going to school, or when he returned with cuts, bruises and his bag slashed with knives, she behaved as if so appalling an insult couldn't exist. And so she turned away from him. What she knew was too much for her (BA 73).

Racism is a topic that led to a lot of disquiet at the end of the 1980 s. According to Skellington, who refers to newspaper articles published at the time and the annual studies on *Racial Violence and Harassment* by the Runnymede Trust, racially motivated incidents soared from 4,383 in 1988, to 5,044 in 1989 and 6,359 in 1990 in England and Wales (Skellington 1996: 85). From 1988 to 1989 serious racial assaults rose by 60 per cent, and racial incidents increased in six of the eight police areas in London (cf. ibid.). Moreover, racial attacks on the homes of immigrants seemed to have increased dramatically, especially in London, towards the end of the 1980 s (cf. Skellington 1996: 87).

This experience with racism is a formative influence for the protagonist and much stronger than any religious feelings. During the whole course of the novel, Shahid is never able to develop any sincere religiosity. The only time he utters a "Thank God" is ironically in answer to Chad's complaint about the fact that London offers so "many temptations for young men" (BA 15). The appeal of Islamist views does not so much

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

derive from weariness with shallow entertainment and hedonism as from his search for friendship and a sense of belonging. In his adolescent search for identity, Shahid desperately wants to belong somewhere to overcome the alienation he has often been feeling with the culture he lives in:

> I had been kicked around and chased a lot, you know. It made me terrifyingly sensitive. I kept thinking there was something I lacked. […] Everywhere I went I was the only dark-skinned person. How did this make people see me? I began to be scared of going into certain places. I didn't know what they were thinking. I was convinced they were full of sneering and disgust and hatred. And if they were pleasant, I imagined they were hypocrites. I became paranoid. I couldn't go out. I knew I was confused and … fucked up. But I didn't know what to do (BA 10).

Since he is surrounded by white culture and politics he first sees a radical assimilation as the only way for him to belong, which is presented in a drastic but also slightly humorous way (considering the absurdity of his plans):

> I wanted to be a racist. […] My mind was invaded by killing-nigger fantasies. […] Of going around abusing Pakis, niggers, Chinks, Irish, any foreign scum. I slagged them under my breath whenever I saw them. I wanted to kick them up the arse. The thought of sleeping with Asian girls made me sick. […] I hated all foreign bastards. […] I argued…why can't I be a racist like everyone else? Why do I have to miss out on that privilege? Why is it only me who has to be good? Why can't I swagger around pissing on others for being inferior? I began to turn into one of them. I was becoming a monster. […] I have wanted to join the British National Party (BA 10-11).

The scene is quite exaggerated. However, the passage hints at a psychological mechanism racism might trigger: The experience of continued exclusion and loneliness may lead to self-hatred and a denial and hatred of all aspects which are rejected by the group an individual yearns to be part of. Rejection leads to self-hatred and ultimately to hatred of all other people – in this case people from other cultures and creeds – who seem to represent what is not conforming to and accepted by the majority society. As Brown notes, the feeling of being singled out is very familiar to the author himself. Being addressed as "Pakistani Pete" (Brown 2011: n.p.) by teachers at school, Kureishi was well aware of his hybridity even as a child. Thus, Brown even regards *The Black Album* as a semi-autobiographical work. The passage quoted above reflects an overwhelming wish of a teenager who still needs to define his own identity to blend in. It is described that, especially after his father's death, the protagonist just "wanted a new start with new people in a new place [...where] he wouldn't be excluded; there had to be ways in which he could belong" (BA 16). The experience of racism and the wish to belong are connected to Shahid's decision to become part of an Islamic fundamentalist group which, however, only aggravates his identity crisis, as will be outlined in the following subchapter.

The Black Album addressed the topics of racism and unequal distribution of wealth in England at a time in the mid-1990 s when the topic of Britain as a multicultural society was still connected to much insecurity. As has been outlined briefly in the previous paragraphs, many people were disenchanted with the economic policies, the attitudes towards migration and the definition of 'British identity' under Margaret Thatcher. This status quo was also maintained during the term of her Conservative

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

successor John Major. Two years after the publication of *The Black Album*, Tony Blair and the Labour Party gained a landslide victory and initiated major changes. Blair initiated a more social course by introducing the National Minimum Wage Act, taxes for the richest privatised companies and a more European-friendly and integrationist course, which went hand in hand with a rhetoric of renewal proclaiming a "New Britain" (Maurer 2005: 469-470). This included a shift from an assimilationist course to a more multicultural vision of British identity.

The Black Album presents identity as an ever changing and versatile construct. Most characters waver between extreme poles that are first and foremost represented by three characters which form a triangle of seemingly irreconcilable worldviews. Riaz Al-Hussain stands for Islamic fundamentalism, Deedee Osgood and Shahid's brother Chili for liberal hedonism and Andrew Brownlow for radical communism. The strongest contrasts are set up between Riaz' religious, moral claims and Deedee's postmodern relativism and striving for pleasure. These polar opposites are first exaggerated only to finally collapse their differences. At the end of the novel, most readers will have noticed that none of these extremes can offer any salvation. As I am going to outline in the next paragraphs, they also share similarities in their claim to sole representation, the use of essentialist categories and their exorbitance that ultimately leads to self-destruction.

Shahid's brother Chili and his lecturer Deedee Osgood can be identified as the two characters who serve as emblems of Western hedonism and a way of life which equally attracts and repels the protagonist. His brother stands for Western consumerism. This fact indicates that the form of 'liberalism' or pleasure principle criticised in *The Black Album* does not seem to be specifically 'Western'. Chili takes assimilation or mimicry to extremes. When he visits his little brother, Shahid ponders:

> In Chili's hand were his car keys, Ray-Bans and Marlboros, without which he wouldn't leave his bathroom. Chili drank only black coffee and neat Jack Daniels; his suits were Boss, his underwear Calvin Klein, his actor Pacino. His barber shook his hand, his accountant took him to dinner, his drug dealer would come to him at all hours, and accept his cheques. At least he wasn't smoking a joint (BA 38).

While Riaz' followers deplore a lack of wealth and prospects, Chili seems to have everything but does not put his advantages to good use. On the whole, he is outlined as a rather shallow character. His life seems to be devoid of any personal values, for he only cherishes consumerism and hedonism. Thus, he seems to blend in perfectly into the anonymous party circle engaging in fetish, partner switch and drug abuse that Deedee finds so fascinating. Shahid's and Chili's father – a self-made man born in Pakistan, who was awarded an MBE for flying RAF bombers during the war – presumably already showed a similar affinity towards Western capitalism and associated it with modernity:

> Papa hated anything 'old-fashioned', unless it charmed tourists. He wanted to tear down the old; he liked 'progress'. 'I only want the best,' he'd say, meaning the newest, the latest, and somehow, the most ostentatious […] Chili's relentless passion had always been for clothes, girls, cars, girls and the money that bought them. When the brothers were young he made it clear that he found Shahid's bookishness effeminate. He was influenced in this

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> by the practical and aggressive Papa, who originated the idea that Shahid's studiousness, was not only unproductive but an affliction for the family […] (BA 39 and 41).

'Progress' and 'Western liberalism' primarily seem to be associated with wealth, money and declining moral standards. Following this definition of the term "modern", no core characteristics of Western 'modernity', such as democratic community, shared sovereignty or constitutionalism and the rule of law, are mentioned and seem to be involved. The ironic tone that can be perceived throughout the whole passage (enforced for example by the double use of the word 'girls' in the list of Chili's passions or the presentation of diligence and intelligence as 'affliction') is augmented by the funny way in which Chili keeps the promise to 'take care' of his little brother that he made on his father's death-bed. He sticks to his word by buying him drinks and drugs in shady nightclubs, which is not exactly what one would call 'taking responsibility for a family member'. Shahid gets "the impression that his elder brother had appointed himself a reality guide, pointing out pitfalls before the boy made a serious error due to credulity, sensitivity and lack of cunning" (BA 42). These descriptions form a humorous contrast to the severe grievances of Riaz' followers. Whereas many members of the Muslim circle are described as victims, "Chili called himself a predator" (BA 51). This suggests a nexus between social problems and a resort to religion. However, Chili's stance towards life does not only stem from his atheism or his father's example but also from a certain uprootedness:

> The problem was, as their uncle Asif once stated, money had come too easily to Chili in the 1980s. He didn't respect where it came from. […] It takes several generations to become accustomed to a place. We think we're settled down, but we're like brides who've just crossed the threshold. We have to watch ourselves, otherwise we will wake up one day to find we have made a calamitous marriage.' This was laced with bitterness, of course. Their uncle had the impossible task of living in a country which couldn't accommodate intelligence, initiative, imagination, and in which most endeavour bogged down into hopelessness (BA 54).

Chili in a way embodies the downturns modernity entailed and the postmodern reaction to these issues: He is an emblem of societal problems such as loneliness, alienation and political apathy and reacts to this with a nihilist attitude, rejecting any moral restrictions, regulating categories and limitations to his personal freedom. The comment by Chili's uncle highlights a similar nostalgia as Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, in which the protagonist expresses his regret about the hopeless political and economic circumstances and the lack of freedom in present-day Pakistan that makes life so difficult there.

The second character Kureishi uses to describe and simultaneously criticise the Western way of life is Shahid's lecturer Deedee Osgood. She is an intellectual who is politically committed to feminism and anti-racist policies and seems to feel attracted to people who do not bow to the majority but swim against the tide. She used to have a relationship with the communist activist Dr. Andrew Brownlow and at the beginning of the novel starts an affair with her student Shahid. Similar to the young protagonist, she seems to be still searching for her place in life and represents the same hedonistic lifestyle Chili enjoys. But while Chili stands for consumerism and capitalism,

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Deedee speaks in favour of intellectual freedom and unrestrained sexuality. Her drug abuse, participation in raves and uninhibited sexual experiments underline her yearning for freedom. She introduces the topic of 'the fluidity of identity', which runs throughout the novel as a central theme and will be analysed more closely in the next paragraphs. When Shahid enters her office for the first time he finds "pictures of Prince, Madonna, and Oscar Wilde, with a quote beneath it, 'All limitations are prisons.'" (BA 25). Deedee is described as a woman with "an unruly edge" (BA 29) and strong desires.

Over the course of the novel she gains considerable control over Shahid by stimulating him intellectually and exerting sexual power over him. But despite her assertive demeanour and her self-confidence, she is at times described more like a child who sleeps like a baby "with her legs pulled up, sucking her thumb" (BA 120). Furthermore, the word 'bomb' is not only used referring to the bombing of Victoria Station and the Muslim circle but also in connection to Deedee's drug consumerism. When she takes Ecstasy the process is described as dropping a bomb (BA 57). These references indicate that Deedee might be as lost as other characters in the novel and that her alleged certainty about the preference of a lifestyle characterised by atheism and the search for pleasure has to be questioned as well. Nevertheless, Shahid's lecturer is not presented as an unsympathetic character and also stands for tolerance, open discussion and education. Furthermore, the character is more individualised and complex than most of the other characters in the novel apart from the protagonist. Western hedonism, through Deedee and Chili, is however described as having an equally destructive potential as Islamic fundamentalism. Furthermore, it is presented as partly stemming from a feeling of disorientation and helplessness caused by the political apathy following a political decade in which change seemed to be impossible and political activism had been stifled for too long. Deedee explains to Shahid about the Thatcher-era:

> 'There was a period, in the mid-seventies, when we imagined history was moving our way. Gays, blacks, women, were asserting and organizing themselves. Less than ten years later, after the Falklands, CND and the miners' strike, even I could see the movement was in a contrary direction. Thatcher had concentrated the struggle. But she'd worn everyone down. Where did we go from here?' (BA 116).

Deedee's craving for pleasure seems to be rooted in disappointment and a feeling of helplessness. The domination of society by a capitalist ideology does not seem to have led to a new 'Biedermeier Period' in which people have lost all autonomy and feeling of social responsibility as in *A Week in December*. However, there are striking parallels between both novels in that the characters react to the pressures of their age and their own feelings of defeat by a retreat to virtual realities. 1980s and 90s pop culture which expresses itself in the form of new synthetic drugs, raves and orgies serves as a way to escape reality and its pressing political and social concerns.

A character who seems to have fought until the end for his political and social ideas is Andrew Brownlow, who is depicted as another important challenger of both extremes. Communist ideology is presented as some kind of middle ground between religious fundamentalism and liberal hedonism with Brownlow as a mediator who

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

maintains contact with both camps. Brownlow is described as a person who was a student at Cambridge and could have worked at Harvard but instead turned down his career to come to Shahid's college and help "the underprivileged niggers and wogs an' margin people" (BA 32). In the beginning, even Riaz admits that he has "some personal integrity" (BA 32). He shares Deedee's intellectualism and political activism as well as Riaz' social conscience and belief in affirmative action. However, his position is ultimately irreconcilable with their attitudes to life. With his ideological stance, he neither endorses religious piety nor the pursuit of pleasure, since communism is both inherently atheist and relies on strict self-control and discipline. Moreover, communism is in a process of decay – which holds true for the novel, as well as for real global political developments that led to the crumbling of the Soviet bloc at the end of the 1980 s and the beginning of the 1990 s. Political ideology is not presented as a viable alternative to religion or moral relativism. Brownlow is depicted as an alcoholic and a pathetic figure. He develops a stutter due to his inability to come to terms with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the inexorable disintegration of the Soviet Union. But the protagonist, nevertheless, wavers between these alternatives and wants to embrace all three aspects: the socio-political dimension, the religious and ethical dimension as well as the pleasure principle. He just does not know how. All forms are described as being so violent and all-encompassing that no harmonious reconciliation and moderate application of different principles seems to be possible.

Kureishi sketches and contrasts these different value systems and approaches to life by means of narrated discussions about core issues. Referring to the concept of eventfulness, outlined by Schmid, one could argue that the novel features a rather low degree of eventfulness and the conversations between different characters have more relevance to the plot than the actual events. The plot events as such often seem predictable in that most characters tend to be rather static and act accordingly most of the time. Apart from the final assault on the bookshop there are no major turning points. Whereas Deedee, Riaz and Brownlow are mainly defined by their actions, the protagonist is mainly defined by his emotions and thoughts. He is a dynamic, complex and round character, whereas the other characters remain more or less static and one-dimensional. In my opinion, they fail to surprise us and tend to be rather flat, which is why readers may be more inclined to identify with Shahid. The protagonist wavers between different positions, but there is not much persistence. None of the events seem to have long-lasting consequences for the actions and thoughts of the protagonist.

The irreconcilability and deterioration of the three extremes is also reflected in the composition of the novel. All plotlines follow the protagonist and are relatively equally divided between scenes with Deedee and scenes with the Muslim circle. These plotlines show the individual deterioration of all three (at first partially fascinating and positive) ways of life. The first plotline culminates in the worship of an aubergine and the bombing of a bookshop, the second one in evermore dehumanising and explicit sex scenes, and the third one in Brownlow's intensified speechlessness and breakdown. However, the narrative style is neither apt to create suspense, nor does the plot grant elaborate insights into religious frameworks and specific ideological

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

stances. The events seem to serve as excesses of overdrawn essentialist positions (or moral attitudes put into action), but they neither surprise nor shock us. Considering the value of education, literature and humanism, which is recurrently underlined by the protagonist, his final retreat from Islamic fundamentalism comes rather fast but is not surprising. The dramatic events surrounding the book burning and the planned attack do not irreversibly shake Shahid's beliefs: they just trigger and highlight his disorientation and crisis of identity.

One of the major points raised by the diverging opinions promoted by Deedee, Brownlow and the Muslim circle is the question about the source of morality in life and the differences between ideology and religion. Riaz and his circle exude mercilessness and deny the possibility of morality without religion. Brownlow, on the other hand, tries to promote justice and morality by means of political activism and communist ideology. While this notion consequently stands for atheism and a promotion of egalitarian values by the realisation of a workers' and peasants' state, the Muslim characters see absolute religious principles as the only path to morality. However, it is shown that this exclusivity works in a similar socio-historical framework and is also derived from the grievances of the political and social climate at that time:

> 'Atheism won't last,' Riaz explained. 'Without religion society is impossible. And without God people think they can sin with impunity. There's no morality.' 'There's only extremity and ingratitude and hard-heartedness, like beneath this Thatcherism,' Chad said. He was about to continue but Riaz said, 'That's a lesson well learned. Gluttony, nihilism, hedonism – capitalism in a nutshell. Along with it, we are witnessing the twilight of Communism. Those revolutionaries weren't even able to achieve socialism in one room. Altogether we are seeing the shrivelling of atheism.' 'It is over,' Chad confirmed. 'They been saying God dead. But it being the other way round. Without the creator no one knows where they are or what they doin" (BA 33).

For them, religion is the answer that politics and ideology denied, and a lack of piety the reason for hatred and racism. This stands in contrast to Brownlow, who underlines social causes as the root of all evil:

> 'Not surprising they're violent,' Brownlow said. 'This place. Living in ugliness. [...] 'They have housing, electricity, heating, TV, fridges, hospitals nearby! They can vote, participate politically or not. They are privileged indeed, are they not?' 'The people here can't oppose the corporations,' Brownlow said. 'Powerless, they are. Badly fed. Uneducated and unemployed. Can't make jobs from hope.' Riaz went on: 'And do you think our brothers in the Third World, as you like to call most people other than you, have a fraction of this? [...] They dream of having fridges, televisions, cookers! And are the people racist skinheads, car thieves, rapists? Have they desired to dominate the rest of the world? No, they are humble, good, hard-working people who love Allah!' (BA 94-95).

Even though Riaz' statement is very bold and simple, it still points to the responsibility of the individual for his deeds and the role of moral norms and conscience.

Deedee's political commitment similarly points out this central topic. Whereas Brownlow seems genuinely committed to the Socialist cause, Deedee's reasons for being attracted to ideology very much resemble Shahid's reasons for joining the circle of 'radical' Muslims. Deedee's past is characterised by a lack of stability, purpose and orientation in life, so that she was longing to have something to fight for. She has been

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

committed to her ideological (feminist, socialist) beliefs for a long time but "[e]ven now she didn't know how she felt about her commitment, except she feared that her politics had merely been an extension of nurturing, taking care of the oppressed instead of a husband" (BA 115). In this respect, Kureishi draws significant parallels between ideology and religion. Just as the novel locates the reasons for radicalisation in a search for identity, belonging and purpose in life, it pictures the inner mechanisms of such groups in their self-image and outward demarcation in a similar way. The novel describes that women and leftist activists in the 1970 s and 80 s committed their whole lives to their political cause, tolerating no questioning of or departure from their rules, regardless of the many personal sacrifices they had to make for their choice. Deedee's description of political activists very much resembles the smug complacency, unworldliness and renunciation of pleasure, which is so characteristic of Riaz' circle:

> How little enjoyment had there been! In those days of commitment while the world remained unchanged – and until the celebrations of 'freedom day' – pleasure could only be provisional and guilty. Also, she'd rarely moved outside the political circle; it was felt, implicitly, that only those striving for change could be good. The others were callous, deliberately ignorant or suffering from false consciousness (BA 116).

Both groups defend a sole claim to possess the truth and seem to construct their own identity as a group mainly by means of distancing themselves from who they are not and what they do not want to be.

Shahid is the consciousness through which the reader sees this complex web of different ideologies and approaches. Readers get most information about the characters by means of implicit self-characterisation through their words and actions (or the discrepancy between their words and actions). Explicit external characterisation is in most cases not provided by the narrator but by other characters. The protagonist remains the major evaluating voice (also with respect to general norms and irony). The narrator recedes behind this point of view. The information is filtered through Shahid and we learn what he assumes, knows, and how he judges the other characters. This naturally entails that we get more specifications or extra information about the characters the protagonist knows very well (such as his hedonist brother Chili and his wife Zulma, cf. BA 85). As has been mentioned, *The Black Album* features many passages in quoted monologue and narrated monologue/free indirect discourse, which create an impression of immediacy. Complementary passages that summarise previous developments predominantly enter the novel through the protagonist's memory (for instance when he thinks of his family in Pakistan and how he grew up). Exceptions from this tendency only seldom appear. One rare example of the summary of a larger time-span in psycho-narration, a narrative form which is suited to "render the flow of successive thoughts and feelings, or expand and elaborate a mental instant" (Cohn 1978: 34), is used to describe the climax of the protagonist's identity crisis. After a longer passage in free indirect discourse, which reflects his questioning and disorientation, we can find the following summary:

> When he had returned to Sevenoaks after first meeting Deedee Osgood, he had thought about his future. He knew he wasn't naturally brilliant like some at school. But his father,

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> who was capable of quite indecent dissipation, had worked all hours, as did his mother still. They had been good examples. Shahid, during this time, had made up his mind to be a disciplined person and not waste his life (BA 147).

The narrator verbalises something which Shahid feels but might not be able to put into words in his confusion.

However, the predominant mode is narrated monologue/free indirect discourse, which draws attention to the protagonist's personal judgments, questions and limitations and allows a "seamless junction between narrated monologues and their narrative context" (Cohn 1978: 103), which merges narrative and figural voice and creates considerable ambiguity. It is this ambiguity which I perceive to be exceedingly suitable for the topic of cross-cutting identities, hybridity and the search for moral orientation and belonging. Cohn elucidates that "[b]oth its dubious attribution of language to the figural mind, and its fusion of narratorial and figural language charge it with ambiguity, give it a quality of now-you-see-it, now-you-don't that exerts a special fascination" (Cohn 1978: 107).

As Cohn outlines, free indirect discourse can also be used in a subtle way to create irony and direct the readers' sympathy:

> [...] no matter how 'impersonal' the tone of the text that surrounds them, narrated monologues themselves tend to commit the narrator to attitudes of sympathy or irony. Precisely because they cast the language of a subjective mind into the grammar of objective narration, they amplify emotional notes, but also throw into ironic relief all false notes struck by a figural mind. A narrator can in turn exploit both possibilities, even with the same character [...] (Cohn 1978: 117).

The narrator in *The Black Album* does both: Shahid's contemplations at times rouse the readers' sympathy and at times create a comic effect by their ironic tone. This imbalance regarding the protagonist's perspective naturally has consequences for our perception of the other characters, whose perspectives are vastly underrepresented.

The fact that the narrator is 'undramatised', as Holmes puts it, also prompts a different effect concerning the evaluation of the narrated content. Whereas text interference (Schmid) is a major issue in Faulks' novel concerning the creation of irony and an evaluative narratorial stance, this is not the case here. In *The Black Album*, most passages are written from a figural perspective. The passages that are not quoted speech only shed light on Shahid's background and often directly refer to comments other characters have made in conversations with him. We get insights into Shahid's personal evaluation of characters and events and his memories of crucial incidents in his life. On the one hand, the repeated use of questions and the fact that we sometimes get more details than necessary accentuate the figural perspective. On the other hand, the protagonist's personal language style is (apart from a slight tinge of irony) not very salient and there is no use of conative and emotive words, which makes it difficult to distinguish his voice from narratorial comments. Due to the rather covert quality of the narrator it is sometimes hard to distinguish his voice from Shahid's, and there are no striking examples of a diffuse point of view. As Chatman remarks, this

> ambiguity may strengthen the bond between the two [focalizer and narrator], make us trust still more the narrator's authority. Perhaps we should speak of 'neutralization' or 'uni-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> fication,' rather than ambiguity. Thus, the covert narrator can describe from a clear external vantage point, dip down to quote from the character's thoughts in his own or the character's very words, or plant an ambiguity about a locution, indistinguishably telling and showing, narrating and enacting the character's inner life (Chatman 1989 [1978]: 206-207).

In crucial passages the narrator gives the floor to the protagonist and remains rather hidden and 'objective', not indicating a superior moralising voice.

Despite the lack of a multiperspectival structure, the text, as we have seen, still renders many contradictory and extreme positions, which are competing for dominance over the protagonist. Kureishi has been frequently criticised for employing clichés, flat, stereotypical characters and a very simple vision of Islamic fundamentalism (cf. e.g. Ranasinha 2002: 82-84, Moore-Gilbert 2012: 190).[132] This, however, can also be interpreted as a well-calculated strategy. The novel employs diametrical opposites, exaggerates them conspicuously, thereby parodying and undermining both extremes. By means of this strategy, Kureishi satirises the way essentialisms work and presents a duality of characters and world-views that are actually not as different in their approach as one may think at first. The novel aggrandises the difference between varieties of fundamentalism and finally collapses them. *The Black Album* features an extended use of contrasts, but underlines essentialism, a lack of humanism and an inherently self-destructive potential as a common denominator of all forms of fundamentalism.

5.2.3) "[T]he world was swirling, its compasses spinning"[133]: Identity formation and crisis

While Kureishi's first novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* stressed the fluidity of identity as a performance that can be used and changed according to different purposes, *The Black Album* shows "greater recognition of capitalism's capacity to co-opt and commodify, while communal identity exerts a stronger influence on the individual" (Thomas 2005: 101). The individual has to make important choices in this confusing network of different communal demands and loyalties. In line with Stuart Hall's concept of cross-cutting identities, the novel depicts identity as determined by many diverse factors. Not only religion and race, or ethnicity, are presented as important markers of identity. Gender and sexuality, social class, inner-cultural and inter-gener-

132 Moore-Gilbert, for instance, claims that "[a]side from its association with irrationality and despotism, neo-Orientalist stereotyping in *The Black Album* is evident in its 'framing' of Islam in terms of its humourlessness, philistinism and 'backward' conception of gender relations." However, there are also critics who object to the accusation of stereotyping and claim that the Muslim characters are complex figures (e.g. cf. Holmes 2001: 311; Buchanan 2007: 60). This diversity of secondary source material, first and foremost, highlights the subjectivity of any interpretation. The same problem is also exceedingly discernible with respect to the creation of empathy, which can never be simply deduced from a specific set of narrative features and stylistic qualities, as Keen outlines (cf. Keen 2006: 207-236).

133 BA 220.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ational conflicts are presented as equally defining forces, which are just as important for the identity formation of the protagonist. It is worthwhile to take a closer look at these different factors which shape Shahid and finally lead to a state of disorientation and an identity crisis. Shahid's turn to Islamic fundamentalism is, on the one hand, described as a result of his identity crisis which is initiated by the death of his father and his move from the family home in the suburbs to the city. As Perfect describes, Kureishi wrote the novel after his own father died. The author examines feelings of abandonment, loneliness and departure that lead to insecurity and a search for guidance but finally also to a process of maturation (cf. Perfect 2015: 12-13). On the other hand, his crisis also has to be evaluated within a broader political and economic context. As Winkgens notes, Kureishi is far from being interested in political correctness, but he is highly conscious of political preconditions and a 'politics of identity' that is determined by constructed hierarchies of gender, race and class (cf. Winkgens 2004: 177-178).

As has been outlined in the previous paragraphs, the protagonist experiences different processes of identification, with class as one of the major factors determining his view on the world. Shahid lives in a rather poor neighbourhood. The many immigrants who live there seem to suffer from a lack of education and economic prospects, which also holds true for many members of the Muslim circle. The protagonist seems to stem from a rather successful, wealthy family and can go to college but experiences every day that class-issues still play a large role. The 1980 s in Britain featured an increasing regional division between a prosperous south-east and a rather poor north as well as an intensified division between citizens with high incomes and unemployed people on social welfare with scarce opportunities for advancement (Kim 2011: 72). As critics such as Saadi (2012: 6) outline, class has, despite all egalitarian rhetoric circulated by the government and the media, remained a dominant factor in the distribution of wealth in Britain until the present day.

Moreover, race is presented as an important determinant of his identity. As has been discussed, race is an issue for the protagonist not because of his supposedly strong identification with his Pakistani roots and a traditional upbringing but because of his experience with racism and exclusion by the white majority society. Even though Shahid is a respected college student at the time the novel sets in and starts a relationship with his white lecturer, he is still the only black person in most places Deedee takes him to. Due to the unifying force of unrestricted sexuality this does not seem to be an issue but nevertheless singles him out. At one point Shahid gets angry at Deedee's doubts towards his Muslim friends and reproaches her with the words:

> The thing is, Deedee, clever white people like you are too cynical. You see through everything and rip everything to shreds but you never take any action. Why would you want to change anything when you already have everything your way? [...] But we're the victims here! [...] You sit smoking dope all day and abuse people who actually take action! (BA 110).

The 1980 s actually saw a variety of race riots. The events in Bristol in 1980, in Brixton in 1981 and in Toxteth, Brixton, Tottenham and Handsworth in 1985 were desperate reactions to the social segregation of ethnic minorities and their pressing social and

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

political concerns. The protagonist experiences a tension between the fact that his ethnic identity is apparently a positive source of fascination and attraction for the woman he wants to impress and at the same time something which singles him out.

Furthermore, it is an important observation that even the characters who strive to take a stand for ethnic and religious minorities, or the Muslim circle in particular, seem to do so with a rather condescending attitude or search for their own advantage. The Labour politician George Rudder who pays a visit to the holy aubergine only wants to gain more support from Asian, Muslim voters. Brownlow, as a second advocate of minority rights, sees the Muslim group more as a political example he wants to make. As Moore-Gilbert argues:

> [S]uch figures are represented as being primarily, if sometimes unwittingly, interested in shoring up the authority, political and cultural, of the ethnic centre to which they belong, by acting as 'referee' between competing marginalized groups, including the ethnic British 'underclass'. [...] Brownlow is equally compromised by his patronizing Orientalist attitudes. These include his attitude of unmistakable lewdness towards Tahira and his literal misrecognition of Shahid, whom he twice confuses with Tariq. Reinforcing a commonplace racial stereotype, the 'ethnic subject' always looks the same to Brownlow and, *pace* his investments in 'difference', he is unable to recognize it at the most basic individual level (Moore-Gilbert 2012: 188).

In addition to class and race, religion develops as a new determinant of Shahid's identity throughout the novel. As has been highlighted, the stress on communal identity and belonging makes a strong impression on the protagonist. Nevertheless, this appeal clashes with his Western upbringing. Islam is for Shahid closely linked to a cultural identity that remains foreign to him:

> At home Papa liked to say, when asked about his faith, 'Yes, I have a belief. It's called working until my arse aches!' Shahid and Chili had been taught little about religion. [...] Shahid was afraid his ignorance would place him in no man's land. These days everyone was insisting on their identity, coming out as a man, woman, gay, black, Jew brandishing whichever features they could claim, as if without a tag they wouldn't be human. Shahid, too, wanted to belong to his people. But first he had to know them, their past and what they hoped for. [...] While praying, Shahid had little notion of what to think, of what the cerebral concomitant to the actions should be. So, on his knees, he celebrated to himself the substantiality of the world, the fact of existence, the inexplicable phenomenon of life, art, humour and love itself in murmured language, itself another sacred miracle. He accompanied this awe and wonder with suitable music, the 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's Ninth, for instance, which he hummed inaudibly (BA 92).

Despite his strong sympathy for the fundamentalist circle, Shahid does not seem to adhere to religious principles but rather cherishes general humanist and educational ideals. First, his gratefulness for humour is striking, since humour is seen, as I mentioned in the introductory chapter, as one of the characteristics said to be incompatible with religious fundamentalism. Secondly, Beethoven ironically provides a very European and Christian accompaniment to Shahid's Muslim prayers. Shahid is as strongly and subconsciously influenced by Western cultural codes as Faulks' young protagonist Hassan. In this respect, the context not only contains popcultural references but also includes a reference to high culture, thereby indicating Shahid's good education. It becomes clear in many passages of the novel that the cultural code the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

protagonist draws on is particularly Western. There are recurrent mentions of elements of British and American pop culture such as "*The Godfather*" (BA 7), "Donna Summer" (BA 14), "Prince" (BA 19), "Madonna and Oscar Wilde" (BA 25), "Vivienne Westwood", "Elvis Costello" and "The Police" (BA 113). Everything seems to have merged into and been swallowed by the entertainment industry – even religious symbols. Ironically "Religion" is the name of a night-club, "Masters of Enlightenment" an Asian punk band (BA 113) and "The Underworld" (BA 115) a student bar. Shahid also blends the two intrinsically divided spheres, writing a poem for his lover, entitled "The Prayer-mat of the Flesh" (BA 134) and turning Riaz' poetry into pornography.

This Western cultural code similarly pervades Kureishi's choice of language. Apart from the occasional interspersal of the typically Indian/Pakistani word "yaar" at the end of sentences (cf. BA 7, 168, 215, etc.), the novel does not feature any foreign language elements. Thus, no techniques of heteroglossia, abrogation or appropriation are employed that could disrupt the dominant cultural code. Language as such is not foregrounded, and regional or cultural varieties are only briefly mentioned but not used. The Muslim girl Tahira, for instance, is described as having a "northern accent [...] from Leeds or Bradford" (BA 36), which, however, cannot be derived from her part of speech. Riaz is the only character who (being in his fifties) was not born in Britain and therefore possesses an accent that "was certainly a compound of both places [Lahore and Leeds], which explained why he sounded like a cross between J.B. Priestley and Zia Al Haq. But his English was precise and without slang" (BA 6). This accent is also something we cannot derive from the written word.

The only deviations from standard English are 'social varieties' marked by frequent instances of incorrect grammar use, visible in the slippage of verbs or the third person singular -s, especially in Chad's utterances. Such devices can be used to indicate unfamiliarity with the English language of characters from different cultural backgrounds. However, it does not become clear in these scenes whether Chad, whose first language is English, just uses teenage slang or tries to imitate a Pakistani accent to blend in. He also wears a Salwar Khamiz to underline his foreignness and Pakistani identity, despite his English family and upbringing. In his desire to belong, he tries to assimilate, even in terms of language use. Thus, it is intriguing that he uses correct English in an educated way in discussions with Shahid and falls back into informal, grammatically incorrect English when he is in the anti-intellectual company of his Muslim friends (e.g.cf. BA 91). Similarly, Shahid's wavering between two at first sight diametrically opposed worlds is also in some passages reflected in his choice of language. In talking to his Muslim brothers he makes uncharacteristic grammar mistakes, such as skipping the third person singular –s (cf. BA 127). This may, again, signify an adjustment to teenage slang or a subconscious attempt at assimilation. Another explanation might be that Kureishi emphasises language more as a social than an ethnic or cultural marker of distinction. Chad uses similar colloquial English to the drug dealer Strapper and the racist, socially disadvantaged mother who abuses the Bengali family Shahid and his friends want to protect.

A fourth important influence next to class, race and religion are communal demands. Kureishi presents inner-cultural as well as inter-generational conflicts which

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

may put pressure on an individual. These conflicts also apply to the protagonist's family. It is, for instance, difficult to determine which system of moral or religious values Shahid's Pakistani friends and family adhere to. The novel leaves the reader with the impression that the characters basically tend to believe in what promotes their safety and well-being in a certain situation. Shahid's father and brother Chili do not adhere to any humanist or religious values. They do whatever pleases them and brings profit. The only limitation seems to be the fact that it is expected of all family members to be diligent, earn a lot of money and therewith honour and support the family. Or as his father asks Shahid reproachfully after he found out about his writing: "Can't you stick to your studies? My nephews are lawyers, bankers and doctors. Ahmed has gone into the hat trade and built a sauna in his house! These artist types are always poor – how will you look relatives in the face?" (BA 75). Expectations are thus culturally determined, not religiously. And even these guidelines seem to be under attack by the new generation, who is not keen any more on working hard for an extra profit. As Chili puts it:

> You see them, our people, the Pakis, in their dirty shops, surly, humourless, their fat sons and ugly daughters watching you, taking the money. The prices are extortionate, because they open all hours. The new Jews, everyone hates them. In a few years the kids will kick their parents in the teeth. Sitting in some crummy shop, it won't be enough for them. [...] We ain't a generation to make sacrifices (BA 201).

While humility and a renunciation of luxury are essential to Islam they do not seem to be embedded in Pakistani culture as such, where title, wealth and social standing seem to determine one's place in society to a larger degree than piety. Only the characters that are poor, lack education and prospects in life or feel harassed and disadvantaged by the majority society and excluded from the benefits of the Western economic and political system are presented as being pious. Ranasinha rightfully highlights that Kureishi, despite recurrent hints at racist tensions, does not only focus on inter-cultural conflicts but also takes a closer look at inner-cultural problems and other factors which may demand loyalty and determine individual identity:

> Unlike first-generation immigrant writers who tend to focus on conflicts *between* cultures, Kureishi and other British-born writers 'reflect' discord between generations and *within* communities. Kureishi's texts demonstrate that identities cannot be exclusively considered in terms of cultural difference, but need to be examined in relation to other differences of generation, class, gender and sexual orientation. […]
> The choice is really one of how to define oneself within the group and balance competing demands between self and others. The tension between the communal and the individual is at the heart of all Kureishi's work (Ranasinha 2002: 14 and 19).

A fifth important component of individual identity and a force which is presented as unifying principle is gender and sexuality. Sexuality is presented as a distracting as well as equalising force with the power to surmount all boundaries of outward demarcation. Sexuality and religion seem to be double-faced in equal measure in that they are both liberating and restraining, attractive and repellent, empowering and degrading. They fascinate people and seem to be able to overcome barriers of race, class and other inequalities, creating multifaceted communities by only one aim: to enjoy life to

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

the fullest in the case of unrestrained sexuality, and to build a community of the righteous to enforce a universal acceptance of Islamic values in the case of religious fundamentalism. Both religion and sexuality satisfy fundamental human needs and are presented as equalising principles. This aspect is accentuated in the description of Shahid's experience at the mosque:

> Here race and class barriers had been suspended. There were businessmen in expensive suits, others in London Underground and Post Office uniforms; bowed old men in salwar kamiz fiddled with beads. [...] There were dozens of languages. Strangers spoke to one another. The atmosphere was uncompetitive, peaceful, mediative (BA 132).

The Black Album depicts sexuality as a similar driving force of unity as well as of hybridity. Not only do race and class fade into the background when sexuality comes into play, but even the borders of sex are blurred and questioned, as the cross-dressing scene between Deedee and Shahid demonstrates. Kureishi spares the reader no details in his description of sex scenes that range from orgies to practices bordering on fetish. When Shahid agrees to let Deedee take over and transform him into a woman with make-up and dress, he feels "relief", as if "a burden went, a certain responsibility had been removed" (BA 117). The scene can be analysed in line with Stuart Hall's concept of 'cross-cutting identities', which highlights the many facets by which individual identity is determined. At the same time, it shows that an escape from rigid categorisations can have a liberating effect and that the protagonist's identity is not cast in stone yet.

It is structurally remarkable in this respect that we sometimes seem to get a bird's-eye view during these sex-scenes, which grant us short glimpses of Deedee's consciousness (e.g. cf. BA 116-117). Readers are drawn into the sequences as 'silent spectators', which endows these interludes with a voyeuristic quality. The scenes indicate how Deedee as "pornographic priestess" (BA 228) takes over control and offers a seemingly 'objective view' of an intensely subjective moment that acts on the maxim: "There's only now" (BA 117). Kaleta also points to the political dimension of sexual submission and domination and the link between sexuality and power:

> Their affair illuminates the message that sex is power. In Kureishi's novel, power is dynamic. Shahid, reduced first to a powerless little boy and then to a sex object, becomes free to move from resignation to hedonism. Deedee first demands mastery and later chooses conspiracy. […] The characters' sexual roles are self-determined. […] Sexual fantasy and political role reversal coexist (Kaleta 1998: 124).

It is striking to see how religion and sexuality are equally brought in connection with power and the potential to overcome boundaries. However, despite its oftentimes degrading nature, sexuality is – as Kaleta notes – presented as self-determined and associated with choice rather than need and imposition. Despite the – in my view quite negative, dehumanising passages (a notion shared by Buchanan 2006: 63) – sexuality seems to embody more freedom and lightness, which is figuratively underlined by the bird's-eye perspective.

A previous scene, in which the protagonist participates in an orgy, also features this outside perspective, which might – in that case – also illustrate the effect of the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

drugs Shahid uses and his overall loss of control. The protagonist feels disjointed from his body and mind, which is reflected in the abrupt shift from his contemplation in free indirect thought to a narratorial description of his actions:

> He needed to find a pen and list the reasons for living. But what on the list could be comparable to the feeling of this drug? He had been let into a dangerous secret; once it had been revealed, much of life, regarded from this high vantage point, could seem quite small. He and the girl next to him were kissing, drawing on one another's tongues until they felt their heads would fuse (BA 63).

The reader becomes a bystander, who is looking down on the action, just as the protagonist who seems strangely detached ("Am I going to start thinking I can fly?", BA 60).

As O'Shea-Meddour accentuates, these scenes are often directly followed and counteracted by the description of Muslim fundamentalist narrow-mindedness and hatred. The cross-dressing scene, for instance, is followed by Shahid's thoughts about the brotherhood's stance towards homosexuality:

> In passing, Hat had stated that homosexuals should be beheaded, though first they should be offered the option of marriage. Riaz had become interested and said that God would burn homosexuals for ever [sic] in hell, scorching their flesh in a furnace before replacing their skin as new, and repeating this throughout eternity. [...] Riaz's hatred had been so cool, so certain (BA 119).

O'Shea-Meddour argues that by means of this technique, which contrasts extreme positions in direct succession to one another,

> [r]eaders who question the merit or narrative pleasure of Kureishi's pornographic scenes are quickly shocked back into the mainstream 'liberal' position. The text suggests that disloyalty to liberal values (extremist or otherwise) will result in a world in which barbaric, homophobic, Muslim 'fundamentalists' – with their Ian Paisley-style tirades – will gain power (O'Shea-Meddour, 2007: 96).

I would like to argue, though, that the direct confrontation of one negative extreme by the opposite pole does not necessarily serve to present the form of Western liberalism or hedonism in a more positive light. The text neither presents the Islamic fundamentalist group as a serious threat to the liberal order nor is postmodern hedonist culture identified as less hazardous for the health, happiness and psychological integrity of the characters. This form of freedom does not stand for liberty but for disorientation, instrumentalisation and emptiness. Both extremes are depicted as lifeless and devoid of compassion and humour. In Kureishi's world "[l]ike pornography, religion couldn't admit the comic" (BA 150). On the one hand, Shahid cannot resist the temptations Deedee and her way of life represent, but, on the other hand, he is constantly reminded how shallow this way of life is. It is Riaz who saves him from choking on his own vomit after a party night.

Due to the variety of conflicting loyalties and demands, Shahid feels increasingly torn between the pleasures and freedoms Deedee promises him and a need to lead a meaningful life devoted to more altruistic values. He experiences great highs when exploring his freedoms but also feels that "[s]omewhere in his mind there lurked desolation: the things he normally liked had been drained off and not only could he not

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

locate them, he couldn't remember what they were. He needed to find a pen and list the reasons for living" (BA 63). The protagonist tries to derive his identity from his membership in the Muslim circle to fill this void but increasingly seems to suffer from a severe crisis and frustrating disorientation:

> He believed everything; he believed nothing. His own self increasingly confounded him. One day he could passionately feel one thing, the next day the opposite. Other times provisional states would alternate from hour to hour; sometimes all crashed into chaos. He would wake up with this feeling: who would he turn out to be on this day? How many warring selves were there within him? Which was his real, natural self? Was there such a thing? [...] Lost in such a room of broken mirrors, with jagged reflection backing into eternity, he felt numb (BA 147).

It is difficult for Shahid to make a decision, partly because *The Black Album* presents all alternatives as polar opposites. There is no trace of the millions of Muslims who endorse in dialogue. There is only belief or disbelief and nothing in between. Or, as Hat puts it: "[O]ur religion isn't something you can test out, like trying on a suit to see if it fit! You gotta buy the whole outfit!" (BA 235). This inability to combine different things which are important to him and the mounting aggression on both sides culminates in an identity crisis:

> He couldn't begin to tell the sane from the mad, wrong from right, good from bad. Where would one start? None of this would lead to the good. But what did? Who knew? What would make them right? Everything was in motion: nothing could be stopped, the world was swirling, its compasses spinning. History was unwinding in his head into chaos, and he was tumbling through space. Where would he land? (BA 220).

Shahid finally decides that he is not willing to buy anything whole – neither religion nor liberal ideology. He resists all attempts to be pigeonholed and is not willing to give up facets of his own personality in order to belong. *The Black Album* presents this "hankering after a fixed, unbending, originary identity" (Yousaf 2002: 44) as problematic. The novel "can be read as refuting any vestigial belief in transcendental racial or cultural categories [...which] is not the sole purview of whites but also of immigrants, especially those who espouse an uncritical orthodoxy" (ebd.).

The Black Album represents cultural identity as a "fluid and manmade construct" (Hall 1994: 30), which echoes Hall's idea that modern identities are never unified but increasingly decentred, dislocated and fragmented (Hall 1994: 180). The novel exemplifies how the pluralisation of identity leads to the competition of different identity markers for allegiance and the development of social movements which fight for their own identity politics.[134] Not only with respect to religion, but also with respect to feminism and sexuality (as represented by Deedee) or political ideology and class affiliation (Brownlow), matters of identification develop into political matters. Riaz' Muslim Brotherhood, furthermore, can be seen as an example of Hall's claim that our globalised age elicits more and more people who seem to be in need of a counter-identity and thus retreat to minority identities (such as religious orthodoxy).

134 For insightful analyses of the representation of identity politics, hybridity and Englishness in *The Black Album*, see Kurtén (2002), Godlasky (2006) and Ricci (2011).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Kureishi confessed in an interview concerning the prevalence of identity politics in Britain:

> 'I've got sick of identity politics, and […] I'm tired of niche marketing for minorities. There was a time when it was useful and politically potent to define oneself as Lesbian, gay, Black, Asian, Muslim, Hindu, transsexual. All those definitions came out of the 1970s, were refined in the 1980s, and really developed under Blair. It seems that now we need wider identifications, in terms, probably, of class, or other identifications that we haven't thought of yet. The important identifications are of the people who need jobs, or housing. Their demands are not to do with their ethnicity, but their positions as regards the financial crash. A poor Muslim, a poor gay, and so on, would have more in common with each other in terms of wanting education, resources, or work. New creative forms of alliances are needed. It seems to me that class – where you stand in terms of your positioning with power – is increasingly important. In the light of the recent financial collapse, you can see that class really is present and always has been' (Chambers 2011: 236-237).

Fortified by recent developments following the world financial crisis, Kureishi reinforces the notion of class and the social question as primary concerns of our age, which overshadow all other forms of identity politics. As *The Black Album* indicates, black people may have become fashionable and more visible in popular culture and the entertainment industry but not in other more important fields. Or as Stuart Hall summarises in his article "The Spectacle of the Other": "While black figures and celebrities may have exploded across the field of popular representation, there remains marked limits to their representation and participation in the centres of cultural and economic power" (Hall 2013: 269). The protagonists of *A Week in December* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which will be the next work under scrutiny, show that there are possibilities of upward social mobility. Kureishi's protagonist does not come from a poor family, either. However, the novel underlines that these opportunities are not the rule for immigrants. To be successful in a society which still singles out its ethnic and religious minorities, an individual has to work very hard to succeed. Moreover, the force of conflicting demands and loyalties may lead to difficult processes of identity formation, as many of the novels in this literary corpus outline.

5.2.4): "[T]here must be more to living than swallowing one old book"[135]: *The Black Album* in the light of ethical criticism and literature as 'cultural ecology'

The novels by Kureishi and Faulks have much in common concerning their portrayal of London as a metropolis of extremes. Both Islamic radicalism and Western lifestyles seem to possess fundamentalist qualities and do not suffice to make life worth living. Similar to *A Week in December*, *The Black Album* addresses the topic of literature and art as important sources of meaning and value. Shahid cherishes literature and art, which are simultaneously seen as a threat or even heresy by the Muslim circle he strives to belong to.

135 BA 272.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Chad, for instance, inverts the common argument claiming that Islamic fundamentalism subjugates people's freedom when he asks Shahid: "[T]he music and fashion industries. They tell us what to wear, where to go, what to listen to. Ain't we their slaves? [...] Don't you want to swim in a clean sea and see by a clear light?" (BA 79). Shahid, however, utters an interesting thought that recurrently comes through in *The Black Album*: "Isn't that what art helps us do? Life would be a desert otherwise" (BA 79). First of all, this reasoning is interesting because Chad turns the common argument against Islamic fundamentalism on its head by claiming that it is Western consumerism which dictates people's lives, commands them what to wear and turns people into slaves – not religion with its strict rules and codes of conduct. And second, the scene exemplifies the emphasis on literature as a medium that might change people's lives and even reverse it. In this respect, Kureishi distinguishes pop culture, as advocated by Deedee, from the value of high culture that only Shahid seems to recognise.

One of the central scenes in the novel is the depiction of the book-burning of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Riaz views fiction as a form of corruption and books like the one by Rushdie as tools of the élite to assume an air of importance and look down on other people of their culture:

> 'You see, all fiction is, by its very nature, a form of lying – a perversion of truth. [...T]here are many fictions that expose a corrupt nature. These are created by authors, who cannot, we might say, hold their ink. These yarn-spinners have usually grovelled for acceptance to the white élite so they can be considered "great authors". They like to pretend they are revealing the truth to the masses – these uncultured, half-illiterate fools. But they know nothing of the masses. The only poor people they meet are their servants ['] (BA 182).

Riaz here, again, alludes to the issue of class, which is connected to the topic of ethnicity and the question of who is granted the right to speak 'for' a community. Literature seems to be seen by several of the Muslim characters who lack an education as tool of intellectuals to prove their superiority to other people (e.g. BA 21). Shahid, however, underlines the important role of literature for every individual as a means of self-exploration as well as an important carrier of meaning illuminating our interactions with others: "Surely literature helps us reflect on our nature? [...] A free imagination, looking into itself, illuminates others" (BA 183). In this vein, Moore-Gilbert points to the underlying tension in the novel between a symbolic embrace of the freedom of the individual in general or the artist in particular and the recognition that the present religious and intercultural conflicts may not be solved by exclusively pointing to these rights (Moore-Gilbert 2001: 147). Shahid defends the voice of the individual and their right to ask questions and think critically. He perceives literature even more than religion as a medium that is able to explain life, give answers and comfort – a feeling that is denied to characters such as Chad who lack the education to make use of it:

> 'How old are you – eight? Aren't there millions of serious things to be done?' Chad pointed towards the window. 'Out there...it's genocide. Rape. Oppression. Murder. The history of this world is – slaughter. And you reading stories like some old grandma.' [...] 'But don't

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> writers try to explain genocide and that kind of thing? Novels are like a picture of life. [...] Literature is more than entertainment' (BA 21).

In the end, humanist values and the power of literature and culture are the only things the novel really attributes positive value to. Deploring the social problems in his environment that recurrently lead to violence, the protagonist despises less other people's immorality than their ignorance:

> All around Shahid people whose eyes burned with blame and resentment. Maybe they were the sort who operated the concentration camps. Didn't they have any pride or shame? How could they bear their own ignorance, living without culture, their lives reduced to watching soap operas three-quarters of the day? They were powerless and lost. It occurred to Shahid that Riaz's group should do something amongst the people in the block, listening, handing out information, not dismissing them all (BA 136-137).

Whereas Riaz stresses the necessity of obedience to virtues and unquestioned piety and belief, Shahid points out education and critical thinking as central stepping stones on the way to a self-determined and dignified life that offers future prospects. He adheres to humanist educational ideals. Moreover, the harsh image of 'concentration camps' broaches the issue of individual responsibility for societal problems. The protagonist singles out hatred, ignorance and a lack of culture as central roots of evil and therewith disqualifies Riaz' approach. Regardless of the Muslim brothers' claim that 'the enemies of their religious beliefs' have to be destroyed, Shahid believes in repentance and positive change. Contemplating his brother's behaviour, Shahid realises that he

> couldn't help being glad that Chili was in trouble. He'd got away with lying, deceit and contempt for others for as long as Shahid could remember. If there was such a thing as natural justice, Chili deserved punishment. When younger, Shahid had, himself, continually attempted revenge. [...] Neverthe-less, [sic.] Shahid didn't want Chili to be destroyed. He wanted him to recognize something about himself and change as a result (BA 146).

The Rushdie affair and the concomitant book burnings in Muslim communities in England and many other countries are central events in the novel and important to the author himself, since Kureishi is a friend of Salman Rushdie's and was very concerned about these developments. In his essay "Newness to the World" he describes his thoughts on the events, which again preoccupied his mind during his research for writing *The Black Album*:

> Some of the attitudes among the kids I talked to for *The Black Album* reminded me of Nietzche's [sic.] analysis of the origins of religion, in particular his idea that religion – and Nietzche [sic.] was referring to Christianity – was the aggression of the weak, of the victim or oppressed. These attacks on the West, and the religion they were supposed to protect, were in fact a form of highly organized resentment or bitterness, developed out of colonialism, racism and envy. The violent criticism of Rushdie, an exceptionally gifted artist of whom the community should have been proud, was in fact a hatred of talent and of the exceptional, a kind of forced equalization from a religion which had not only become culturally and intellectually mediocre, but which was looking to the far past for a solution to contemporary difficulties (Kureishi 2011: 118).

When Kureishi describes Islam as 'culturally and intellectually mediocre', he uses harsh words. As an atheist he does not seem to be able to comprehend this kind of

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

bigotry he sees embodied in book burnings and violent attacks. However, the author radiates understanding for the reasons he perceives as crucial factors for the rise of fundamentalist ideas. He sees the economic and social deprivation but even more the exclusion of and racial hatred directed against the youths he speaks with. He sees their struggle to develop a British identity, because their racial, ethnic, cultural or religious background prevents them from being regarded as 'British' by the white British majority. Kureishi seems to explain the phenomenon of home-grown Islamism with continuing discrimination, a sense of inferiority and a lack of future prospects perceived by many immigrants.

In addition to these socio-political attempts at explaining the phenomenon, Kureishi also hints at the power of literature to challenge and transform – in a good as well as dangerous way:

> The Iranian condemnation of a writer had, after all, been aimed at his words. What, then, was the relation between free speech and respect? What could and could not be said in a liberal society? […] The coercive force of language was something I had long been aware of. As a mixed-race child growing up in a white suburb, the debased language used about immigrants and their families had helped fix and limit my identity. My early attempts to write now seem like an attempt to undo this stasis, to create a more fluid and complicated self through storytelling. One of the uses of literature is that it will enable individuals to enlarge their sense of self – their vocabulary, the store of ideas they use to think about themselves (Kureishi 2011: 114-115).

With this comment Kureishi not only refers to the potential explosive political and religious power of literature but also to its use as a weapon for good or bad ideological purposes. Literature is presented as a basic need of human beings and a necessary tool to create their identity. Life consists of stories, and how we choose to tell these stories partly also determines who we are or who we want to be.

This definition of identity is influenced by several diverse and at times conflicting factors. As we have seen, hybridity is one of the central topics of *The Black Album*. Even the ending seems to be hybrid in that it is half open and half closed. Some plotlines come to an end, but the protagonist's journey is still at its beginning. Brownlow seems at the end of his tether and the communist ideology he believed in has turned out to be a historical failure in practice. The radical Muslims' plan to bomb a bookshop turns out to be self-destructive, with horrible consequences for Chad, who is dramatically wounded. Shahid finally prefers Western 'liberalism' and freedom of expression to religious fanaticism and stays with his lover. This turn seems plausible in the light of these developments, but comes quite sudden, is not really psychologically believable and, beyond that, offers no solution to Shahid's central questions. The main conflicts between the pursuit of pleasure and his conscience, social responsibilities, and political interests remain unresolved. What is more, the ending indicates that Shahid's decision is not final:

> He had to find some sense in his recent experiences; he wanted to know and understand. How could anyone confine themselves to one system or creed? Why should they feel they had to? There was no fixed self; surely our several selves melted and mutated daily? There had to be innumerable ways of being in the world. He would spread himself out, in his work and in love, following his curiosity. [...] He didn't have to think about anything. They

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> looked across at one another as if to say, what new adventure is this? 'Until it stops being fun,' she said. 'Until then,' he said (BA 274 and 276).

Freedom and sexual liberty is what he wants for the moment, but he still hasn't established his identity or goals in life. Furthermore, as Hammond notes, "Shahid's quest leads him to realise an abstract syncretism [...but] he evolves no political agenda, and fails to determine how the cultural divisions examined in the novel are to be overcome" (Hammond 2007: 238).

What is remarkable about the ending, in my view, is especially Kureishi's own evaluation of it. Often criticised as indeterminate or shallow (e.g. cf. Buchanan 2006: 67), Kureishi counters in an interview: "What I like about their relationship was the provisionality of it. [...] And that sets a fluidity. It makes their relationship a good one" (Kaleta 1998: 125). The novel seems to endorse a belief in the necessity of humanist values and lasting principles, but also embraces a fundamental optimism concerning the liberating and positive potential of provisionality, mutability and transitoriness. This "postmodern erosion of boundaries and definitions" (Holmes 2001: 308) is celebrated, despite the knowledge of "that what is sacrificed in such a fluid world is stability and enduring purpose" (ibid.). In the end, the protagonist comes to a conclusion that highlights this postmodern moment in *The Black Album* and its rejection of any fixed meanings and categories: "There was no fixed self; surely our several selves melted and mutated daily? There had to be innumerable ways of being in the world. He would spread himself out, in his work and in love, following his curiosity" (BA 228).

In the introductory chapter on narrative theory, I made the assumption that the representation of consciousness is mainly used in this literary corpus to flesh out the main topics surrounding ethics, religion and politics. For *The Black Album*, this holds true only with restrictions. Social and political issues (such as racism and social dislocations) are indeed a major topic and concern for the protagonist. They are presented as triggers of fundamentalist radicalisation, but religion, ethics and politics are nevertheless not illustrated. Especially religious positions remain vague and relatively undefined due to the fact that they do not take centre stage in Kureishi's novel.

Critics have been indecisive about the evaluation of Islamic fundamentalism in *The Black Album*. Whereas Ranasinha criticises the privileging of Western hedonism against a form of Islam that is presented as stereotypically anti-modern, anti-intellectual, violent and monolithic (cf. Ranasinha 2002: 82-92), Moore-Gilbert highlights the positive elements in the portrayal of Islamic fundamentalists and the criticism of Western lifestyle with its lack of moral integrity and its hidden ethnocentrism (cf. Moore-Gilbert 2001: 135-143). Concerning this criticism, I hold the opinion that the author aimed at no point in time at a mimetic depiction of reality. Kureishi may ignore different forms of Islamic belief but he also ignores the variety of 'Western lifestyles'. But then, these nuances are not the topic of his novel in the first place, since it mainly focuses on the questions of identity and belonging against a background of different and sometimes even polar choices. I agree with Thomas, who argues that

> it is worth noting here that Kureishi intended to represent the 'fundamentalists' with sympathy and to show how the rise in militant Islam amongst the young in the west is in part a defence against racism and alienation. As in previous works of Kureishi, there is also the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> issue of whether he is seen by the media as an 'insider', but he makes it clear that he writes as a liberal individualist and not as a spokesperson for the British Asian Muslim community. But above all, *The Black Album* raised the question of a writer's responsibility to combat negative stereotyping, especially during a time of rising Muslimophobia (Thomas 2005: 103).

By means of quite drastic (and deliberately exaggerated and ironic) descriptions, the novel points to the attractiveness as well as the downturns of 'Islamic fundamentalist ideals' and 'Western liberalism' alike. It exaggerates both ways of life to a great extent in order to display the absurdity of both alternatives. What Kureishi seems most interested in are the ways in which sexuality or religion can be used as a tool to achieve a (temporary) harmony among people from different classes and cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Both models are presented as having so much appeal because they seem to enable a synthesis, a fusing and understanding of individuals that are so diverse that their coexistence is normally often scarred by conflict, friction, alienation and sometimes even hatred. Meetings at the mosque, where people from various different backgrounds come together to pray and talk, seem to follow the same egalitarian principles as the orgies Deedee Osgood takes the protagonist to. By adopting the respective code and submitting to the ruling principles, one becomes a member of a community that does not seem to ask about one's whereabouts.

Kureishi's novel (as many of his other works, such as *The Buddha of Suburbia* or *Something to tell you*) elucidates a concept of hybridity which seems to be strongly influenced by Stuart Hall's model of cross-cutting identities. This is also reflected by the title. *The Black Album* is the title of a famous record by Prince, who became a symbol of hybridity due to his daring experiments with cross-dressing and an ever-changing repertoire of artistic figures, which challenged the boundaries of ethnicity and gender. As Deedee Osgood summarises: "He's half black and half white, half man, half woman, half size, feminine but macho too" (BA 25).

This preoccupation with hybridity and 'in-betweenness', which is also taken up by the references to pop culture and literature, is what makes *The Black Album* a postcolonial novel, despite its British setting and lack of foreign language elements. What makes the novel postcolonial in the first place is its "concern for 'halves', [...] the double vision, the 'in-between-ness', and the ambiguous nature of identity and identification" (Reichl 2007: 140). As Reichl reasons with respect to *The Buddha of Suburbia*: "to be a British novel and to be a postcolonial novel does not entail a contradiction. Rather, it draws attention to the way British society has changed and to the variety of the notion of the postcolonial" (Reichl 2007: 140). Just as Kureishi's first major novel, *The Black Album* can likewise find a home in both categories. It grants us a view of migrant life in a globalised and multicultural London, and it addresses the topic of identity as 'performance' and artificial 'construction' for all people, regardless of their ethnicity, class, gender or background. In this context, Kureishi performs a remarkable balancing act between different categories, thinks outside the box and manages to evade any final assertions:

> His irony, his dissection of British class antagonisms, and his immersion in popular culture all signal his 'Englishness'. His work is peopled with characters that resist being de-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> fined according to their ethnicity and labeled as irreconcilably 'different'. In the same way, his moves between genres and styles parallel his attempts to find freedom of identity outside formal definitions. Similarly, Kureishi rightly refuses to limit himself to the subjects marked for minority writers: the requirement to discuss matters of race in his work. […] T]his ambivalence and ironic distance makes his work more difficult to interpret politically. His irony is itself a refusal to commit (Ranasinha 2002: 5).

As we have seen, the novel addresses many ethical questions. The protagonist seems to repeat Haker's claim that narrative is central for the constitution of our moral identity (Haker 2000: 49), as has been outlined in chapter 3. What is more, Kureishi's novel has a clear political dimension. It points to the political and social problems of the Thatcher-era and connects them to the phenomenon of 'home-grown' Islamic fundamentalism, foregrounding marginalised elements of society, imagining what might become of them due to their marginalisation. Referring to the categories Martha Nussbaum is interested in, we can, however, see that Kureishi (in contrast to Khadra, as we are going to see in the next chapters) addresses our intellect rather than our emotion. The focus on Shahid's perspective induces sympathy with his position. The reader is drawn into his emotional world, but since most fundamentalist characters are rather one-dimensional and we do not get any insight into their consciousness, the reader is not likely to empathise with these characters. Nussbaum is also interested in whether characters might serve as symbols of more general principles. This holds true for *The Black Album*, as we have seen with respect to Chili and Deedee (Western hedonism), Brownlow (Communism) and Riaz (Islamic fundamentalism). In the end of the novel, not only the characters have failed but the ideas they represent seem to be discredited as well. Thus Nussbaum's central question what a text shows "*about* human life, *about* knowledge, about personality, about how to live" (Nussbaum 1992: 35), can be at least partly answered by what is ruled out. The novel undermines essentialist readings of all kinds. Despite their equalising potential, religious and liberal fundamentalism are also forces that may humiliate the individual and are not reconcilable with a humanist understanding of individual worth and dignity. Knowledge is never absolute and personality is influenced by the fluid processes of identity formation. To enjoy one's freedom of thought and explore one's potential seems to be the only way of coming at least closer to a good life. The hero of the story asks many questions and shares common insecurities, which invites readers to accompany him on his journey. Highlighting the potential of Kureishi's novel to shed light on societal issues that are central to develop an understanding of the phenomenon of home-grown terrorism, Upstone holds the opinion that Kureishi asks us "to read literature as direct social engagement" (Upstone 2008: 20).

The individual in *The Black Album* strives for unlimited self-fulfilment and joy and does assign high value to other people. Lovers and partners are interchangeable. Human dignity, personal integrity and physical health are under attack: from the outside by humiliating racist attitudes and assaults as well as from the inside by self-destructive behaviour such as drug abuse and an unquestioned willingness to submit to sexual practices that reduce human beings to mere toys for the sexual experimentation of others. The individual is a hybrid, whose identity is subjected to a variety of

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

conflicting ethnic, cultural, religious, sexual and political forces. The novel leaves no doubt that unrestricted sexuality without any love, values and care is empty and sad and nothing but a mere "exchange of skills and performances" (BA 240). Despite the thrill of experimentation and irresponsibility, the protagonist feels that Riaz is right in his claim that

> without a framework in which love could flourish – given by God and established in society – love was impossible. Otherwise, people merely rented one another for a period. In this faithless interlude they hoped to obtain pleasure and distraction; they even hoped to discover something, which would complete them. And if they didn't soon receive it, they threw the person over and moved on. And on. In such circumstances what permanence or deep knowing could there be? (BA 240).

The novel here endorses the value of the individual and the belief that no one should be instrumentalised, because every individual possesses dignity and worth. This conviction, however, is not only inherent to Islam but also to a Christian anthropology and to secular humanism as expressed in many legal constitutions.[136] And this humanist worldview is what Kureishi's characters actually long for, but which only occasionally shines through without ever being realised in *The Black Album*. A humanist position is indicated at times by the protagonist but represents a gap in the society Kureishi portrays. This marks a difference to the novels by Faulks and Khadra, which feature characters that can be seen as strong advocates of humanism.

While the novels by Yasmina Khadra for instance reflect a hope that there can always be redemption and morality, which is not necessarily grounded in religion but in personal integrity and conscience, Kureishi's novel leaves doubts about the assertiveness of moral values in this world. His art primarily hints at the fragility and vulnerability of the human personality, its constant and never-ending search for individual identity and its painful yearning for belonging. Religion is no solution in this world, but it seems doubtful if any solution exists at all. At times it seems as if all values were constantly changing and historically variable without any reliable moral scale. Kureishi himself is a humanist who states: "Secular liberalism seems to me the only hope" (Chambers 2011: 240). Thus the individualism, the yearning for freedom and the end of fundamentalism and prejudices described in the novel seem to be in line with the author's thoughts on the topic.

With respect to literary functions and Zapf's concept of 'literature as cultural ecology', the novel can be seen as a 'culture-critical metadiscourse' in that it highlights the tensions between different centres of authority which are struggling for dominance and cause a state of self-alienation for the protagonist. The novel portrays the social, political and economic imbalances in Britain during the 1980s and hints at underlying dualisms and double-standards. Kureishi has often been labelled as a minority writer. However, it has to be stated that he does neither speak for a specific ethnic or religious minority in Britain, nor concentrate on only one group. As Fischer

136 The first preamble article of the German constitution, which starts with the sentence 'Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar', lays the foundation and determines the tone for all following laws and regulations.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

rightfully outlines, Kureishi "refuses to keep people and their cultures separate and 'pure'" but instead creates "complex characters from a broad cross section of society in terms of ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, sexuality, and age" (Fischer 2015: 70-71). Kureishi's stories and characters are multifaceted, difficult to label and sometimes also contradictory. Binaries are exaggerated just to be subverted in the end.

Furthermore, *The Black Album* can be regarded as an imaginative counter-discourse. It clearly takes a stand for marginalised groups, even though Kureishi avoids a sole focus on religion and ethnicity. The characters that turn to Muslim fundamentalist beliefs do so because of their racial, social and economic marginalisation in Britain. Their views are presented as incompatible with the dominant discourse. Thus, my initial supposition that many novels exemplify the fragmentation of beliefs and value-systems within Western societies, make marginalised voices heard and reflect a form of social criticism which expresses scepticism towards simple truths, be they religious, economic or political, definitely holds true for this novel. However, it has to be admitted that, till the present day, Kureishi's strategy is evaluated in a very different way by some Muslim literary critics. In a study on Muslim identities in contemporary British novels, Majed, for instance, claims that "Kureishi has attempted to prove his Britishness by writing in favour of white culture" (Majed 2015: 52). He strongly criticises Kureishi's supposed rejection of his Muslim and Pakistani identity, his ostensible assimilation and proclamation of atheism. However, I believe this reading to be reductive, because it ignores Kureishi's criticism of all essentialist systems. His fiction refuses to be labelled in any way and embodies a counter-discourse to all ideologies that negate love and the zest for life.

Nonetheless, the novel does not emphasise a common humanist core of the different religious, secular and ideological approaches to life, which are outlined, but presents all of these approaches as failures and extremes that cannot be reconciled. In this regard, Kureishi's work is no 'reintegrative interdiscourse', since it creates no vision of cultural renewal and an integration of segregated discourses (cf. Zapf 2005: 67-71). The era under Margaret Thatcher is portrayed as a decade without a "renewal of the cultural center from its margins" (Zapf 2007: 158). The climate is characterised by stasis, decrepit structures and mutual distrust. No creativity seems to be gained by the collision of different discourses. Humanism has to be found outside of this system. Instead, *The Black Album* makes an appeal to the personal responsibility and ethics of the individual. What is presented as worthwhile in Kureishi's fiction is openness, culture and love that is guided by tolerance and curiosity. The relationship between Deedee and Shahid seems to work because it is based on love for the freedom of thought and a curious interest in the other person. The joy about the unpredictable and beautiful facets of life itself seems to have the power to supersede all differences which separate these two characters. "In seeking 'a better philosophy' through the radical possibilities of both love and culture, Kureishi thus reclaims a central role for the outsider, the artist, and the intellectual in the twenty-first century", Fischer summarises (Fischer 2015: 84). The author does not seem to believe in the redeeming potential of opposed groups and value systems to come to terms with each other, but he believes in the strength and dignity of the individual who might achieve this reinte-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

gration. At the end of the novel the protagonist has discarded many fundamentalist ideas but still remains undecided about the eventual course and meaning of his life. However, the novel indicates that he will find the right way as long as he asserts his freedom of opinion and his individuality against all possessive essentialist ideologies.

5.3) A story of disappointed love and nostalgia: Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the power to subvert stereotypes by engaging the reader

The Reluctant Fundamentalist (RF) is a story of love, loss, nostalgia and disappointment. The protagonist Changez at first glance seems to live the American dream: Coming from a sophisticated but poor family in Lahore (Pakistan), he manages to get a scholarship for studying at Princeton. Through his intelligence, diligence and hard work he soon becomes one of the best graduates in his year and ascends into the ranks of high society. He also establishes close ties with Erica, a fellow American student who enchants him and with her tender fragility rouses his protective instinct. Hired on the spot by the valuation firm Underwood Samson & Company after his graduation, Changez moves to New York and finds a challenging and extremely well-paid new job as well as a boss who supports and personally likes him. Proud of himself and content with his life in America, Changez does not question his way of life until the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Triggered by the war in Afghanistan and the tensions between India and his home-country Pakistan, Changez experiences a crisis of identity. He feels as if he betrayed his own roots and people, serving a country which sacrifices its allies to its own interests and does nothing to help Pakistan against the supposed 'Indian aggression'. This feeling is amplified by the protagonist's work experience. Involved in the valuation of various companies in the U.S., as well as in developing countries, he has to face the repercussions of his actions for other people, whose means of subsistence are suddenly dependent on his decisions. The lack of social justice and the increasing disparity of income – both within the United States and between America and many developing and threshold countries – become more and more apparent to him and burden his conscience. Furthermore, he has to come to terms with a public atmosphere after 9/11 which is increasingly dominated by fear, distrust and hostility against Muslim immigrants. When his closest friend Erica, with whom he is in love, cannot fight her long-standing depression any longer and disappears without a trace from a mental hospital, his last tie to America is broken. Changez quits his job and returns to Pakistan. After some time, he starts working as a university lecturer and is classified abroad as 'anti-American' for criticising US foreign politics and taking a stand for greater Pakistani independence.

One of the most intriguing facts about *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is its remarkable narrative structure, which is intimately connected to the idea of turning the tables. The story is written in the form of a monologue. Changez tells his story to an ominous American visitor who is not granted a voice throughout the novel. The protagonist functions as an intra- and autodiegetic narrator. We only encounter fixed ex-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ternal focalisation. Due to the lack of internal focalisation or other multiperspectival narrative techniques, we are bound to a single, subjective vision. The narrator is very overt and comments constantly on other characters and their actions as well as on the storytelling itself and his own former social role in comparison to his present self. Since there are no other focalisers, every character is described by the protagonist. Due to this narrative strategy the text can be regarded as strongly diegetic.

The novel starts in medias res with Changez addressing an American he meets by chance in Lahore. He offers him his services due to his knowledge of the city. This frame-story follows Changez and his companion on one evening in a café in the city during which the protagonist narrates the story of his life in America. Since the interlocutor is never given a voice, the reader has to guess the remarks of the American on the basis of Changez' verbal reactions. First, this has a mystifying effect because the American remains obscure for us and we cannot gauge his character, ideas, and motives. This effect is intensified by the way Hamid creates insecurity and fear in the reader by means of an atmosphere of suspense and recurring hints that the stranger might be dangerous. Secondly, this narrative technique draws us more and more into the plot for we are invited to put ourselves into the silent stranger's shoes and listen to Changez' story as if it was told to us. This feeling is encouraged by the temporal structure of the framework plot, which lasts about as long as it takes us to read the novel. The pace of the main story, narrated in flashbacks, is, however rather fast and spans approximately ten years in twelve chapters of less than 200 pages. This marks a difference to *A Week in December*, for instance, which presents just one week on nearly 600 pages. Apart from the frame-story, the main plot unfolds chronologically. There seem to be no major omissions, even though events are generally described quite briefly. As we are going to see, the novel features a rather high degree of 'eventfulness'. Many events of high significance are narrated on a rather small number of pages. 9/11 and Erica's disappearance function as major turning points. Both events promote a change of outer circumstances and living conditions as well as an inner transformation for the protagonist. Both events are unpredictable, have persistent consequences and are irreversible and non-iterative, which, according to Schmid, suggests a high degree of eventfulness. The consequences are serious: Changez turns his back on the West and its economic ideals, loses his adoration and love for America and returns to Pakistan with his initial beliefs irreversibly shaken.

At the end of the novel, Changez has told his whole story up to the day he meets the American – starting with a holiday in Greece during which he met Erica up to his return to and current life in Pakistan. The flashbacks address different places and facets of his life, condensing political events as well as his professional and love life. But while the main plot is closed the frame provides us with an open ending. Until the end we do not know who is "predator or prey" (RF 31). We are not told why the protagonist tells his story to a total stranger in the first place. Following the development of his relationship towards America our curiosity is aroused. We are led to wonder whether he came to hate the country so much that he might have resorted to Islamic fundamentalist ideas. Similarly, there are various hints indicating that the ominous American might be armed and a CIA agent sent to kill the alleged anti-Ameri-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

can agitator. The novel ends with the sentences: "But why are you reaching into your jacket, sir? I detect a glint of metal. Given that you and I are now bound by a certain shared intimacy, I trust it is from the holder of your business cards" (RF 184). Whether the stranger really intends to kill the protagonist or if Changez, in turn, led him into a trap, we do not know. Our interpretation solely depends on our own reading of the text, but our reaction directs our attention to the central aspects of this novel: the role of fear, stereotypes and our own prejudices that are conjured up by the many open questions in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.*

5.3.1) Islamic fundamentalism, the subversion of stereotypes and the creation of narrative ambiguity

Irrespective of the expectations raised by the title of the novel, Hamid did not write a book on religious fundamentalism. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a work about identity, the relationship between self and other as well as questions of nationality and belonging. In this context, the novel bears many similarities to the other three major works of my literary corpus and broaches a variety of political and economic issues. The title, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, indicates that the protagonist undergoes a process of radicalisation, but the novel does not specify in the beginning in which ways this happens. As has been outlined in the previous chapters, all novels under discussion imply that Islamic radicalism is not the only form of fundamentalism. Hamid's novel bears many similarities to Faulks' *A Week in December* in that it first and foremost concentrates on the fundamentalist potential of Western capitalism. Events connected to the topic of Islamic fundamentalism, such as the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 and the war in Afghanistan, are mentioned as central influences for the protagonist. But they are not used to outline Islamic fundamentalist ideology. As the story unfolds, the reader comes to realise that it is the fundamentalist potential of Western capitalism the protagonist is increasingly reluctant to embrace.

The novel skilfully mocks stereotypes about Islam or the Arabic world and seems to turn the tables. First, because it is Changez who speaks and therewith appropriates and interprets the silent and nameless American who never receives a voice. As Shamsie argues, this embodies a "reversal of the traditional colonial narrative" (Shamsie 2009: 20). Second, this effect is achieved by the remarks the narrator addresses to his American interlocutor and by the way he comments on the reactions and behaviour of the man who remains so enigmatic to the reader. The form and the friendly, reassuring content satirises the fears and prejudices of the American. Changez himself seems to contradict all prejudices that might be associated with Islamic fundamentalist ideas. He shows no homophobia, which is often assigned to Muslims. No indignation is visible when "a gay gentleman" offers him "an invitational smile" (RF 48). The protagonist treats women with utter respect, politeness and warmth. Whereas some remarks tell us that the ominous American stares lewdly at some pretty girls who are dressed in Western fashion, Changez, due to his Pakistani upbringing, never

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

loses his shyness and even after four years in the United States and some sexual experience remains "acutely aware of visible female skin" (RF 26). Still he is neither presented as sexually repressed. He enjoys the sight of American girls who sunbathe topless instead of scorning them for impropriety.

Changez is at no point in the novel described as religious, let alone fanatical or a moraliser. He drinks beer, goes to parties and, apart from uttering a relieved and proud "Thank you, God!" (RF 14) after getting the job at Underwood Samson, never even mentions religion. The name of the protagonist even indicates that Changez might be the opposite of a devout Muslim. Hamid explains about the roots of the word 'Changez':

> Changez is an Urdu name for Genghis […] Genghis's role of course in southwest Asian history, that of the famous Genghis anyway, is of the invader who attacks and destroys the Caliphate, the largest and most successful Muslim empire of its time. So Changez is paradoxically a kind of warrior figure who is counter Muslim. That notion interested me in creating this character because when he works in the corporate world there is a certain warrior aspect to him, there is a sort of martial overtone in the way he thinks about life. He does see himself, to a certain extent, as a sort of warrior. The audience is encouraged in seeing him as a warrior. But on whose behalf? That is not really answered. For people who are familiar with Muslim history, the Changez name is a warning not to read this character as his appearance would suggest. He has a beard and he is Pakistani, but don't assume he stands for Muslims, because his name implies the opposite (Hamid 2009 (b): 237).

Overall, several terms are used that carry a religious connotation but are employed in rather unorthodox ways. In the context of Changez' encounter with Juan-Bautista, the boss of a small publishing company in Valparaiso that the protagonist has to valuate, the symbol of the 'veil' is used, but not in a religious context. The protagonist feels that Juan-Bautista helped him "to push back the veil behind which all this had been concealed" (RF 157). With 'this' he apparently refers to American political, military and economic domination. It feels as if Hamid constantly brings up images which may provoke certain associations in the reader, just to disappoint them in the end. Similarly, Changez' beard, which is mistaken in public as a sign of orthodox religiosity, is only a sign of inner conflict and defiance for the protagonist and is even less symbolical for his family. It can nearly be described as a comic scene when the narrator recounts his mother's request that he should shave: "'Why?' I asked, indicating my father and brother. 'They have beards.' 'They,' she replied, 'have them only because they wish to hide the fact that they are bald. Besides, you are still a boy [...] It makes you look like a mouse'" (RF 128).

Hamid picks up a variety of stereotypes and prejudices Western readers might hold to debunk and sometimes also mock them. Even-handedly the author describes how, during Changez' last visit to his love Erica, she "glowed with something not unlike the fervor of the *devout*" (RF 133). Again, a state of mind normally associated with religion is connected to something totally different. In this case, it refers to a rather delirious and detached mental state, which allows parallels to *A Week in December*, where religious symbolism is associated with Gabriel's schizophrenic brother. Just as Gabriel's brother, Erica lives in her own world, scared and unable to escape her fears and paranoid reactions to the outside world.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The author addresses religious symbols as well as stereotypes to show them from a different perspective. At the same time, he also uses gaps to play with the readers' preconceptions. The American interlocutor constantly seems to insinuate Changez' bad intentions, which invites us to contemplate our own prejudices. He stares at a man with a beard, expecting him to scorn the unveiled girls at the next table for their dress (RF 22), suspiciously examines Changez' scar, wondering "what training camp" (RF 46) caused this mark and is confused when the protagonist says that he, as well as many other Pakistanis, drink alcohol (RF 53). Moreover, the foreigner seems very alarmed by a power-cut (RF 60), is apparently suspicious concerning the food and seems to show revulsion and disgust about Changez' sexual relationship with Erica (RF 107). His behaviour indicates that he has neither trust in the cultural sophistication and hospitality of Pakistan, nor in the integrity of his host.

Our evaluation of the situation is likely to be guided by our own stereotypes and fears. Hamid provides a stream of comments which create tension and insecurity about the role of predator and prey in the frame story. Some moments suggest that the American is scared and fears being led into a trap by the protagonist. When he feels uncomfortable about accepting a cup of tea, Changez comments: "After all, it is not as if it has been *poisoned*. Come, if it makes you more comfortable, let me switch my cup with yours" (RF 11). Right from the beginning, the atmosphere is contaminated by distrust. It becomes clear quite early that the foreigner does not feel comfortable in his surroundings, but it is never explained why. The fact that the narrator addresses all these moments leaves us with a strange feeling of unease and constructedness. The behaviour of both interlocutors seems very unnatural, as we can see in the following address:

> [Y]ou sir, continue to appear ill at ease. I hope you will not mind my saying so, but the frequency and purposefulness with which you glance about – a steady tick-tick-tick seeming to beat in your head as you move your gaze from one point to the next – brings to mind the behavior of an animal that has ventured too far from its lair and is now, in unfamiliar surroundings, uncertain whether it is predator or prey! (RF 31).

The reader never knows what the interlocutor really says or does and if his behaviour is alarming or whether it is just the protagonist who projects his own prejudices about Americans on the situation. According to the author himself, he deliberately used this kind of stylisation to create tension between the frame story as a 'hyper-real scenario' and a realist plot inside this frame (Singh 2012: 155).

Hamid's novelistic style is very blunt, but it is this bluntness which creates an extra-ordinary ambiguity and insecurity. Whereas Khadra creates tension and shocking effects by means of a detailed narration of brutal and heartbreaking scenes of bloodshed, Hamid uses the opposite strategy. Changez excites anxiety in the reader not by exaggerations or detailed descriptions of horrible scenes but by his constant casual references, downplaying and slurring over strange and frightening details. The gloomy atmosphere is also reflected by a very uncanny setting:

> It is odd how the character of a public space changes when it is empty; the abandoned amusement park, the shuttered opera house, the vacant hotel: in films these often feature as backdrops for events intended to frighten. So it is with this market. […] Perhaps it has

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> to do with the cloudy sky above, through which one occasionally glimpses a gash of moon, or perhaps it is the darkening shadows in the warren of alleyways slipping away from here in all directions, but I would suggest that it is instead our *solitude* that most disturbs us, the fact that we are all but alone despite being in the heart of a city (RF 155-156).

The atmosphere becomes increasingly claustrophobic between flying bats, dark alleyways, strange noises and foreign people who are perceived as uncanny by the American foreigner. Some critics even argue that "the novel deliberately filters the city through Orientalist stereotypes, demonstrating its status as a menace in the imagination of the western reader" (Hartnell 2010: 337).[137] On the one hand, we can feel his fear but on the other hand also the danger he seems to represent. From the beginning he is described as if he was planning some kind of attack. "[Y]ou seemed to be on a mission" (RF 1), the protagonist instantaneously notes and nonchalantly responds to the strange behaviour of his interlocutor, who reaches into his jacket as if he was ready to draw a gun (RF 5) and shows a bulge in his jacket "where the undercover security agents of our country [...] tend to favour wearing an armpit holster for their sidearm" (RF 139). What is more, the American gets strange calls and hourly text messages via his satellite mobile phone (RF 30 and 115), does not want to reveal the purpose of his travels (RF 77) and in the end appears "ready to bolt" (RF 176) at the slightest sign of danger. His nervous demeanour indicates that he might be an agent set on a deathly mission. Salomon notes that the insecurity created by the text could even be described as 'terrorist' itself, because it opens the mind of the readers for paranoid speculations (Salomon 2011: 159). Indeed, the narrative structure of the text causes considerable ambiguity and discomfort in the reader. It might instil fear and an anxiety which is caused by distrust and the inability to determine clear standpoints and intentions. But whether we really perceive the novel as a frightening thriller depends on our own reading and interpretation of the situation, which is determined by our past experience and prejudices.

In this context, one reading of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is to consider it as an example of the 'espionage thriller genre' and 'contemporary terrorist thriller' focusing on terrorism and counterterrorism (Wilson 2012: 91). Although I do not think that this categorisation is really fitting for the key subject of the novel, Wilson makes some trenchant observations on the use of stereotypes. "The novel also introduces reverse profiling to dramatize the East-West polarization" (Wilson 2012: 97), she writes and highlights the special role of the media in enforcing these polarisations:

> The problematic perception of the other is mediated through the media, which propagate stereotypes and blurred half-images that become turning points in the plot. Political reporting stirs up public uncertainty by playing on fears of annihilation and developing an atmosphere of mistrust, suspicion, and menace, so diminishing the characters' sense of reality. [...] In conclusion, the collusion between political reporting and fiction-making dominates contemporary thrillers about terrorism, which deal with paranoia, subterfuge,

137 For an interesting introduction to different types of Orientalism and the "new Orientalism" after 9/11 see Kumar (2012). The article also deals with Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Khadra's *The Attack* as positive examples of a more complex representation of Islamic fundamentalism that also pay attention to the political and economic roots of terror.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> and the clandestine, which produce cases of mistaken identity and play on the distinctions between the self and the other (Wilson 2012: 105-106).

The novel highlights the impact of misinformation and biased representation. It plays with these stereotypes while, at the same time, it undermines generalisation by an individualised portrait of one single character.

Concerning the frame story, we are, however, left in the dark about the question if Changez, who searches for ever-new excuses for the strange behaviour of his interlocutor, simply does not realise the danger he might be in, or if he consciously and self-confidently plays with this danger. Does he know the role of the American? His recurring allusions to soldiers and agents at least indicate a certain suspicion. For instance, he offers his guest a dessert with the words:

> Such dishes may not normally be to your taste, but I would encourage you to have, at the very least, a tiny bite. After all, one reads that the soldiers of your country are sent to battle with chocolate in their rations, so the prospect of sugaring your tongue before undertaking even the bloodiest of tasks cannot be entirely alien to you (RF 138).

In the end, the protagonist comes to speak of his present role in the 'anti-American' protests as a university lecturer and describes himself as "a believer in non-violence" (RF181) and "simply a university lecturer, nothing more nor less" (RF 181). However, he also addresses the danger in which he brought himself by publicly and vehemently criticising American policies:

> Such was its impact that I was warned by my comrades that America might react to my admittedly intemperate remarks by sending an emissary to intimidate me or worse. Since then, I have felt rather like a Kurtz waiting for his Marlowe [sic]. I have endeavoured to live normally, as though nothing has changed, but I have been plagued by paranoia, by an intermittent sense that I am being observed. I even tried to vary my routines [...] but I have come to realize that all this serves no purpose. I must meet my fate when it confronts me, and in the meantime I must conduct myself without panic. Most of all, I must avoid doing what you are doing in the instant, namely constantly looking over my shoulder. [...] It seems an obvious thing to say, but you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins (RF182-183).

Hamid here interestingly refers to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* from 1899, which became known as a novel that questioned racism, imperialism and supposed dichotomies between civilisation and savagery (cf. Hawkins 1979), but was at the same time attacked by postcolonial studies as a work which promotes xenophobic stereotypes of African people.[138] In Conrad's novel, the narrator Marlow becomes obsessed with the figure Kurtz. Kurtz is an ivory trader and remains as enigmatic as Hamid's character Changez. As Meisel notes, Marlow is unable to read what Kurtz represents, which led critics to ascribe multiple psychological meanings to the story and its enigmatic character (cf. Meisel 1978: 20-28). Just as *Heart of Darkness* Hamid's novel allows many different interpretations of the plot as well as of different charac-

138 The African author Chinua Achebe, for instance, harshly criticised Conrad's novel as promoting racist stereotypes and classifies it as an "offensive and totally deplorable book" (Watts 1983: 196).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ters and creates insecurity on several levels.[139] Similarly to the different interpretations of Conrad's novel as an anti-imperialist or xenophobic work, the reader of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has to decide if he interprets the story as anti-American or not.

As I outlined in detail in an article, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* also features some similarities to traditional gothic novels in terms of its use of ambivalence, the importance of misconceptions for the plot as well as the centrality of a revelation or turning point (Liewald 2011: 253-255). Especially the frame story contributes to creating tension. It plays with the notion that the protagonist might not see something (for example that the stranger might be dangerous) we as readers believe to be aware of. Information does not seem to be consciously restricted or held back. However, we remain unsure about how to evaluate the information we get. At many points an interpretation would depend on the tone. Since we neither know the tone of Changez' voice nor the answers and reactions of the interlocutor, we might interpret it as threatening, sarcastic or friendly, luring, bitter or neutral. This strategy brings to the surface our own stereotypes and prejudices in relation to the topic as well as the depicted prejudices of the narrator and his interlocutor. Depending on what we fear more, we can see the protagonist as hunter or prey, luring or innocent, scheming and paranoid or simply open-minded. The play with and possible reversal of roles makes the open ending thrilling and dissatisfying at the same time. Concerning the topic of 9/11, Ilott argues that the novel not only empowers a non-Western view on 9/11 but that its form also reflects an empowerment of the Western reader. Instead of just being a passive victim of terror and trauma, the reader is challenged by the narrative style to become active and endow the text with individual meaning. The many gaps that need to be filled by the reader and leave room for interpretation empower the reader and his capacity to shape the text. In that regard, "readers are removed from a state of passive victimhood and can have access to the cathartic and restorative functions associated with authorship and narrative control" (Ilott 2014: 574).

Hamid skilfully uses gaps, contradicting signals and an uncertainty concerning motivational coherences to create an ambiguity about the general motivation of the characters, which lasts until the end. The great significance of the reader's disposition, knowledge and experience for the construction of meaning in the novel at hand exemplifies the validity of cognitive approaches to literature. According to Ensink and Sauer, communication is a social and cognitive concept, an interaction which is based on the supposition of a certain amount of shared knowledge (Ensink/Sauer 2003: 1). They describe how the cognitive foundation for communication is influenced by 'frame' and 'perspective':

139 As Salomon mentions, the misspelling of the name of the antagonist suggests a second intertextual reference: „[Der Erzähler] suggeriert mit der Falschschreibung des Namens seines Gegenspielers Marlow jedoch auch die Nähe zu einer anderen literarischen Figur aus dem Genre der amerikanischen *hard-boiled detective novel*: Raymond Chandlers Privatdetektiv Philip Marlowe, der sich als sensibler Moralist […] mit einer rücksichtslos korrupten Gesellschaft herumschlägt" (Salomon 2011: 158). This reading would, again, contribute to an insecurity about who is hunter and who is prey in the frame-story.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> 'Frame' refers to the fact that discourse participants need a shared sense of the way in which the discourse is framed, i.e. an overall sense of the function of the discourse in the social situation. […] The frame separates the painting from the environment and is used at the same time to give the painting its place, e.g., by fixing it to the wall. A frame thus gives structure to both an object itself and to the way the object is perceived (Ensink/Sauer 2003: 2).

According to this approach, the concept of the frame can be consulted to describe the way our previous knowledge on a given topic, our expectations and opinions influence the reading process. We subconsciously use all information present in the back of our mind, which might be a mixture of 'common sense' and previously acquired facts, to complete fragmentary messages, make connections and draw conclusions which are most of the time not explicitly stated in a given text. Ensink/Sauer summarise:

> A knowledge frame is a cognitively available pattern used in perception in order to make sense of the perceived material by 'imposing' that pattern and its known features on that material. […] The concept is used in order to describe and explain the coherence in knowledge as used for the representation and understanding of the world. […P]rocesses of human perception and comprehension do not need complete data in order to yield coherent and interpreted output (Ensink/Sauer 2003: 5).

No text has exclusively fixed properties, but the interpretation of its meaning in part also depends on several preconditions, such as the knowledge of a reader about the topic. Furthermore, there are other context-bound factors that might influence an interpretation, such as the question whether we engage in an exchange with others and respond to their views ('interactive frames'). The reader slowly composes a picture of the meaning of a textual passage by employing a knowledge frame, which might step by step be replaced or embedded in other frames depending on the information which complements the initial details.[140]

The second concept determining our interpretation is the concept of perspective. According to the above-cited volume

> '[p]erspective' refers to the fact that the content of a discourse necessarily is 'displayed' from some point of view. Discourse participants cannot contribute to the discourse without at the same time showing their view on the subject matter of the discourse. […] In discourse analysis, the concept refers to the way people imply a certain way of looking at things when communicating about them (Ensink/Sauer 2003: 2 and 9).

Point of view is a central element for an interpretation of a text that is determined by the degree of explicitness in which views are uttered, by the voice (and number of voices) chosen, as well as by the form of quotations. The cognitive frames of different readers determine not only the interpretation of a plot but also the perception of literary characters, perspective structures, unreliability and the direction of sympathy, to

140 As Jahn describes, a reader constructs a frame which is retained (primacy effect) as long as the text does not cause him or her to replace or modify this frame and reinterpret the information given (recency effect) (Jahn 1997: 457-460).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

mention but a few assumptions of cognitive narratology.[141] As Zerweck describes, every interpretation is based on a mixture of 'bottom-up' processes controlled by textual characteristics and 'top-down' processes, which depend on context and cognitive predispositions (Zerweck 2002: 231). As we have seen, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to a large degree encourages the employment of top-down approaches. Gaps, a shifting direction of sympathy and the many ambiguities in the text invite the readers to apply their own cognitive frames – not only to interpret the story but also to evaluate its protagonist. The frames someone uses for an evaluation of literary characters, again, depend on personal experience, social and literary knowledge, norms and values, psychological predisposition, implied personality theories and emotions that may lead to a rejection of or an identification with a literary character (Zerweck 2002: 231-232).[142] Readers 'naturalise' these cognitive assumptions to construct mental models of literary characters. These models, however, are fluid and dynamic. They may change or be revised during the reading process.

Schneider describes how these 'multimodal mental models' of characters are formed. He starts from the premise that "readers of novels focus their attention *predominantly* on psychological trait, emotions, and aims of characters that are more abstract and less dependent on the immediate circumstantial conditions of individual situations" (Schneider 2001: 610). As important characteristics he mentions, for instance, direct or indirect characterisations and descriptions of a character's behaviour, his body language, his character traits or outer appearance as well as the form of narration and representation of consciousness (Schneider 2001: 611). These clues are then interpreted on the basis of the readers' values, literary knowledge as well as societal background and assumptions. As has been outlined in the chapter on narrative theory, narrative conventions and social roles differ from culture to culture, which means that one and the same fictional character may cause different reader responses in diverse cultural contexts, as well as from individual to individual. Moreover, these concepts are historically determined. Thus, frames are culturally as well as historically changing.

I would argue that the description of Changez' emotions and character traits and the direct address of the reader tend to work in favour of the protagonist. Usually, the degree of immediacy tends to be lower in diegetic texts than in mimetic texts, but this is not the case in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* Through the use of the frame-story, readers must feel directly addressed, which enhances the emotional intensity of the story. Moreover, this strategy of consciousness representation has an influence on the potential ability of readers to sympathise with the character. Changez displays a straightforward attitude towards his narrated story. As we will see in the following analysis, he rarely employs irony and his language retains its sophistication throughout the plot. His increasingly emotional involvement when unfolding the reasons for his depression and identity crisis is only evident in the content of his stories, but it is

141 For an elaborate discussion of cognitive approaches (illustrated by reference to third-person narratives) see Jahn (1997: 441-468).

142 For a more detailed description of different influences on cognition see also Eder (2003: 294).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

not reflected by his use of words. There are no unfinished sentences, exclamations or other markers which might indicate a loss of control. His words remain descriptive, articulate and thought-through. This also underscores the fact that the protagonist is presented as a round, multidimensional and dynamic character that grows and changes. He is defined more by his feelings than by his actions. But despite his inner development, Changez' character seems to be consistent: There are no major contradictions in his behaviour and all changes are made psychologically plausible. Moreover, the employed autodiegetic narration fosters identification with the protagonist. As Keen notes:

> Character identification often invites empathy, even when the fictional character and reader differ from one another in all sorts of practical and obvious ways, but empathy for fictional characters appears to require only minimal elements of identity, situation, and feeling, not necessarily complex or realistic characterization (Keen 2006: 2014).

Hamid seems to be an author who is interested in compassion and who strives to raise empathy for ideologically different positions. This potential of the novel to raise the readers' empathy might be enhanced by the fact that "empathetic responses to fictional characters and situations occur more readily for negative emotions [...and that] empathy for situations depicted in fiction may be enhanced by chance relevance to particular historical, economic, cultural, or social circumstances" (Keen 2006: 214).

Changez adopts a very sincere tone and seems to have an honest and upright personality, which makes his statements credible. Besides, the reader gets background information and characterisations by other characters, which are rendered in direct speech. On the one hand, the use of direct speech gives Changez' account a more artificial quality. On the other hand, these passages of direct speech not only give us a more comprehensive picture of the narrator, but also serve to introduce us to a plurality of world views, which, despite not being very detailed, complement the strong focus on one individual. The protagonist describes no one in a particularly negative way, which suggests that he possesses good manners and is a polite person. Moreover, this leads the reader to believe that the narrator's account does not seem to be driven by motifs of retribution or hatred. As we will see in the following analysis, Changez exerts a large amount of self-reflective distance, seems to be honest, sometimes even merciless with himself and tries to avoid being too judgmental. He interprets the behaviour of other characters, but seems to refrain from generalisations. This gives his ideas and opinions more credibility. The fact that he also passes critical judgment on his own demeanour and actions shows his values and contributes to his implicit portrayal as an amiable, apparently trustworthy narrator. Furthermore, the characterisations by other characters reflect affection and admiration for the protagonist, which can, according to Schneider, also be a source of a positive disposition towards the protagonist (cf. Schneider 2001: 615).

As I am going to outline, Changez' actions and changes of mind are explained and made psychologically plausible despite the fact that the narrator does not pretend to offer an objective view of events. Due to the narrative structure and the restriction to Changez' consciousness, the reader is unaware of the motives of other characters unknown to the protagonist. Erica for instance remains an enigma to him. Neverthe-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

less, the text does not evoke the suspicion that the narrator purposefully withholds information. The narrator is quite blunt and straightforward and expresses his insecurity when he does not know or understand something at a certain point in time. The emotional involvement of the reader with Changez' story as well as the ambiguity that makes it difficult for the reader to establish clear-cut categorisations may also contribute to the personalisation of the character (cf. Schneider 2001: 625).

As Cohn delineates, there are many gradations between an autobiographical mode characterised by a distanced narrator who utters wise reflections on his former self and a narrator who is still emotionally involved in and identifies with his former feelings (Cohn 1978: 155). Changez, I would argue, represents a mixture of both stances. The protagonist evaluates his former self from a reflective distance and adds information he did not have at the time he speaks about. However, the narrator is emotionally engaged and not distanced from his former feelings and thoughts. Changez evaluates, explains causal links in his story and vividly describes his feelings of depression, anger and disappointment. He simultaneously analyses his past self and sympathises with it. His increasing agitation is reflected mainly in the framework plot. The novel makes us aware of the fact that the narrator's attitude is neither neutral nor detached. Changez is emotionally involved in his story, sometimes sentimental, sometimes furious about the things that happened to him. He does not hide his emotions or claim to utter an objective opinion. Readers know from the start that they enter Changez' evaluative perspective. Even though the existence of multiple perspectives in a novel cannot automatically be equated with ideological heterogeneity, the different focalisers represented in other novels in this literary corpus still reflect a greater spectrum of different views and voices. In Hamid's novel, different characters also reflect different norms and values that interact with each other, but each of these characters is seen and interpreted through the eyes of the protagonist. As has been outlined in the chapter on narrative theory, the potential meaning of a text derives from the complex interplay of single perspectives, which correct, complete, modify or contradict each other, can be equal or integrated into a hierarchy and may or may not reflect a plurality of worldviews that runs counter to possible beliefs in an objective truth (Surkamp 2003: 3-4). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* denies us this interplay of different focalisers and perspectives. However, the text actively engages the reader in an interplay with the protagonist. It is his turn to complete and interpret the single perspective given.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist impressively shows that frame and perspective have the power to manipulate the pure content of a text according to our own experience and potential prejudices. The textual ambiguity which enables us to interpret the plot in many different ways is amplified by the monological structure of the novel. Many passages provoke the reader to jump to conclusions not explicitly formulated in the text. The title as well as many passages in the frame story invite categorisations. Much of the information we get is not explicit but presupposed. Discourses or statements are constantly embedded in other – often converse – statements which call into question the information given before. The novel conveys the impression that the whole topic is subject to an extreme subjectivity and that there might be no way of

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

escaping stereotypes. This ambiguity is, however, partly countered by the story of the protagonist, which is much more individualised. While the frame story rouses tension by playing with a 'top-down' approach that provokes the readers to categorise and to project their own cognitive frames of interpretation and prejudices on the story, the embedded story features more 'bottom-up' passages which serve to provide more detailed descriptions.

Whereas there is no real indeterminacy with regard to the main plot the frame creates permanent gaps by the absence of the American's voice, which the reader has to fill in and imagine. As Hamid mentioned in an interview, this apparently created a considerable amount of insecurity and led especially some American readers to feel accused (cf. Hamid 2009 b: 231). The novel has been repeatedly criticised as 'anti-American'. Hamid's long-standing attachment to America, however, underlines his claim that he did not endeavour to write an 'anti-American' novel.[143] He is a political author who regularly utters his opinion on political events and concedes: "I tend to write from experience, not from research" (Kinson 2008: n.p.). This is not restricted to a criticism of British or American politics but includes regular comments on the shortcomings and abuses in his home-country Pakistan (cf. Hamid 2007 (c), 2009 (a) and 2012 (b)). Hamid describes the conversation and the stereotypes that shine through his novel as "an act of reverse ethnic profiling" (Solomon 2007: n.p.) and claims that "[t]he novel is not supposed to have a correct answer. It's a mirror. It really is just a conversation, and different people will read it in different ways" (Solomon 2007: n.p.).

Moreover, as can be seen with respect to all novels in my literary corpus, a humanist attitude shines through the works at hand. At first sight the novel seems to be about religious extremism, but it soon becomes clear that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is not about religion at all – let alone Islamic fundamentalism. Hamid outlines in an interview that the title provokes an assumption which does not prove to be well-founded:

> [W]hat I find very interesting is that, by calling the book *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and giving the guy a beard, it tends to be assumed that he is spiritually or philosophically a Muslim. There's no evidence for that whatsoever in the novel. Changez isn't actually a violent person, but leaving that on one side, what you have in Changez is a secular, humanist rationalist. He has a tribal identity which is Muslim, but it would be the same if he were Afro-Caribbean, or anything else. This identity only involves belonging to a group, and he doesn't describe the world in specifically Muslim terms, or even begin to wonder what such terms might be. [...] It's possible to recast this entire conflict in non-religious terms and find the conflict unchanged, except in our understanding of it (Chambers 2011: 188-189).

Comparing this open structure of Hamid's novel to the film version, we can observe that the movie is based on a much more closed and less ambiguous structure. What is striking is the difference in approach, detail and the direction of sympathy between Hamid's novel and the filmic adaptation by Myra Nair released in 2012. Noticeably,

143 Despite all criticism of American politics, Hamid recurrently stated his affection for the United States and its values. See, for instance, Hamid (2007) (b): n.p.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

the movie version of Hamid's novel also plays with shifting positions, ambiguity and mutual prejudices, but in the end leaves much less doubt about the intention of both the protagonist and the American interlocutor. The movie endows the American with a personality and a voice. In the end, it becomes clear that the American is indeed a CIA agent and that Changez was invited to become a member of a terrorist organisation but has actually rejected this membership on the grounds of his general aversion to fundamentalist world-views. The movie features an even more prominent attempt to promote empathy and trigger the readers' sympathy for the protagonist. Changez and his family are presented in a pointedly Western way: We see how his sister speaks about "Sex and the City" and how his uncle drinks alcohol. None of the women in his family is veiled. All of these manifestations of a liberal and secular lifestyle are not mentioned in the rather short novel but fleshed out in the movie. Furthermore, Erica is presented as a much less vulnerable and helpless person. Even her story has been changed. Whereas the literary Erica lost her boyfriend Chris to a deadly disease and finally disappears from a mental hospital after suffering a breakdown, Erica in Myra Nair's filmic adaptation is a much more self-confident and scheming person. First of all, she is presented as guilty for the death of Chris as she caused a fatal car accident by drunk-driving. Moreover, she is represented as exploiting Changez by using him as a topic for one of her exhibitions. After 9/11, she instrumentalises the fashionable and simultaneously shocking strangeness of 'the Oriental exotic' for her own success and marketing purposes, which finally leads to the end of their relationship.

While the novel until the end gives the readers many opportunities to project hostile intentions on the protagonist and feel vindicated concerning their own prejudices, the film finally dismantles these apprehensions and represents Changez as an upright and peace-loving humanist. The novel leaves us with a rest of doubt that the narrator might be paranoid and the interlocutor just an imagined projection of his desperate dysfunctional mind. These doubts, however, are resolved in the movie. The movie at no point in time conveys the feeling that the protagonist might be an unreliable narrator or could be acting on irrational grounds. In the novel, however, the evaluation of the protagonist as reliable or unreliable may to a large degree depend on the reader's own moral, aesthetic, cultural, personal and philosophical norms and his or her assumptions about 'normal' behaviour (cf. Zerweck 2002: 235-236).

5.3.2) American nostalgia, Christianity and capitalism

In addition to the interesting use of structure and ambiguity, Hamid's use of allegorical figures also adds an interesting dimension to the meaning of the text. Changez' lover Erica, her former boyfriend Chris and his boss Jim all represent different facets of the country the protagonist at first learns to love and then mistrust.

Erica is described as a character prone to depression. She is the fragile American girl Changez falls in love with at first sight. I will describe her character in detail, because she has frequently been interpreted as an allegorical figure for America (Lasdun 2007: n.p.) and represents a specific facet of the United States that is important for the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

message of the novel. The narrator describes Erica as "stunningly *regal*" (RF 17). She comes from a rich family and also studies at Princeton but ironically wears a T-shirt with an image of Chairman Mao when Changez first sees her, which might be interpreted as a first indicator of a certain ambiguity in terms of her attitudes. From the start, we are introduced to a person who does not feel "solid" (RF 20) and is drawn to Changez because he seems to radiate security and stability. Erica's aura is one of weakness, loneliness and vulnerability but at the same time extreme attraction, pride and sublimity. The protagonist describes his first encounters with her as follows:

> She had told me that she hated to be alone, and I came to notice that she rarely was. She attracted people to her; she had presence, an uncommon *magnetism*. Documenting her effect on her habitat, a naturalist would likely have compared her to a lioness: strong, sleek, and invariably surrounded by her pride. Yet one got the sense that she existed internally at a degree of remove from those around her. Not that she was aloof; she was, in fact, friendly in disposition. But one felt that some part of her – and this, perhaps, was a not insubstantial component of her appeal – was out of reach, lost in thoughts unsaid (RF 21-22).

The passage already adumbrates her inherent nostalgia and her liability to depression and retreating from the world. It also explains why Erica attracts not only Changez' affection and "desire" but also his "protectiveness" (RF 86). She is the dream he fights for. Fulfilment and gratification (on a sexual as well as emotional level) seem always within his grasp but can never be reached. Intriguingly, nostalgia for bygone times – which is attributed to the character of Erica and the United States as such – is described by Marty/Appleby as "a hallmark of fundamentalist rhetoric" (Marty/Appleby 1991 (b): 835). As will be outlined further in the next paragraphs, Hamid recurrently raises the question of whether the protagonist is really the one who can be regarded as fundamentalist, or whether fundamentalism is something inherent to many systems of belief.

In this context, both Erica and the United States seem to be promising to the protagonist but do not keep this promise at second glance. Erica looks absolutely desirable and is invitingly friendly. But somehow this is just a proud facade behind which there is an abyss of fear, loneliness and immobility. Just as Changez thinks he can win the love of Erica if he just tries hard enough, he believes that he can be a true 'New Yorker' living the 'American dream' of social upward mobility through diligence and hard work. Up to a point his future looks bright but only as long as he does not look below the surface and does not question the system. The success of the United States is characterised as based on maximum economic profit and the clinging to political and military dominance. Erica's happiness seems to be based on her adherence to the memory of her deceased lover Chris. Both realities are presented as delusional. The United States is described as ignoring the detrimental effects of its policies for the rest of the world. Erica, likewise, blocks out the reality of change and the people (like Changez) who might symbolise this change.

Erica and 'America' at first seem desirable but lose their appeal once Changez detects their inner instability, sadness and stagnation, which exposes both shiny surfaces as a disappointing fallacy. This fallacy, however, is not presented as guileful deception

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

but as nearly innocent inability to act otherwise and to escape the automatism of self-destruction and denial, once they have been set in motion. Erica's behaviour is not malicious. This, however, does not change its devastating effects on the protagonist, who, despite all efforts to comfort her, sees her slip more and more deeply into depression. Like Changez, Erica misses home (cf. RF 28), but unlike him she identifies being home not with a place but with her boyfriend Chris, who died a year before from lung cancer. After his death she was hospitalised due to depression, and Changez realises that behind her eyes "there was something *broken*" (RF 52) because there is a "crack inside her" (RF 159). He compares her to "a child who could sleep only with the door open and the light on" (RF 57), an image which again underlines both her helplessness and her innocence.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks severely compound Erica's problems because they bring back bad memories of loss, which, again, render her sleepless. "I feel haunted" (RF 80), she tells Changez, and "appeared deeply anxious" (RF 82), "detached, lost in a world of her own [...and] struggling against a current that pulled her within herself" (RF 86). These descriptions can be interpreted as allusions to the state of the nation after 9/11. Many works have addressed the state of collective trauma and paralysation after the event, which seems to represent an understandable psychological mechanism but is not unproblematic at the same time. Däwes highlights the difficulty of describing 9/11 as a national trauma[144], because this "not only conveniently silences a historical tradition of imperialism, but it also revives the notion of American exceptionalism" (Däwes 2011: 76). Despite these reservations concerning the terminology, it is still justifiable to say that the novel deals with trauma – and it does so in a more balanced way than many other works do. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* does not only focus on the trauma (Am)Erica experiences through the events of 9/11 but also on the traumata the political and social repercussions of the events have on Americans with a different cultural or religious background. Hamid subverts common images of US nationalism and rewrites history from a different perspective, therewith preventing the event from a reduction to a catastrophe for the Christian Western world. Srivastava suggests that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* "presents a counter-reading of 9/11 itself, an oppositional narrative to the Eurocentric literary fictions about the fall of the Twin Towers" (Srivastava 2012: 172). Hamid does not focus on trauma as many American authors engaging with 9/11 do, but he scrutinises the potential deficits of the Western political and economic system that may give rise to Islamic fundamentalism worldwide, thereby producing "a 'first-world allegory' generated from a 'third-world perspective'" (Srivastava 2012: 176). The author subverts the distinction be-

144 As Däwes (2011: 68) remarks on the dangers of describing 9/11 as national trauma: "The traumatic event's uniqueness and its devastating impact is constructed as a given; the discourse of trauma thus not only accentuates the victim's innocence, but it also isolates the experience from its historical context. In the case of 9/11, the discoursive framing of the terrorist attacks as a shattering disaster coming 'out of the blue' […] thus caters to the master narrative of a new American exceptionalism." She notes that in times where the terrorist attacks have been politically used to change policies and start the war in Iraq "[r]eading Ground Zero Fiction as 'trauma literature' thus comes at an ideological, ethical and political cost that has, so far, been neglected" (Däwes 2011: 68).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

tween Christian and Muslim, East and West by showing that the East is actually part of the West. Changez as well as many other immigrants are important members of American society and by ostracising these members, the nation maims itself.

As Bjerre outlines, Hamid's adaptation of the topic also questions and undermines the heroic notions of male dominance media reports after 9/11 so often invoked (Bjerre 2012: 241-266). The novel displays Changez' helplessness and fragility in the face of Erica's deterioration and retreat, the increasing hostility he experiences in American society and his inability to become fully accepted. This counters a possible gendered reading of a powerful, male Oriental 'Ghengis' conquering a weak and female (Am)Erica. Even though Erica and the nation itself are described as being weakened and touched to the quick by 9/11, they still possess power over Changez, who becomes increasingly dependent on their goodwill and acceptance.

Moreover, it is interesting to see how the novel sets itself apart from many other literary adaptations of the event. Randall describes the "rise of anti-Islamic sentiment and a more general mood of paranoia, fear and political instability" (Randall 2011: 1) in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. He traces the development of literature that deals with this seminal event from the direct aftermath to the end of the decade. In the first years, mainly survivor stories, eyewitness accounts and reports were published and writers experienced great insecurity in dealing with this topic, concerning the danger of simplification and the inadequacy of realist fiction to describe the enormity of the event. Hamid's novel, however, is a sign that the paralysis, so characteristic of the first years after the event, finally gave way to more experimental adaptations of 9/11 which go beyond the topics of trauma and patriotism and might even challenge these notions. As Randall notes, approaches such as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* are more political than earlier representations and "are moving away from the 'sacralising', 'mythologising' and 'commemorative' discourses that have dominated how 9/11 has been written and spoken about" (Randall 2011: 131).

This engagement with global political and economic questions marks a rejection of the focus on domestic trauma that has been so prevalent in the first years after the 9/11 attacks. Mishra argues in his article "The End of Innocence" that American writers have often retreated to the domestic sphere and evaded addressing the downturns of the unequal distribution of political and economic power that has contributed to the rise of groups hostile towards the United States. After 9/11 many of these world-political issues came to the fore. Nevertheless, several novelists, such as John Updike who will be discussed in a concluding outlook chapter, tried to imagine the perspective of Islamic fundamentalists but failed to convey a convincing and balanced picture. Mishra notes that many representations are one-dimensional and resort to stereotypes of the 'other' without much self-reflexivity: "Sympathy often breaks down, and hasty research reduces individuals as well as movements to stereotypical motivations" (Mishra 2007: n.p.). The ambiguity and change of perspective embodied by Hamid's novel stands in contrast to Mishra's concerns about the retreat of writers to purely domestic topics and the relapse to clichés. Hamid addresses many of these stereotypes, but he does so with irony and creates narrative uncertainty to undermine their validity and plausibility.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

What is described to happen on a personal level simultaneously happens on a national level. As Erica turns away from Changez and retreats into her self, many other characters are described as turning away from ethnic and religious diversity as such. When the protagonist grows a beard, acceptance suddenly hits the wall. Erica really likes the protagonist and treats him well, but she still cannot feel any passion or joy in her deep sadness and nostalgia. The object of her desire, Chris, remains enigmatic throughout the novel. It is palpable how much he means to Erica but not why. Thus, he is a surreal presence in the story and an invisible competitor the protagonist is not able to grasp. Changez notices with sorrow: "I was desirous of embarking upon a relationship with her that amounted to more than friendship, and I felt in the strength of her ongoing attachment to Chris the presence of a rival – albeit a dead one – with whom I feared I could never compete" (RF 82).

In line with the interpretation of Erica as an allegory for 'America', Chris could be seen on a symbolical level as an emblem of 'Christianity'. An argument for this approach is the fact that Erica increasingly longs for Chris after the 9/11 attacks. Similarly, the 9/11 attacks provoked an increasing accentuation of the Christian heritage of the United States in political and public rhetoric. Just as Erica is more and more alienated from Changez through her turn towards a lost past, American society, as such, avoids or even excludes him due to his cultural and religious difference. The country and the character of Erica suffer from a nostalgia for something which seems to be lost and cannot be retrieved. The apparent longing for the comforts of the past does, however, not materialise in concrete descriptions of what that past consisted of. This lack of concretisation indicates that (Am)Erica's nostalgia might be based on an illusion. These observations also correspond to a possible second interpretative view of Chris as an allusion to Christopher Columbus or an older version of America, associated with white, Christian domination. The only information we get about Chris is that he grew up with Erica in facing apartments and was also admitted to Princeton, which suggests that he was an intelligent boy from the upper class. The scarce references we get are surprisingly not unconditionally positive. He is portrayed as "a good-looking boy with [...] an *Old World* appeal" but "had been quite the dandy, and rather vain even in hospital" (RF 27). Chris seems to have radiated an air of beauty, sophistication and grandeur. But at the same time he is also associated with a traditional, backward-looking appeal, with arrogance, a hedonistic streak and vanity. On a symbolical level, the depiction of Chris can be seen as a questioning of the supposed superiority and power of a white and Christian American nation. Its former hegemony is presented as something which people still cling to. However, the concept itself is of the past, divorced from the present multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious composition of American society.

Erica and Chris – or America and Christianity – seem to be so strongly interconnected that the separation of both is presented as a very painful process. Their love "had been an unusual love, with such a degree of commingling of identities that when Chris died, Erica felt she had lost herself" (RF 91). 9/11 not only triggers a crisis of identity for the protagonist but also for the nation as such. At the same time, the novel

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

calls into question whether these supposedly glorious days (Am)Erica is longing for ever existed at all:

> Perhaps the reality of their time together was as wonderful as she had, on more than one occasion, described to me. Or perhaps theirs was a past all the more potent for its being imaginary. I did not know whether I believed in the truth of their love; it was, after all, a religion that would not accept me as a convert. But I knew that *she* believed in it, and I felt small for being able to offer her nothing of comparable splendor instead (RF 114).

Erica still idealises something that cannot be retrieved and presumably has never been perfect in the first place. Moreover, Changez realises that he will never be able to be fully accepted and compete with this notional ideal – not even through assimilation. Parallel to the American state of the nation after 9/11, Erica is caught in a dangerous state of nostalgia that causes stagnation, paralysis, fear and an inability to adequately react to her environment. She wants to fully embrace Changez and is curious about his alterity but cannot look ahead.

In this context, Changez could also stand for the 'changes' he brings to (Am)Erica. His ascent into the ranks of the American elite demonstrates that success is not solely determined by colour or class anymore, but by education and money. He stands for the changes and challenges migrants from different cultures and religions have at all times brought to the United States. The protagonist changes Erica's life in that he forces her to acknowledge the possibility of a different reality than the one she desperately clings to. However, it is telling that she only manages to make love to Changez when he pretends to be Chris. Despite the friendliness of most people towards him, the protagonist apparently has to engage in role-playing to be accepted. In his relationship to Erica he has to pretend to be Chris to be embraced, at Princeton he has to mime "a young prince, generous and carefree" (RF 11) and at Underwood Samson, he has to pretend not to care about his cultural and religious heritage and the social downsides of his job to be accepted as a team-member.

His relationship to Erica as well as his status in the American society were promising, but both promises turn out to be empty. The narrator's attempts to stay away from his love resemble "a struggle not unlike that of a man attempting to rid himself of an addiction" (RF 114). Again, Erica's enchanting quality is not unambiguous but connected to a destructive and dangerous dynamic. Likewise, Changez' success in America initially intoxicated him but finally only engenders pain and sadness. Nostalgia seems to be the core of everything he encounters:

> Possibly this was due to my state of mind, but it seemed to me that America, too, was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia that time. There was something undeniably retro about the flags and uniforms, about generals addressing cameras in war rooms and newspaper headlines featuring such words as *duty* and *honor.* I had always thought of America as a nation that looked forward; for the first time I was struck by this determination to look *back.* […] What your fellow countrymen longed for was unclear to me – a time of unquestioned dominance? Of safety? Of moral certainty? I did not know – but that they were scrambling to don the costumes of another era was apparent. I felt treacherous for wondering whether that era was fictitious, and whether – if it could indeed be animated – it contained a part written for someone like me (RF 114-115).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

As we can see, the passage very much resembles the protagonist's anxieties about the inability to compete with Erica's image of Chris. Now, he is not sure if he is able to blend in with the diffuse notion of America that is triggered by the traumatic events of 9/11.

The protagonist is described as an ambassador of 'change' who is not embraced but seen as a threat or at least a risk. Erica's mother tries to prevent Changez from coming too close to her daughter by saying: "What she needs right now is stability. No emotional upheavals" (RF 110). A self-destructive psychological state seems to appear more secure than an encounter with the protagonist, maybe because this state is well-known and therefore seems more secure than any changes that could pull her out of her trance. Changez apparently has a disruptive effect on his surroundings. In the last scenes set before her disappearance, Erica is content with living in a mental hospital as a place "where people could live in their minds without feeling bad about it" (RF 133). The nurse tells him: "You're the one who upsets her most. Because you're the most real, and you make her lose her balance" (RF 133).

Changez/change is real, but Erica does not seem to possess enough strength to face this reality. She lives in an alternate reality just as the deluded characters in Faulks' novel do. Whereas the characters in *A Week in December* are also close to self-destruction, there seems to be at least some hope for them, as is shown by the example of the character Hassan who refrains from exercising a planned terrorist attack. Erica, on the other hand, looks completely "emaciated, detached, and so lacking in *life*" (RF 140) that when Changez last sees her, not much hope is left. Soon afterwards he gets the news of her disappearance. It is indicated that she might have committed suicide, but the mystery is never solved. The protagonist, who longed to give her stability and hope, reflects that his inability to do so might have been grounded in his own identity crisis:

> I lacked a stable *core*. I was not certain where I belonged – in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither – and for this reason, when she reached out to me for help, I had nothing of substance to give her. Probably this was why I had been willing to try to take on the persona of Chris, because my own identity was so fragile. But in so doing – and by being unable to offer her an alternative to the chronic nostalgia inside her – I might have pushed Erica deeper into her own confusion (RF 148).

By joining the game and trying to assimilate the protagonist has helped neither himself nor others and has only engaged in self-deception. Because he does not know where he belongs anymore, he also loses his power to persuade (Am)Erica of his loyalty. As I already mentioned, Changez speaks of the destruction of his "personal American dream" (RF 93). This also applies to Erica if we want to see her allegorically. The American dream disappears, because the attributes it is supposed to represent, such as freedom, equal opportunities, the fight against oppression and injustice as well as the pursuit of happiness and social upward mobility independent of class, wealth or heritage, in Changez' eyes do not correspond to reality any longer. As Munos argues

> Hamid uses the post-9/11 context to reveal the racial melancholia surreptitiously informing today's 'new' versions of the American Dream – a melancholia which is apparent in

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> Changez's and Erica's relationship as well as in their parallel impossible mourning of the broken mirror of 'white' Am/Erica (Munos 2012: 397).

9/11 marks a turning point in the novel that reveals the vulnerability and impermanence of a multicultural ideal of America in the face of peril.

The only character who seems to maintain a positive attitude towards Changez is his employer Jim. Jim can be seen, next to America and Christianity, as a third allegorical figure. He represents modern globalised capitalism and its positive as well as negative repercussions. In contrast to Faulks' character Veals, Jim is a much more positive and life-like character. The background knowledge the reader gets about his difficult childhood and his motivations render a more balanced picture and clarify that he is not solely driven by greed and thirst for power. Jim never seems to question the logic of the economic system he serves, but he stays loyal to the protagonist until the end. This is particularly interesting because he serves as a foil for the protagonist. He seems to have a similar story and personality and is the prototype of a self-made man. Stemming from a poor family, he was the first to go to college and had to work secret nightshifts to pay his tuition. Thus, Jim knows hardships, shame and disadvantage, and he sees through Changez within a couple of minutes. The protagonist recapitulates: "Most people I met were taken in by my public persona. Jim was not. But fortunately, where I saw shame, he saw opportunity" (RF 11). Jim hires him on the spot since he not only believes in the protagonist's abilities, but also identifies with him. "You're a watchful guy. You know where that comes from?" he asks Changez "It comes from feeling out of place [...] Believe me. I know" (RF 42-43).

Jim is presented in a sympathetic and positive light and seems to embody the ideal of a successful, wealthy, educated and colour-blind American who is down-to-earth despite his career. We get more background information about him than about any other character apart from the protagonist and Erica. He entrusts to Changez that he understands his being uncomfortable with the behaviour of many colleagues:

> ['] I never let on that I felt like I didn't belong to this world. Just like you.' [...] 'Why did you not belong?' He smiled – again as if he could see right through me – and replied, "Because I grew up on the other side. For half my life, I was outside the candy store looking in, kid. And in America, no matter how poor you are, TV gives you a good view. But I was dirt poor. My dad died of gangrene. So I get the irony of paying a hundred bucks for a bottle of fermented grape juice, if you know what I mean' (RF 70).

Notwithstanding the fact that he represents American capitalism, Jim is never described as unconscionable but as tolerant and generous. All the same, the protagonist is reminded of *The Great Gatsby* on entering Jim's house (cf. RF 43). The novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald from 1925 is mostly viewed as a socio-critical work which denounces the degeneration of the 'original' American dream (cf. Pearson 1970, Decker 1994 or Railton 2011). The novel animadverts that instead of happiness and freedom people only strive for power and wealth. Jim is a likeable character. But for all that, he still sees himself as predatory animal (a "shark" RF 70) and stays loyal to the system that guarantees his career.

In contrast to the protagonist who 'lacks a stable core' he is described as a "man of substance" (RF 71). Whereas Changez suffers from a clash of several facets of his new

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

life with his religious and cultural identity, Jim does not face a similar dilemma. Despite the fact that he has not forgotten where he came from, he is not forced to reconsider his stance towards American politics or the neoliberal agenda in the same way an immigrant from Pakistan is. Jim remains an integral part of the Underwood Samson system which "embodies a utilitarian version of the melting pot, thus highlighting a national culture determined to assimilate difference only as past, as history" (Hartnell 2010: 342). The company which hires Changez also has the initials U.S., which might be no coincidence. I am going to take a closer look at the facets of American society represented by Underwood Samson in the next subchapter.

Looking again at the character constellation in *A Reluctant Fundamentalist*, it is striking how much the protagonist gains centre stage. In contrast to all other novels in this literary corpus there are very few characters involved, and no major conflicts develop between these characters. *The Black Album*, *The Sirens of Baghdad* and *A Week in December* all feature antagonistic relationships. There are good characters that readers are invited to sympathise with as well as bad (or at least misguided characters) we might not be able to identify with. There are conflicts between people, groups and ideas. Hamid's work, on the contrary, does not feature one really unprincipled, ruthless or despicable character. The major conflicts do not happen between individuals, but on the level of global politics and economics as well as within people. The characters at times resemble puppets who suffer from events beyond their control.

Hamid's characters are neither mean nor excessively ruthless, but careless and in Erica's case also naive. Many stereotypes of 'the West' are discussed in the novel. Among the main points there are, for instance, American unipolarity and imperialist political, economic and military practices. Furthermore, the country is associated with arrogance concerning its self-righteous claim to power and double standards concerning the defence of values. The United States claims to give everyone a fair chance but supposedly does not care for the 'collateral damage' caused by its economic principles and military tactics. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* also alludes to a decline in values, but presents no excesses, as already mentioned. Like Faulks, Hamid mentions the loneliness one might feel in a highly individualised Western society characterised by more personal freedom and self-actualisation but also by more carelessness of people with regard to their fellow human beings. The protagonist finds this difference in social values and family structure strange and admits: "I missed my family and the comfort of a family residence, where generations stayed together, instead of apart in an atomized state of age segregation" (RF 50). However, criticism of the anonymity and loneliness of our modern age never gains centre stage in the plot as it does in *A Week in December*. As a result, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* addresses many common accusations against the West but in a more nuanced way than many other novels do. There is no violence or severe ill-will, and no character is depicted as inherently mean. Unlike *The Black Album*, the text contains no flat, stereotypical characters. They are all mixed, displaying positive and negative qualities.

Another important difference between *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the novels by Yasmina Khadra and other works, I will analyse in the next chapters, lies in Hamid's thematisation of historical events. These events are the major reasons for the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

climaxes and turning points of the novel but are still just a footnote when we look at the lack of detail with which they are described. Knowledge about the media coverage of 9/11, the war on Afghanistan and the tensions between India and Pakistan is presupposed. There are no explanations or debates about different sides to the problem. Hamid apparently, in contrast to Faulks, does not want to increase the reader's knowledge of economic ideas or world-political events. He conjures up our own memories of events and displays a certain reaction to the things we have seen on the news ourselves. However, the text lacks further value judgments and we are invited to interpret potential tensions between different views according to our own experience – a strategy quite common for contemporary novels.

As Frank and Gruber rightfully note, terrorism is a topic that has been featured in literature for the last 140 years and has since been a prominent topic – from the works by Robert Louis Stevenson, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Henry James till the present day (Frank/Gruber 2012: 7). Thus, an interest in the topic had been visible in American and British writing long before 9/11. However, the approaches to the topic have changed, which can partly be attributed to the controversy surrounding the question: How much empathy can or should be invoked for the perpetrators of terrorist attacks? Likewise, the state of emergency after 9/11 which led to the targeting of Muslim Americans as a suspect group and the partial suspension of civil rights is, according to Maira, not a new development but "is constitutive of an imperial governmentality that rests on the exclusion of certain groups from citizenship at various historical moments" (Maira 2011: 111). Maira claims that the "post-9/11 moment is not a radical historical rupture but builds on forms of power already in place that target different groups to varying degrees and in specific ways, particularly in moments of national crisis" (Maira 2011: 111).

As Däwes outlines in her analysis of over hundred works that deal with 9/11[145], 'Ground Zero Fiction' is characterised by the formation of patterns. She diagnoses metonymic, appropriative, diagnostic, writerly, salvational and symbolic approaches (Däwes 2011: 20-22). According to these definitions, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* can be seen as a 'diagnostic novel' because it "contextualize[s] 9/11 within larger historical and/or geographical frameworks […and displays] the impact that 9/11 had on concepts of gender, ethnicity, class, and national identity at large" (Däwes 2011: 20). Hamid is interested less in the event as such than in the severe consequences of 9/11 for an understanding of American identity and the formation of inner demarcation lines. He describes the process of a redefinition of national identity that suddenly seems to exclude many immigrants it used to embrace. An increasing division between 'us' and 'them', 'self' and 'other' informs political decisions and security policies and finds expression in a colder social climate. Hamid takes the example of his protagonist to show how these altered circumstances may also alter an individual up to the point that he reconsiders his loyalties. Furthermore, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* also features characteristics of a 'symbolic approach' which is characterised by the use

145 Included in the many works on 9/11 are also many contemporary plays. For an interesting overview of dramatic adaptations of 9/11 see Grabes (2012: 249-262).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

of "9/11 as a symbolic setting and event, which provides a parallel or contrastive background to tales of personal crisis, loss, or decline […and] a metaphor for any personal suffering that seems excessive, incomprehensible, and painful beyond description" (Däwes 2011: 21). In this respect, 9/11 is used as a trigger for Changez' personal crisis and his process of reorientation and identification. As Banita highlights, fiction dealing with 9/11 often features protagonists who are challenged to change their lives, relationships and emotional foundation (Banita 2012: 294). The fall of the Twin Towers mirrors Erica's inner breakdown. Just as the towers disappear, the heroine and symbolic figure disappears as well. Both events are accompanied by pain and suffering and contribute to the protagonist's change.

In my interview with the author, Hamid spoke about his own experience as an immigrant in America after 9/11 and about potential differences between Britain and the United States in their approach to immigration, multiculturalism and people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Interestingly, he assigns the United States a more mature approach to diversity, which, however, changed after the 2001 terrorist attacks:

> I think that America has a longer history of immigration, of racial differences and encounters. So to a certain extent, when I was living in New York or in California, these places did feel to me racially more 'advanced' than Europe or Britain. But things have changed since September 11th. Before I was just somebody – with brown skin, but who was well-educated and spoke English very well. I got along quite well in America. Ever since September 11th two things happened: Muslims in particular have become a suspect group. So Muslims are now more like African Americans used to be. […] And also America has become much more anti-immigrant, because of this fear of predominantly Latin-American immigration. So in that sense, America has become quite different from what it felt like, to me, twenty years ago.
>
> In the UK and in Europe, I think, there is still very much an underlying ethnic tribalism. Generally speaking, I find race relations more problematic in Europe than in America. The tribe has constructed these institutions: the welfare state, the national health service, etc. But they are still tribal institutions, and when somebody not from the tribe, like an immigrant, comes, the tribe is reactive to this. The immigrant experience in Europe is often much more ghettoised and circumscribed than in the United States. So whereas Europe speaks much more about solidarity, Americans do not speak about solidarity very much, at all. The European solidarity feels to me that it is built on an insider vs. outsider solidarity. In other words: 'We must have solidarity in the face of our common foe' as opposed to 'All humans must have solidarity' (Interview with Mohsin Hamid, 16.08.2012).

In a way this view corresponds to the stronger accentuation of class issues in the novels by Faulks and Kureishi, which are set in Britain. Hamid describes American society as facilitating more social and economic inclusion. Nevertheless, cultural and religious prejudices in the wake of 9/11 seem to change these positive conditions. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* the protagonist experiences what it feels like to be regarded as a suspect. This particularly hurts him because of his initially admiring and loving attitude towards the country. I will take a closer look at his description of America since it is pivotal for the major issues in the novel related to the formation of identity, political and economic divides and the question of what the use of the term 'fundamentalist' in the title might indicate.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The depiction of America is from the beginning based on a simultaneous inside- and outside-view, for the protagonist constantly compares his impressions of the country to his expectations as well as to the circumstances in his home-country. For instance, he realises that in America buildings are made "to look older" (RF 3), which is contrasted to the historical buildings in Pakistan and the rich history of the country. Arriving at Princeton, he thinks at first that this embodies "*a dream come true*" (RF 3) and that he would be surrounded by "*professors who are titans in their fields and fellow students who are philosopher-kings in the making*" (RF 3). The choice of words alludes to similarities between his initial ideas and a fairy-tale, which is soon deprived of its mystique. The protagonist learns that the other students are just normal people and that, in general, "Americans faced much less daunting odds in the selection process" (RF 3).

Contemplating his first months in the United States Changez recounts: "Looking back now, I see the power of that system, pragmatic and effective like so much else in America" (RF 4). This comment can be interpreted either as a positive remark or as bitter and sarcastic comment. The suggestion that the tone is likely to be sarcastic is indicated by the following passages, which outline that in America, people's ascent "into the ranks of meritocracy" (RF 4) seems to be dependent on the contribution someone is able to make to that society. Entry is restricted to the brightest and strongest, and by far not everyone is admitted. The passage even insinuates that academia 'prostitutes' itself for an inhumane economic system, as "[e]very fall, Princeton raised her skirt for the corporate recruiters" (RF 4). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Changez' fellow students are described as careless and spendthrift. Despite their standing in society, they seem to lack good manners. The protagonist speculates:

> I, with my finite and depleting reserve of cash and my traditional sense of deference to one's seniors, found myself wondering by what quirk of human history my companions – many of whom I would have regarded as upstarts in my own country, so devoid of refinement were they – were in a position to conduct themselves in the world as though they were its ruling class (RF 21).

But despite this apparent lack of culture and sophistication, America is described as "the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known" (RF 34). This civilisation is driven by "systematic pragmatism" (RF 36-37), "*professionalism*" (RF 37) and "*efficiency*" (RF 37) that are presented as determining principles and core-characteristics of American success. At one point the protagonist refers to an accident with a candle that left a scar when he was a child and notes: "In America, this would have been the start, in all likelihood, of a protracted bout of litigation with the manufacturer for using candle-wax with such a high, and unsafe, melting point; here, it resulted merely in an evening of crying" (RF 47). Thus, American people are presented as showing a tendency to protect their fellow human beings from harm and danger, but also as rather pedantic and combative.

Enjoying New York's multicultural atmosphere and its "open-mindedness and [...] cosmopolitan nature" (RF 48), Changez initially feels in good hands: "I was a young New Yorker with the city at my feet" (RF 45). The party scene Erica introduces him to

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

opens up an "insider's world" (RF 56) for him. This world is characterised by a glamour and carelessness that completely seems to ignore the vast discrepancies in wealth. Changez encounters a "typically *American* undercurrent of condescension" (RF 55) in dealing with other people and countries. America seems to have everything, but because of this does not seem to be grateful and humble but arrogant and blind to the needs of others. The narrator describes that he, on the contrary, had "learned to *savor* the denial of gratification – that most un-American of pleasures" (RF 69).

The just mentioned American efficiency is not only visible in the economic but also in the military sector. When the war in Afghanistan starts, the protagonist feels uncomfortable seeing "the mismatch between the American bombers with their twenty-first-century weaponry and the ill-equipped and ill-fed Afghan tribesmen below" (RF 99). The comment establishes a stark contrast to the recurrently evoked former strength, power, grandeur and cultural as well as military superiority of Muslim countries (cf. RF 102). A vast disparity between the proud self-image of Muslim people and American media images becomes apparent and is left open for debate. Moreover, the American fear and paranoia concerning its own security coupled with its indifference towards the security of its ally Pakistan provokes the question of commensurability. Changez contrasts America as "a country that has not fought a war on its own soil in living memory, the rare sneak attack or terrorist outrage excepted" (RF 127) to his home-town Lahore as "residing within commuting distance of a million or so hostile troops who could, at any moment, attempt a full-scale invasion" (RF 127). His fears and anxieties are presented as real and justified, whereas the panic and hatred of the American population after 9/11 are presented as rather disproportionate.[146] As Greiner and Spang note, the events of 9/11 have often been exploited as an icon or a myth, and the commentators of the attacks partly used an ideological rhetoric which was as emotional and reductive as the one used by the fundamentalist perpetrators (cf. Greiner/Spang 2011: 9-10).

146 Interesting in this context are the findings of the PEW Forum on Religion and Public life, published at the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. The report reflects a vast discrepancy between the number of Muslim Americans who support or accept Islamic extremism and the number of Muslim Americans who are facing difficulties due to their religious background. Distrust seems to be widespread despite the fact that statistics suggest moderate religious views of most American Muslims. The report states: "On the contrary, as found in the Pew Research Center's 2007 survey, Muslims in the United States continue to reject extremism by much larger margins than most other Muslim publics around the world, and many express concern about the possible rise of Islamic extremism. […] Fully 81% say that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilians are never justified. Comparably small percentages of Muslim Americans express favorable views of al Qaeda, and the current poll finds more holding very unfavorable views of al Qaeda now than in 2007. Nevertheless, a significant minority (21%) of Muslim Americans report that they see a great deal or a fair amount of support for extremism in the Muslim American community. That is far below the proportion of the general public that sees at least a fair amount of support (40%). And while nearly a quarter of the public (24%) thinks that Muslim support for extremism is increasing, just 4% of Muslims agree. […] However, concerns about Islamic extremism coexist with the view that life for U.S. Muslims in post-9/11 America is difficult in a number of ways. Significant numbers report being looked at with suspicion (28%), and being called offensive names (22%). And while 21% report being singled out by airport security, 13% say they have been singled out by other law enforcement" (PEW Forum 30 August 2011: n.p.).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

What is striking in this respect is the similarity of Changez' story to the author's own experience after 9/11. In his essay "My Reluctant Fundamentalist" Hamid recounts how he worked as a consultant for McKinsey in New York and how his daily life was affected by the attacks:

> The rest of that year was one of great turmoil for me. Muslim friends of mine in America began to be questioned and harassed; I was upset by the war in Afghanistan; travelling on my Pakistani Passport became increasingly unpleasant; and then, following the December terrorist attacks on India's parliament, it looked as though India might invade Pakistan. Lahore sits on the border, just a few miles from what would have been the front line. I knew I needed to be there with my family. So I took a leave of absence and went back, moving into my old room. [...] I grew personally more divided, saddened and angered by the heavy-handedness of the Bush administration's conduct abroad. I decided to make my transfer to London permanent. [...] Eventually, I realized that, just as in my exterior world, there was no escaping the effects of September 11 in the interior world that was my novel (Hamid March 2007: n.p.).

Hamid writes about what is important to him to make the reader approach an omnipresent topic from a different angle. The tenor of the novel bears many similarities to Hamid's own political views, which he regularly expresses in public interviews and internet blogs.

This feeling of being singled out and not accepted as an integral part of society any more seems to be reinforced by world politics. The protagonist, for instance, deplores American politics in Iraq as the politics of a small elite. In this respect, the novel bears many similarities to *A Week in December*. It criticises the political apathy of the masses as well as the policies of the economic and political ruling class:

> A common strand appeared to unite these conflicts and that was the advancement of a small coterie's concept of American interests in the guise of the fight against terrorism, which was defined to refer only to the organized and politically motivated killing of civilians by killers *not* wearing the uniforms of soldiers. I recognized that if this was to be the single most important priority of your species, then the lives of those of us who lived in lands in which such killers also lived had no meaning except as collateral damage (RF 178).

The protagonist suddenly feels like a second-class citizen and deplores a supposed distinction America makes in determining the value of human life. Another thing criticised with respect to American politics in this context is also a supposed double standard with respect to its allies. America's lack of protection for Pakistan is, in Changez' eyes, a sign that the US is not to be trusted, since it uses other countries just as it suits its own economic and political interests. This, of course, reflects a rather one-sided view of the complex conflict between India and Pakistan, which featured grave abuses on both sides. However, the novel does not aim at explaining this conflict but rather uses the conflict as an example for the supposed American thirst for power, money and global influence. During his work for projects in other third-world countries the protagonist understands:

> I reflected that I had always resented the manner in which America conducted itself in the world; your country's constant interference in the affairs of others was insufferable. Vietnam, Korea, the straits of Taiwan, the Middle East, and now Afghanistan: in each of the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> major conflicts and standoffs that ringed my mother continent of Asia, America played a central role. Moreover I knew from my experience as a Pakistani – of alternating periods of American aid and sanctions – that finance was a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power. It was right for me to refuse to participate any longer in facilitating this project of domination (RF 156).

His double-vision and experience with different cultural and political systems broaden his view but at the same time deprive him of any illusions. His direct, relentless gaze is full of sadness, bitterness and sarcasm, which marks a change in tone compared to the initial passages with their friendly way of delivery and positive content. After his conscious shift in perspective the protagonist realises:

> Seen in this fashion I was struck by how traditional your empire appeared. Armed sentries manned the check post at which I sought entry; being of a suspect race I was quarantined and subjected to additional inspection; once admitted I hired a charioteer who belonged to a serf class lacking the requisite permissions to abide legally and forced therefore to accept work at lower pay; I myself was a form of indentured servant whose right to remain was dependent upon the continued benevolence of my employer (RF 157).

Even though visa restrictions are of importance in every country and stricter security checks were enforced at most airports worldwide after 9/11 – not just in the United States – Changez becomes increasingly disillusioned with America. The choice of words ('suspect race', 'serf class' etc.) is a sign of the narrator's disappointed love for the country he lives in.

Darda suggests that Changez' vision after 9/11 is not one of a retreat into a nationalist Pakistani framework but one that challenges the boundaries between the local and the global. The protagonist starts to see the global repercussions of the Western political and economic system when he is confronted with conflicts and war in places all over the world from Valparaiso to Manila (Darda 2014: 119). A limited nationalism is no solution for these global problems. Darda views Hamid's novel as "critical global fiction […which contests] the forces inhibiting global understanding […] founded on the idea that life is not bounded and isolated but always conditioned by one's material and social surroundings" (Darda 2014: 108). The protagonist does not experience a simple resurgence of patriotic feelings but he feels a sudden solidarity with people from other countries that are excluded by nationalism and economic inequality. In my interview with the author, Hamid himself criticised nationalism and the inability and unwillingness of nation-states to accept change and cultural or religious diversity:

> I'm quite opposed to the thought of the nation. I feel that countries are becoming a problem because people think in these categories. Why should Germans, for example, determine which beings are entitled to enter Germany? There is no reason why they should be able to determine that. If we say that one German can move freely within Germany – on what moral basis do we say that others cannot cross its boundaries? On what moral basis can we say that the Somali man, who is at risk of death and faces enormous difficulties, arrives in Germany with his family, hoping for a new life, cannot stay? (Interview with Mohsin Hamid, 16.08.2012).

The end of the novel contains a critique of a system that is based on exclusionism and maximum utility. The protagonist becomes aware of the fact that American effective-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ness does not necessarily correspond to the norms he had been brought up with. "I had been raised to favor mutual generosity over mathematical precision," (RF 162) Changez contemplates and attests America a lack of consideration for the perspective and needs of others:

> As a society, you were unwilling to reflect upon the shared pain that united you with those who attacked you. You retreated into myths of your own difference, assumptions of your own superiority. And you acted out these beliefs on the stage of the world, so that the entire planet was rocked by the repercussions of your tantrums, not least my family, now facing war thousands of miles away. Such an America had to be stopped in the interests not only of the rest of humanity, but also in your own. I resolved to do so, as best I could (RF 168).

This aggravation happens less than 20 pages before the novel ends. At this point in time the reader may still wonder what happens next and whether the plot finally takes a religious turn.

5.3.3) A "modern-day janissary"[147] who refuses to "focus on the fundamentals"[148]: identity and 'fundamentalism'

As we have seen, Changez, similarly to the protagonists of the novels by Faulks, Kureishi and Khadra, suffers a crisis of identity leading to a change in his behaviour and opinions. Däwes shows in her study that many Ground Zero Novels "use the private domain as a microcosmic site of larger conflicts and crises (including disease and mortality, absence and loss, as well as contestations of national, religious, and cultural identity)" (Däwes 2011: 409). This also holds true for Hamid's novel, which addresses all of the above-mentioned symptoms. As has been outlined, the protagonist's cultural identity at first does not seem to impair his role in American society. Changez is a successful member of a new, globalised business elite, which seems to disregard all potential differences between its members and attracts people from all over the world. Moore-Gilbert describes that

> transnational affiliations are central to Hamid's vision. Extending from Pakistan to New York and from Chile to the Philippines, the novella addresses the emergence of a new class of mobile, global citizens who, in Rushdie-esque fashion, defy the 'gravity of traditional, territorialized belongings' (Moore-Gilbert 2012: 191).

However, 9/11 causes not only an increasing challenging of this ideal of the 'global citizen' but also a period of disorientation and confusion for the protagonist. Since identity plays such a large role in this literary corpus, a closer look at the process of Changez' disenchantment with America shall serve to shed light on important psychological and social issues. As has been mentioned, the protagonist grew up in Pakistan and spent four and a half years in the US studying at Princeton and working for the valuation firm Underwood Samson in New York. His exemplary career is, how-

147 RF 152.
148 RF 98.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ever, directly contrasted with his background. Issues related to class, money and social status are brought up for discussion right from the beginning. In the United States Changez would probably be seen as a poor immigrant of a rather low status if he had not managed to go to Princeton and hide from his fellow students the three secret on-campus jobs he needs to make ends meet. In Pakistan, on the contrary, his family used to be wealthy and enjoyed a high status in society. His grandfather and father studied in England, used to live in an expensive district and employed servants. Due to the difficult economic situation in Pakistan and the devaluation of the rupee, however, nothing but status was left to his family (RF 10).

This status is reflected in the use of language. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* features no heteroglossia. No foreign language elements are used as means of abrogation or appropriation. His language competence in English shows that the protagonist is very eloquent and well-educated. Moreover, his natural use of terms and icons of American popular culture reflects a familiarity with a 'Western cultural code', which seems to reveal him as an insider to the system. In this context, he refers to "Top Gun" (RF 35), "Star Wars" (RF 38), the "Terminator" (RF 99), or "Sleepy Hollow" (RF 171). At the same time, his English is quite formal and old-fashioned. In an interview, Hamid explained that one learns to speak like that in Pakistani elite schools. He describes this kind of English as "anachronistic" and "suggestive of an older system of values and of an abiding historical pride" (Hamilton 2007: n.p.). Thus, the narrator's voice does not necessarily reveal much about his geographical background but corresponds to a social variety of language use identifying him as a member of a certain class in Pakistan. In the West, in contrast, elite concepts increasingly seem to be based on money – not birth or education. Consequently, Changez learns to blend in and to conduct himself "in public like a young prince, generous and carefree" (RF 11) even though he has to work so hard to earn the money and dislikes "[t]he ease with which they [the other students] parted with money […o]r their self-righteousness in dealing with those whom they had paid for a service" (RF 21).

Changez at first appears to be the perfect example of successful integration. He is grateful for everything Princeton or the Western education system enables him to do, while never forgetting his roots (cf. RF 15). His description as "well-liked as an exotic acquaintance" (RF 17) also indicates a certain amount of Western arrogance. America seems to love its 'exotic' upstarts and likes to use them as figureheads. But the number of people allowed to ascend the social ladder seems to be strictly regulated. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist seems to believe that the regional identity of New York as a multicultural, globalised city overrides the forces of a possibly exclusivist American national identity:

> In a subway car, my skin would typically fall in the middle of the color spectrum. On street corners, tourists would ask me for directions. I was, in four and a half years, never an American; I was *immediately* a New Yorker. What? My voice is rising? You are right; I tend to become sentimental when I think of that city. It still occupies a place of fondness in my heart, which is quite something, I must say, given the circumstances under which, after only eight months of residence, I would later depart (RF 33).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Hartnell hence argues that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* may pass criticism on the way in which 9/11 brought racist attitudes to the surface, but takes the view that the novel is also partly informed by American exceptionalism (Hartnell 2010: 336). Indeed, Changez' initial fondness for New York and his employer, Underwood Samson, reflect his integration and social upward-mobility. This acceptance, however, as the reader learns in the course of the novel, is not built on recognition of difference and the positive values immigrants could contribute to American society but on a demand for assimilation.

The passage not only reflects Changez' initial love for the city and his life there, but is also a good example of the narrative strategy that is used. The beginning and end of every chapter brings us back to the frame-story and contains a direct address to the silent stranger. Consequently, the different flashbacks are interrupted on a regular basis. This does not disturb the flow of Changez' story but only increases its tension, because the comments "lend his tale an Arabian Nights-style urgency: the end of the story may mean the death of the teller" (Olsson 2007: n.p.). These comments reveal more about the protagonist's emotional life than the content of the story itself and become more desperate and forceful as we are drawn deeper into his life story. In the middle of the novel the frame primarily serves as a short exposition and final comment for every chapter. However, these narratorial comments often include a foreshadowing of later events or a judgment of Changez' past emotions and actions from a temporal self-reflective distance and draw attention to the suggested answers of the silent American interlocutor. Furthermore, we can detect the use of italics to highlight certain words or sentences in the passage cited above – a narrative strategy Hamid uses throughout the novel. Therewith, he manages to lend additional force to the words of his protagonist, to emphasise specific aspects or reflect a heightened emotionality.

Notwithstanding the deterioration of his relationship to America, which is alluded to at an early stage of the novel, Changez describes life and people there with a lot of affection. He knows where he comes from, but he also sees the vast discrepancy between the US and Pakistan. He feels anger, resentment and sadness when he compares Pakistan's former glory to the present situation:

> This, I realized, was another world from Pakistan; supporting my feet were the achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known. Often, during my stay in your country, such comparisons troubled me. In fact, they did more than trouble me: they made me resentful. Four thousand years ago, we, the people of the Indus River basin, had cities that were laid out on grids and boasted underground sewers, while the ancestors of those who would invade and colonize America were illiterate barbarians. Now our cities were largely unplanned, unsanitary affairs, and America had universities with individual endowments greater than our national budget for education. To be reminded of this vast disparity was, for me, to be ashamed (RF 34).

Nostalgia for the 'lost glory' and former achievements of his home-country gnaw at the protagonist (cf. RF 63, 71, 101-102), even though he works so hard that he can be proud of his own achievements. Changez initially feels he can derive more pride from his work at Underwood Samson than from his background. The company seems to

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

accept heterogeneity quite naturally. Cultural, ethnic and gender diversity are embraced – but admittedly within an elite:

> Two of my five colleagues were women; Wainwright and I were non-white. We were marvellously diverse...and yet we were not: all of us, Sherman included, hailed from the same elite universities – Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Yale: we all exuded a sense of confident self-satisfaction; and not one of us was either short or overweight. It struck me then – no. I must be honest, it strikes me *now* – that shorn of hair and dressed in battle fatigues, we would have been virtually indistinguishable (RF 38).

Acceptance is selective and depends on "maximum return" (RF 37). Class in this case is initially presented as overriding other determinants of identity like ethnicity or religion. Changez is so proud of having climbed the social ladder that he does not underline the differences between himself and his other colleagues. He reflects on his initial feeling of contentment and security: "I was the only non-American in our group, but I suspected my Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expense account, and – most of all – by my companions" (RF 71). Just as in Faulks' *A Week in December*, money seems to function as egalitarian principle.

Cultural differences are only addressed quite subtly and mentioned casually, especially by Erica. While Erica is afraid of loneliness, for Changez, who grew up in a large family, being alone is a "luxury" (RF 19). "You give off this strong sense of home [... .] It makes you feel solid," (RF 19) Erica says and is taken in by his extraordinary politeness and respect towards others (cf. RF 25). The protagonist is characterised very positively by her remarks but also indirectly by his own actions. He recurrently mentions his "traditional sense of deference to one's seniors" (RF 21) and shows his generosity by inviting the American stranger and by giving a donation to a passing beggar. To be successful in his career, however, he shows "controlled aggression", "determination", "tenacity" and works "harder [...] than any of the others" (RF 41). His boss Jim claims: "you've got a bit of the warrior in you" (RF 44). After 'battle fatigues' the reference to a 'warrior' is another martial image referring to the job at Underwood Samson. Remarks like these already foreshadow Changez' struggles: the war of his conscience against the ideals of economic maximum utility, the war on terror following 9/11, as well as the war against himself, triggered by guilt and the fear of stabbing his own people in the back. In the course of the novel the protagonist is afraid of changing from a 'warrior' into a 'janissary', as I will outline later in this chapter.

His doubts and feelings of disorientation begin when he is employed in valuation projects in the US and abroad and has to face the social effects of his work. He suddenly has to come to terms with hostility. Not only people who are affected by his company treat him with hostility and distrust but also average people who despise him for doing such a job in the first place. Changez describes a brief encounter with a Filipino driver in Manila as resulting in open hatred:

> There was an undisguised hostility in his expression; I had no idea why. [...] But his dislike was so obvious, so *intimate*, that it got under my skin. I stared back at him, getting angry myself [...] I remained preoccupied with this matter far longer than I should have, pursuing several possibilities that all assumed – as their unconscious starting point – that he and I shared a sort of Third World sensibility. Then one of my colleagues asked me a

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> question, and when I turned to answer him, something rather strange took place. I looked at him – at his fair hair and light eyes and, most of all, his oblivious immersion in the minutiae of our work – and thought, you are so *foreign*. I felt in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him; I felt I was play-acting when in reality I ought to be making my way home, like the people on the street outside (RF 66-67).

Suddenly, ethnicity – or at least non-whiteness – gains centre stage. Similar to the other novels in this literary corpus, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* also raises the question of whether ethnicity or class is a stronger determinant of individual identity. At first, the protagonist believes in the power of his personal success to override all other factors separating him from his white American colleagues. In this scene, however, he feels closer to a Filipino than to his American colleague. The 'Third World sensibility' he mentions seems to refer to a joint feeling of defeat, inferiority and exclusion from power and economic resources. It's a matter of common knowledge that the term 'third world' was used during the Cold War for all non-aligned countries between the so-called 'First World' (NATO-countries in Western Europe and the United States) and the 'Second World' (the Communist bloc). Many of these non-aligned countries shared a history of colonialism and deficits in economic development. Later on, the term 'third world' became a stereotype for developing and least developed countries suffering from poverty and a lack of industrialisation. This categorisation became common irrespective of the former meaning of 'Third World'. The term had emerged as a political and not primarily economic or social category and originally also included some wealthier but non-aligned European countries such as Sweden, Austria or Switzerland. However, the term came to be used as an economic marker denoting the border between centre and periphery or between powerful, capitalist, developed countries and developing countries, which depend on Western aid. Since this description is highly misleading and the economic, political and cultural differences between 'third world countries' are vast, the term is no longer used in political theory but continues to be a part of common parlance. The protagonist's birth in a country viewed as 'Third World' in the U.S., entices his sudden empathy with the Filipino, who also stems from a supposedly marginalised, peripheral country. Changez leads a cosmopolitan life but is suddenly reminded of his roots. As Gamal summarises:

> The reconstruction of new contact zones within the historical settings and transnational context of post-migratory narratives is hence styled as fundamentally cosmopolitan. However, the common 'post' in post-migratory and postcolonial literature connotes a manifest oppositional stance that might be unavailable in unconditional cosmopolitanism. In addition, post-migratory writings deftly portray characters that retain their sense of tradition, cultural heritage and, accordingly, their postcolonial backgrounds in their newly adopted homelands (Gamal 2013: 558).

Even though the Philippines and Pakistan do not have much in common, a bond seems to be created by means of a shared feeling of inferiority and exclusion. Simultaneously, this unconscious process of identification engenders a role reversal and an alienation from his American colleague. The protagonist used to have the feeling of belonging to the company he worked for and felt accepted and respected irrespective

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

of his background. The hostility of the Filipino driver, however, confronts him with a view that, first and foremost, takes in his cultural background and skin colour – not his social standing and life in America. The comfort of social upward mobility does not seem to override the anxiety of feeling marginalised.

The feeling of backwardness connected to his own country of origin causes him so much shame that he rather risks being spurned as an American than looked down on as a Pakistani since

> it was one thing to accept that New York was more wealthy than Lahore, but quite another to swallow the fact that Manila was as well. [...] I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an *American.* The Filipinos we worked with seemed to look up to my American colleagues, accepting them almost instinctively as members of the officer class of global business – and I wanted my share of that respect as well. So I learned to tell executives my father's age, "I need it *now*"; I learned to cut to the front of lines with an extraterritorial smile; and I learned to answer, when asked where I was from, that I was from New York. [...] I was often ashamed. But outwardly I gave no sign of this (RF 64-65).

As we have seen in the previous analytical chapters, this longing for 'respect' is presented by many novels in this literary corpus as a basic need of human beings and a central motive for turning to fundamentalist ideas. Changez uses being 'a New Yorker' as a cloak to gain this respect and to mask his feeling of insecurity and his doubts about where he belongs. To achieve this, though, he has to disrespect some of the rules of his upbringing thus decreasing his self-respect. Furthermore, people can guess from his foreign outer appearance that he might have a different cultural background. As the scene above indicates, people assume Changez to know the grievances of people in developing countries and therefore despise him for assimilating to an economic system that is seen by many as exploitative and adversarial.

Cultural background moves even more into the focus after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which mark a turning point for Changez. Even before he comes "under suspicion" (RF) because of his foreign appearance and Muslim background, he detects a silent malicious glee in his reaction to the attacks:

> I stared as one – and then the other – of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center collapsed. And then I *smiled.* Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased. Your disgust is evident; indeed, your large hand has, perhaps without your noticing, clenched into a fist. But please believe me when I tell you that I am no sociopath. […] So when I tell you I was pleased at the slaughter of thousands of innocents, I do so with a profound sense of perplexity. […] I was caught up in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees. [...] But surely you cannot be completely innocent of such feelings yourself. Do you feel no joy at the video clips – so prevalent these days – of American munitions laying waste the structures of your enemies? But you are at war, you say? Yes, you have a point. I was not at war with America. Far from it: I was the product of an American university; I was earning a lucrative American salary; I was infatuated with an American woman. So why did part of me desire to see America harmed? I did not know, then; I knew merely that my feelings would be unacceptable to my colleagues, and I undertook to hide them as well as I could (RF 72-73).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The protagonist speaks from a self-reflective temporal distance and reveals to us what he felt but could not classify at that point in time. This strategy increases our suspense and makes us wonder about the development and outcome of these feelings. Moreover, suspense is created by the allusion to the reaction of the American. A 'clenched fist' indicates rising tension between the two interlocutors, but the details are never outlined to the reader. Apparently, the account of the protagonist is perceived as 'aggression' even though Changez instantly classifies the terrorist attack as 'slaughter of innocents'. What fascinates him is not the event as such but the fact that a group from the 'marginalised periphery' was able to severely attack and demoralise the centre of global political and economic power. This at least momentarily seems to change rigid power structures. At this point in the novel, the reader can perceive an increasing anti-American undercurrent, even though this anti-Americanism seems to have developed from feelings of empathy with 'the underdog'. Because of his spontaneous gleeful reaction to 9/11, the protagonist feels "guilty [...] stiff and self-conscious" (RF 74). His divided loyalties cause a "constant murmur of reproach" (RF 79) within himself.

Asked whether Changez' reaction to the 9/11 terrorist attacks mirrored his own feelings, Hamid explains: "No. I was devastated. A wall had suddenly come up between my American and Muslim worlds. The novel is my attempt to reconnect those divided worlds" (Solomon 2007: n.p). The author seems to have experienced a similar crisis of identity following the changed social climate after 9/11 and underlines his need to mend the fractured parts of his identity (cf. Harcourt interview 2007). The protagonist describes a tense and hostile social climate. His inner pressure is mirrored at the outside by rising nationalism:

> Your country's flag invaded New York after the attacks; it was everywhere. [...] They all seemed to proclaim: *We are America* – not New York, which, in my opinion, means something quite different – *the mightiest civilization the world has ever known; you have slighted us; beware our wrath* (RF 79).

With a resort to nationalist defence, Changez, who seemed to have blended in so perfectly in a cosmopolitan city like New York, becomes an outsider who is distrustfully eyed by others. The protagonist later on describes the attacks and the subsequent political events as the beginning annihilation of his "personal American dream" (RF 93). He narrates how "America was gripped by a growing and self-righteous rage" (RF 94) in the wake of 9/11 and how he tried to ignore rumours of racist assaults against immigrants and FBI raids of Muslim houses and mosques. Protected by an "armor of denial" (RF 95), Changez immerses himself in work and tries to ignore increasing political tensions within the US as well as the social injustices caused by the advice he has to give to his customers.

His increasing disillusionment and discomfort with the system surfaces after the American invasion of Afghanistan and the crisis between India and Pakistan, which brings the risk of war to his country and family. Driven by fear, pride and indignation, his simmering antipathy becomes stronger and less controllable:

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> My reaction caught me by surprise; Afghanistan was Pakistan's neighbour, our friend, and a fellow Muslim nation besides, and the sight of what I took to be the beginning of its invasion by your countrymen caused me to tremble with fury. I had to sit down to calm myself, and I remember polishing off a third of a bottle of whiskey before I was able to fall asleep. [...W]e were not always burdened by debt, dependent on foreign aid and handouts; in the stories we tell of ourselves we were not the crazed and destitute radicals you see on your television channels but rather saints and poets and – yes – conquering kings. *We* built the Royal Mosque and the Shalimar Gardens in this city, and *we* built the Lahore Fort with its mighty walls and wide ramp for our battle-elephants. And we did these things when your country was still a collection of thirteen small colonies, gnawing away at the edge of a continent. But once more I am raising my voice, and making you rather uncomfortable besides. I apologize; it was not my intention to be rude (RF 100-102).

Changez' inner pangs are caused by a conflict of divided loyalties. He has a broader social, cultural and religious perspective than most of his colleagues and knows the ropes of First World and developing countries. However, this knowledge is not always beneficial for him. The protagonist acquired his moral education in Pakistan and his academic education in the United States. Both systems, however, are often at odds when it comes to values and norms. Changez feels that he cannot serve both sides. The protagonist's anger starts to materialise not only on the story level but also on the level of the frame-story, which gives it an increasingly tense and claustrophobic atmosphere. Furthermore, Hamid now recurrently conjures up media images (like the collapse of the twin towers or the invasion of Afghanistan) most Western readers will still have in mind. This invites the readers to compare their own responses to the attitudes described by the protagonist.

Esposito, a renowned American professor of International Affairs and Islamic Studies and director of the Prince Alwaleed Center for Christian-Muslim Understanding at Georgetown University, describes how Islamophobia spread throughout American society like a "social cancer" (Esposito 2011: xxxiv) after 9/11. Several articles in his collection on Islamophobia testify to the power of the media to convey specific Islamophobic prejudices.[149] First, Islamophobia fosters the development of parallel societies by creating an atmosphere of victimisation, of not being welcome, which hinders Muslim citizens "from fully participating in the political, social, cultural, and economic life of the societies in which they live" (Kalin 2011: 16). Secondly, it provokes a similarly undifferentiated counter-reaction by the Muslim people who feel forced into a corner:

> [T]he constant presence of pressure and intimidation bars Muslims themselves from self-criticism. Confronted with frontal attacks driven by racist and Islamophobic attitudes, Muslims of various religious and political bends shy away from openly criticizing fellow Muslims [. …] The fear is that they will be betraying their Muslim brothers and sisters in the midst of a war launched against them. […] Confronted with guilt by association and communal stigmatization, even the most conscientious and analytical members of the Muslim community take refuge in the kind of group solidarity that makes self-criticism look like a self-defeating strategy (Kalin 2011: 16-17).

149 See also the useful case studies on the relationship between Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism (Nimer 2011: 77-92) or forms of Islamophobia in European countries (Cesari 2011: 21-43) and Great Britain (Abbas 2011: 63-76 and Zebiri 2011: 173-190) in the wake of 9/11.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The protagonist in Hamid's novel experiences exactly this feeling of being singled out and betraying his own people, which finally causes a defensive reaction and a retreat to solidarity with his cultural roots.

At first, Changez keeps on clinging to economic maxims as "bulwark" (RF 116) against insecurity and prejudice: Underwood Samson becomes his anchor of stability within a sea of uncertainties. These uncertainties also include his first personal encounter with racism. Despite his long-held belief that "those rare cases of abuse [...] invariably happened, in America as in all countries, to the hapless poor, not to Princeton graduates earning eighty thousand dollars a year" (RF 94-95) he is now called a "[f]ucking Arab" (RF 117) and cannot "entirely escape the growing importance of *tribe*" (RF 117). For the first time the narrator really feels the importance of his ethnicity. At the same time, he recognises the significance of socialisation. Returning for a visit to Pakistan fearing that the country could be drawn into the war, the protagonist regards with horror the changes in his own perspective:

> I recall the Americanness of my own gaze when I returned to Lahore that winter when war was in the offing. I was struck at first by how shabby our house appeared […] I was saddened to find it in such a state – no, more than saddened, I was shamed. *This* was where I came from, this was my provenance, and it smacked of lowliness. But as I reacclimatized and my surroundings once again became familiar, it occurred to me that the house had not changed in my absence, *I* had changed; I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner, and not just any foreigner, but that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of your country's elite. This realization angered me [...] It was far from impoverished; indeed, it was rich with history. I wondered how I could ever have been so ungenerous – and so blind – to have thought otherwise, and I was disturbed by what this implied about myself: that I was a man lacking in substance and hence easily influenced by even a short sojourn in the company of others (RF 124-125).

The Reluctant Fundamentalist plays with numerous role-reversals and changes of perspective. Life in the United States seems to have changed Changez' point of view. But coming back to his family home and his roots, he remembers his old role and realises the foreign influence on his perception. His life between different cultures constantly holds up a mirror to the protagonist and confuses his loyalties. His life in New York suddenly seems remote and strange to him, and it seems impossible to speak about it to his parents for "what is natural in one place can seem unnatural in another, and some concepts travel rather poorly, if at all" (RF 126). When he finally has to return, he is full of self-contempt and feels "worried", "powerless", "angry" and like a "coward" and "traitor" (RF 128) for leaving his family in imminent danger and returning to the smug security of his former life in the US.

His visit to Pakistan triggers a further stage of self-reflection and also self-alienation. Feeling disconnected and confused, he tells the American stranger how he decided to grow a beard: "It was, perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind; I do not now recall my precise motivations" (RF 130). Clinging to what he seems to have lost or left behind, Changez becomes "the subject of whispers and stares" (RF 130). The scene points to a kind of paranoia that might be mostly groundless and irrational,

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

but which is still real for many people. This is the case, surprisingly, even though religion has not played any role in the novel up to this point. The protagonist defiantly provokes these reactions as if he had lost any trust in American society. His inner struggle is also indicated in the frame-story. Changez for the first time utters insecurity concerning his motives and the accuracy of his memory. His sudden lack of clarity may point to his feverish state of inner conflict at that time, although the narration as such is at all times logically structured. As already mentioned, there are no exclamations, unfinished sentences or other textual elements which may allude to an extreme emotional state of the speaker or narrator.

The last decisive reason for Changez' change of mind is finally his project visit to Valparaiso. The city's "former aspirations to grandeur" (RF 144) remind him of Lahore, which brings back his nostalgia for a past of cultural richness, political sophistication and economic wealth. The protagonist feels as if his "blinders were coming off" (RF 145). He embarks on an "inflective journey" (RF 146) and finally is "clearly on the threshold of great change" (RF 150). This journey, however, is accompanied by a severe crisis of identity. Whereas his colleague is silently desperate about Changez' lack of care and inability to do his job, Juan-Bautista, the head of the company that is to be evaluated, seems to be the only one who can sense the core of his misery:

> 'Does it trouble you,' he [Juan-Bautista] inquired, 'to make your living by disrupting the lives of others? [...] Have you heard of the janissaries?' 'No,' I said. 'They were Christian boys,' he explained, 'captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim army, at that time the greatest army in the world. They were ferocious and utterly loyal: they had fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to.' [...] In any case, Juan-Bautista's words plunged me into a deep bout of introspection. I spent that night considering what I had become. There really could be no doubt: I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war. Of course I was struggling! Of course I felt torn! (RF 151-152).

This reference to the janissaries hints at several supposed contradictions which occupy the protagonist's thoughts. The historical janissaries were culturally and religiously strangers in the Ottoman Empire. They had been taken from their parents, had lost their roots and connections to their family and kin and were then forced to convert to Islam and fight against their own people. At the same time, they also managed to ascend into the ranks of a political and economic elite gaining considerable influence in the Ottoman Empire. They gained such a powerful position that they were even able to control and unseat several sultans. As their prestige and power increased, many people voluntarily began to strive for a membership in the troops. However, the ascent of the janissaries from victims to power brokers was also accompanied by increasing brutality, decadence, moral decay and military inefficiency so that sultan Mahmud II finally succeeded in annihilating the janissaries in 1826.[150]

Similar to the janissaries Changez left his home-country to join a foreign elite. His journey is voluntary, but the protagonist is still alienated from his roots because the

150 For an insightful introduction to the Ottoman Empire at the late 18th and early 19th century and the role of the janissaries see Anscombe (2012).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

system he enters obeys totally different rules and enforces economic and political structures worldwide that may even harm the country he comes from. Furthermore, the treatment of people with a different ethnic background after 9/11 indicates the danger that people like Changez might face the same fate as the janissaries once did: to be annihilated or at least excluded if they become too powerful and are perceived as a threat. Following his encounter with Juan-Bautista, Changez decides to quit his job and thus to disappoint his boss Jim's "act of faith and generosity" (RF 153). Interestingly, Jim also uses a military example when he tries to appeal to their common Underwood Samson group identity. "In wartime soldiers don't really fight for their flags, Changez", he claims; "They fight for their friends, their buddies. Their team. Well, right now your team is asking you to stay" (RF 153). His job used to arouse his pride but these days are over. It becomes visible how much national and cultural identity may override other factors in times of war. Finck describes how the postmodern subject is described "as necessarily fragmented and inescapably permeated by cultural experience" (Finck 2015: 22). The war between the United States and Afghanistan, the conflict between Pakistan and India are more important to the protagonist than his loyalty to his employer. In the end, the loss of his job, as well as the news of Erica's disappearance, cause a severe crisis of identity and turn him into "an incoherent and emotional madman, flying off into rages and sinking into depressions" (RF 167). Just as Kureishi's novel *The Black Album*, Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* shows that identity is no monolithic construct. Our identity has many facets and we are influenced by a variety of different loyalties and roles we play in our lives.

The topic of identity is addressed by the novel on a personal as well as national level. As Bragard notes, 9/11 "has plunged America – and possibly the West – into a crisis of representation with itself" (Bragard 2011: 8) and even more so the individuals targeted by suspicion and fear:

> [R]econsiderations of American and Muslim cultures and identities surfaced on a global level. In more private and domestic spheres, terror shook the definition of the self and radically altered relationships among individuals, leaving behind not only grief and incomprehension but a range of other complex feelings as well such as fear, depression, and alienation from family and community (Bragard 2011: 4).

As we have seen, the novel can be read as a case for cultural hybridity and a melancholic regretfulness about the distrust and calls for assimilation following the war on terror. In this context, Hamid's work has also been criticised for its depiction of the ideal of global culture as symbolised by the city of New York. Roy, for instance, argues that this vision supposedly reflects less a desirable ideal of multiculturalism than "the universalization of American national identity" (Roy 2011: n.p.). He reasons that the novel "creates sympathy for the secular, westernized Muslim that has been stigmatized following 9/11, but leaves the broader political relations between America and the 'Muslim world' unquestioned" (Roy 2011: n.p.). Indeed, the novel does not indicate that the protagonist would also have turned his back on America if he had not felt excluded and attacked. It reflects sympathy for the United States and does not represent a contestation of a secular, liberal world-view. Nevertheless, Hamid, to my mind, does not aim at a concise representation of Muslim-American relations or an

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

analysis of Muslim self-determination or the diverse reasons for a resort to Islamic fundamentalist ideologies. Thus, his work should not be judged along these lines. His novel focuses on the experience of one ordinary individual who is suddenly torn between his cultural heritage and the facets of his identity that are linked to his life in America.[151] Hamid strives to challenge our preconceptions and "tease apart identities the war on terror fuses" (Scanlan 2010: 266), such as Muslim and fundamentalist.

As already mentioned, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* features no references to religion or an Islamic form of fundamentalism. It becomes clear that the kind of fundamentalism the protagonist is reluctant to embrace is the form of economic libertarianism embodied by his employer Underwood Samson. The novel illustrates clashes between humanist and economic values as well as between cultural values and political views. As Perlez summarises, the author holds the opinion that "religion is not pivotal in the tensions between the United States and the Muslim world. Islamic extremists are not Koranic robots, he says. Rather, 'there's a sense of being humiliated and then threatened, that's what makes it insufferable'" (Perlez 2007: n.p.). The identity crisis of the protagonist is triggered by world-political events. These events are provoked by an attack rooted in Islamic fundamentalist beliefs. However, the resulting war is not presented as a religious controversy but as a struggle for power, security and influence over territory. The novel also indicates, as Perry states for the works of many North African Muslim writers, a rising interest in "more global human issues beyond a colonial/postcolonial dichotomy" (Perry 2011: 122).

Underwood Samson's guiding principle "Focus on the fundamentals" (RF 98) explicitly establishes a connection between the American economic system and a fundamentalist potential. However, liberalism does not seem to possess fundamentalist qualities to the same extent as in Faulks' novel *A Week in December*. There are no signs of moral Manicheanism, absolutism or a claim to inerrancy. In contrast to characters such as Faulks' protagonist John Veals, the characters in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* who represent this economic system do not strive to do wrong and do not believe in their own superiority. Erica and Jim seem to recognise the flaws of the system, but they nevertheless do not escape its rules and dynamics. Erica is too sick and immersed in her own misery to have the strength to care about other issues, and Jim is maybe just too relieved and grateful to have escaped his poor childhood to wish for change. Despite their flaws, both characters are still presented as humane, likeable and also vulnerable, which is the opposite of Veals' purely selfish and greedy impulses. Concerning his own stance towards capitalism, Hamid states:

151 Shamsie insightfully highlights that "[t]oday's widespread notions of Christianity/the West vs. Islam have roots in early ideas of European statehood where religion (Christianity vs. Islam, Protestants vs. Catholics) shaped monolithic national identities. These concepts of nationhood did not exist in the symbiotic Indo-Muslim culture of Mughal India, but by the early twentieth century, under the impact of colonization and the struggle for modernity, language and religion became contentious issues in the fight for statehood" (Shamsie 2011: 149). This might explain why the protagonist cannot comprehend the strong link between religion and national identity he experiences in America after the September 11 attacks.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> I'm not an anti-capitalist; it's not that I think that business is wrong. However, it's certainly the case that the system of money and the protection of property necessitate violence. [...] The idea that there is violence behind a system of capital can't be denied, but capitalism allows us to act as though we're not violent (Chambers 2011: 184-185).

As a former insider to the system he describes, Hamid expresses criticism but does so without great reproach for the individual members of this system.

Looking at the other parameters of 'fundamentalism' outlined by *The Fundamentalism Project*, one can state that the membership in Princeton or Underwood Samson 'high society' is elitist in that it is mostly determined by money and social background. Changez, however, defies this tendency and is neither excluded nor harassed for his background but rather treated with respect and admiration. The economic as well as the academic system have their 'behavioural requirements' (such as a contribution to success), but the organisation is not described as very authoritarian. The system displayed shows a much larger amount of tolerance concerning infringements than the systems depicted by Faulks, Khadra or Kureishi. In Veals' world one has to be unconditionally unscrupulous, and Khadra's world is based on the unquestionable principles of honour and shame. Kureishi's proponents of radical religious or political ideologies similarly claim blind allegiance and total submission to their respective doctrines of salvation. In comparison to these setups, Changez encounters a considerable amount of goodwill after his defiant, silent rebellion. However, the American economic system, as embodied by Underwood Samson, claims to promote 'universal values' everyone has to embrace to be successful. Profit functions as comprehensive frame of reference.

The major sources of conflict in the novel are economic and political and not cultural or religious. Even jihadism plays no role in Hamid's work despite the centrality of 9/11 for the plot. No tensions between secularity and religious practice are displayed, and the focus of Changez' perception lies on economic and political divisions between some states that possess more power and others that possess less. Changez' identity conflict is not simply caused by his cultural socialisation but by concrete political developments which necessitate a decision for one side or the other. He sees no possibility to stay neutral. It is true that the novel reflects the rootedness of his political and economic values in his cultural background. Nevertheless, the story rather reflects a clash of interests than a clash of identities. As Schäfer claims, Islamic fundamentalism managed the transformation of a goal conflict into an identity conflict. In his article "Discontent and Its Civilizations" Hamid explicitly refers to the idea of a 'clash of civilizations' and tries to dismantle it as a dangerous illusion:

> Some might argue episodes such as these [a suicide bombing in Pakistan] are signs of a clash of civilizations. But I think not. Individuals have commonalities that cut across different countries, religions and languages – and differences that divide those who share a common country, religion and language. The idea that we fall into civilizations, plural, is merely a politically convenient myth. [...] Civilizations are illusory. But they are useful illusions. They allow us to deny our common humanity, to allocate power, resources and rights in ways repugnantly discriminatory. [...] Our civilizations do not cause us to clash. No, our clashing allows us to pretend we belong to civilizations (Hamid 2010: n.p.).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

This view corresponds to Stuart Hall's concept of 'cross-cutting identities' according to which we all share many different markers of identity which guide us and determine our loyalties and points of view. Whereas Kureishi, for instance, highlights sexuality and ideology as major determinants of personal identity, Hamid stresses different things. Cultural background becomes ever more important for the protagonist over the course of the novel. But this is not due to supposedly insurmountable differences between the American and the Pakistani culture but is a result of his disagreement with American economic as well as military politics. As I already outlined in the chapter on ethical criticism, Hall sees identity not as 'essence' but as 'positioning' (Hall 1994 (a): 30). External influences in this case change Changez' position in that they force a different facet of his identity to move into the focus. In Changez' case, this transformation happens without religious influences or manipulation by others. He is constantly confronted with goal conflicts: the conflict between social justice and economic maximum utility, between loyalty towards his country and compliance with an economic and political system that facilitated his success, between a more just distribution of global wealth and power and American military and political dominance.

Whereas Faulks, Kureishi and Khadra show how grievances are used and exploited by agitators, Hamid presents the change of his protagonist as an entirely inner and conscious process that alters an intelligent, rationalist and good-hearted individual. A turn towards 'anti-Americanism' is neither explained by social or economic misery, a lack of education, prospects and social upward mobility, nor by the manipulation by vindictive, deluded individuals. It does not evoke pity for the oppressed and exploited to win the readers' sympathy and commiseration. Instead, the novel seems to claim our respect for the political standpoints and the self-defence of other nations against a 'Western' fundamentalist potential. Furthermore, the novel expresses hope that the United States will again leave behind defensiveness, fear and distrust and learn to embrace the positive effects of cultural and religious diversity, as it used to do.

Furthermore, in comparison to *The Black Album* or *A Week in December*, Hamid's novel does not address the downturns of our modern age to the same extent. We find no descriptions of subcultures, political apathy, individual alienation or economic inequality within the society under discussion. Jim's background hints at this dimension, but the novel primarily aims at the unequal distribution of power and wealth between the US and what was formerly called the 'Third World'. Thus, it features a perspective sensitised to the needs and problems of developing countries. The other authors shed light on the mechanisms of disadvantaged religious or ethnic parallel societies. Changez, in contrast, seems to be at the heart of privileged American society. But ironically, the Princeton and Underwood Samson circles themselves show similarities to parallel societies in that they are detached from the reality of average people and do not interact much with people who do not have access to their world.

The novel criticises Western hedonism, but in a different way than Kureishi or Faulks. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* we find no scenes of sexual excesses or drug abuse. Parties and the waste of money are mentioned, but they are not presented in detailed and caricatured scenes. Dissipations seem to be common but not morally deplorable or harmful. What is more, no generalising critique of 'Western' decadent be-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

haviour can be deducted from the plot, since the story is restricted to a special circle of the wealthy and educated academic elite in the United States. The protagonist does not seem to know any people outside this circle and thus stays rather silent about the behaviour of the 'rest' of American society. As Olsson justifiably argues, the novel "aptly captures the ethos and hypocrisies of the Ivy League meritocracy, but less so its individual members. Throughout the book, secondary characters are sketched rather than distinctively rendered" (Olsson 2007: n.p.).

In a way, the novel's critique of the Western economic system remains much less concrete, detailed and personalised than the harsh and bitter criticism that is uttered in *A Week in December.* This can be ascribed to the more modest length of the novel but also to the fact that none of Hamid's characters really stands for the evil he deplores in the system. Nevertheless, in an interview from 2011 Hamid mentions concerns which are quite similar to Faulks' major worries regarding the course of Britain. He thinks to have discovered developments in the United States which remind him of the system in Pakistan:

> In my time in elite America, in the course of the last decade and a half, what I was struck by was how that system was basically collapsing. Friends of mine are earning insane amounts of money – those who stayed in the hedge fund world. Oftentimes it's unclear what they're actually contributing to society. And meanwhile the school system is collapsing, and the American middle class is being eviscerated. And all of this being done on the back of a certain demagogic tribalism. Here in Pakistan we've seen many of the same sorts of things — this combination of xenophobia, unwillingness to pay taxes, comfort with a powerful and entrenched elite that coopts the democratic process. I mean, that's what we have here, and it isn't great! […] Underneath all that are millions of gradations of hierarchy which exist in American society, just as in Pakistani society. Except here the elite embraces that, uses it to oppress everybody and says: that is the expectation. In America the pretense is: it doesn't exist, which makes it maybe even more effective, because people don't see it (Lydon 2011: n.p.).

What Hamid addresses here is not only an increasing social divide but also the fact that this divide is repudiated by the cover-up tactics of the wealthy and powerful. Just as in Faulks' novel average people seem to play no role in this game, being too powerless, unaware or politically apathetic to defend their civic rights and get their share of the economic revenue. America pretends to be more just than other countries and to provide everyone with the possibility of their personal American dream. But according to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* this promise seems hollow and the existence of equal opportunities is at least doubtful.

5.3.4) *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the light of ethical criticism and literature as cultural ecology

As has been outlined, Mohsin Hamid takes up the prominent discourses after 9/11 to question and subvert them. These discourses are filtered through the consciousness of 'the Muslim' or 'the other' who has so often been presented as stereotypical enemy image. By seeing the world through Changez' eyes, media discourses are personalised

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

and readers are invited to overcome simple prejudices and to become aware of their own fears and simplifications. As Banita notes, this process has an undeniable ethical dimension:

> By cladding in vulnerable human forms the political and media discourses that mark the post-9/11 era, such fiction underscores the spectacular ductility of ethics as a transnational narrative with the potential to explode the literary conventions that shore up national interests as well as the entrenched moralism of contemporary politics, which could profit from the historicizing perspective and ethical self-doubt that permeate post-9/11 literary culture (Banita 2012: 299).

The Reluctant Fundamentalist does not focus on a criticism of 9/11 but animadverts the absence of humanist principles in all essentialist world-views – including economic libertarianism. Even though the event of 9/11 as such does not play a very prominent role in the novel, the text questions the ethical validity of anti-Muslim American moralism following the event. It subverts boundaries just like many works of Ground Zero Fiction do. As Däwes outlines:

> Ground Zero Fiction unsettles the concepts of hermetic community and wounded nation: it provides a site for encounters between Self and Other in which the boundaries are shifted. […Many approaches] deconstruct, in very different ways, the dichotomies of 'us' and 'them', encouraging instead heteroglossia and dialogue, global perspectives, and a poetics of inclusion (Däwes 2011: 413-414).

Just as Kureishi's protagonist realises in the end of *The Black Album*, people might try to erect barriers between Self and 'Other' but in doing so, they often do not understand that boundaries and identities have already been permeated. No matter how much this interdependence and exchange might frighten a majority society: There has already been a commingling of influences and identities that cannot be undone any more.

One could say that the many questions *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* leaves to be interpreted by the reader, already constitute an anti-fundamentalist strategy. As Saadi notes:

> The greater the distance between the implicit and the explicit, the more challenging a text can be, but also the more the reader will have to reconstruct the world of the text. This empowers both writer and reader and is the antithesis of literalism (Saadi 2012: 14-15).

Whereas religious fundamentalists insist on only one reading and interpretation of their holy text, Hamid's novel grants us the opportunity to employ our imagination, consider very different readings of the text and fill the gaps according to our own preconceptions. This simultaneously leads us to question the text and its quality as well as our own expectations and prejudices we project on the novel. The decisions we make, according to Hamid, are moral decisions and tell us something about our own ethical principles (cf. Singh 2012: 156). The author, thus, encourages a decidedly non-fundamentalist way of reading solely by using an open form and skilful changes between first-person and second-person narration. As Morey argues,

> in employing the hoax confessional and dramatic monologue forms, the novel not only effectively parodies the cultural certainties encouraged by those 'true confessions' of for-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> mer radicals, in destabilizing the reader's identification through hyperbole, strategic exoticization, allegorical layering and unreliable narration, but also defamiliarizes our relation to literary projects of national identification, forcing us to be the kind of deterritorialized reader demanded by the emerging category of world literature (Morey 2011: 136).

The strategy of the novel to hint at prevalent stereotypes on all sides is expertly underlined by a combination of form and content which promotes this aim. As has been outlined in the previous chapters, Martha Nussbaum believes in an important link between form and function and states that not only the content of a novel is central to its meaning but also the "sort of feeling and imagining [...] enacted in the telling of the story itself, in the shape and texture of the sentences, the pattern of the narrative, the sense of life that animates the text as a whole" (Nussbaum 1998: 225-226). With respect to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, one could say that the dominant feeling in the novel may probably best be described as an insecurity about fixed categories – concerning stereotypes about the 'other' as well as a monolithic understanding of one's own identity. Hamid invites us to see the world as well as political events from a different – non Western – perspective and rethink our own ethical positions. I believe to have outlined in enough detail in which ways the author employs formal features Nussbaum's theories focus on, such as the use of voice, point of view, empathy, contradictions or determinacy, to underline his central concerns. Thus, I will not repeat these details but will proceed to take a brief look at the novel in the context of literature as cultural ecology.

Like the other works in this narrative corpus, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* also contributes to the notion that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Through the simultaneous use of nuanced descriptions and a blunt depiction of stereotypes and prejudices the novel questions simple truths. It shows with respect to globalised capitalism that a system as a whole can deteriorate despite the fact that the makeup of this system consists of normal people with hopes and good intentions. As I already outlined in the chapter on ethical criticism, Zapf highlights the potential of literature to "radically question the modernist ideology of the autonomous, entirely self-constituting subject" (Zapf 2007: 155). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* impressively displays the dependence of the individual on larger economic, social and cultural frameworks. Changez is influenced by his cultural background as dominant framework, whereas Americans after 9/11 are presented as increasingly dependent on a nationalist framework. On the one hand, the novel points to the fact that identity is determined by a variety of facets. On the other hand, it also shows that personal identity is "founded on the notion of origin, of 'home'" and that it often "requires contact with an Other to bring the 'me' to the fore" (Waterman 2015: 121). In this case, cultural identity is enhanced through the contact or interplay with nationalist identification. These frameworks may develop fatal dynamics and endanger the integrity of their parts. What we see in all novels is the fragmentation of systems of belief, the plurality of meanings and the use of fictional literature as culture-critical metadiscourse.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist can be viewed as culture-critical metadiscourse in that it displays the deficits of the global capitalist system with its unequal distribution of wealth and power. Furthermore, the novel addresses contradictions in systems of

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

political power. With respect to the United States, double standards concerning the defence of moral values are especially animadverted. The claim to promote freedom and justice is counteracted by a ruthless use and dropping of allies and an unflinching acquiescence of 'collateral damage'. The sometimes mocking tone and direct addressing of stereotypes directs our attention to our own prejudices and blind spots concerning the needs of people who see the world from a different cultural, religious or political vantage point. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* visualises the clash of the protagonist with the society he lives in as well as a clash between different societies. These clashes between dominant systems lead to Changez' alienation from the life he was used to as well as from himself. The dominant systems displayed do not seem to negate individuality in an inescapable way: the characters choose consciously to be loyal to the economic system in order to promote their own career and not because they are forced to do so. However, Changez has to negate his cultural and religious heritage for the sake of occupational advancement, which results in "chronic states of self-alienation, failed communication and paralyzed vitality" (Zapf 2007: 155-156).

The Reluctant Fundamentalist also fulfils the literary function of an imaginative counter-discourse, even though restrictions might apply in this case. The only voice we get is not a marginalised voice as such, because our protagonist is neither economically nor socially disadvantaged. However, certain facets of his identity, such as his cultural and religious heritage, are suppressed. As Changez finally manages to express his cultural identity that was relegated by the systems of Princeton and Underwood Samson, formerly excluded facets move to the forefront, as the protagonist's gleeful reaction to the 9/11 terrorist attacks exemplifies. Changez' perspective allows us to shift our ground and view events from a totally different angle. What is more, the 'centre of alterity' shifts as well: It is not the protagonist's alterity which is highlighted but the alterity, aloofness and artificiality of Princeton and Underwood Samson circles. As Gray notes, even the construction of differences and the criticism of the majority society voiced by writers with different cultural backgrounds do not just represent counter-discourses because influence and transformation are mutual processes. He argues that works by authors with a second cultural background "reconfigure language, the themes and tropes of American writing, in terms that go way beyond bipolar, biracial models. In the process, they become a lexical equivalent of the immigrant encounter, transforming their literary environs just as they are transformed by them" (Gray 2008: 140). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* explores how this mutual influence may work in a detrimental way in that it may reinforce a dangerous spiral of mutual distrust and resentment.

Regardless of Changez' apparently final rejection of his life in America and the plot's irreconcilable differences which last till the end, the novel still bears traces of a reintegrative interdiscourse. The author has recurrently demonstrated through his fictional as well as journalistic texts that he accepts the role as a mediator between different cultures, so often assigned to postcolonial writers (cf. Also Perner 2011: 23). Especially Hamid's choice to establish a strong interconnection between public and private life in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* can be said to function as reintegrative principle. Hamid believes "in the intertwined nature of the personal and the political"

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

(Hamilton 2007: n.p.). The author claims that there are many similarities between countries and people in that

> notions of pride, passion, nostalgia, and envy shape the behaviour of countries more than is sometimes acknowledged. In the Muslim world, one sees love for things American co-exist with anger towards America. Which is stronger, politics or love, is like asking which is stronger, exhaling or inhaling. They are two sides of the same thing (Hamilton 2007: n.p.).

This comment corresponds to the word-plays in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the parallels between Erica and America, Underwood Samson and the United States. "People and countries tend to blur in my fiction," Hamid admits, "both serving as symbols of the other" (Harcourt interview 2007: n.p.). "One of the novel's notable achievements is the seamless manner in which ideology and emotion, politics and the personal are brought together into a vivid picture of an individual's globalised revolt" (Anthony 2012: n.p.), Guardian critic Andrew Anthony praised Hamid's work. The novel indeed shows that "the conscious and the unconscious" as well as "intellect and passion" (Zapf 2007: 158-159) cannot be divided. The reintegration of both spheres within the protagonist leads to his professional failure and a fundamental clash with the system that promoted his success. Accordingly, antagonising forces and world-views cannot be reconciled on the level of action. For the protagonist, however, this painful process means regeneration. In the end, he separates from his former life but is again in accord with his conscience and in harmony with his inner self. Zapf speaks in this context of "paralysis and creative renewal" (Zapf 2008 (b): 35). And this is partly what happens in the novel. Changez at some point is paralysed and unable to act. The encounter with Juan Bautista finally helps to free him from his ossification and accelerates his inner change. Nevertheless, the resolution of a conflict within the protagonist leads to intensified conflicts with his environment. His relationship to America is not put on a new basis, but relations are discontinued. This prevents a reintegration of diverse discourses on the story-level. Thus, a harmonious synthesis is rejected and the idea of the autonomous being is qualified.

What unites Hamid most with Khadra is his strong emphasis on the central role of empathy and the function of literature as a vehicle to rouse this empathy for positions we might not encounter or be able to comprehend otherwise:

> I believe that the core skill of a novelist is empathy: the ability to imagine what someone else might feel. And I believe that the world is suffering from a deficit of empathy at the moment: the political positions of both Osama Bin Laden and George W. Bush are founded on failures of empathy, failures of compassion towards people who seem different. By taking readers inside a man who both loves and is angered by America, and hopefully by allowing readers to feel what that man feels, I hope to show that the world is more complicated than politicians and newspapers usually have time for. We need to stop being so confused by the fear we are fed: a shared humanity unites us with people we are encouraged to think of as our enemies (Harcourt Interview 2007: n.p.).

Hamid makes it clear that he wants readers to think about their own assumptions and prejudices. The author establishes links between the personal and the political sphere, between his own experiences and beliefs and the topics he writes about. He states that

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

it is "okay for writers to be scared of writing about certain issues. 'What is not okay is that out of that fear, you say something you do not believe in […] Art should be about expressing what one believes and thinks'" (Shaukat 2012: n.p.). Hamid's novel is supposed to be an invitation to put ourselves in the protagonist's shoes, to view the world from a different perspective and develop an understanding of characters who represent values and world-views we might not appreciate. Hamid strongly believes in the ethical potential of literature to hold a mirror up to the readers and rouse their empathy. Thus, his novel reflects his wish to dismantle and question stereotypes and reanimate a conversation which has been stifled by world-political events and mutual distrust. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a very topical book and, concerning the political events outlined in the first chapters, will remain so for a considerable time.

5.4) The responsibility to transcend hatred: Yasmina Khadra's *The Sirens of Baghdad* as expression of an indelible love for humanity

Yasmina Khadra – or Mohammed Moulessehoul – has been praised by many critics as "un vrai *phénomène* de la littérature arabe, maghrébine et universelle" (Bendaoud 2010: 17) and one of the rare Algerian writers "qui défraient la chronique, convoquent les consciences et suscitent un intérêt certain pour une lecture assidue, faite d'émotion, de sensations, de mots qui chantent et de phrases qui enchantent" (Bendaoud 2010: 18). *The Sirens of Baghdad* (SB) is a novel which seems to confirm this claim. It is set in Beirut/Lebanon, Baghdad and Kafr Karam, a Bedouin village in the middle of the Iraqi desert. The novel features the journey of an anonymous protagonist who tells us his story. He describes how the American war in Iraq, starting in 2003, severely disrupts life everywhere in the country, causes bloodshed – often among civilians – and triggers a wave of anger, frustration and vows of revenge among the Iraqi people. The novel is a chronicle of brutality, shame and the force of traditional cultural concepts, the violation of which triggers a vicious circle of terrorist counter-attacks. The protagonist's previously peaceful life is turned upside down by three major events, which can be interpreted as symbolising the assassination of 'innocence', the arbitrariness of bloodshed and the irreversible violation of traditional moral norms. These three events will be outlined in more detail in this chapter, because they are depicted as turning points which induce the narrator's urge to wash away in blood the indignities he suffered. Due to these traumatising events, he joins a cell of fundamentalists around his cousin Sayed, which plans and facilitates suicide attacks. The protagonist consents to carry out an assault with outstandingly disastrous consequences: He is supposed to fly to Europe carrying a lethal virus against which no cure has been developed yet. In the last minute, however, having already been injected with the deadly disease, he refuses to board the plane and sacrifices the alleged retrieval of his honour for humanist values and the protection of other people.

In *The Sirens of Baghdad* we get acquainted with an auto-, intradiegetic narrator, who remains nameless throughout the whole novel. There are no focalised passages and accordingly no paralepses that could grant the reader an insight into the thoughts

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

and feelings of other characters. The novel begins *in medias res* and then features a longer flashback, which stretches over seven chapters and gives us a synopsis of all crucial events that have shaped the protagonist's decision to turn towards a suicide attack. A short introduction set in Beirut/Lebanon sets the tone for the novel. The atmosphere is marked by gloomy desolation, and we are introduced to the main elements that will permeate the whole plot: destruction, double standards and despair. This introduction is written in present tense and works like a prologue. It is followed by two extensive flashbacks: one to Kafr Karam, our narrator's birthplace, and one to Baghdad, where the last two thirds of the novel are set. Similar to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *The Sirens of Baghdad* uses no alternating perspectives, only three main settings and one main plotline. Whereas Faulks, for instance, constantly switches between many different settings and focalisers, Khadra focuses on his autodiegetic narrator. The seven chapters set in Kafr Karam feature all major climaxes and turning points which influence the protagonist and drive him to violence. This part starts with a brief summary of the narrator's upbringing and education, his family situation and the life in Kafr Karam before the war, which is followed by a more elaborate description of the first months of armed conflict. The follow-up flashback set in Baghdad features the protagonist's disoriented journey through the city and his changing states of mind, ranging from grief and despair via apathy and defiance to impatience and aggression. The ten chapters trace his increasing radicalisation as well as the climax and turning point – namely the disclosure of a plan for a terrorist attack and the protagonist's final decision to refrain from carrying it out.

Whereas the middle part is written in past tense, the last five chapters return to Beirut and the present. The culmination of the frame story contains the planned attack towards which the main plotlines and flashbacks build up. The use of the present tense in the first and last part creates more immediacy but also accounts for a rather artificial quality due to the fact that we have an autodiegetic narrator who tells us something in the same moment he experiences it, including his last minutes awaiting his death. The text also seems artificial in that the autodiegetic narrator nearly seems to adopt the position of an extradiegetic narrator, using a lot of meticulous descriptions and word-for-word renderings of spoken conversations. However, this setup allows for a more detailed presentation of different worldviews while at the same time evoking empathy for the plight of the narrator. Khadra wrote a cruel but hopeful, or "beautifully haunting" (Tarpley 2008: 1307) tale, as one of his critics described it.

5.4.1) "The sirens echoed in the silence of the night"[152]: The lure of Islamic fundamentalism

As will be outlined in the following analysis, the novel defies the first guess that it might depict a 'clash of civilisations' between 'the West' and a predominantly Muslim Arabic country. Even though the novel focuses on the American war in Iraq, it is still

152 SB 19.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

made clear that the protagonist's inner development and crisis is primarily caused by a political and military conflict of interests and not by a conflict of identities. This conflict eventually also impinges upon cultural norms, but in contrast to the works by Faulks, Kureishi and Hamid, Khadra's novel is not set in a context of migration. The author does not focus on the danger of being torn between 'Western' values and other cultural and religious systems of belief but explores diverse approaches within Iraq itself: to religion, to traditional Bedouin norms and to the American invaders. The world of *The Sirens of Baghdad* is full of fractions and focuses strongly on inner-cultural – not only inter-cultural – tensions. Moreover, Khadra introduces an economic and social dimension differing from the situation presented in the other works of this literary corpus. Whereas the protagonists in Hamid's and Faulks' novel are rather wealthy and privileged, Khadra's protagonist is from a poor Bedouin family. The novel underlines the oppressing force of communal, collective identities, shaped by a traditional milieu which suffers from economic disadvantage and political powerlessness. *The Sirens of Baghdad* highlights the pressures exerted on the protagonist by kinship community, while at the same time stressing the large responsibility of the individual to question these imperatives.

While the other novels under discussion start with more or less common situations, Khadra's novel emphasises from the beginning that the plot is set in a state of emergency, as indicated by the title. The sirens in the title of the novel may be interpreted in three different ways: First of all, "sirens wailing" (SB 156) is what people in Baghdad constantly hear during the war when there are missile strikes or suicide bombings. Secondly, the sirens could also be seen metaphorically as the forces driving the protagonist towards Islamic fundamentalism and lure him into violence. And thirdly, the West is presented as "a siren song for people shipwrecked on their identity quest" (SB 10) which attracts people from Muslim countries and at the same time disappoints them. Starting with an analysis of how the phenomenon of 'Islamic fundamentalism' is presented in the novel, it is noteworthy that *The Sirens of Baghdad* in contrast to the other novels in this literary corpus does not present any moderate forms of Islam in detail. The novel depicts a jihadist cell in rather realistic terms. However, Khadra underlines from the beginning the prevalence of political and personal motifs over religious ones. None of the jihadists is described as outstandingly pious. The main aim of the cell is to harm the 'American invaders' in order to resurrect the honour of the country and of individual people. Thus, religious behavioural requirements (concerning dress, ritual prayers, sexuality, the renunciation of luxury, etc.) do not play an overriding role for the violent plans of the cell. Homophobia seems to be prevalent among its members, but it is not outlined whether these prejudices are religiously or culturally influenced. Furthermore, Sayed, the leader of the brotherhood, lives in a luxurious apartment and drives an expensive car, which distinguishes him from Kureishi's brother Riaz and his reproachful pledges for piety and modesty. The most elaborate explanations are reserved for Bedouin culture and the political and social reasons which may radicalise people. Neither Western liberal ideas nor Islamic fundamentalism are described in-depth in their ideological and religious manifestations and characteristics.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Similarly to Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* or partly also Kureishi's *The Black Album*, nostalgia and disappointed hopes play a major role in the plot as catalysts of fundamentalism. But whereas Hamid gives us the perspective of a protagonist who lives in the United States and is an insider to the Western liberal economic and political system, Khadra shows us a view of Western politics 'from the outside' and an inside-view of a Muslim society. Directly on the first page we get acquainted with the nostalgia of the autodiegetic narrator for the Beirut he imagined: "Arab and proud of it" (SB 1). The reality of a city wavering between different powers and scarred by armed conflict, however, contradicts his ideal. The first image the reader gets of the city is one of false appearances and double standards, which appal and enrage the protagonist:

> Beirut's a slapdash affair: Its martyrdom is phony; its tears are crocodile tears. I hate it with all my heart for its gutless, illogical pride, for the way it falls between two stools, sometimes Arab, sometimes Western, depending on the payoffs involved. What it sanctifies by day, it renounces at night, what it demands in the public square, it shuns on the beach, and it hurtles toward its ruin like an embittered runaway who thinks he'll find elsewhere the thing that's lying within reach of his hand… (SB 2).

It is helpful to add that Beirut has a rich cultural history to understand the indignation of the protagonist. People have been settling in this territory for more than 5000 years. Even under the Ottoman Empire, Beirut entertained good relations with Western countries and became the capital of Lebanon after its independence in 1943. The city prospered as intellectual centre and a popular destination for tourists from all over the world. Beirut also functioned as a centre for trade and finance, known for its economic prosperity and its huge religious diversity. However, from the 1970 s on, various religious and political conflicts disrupted the country. The Lebanese Civil War from 1975 till 1991 and the Israel-Lebanon conflict (or 'July War') in 2006 between Israel and Hezbollah left their marks on the city. During the 16 years of civil war more than 100 000 Lebanese people lost their lives and an estimate of 900 000 citizens were displaced.[153] In 2005, one year before the publication of the novel, a series of bomb attacks alarmed Beirut after the assassination of the former prime minister Hariri. The murder was followed by mass protests for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. The above-cited quote might refer to the tensions between East and West, Islam and Christianity as well as between different lifestyles in Beirut. Lebanon itself is the country in the Middle East with the most pronounced religious heterogeneity. About 54 % of the population is Muslim (split in half between Sunnis and Shiites), 40 % of the population is Christian (CIA World Factbook 2016). Many other religious minorities call Lebanon their home. Furthermore, the country has a free-market

153 For a description of Beirut after the civil war, the efforts to reconstruct the city and the religious, political and socioeconomic conflicts that divide Lebanese society see Stewart (1996). First and foremost, she underlines the danger of continuing religious tensions between Christian and Muslim groups, the neglect of social concerns and increasing violence and radicalism in poor areas (Stewart 1996: 502). For an overview of crucial events in the conflicts affecting Lebanon and Beirut see the chronologies by Collins (1982) and Koff (1984). For a closer examination of the invasion from an Israeli perspective and from an American perspective see Yaniv/Lieber (1983) and Ryan (1982).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

economy without many governmental restrictions. Thus, several political, religious and economic influences might inhibit a more orthodox Muslim lifestyle.

The central character attributes the decline of the city to its former endeavour to imitate the West:

> Maybe its obstinate efforts to resemble the cities of its enemies have caused its patron saints to disown it, and that's why it's exposed to the traumas of war and the dangers of every tomorrow. […] Its affected airs are nothing but a con. Its alleged charisma doesn't jibe with its qualms; it's like a silk cloth over an ugly stain (SB 1).

It is not specified what the term "enemies" subsumes here. It is intriguing, however, that the protagonist uses vocabulary which reflects the Western influence he renounces. The concept of patron saints is Christian (and also used in Oriental Orthodoxy), but not in Islam. The initial picture the reader is introduced to on the first pages is one of many contradictions. This Janus-faced character of Beirut is also inherent to the protagonist's companion Dr. Jalal. On the one hand, he is described as sharing an explicitly anti-Western attitude and as adhering to fundamentalist beliefs. On the other hand, it is made clear from the beginning that his radical stance does not seem to be based on religious reasons. While the protagonist refuses to smoke and drink alcohol, Dr. Jalal is in his fifties and described as an alcoholic, drug user, regular client of whorehouses and "already a wreck" (SB 3). Being a former figurehead of Western academia, Dr. Jalal at some point performed a volte-face and turned from a fervent critic of armed jihad into an advocate of armed resistance against the West. Initially he seems to serve as a foil for the protagonist in that his moral arbitrariness is contrasted with the protagonist's genuine and consistent behaviour. We learn only later on through the extensive flashback that forms the novel's middle part that the protagonist used to be more lenient as well.

Even though a lot of sympathy is initially created for the protagonist by means of contrasting his genuine behaviour with the doctor's moral arbitrariness, the readers are still encouraged to feel pity for Jalal. Tradition, honour, shame, cultural identity as well as a yearning to belong are presented as major incentives for his behaviour. The character serves to introduce these central concepts on the first pages of the novel, which directly describe the loss of his family honour as central key event transforming his life:

> 'Once, a long time ago, I tried to hang myself,' he says, leaning out over the parapet. 'With a length of hempen twine. I was barely eighteen.' He takes another swallow and continues: 'I had just caught my mother with a man.' [...] In Kafr Karam, such revelations would be fatal. I've never heard anyone speak like this about his mother, and the doctor's casual way of spreading out his dirty linen confounds me (SB 4-5).

The casualty with which Jalal talks of such grave matters and the fact that he drinks alcohol during his confession indicates a great distance between his former self and how he evaluates moral concepts today. The passage delineates shame and honour in the Bedouin cultural framework as communal concept. The loss of one's honour does not have to be self-inflicted. It can also be caused by other family members. Especially women are seen as guardians of a family's honour. We are left to guess if the character

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

actually had to renounce his roots and turn to Western points of orientation because there was no way of regaining honour and integrity in his own community.

Jalal is the first character with an allegedly fundamentalist mindset we are introduced to, and he seems to be an emblem of resignation and disappointment with human nature as such. Let down by his mother and apparently never fully accepted in the West, he mistrusts people: "[...H]e doesn't trust the world he's fallen into. No matter how often he tells himself he's in good hands, he's never convinced it's the truth. Aren't those the same hands that fire weapons in the dark, slit throats, strangle people, and place explosive devices under selected chairs?" (SB 5). Jalal's estrangement from traditional values seems to be routed in his experience, which makes his behaviour appear as a survival strategy. The reader can perceive a stark contrast between the sheer impossibility of just *saying* something and breaching certain topics for the protagonist, and Jalal's present nonchalance to actually *do* all these things from cursing, via consuming alcohol and drugs to regular visits in brothels. The protagonist is shocked and embarrassed by this bluntness. However, his indignation does not come from religiosity but seems to be primarily rooted in his understanding of moral conduct in accordance with Bedouin traditions. On that note, culture and tradition are, already in the frame narration, presented as stronger binding forces than religion, and Jalal's turn to radicalism seems to stem from a disappointment with Western politics – not from a turn to religious values.

Embedded in this cultural framework is the individual fate of the protagonist, which is moulded by three major events that shape the plot and serve as turning points for the main character's inner development. In flashbacks, the reader gets to know the major events which trigger his turn to an Islamic fundamentalist group and are set in the protagonist's hometown Kafr Karam and in Baghdad. Khadra does not give us any concrete time frame, but the plot is clearly driven by the American invasion of Iraq from March to May 2003, following the September 11 attacks and the war in Afghanistan. In his radio address at the start of the invasion of Iraq, US President George W. Bush explained: "Our cause is just, the security of the nations we serve and the peace of the world. And our mission is clear, to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people" (The White House, 22.03.2003). The war in Iraq led to the American domination of all major cities in the country and the abolishment of Saddam Hussein's regime, but was also criticised worldwide. The operation had no UN mandate, no evidence was later on found for the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and many people justifiably feared a further destabilisation of the whole region.[154]

154 Due to the abundance of literature on the War in Iraq, it is not possible to give a comprehensive overview of this topic in this thesis. However, the following articles give brief insights into major discussions connected to this conflict. For a discussion of moral issues connected to the 'War on Terror' and the invasion of Iraq see Gordon (2003), Pfiffner (2004), Gershkoff (2005) and Lal (2006). Moreover, Falah (2006), Lindner (2009) and Nikolaev/Porpora (2011) give interesting insights into different journalistic vantage points and the way the invasion was presented by newspapers in Arabic countries as well as in the United States. Hegghammer (2006) analyses how the war

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The findings of the PEW research centre on this topic reflect the growing scepticism towards American politics in Iraq that are voiced by Khadra's novel. The American War on Terror was seen very critically worldwide – by Muslim countries but also elsewhere, despite the fact that Islamic fundamentalism is acknowledged as a serious problem. However, it is discernible that the distrust of American military politics has to be analysed in the context of American global dominance and the perceived disregard for the interests and needs of other countries as such. A 2002 survey assessed:

> The war on terrorism is opposed by majorities in nearly every predominantly Muslim country surveyed. […But the] U.S. image problems are not confined to Muslim countries. […] Many people around the world, especially in Europe and the Middle East/Conflict Area, believe the U.S. does not take into account the interests of their country when making international policies. Majorities in most countries also see U.S. policies as contributing to the growing gap between rich and poor nations and believe the United States does not do the right amount to solve global problems. U.S. global influence is simultaneously embraced and rejected by world publics. America is nearly universally admired for its technological achievements and people in most countries say they enjoy U.S. movies, music and television programs. Yet in general, the spread of U.S. ideas and customs is disliked by majorities in almost every country included in this survey (Pew Research Center 2002: 5).

One year after the start of the war in Iraq, Muslim populations still remained critical and adverse against the invasion, but support in Britain and France also decreased. 33% Britons and 57% of the French believed in March 2004 that the U.S. overreacted to the terrorist threat while only 13% of Americans thought so (Pew Research Center 2004 (a): 2-3 and 17-18). However, only three years after the September 11 attacks, fewer Americans saw the need to curtail civil liberties in order to win the war on terror (Pew Research Center 2004 (b): 27).

Furthermore, majorities in Britain and France, for instance, share the opinion that the war in Iraq rather impeded the fight against terrorism whereas 62 % of the interviewed American citizens believed in the war's positive effects regarding terrorism (Pew Research Center 2004 (a): 14; Pew Research Center 2004 (b): 14-15). The course of the Iraq war triggered widespread disillusionment as well as concern about America's deteriorating image in the world (Pew Research Center 2004 (b): 1 and 9-10). A 2007 report not surprisingly demonstrated that while only 48 % of U.S. American Muslims deemed the invasion of Afghanistan a wrong decision, 75 % opposed the use of military force in Iraq (Pew Research Center 2007: 49).

Concurrently, concern about the growing worldwide resentment against the United States has since been increasing – even in Republican circles where apprehension about this fact used to be quite low (cf. Pew Research Centre 2008 (a)). By the same token, many more Americans in 2008 held the opinion that religion should play a lesser role in politics than it did in 2004, which also holds true for conservative circles indicating a major shift in conservative public opinion (cf. Pew Research Centre 2008 (b)). The same declining support could be seen with respect to President George W.

---

influenced the development of jihadism on a global scale and traces major changes in jihadist ideology and rhetoric caused by the war in Iraq.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Bush. Enjoying a public approval and support by 86 % of the American people in late September 2001, his approval rate hit a bottom of 24 % in December 2008 when 34 % of the polled Americans uttered the strong opinion that Bush will be remembered as a poor president (Pew Research Centre 2008 (c): 1-5). As an opinion poll ten years after the invasion exemplified, fewer and fewer U.S. citizens are retrospectively convinced that the war was the right decision and achieved its goals (Pew Research Centre 2013 (a): 1). Thus, *The Sirens of Baghdad* reflects concerns about the war in Iraq which were shared at that time by many other – not only Muslim – people worldwide. What makes the novel special is its engagement with the ramifications of this invasion for the cultural frameworks of a society which is guided by different ethical standards and moral values. Concepts of honour and shame play a central role for the development of the protagonist as will be outlined in the next paragraph.

To explain the psychological development of the protagonist and his turn to fundamentalist ideas, three major events are presented as driving forces of the plot. In contrast to Kureishi's *The Black Album*, Khadra's work is marked by a high degree of eventfulness. The three main events and turning points – the murder of Sulayman, a mentally disabled boy, an assault on a wedding party, and the humiliation and defilement of the protagonist's father – are all outlined in the middle part of the novel. All of these events are (according to the central markers by Schmid, illustrated in the introductory chapter) characterised by 'relevance', 'unpredictability' (in that they break the norms of the narrative world and run contrary to the narrator's expectations – even if they might not be as surprising for the reader), 'persistence', 'irreversibility' and 'non-iterativity' (cf. Schmid 2010, 9-12). They irreversibly change the protagonist's horizon of experience, confound any future plans, and alter his tender nature and rejection of violence. The consequences of these main events are immense and irreversible due to the death of people who can never be replaced and the severe violation of Bedouin concepts of honour. Thus, the protagonist's decision to align himself with armed jihad does not come as a surprise to the reader anymore. This development rather represents the logical culmination of the events outlined, following the norms of the fictional world. A *New York Times* review from 2007 takes up this fact, claiming that

> [t]he terrorist half of this book offers a visceral illustration of the difference between suspense and surprise. Suspense is there: 'The Sirens of Baghdad' is nerve-racking despite its excess verbiage. And it shows real momentum as it propels its main character toward 'the most important revolutionary mission undertaken since man learned to stiffen his spine!' But it remains essentially unsurprising until a final twist affects its outcome. The documentary-style details of this story offer all too familiar, credible illustrations of what real terrorists do and say (Maslin 2007: n.p.).

As Schmid notes, this comment also illustrates that "we need to take account of the fact that real readers can have individual concepts of relevance and unpredictability that do not conform with those of the fictive and implied entities" (Schmid 2010: 15). But even granting this qualification, the novel possesses, to my mind, a high degree of eventfulness and tellability (or noteworthiness). Even if readers from different cultural backgrounds might not be able to fully comprehend why accidentally seeing one's

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

father's private parts should be a reason for suicide and the killing of other people, all readers will still be able to understand the enormity of war, arbitrary killings and the loss of human dignity, and will ascribe importance to the respective core events. In this respect, *The Sirens of Baghdad* displays much more action than Kureishi's novel, which places a greater stress on irony and the depiction of ideological arguments.

Furthermore, Khadra's novel stands out in its emotional intensity. The following passages are supposed to give the reader a brief insight into the emotional quality of the three formative events in the plot. The first crucial and shocking event is the murder of Kafr Karam's mentally retarded but harmless and beloved son of the local blacksmith by American GIs at a checkpoint. The blind hatred (and possibly also fear) of an American soldier leads to the cruel execution of an innocent and helpless boy. The scene is described in very drastic pictures that cannot fail to rouse the reader's empathy:

> 'I beg you, please don't shout. My son is mentally ill, and you're scaring him.' The black GI didn't understand very much of what the blacksmith was trying to tell him; the fact that someone would address him in a language he didn't know seemed to infuriate him, and so now he was doubly angry. [...] *'Shut up! Shut the fuck up or I'll blow your brains out!*[' ...] 'He is mentally ill. *Don't shoot. He's crazy.*' Sulayman ran and ran, his spine straight, his arms dangling, his body absurdly tilted to the left. Just from his way of running, it was evident that he wasn't normal. But in time of war, the benefit of the doubt favors blunderers over those who keep their composure; the catchall term is 'legitimate defense.' The first gunshots shook me from my head to my feet, like a surge of electric current. [...] Beside me, the blacksmith was shrieking like a maniac, his face bathed in tears. 'Mike!' the sergeant barked. '*He's wearing a bulletproof vest, the little prick. Aim for his head.*' [...] Bull's-eye, first shot. Sulayman's head exploded like a melon [...] (SB 55-57).

The incident causes a wave of grief and anger in the whole village. The local people do not "accept any justification for firing on a simpleminded boy – that is, on a pure and innocent creature closer to the Lord than the saints" (SB 61). Sulayman was appreciated and protected in a community that does not only judge human beings by their societal utility. The moral integrity of the foreign invaders seems to be justifiably questioned, concerning the fact that the soldiers try to make up for Sulayman's brutal execution by offering financial indemnity to his father. The attitude and thoughtful reaction of the village elders to this incident stands in stark contrast to the GI's improvident and inhumane behaviour:

> The elders of the village called for calm. No one was infallible, they said. The American colonel had demonstrated genuine sorrow. His only mistake was in broaching the subject of money with the blacksmith. In Kafr Karam, one never speaks of money to a person in mourning. No compensation can lessen the grief of a distraught father at his son's fresh grave (SB 68).

Nevertheless, the novel, on the whole, does not seem to aim at decrying the brutality and short-sightedness of one side but hints at the shortcomings of human beings as such.

The second key scene similarly throws the protagonist, who is an eyewitness to both events, into delirium and a sleepwalking, desperate state. A neighbouring wedding party is hit by a missile which kills seventeen people. When a foreign TV team

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

arrives at the scene a grieving father shouts at them: "'Look! Nothing but women and children! This was a wedding reception! Where are the terrorists?' He grabbed a cameraman by the arm, showed him the corpses stretched out on the grass, and said, 'The real terrorists are the bastards who fired the missile at us'" (SB 95). This experience leaves the central character "outraged, sick, tormented by a thousand thorns, like Christ at the height of His suffering" (SB 97).[155] The imagery not only underlines the protagonist's pain and his supposed innocence, but also reflects a distinctly Christian symbolism, which might indicate that Yasmina Khadra addressed his novels primarily to a Western readership. Similar to the first incident, the missile strike is also justified by the American military as an attack against terrorist movements and finally regretted as "mistake" (cf. SB 98). Some weeks later the town loses its first six 'martyrs' – young men who left the city to avenge the past injustices, while the protagonist becomes increasingly traumatised and shuts himself up at home. He feels reproached for his cowardice by the other villagers but, at first, cannot take the step towards action:

> I was indeed angry, I held a bitter grudge against the coalition forces, but I couldn't see myself indiscriminately attacking everyone and everything in sight. War wasn't my line. I wasn't born to commit violence – I considered myself a thousand times likelier to suffer it than to practice it one day (SB 99).

This attitude only changes after the third crucial shock which marks the turning point of the plot. The protagonist's whole world crumbles during a nightly raid by soldiers in his village, when they agonise and disgrace his old father. The scene is so intense and pivotal for the triggering of radicalisation processes in the novel that I quote the passage almost in full:

> And I saw, while my family's honor lay stricken on the floor, I saw what it was forbidden to see, what a worthy, respectable son, an authentic Bedouin, must never see: that flaccid, hideous, degrading thing, that forbidden, unspoken-of, sacrilegious object, my father's penis, rolling to one side as his testicles flopped up over his ass. That sight was the edge of the abyss, and beyond it, there was nothing but the infinite void, an interminable fall, nothingness. Suddenly, all our tribal myths, all the world's legends, all the stars in the sky lost their gleam. The sun could keep on rising, but I'd never be able to distinguish day from night anymore. A Westerner can't understand, can't suspect the dimensions of the disaster. For me, to see my father's sex was to reduce my entire existence, my values and my scruples, my pride and my singularity, to a coarse, pornographic flash. The gates of hell would have seemed less catastrophic! I was finished. Everything was finished – irrecoverably, irreversibly. I had been saddled, once and for all, with infamy; I'd plunged into a parallel world from which I'd never escape. I found myself hating my arms, which seemed grotesque, translucent, ugly, the symbols of my impotence; hating my eyes, which refused to turn away and pleaded for blindness; hating my mother's screams, which discredited me. I looked at my father, and my father looked back at me. He must have read in my eyes the contempt I felt toward everything that had counted for us and my sudden pity for the person I revered above everything, despite everything. [...] At that very instant, we already

155 The scene might refer to the bombing of a wedding in the small Iraqi village Mukaradeeb on 19 May 2004. More than 40 civilians died because of the attack which was supposed to eliminate Iraqi anti-coalition forces. Videos of the attack later on backed the claim of survivors that the American army hit an exclusively civilian target and therewith also caused the death of various children (cf. McCarthy 20 May 2004 and 25 May 2004).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> knew that we were looking at each other for the last time. [...] I knew I'd no longer consider things in the same way; I heard the foul beast roar deep inside me, and it was clear that sooner or later, whatever happened, I was *condemned to wash away this insult in blood*, until the rivers and the oceans turned as red as the cut on Bahia's neck, as my mother's eyes, as the fire in my guts, which was already preparing me for the hell I knew was waiting... (SB 101-102).

Bedouin society is characterised by propriety, pride and the reverence of one's parents. To see his father disgraced and humiliated fundamentally violates each of these principles. The stain is believed to be permanent if it is not atoned for by a member of the family. At the sight of his naked father, the protagonist experiences a feeling of self-alienation because of his weakness and impotence to stop the humiliation of the family patriarch. When both father and son realise that veneration and respect turn into pity, it becomes clear that there is no way to continue social interaction as it used to be before the incident. Remarkably, it is not the protagonist's rage and hatred which propel him towards an accession to a fundamentalist group but a feeling of duty. Due to his cultural heritage and the expectations of his family and kin, he feels "condemned to wash away this insult in blood" (SB 102). The laws of the tribal society he belongs to stipulate that an attack on the honour of a family member has to be revenged. His motivation thus is culturally and not religiously determined.

As Braukämpfer notes, Bedouin societies have been influenced by Islam and have often been mobilised for the defence of this religion, but have not shown a large degree of religious devotion and rather concentrated on their own advantage and a pragmatic pan-Arabic solidarity (Braukämpfer 2002: 303). He outlines that despite various differences between Bedouin groups and traditions in different countries, notions of 'honour' and 'shame' are uniting elements of Bedouin tribalism and regulate all social interactions:

> This honour called sharaf in Arabic has to be constantly defended and asserted. It is an integrated part of the cultural legacy inherited in Bedouin families from generation to generation. Sharaf can be changed in quality and reputation according to the conduct of individuals and their respective kin groups. People regarded as being in a state of dishonour (ar) or shame (aybca) are exposed to a very comprehensive set of social sanctions. Individuals committing grave misbehaviour are threatened by the punishment of expulsion (dlala) from the community. It is one of the most important duties of the elders to deal with affronts to dignity. [...] Any sign of failure in warfare or loss of independence humiliated and dishonoured the Bedouin. Weakness was conceived as the reason for dishonour, power the foundation for honour or *ird* (Braukämpfer 2002: 304).

Even though honour is often very strongly associated with the conduct and chastity of the female members of the tribe, the strength or defencelessness of its male members also reflects on the honour of the community. As Dodd underlines, the Bedouin understanding of 'honour' is a secular concept which also exists in non-Muslim communities. Islamic teachings may indirectly support these notions, but the concept already existed in pre-Islamic Arabic societies and is not proclaimed by the Quran (Dodd 1973: 44). Once lost, honour is very difficult to restore, if at all. Honour cannot only be lost through a lack of modesty and chastity but also through a lack of male pride and the ability to defend oneself. An indignity can only be avenged by a male member

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

of the bloodline. Even though the father of the protagonist is not guilty of any misconduct, he is still disgraced by the American soldiers: By showing his genitals to his family he transgresses the sacred rule of modesty and simultaneously loses his male pride, because he is helpless and unable to defend himself against the foreign invaders. His son knows his communal duty, which is preserved against all other legal rules.[156]

Whereas the term 'Bedouin' used to denote a specific way of life of rural pastoralists who moved with their herds within large territories, the term has nowadays turned into a marker of identity, as Cole explains: "The way of life was grounded in ecology and economy, the identity in heritage and culture" (Cole 2003: 237). Changed socioeconomic and socio-political conditions, urbanisation, education and the power of national and global frameworks changed the Bedouin way of life but did not eradicate Bedouin identity. Bedouin customary law in many places coexists with state law and Islamic law (Cole 2003: 251).

The emergence of radicalisation in Kafr Karam, described in the novel, stands in direct connection with political and military events – not with ideology or religion. Religion plays only a minor role in *The Sirens of Baghdad.* The novel does not feature any elaborate descriptions of the protagonist's religiosity. The first mentioning of God comes after more than fifty pages when he tries to comfort Sulayman's father, who is afraid of running out of petrol before reaching the hospital with his wounded son, with the words "God won't abandon us" (SB 52). Ironically, God seems to do just that when Sulayman is shot by American GIs just some hours later. Later on, a mosque is the place where the protagonist seeks security but where his whole belongings and money are stolen while he sleeps. The next instance, God is invoked by the policeman who presses his cousin Sayed for protection money and takes away his possessions with the sarcastic remark: "You're a good prince, Sayed. God will repay you" (SB 186). As a result, the rare mentioning of religion gains an ironic undercurrent.

The Sirens of Baghdad primarily focuses on pride and the responsibility of each individual to stand up and fight against injustice. This topic, however, is not only addressed in relation to the American invasion of Iraq. The novel also critically addresses the downturns of Saddam Hussein's regime, during which even the people in Kafr Karam did not dare to speak freely because they had to fear spies and mass executions. A crucial scene features a conversation among the tribal people about the pros and cons of Hussein's removal and their responsibility for their own situation. Not only blame on foreign influences but also critical self-reflection is employed in the debate:

> 'If Saddam tyrannized us, it was because of our cowardice, large and small,' the Falcon insisted contemptuously. 'People have the kings they deserve.' [... '] He was a monster, yes, but he was our monster. He came from among us, he shared our blood, and we all contributed to consolidating his megalomania. Do you prefer infidels from the other side of the world, troops sent here to roll over us? The GIs are nothing but brutes and wild beasts; they drive their big machines past our widows and orphans and have no qualms about

156 The coexistence of tribal codes of honour with national jurisdiction is not identical with a lack of mechanisms to control conflict and violence. For interesting insights into Bedouin strategies to settle conflict see Khalaf (1990).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> dropping their bombs on our health clinics. Look at what they've made of our country: hell on earth.'
> 'Saddam made it a mass grave,' Issam two reminded him.
> 'It wasn't Saddam; it was our fear. If we had shown a minimum of courage and solidarity, that cur would never have dared become such a tyrant' (SB 32-33).

Continuing stasis and cowardice have only led to the supersession of a local tyrant by international forces. The vocabulary used ("monster", "megalomania", "brutes", "wild beasts") reflects a clear judgemental point of view and leaves no doubt that the characters perceive the change as a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea. No self-determination is deemed possible without a turn to action and 'self-defence'. Religion and politics seem to be closely interconnected. Political and economic decline is not only blamed on the American invasion but also on a lack of faith in God:

> 'And where have we gone wrong?' the Falcon asked testily. 'In our faith. We've lost it, and we've lost face along with it. [...] It's not a question of washing your bodies, but your souls, young men. If you're rotten inside, neither rivers nor oceans will suffice to make you clean. [...] If the Americans are here, it's our fault. By losing our faith, we've also lost our bearings and our sense of honor [...]' (SB 36-37).

The passage is interesting because it hints at the actual meaning of jihad as endeavour or individual duty to constantly refine and clean oneself from within and strive to lead a life pleasing to God.[157] This self-reflection is, however, followed by a monologue that reflects the main line of argumentation (as asserted by the media of many Muslim countries) – from a highlighting of US economic and military interests in the region, via its presumable favouring of Israel to its supposed main aim of preventing Iraq from attaining its rightful means of nuclear defence. Some reviewers, such as Steven Poole, have claimed that "[s]uch arguments can seem schematically staged, and the novel is more mechanical" (Poole 2007: n.p.) than other books by Khadra. I agree with him on the partly artificial character of these conversations, which are similar in their outline to the depiction of different points of view in *The Black Album*. Nevertheless, scenes like these also serve to rouse sympathy for the characters and to unmask one-sided views and a lack of knowledge on both sides.

The violation of cultural concepts of honour and shame, human suffering caused by 'collateral damage' and the desperate wish for emancipation from helplessness and vassalage form important catalysts for a turn to violent action and Islamic fundamentalist ideas in Khadra's novel. Radical leaders, aware of this desperate situation, then use the entanglement of the emotional, cultural and political developments to exploit people for their violent plans. Sayed, for instance, uses videotapes of atrocities to fuel

157 In his enlightening essay on political order, the use of force and theoretical as well as historical concerns in Islam, Turner Johnson states about the meaning of jihad: "In Islam jihad refers not to the warfare of the Muslim community but to the personal effort to lead one's life according to the will of God. The root meaning of the word jihad is exertion, striving; in the Qur'an the phrase 'jihad in the path of God' (for example, Qur'an 6:108, 22:77) does not refer to warfare but to the individual's need to strive morally by heart (intention), tongue (speech), and hand (action). Juristic tradition extended this meaning to include fighting (qital) on behalf of the faith, establishing the idea of the jihad of the sword as the warfare against unbelief" (Turner Johnson 1997: 89).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

the anger of the protagonist and prepare him for the execution of a suicide attack. The contents are

> the siege of Fallujah; the racist assaults carried out by British troops on some Iraqi kids seized during a popular demonstration; a GI's summary execution of a wounded civilian inside a mosque; an American helicopter's night attack on some peasants whose truck had broken down in a field – the visual chronicle, in short, of our humiliation, and of the awful blunders that had become so commonplace (SB 198).

This passage not only links the fictional content of the novel to real events but also enables a timing of the plot. The First Battle of Fallujah, which ended with the failure and retreat of American troops, took place in April 2004. During the Second Battle of Fallujah in November 2004, they managed to finally occupy the city, which was regarded as one of the most culturally traditional and religious cities in Iraq, and therefore seen as great defeat by the Muslim population of the city. Furthermore, Khadra – similar to Hamid and Faulks – recalls media images that might be present in readers' minds and open up a different perspective on the events and a re-examination of 'Western' media portrayals.

Having outlined the major cultural and political preconditions for Islamist radicalisation processes, it is of interest how leaders and individuals of the jihadist group are portrayed in *The Sirens of Baghdad.* Sayed as main representative of the Islamist cell is in most passages depicted in an unappealing way. The sheer brutality of Sayed's words and deeds cannot but shock the reader. No emotions are described when he brutally suffocates a greedy and corrupt but rather harmless police officer with six kids in order to save his secret cell from being exposed to the public. "Get rid of these two stiffs" (SB 193), he orders and that is that. The protagonist clearly uses judgmental descriptions. We perceive Sayed through the protagonist's consciousness, which engenders a direction of sympathy to his detriment. Sayed stands for violence and misguidance but also for stability and authority, which is what the protagonist needs most at that moment:

> Sayed was by nature taciturn, not to mention haughty. I didn't like the way he ordered his employees around. He had to be obeyed to the letter, and once he'd reached a decision, there was no appeal. Paradoxically, I found his authority reassuring. Working for a guy of his stature meant I had no reason to ask questions [...] (SB 196).

Easy answers and reassurance are also described by Kureishi and Faulks as central elements lending attractiveness to fundamentalist ideas. However, *The Sirens of Bagdad* depicts different reasons for a turn towards fundamentalist ideologies than *The Black Album* or *A Week in December.* Whereas identity and the desire to belong are the major driving forces for Faulks' and Kureishi's protagonists, anger, helplessness and the power of cultural imperatives in connection with political events urge Khadra's protagonist to violent action. He neither finds friendly companions in Sayed's group, nor does he belong to them. The reader at first perceives a vast discrepancy between the protagonist's sensitivity and Sayed's detachment and brutality, between his intelligence and Hussein's alleged stupidity. Throughout most parts of *The Sirens of Baghdad* a negative stance towards these characters is created by the fact that Sayed – in contrast

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

to Omar the Corporal or the hero's best friend Kadem – does not talk about his feelings or motives. The narrator can only guess about his driving forces, as I like to exemplify with the following quote referring to the DVDs of war atrocities Sayed gives to the protagonist:

> The result was, **no doubt,** just what Sayed had hoped: I got an eyeful, and my subconscious stored away a maximum load of anger, which (when the time came) would give me enthusiasm for whatever violence I might commit and even lend it a certain legitimacy. [...] I was a Bedouin, and no Bedouin can come to terms with an offense unless blood is spilled. Sayed **must have lost sight of** that constant, inflexible rule, which has survived through ages and generations; his city life and his mysterious peregrinations **had surely taken him** far from the tribal soul of Kafr Karam (SB 198, my emphases).

Most statements about Sayed are mere speculations and are tinged by the narrator's perception and his conclusion from described actions and events.

Whereas many accusations the protagonist utters seem to be based on specific disillusioning experience with American soldiers, Sayed's argumentation clearly spaces out into the construction of binaries that are one-dimensional and stereotypical:

> 'Our streets are going to witness the greatest duel of all time, the clash of the titans: Babylon against Disneyland, the Tower of Babel against the Empire State Building, the Hanging Gardens against the Golden Gate Bridge, Scheherazade against Bonnie Parker, Sindbad against the Terminator...' (SB 176).

This construction of binaries not only causes a comic effect (similar to the effects created by Kureishi with respect to the satirised sermons of brother Riaz), but also mixes old (sometimes even biblical) imagery with modern, capitalist symbols. It is remarkable that the character contrasts Western symbols with Eastern symbols that do not necessarily possess a positive connotation. The Hanging Gardens are one of the seven world wonders. But in the Revelation of St. John, Babylon signifies a place of decadence and sin. The renowned story of the Tower of Babel pertaining to the Old Testament refers to the arrogance and ambition of human beings, who built a tower so high that it was seen as an attempt to rival God and therefore punished by confusion of languages and the worldwide dissipation of peoples. The passage also features a strange mixture of real people (such as Bonnie Parker from the famous American criminal couple Bonnie and Clyde), mythological figures (such as Sheherazade and Sindbad from *Arabian Nights*) and contemporary pop cultural icons (such as the android 'Terminator' from the eponymous 1984 science-fiction movie by James Cameron). Hearing the rantings of the fundamentalist leaders, the protagonist feels "surrounded by mediocre actors who'd learned their roles but didn't have the talent the text deserved" (SB 176). Passages like this one indicate that the main character seems to look behind the 'farce' of these views, but he still clings to the group of Islamic fundamentalists in his desperate search for action.

Only towards the end of the novel does the reader get a little glimpse of the psyche of Sayed, who is presented as rather one-dimensional, flat character for most parts of the text. However, talking to the narrator about the planned attack, he suddenly appears human and vulnerable for the first time in the story:

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> ['] Please don't think there's any pressure on you [...] If you felt cheated or trapped, I wouldn't forgive myself. [...] I'm not afraid of dying, but our deaths have to mean something. They have to change our situation. [...] I don't want our children to suffer. [' ...] His face is deathly pale, and his eyes shimmer with furious tears. 'If you could see Baghdad – if you could see what it's become: ruined sanctuaries, mosques at war with one another, fratricidal slaughter. [...] We call for calm and no one listens. It's true that we were hostages back when Saddam was in power. But, good God! Now we're zombies. [...] You're our only recourse, our last-ditch stand. If you succeed, you'll put things back in their proper order, and a new day will dawn for us ['] (SB 265-267).

As this quote shows, Khadra does not leave anything in the novel without ambiguity and shows us that there are always two sides to every question. He does not qualify the negative picture of fundamentalist ideologies, but an indelible love for human beings and an empathy with their suffering and fear always shines through. Consequently, we are at times misled by appearances and the protagonist's subjective assumptions. Hussein is another good example for this play with our expectations. He remains rather silent and unobtrusive at the beginning and is described as "nice guy, but a bit slow on the uptake" (SB 203) with "something broken in his mind" (SB 203). Only towards the end does he reveal to the narrator the reasons for his behaviour:

> ['] I caught the laughing bug watching that simpleton Adel get all frazzled because he couldn't find the button to blow himself up. [...] At that moment, I was in a panic. And when the cops fired on him and he exploded, it was as if I disintegrated along with him. He was someone I really liked. He grew up on our patio. I sincerely mourned him, but then the mourning was over, and now, whenever I picture him stabbing at his explosive belt and cursing, I burst out laughing. It was so insane...but that doesn't make me a nutcase. I can count on my fingers, and I can tell what's right and wrong. [...] Our cause is just, but we're defending it very badly. If I laugh from time to time, maybe that's the reason why. [...] What's going on makes no sense. Killing, killing, and more killing. Day and night. On the squares, in the mosques. Nobody knows who's who anymore, and everyone has it in for everyone else ['] (SB 210-211).

Without any guiding comments of the narrator and against his attempts at discounting Hussein's claims, the reader now comes to see the character in a new light. With this strategy our expectations are belied in that we suddenly realise that the narratorial viewpoint led us to underestimate Hussein's mental capacity and strength of judgment. Alleged madness turns into clear-sightedness, as in the case of Sayed alleged rationality turns into blind madness and in the end again into desperate human motives, which may not justify the enormity of the planned attack or make him a sympathetic character but still serve to make Sayed all too human.

Just as the reader is manipulated into gaining ambiguous attitudes towards the topic, the novel also addresses the contradictory stances of civilians to armed jihad. Not only are they described as suffering from the attacks that hit them as badly as the invaders. Many of them also despise and hate the people who set themselves up as judges. The man who reports Sayed's cell to the police cries out disdainfully to the Islamist Salah, who killed his brother:

> 'You think I want to be saved by hoodlums like you? I'd rather die! [...] You consider yourselves fedayeen,' he panted. 'But you're nothing but murderers. Vandals, Child-killers. I'm not afraid of you. Do what you want with me, you won't change my mind. I think you're a

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> pack of mad dogs. Criminals, heathens, head cases. I loathe you! [...] That's all you're good for, shooting someone from behind and running like a rabbit. And afterward, you think you're a hero and you swagger around the square. If Iraq has to be defended by spineless cowards like you, I'd rather let it go to the fucking dogs' (SB 230-232).

The novel strives to clarify that there are no clear-cut battle lines in this conflict. Many innocent citizens are caught in the middle without the power to make their voices heard or put a stop to the violence and injustice committed by both sides. The reaction of the addressed Muslim fundamentalist to this suffering person shows neither mercy nor pity or the slightest respect for the man's courage. He is presented as cold-hearted and vindictive, knowing no philanthropy. "I want him to die slowly, bit by bit" (SB 232), he orders. There are many hints at the gang-like criminal organisation of Sayed's cell. Regardless of their common cause, Sayed despises the intrusion of other jihadist groups and endeavours to defend "their territory [...against the] unknown rivals" (SB 201), which is more reminiscent of gang warfare than of religious groups.

As a result, we can assess that the sole claim of the Islamic fundamentalists in *The Sirens of Baghdad* is presented as politically and personally motivated – not religiously. As has been mentioned, the cruelties and collateral damage suffered by the American invasion as well as the cultural concepts of honour, shame and revenge are described as powerful driving forces of armed resistance and jihad. A third reason for fundamentalist radicalisation Khadra discusses is an enchantment with Western politics and the feeling of exclusion from the West. Jalal's story introduces the dimension of migration, diaspora and assimilation that is so elaborately discussed by Hamid and Kureishi. Despite his attempts at assimilation and his outstanding achievements in Western academia, Jalal has the feeling that he was never fully accepted at eye-level and just promoted as long as he served to propagate Western political attitudes and opinions. He complains:

> ['] The West loves only itself and thinks only of itself. It throws us a line so it can use us as bait. It manipulates us and sets us against our own people, and then, when it's through with us, it files us away in its secret drawers and forgets us. [...] The West will never acknowledge our merits. As far as Westerners are concerned, Arabs are only good for kicking soccer balls or wailing into microphones. The more we prove the contrary, the less they're willing to admit it ['] (SB 9-10).

Considering Jalal's lifestyle, ethics and background, his judgment of the West is not based on a moral or religious verdict, but on a relationship of disappointed love and hopes which bears strong parallels to Hamid's and Kureishi's works. Khadra draws on the topic of multicultural societies in 'Western' countries and their downturns such as racism and an insurmountable glass-ceiling that cannot be overcome by immigrants – no matter how intellectual, successful and assimilated they might be. The search for one's identity and quest for belonging and recognition is the topic which is truly at the heart of Kureishi's *The Black Album* and Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* It is remarkable that Khadra also broaches this issue even though the plot is set in Iraq and not in a migrant context. Like Hamid, the author sketches the disenchantment of well-educated young people, who suffer from a lack of prospects in their own country,

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

with an ideal that promised them a better life but left them even more disoriented and unsuccessful:

> 'Others before us have learned this lesson, to their cost,' he continues, his voice filled with chagrin. 'They thought they'd find a homeland for their knowledge and fertile soil for their ambitions in Europe. And when they saw they weren't welcome, for some stupid reason they decided just to hold on as well as they could. Since they subscribed to Western values, they took for granted the ideals of people whispered in their ears: freedom of expression, human rights, equality, justice. Bright, shining words – but how many of our geniuses have been successful? Most of them die with rage in their hearts. I'm sure regret still gnaws at them in the grave. It's clear that they strove and struggled for nothing. Their Western colleagues were never going to allow them to achieve recognition. True racism has always been intellectual. Segregation begins as soon as one of our books is opened. [...] The West is nothing but an acidic lie, an insidious perversity, a siren song for people shipwrecked on their identity quest [...]' (SB 10).

Jalal has come to be disappointed by the supposed double-standards of the West. At first attracted by liberal values and ideas about justice and equality, he was disappointed by empty promises and the lack of real acceptance in Western society. This experience leads Jalal to the conviction that "peaceful coexistence is no longer possible [...] and we won't put up with their arrogance anymore" (SB 11). It is striking that his endorsement of jihad seems primarily personally motivated by wounded pride and a sense of exclusion. He describes how after the murder of a Dutch filmmaker by a Muslim[158] he sees that the people he supports suddenly distrust him – a scene which bears strong parallels to the situation of Mohsin Hamid's protagonist after 9/11:

> ['] I was no longer Dr. Jalal, their ally, the man who defended their values and what they thought of as democracy. [...] In their eyes, I was only an Arab, the spitting image of the Arab who murdered the filmmaker. They had changed radically, those pioneers of modernity, the most tolerant and emancipated people in Europe. There they were, displaying their racism like a trophy. As far as they were concerned, from that point on, all Arabs were terrorists, and what was I? Dr. Jalal, the sworn enemy of the fundamentalists, the target of fatwas, who worked his ass off for them – what was I? In their eyes, I was a traitor to my nation, which made me doubly contemptible. And that's when I experienced a kind of illumination. I realized what a dupe I'd been, and I especially realized where my true place was. And so I packed my bags and returned to my people' (SB 254-255).

In Jalal's case no political, religious or cultural differences or the repercussions of Western economic policies on Arabic countries are presented as justification for a turn towards Islamic fundamentalist ideas. However, his case illuminates the challenges of multiculturalist societies and the downturns of exclusionist identity politics. The political and the private sphere blur into each other with loyalty, love and national pride as different sides of the same medal. Just as Hamid, Khadra literally addresses disappointed love as one of the cruxes in inter-cultural relations. "The West doesn't

158 This incident probably refers to the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004 by the Dutch-Moroccan radical Muslim Mohammed Bouyeri. Van Gogh was a fervent critic of a multicultural society and had produced the film *Submission* (based on the writings of Ayaan Hirsi Ali), which criticised the oppression of women in Islam.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

love us ["], Jalal says; "It will never carry you in its heart, because it doesn't have one, and it will never exalt you, because it looks down on you [...]" (SB 279).

5.4.2) A war against "dim-witted cowboys"[159]: Bedouin traditions vs. U.S. politics

In addition to the description of the major motives of the protagonist for his turn to violence, Khadra also pays particular attention to the tensions between the two cultures meeting on the battlefield. A positive depiction of the American troops is not only undermined by actions and dialogues, but the sympathy of the reader is also directed by various references to Bedouin cultural values which are presented in stark contrast to the ethically questionable behaviour of US-American soldiers. However, Khadra paints no one-dimensional picture and is far from idealising the traditions he knows very well from his own socialisation and upbringing. In *The Sirens of Baghdad* tensions do not only shape inter-cultural relationships, but extend to the inner-cultural dimension. The protagonist underlines the vast discrepancies between Iraq and Western countries but increasingly also within the country itself: between Sunnis and Shiites and their respective political loyalties, between traditional and more secular, adverse lifestyles, between rural and urban areas and different stages of development. Bedouin culture is presented as possessing various positive features that are slowly destroyed by the war. Nevertheless, both U.S. American capitalism and sense of mission and Bedouin traditions are described as essentialist systems, which in the long run destroy the free will and wellbeing of the individual.

Prior to an analysis of the ways in which *The Sirens of Baghad* presents a critique of Western – especially U.S. American – politics, a closer look at inner-cultural conflicts and the representation of Bedouin culture will facilitate a more diversified examination of the conflicts the novel describes. First of all, conflicts between different factions of Islam seem to separate the Iraqi population. During the protagonist's surreal journey through the desert to Baghdad, it is briefly mentioned that he passes Shiite houses with black flags on the roof which are supposed to indicate that "the residents wished to distance themselves from the doings of the Sunnis and to line up on the side of those who were burning incense to the new regime" (SB 119). Here, a religious divide leads to a political one, which is, however, not outlined in detail.

Second, the life in the countryside differs to a considerable extent from life in the war-torn cities. Khadra paints a vivid picture of the countryside, which seems to be deeply influenced by rural Bedouin traditions that represent pride and stability but also economic and educational underdevelopment. The hero's place of origin, Kafr Karam, a little town in the Iraqi desert, is described as "miserable, ugly, backward town" (11), where people live in some sort of "autistic happiness" (SB 48) in the middle of an endless plain of "emptiness" (SB 51). Old Bedouin traditions and rules of conduct seem to have survived over centuries, which leaves the impression of a rather static moral and political system that is not very open to change and reform. Due to

159 SB 127.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

their cultural ignorance, the American invaders display arrogance and perceive this system (and Iraq on the whole) as rather anti-modern and the people as poor and oppressed. Thus, they destroy cultural systems that have been intact for hundreds of years. Reminiscing about his hometown Kafr Karam the protagonist realises:

> We were poor, common people, but we were at peace. Until the day when our privacy was violated, our taboos broken, our dignity dragged through mud and gore...until the day when brutes festooned with grenades and handcuffs burst into the gardens of Babylon, come to teach poets how to be free men... (SB 12).

The quote exemplifies several things: It expresses that the people in Kafr Karam led a dignified and relatively happy life before the invasion. They adapted to the circumstances and were able to continue living according to their old traditions. 'Peace', 'dignity' and 'poets' are contraposed by 'brutes', 'grenades' and 'handcuffs', thus inverting stereotypical notions of 'civilisation' and 'savagery'. Not the people in Kafr Karam are presented as backwards but the invaders, who destroy everything they do not understand and bring enslavement, devastation and terror while promising freedom and liberation. Their claim to give education and freedom to other people is shown to be self-righteous, since the Bedouin people already possess knowledge and culture – just of a different kind. They are pictured as simple people but as proud and content with their former way of life. Furthermore, the notion of 'the gardens of Babylon'[160] and 'poets'[161] alludes to a long and rich cultural tradition. The musings of the protagonist allude to a past characterised by sophistication in the realms of science, culture and arts, which is contrasted by the invaders' supposed barbarity.

Propriety and respect are presented as central values in Bedouin society (cf. SB 38, 43). Individualism and a violation of tribal codes seem possible but are shunned and sanctioned. Even characters such as Omar the Corporal, who are punished by societal isolation for a breach of traditional norms, still retain their sense of pride and dignity when it comes to the treatment of other people. Despite his apparent lack of religious faith and his disregard of conventions, Omar still believes in his duties towards family members and his pride, which rouses the readers' sympathy for the character. He offers refuge to the protagonist: "You're staying with me until you can stand on your own two feet. [...] I have a lot of faults, I surely do – no way I'm getting into paradise – but I have my pride [...]" (SB 165).

Notwithstanding, traditional virtues are also described as inhibiting people from pursuing their economic interests, which becomes a severe problem in times of war and crises, when supplies are short. It is outlined that the people from Kafr Karam are

160 The Hanging Gardens of Babylon (supposedly built around 600 B.C. by King Nebuchadnezzar II.) are regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The gardens are said to have been the result of great engineering skills and cultural sophistication. However, the scientific controversy surrounding the question whether the gardens really existed or were just a figment of poetic imagination has not been settled till the present day.

161 As Abu-Lughod (1985: 245-261) outlines, poetry is a powerful tool in Bedouin societies to express emotions of sadness, loss and vulnerability, which have to be hidden in normal social interactions due to the strict code of honour and moral conduct.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

too pious to search for their luck in the cities, which are perceived as too corrupted. Along these lines, virtue is even regarded as more important than life:

> They all dreamed of finding a job that would allow them to hold their heads high. But times were hard; wars and the embargo had brought the country to its knees, and the young people of our village were too pious to venture into the big cities, where their ancestral blessing had no jurisdiction, and where the devil was at work, nimbly perverting souls. In Kafr Karam, we had nothing to do with that sort of thing. Our people think it's better to die than to sink into vice or thievery. [...] We're honest by vocation (SB 18).

This honesty and endeavour to lead a virtuous life, however, do not hinder the people in Kafr Karam from accepting money from the people like the protagonist's sister who did see the necessity to go to the city to get a good education and to earn a decent living. In this respect, the strength and tenderness of Khadra's female characters stands in visible contrast to the weakness and brutality of most male figures. Regarding the role of women in society, Khadra's novel presents a wide range of different lifestyles, indicating the role of the individual and her strength to emancipate herself from patriarchal traditions. The protagonist's twin sister Bahia is presented as a strong and caring character. However, she had to leave school at the age of 16 and had to stay at home after the premature death of her fiancé. His sister Aisha had married a rich man but left her husband and returned to her own family, since she was unwilling to stand any more abuse by her parents-in-law. His sister Alaf lives shut up at home and did not get any education just because of a genetic deficiency that prevents her from growing hair. A fourth sister, Farah, on the other hand, managed to assert herself against her family and the people of the village, surmounted the traditional role of women in society and studied at university to become a doctor. She financially supports her family but is described as "a rebel and a fighter, the only girl from Kafr Karam who'd ever dared to violate the rules of the tribe and do exactly what she wanted to do" (SB 137). Thus, the protagonist's sisters exemplify different levels of female visibility and emancipation in Iraqi society. Whereas Alaf is always at home, without prospects and nearly invisible, Farah is independent and emancipated. She is described as one of the last doctors staying in her hospital to care for the wounded and mutilated, despite the danger and the lack of payment for her work in times of war. Still, the protagonist reproaches her when he finds out that she lives with a partner without being married:

> 'You live with a man? You live in sin?' She gave me a dry look. 'What's sin, little brother?' 'You don't have the right. It's ...it's forbidden by, by...Look, have you gone mad? You have a family. Do you ever think about your family? About its honor? About yours? You are – you can't live in sin, not you....' 'I don't live in sin; I live my life.' 'You don't believe in God anymore?' 'I believe in what I do, and that's enough for me' (SB 139-140).

Surprisingly, the protagonist appeals to the religious concept of sin, even though he has not made a single remark about religious belief before. Again, concepts like sin and honour seem to be primarily culturally connoted. Most grievances endured by the characters in the novel (such as the ramifications of arranged marriages), are socio-culturally rather than religiously determined, with stricter rules for women than for men.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Queder describes how Bedouin women are often subject to a twofold marginalisation: They are ethnically marginalised as Bedouin minority in the state they live in and they are subject to gender-related discrimination as women in a patriarchal tribal system (Queder 2007: 162). Women are supposed to marry within the limits of the tribe for the sake of communal interests, not personal choice. Loyalty to the group is a central element of Bedouin culture and a deviation from these cultural codes supposedly weakens the power and honour of the whole group. Queder's study, which involves interviews with three generations of Bedouin women in Israel, reveals changing attitudes and a growing wish for self-determination among younger women who are mostly better educated and enjoy more prospects on the labour market than their mothers and grandmothers. However, the study also finds that resistance is usually rather expressed in language than in action – complete breaks with societal norms are rather rare and often punished by an exclusion from the family. Especially the third generation is described as having developed a "hyrid identity", torn between tradition and emancipation, or "their wish for autonomy and belonging" (Queder 2007: 183). The majority of Bedouin women seem to question the validity of the social order but still operate within its bonds.

The representation of the protagonist's sister Farah, thus, represents a very high degree of emancipation that defies many traditional views on women – from her education and financial independence to her choice to live with a partner she chooses without marriage.[162] For these violations of Bedouin rules the protagonist renounces his elder sister without even inquiring about the nature of her relationship:

> She was nothing but a succubus, a whore, and she had no more place in my life. In our ancestral tradition, when a relative went astray, that person was systematically banished from the community. When the sinner was a woman, she was rejected all the more swiftly (SB 141).

The positive picture of the main character becomes increasingly doubtful for the reader from a 'Western' point of view as his inner transformation after the three traumatising events advances. Not only are the words he uses, like 'whore' and 'succubus',[163] extremely harsh and derogatory, but the protagonist also shows a considerable amount of self-righteousness setting himself up as judge of his sister. She has been supporting him financially for years and saves lives every day, while he, in contrast, was not even able to administer first aid at the bombing of the wedding. On the whole, his sisters are presented as strong characters, which may cause the reader to feel sorry for their subordinate position in Bedouin society.

162 For more detailed insights into the role of women in Arab societies and practices of honour-related violence see Odeh (2010) and Piety (2015).

163 The word 'succubus' stands for a female demon that causes nightmares and seduces men in their sleep when they cannot defend themselves. Sinful erotic dreams and nightly ejaculations were often blamed on the visits of succubi. The trope can be found in Christian and Jewish mythology, but there are also pagan variations in many countries and regions of the world. In this context, the use of the insult 'succubus' highlights the imposition of responsibility for immoral, sexual behaviour on women.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Khadra renders a nuanced picture of Bedouin society and the different lifestyles and coping mechanisms employed by its members. As everything else in the novel, the culture is described as having positive and negative sides. The Bedouin way of life was hard but possible in peaceful times, but during war with increasing poverty, unemployment and supply shortages it poses a serious threat to the community. The tribal system is sketched as anachronistic compared to Western economic standards, which, however, implies a judgement from a clearly subjective Western point of view. The tribal system is a closed system shut up from the rest of the world (with most of its members related by blood) that has its own system of unofficial jurisdiction. Within this system corruption is addressed as a serious problem, which gives the criticism of Western capitalist greed a rather ironic tinge. Nepotism is described as permeating every sphere of life and all official channels:

> Getting your palm greased was the primary vocation of each and every functionary in the service of the state, particularly those in the security forces. This ingrained practice was an inheritance from the former regime and continued to flourish under the occupation, facilitated by the confusion and the galloping impoverishment that reigned in the country, where villainous kidnappings, bribes, embezzlements, and extortions were the order of the day (SB 188-189).

It is striking that the criticism in various parts of the novel is not directed at Western global politics or Western influence as such, but at the reaction of the protagonist's own people to outer influences. It is a condemnation of inner weakness, reckless profit seeking at the expense of moral and political integrity as well as the employment of blatant moral double standards. The protagonist passes deserted military positions, which the local resistance has left before the enemy even arrived. When he waits for a bus to Baghdad, another man is terribly beaten up by thieves right before the eyes of everyone – no one comes to the victim's aid (cf. SB 131). This inner weakness, opportunism and cowardice contribute much to the feeling of helplessness and the determination of the protagonist to fulfil his tribal 'duties'.

These double standards, however, are highlighted with respect to both sides and also criticised by a Bedouin elder concerning the American invasion of Iraq:

> 'Why do you think they're here, the Americans?' the Falcon went on obstinately. 'Is it Christian charity? They're businessmen, we're commodities, and they're ready to trade. Yesterday, it was oil for food. Today, it's Saddam for oil. And what do we get out of all this? If the Americans had an ounce of human kindness, they wouldn't treat their blacks and their Latinos like subhumans. Instead of crossing oceans to come to the aid of some poor, emasculated ragheads, they'd do better to put their own house in order. They could do something about the Indians they've got rotting away on their reservations, kept out of sight like people with some shameful disease' (SB 33).

The hint at the abiding racism and social inequality in the US is also expressed in the nickname 'sand niggers' (cf. SB 126) the American soldiers use for their Iraqi collaborators. From an Iraqi point of view, the American acceptance of the 'collateral damage' and the disrespect for other people and cultures is incompatible with their system of values. Similarly, from a Western point of view, concepts of shame and blood revenge are incompatible with notions of human rights and individual autonomy. According

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

to the majority view in democratic societies, injustices have to be set right by judges and courts, not by individuals. This perception of justice, however, clashes with the cultural values of the Bedouin society:

> For Bedouin, no matter how impoverished they may be, honor is no joking matter. An offense must be washed away in blood, which is the sole authorized detergent when it's a question of keeping one's self-respect. I was the only boy in my family. Since my father was an invalid, the supreme task of avenging the outrage he'd suffered fell to me, even at the cost of my life. Dignity can't be negotiated. Should we lose it, all the shrouds in the world won't suffice to veil our faces, and no tomb will receive our carcasses without cracking (SB 133).

Pride seems to be a concept that is very prone to trigger violence and revenge and becomes easily exploited by warmongers. For some characters (such as the hotspur Yaseen) the concept of honour and pride also seems to function as a cultural surrogate for education and political or economic prosperity. Feeling insulted by Sayed's intellectual superiority, he retorts: "I can't stand being talked down to, and nobody – *nobody* – is going to make a fool of me. I may not have enough education, but I've got pride to spare" (SB 66). Whereas others seem to be stuck in apathy and inaction, some of the young people like Yaseen resort to ignorant but aggressive zeal. "They stare at their navels; you stare at your biceps. It comes to the same thing" (SB 67), Sayed counters: "If you really think what you say, translate talk into action and make those goddamned Americans pay for what they've done. If not, calm down and back off" (SB 67).

On a related note, the actions of the American occupiers are also described as impulsive, and notions of a supposedly more civilised and advanced 'Western' culture are fundamentally questioned. As I will briefly outline in the following passages, the American soldiers stand for a view of Western liberalism which destroys liberty, freedom, dignity and culture instead of promoting these ideals. The GIs seem to lack religious as well as humanist ideals. They remain roughly sketched figures who are never fully developed or described in more detail, due to the focus of perception and the protagonist's lack of knowledge about and insight into the views and feelings of 'the enemy'. They seem to serve as mere symbols of human weaknesses and frailties: of brutality, cultural ignorance and arrogance.

The scene of Sulayman's execution by the American GI, for instance, serves to highlight war as a force which inevitably brutalises men. Aggression against another culture which is perceived as alien and threatening is aggravated by the blunted affect caused by the daily sight of violence and death. Not only the event itself but also the indifference with which it is rejected with a shrug as a deplorable accident might shock the reader:

> Apparently, they all realized that a mistake had been made, but they weren't going to make a big deal of it. Incidents of this kind were commonplace in Iraq. Amid the general confusion, everyone sought his own advantage. To err is human, and fate has broad shoulders. The black GI [...] put on a sorrowful expression – a vain effort, as far as I was concerned, because his new, compassionate persona seemed incompatible with his temperament. A brute is still a brute, even when he smiles; the eyes are where the soul declares its true nature (SB 59).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

This brutality is also depicted as one reason for the disillusionment with God and the salvaging force of religion. Hinting at events such as the Abu Ghraib torture scandal in 2004, a young Bedouin challenges his pals:

> ['] We're at the dawn of the third millennium, and some foreign sons of bitches are here in our land, dragging us in the mud every day God sends. Iraq is occupied, my friend. [...] What's the TV telling you? [...] Infidels subjugating Muslims, demeaning their leaders, throwing their heroes into cages where sluts in fatigues pull their ears and their testicles and pose for posterity. What's God waiting for, you think, before He falls on them? They've been here for some time now, mocking Him where He lives, in His sacred temples and in the hearts of His faithful. Why doesn't He flick His little finger, when those bastards are strafing our souks and bombing our celebrations and shooting our people down like dogs on every street corner? [...] I'm just back from Baghdad. I'll spare you the details. We're alone in the world. We can count on no one but ourselves. [...] The night, all night, every night, belongs to them. And in the day, when I raise my eyes to heaven to implore Him, I can't see anything except their helicopters [...]' (SB 77-78).

The scene exemplifies how political developments do not necessarily deepen religious feelings and therewith fundamentalist Islamist beliefs. Some characters see themselves as tools of God's wrath. Others, on the contrary, are shown to be so disappointed and desperate that they turn away from God and resort to violence, precisely because they lost their trust in God's mercy and see attacks as a means of necessary self-defence and last resort. Tensions are exacerbated by the "silences and submissions accumulated through many years and various despotic regimes [...which finally rise] like drowned corpses from a muddy river bottom" (SB 84).

Khadra describes many brutal war scenes in detail without giving the reader an insight into the thoughts, feelings and opinions of the American invaders. An Iraqi interpreter previously working for the American troops particularly deplores their arrogance and lack of knowledge about and respect for the other culture:

> 'They think all Arabs are retarded,' he muttered. 'Imagine: Arabs, the most fabulous creatures on earth. We taught the world table manners; we taught the world hygiene and cooking and mathematics and medicine. And what do these degenerates of modernity remember of all that? A camel caravan crossing the dunes at sunset? Some fat guy in a white robe and a keffiyeh flashing his millions in a gambling casino on the Côte D'Azur? Clichés, caricatures...' (SB 128).

The painful feelings of the protagonist about the difference between a glorious past and a present which is dominated by foreign domination and condescension are reminiscent of Hamid's protagonist's longing for the lost past of Lahore. The lack of knowledge about his culture in other countries as well as the exploitation of stereotypical pictures and the 'commodification of culture' for the tourism industry enrage him. The interpreter not only blames the American troops for their condescending behaviour but also for their double standards:

> 'Eight months putting up with their arrogance and their idiotic sarcasm. [...] The truth is, they don't have any more scruples than a pack of hyenas let loose in a sheep barn. I've seen them fire on children and old people as though they were cardboard training targets. [...] I have nightmares every night. I was an interpreter with a regular army battalion – angels compared to the Marines – but it was still pretty hard to take. Plus, they got their kicks making fun of me and treating me like shit. As far as they were concerned, I was just a

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> traitor to my country. It took me eight months to realize that. [...] Even if I'm on the losing side, I'm worth more than that' (SB 127).

Even though he helps the American troops and is of use to them, they never accept him but also see him as a traitor. Similar to the experience described in the novels by Kureishi and Hamid, people of different colour, origin and religion are never fully accepted and regarded as equal in Western society – no matter which efforts they make. Furthermore, the reference to 'cardboard training targets' as well as the above-mentioned reference to "sluts in fatigues" hints at the occurrence of war crimes. In the years following the invasion in 2003 various human rights violations were revealed. In the Abu Ghraib prison Iraqi detainees were tortured, physically and sexually abused, raped and murdered. The pictures of Charles Graner and Lynndie England posing with naked, humiliated and tortured prisoners spread around the globe in no time. The torture practices reported from Abu Ghraib but also from other secret detention centres in Iraq and Afghanistan represented a grave violation of the UN Convention against Torture and international law. Especially the sexualised nature of many acts of torture perfidiously aimed at humiliating and demoralising a Muslim population with strict rules of propriety and sexual modesty. The reports not only damaged the reputation of American politics in other countries but also served to erode the support for US military interventions in the United States itself. Some of the executive soldiers like England were later on interrogated, reduced in rank and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Many critics, however, saw this as diversionary tactic, because no politicians and high-ranking military officials who actually were responsible for the practice were punished, and the American military tactics and invasion of Iraq was not questioned.[164]

On the whole, *The Sirens of Baghdad* features not one positive encounter between people from Iraq and the United States. This, however, makes the wide range of Iraqi reactions from aggression to thoughtfulness even more remarkable and rouses admiration for more nuanced views and humanist approaches. Despite the ignorance, arrogance and violence of the invaders there are still characters, like Omar, who try to be decent and underline the difference between just retribution and blind revenge. He warns the protagonist:

> 'If you insist on fighting, do it properly. Fight *for* your country, not *against* the whole world. Keep things in perspective; don't mistake wrong for right. Don't kill just for killing's

164 Many authors on the Abu Ghraib torture scandal underline the symbolic dimension of the pictures as an attempt to show mastery and regain power after the severe humiliation of 09/11 (e.g. Tétreault 2006). Pugliese, for instance, sees the human rights violations in line with a long history of Orientalist, white supremacist claims (Pugliese 2007). Thus, one could argue that "the Abu Ghraib photographs are more about dominance established through the staging of trauma than the extraction of truth" (Hesford 2006: 30). Many critics examined that the human rights violations at Abu Ghraib and in other places were not the sole excesses of individual sadism, but that they were sanctioned by the community, or the military and political leadership. Thus, they can be seen as an inherently political act (Apel 2005: 89) and as "cases of administrative evil" (Adams/Balfour/Reed 2006: 680) which are systemic to the political and military strategy of the United States in its 'war on terrorism' (Hooks/Mosher 2005). For an interesting account of how torture is used in conflicts to secure legitimacy for elites and deter political opposition, see Blakely (2007).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> sake. Don't fire blindly – we're losing more innocent people than bastards who deserve to die. [...] The world isn't our enemy. Remember all the people who protested the invasion all over the world, millions of them marching in Madrid, Rome, Paris, Tokyo, South America, Asia. All of them were on our side, and they still are. We got more support from them than we got from the other Arab countries. Don't forget that. All nations are victims of the avarice of a handful of multinational companies. It would be terrible to lump them all together. Kidnapping journalists, executing NGO workers who are here only to help us – those kinds of things are alien to our customs. If you want to avenge an offense, don't commit one. If you think your honor must be saved, don't dishonor your people. Don't give way to madness. If I see pictures of you mistaking arbitrary execution for a feat of arms, I'll hang myself' (SB 182-183).

This crucial passage underlines several important points. First, it serves to rouse sympathy for the character of Omar and his sense of justice and mercy – even towards the enemy. He shows consideration and a nuanced assessment of the divides within every society. Second, it constitutes one of the scarce references to the international economic system and the role of capitalism. And thirdly, it underlines that jihad is clearly seen here from a cultural and not a religious point of view. Random violence against innocent people is presented as alien to Bedouin customs and is therefore ignominious. Whereas the protagonist plans to embrace armed jihad to actually satisfy a cultural obligation, Omar outlines that the result would achieve the opposite of a reestablishment of family honour. The mixture of religious and cultural/social concepts is presented as hazardous for all parties concerned.

Ironically, the narrator later on participates in the transport of a hostage who is "a European woman, a member of an NGO, kidnapped from the clinic where she worked as a physician" (SB 205), and thereby violates exactly the humanist norms Omar appeals to so urgently. Furthermore, after a raid he accidentally discloses Omar's address to his cell, which results in his friend's brutal assassination when the fundamentalists find him asleep in bed with his male lover. At this point the protagonist begins to understand that his involvement with jihad cuts him off from God: "Baghdad had turned away everything, even its prayers. And as for me, I no longer recognized myself in mine. [...] *What have I done? Almighty God! How will Omar ever forgive me?*" (SB 233, original emphasis). The last exclamation is also the first instance of autonomous interior monologue, in which word and deed temporally coincide. This accounts for a lot of emotional intensity and the feeling of immediacy.

As has been outlined in this chapter, Khadra makes use of relationships of contrast and correspondence to shed light on different groups and their approaches to the topic. But despite the outlined rigidity of cultural systems, the author does not use binary oppositions as Kureishi does in *The Black Album*. The reader gets only one perspective but becomes acquainted with many different characters and world-views, which are difficult to reconcile. In contrast to *The Black Album*, *The Sirens of Bagdad* establishes more nuanced characters: They have virtues and vices, justified claims and blind spots, amiable qualities and character flaws. Exceptions from this tendency are, however, the characters that remain unfamiliar to the reader and are presented in a particularly negative light. This holds especially true for the American soldiers, with whom the protagonist cannot even communicate. Due to his lack of insight into their

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

feelings, thoughts and worldview, they appear one-dimensional and remain elusive to us. This does not necessarily imply a devaluation of their position but still inhibits the reader from identifying with these characters or feeling sympathy for their situation. The novel primarily focuses on divides within Iraqi society. The representatives of 'Western liberalism' remain anonymous throughout the whole novel. By exclusively focusing on an Iraqi perspective, Khadra endeavours to give people, whom he perceives to be powerless and defenceless, a voice. He thereby adopts a perspective that differs from the common focus on American perceptions in the media:

> All my literature takes place in that space – it deals with that which has not been attended to. […] I have written a Western tragedy, but also a book that is filled with eastern storytelling. When there are two perspectives there's a better chance of understanding (Jeffries 2005: n.p.).

The author strives to create empathy for the plight of the Iraqi people. This, however, does not imply an imbalanced representation. Khadra's novels are always ambivalent and nuanced, defying stereotypical representations. The American 'antagonists' remain as elusive and silent as the protagonist's (also unnamed) father, who represents old Bedouin traditions, patriarchy and hierarchical societal structures. We are neither invited to understand his mindset nor are we guided to identify with liberal, Western ideas, which are never mentioned in detail.

These factors set up a contrast between flat and round characters, which is central for influencing the readers' sympathy. The hero is a dynamic character who changes and grows. He is complex, multidimensional and consistent, bearing no real contradictions. Furthermore, it is interesting to see that the central character is mainly defined by his feelings, not his actions. Similarly, Dr. Jalal, Omar and Kadem are also presented as round and dynamic characters who are primarily defined by their emotions. The characters representing Bedouin tradition and/or Islamic fundamentalism, on the other hand, tend to be rather static, simple and one-dimensional. About Yaseen, Hassan or the narrator's father we can only draw conclusions from their actions, which creates a qualitative imbalance in the direction of sympathy to the detriment of these figures. As we have seen, the same strategy is employed for the depiction of the American GIs. No worldview which possesses an essentialist quality and denies the worth and free choice of the individual is presented as a credible alternative.

The novel features many different nuances, and lines of conflict cannot be clearly demarcated. The main antagonisms develop not simply between Islamic fundamentalism and Western liberal views but between urban and rural areas, elders and younger people who start emancipating themselves from traditions and hierarchies, between thoughtful, peace-loving and disoriented, hot-headed individuals. As Naudillon notes, Khadra "n'a cessé, sa vie durant, de combattre des deux plus difficiles ennemis de l'humanité: l'ignorance et le colonialisme d'autrefois" (Naudillon 2002: 166).[165] The author exposes the short-sightedness, ignorance and hatred of many peo-

165 Khadra "has continued throughout his life, to fight the two toughest enemies of humanity: ignorance and former colonialism" (my translation).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

ple in political conflicts: But it is always the ignorance of individuals – not that of groups.

5.4.3) The protagonist's turn to fundamentalist ideas

Having outlined the main plotlines and major turning points, I will now grant the figure of the protagonist a closer examination. Given the fact that Khadra uses an autodiegetic narrator, it is interesting to analyse in which ways his text differs from the novels by Kureishi or Faulks and their use of extradiegetic narrators. The first case in point differing according to the chosen point of view is the characterisation of the protagonist. The emotional quality of the novel and the immediacy of perception is mainly achieved by the modes of self-narration. Khadra's narrator does not employ any self-quoted monologues or distant-self-narration characterised by detailed self-analysis and an often recurrent thematisation of the narration process. In key scenes, the narrator seems to render all events to the reader as he experiences them – without many explanatory narratorial comments. This effect of immediacy is, however, slightly reduced by the use of the past tense in these chapters and the chronological order of representation "that counteracts the illusion of an unrolling thought process in autobiographical monologues [...since] in genuine interior monologues the temporal sequence of past events yields to the temporal sequence of present remembrance, and the past is thereby radically dechronologized" (Cohn 1978: 182). The narration unfolds rather chronologically with a proper introduction of other important characters and a summary of the protagonist's upbringing in Kafr Karam. The story reverberates of a written account in its form as well as in its lack of a specific listener or addressee. (Changez's monologue in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is, in contrast, clearly marked as a verbal report). The first and the last part are, as mentioned above, written in consonant self-narration in present tense, which minimises the distance between narrating and experiencing self.

Our assessment of the protagonist derives from implicit and explicit self-characterisation. All other characters are described by their own utterances and deeds as well as the protagonist's attitude and reaction towards them. He narrates some of their background stories, gives us an insight into their motivations, where possible, and morally judges their behaviour. For some characters, the protagonist's description is the only information we get. It is remarkable that the protagonist's whole family remains rather 'silent' throughout the novel. The characters whose direct speech is presented are mostly characters who express specific political or ethical opinions like Omar the Corporal, Jalal or Sayed, which fleshes out their specific points of view. As a result, the flashbacks do have a rather artificial quality but enable the reader to evaluate characters on the basis of their own comments.

On the whole, all information is naturally filtered by the protagonist's consciousness and selected according to his current knowledge and level of information. However, there is no indication of unreliability or manipulation. There are no signs of an incorrect rendering of facts or an intentional misdirection of the reader. We are in-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

formed in detail about the experience and value system which shaped the narrator's opinions and are aware of his biases. As most information we get about the unnamed hero is influenced by the selection of events he chooses to narrate, this necessarily entails a high degree of subjectivity. This subjectivity, however, is not reflected in the choice of language. Khadra writes in French, which is not his native tongue and also consciously chooses not to use foreign language elements, unlike other authors (such as Updike, whose novel *Terrorist* I will briefly analyse in the next chapter). He is aware that 'authenticity' is a dangerous and manmade construct and is careful to avoid the trap of exoticism.

Readers are aware of a quantitative imbalance of representation caused by the protagonist's lack of knowledge about and insight into the thoughts, feelings and opinions of the 'Western' characters in the novel. As a result, the reader may be able to comprehend the decisions and attitudes of the protagonist but does not necessarily get convinced into sharing them. As already mentioned, the protagonist describes his sister Farah as an immoral whore. But the facts he selects to present us make us think the opposite. It becomes clear that she supports the whole family and altruistically helps people in need at the risk of her own life. With respect to Sayed, on the other hand, his verbal expressions seem to match the protagonist's assessment of his character. Even though the author chose to present only one perspective, speech representation provides us with an insight into the lives and worldviews of other characters.

Concerning the psychological development of the protagonist, it becomes apparent from the beginning that his situation is very difficult. The autodiegetic narrator is emotionally involved and at times affected by extreme states of despair, rage and a disorientation, which corresponds to the delirious atmosphere of the whole setting. At the same time, it is made clear that a transformation has taken place and that his psychological state is the result of traumatising events. He describes himself as a tender and sensitive boy, and his behaviour gives the reader no reason to doubt the validity of these descriptions. He narrates about his past:

> I was an emotional person; I found other people's sorrows devastating. [...] As a child, I often wept in my room after locking the door, for fear that my twin sister – a *girl* – would catch me shedding tears. People said she was stronger than I was, and less of a crybaby. [...] At school, my classmates considered me a weakling. [...] In fact, I wasn't a weakling; I simply hated violence (SB 97).

Neither a thirst for revenge nor a propensity towards violence drives him to join the terrorist cell but solely his sense of duty. Concepts of pride and honour are at the centre stage of the protagonist's consciousness. His aim was always to make his father proud, who is an illiterate old well-digger dispensing with much to grant his son a good education. He sees with pain his father's enforced inertia and suffering and his proud attempts to keep up appearances. His relationship towards his father is shaped by obedience and great respect that is shown to parents as well as the tribal village elders, but not by affection and tenderness. The protagonist takes these patriarchal, hierarchical structures for granted when he admits:

> Immutable as a totem, my father let none of his emotions show. When I was a child, he was a sort of ghost to me. [...] I wondered if he were capable of love, if his stature as beget-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> ter wasn't going to transform him into a pillar of salt. In Kafr Karam, fathers were convinced that familiarity would detract from their authority, and so they had to keep their distance from their progeny. [...W]e couldn't even look each other in the face (SB 22).

On the whole, honour and pride are presented as very ambivalent concepts. On the one hand, they stand for dignity, tradition and respect. On the other hand, Bedouin customs are also depicted as fossilised and detrimental to the worth and needs of the individual as they inhibit open gestures of love, hold up the concept of violent retribution and force people to implement rituals they cannot always reconcile with their conscience and character. Yasmina Khadra also describes the opportunism of the rural people who feel isolated because they do not take part in the ongoing war in their own country, but at the same time do nothing to change the situation. They are uneducated, have no real insight into political backgrounds and start getting excited about the invasion, partly out of boredom and a lack of work and prospects. The protagonist cannot bear the stasis and helplessness anymore which characterises life in Kafr Karam. He knows that he has to leave the countryside to avenge his father.

The protagonist's following journey through the desert to Baghdad radiates a feverish atmosphere. The reader can nearly feel the dryness, unbearable heat and despondency of the whole place. He moves in this desolation "like a bomb that's about to go off [...] two burning eyes in a tormented face" (SB 123-124). Sulayman's assassination, the traumatic events at the wedding party and his father's humiliation and disgrace throw him into a severe crisis of identity, which again invites comparisons to the thematisation of these issues by Faulks, Hamid and mainly Kureishi. Khadra's protagonist is torn between his sensitivity and natural aversion to violence and his seemingly inescapable duty to avenge his father. Not even able to stand the sight of carnage (he vomits and/or faints every time he is confronted with blood and violence), he now feels the obligation to inflict suffering himself, which necessitates an inner transformation:

> How could I love anything after what I'd seen in Kafr Karam? [...] Was I still myself? If so, who was I? I wasn't really interested in knowing that. It had no sort of importance for me anymore. Some moorings had broken, some taboos had fallen, and a world of spells and anathemas was springing up from their ruins. What was terrifying about this whole affair was the ease with which I passed from one universe to another without feeling out of place. Such a smooth transition! I had gone to bed a docile, courteous boy, and I'd awakened with an inextinguishable rage lodged in my very flesh. I carried my hatred like a second nature; it was my armor and my shirt of Nessus[166], my pedestal and my stake; it was all that remained to me in this false, unjust, arid, and cruel life. I wasn't returning to Baghdad to relive happy memories, but to banish them forever. The blooming innocence of first love was over; the city and I no longer had anything to say to each other. And yet we were very much alike; we'd lost our souls, and we were ready to destroy others (SB 134).

As in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* the loss of love plays a major role in the radicalisation process of an individual. The love for other people and the love of a city

166 The symbol of the shirt of Nessus refers to Greek mythology. The centaur Nessus is killed by Heracles and in turn manages to assassinate him by means of a tunic which poisons his antagonist, because it is tainted with the centaur's blood.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

or a home-country seem to be inextricably intertwined. The personal realm blurs into the political and the political is inevitably personal. Describing his hatred as 'armor' and 'shirt of Nessus', the protagonist recognises the ambivalent destructive potential of his behaviour. The anger resulting from the trauma he suffered enables him to take action and to suppress nagging doubts, but at the same time it also kills him metaphorically like the famous shirt of Nessus. The legend symbolises how the spilling of blood will ultimately kill the murderer himself. The essence of Khadra's novels is always that violence can never precipitate justice and destruction only causes further destruction. The main character has bottled up hatred and despair but has no aim or plan. As the Corporal sums up: "These days people come to Baghdad to avenge an offense they've suffered elsewhere, which means they tend to mistake their targets – by a lot [...]" (SB 156).

The reasons for revenge in Khadra's novel are mostly culturally determined, but to take action means entering a political and military conflict, which often inflicts more harm on the domestic population than it hurts the enemy. The example of Omar the Corporal shows the difficulty to divide both spheres and the fatality of 'mistaking one's target'. Even though Omar breaches nearly all rules of propriety he still cannot escape the constraints of his society and finally loses his life because of these constraints. Yet, he understands that he cannot avenge one injustice by committing an even greater crime against innocent and non-involved people:

> ['] You see what the resistance does every day. It's killed thousands of Iraqis. In exchange for how many Americans? [...] To tell you the truth, I came to Baghdad to do some damage. I've never been able to get over the way Yaseen insulted me in the café. [...] My ass is going to have that offense stuck to it until the insult is washed away in blood, [...] he declared. [...]There's no doubt about it – sooner or later, Yaseen will pay for it with his life.' [...] And I happened to arrive in Baghdad the day a false alert caused an enormous crush on a bridge – you remember – and a thousand demonstrators got killed. [...W]hen I saw that whole mess, caused to Iraqis by Iraqis, I said to myself, right away, This is not my war. [...] I came here to join the fedayeen [...] I had to find the weapons I'd left on the battlefield when the enemy approached; I had to deserve the country I couldn't defend when I was supposed to be ready to die for it. ...But, hell, you don't make war on your own people just to piss off the world ['] (SB 158-160).

When the protagonist decides to move to Sayed's shop in Baghdad and work for him, he knows exactly with whom he gets involved. His disgust and feverish anger are even fuelled by his sense of inaction, exclusion and rejection by the other men. The final decisive factor for the protagonist's inner transformation is his accidental connivance of Sayed's murder of two policemen. Whereas before he had to vomit at the sole sight of blood, at this point he already seems to be so apathetic that he neither feels sorrow nor fear or disgust anymore:

> I'd always dreaded the moment when I would step over the line; now that it was behind me, I didn't feel anything in particular. I'd witnessed the killings of the two officers with the same detachment I observed when I contemplated the victims of terrorist attacks**. I was no longer the delicate boy from Kafr Karam**. Another individual had taken his place. I was stunned by how easy it was to pass from one world to another and practically regretted having spent so much time being fearful of what I'd find. [...] I was born again as someone else, someone hard, cold, implacable (SB 194-195, my emphasis).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

His supposedly blunted affect, however, does not diminish the sadness about the murder of his friend Omar by the fundamentalist cell he joins, which would have never happened without his involvement. Haunted by Omar's ghost and his bad conscience, he sinks into depression and longs for his own death. Paradoxically, he chooses the one way Omar always disapproved of. The concepts of pride and honour outweigh all sensibility and remorse:

> Either live like a man or die as a martyr – there's no other alternative for one who wants to be free. I'm not comfortable in the role of the defeated. Ever since that night when the American soldiers burst into our house, overturning our ancestral values and the order of things, I've been waiting! I'm waiting for the moment when I'll recover my self-esteem, without which a man is nothing but a stain (SB 246).

For once he tries to gain mastery over his thoughts and feelings which so often left him no choice. This, however, seems to betray his actual personality. When he comes closer to executing their plan, the protagonist again contradicts himself, when saying:

> **I'm still the shy, retiring boy from Kafr Karam**. Even though I know the importance I've assumed, I haven't broken any of the rules that formed my character in simplicity and propriety.
> I'm no longer afraid of being alone in the dark.
> I've filled my lungs with the mustiness of the tomb.
> I'm ready!
> I've tamed my thoughts and brought my doubts to heel.
> I'm keeping my spirits under firm control. [...]
> I'm the master of what goes on in my head (SB 246-247, my emphasis).

Apparently, the hero has come to be disgusted by everything he sees as weakness – probably because he was himself such a weak person and unable to defend the ones he loves. Quoting the sentences one underneath the other, a pattern becomes visible which resembles an attempt at auto-suggestion. The passage sounds as if the protagonist needed to convince himself of the claims he makes, producing a row of sentences that repeat his resolution like a mantra in different forms. The inherent contradictions in his speech and the repetitive nature of his self-assurance cast doubt on his conviction.

The next part of autonomous interior monologue marks the narrator's final pondering about his past. The passage illuminates the transformation from helplessness into activism, which is underlined by this direct way of representing consciousness: "In a few days, it will be the world that prostrates itself at my feet. *The most important revolutionary mission undertaken since man learned to stiffen his spine!* And I'm the one who's been chosen to accomplish it. What a way of getting even with destiny!" (SB 248). Nevertheless, his psychological constitution is presented as fragile, allowing no impeachment of his plans and motives. In a crucial passage towards the end of the novel, Dr. Jalal finds out that the protagonist is supposed to fly to London to spread a deadly virus, which might kill thousands or even millions of people. Even though he criticises American politics he tries to appeal to the hero's conscience to make him realise that even armed jihad is supposed to have certain limits. The passage not only reflects a humanist attitude that permeates the whole novel but also skilfully shows

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

how omissions in the narrative structure serve to highlight the protagonist's fragile state of mind:

> ['] Every war has its limits. But this – this is beyond all bounds. What do you hope for after the apocalypse? What's going to be left of the world, except for rotting corpses and plagues and chaos? God himself will tear out His hair. [...] Teaching the West a lesson is one thing; massacring the fucking planet is something else. [...] You're going to turn yourself in to the police. Right away. With a little luck, maybe you can be cured. If not, you'll just have to croak all by yourself, and good riddance. You unspeakable fool!'
> Shakir arrives at once, breathless, as if he has a pack of devils on his heels. When he bursts into my suite and sees Dr. Jalal on the carpet with a pool of blood like a halo around his head, Shakir puts his hand over his mouth and utters a curse. [...] I don't understand what the ashtray's doing in my hand [...] (SB 296).

It seems as if the narrator hits (and probably kills) his uninvited confidant. The event itself is, however, omitted. The narrative style makes it clear that the protagonist panicked and acted in the heat of the moment and not in cold blood. The sudden shift from narrated direct speech to a description of the crime scene and Shakir's arrival produces a strange mixture of immediacy, coupled with an outside view. The central character seems to be looking at the scene from above, disjointed from his own body and mind.

Even though he drives to the airport convinced to fly to Europe, the protagonist finally does not carry out his plan. He sits at the airport for hours rather paralysed without entering the plane. Crucial are his observations of happy couples kissing, parents to be and people who represent the many joys in life the hero has never experienced himself. In the end his tender nature and humanist urge wins, and he decides in favour of human life at the disadvantage of honour and revenge. Whether the ending is psychologically plausible is open to debate, since there have been various scenes before in which the central character saw families with children, scenes of happiness, care and love, which were, however, barely noticed by him in his rage. The ending of the novel resonates with pain and disappointment, but also with an indelible love for humanity:

> My whole life passes through my mind: Kafr Karam, my family, my dead, my living, the people I miss, the ones who haunt me. ... Nevertheless, of all my memories, the most recent are the most distinct: that woman in the airport, hopefully examining the screen of her cell phone; that father-to-be who was so happy, he didn't know which way to turn; that young European couple kissing each other. ... They deserved to live for a thousand years. I have no right to challenge their kisses, scuttle their dreams, dash their hopes. What have I done with my own destiny? I'm only twenty-one years old, and all I have is the certainty that I've wrecked my life twenty-one times over (SB 306).

The ending is as ambivalent as the rest of the novel. The hero finally acknowledges the worth of life – a thought that comes to him like an epiphany – and thereby saves many innocent lives. At the same time, the relief readers might feel is undercut by sadness about the sheer waste of a young man who never even had the chance to live his life and emancipate himself from social bonds. Contemplating his fatal choice and having lost all his hatred, he quietly waits for his fundamentalist executioners. In the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

same moment he grasps the desirability of love and happiness, he knows that he will never be able to have this experience.

Similar to novels by Kureishi and Faulks, Khadra's text also traces a coming-of-age process. Similar to Hassan and Shahid, his narrator initially possesses a tender nature and is still young and inexperienced. Nevertheless, the three novels differ concerning the challenges that are faced and concerning the ways identity is presented. *The Black Album* and *A Week in December* are set in a highly individualised English society which is perceived as hollow and immoral but does not face the challenges of war and occupation. Whereas Faulks and Kureishi focus on issues of identity formation and divided loyalties in a context of migration, Khadra gives us an insight into a society where rules are clear-cut. His protagonist cannot afford the luxury to experiment with different roles and identities as Shahid does. The community determines identity with no space for an individual quest for meaning. All characters (such as Kadem, Dr. Jalal or Omar the Corporal) who try to escape and rebel against conventions are outsiders in this society who never really come to terms with their lives and ultimately fall victim to their fundamentalist antagonists. Whereas Faulks and Kureishi give their heroes a future with the opportunity to finally live fulfilled lives, Khadra's ending is darker and, perhaps, more realistic. The maturation of the protagonist is not the result of an adolescent search for meaning but is enforced by political events which bereave him of other options. In this context, the novel also reminds us of the fact that most victims of Islamic fundamentalists are Muslims themselves (cf. Toumi 2011: 127). They are persecuted as writers, intellectuals or feminists who might have more in common with us than we think. The novel reflects the wish of the author for a society in which more people respect the worth of human life and peace, but his work also remains strongly influenced by his experience in the Algerian wars. Khadra is a dreamer. He writes in an emotional and empathic style and likes to imagine that there is a point of return – that even in our turbulent and conflictual times people may renounce hatred and violence. But he is also a realist who knows from experience that the world is far from answering his pleas.

5.4.4) *The Sirens of Baghdad* in the light of ethical criticism and literature as cultural ecology

The major divides Khadra delineates do not only develop between irreconcilable religious, ethnic or political groups but within Bedouin society itself. Conflicts arise between an elder generation who shows a temporising attitude towards political events and a younger generation that is characterised by hot-headedness and activism; between those people who hold foreign influences accountable for the current crisis and those who blame it on cowardice, a lack of faith and inner weakness in their own society. Sayed's intelligent and calculating attempt to stir violent resistance against the American invasion is pitted against Yaseen's aggressive zeal and lack of education. All characters fall prey to stereotypes, simple answers and hatred – no matter if they are uneducated or intellectual. Intellectual characters are more dangerous, though, in that

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

they have a great ability to manipulate others for their political ends. At the same time, intellectuals also have a positive potential to question stereotypes and influence society towards more humanist attitudes. The character constellation in the novel serves to highlight the divides and tensions *within* the country. The rifts that are presented run deep, but are relatively independent of religion and are prevalent in many countries – regardless of the question if these countries are predominantly Muslim or not: older vs. younger generation, city vs. countryside, strict traditional norms vs. 'modern' attitudes and female emancipation. The novel does not elaborately address conflicts between religion and secularism, and we cannot find strong advocates of exaggerated piety or an Islamic fundamentalism based on religious ideals. The dividing lines remain diffuse. Dr. Jalal, for instance, turns from one extreme to the next but simultaneously violates the codes of conduct of all systems. Sayed, similarly, is presented as an advocate of jihad, but indulges in luxury and does not seem to adhere to Muslim principles of moral conduct. His religious beliefs are never really explained.

The choice of an overt first-person narrator makes it clear from the beginning that no neutral voice is narrating and that there can be no 'objective', unemotional view on the topic. And this is exactly what Khadra's depiction of the whole subject reflects: Similar to the other three authors of this literary corpus, he presents the choices and plight of the individual and does not strive to explain Islamic fundamentalism as such. In this respect, the emotionally laden and judgmental attitude of the narrator also mirrors how the topic is mostly dealt with in the media on both sides. All claims made are highly subjective and biased, but it cannot be otherwise. There is no single truth and many claims have their justification. Khadra sheds light on different facets of a problem. He leaves us with the hope that the good might prevail, but this is never achieved without sacrifice. While we wait together with the protagonist for his assassins, we are groping in the dark about the final ending of his story, but at least we learn that his inner conflicts seem to be resolved. Hatred and traditional concepts of honour, shame and retribution are overcome by humanism and the worth of human life.

The novel exemplifies how dangerous generalisations and stereotypes on both sides can be. A lack of dialogue and knowledge about 'the Americans' or 'the Iraqi terrorists' leads to a spiral of violence, retribution and hatred. By showing the reader an ambivalent picture without clear-cut divisions between good and evil, Khadra wants us to question our own preconceptions about potential motivations for terrorist actions and strives to challenge stereotypes about the Arab world:

> Dans ce roman, ce qui m'importait, c'était de montrer ce côté fantastique des Arabes, ce côté généreux, pacifique, que l'Occident ne voit pas. Je voulais bousculer les habitudes des gens, écarter les oeillères pour montrer un monde plus large et plus enrichissant qu'on ne le pense. […] Ce roman est un combat contre les stéréotypes, les a priori, les raccourcis, contre la paresse intellectuelle. J'ai écrit ce livre pour dire: 'Non, le monde va bien, ce sont les hommes qui déconnent de temps en temps' (Valentin 2006: n.p.).[167]

167 In this novel, what mattered to me was to show this fantastic side of the Arabs, that generous, peaceful side that the West does not see. I wanted to challenge people's habits, to remove their blinkers in order to show them a world that is wider and more rewarding than one thinks. […] This novel is a

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

As Nussbaum believes, literature and especially the genre of the novel can help people to see the world with different eyes. Khadra's novel is a good example for Rorty's belief in the instructive force of fictional literature (cf. Rorty 1994: 578) and Nussbaum's claim that the representation of emotion is crucial for the creation of empathy. Kyle Vaughn describes how reading the novel with his high school class changed the students' view of the Middle East and Muslims. According to his observations, his pupils were able to empathise with the characters, found commonalities with them and began to question stereotypical images. Apparently, reading the novel led them to the conclusion that people sometimes just react to events which are beyond their control and that we have to look at each individual situation instead of cultivating generalising prejudice (Vaughn 2011: 66). The content as well as the structure reflect the difficulty of making choices.

Concerning Nussbaum's interest in the narrator's or main character's relationship to the plot, Khadra skilfully manages to give the reader insights into different perspectives despite his choice of a single focaliser. Through the development of the protagonist from a shy boy to a would-be terrorist and back to a person who questions the justifiability of armed jihad, the reader encounters a variety of different arguments and motivations which are also fleshed out by other characters. Despite its high degree of eventfulness, the novel features a relatively balanced mixture of mimesis or 'showing' (action, dialogue) and diegesis or 'telling' (narratorial comments that mediate between reader and scene). A strong reality effect is created by the graphic description of the main formative events in the plot. Moreover, the novel seems to convey a high degree of immediacy due to the emotional quality of the narrator's voice – a sensibility which Khadra describes as a key feature of the Bedouin/Eastern storytelling traditions that influence his work. To use Nussbaum's words, not 'intellect alone' but also 'emotions', 'imagination', 'perception' and 'desire' (Nussbaum 1992: 33) are roused in the reader. Structure and content complement each other. The protagonist is presented as a round and ambiguous character. We might not always have sympathy, but we are definitely invited to empathise with the character and to understand his motives. This stands in contrast to the matter-of-fact and ironic tone of *A Week in December* and the fact that some characters (such as the hedge-fund manager Veals) are presented in such a stereotypical way that no credible personal motives for his behaviour are conceivable.

As we have seen, the sad and bitter tone of Khadra's novel differs significantly from the irony employed in the works by Faulks and especially Kureishi. *The Sirens of Baghdad* does not leave much room for humorous remarks. Some of the characters are at times unintentionally funny, but even these few moments of comic relief that make us smirk are weighed down by the heaviness of the topic, by bloodshed and grief. As Senapati notes, "the terror ordinary citizens of occupied countries experience has uncanny parallels to the terror unleashed by modern day suicide-terrorists"

fight against stereotypes, prejudgments, shortcuts, against intellectual laziness. I wrote this book to say, 'No, the world is fine, it's human beings who behave like fools from time to time' (my translation).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

(Senapati 2011: 125). The wanderings of the protagonist through desolate and war-torn Iraqi cities often have a dream-like quality and mirror his inner frustration and disorientation. What Ireland observes in relation to Khadra's Algerian detective fiction also holds true for *The Sirens of Baghdad*: His "unusual mix of realist description, lyricism, and political allegory [...] create a nightmarish, often surreal vision" (Ireland 2002: 58).

Concerning the negotiation of different beliefs and values in the plot it is evident that Khadra assigns the greatest importance to humanist values. The author gives some merit to traditional cultural values as far as they are connected to the respectful behaviour towards other human beings but questions the ethical validity of these concepts when it comes to concepts of honour, shame and revenge. Religious values are not discussed at all and simply do not play a large role for the description of Islamic fundamentalism in the novel. As Kadari outlines, the novel exemplifies that "l'islamisme n'est rien la représentation emblématique de l'Islam, mais qu'il s'agit là d'un épiphénomène qui, endémique à des troubles socio-politiques, tente d'imposer des valeurs qu'il revendique comme œcuméniques" (Kadari 2007: 143).[168] Islamic fundamentalism is represented as a symptom of a political crisis. Moreover, the novel impressively shows the power of collective identities and appeals to the responsibility of the individual to question communal imperatives. Whereas Kureishi and Faulks present a liberal concept of the self in an individualised society, Khadra shows compassion for the pressures cultural communities may exert on the individual. In contrast to *The Black Album*, for instance, *The Sirens of Baghdad* shows us a world in which culture seems to be a much stronger determinant of individual identity than gender, ideology, sexual orientation, class or other facets of identity formation. Farah's female emancipation and Omar's homosexuality indicate the importance of other identity markers, but in comparison to Kureishi's protagonist, none of Khadra's characters is able to act on their feelings openly. Reproach, defamation and in Omar's case even death are the sad results in a society that does not seem to tolerate defection and the construction of counter-identities.

On this note, the novel questions, as Zapf puts it, "the modernist ideology of the autonomous, entirely self-constituting subject" (Zapf 2007: 155) in that it underlines the dependence of the individual on larger cultural frameworks. As has been outlined, Khadra aims at making suppressed voices heard and at giving readers a glimpse of Bedouin culture as a marginalised group. The novel can be seen as 'cultural-critical metadiscourse' in that it addresses the deficits, contradictions and double-standards in Iraqi society. At the same time, it is a critique of American politics and the way in which people treat others without the slightest knowledge of their culture and motives. In depicting the deep rifts between local people and invaders as well as between different groups within Iraq, Khadra shows the reader how these conflicts can lead to "deep-rooted civilizatory self-alienation, failed communication and paralyzed vitality" (Zapf 2007: 156). Just like the other three novels in this literary corpus, *The Sirens of*

168 Islamism is not an emblematic representation of Islam, but it is an epi-phenomenon, endemic to socio-political turmoil, which tries to impose the values it claims to be ecumenical (my translation).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Baghdad exposes the contradictions within and the destructive potential of essentialisms that lead to the alienation and crisis of the individual. The psychological disposition and identity crisis of Khadra's protagonist mirrors the claustrophobic images of Baghdad. Both the condition of the city and of the protagonist, come close to a state of "death in life" so vividly described by Zapf (2007: 156).

Furthermore, Khadra's novel seeks to empower marginalised voices. He strives to foreground what is neglected. First of all, this finds an expression in Khadra's decision to narrate the war from an Iraqi perspective to counter dominant 'Western' media representations. Secondly, the protagonist represents a position of double-marginalisation in that he is also a member of a rural Bedouin community, which is presented as rather uneducated and poor. Nevertheless, the novel not only shows the violence of a small minority against a dominant majority, but it also depicts the struggle of a whole country against foreign invasion. In this respect, *The Sirens of Baghdad* is not similar to the other novels concerning the way it represents an imaginative counter-discourse. The novel describes marginalisation primarily in terms of culture and world-politics, whereas Hamid, Faulks and Kureishi foreground economic stratification and forms of marginalisation based on issues of ethnicity and class.

Just as the other novels under discussion, *The Sirens of Baghdad* does not picture a harmonisation of conflicts. Different worldviews remain separated, war continues and the protagonist finally loses his life without achieving any of his plans. Khadra keeps the American and Iraqi adversaries apart until the end. No reconciliation or understanding is indicated between both parties. Thus, at first sight, the novel seems to bear less potential for a reintegration of different discourses. However, the end still symbolises hope and a "moment of regeneration" (Zapf 2007: 159) as the protagonist chooses the protection of innocent human life over doctrine and revenge. Furthermore, representing various factions within Iraqi society as well as a world-political conflict, the novel brings together a variety of different lifestyles and points of view. On the level of content, no reintegration of conflicting discourses seems to be possible. Nevertheless, *The Sirens of Baghdad* contains elements of a reintegrative discourse in that it opens up a dialogue between different cultural discourses and negotiates individual and collective traumata. Khadra uses the example of an individual that readers are invited to empathise with to shed light on communal problems. The phenomenon of fundamentalism is fleshed out by a personal story the readers can comprehend even though they might not have been familiar with the depicted cultural codes before.

Khadra's novel is quite pessimistic about the ability of the individual to change the course of history – maybe because its author had served in the Algerian Army for most of his life and comes from a world in which war is omnipresent. But for all that, Khadra's belief in the positive potential of intellectuals to fight for their ideals shines like a ray of hope through the novel. Like Kureishi and Hamid, Khadra points out the role of intellectuals and art in promoting humanist ideals and confronting fundamentalist attitudes. Simultaneously, the author emphasises the demagogic potential intellectuals might unlock in societies where education and nuanced evaluations are rare.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The protagonist's childhood friend Kadem, Dr. Jalal and his friend Mohammed Seen all represent different roles intellectuals might take.

Kadem denotes an intellectual stance that is peaceful and symbolises art as a recluse from the harsh reality of war. The deeply unhappy and traumatised young man derives new hope and comfort from playing the lute. His character stands for tender love, nostalgia and the power of music and art. He is not ashamed to admit his vulnerability, loyalty and faithfulness and shows a great respect for women, which makes him an endearing character the reader might find likeable. Art is generally presented as a source of inspiration, consolation and recluse in times of war. Khadra underlines the power of art in expressing emotion and joining people in love and understanding, as a key to the comprehension of a culture:

> 'All Arab songs are love songs', he said. 'If the West could only understand our music, if it could even just listen to us sing, if it could hear our soul in the voices of Sabah Fakhri and Wadi es-Safi and Abdelwaheb and Asmahan and Umm Kulthum – if it could commune with our world – I think it would renounce its cutting-edge technology, its satellites, and its armies and follow us to the end of our art...' (SB 71).

Art rouses empathy. It opens people's eyes for the really important things in life and enables them to look beyond outer appearances. The US soldiers, however, seem to be blind to this message. GIs later on smash the "fabulous lute of inestimable value, a tribal and even nation heirloom" (SB 104), therewith destroying Kadem's only recluse. Kadem symbolises pacifism but also helplessness and an inability to fight for self-determination.

Dr. Jalal, in contrast, is presented as a representative of a more political and intellectual stance. His sharpness stands in contrast to the simple-mindedness and lack of education of the villagers in Kafr Karam. He takes up a minority position in Bedouin society and his stance even seems to have an impact on the media and public opinion. Notably, Jalal criticises the West as well as Muslim societies and seems to have been equally abused as a mouthpiece by both sides. The attitude of the protagonist towards Jalal changes from merciless rejection to admiration and praise:

> His theories about the dysfunctions of contemporary Muslim thought were veritable indictments; the imams rejected his writings in toto, even going so far as to predict hellfire for anyone who dared to read them. For the ordinary devout Muslim, Dr. Jalal was nothing but a mountebank, a Western lackey in the pay of factions hostile to Islam in general and to Arabs in particular. I myself detested him; I thought his learning perverted, exhibitionistic, and conventional, and his contempt for his people seemed obvious to me. In my eyes, he offered one of the most repulsive examples of those traitors who proliferated like rats in European media and academic circles, fully prepared to exchange their souls for the privilege of seeing their photographs in a newspaper and hearing themselves talked about. I didn't disapprove of the fatwas that condemned him to death [...] (SB 249).

The passage not only shows the strong moral judgment of the narratorial voice, but also forms a stark contrast to Dr. Jalal's later praise by the protagonist for his criticism of Western imperialism: "I adored the man that day. [...] Better than anyone, he knows how to express our anguish and the insults we suffer and the necessity of breaking our silence and rising up. [...] He's hypersensitive and exceptionally intelligent, a mentor of rare charisma" (SB 250-251). The emotional quality of the passages

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

and the blatant change of mind make the reader aware of the large influence and demagogic potential intellectuals may exert.

Mohammed Seen, a friend of Dr. Jalal and a fellow novelist, embodies a third position between passive inactivity and demagogic resistance. He stresses the responsibility and also the power of Muslim intellectuals to simultaneously fight for their rights AND a peaceful coexistence with people from other countries and creeds. In his argument with Jalal on the final pages he draws a conclusion that sounds like a sermon and a plea for a humanist world-view:

> [‘] We're the world's conscience now, you and I and the other intellectual orphans, jeered by our own people and spurned by the hidebound establishment. We're in the minority, of course, but we exist. And we're the only ones capable of changing things, you and I. The West is out of the race. It's been overtaken by events. The battle, the real battle, is taking place among the Muslim elite, that is, between us two and the radical clerics.'
> 'Between the Aryan race and the non-Aryans.'
> 'That's false and you know it. Today, our struggle is *internal.* Muslims are on the side of the person who can project their voice, the Muslim voice, as far as possible. [...] They need a myth, an idol. Someone capable of representing them, of expressing them in their complexity, of defending them in some way. Whether with the pen or with bombs, it makes little difference to them. And so it's up to us to choose our weapons, Jalal. [...] We have in our hands an incredible instrument: our double culture [...'] (SB 274-275).

Seen appeals to the principle of personal choice, which seems to be so alien to the society Khadra describes. Bedouin tradition might dictate to wash away dishonour in blood. But intellectual tradition dictates to question these rules, to reflect about conflicts in their complexity, to defend one's values with words – not violence. He appeals to personal responsibility and deliberation when he urges Jalal: "Vandals don't build; they destroy. We have to take responsibility, Jalal. [...] We have to transcend our rage. It's a question of humanity's future" (SB 277).

Khadra's work is a manifesto for the value of life despite its cruelties and abysses. Many of his novels read like a 'dance on a grave' and embrace life even though everything seems to be lost:

> Je ne suis pas un messager, je suis un homme alerte, vigilant, qui voit le monde courir à sa perte et qui essaye de réagir. Je sais combien les gens sont abusés par les raccourcis médiatiques et les stéréotypes politiques et, armé de mon expérience et de mon amour pour l'espèce humaine, j'essaye de calmer les esprits en remettant chaque chose dans son contexte. Je tente de rassurer les intelligences, d'éveiller les consciences et de mobiliser les esprits autour d'un merveilleux idéal qui s'appelle : la vie. Les gens, souvent, ne se rendent pas compte de la chance qu'ils ont d'être en vie. La vie est tellement précieuse qu'il devient impératif, obsessionnel de la préserver (Interview with Marie Laure 2007: n.p.).[169]

169 I am not a messenger, I am an alert, vigilant man, who sees the world running to ruin and tries to react. I see how people are being abused by media simplification and political stereotypes and, armed with my experience and love for the human race, I try to calm people down by putting everything in context. I try to reassure our intelligence, to appeal to our conscience and to mobilise our spirits for a wonderful ideal which is called: life. People often do not realise how lucky they are to be alive. Life is so precious that it becomes imperative and obsessive to preserve it (my translation).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Khadra desires to make the reader aware that life is worth living and that all ideologies which deny the value of this life are not worth dying for.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

6) Outlook: "We seek attachments, however unfortunate"[170]

The novels in this outlook serve to broaden the textual basis from which I draw conclusions and to exemplify further approaches and narrative styles used to deal with this difficult topic. A short analysis of a few additional novels helps to verify whether the unifying elements I deduced from the four major works under discussion might in fact indicate more general tendencies. The works analysed differ in their content, settings and the narrative forms and strategies to attract the readers' sympathy. However, all works share a humanist attitude, question stereotypes and binary oppositions and reflect an indelible love for humanity, rejecting essentialism in every form. The four novels *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) by Nadeem Aslam, *Terrorist* (2007) by John Updike, *The Attack* (2007) by Yasmina Khadra and *The Good Muslim* (2011) by Tahmima Anam serve as further examples, which are as diverse regarding settings, backgrounds and depicted perspectives. The outlook again exemplifies the global, interdiscursive and interdisciplinary nature of literary portrayals of Islamic fundamentalism and renders a bigger picture, which will permit to identify characteristics shared by fictional approaches to this topic beyond all work-specific peculiarities.

John Updike's novel *Terrorist* is special in that the author went to great lengths to study the Koran in order to give his work a sound foundation. As has been outlined, Faulks and Kureishi do not put a lot of effort into describing the foundations of Islamic fundamentalist beliefs and do not refer to any specific movements or religious schools. Hamid and Khadra pay more attention to detail, but concentrate on the political circumstances and points of view that may contribute to fundamentalist radicalisation – not on the religious doctrines that serve as a justification for fundamentalist violence. Thus, it is interesting to ascertain if Updike's attention to detail has the potential to lend the depiction of Islamic fundamentalism a more realistic and lifelike quality. Are the motives and behaviour of Updike's characters more comprehensible because their religious beliefs are thoroughly described? This will be an interesting aspect to work out, regarding the fact that the four major works at hand ascribe only little importance to the role of religion.

Nadeem Aslam's work *Maps for Lost Lovers* raises interesting questions concerning the difficult dilemma of authors who write texts which create empathy with characters that represent the most abhorrent deeds and inhuman worldviews. Aslam manages to establish a very fragile equilibrium between the depiction of events that certainly move readers to conceive abhorrence with regard to his main character Kaukab and insights into her pain, sorrow and desperation. Whereas, in the four major novels under discussion, empathy with a character (or a lack thereof) most of the time goes

170 Updike *Terrorist* 224.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

hand in hand with sympathy for a character (or a lack thereof), the tension between the plot of *Maps for Lost Lovers* and its narrative structure seems to achieve a divergence between empathy and sympathy. As will be described in more detail in this chapter, the character of Kaukab rouses the empathy of the reader, because Aslam describes a round and life-like character. By means of numerous detailed descriptions of Kaukab's thoughts, feelings and background, Aslam manages to render her behaviour psychologically plausible. However, even though readers are invited to feel with Kaukab, they are not invited to feel for Kaukab. The novel underlines that the character's sad fate and loneliness is only a logical product of her fundamentalist worldviews and her inability to accept other views and embrace change. Thus, understanding for Kaukab's motives and the tragic nature of this character is roused, but the novel does not promote sympathy with or pity for her. To my mind, this is an interesting way of establishing a moral hierarchy of perspectives that deserves attention in this chapter.

Furthermore, I selected a second novel by Yasmina Khadra in order to provide a more detailed insight into his versatile oeuvre. As has been outlined, *The Sirens of Baghdad* ascribes fundamentalist radicalisation to geopolitical reasons, war and the greed for power and money of some fundamentalist masterminds – not to an excessive interpretation of religious doctrine. In this context, I deem it worthwhile to ask if this assessment of the phenomenon is only an idiosyncratic feature of Khadra's view of the conflict in Iraq, or if the belief that religious fundamentalism is rather a symptom of other problems and not the cause of present conflicts can also be found in his other novels. *The Attack* is set in Israel/Palestine. In this context, it is of interest which role religion might play in Khadra's second work, which deals with a very different political conflict. Moreover, Khadra drafts a female terrorist, which roused my interest.

A brief analysis of *The Good Muslim* by Tahmima Anam is supposed to complete the outlook. It is a very remarkable work, because it breaks down in one short but central passage the dichotomy between Islamic fundamentalist leaders and their followers. As has been outlined in previous chapters, the present literary corpus seems to establish a difference between fundamentalist leaders, who are described as very negative, selfish and scheming characters that grant the reader no insights into their consciousness, and likeable but desperate individual protagonists, who fall prey to fundamentalist demagogues but whose behaviour is made psychologically plausible. Anam's character Sohail – the brother of her female protagonist – in a sense fulfils a double function. Throughout the novel, he is presented as a rather cold and merciless religious leader about whose motives even his sister can only speculate. At one point in the novel, however, Anam inserts a passage of internal focalisation, which serves as a flashback and sheds light on Sohail's feelings and his reasons for radicalisation. It will be interesting to analyse which effect this double function might have on directing the readers' empathy with or sympathy for this character.

Similar to the authors of the four major works in the focus of this study, Anam, Aslam and Updike are writers who openly voice political opinions and have different degrees of personal familiarity with fundamentalism. Nadeem Aslam was born in

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

1966 in Gujranwala, Pakistan, and came to England at the age of 14 when his father, a poet and a communist, fled General Zia ul-Haq's Islamic regime for good and settled in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. The tensions that become visible in his work are tensions the author experienced in his own family with a political, artistic father and a very pious mother (see Jaggi 2013: n.p.). Aslam is a Muslim but claims to be a 'non-believer' (Brace 2004: n.p.). He knows the monetary problems, language difficulties and social decline that may be connected to exile. During the writing process of *Maps for Lost Lovers,* he lived in the Asian neighbourhoods of various English towns (Ezard 2005: n.p.). Most importantly, he underlines that his fiction may not be based on real-life people but on real events he witnessed. Referring to *Maps for Lost Lovers* he stresses:

> 'Nothing in that novel was made up [. …] I lived in that community and my family still does.' His late maternal uncle, an Islamic missionary to England in the 1970 s, helped found the Dewsbury mosque where the London bombers 'were radicalized. I didn't see it coming, but I could imagine the paths these boys took'" (Jaggi 2013: n.p.).

For Aslam, a 'secular atheist', one advantage of growing up in Pakistan is an extended family. "'I have 50 first cousins, and every person has their own kind of belief or disbelief. I always knew there was no one way of being Muslim, but a whole spectrum'" (Jaggi 2013: n.p.) The author sharply criticises Islamic superstitions and practices such as honour killings just as he animadverts white racism (Chambers 2011: 137). Coming from a working-class background, he moreover underlines the importance of class issues and education that continue to have an influence on society – in Pakistan as well as Britain – and determine people as much as religion or ethnicity. As most authors discussed in this study, Aslam is difficult to 'label' and rejects any simple categorisations. "Given his late arrival in the UK, he is neither a diasporic 'British Pakistani writer', nor a Pakistani writer, but is situated in an in-between position, complicating conceptual boundaries between East and West" (Chambers 2011: 134).

Similarly, Tahmima Anam currently lives in London but was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Having lived in Paris, New York and Bangkok, Anam can truly be called a cosmopolitan artist. Despite this mobility and the fact that she received British citizenship in 2010, she continues to nourish strong bonds to her country of birth, where she sees her "main political and emotional ties" (Chambers 2011: 171). Apart from English she also speaks her mother-tongue Bengali. Anam's mother is a feminist political activist and her father a renowned journalist and socialist student leader and publisher. Her father's Bengali newspaper was involved in a huge public controversy in 2007, since it printed a cartoon seen as blasphemous (Chambers 2011: 158-159). Thus, Anam did not receive any religious education but came into early contact with tensions between political and religious views. Her grandmother was close to the 1971 Pakistan civil war (or Bangladeshi liberation war) and Anam herself interviewed hundreds of war veterans for her doctoral thesis in social anthropology. She calls herself a feminist (Chambers 2011: 170) and is committed to the cause of women in Bangladesh and elsewhere to achieve equal rights. Anam did not read the Koran until researching for her novels but seems to respect religious faith. Like all of the other

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

writers in this literary corpus she is very aware of the large diversity of Muslim beliefs and practices in the world.

John Updike's biography, in contrast, is characterised by fewer upheavals and international influences. Born in Pennsylvania, Updike's talents were soon discovered and promoted. After receiving a full scholarship for Harvard, he attended the University of Oxford and later on returned to the United States, where he began his career as a writer, writing articles for *The New Yorker*. Until his death in 2009 he was praised not only as one of America's greatest writers but was also highly esteemed as a literary critic. As Miller argues, regarding the background of the Cold War, Updike's writing has always been deeply influenced by politics. He describes Updike's various negotiations of American national identity and his assessments of the discrepancies between high aspirations and a disillusioning reality (cf. Miller 2001: 3). Updike's novels often focus on young protagonists who are in conflict with the parental generation, disregard conventions and seek moral guidance in an ambiguous world (De Bellis 2000: 97). Furthermore, religion has been an important factor in Updike's life. Born as a Lutheran and engaged in the Episcopal Church until his death, he is said to have negotiated personal spiritual crises in his works and may have derived his sympathy for literary characters from the principle of Christian charity (De Bellis 2000: 376-377). Updike's novel *Terrorist* adds an interesting dimension to the study because it was discussed very controversially for the representation of characters and its engagement with the Koran. Updike is the only author in this literary corpus whose novel actually betrays an extensive study of the holy scripture of Islam. His approach to use extensive quotations from the Koran and some Arabic language elements is very distinctive. However, Updike was also criticised in this context for using stereotypical representations and stock characters who seem to represent popular ideological standpoints and are thus rather lifeless and unrealistic.

6.1) Islamic fundamentalism and its antipoles

The first question asked at the beginning of this study was how the phenomenon of fundamentalism in general and Islamic fundamentalism, in particular, is depicted and if the phenomenon is always described in its relationship to its antipoles. Similar to the four major works examined in detail, the texts at hand further exemplify that fundamentalism comes in different forms and guises. The authors endeavour to take a closer look at political and societal catalysts for fundamentalism and the reasons an individual might have for radicalisation.

John Updike's novel *Terrorist* (T) is a very interesting example, because it contains a rather stereotypical representation of Islamic fundamentalism, even though its author is a very political and experienced writer. The novel is set in the United States and connects the life-stories of people from three different religions: the story of the pupil Ahmad Ashmavy-Mulloy, the son of an Irish-American mother and an Egyptian father, who converts to Islam, of his Christian class-mate Joryleen and his Jewish teacher and guidance counsellor Jack Levy. The story is set in the dilapidated fictional

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

suburb 'New Prospect' in a town somewhere in New Jersey. High unemployment and crime rates, low levels of education, a very multicultural composition and widespread social problems characterise the district. The reader gets a profound insight into the thoughts and feelings of Ahmad and Levy who serve as major focalisers and are both in a way lonely and disillusioned. Ahmad is influenced by the radical Shaikh of a local mosque who stirs him towards carrying out a suicide attack. In the end, however, Ahmad suddenly changes his mind and chooses life over death.

Updike fuses many different worldviews, religions and moral principles in one book. The novel features a multitude of long conversations representing negotiations between conflicting ideological, political and religious principles. Updike's style has provoked extremely diverse reviews. On the one hand, some critics praise Updike as a "minor expert of the Qur'an" (Ali 2006: n.p.), and claim that his "narrative insists repeatedly on the moral and spiritual dimensions of jihad, tacitly urging us towards a deeper understanding of Islamic fundamentalism" (Poster 2006: n.p.). On the other hand, Updike was reprimanded for not understanding the nature and motivations of Islamic fundamentalist movements, for an incredible protagonist and plot, as well as a boring style of writing (Mazzeno 2013: 169-174). First and foremost, critics found fault with his supposed "stereotypical, ideologically motivated branding of Islam as a religion of violence" (Mazzeno 2013: 170) and criticised the close connection between religious fundamentalism and Updike's vision of terrorism (cf. Wolff 2012: 103). Hartnell, for instance, claims that Updike reproduces "familiar Orientalist archetypes" and sketches a picture of a 'disembodied Islam' that is represented in "monolithic terms" (Hartnell 2012: 142). According to Hartnell, *Terrorist* was written in a very Christian frame of reference and presents a decontextualised Islam. Her charges are not ungrounded, but the weaknesses of the novel concerning the representation of Islamic fundamentalism may partly be attributed to the fact that the novel does not primarily deal with faith and Islam. *Terrorist* rather focuses on the problems of living in our modern world and the difficulties involved in coming-of-age processes. Furthermore, we may have to grant Updike that the novel, despite its much discussed shortcomings, represents a difficult endeavour. Däwes (2010: 497) as well as Herman (2015: 692) point to the fact that Updike indeed violated conventions and took a risk by focusing on a terrorist perspective. After 9/11 it was seen as highly problematical to imagine the victimizer's perspective with all the empathy this might engender. To take the perspective of a perpetrator was often seen as a lack of respect for the victims and the legitimacy of their claims.

Concerning the depiction of Islamic fundamentalism and its antipoles, the 'Western' way of life is from the beginning of the novel portrayed as 'the other' Ahmad loathes and rejects, even though it is made clear that he does not know any other culture or country. "These devils seek to take away my God" (T 1), is his first sentence and sets the tenor for the whole novel. The protagonist condemns first and foremost a supposed lack of morals, sexual promiscuity, materialism and the absence of belief. He finds fault with double-standards and blames the people in his environment for only paying lip-service to principles (cf. T 1). Ahmad rejects the abandonment of religion to the private sphere and bemoans the loss of family and community values. His

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

disappointment about the failure of his teachers to function as role models and the omnipresent lack of moral 'authenticity' point to the protagonist's major problems: the absence of his father and his mother's unsettled (love-) life. Kacou describes Ahmad as "nihilistic idealist" and Jack Levy as his "alter ego" in that they both share

> frustrations with the inauthenticity of the American education system, or with the nihilistic materialism of modern American life, or even with the 'absurdity' of secular life in general. More fundamentally still, they share a basic sense that people 'stink' – except that, tellingly, Ahmad's comes from ideology, and Jack's comes from decades of experience (Kacou 2012: n.p.).

Nevertheless, Updike highlights that the disgust of his protagonist is not only rooted in disappointment about the moral, political or economic order but also linked to religious belief and a strict reading of the Koran. An element of the novel discussed by many critics as a central shortcoming is Updike's recurrent and extensive use of stereotypes.[171] The young protagonist recites major Occidentalist stereotypes when criticising Western culture:

> ['] Western culture is Godless. [...] And because it has no God, it is obsessed with sex and luxury goods. […] Look at the history the school teaches, pure colonialist. Look how Christianity committed genocide on the Native Americans and undermined Asia and Africa and now is coming after Islam, with everything in Washington run by the Jews to keep themselves in Palestine' (T 35-36).

Ahmad's view of the world is as undifferentiated as his character. His sulky demeanour and defiant reactions betray the fact that he is still a teenager without much knowledge of the world. The criticism of the capitalist economy bears many parallels to Faulks' *A Week in December*. The media is seen as a narcotic that numbs people and manipulates them. International corporations are accused of turning people "into machines for consuming" (T 169). The resulting political apathy and disinterest of the society ensures that these mechanisms remain uncontested. In this context, Fachinger holds the view that the novel undermines the idea of the melting-pot and the American dream, which promise success for every American regardless of race, class or ethnicity (Fachinger 2007: 412). Equality and chances of upward social mobility seem to be out of reach for many characters in Updike's America.

While Ahmad's criticism is very one-sided and prejudiced, Jack Levy tries to see both sides to a problem but disapproves of very similar things his pupil finds fault with. He realises that the society he lives in is characterised by "[t]oo many losers, and the winners winning too big" (T 133-134). His position is one of disillusionment and the rejection of all ideology. He sees that freedom is highly dependent on money and class. Ahmad's political and economic criticism seems to be linked to the fact that he grew up in a poor neighbourhood, where the discrepancy between rich and poor is very visible and money and class, or the lack thereof, become criteria of societal exclusion. As Richter notes, "terrorism is shown to grow in a dysfunctional social setting" (Richter 2008: 482). The name "New Prospect" ironically counteracts the setting of a

171 Banerjee even accuses *Terrorist* of being obsessed with skin colour, race, and "true whiteness" and detects "a deeply reactionary undercurrent in Updike's narrative" (Banerjee 2008: 22).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

decaying industrial town with a hotchpotch of migrant workers, who have left all hope behind. Poverty is linked to ethnicity and consumerism seems to function as an anaesthetic to distract attention from the real problems:

> He [Levy] would come home depressed because of all the problems he couldn't solve, the poor lives lived in New Prospect to no purpose and now being passed on to the children: 'Beth, they don't give a fuck. They never knew structure. They can't imagine a life that goes beyond the next fix, the next binge, the next scrape with the cops or the bank or the INS. The poor kids, they've never had the luxury of being kids [...] What really gets me,' he would say, 'is they refuse to grasp how bad off they are. They think they're doing pretty good, with some flashy-trashy new outfit they've bought at half-price, or the latest hyper-violent new computer game, or some hot new CD everybody has to have, or a ridiculous new religion when you've drugged your brain back into the Stone Age ['] (T 133-134).

Like in Faulks' novel, people lack awareness of their situation and the ambition to change it. Levy sees the emergence of religious orthodoxy in line with these escapist tendencies and criticises hedonism, nihilism and the lack of spiritual guidance. This guidance is seen as a central human need, especially for young people "wanting to be *good*, to amount to something [...] to be worthy, if we could just tell them what worth is" (T 203). In this context, Mansutti argues that the novel is shaped by a "white gaze", which turns the ethnic characters into victims of their social and political environment and portrays them "with nuances that can be read as reactionary and patronizing" (Mansutti 2011: 106). I disagree with this claim: Even though it is Levy's perspective that is used to evaluate social problems, not ethnicity but a sympathetic portrayal of human trials and the social criticism of contemporary American society are at the heart of the novel.

With respect to economic criticism, *Terrorist* comes close to the messages uttered in *A Week in December* as well as in *The Attack.* The novel promotes the idea that 'freedom' entails more than just material wealth. Where others may see freedom and opportunity in the American way of life, Ahmad sees the dependence of people as "slaves to drugs, slaves to fads, slaves to television, slaves to sports heroes that don't know they exist, slaves to the unholy, meaningless opinions of others ['] (T 71). The protagonist deplores for the United States what Faulks underlines with respect to Great Britain: the lack of activism, civil courage and critical thinking in contemporary society. Surfeited with entertainment, people forget their civic responsibilities and tend to concentrate on themselves and their own enjoyment, thinking "the human mind is on eternal holiday" (T 111). This hedonism, which is carried to extremes in Kureishi's *The Black Album*, is here described as the 'American religion':

> She is a victim of the American religion of freedom, freedom above all, though freedom to do what and to what purpose is left up in the air. *Bombs bursting in air* – empty air is the perfect symbol of American freedom. There is no *ummah* here, both Charlie and Shaikh Rashid point out – no encompassing structure of divine law that brings men rich and poor to bow down shoulder to shoulder, no code of self-sacrifice, no exalted submission such as lies at the heart of Islam, its very name. Instead there is a clashing diversity of private self-seeking, whose catchwords are *Seize the day* and *Devil take the hindmost* and *God helps those who help themselves,* which translate to *There is no God, no Day of Judgement; help yourself* (T 164-165).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Cartwright refers to this criticism of the United States when he describes *Terrorist* as "a novel designed to raise serious questions about American's fitness – in every sense of that word – to carry the torch for freedom and democracy" (Cartwright 2006: n.p.).

As in many of the other novels in the present literary corpus, contradictory views are often depicted by means of longer conversations between characters representing different positions on an issue. Surprisingly, the characters who defend America in *Terrorist* are older Muslim immigrants from Lebanon. Similar to *A Week in December,* Updike's novel also portrays a generational conflict between a member of the first generation of migrants who underlines the chances the new country offered to him and a member of the second generation who finds fault with political and economic circumstances. The staging of arguments and discussion of prevalent stereotypes can function as a mirror, which may lead readers to question their own prejudices, as *Terrorist* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* impressively show. Similar to Hamid, Updike gives us a glimpse of post 9/11 America as a country that is dominated by an ineradicable belief in progress and democracy but also by fear and a lack of understanding for its enemies. "'Why do they want to do these horrible things? Why do they hate us? What's to hate?'", (T 46) the Home Secretary asks, rephrasing George W. Bush's famous words (cf. Däwes 2010: 507). The achievements of Western democracies are described as vulnerable: "[‘] Everywhere, anywhere – all it takes is a little bomb, a few guns. An open society is so *defenceless*. Everything the modern free world has achieved is so *fragile*'" (T 130).

In line with the other texts in the literary corpus, Updike describes self-appointed "reality-instructors" as "inconsistent", "doctrinaire", "authoritarian", "dangerous", "fakes" or "dehumanizing" (De Bellis 2000: 100). Shaikh Rashid remains inscrutable for the reader since the novel does not give any insight into his thoughts and feelings by means of internal focalisation. Inconsistencies in the plot furthermore discredit the character. Although Ahmad in the beginning criticises Shaikh Rashid's supposed laxity, doubts and attempt "to soften the Prophet's words" (T 5), he later on claims the opposite. Rashid is presented as merciless and sadistic. To the question if God should not have mercy with infidels, he compares people who do not believe in the Prophet to "cockroaches" (T 74) that need to be destroyed. The Shaikh seems to corroborate many Orientalist stereotypes – in his demeanour as well as in his outer appearance. His face is described as "pale in a waxy, even, impervious Yemeni way" (T 74), the person as "slight and slim as a dagger, with a dangerous slyness about him" (T 142), which renders Rashid unsuitable to function as the surrogate father figure his pupil needs. Moreover, ethnicity also plays a role as segregating factor. The Shaikh does not grant Ahmad a full status as Muslim due to his American background. He believes that "no amount of zeal and Qu'ran studies can change his mother's race or his father's absence" (T 142). Racist prejudices exist on all sides and range from fear to an obsession with the 'Orientalist' exotic, exemplified by Ahmad's mother as well as Deedee in *The Black Album* or Erica in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Nadeem Aslam's novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* (MLL) focuses on the topic of migration. But in contrast to the works by Kureishi, Hamid or Faulks that deal with the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

identity conflicts of the second generation, Aslam's novel renders an elaborate picture of first-generation migrants in England and their problems of integration. Aslam tells the story of Shamas and his wife Kaukab who grew up in Pakistan and moved to an English town. The city is fictional and the only name we get is the one agreed upon by the various Asian migrants: "Dasht-e-Tanhaii" – "The Wilderness of Solitude. The Desert of Loneliness" (MLL 29). *Maps for Lost Lovers* is a story about parallel societies and migrants who found a new place to live but not a new home – about people whose hearts remain where they came from decades ago. Shamas and especially his wife Kaukab live a secluded life in their neighbourhood where Asian immigrants with different religious backgrounds, mostly Muslim and Hindu, dominate. Contacts with 'white' British people are scarce to non-existent. The Pakistani community to which the couple belongs continues to speak their language and to adhere to their religious and cultural customs. Their practices contain some quite fundamentalist characteristics such as arranged marriages, the rejection of interracial, intercultural or interreligious relationships and strict behavioural codes which are visible in a rigid dress code and austere rules of female modesty. At the centre of the novel lies the mystery surrounding the disappearance of Shamas' brother Jugnu and his girlfriend Chanda, the daughter of the leader of the local mosque. The couple is murdered by Chanda's brothers for dishonouring the family. They lived together without the possibility of marriage. Chanda cannot get a Muslim divorce because she was married off by her family to another man, who only wanted to gain British citizenship and then disappeared. The story starts around five months after the murder and ends with the trial of the crime. Kaukab is presented as the central character representing Islamic fundamentalist worldviews. Her beliefs are inextricably linked to her upbringing and cultural background. She cannot speak English very well and suffers from loneliness and isolation after her children have left. Her husband Shamas tries to support her but feels rejected and unloved. Being himself a liberal humanist, he tries to mediate between his wife and children but increasingly retreats into his memories and the world of literature for consolation. He experiences a last flourishing through an affair with Suraya, which, however, finds an abrupt and tragic end.

Maps for Lost Lovers portrays Islamic fundamentalism as a system which exerts considerable pressure on all community members – whether they affirm or reject these principles. The novel strongly focuses on the inferior role of women according to Islamic fundamentalist laws. McCulloch calls the setting Aslam envisions "an imprisoned dark world of phallocentric horror […and] patriarchal ignorance" (McCulloch 2012: 83). Women have no rights to decide about their own body or sexuality and are objects in Aslam's fiction. Once they lose their virginity they are regarded as "used goods" (MLL 110) and are always heteronomous – directed either by their parents or husbands. Aslam paints a horrid picture of enforced marriage, violence against women, rape, the regular abortion of girls and honour killings (cf. for instance MLL 136,157-159, 251). The novel builds up a tension between these horrible incidents and the reaction of women such as Kaukab or Suraya who nevertheless defend the tools of their own oppression: "*It's as though Allah forgot there were women in the world when he made some of his laws, thinking only of men* – but she has banished

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

these thoughts as all good Muslims must" (MLL 150). The second generation, however, struggles against these abuses and refuses to accept them as divine law. In a long argument, Mah-Jabin accuses her mother Kaukab for sending her away to marry a man in Pakistan at the age of 16: "'You must be a moral cripple if you think what you did to me wasn't wrong. [...W]hy didn't you make sure I avoided such a life? [']" (MLL 113). Her daughter rebels against the constraints of a misanthropic, misogynist and oppressing ideology. She sees the system in a broader political context and tries to assert her worth as an individual.

What particularly sheds a negative light on Islamic fundamentalist practices are the double standards concerning sexual morals. Chanda's father has to step down as headman of the mosque just because his daughter wants to live with a man she isn't married to (cf. MLL 15). An Imam who rapes children is, in contrast, not only allowed to keep his job but is also protected by the community, because "the scandal would give Islam and Pakistan a bad name [...and] if the police got involved and shut down the mosque no one would teach their sons to stay away from the whore-like white girls" (MLL 235). Concepts of holiness and sin are reversed. Social injustice, sexual double standards, arrogance, the cover-up of crime as well as the total seclusion of the migrant community from British society and its legal system are prevalent in Dasht-e-Tanhaii. The atmosphere is described as claustrophobic, hopeless and dreary, poisoned by mistrust and punishment for the breach of every unwritten rule. Dasht-e-Tanhaii is depicted as "place of Byzantine intrigue and emotional espionage" (MLL 176). The community is fraught with problems, ranging from poor health standards (cf. MLL 161) via the birth of disabled children due to inbreeding (cf. MLL 189) to unemployment and a total lack of English language skills (cf. MLL 190). The widespread idealisation of the old home-country is thus dismantled as a dangerous illusion. Just as in the novels by Updike and Faulks, people lack the civil courage to challenge the system from within. The neighbourhood

> hoards its secrets, unwilling to let on the pain in its breast. Shame, guilt, honour and fear are like padlocks hanging from mouths. No one makes a sound in case it draws attention. No one speaks. No one breathes. The place is bumpy with buried secrets and problems swept under the carpets (MLL 45).

Waterman (2010: 20) describes the paradox that a sense of community can not only be damaged but can also be created by cultural trauma and negative forces, which in *Maps for Lost Lovers* represent the only binding elements for the unhappy community of Dasht-e-Tanhaii.

Just as Kureishi's and Hamid's immigrants, the Pakistani characters in Aslam's novel have experienced racist abuse and exclusion. This exclusion, however, is also self-imposed and not presented as a reason for radicalisation. None of the characters who defend orthodox Islamic practices in the novel have consciously chosen these beliefs. Kaukab, as the daughter of a Muslim cleric, absorbed culturally conditioned orthodox rules from her early childhood on. Suraya similarly seems to prove the theory that exaggerated piety can be a result of belonging to a lower class, religious education being the only form of education girls from poorer backgrounds may receive (cf. MLL 203). This points to the widely discussed question whether poverty and a lack of

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Western-style education can be regarded as catalysts for Islamic fundamentalism. While Faulks, Kureishi or Hamid portray different reasons for a turn towards essentialist beliefs, Aslam seems to see these factors as important roots for radical beliefs. The author does not link fundamentalism to Islam as such. His characters defend orthodox systems due to a lack of choice. Suraya confesses to Shamas her thirst for knowledge and stimulation that motivated her to pursue her fervent studies of Islam but never gave her an understanding of life or the intellectual power to question things (cf. MLL 225). This nexus between fundamentalism, class and education is accentuated by the fact that the novel does not feature one well-educated Muslim character who is drawn towards orthodoxy. Kaukab's children forcefully reject her essentialist views. Likewise, educated people still living in Pakistan are described as much more progressive, open-minded, tolerant and successful. They regard the migrants with contempt as "sister-murdering, nose-blowing, mosque-going, cousin-marrying, veil-wearing inbred imbeciles" (MLL 312) who ruin the reputation of Pakistanis worldwide. Kaukab feels sadness and bewilderment at this accusation: "'We are driven out of our countries because of people like her, the rich and the powerful. We leave because we never have any food or dignity because of their selfish behaviour. And now they resent our being *here* too. Where are we supposed to go? ']" (MLL 312). Class and education are singled out as more decisive factors than race, ethnicity or religion when it comes to the appeal of essentialist ideologies. Criticism is not directed at Islam but at the toxic mixture of traditions, communal pressures and social problems which promote fundamentalist ideology.

On the whole, Muslim clerics are the most abhorrent characters in Aslam's novel. They use their power to torture and kill. An example narrated in drastic details is the exorcism of a young girl, who is married against her will to an old cousin. Her parents believe that she is possessed by a djinn since she refuses to consummate the marriage with the man who already has three other wives. The girl is finally killed during an 'exorcism':

> The girl was taken into the cellar and the beatings lasted several days with the mother and father in the room directly above reading the Koran out loud. She was not fed or given water for the duration and wasn't allowed to fall asleep even for five minutes, and when she soiled herself she was taken upstairs to the bathroom by her mother to be cleaned and brought back down for the beating to continue. [...] According to the report in *The Afternoon* the coroner found the arms and legs broken by a cricket bat. (MLL 184-185).

The narrated scenes display a total lack of respect for human rights and the worth of the individual. Cruelty and barbarism are omnipresent in Aslam's world, and Islamic orthodoxy is described as backwards, outdated and oppressive.

The author underlines the alterity of fundamentalist leaders by not giving any insight into their consciousness. The character of Kaukab, however, marks an exception. Despite the rejection the reader is made to feel for her position and actions, many critics rightfully emphasise that Kaukab is a round character, tragic but human and also loving (cf. Shamsie 2004: n.p., Bhattacharya 2004: n.p.). She serves as one of the main focalisers of the novel. Her motivations, thoughts and feelings are laid open and are made psychologically plausible. This evokes empathy for her character even

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

though no sympathy for her position is roused. Kaukab is an emblem of isolation in a parallel society: "The 'thank you' she murmurs to the flower-deliveryman is her third exchange with a white person this year; there were five last year; none the year before" (MLL 69). This isolation is connected to sheer impotency. "'Who is this green woman in a sari?'" (MLL 27), she asks, receiving a postcard from her son with the Statue of Liberty. We see her shame and shyness in contact with white people and cannot but feel sorry for a character that is described as "a picture of loneliness" (MLL 45). She feels alienated from her children, unable to understand the world they move in. Her religious belief, on the contrary, represents kin and home for her and connects her present to her past in Pakistan, giving her identification, stability and orientation. Lemke notes that "the absence of a place which the reader can trace on his map of Britain renders the town a utopian fantasy and foregrounds the tendency of diasporas to invent backgrounds for themselves. […] Home is where their cultural identity is, home is where they understand the laws and rituals of society" (Lemke 2008: 173). There is a loving side to her as a spouse and mother, which she cannot show openly due to the fundamentalist rules for female modesty. On the one hand, the examination of her feelings rouses our pity, while on the other hand, the description of her actions rouses our indignation. Pomar Amer describes her as 'subaltern' figure (speaking in Spivak's terms) – both in Pakistan and in Britain, in the public sphere as well as the private sphere of her home where her children rebel against her. She is strong and dominating and simultaneously helpless, caught between her religious orthodoxy and the love for her family. "Kaukab just acts as a loudspeaker for the discourses that dictate her behaviour [. …A]s a medial figure between them, [she] must make an effort to make them compatible" (Pomar Amer 2012: 265).

On the whole, the novel clearly rejects the validity of fundamentalist beliefs. What makes Kaukab such a tragic figure is less her ignorance or helplessness than her inability to see her personal responsibility. Her reactions to the accusations of her children remain inflexible since rules and "punishments are of divine origin and cannot be judged by human criteria'" (MLL 322). What could be seen as personal intransigence characterises the very nature of fundamentalist religious belief: the divine law is no object of negotiation. Similarly, there is no moment of remorse uttered by the murderers. Having justified a not necessarily religiously motivated deed as an honour-killing, they show pride and reject their court sentence as an insult to their culture and religion (MLL 348). Morality, guilt, honour and shame are entirely determined by religion and culture in the world of Aslam's novel. "['] My religion is not the British legal system, it's Islam'" (MLL 115), Kaukab underscores. One of the most intriguing features of *Maps for Lost Lovers* is the pronounced absence of the British system and its people in the novel. Pesso-Miquel refers to this absence and anonymity when she states that "the novel plays down classical postcolonial oppositions between the coloniser and the colonised, offering us instead a detailed vision of the dissensions within the immigrant community, structured along lines of class, nationality, language, generation, and above all religion and gender" (Pesso-Miquel 2011: 135). The plot could as well have been staged in a different country, which stresses Aslam's criticism of parallel societies.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Parallel societies are depicted as a phenomenon for which migrants are as responsible as the majority society. Throughout the novel verbal abuse, beatings, racially motivated attacks and the death of Asian people in police custody are mentioned (cf. MLL 160, 169, 174, 178 etc.). These prejudices towards the town's Asian immigrants are, however, contrasted with the migrants' vision of Britain as "a dirty country, an unsacred country full of people filthy with disgusting habits and practices" (MLL 267). Britain is seen as a dangerous "nest of devilry from where God has been exiled […] denied and slain" (MLL 30). This fear and loathing is described in quite drastic terms, which serve to direct the sympathy of the reader to the detriment of characters who represent fundamentalist ideas. On the story-level the novel thus picks up many Occidentalist stereotypes. White people are generalised and seen as decadent, faithless and morally inferior, but they are not known.

Another novel set in a war-ridden country is *The Attack*, the second part of Khadra's trilogy on radical Islam in current political crises. While *The Swallows of Kabul* is set in Afghanistan and *The Sirens of Baghdad* in Iraq, *The Attack* (TA) is concerned with the conflict in Israel/Palestine. It is written from the point of view of Dr. Amin Jaafari, a Muslim Arabic doctor who adopted Israeli citizenship and achieved a comfortable life and successful career as a surgeon in a hospital in Tel Aviv. Despite the many difficulties and prejudices Arab Muslims have to face in Israel, he seems to be well-integrated, respected and liked – also by his Jewish colleagues and neighbours. His life changes irreversibly when he is requested to operate on the victims of a suicide bombing and learns that his wife Sihem is not only among the dead but actually committed the attack, blowing herself up inside a café where kids were just celebrating a birthday party. Shattered and nearly losing his mind, Jaafari makes inquiries. He travels to Jenin and Bethlehem to locate Sihem's acquaintances and find out why his wife, whom he had never witnessed as very religious, committed such a terrible deed. In his endeavour to find the masterminds behind the plot, Jaafari ventures deep into Palestinian territory and places himself in great danger delving deeply into the political and religious entanglements in Palestine. Talking to Sheikh Marwan, a commander of the Intifada, and his nephew Adel, the protagonist gets some information about Sihem's possible motifs but remains bewildered and broken. Harassed by racist assaults and unable to get over the loss of his wife and her betrayal, Jaafari cannot return to his former life. Ironically, he ultimately manages to regain some of his inner peace but finds his death in another attack – this time an air strike of the Israeli military against a radical Muslim leader.

The approach developed in *The Attack* points to the close connection of religion and politics in countries such as Israel. Maslin calls *The Attack* "both a plea for peace and a rendering of the Palestinian frustration and fury" (Maslin 2006: n.p.). Like Jaafari, the reader searches for possible religious motives to explain the attack – but like him he cannot identify any reasons not inextricably linked to the Palestinian struggle for land and recognition. The terrorist in the novel is depicted as a tender and loving character, who shared a happy relationship with her husband and also indulged in a quite secular way of life:

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> ['] She was a woman of her time. She liked to travel, she liked to swim, she liked sipping her lemonade on the terraces outside the shops, and she was too proud of her hair to hide it under a head scarf. What tales did you tell her? How did you make a monster, a terrorist, a suicidal fundamentalist out of a woman who couldn't bear to hear a puppy whine?' (TA 156).

The depiction of Sihem's character stands in stark contrast to the impact of her deed through which 19 people die – eleven of them children. At the heart of the novel lies the bewilderment of the protagonist about the fact that someone who possessed not only material comfort but also the unrestricted love of her husband and takes her own life and the life of others. This perplexity finds its expression in a comparison of fundamentalism to a disease:

> 'Either it falls on your head like a roof tile or it attaches itself to your insides like a tapeworm. [...] And from that point on, you can never turn back. Besides, you're no longer giving the orders. You think you're in control, doing what you want to do, but it's not true. [...] You live in a kind of limbo, stalking houris and unicorns ['] (TA 93-94).

Jihadist ideology is compared to an accident or a parasite – something an individual can be helpless against. The effects of brainwashing are clearly underlined. Not the deliberate agency of the jihadist is blamed but his obsession with an idea that overpowers him. God or religion are not mentioned at all as reasonable motives but discounted as fiction, when the houris of paradise are compared to the mythical creature of the unicorn.

Sihem's short written confession to her husband suggests purely political motives referring to the Palestinian struggle: "*What use is happiness when it's not shared, Amin, my love? My joys faded away every time yours didn't follow. You wanted children. I wanted to deserve them. No child is completely safe if it has no country. Don't hate me. Sihem*" (TA 69). Nationality or ethnic belonging are presented as main reasons for the attack – not religiosity. In this context, freedom is seen as central value worth dying for. The way Jaafari describes freedom and a good life significantly differs from the view of the Intifada: "If we accept that other people's children die for ours, we must accept that our children die for other people's; otherwise, it wouldn't be fair. [...] There's no happiness without dignity, and no dream is possible without freedom" (TA 226-227). Sihem's determination to act ironically stems from the feeling of personal responsibility and the civil courage Faulks and Aslam call for. The novel undermines the prejudice that radicalism has to be linked to poverty, a lack of education or social disadvantage. Contrary to the terrorist in Khadra's *The Sirens of Baghdad*, the terrorist in *The Attack* is educated and possesses wealth and recognition. It is indicated, however, that she "grew up among the oppressed, as an orphan and an Arab in a world that pardons neither. She must necessarily have had to bow very low [....] When you've got hate inside of you, it doesn't take much to push you past the point of no return" (TA 228-229).

The novel features several references to racist abuses, the discrimination of Palestinian people in Israel and social envy for those who managed to escape the 'taint' of their ethnicity (cf. TA 7-8, 15, 21, 44, 53-58, 82-83, 97, 176). Ethnicity seems to be directly linked to class and social standing, and Palestinian Arabs have to work thrice

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

as hard as Jewish Israelis to be accepted. The protagonist is distrusted, controlled and often rejected as a doctor. Israel is described as a country characterised by segregation and an institutionalised two-class society. As Goodman describes in his study on policing in contemporary literature, "*The Attack* points to national institutions as […] expressions of an inequality caused by the social, regressive, and paternalistic customs demanded by national belonging" (Goodman 2009: 123). Especially the treatment Jaafari has to endure after the attack draws the attention of the reader to the suffering of the individual and directs our sympathy in favour of the protagonist. His interrogation is so dehumanising that he wets himself (cf. TA 44), and he is beaten up in front of his house. Visceral hatred and social envy suddenly surface (cf. TA 57-58). Due to the extremely emotional quality of the first-person narration, we are invited to share the feelings of the protagonist. Sihem's idealistic, tender character is contrasted to the masterminds behind such attacks. Jaafari deplores that the best people sacrifice themselves "so that the cowards, the counterfeits, the charlatans, and the pricks can continue to proliferate like rats" (TA 121). The novel implies that martyrs are often brave and righteous people who are exploited by demagogues. A deeper dive into the Palestinian reality reveals, however, higher complexity. While Khadra's picture of Islamic fundamentalists and their motives in *The Sirens of Baghdad* is very negative, fundamentalist leaders come across as more comprehensible in *The Attack*. Nevertheless, they are all presented as highly dangerous and threatening – possessing nothing of the humorous quality given to them by Kureishi or Faulks.

Most significantly, the leaders from the Palestinian Intifada who appear in the novel do NOT label themselves as fundamentalists or Islamists but establish a clear distinction between different groups, which is not made in any other novel in the present literary corpus:

> ['] An Islamist is a political activist. He has but one ambition: to establish a theocratic state in his country and take full advantage of its sovereignty and its independence. A fundamentalist is an extremist *jihadi*. He believes neither in the sovereignty of Muslim states nor in their autonomy. In his view, these are vassal states that will be called upon to dissolve themselves and form the one, sole Caliphate. The fundamentalist dreams of a single, indivisible *umma,* the great Muslim community that will extend from Indonesia to Morocco, and which, if it cannot convert the West to Islam, will subjugate or destroy it. We're not Islamists, Dr. Jaafari, and we're not fundamentalists, either. We are only the children of a ravaged, despised people, fighting with whatever means we can to recover our homeland and or dignity ['] (TA 157-158).

His comment highlights the difficulty of making distinctions between different groups and leaves open the debate as to whether the novel focuses on the problem of Islamic fundamentalism. Independent of this question, the novel tries to give an insight into potential reasons for radicalisation in Palestine, underlining the role of humiliation as the first reason for terrorism:

> ['] When a person has been scorned, when his self-esteem has been wounded, all tragedies become possible. Especially if he recognizes that he's impotent, with no means of restoring his dignity. [...] The instant when you really learn to hate is the one in which you become aware of your impotence. [...] There's no worse cataclysm than humiliation. [...] No one joins our ranks for the pleasure of it, Doctor. All the young men you've seen, the ones with

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> slingshots as well as the ones with rocket launchers, loathe war unspeakably. Because every day, enemy fire carries off one of them. They'd like to be respectable, too; they'd like to be surgeons or pop singers or film actors, ride around in fine cars and live their dreams every day. The problem, Doctor, is that other people deny them those dreams. [...] When dreams are turned away, death becomes the ultimate salvation ['] (TA 218-220).

The novel contains long passages that are aimed at making the reasons for suicide attacks psychologically plausible. However, Sihem still does not seem to fit in with this model. She is neither impotent nor desperate, and it is psychologically not very plausible that she is supposed to be so full of hatred to agree to murder other human beings for the sake of a political cause. Buchan states: "Sihem's motivations are a riddle, and the Arabs created to explain them are mere incorporations of political postures" (Buchan 2006: n.p.). Adams goes even further by claiming that Khadra's stereotypical character types "display a pestilent self-importance" which prevents "readers from fully grappling with the bloody complexity, outside polemic and political condemnation that permeate these characters' lives" (Adams 2006: n.p.). Nevertheless, the novel shows many different views far from postulating simple truths. Its emotional tone succeeds in evoking empathy for different sides in a complex conflict.

The central controversy develops around the question of what is more essential to existence: the value of human life or honour, freedom and dignity. Whereas the Sheik sees honour "as essential to existence" (TA 161) the doctor defends humanist principles:

> You have chosen to kill; I have chosen to save. Where you see an enemy, I see a patient. I'm neither selfish nor indifferent, and I've got as much self-esteem as anyone. I just want to be able to live my share of existence without being obliged to detract from the existence of others. I don't believe in prophecies that favour suffering over common sense. I came naked into the world, I'll leave it naked, what I possess doesn't belong to me, and neither do other people's lives (TA 160).

The scene represents a clash between two diametrically opposed systems of belief and ethical standards. Khadra's style is very special in that his characters nearly seem to embody the ideological stances they defend. No compromise is possible or mutual understanding indicated.

The third work, Tahmima Anam's second novel *The Good Muslim*, is set in an equally war-torn country. It deals with the story of Maya Haque and her brother Sohail who struggle to come to terms with the traumas of the Bangladesh Liberation War. The novel is set in 1984/1985 and contains several flashbacks from the early to late 1970 s. Returning home to her native place after a decade, Maya finds her brother Sohail to have become a venerated religious leader of the *Tablighi Jamaat*[172], the *Congregation of Islam*. Bewildered by this development, she tries to understand the reasons for his transformation and passionately strives to prevent him from sending his little son Zaid to a madrassa, an Islamic school. In several flashbacks the reader is familiarised with previous events that deeply influenced both characters. In 1977, Maya had left her home village after one of her best friends was accused of adultery and

172 Tablighi Jamaat is a real movement. It was started in India in 1926 and is known for its orthodoxy.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

brutally whipped, because she gave birth to a child with Down syndrome. Afterwards she started her own clinic, treating women raped during the war. To make amends for all the children of war she had to abort, she becomes a country doctor and gynaecologist at the impoverished countryside. Sohail, who had fought with the 'freedom fighters', had come home deeply traumatised and a stranger to his sister, with whom he had always shared a relationship of trust and mutual support. When Sohail's orthodox wife Silvi dies after some years, Maya returns home. She decides to stay and care for her sick mother and Zaid. The boy, however, tragically drowns when Maya tries to save him from the madrassa his father sent him to, where he is sexually abused and beaten by the Huzoor. Maya finally tries to come to terms with the civil war by playing an active part in setting up a tribunal for war crimes.

As Anam outlines in an interview, the relationship between Sohail and his sister Maya represents the "conflict between the religious and the secular", referring to the disputes "from the 1980 s about whether Bangladesh should continue to hold to its secular, Marxist-inflected nationalism, or embrace new Islamist movements" (Chambers 2011: 164). The story of Maya's family is embedded in the larger story of the country's history. As many of the authors under discussion underline, the personal and the political sphere cannot be separated. "The family crises mirror the state of the nation" with its traumata of exile, loss and mourning", Hussein explains (Hussein 2011: n.p.). The depicted belief-systems in rural Bangladesh in the 1970 s are marked by superstition and strict rules of propriety – particularly for women. It is described how Maya "had been lecturing them for years now, about science and superstition and their rights" (TGM 18) but is not able to convince the men to abandon their age-old systems. She represents a humanist position and a secular stance that does not reject religion per se but cannot accept the injustice that has been committed in the name of religion. Like Aslam, Anam portrays Islam as a religion abused for the oppression and control of women. When her friend Nazia gives birth to a child with Down syndrome, she is accused by her husband of adultery and suffers a public whipping, which is described in brutal detail (cf. TGM 23). Religion is used as a justification for cruelty, induced by superstition, tradition and a lack of medical knowledge. An inability to accept scientific explanations is aggravated by the fact that women are regarded as inferior and chronically sinful.

The Islamic orthodox group Sohail belongs to punishes every breach of rule mercilessly. The pregnant woman Rokeya is half starved and has to kneel in the sweltering heat as a punishment for some minor misbehaviour, which nearly kills her and her child (cf. TGM 235). The practices of the group thus convey the impression of being senseless and cruel. Particularly the treatment of Sohail's little son Zaid is used to direct the antipathy of the reader towards fundamentalist practices. He neither gets enough food or clothing nor education, love and care. His father refuses to grant him his greatest wish of going to a normal school. Because Sohail does not give him any toys, clothes or pocket money, the little boy is misled into stealing. Zaid is a nice and vivacious boy but "always hungry and sick of diseases which are caused by a lack of hygiene" (TGM 114). What would be called child maltreatment in different circumstances is depicted as Sohail's method of raising his child according to his religious

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

principles. It becomes obvious that he is clearly unable to cope with his vocation and his son at the same time. The madrassa he sends his son to is described through Zaid's eyes with the little boy as the only focaliser, which highlights the horror attached to the setting:

> The courtyard strewn with chicken bones, a dirty drain clogged with spit. […] He is alone with the blanket and the plate, the grey light from a slit between the thatch and the wall, the scratch of rats, and as the lock is turned he hurls himself at the door and opens his voice to the footsteps fading with every moment, until there is nothing but his own voice, begging to be released, and his fist on the wall, and each cry echoing into the next: Abboo, Abboo, Abboo. At this moment he is more afraid of what is in the room, the aloneness and the rats and the line of light against the wall, than of what is beyond. He is wrong (TGM 172-173).

The unimaginable suffering of the little boy turns the reader against the fundamentalist leaders. The life at the madrassa is described as hell on earth, with references to sexual abuse (TGM 239). The Huzoor, moreover, remains alien to the reader. No insight is given into his mind or motives.

The radicalisation of Sohail, in contrast, is outlined in detail. He is described as an originally humorous boy who did not believe in religion but love and friendship:

> [H]e had been the opposite of a religious man. He had laughed and joked about it, and he had been angry at a religion that could be so easily turned to cruelty. He had seen it with his own eyes, the boys butchered because they were Hindu, the university teachers shot and piled into graves because they weren't considered Islamic enough. For all these reasons Maya believed Sohail's conversion was fragile (TGM 158).

Sohail's transformation renders him alien and devious to his own family. He is depicted as "fragile", "remote" (TGM 81) and "a stranger" (TGM 83). It is indicated that his suddenly brisk and pitiless demeanour towards his family might be induced by the experience of suffering. But since Sohail never speaks about the war, the reader only finds out more about his motives in the second subchapter of the second book. For several pages, Sohail becomes the focaliser, giving the reader an explanation for his radicalisation from his point of view. Field mentions the existence of "mirror-scenes" which link Maya's and Sohail's feelings upon their return from the war and underline their joint needs despite the chasm between them (Field 2011: n.p.). We get nuanced insights into Sohail's thoughts and emotions which render his actions upon his return from the war in 1972 psychologically plausible.

> Sohail finds, in the spring after he has returned from the war, that his hands will not stop shaking. […] Ma, he wants to say, my hands will not stop shaking. Will you say a prayer and blow on them? Will you twine your fingers through mine and bind them to yours? But he stops. He isn't a child any more [sic.]; he's a man, a soldier back from the war. He asks himself if he can be right again, if he can be good. […] He had killed an innocent man. The man was not an enemy, not a soldier. Just someone who had let the wrong word come out of his mouth. There is only one way to be good now. The Book has told him he is good, that it is in his nature to be good (TGM 123-124).

Ironically, due to his sensitiveness he turns into an outwardly unfeeling man since his memories and his bad conscience do not stop tormenting him. The reader comes to share his pain, his traumas and the feeling of personal responsibility. Accordingly, the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

style of the novel evokes pity for a man who suffers from post-traumatic psychosis but is expected to pull himself together. While Maya seems to be the stronger character and tries to confide in her brother, Sohail can only cope with the past by locking it up inside himself and turning to God. Religion is described as the only thing that "holds him together, it lights him up. [...] She sees that he fell into the abyss and that this Book is what brought him to the surface and allowed him to breathe. She sees too, in herself, the need for such a rescue" (TGM 126). Religiosity is depicted as something which might be induced by circumstances but is also a basic human need. In its non-fundamentalist form, religion can function as an anchor that saves people from despair. It is presented as a Janus-faced phenomenon which simultaneously saves and destroys. In Maya's case, it is her inner strength that prevents her from turning to religion – not a lack of need.

Sohail needs the Koran as only thing that gives him stability and orientation in times of war. The holy book is not only described as the answer to his fears but also to his hopes and ideals of justice and equality. He needs God to believe in his goodness, because he stopped believing in it himself: "The Book was the miracle. It was so simple. That was the power of the message. It turned them into brothers and guardians of one another. It promised equality. It promised freedom." (TGM 166-167). Simple answers to very difficult questions seem to be a consolation in times in which the mind verges on insanity. As Bidisha notes, all characters in the novel have "been radicalized in their own ways, invaded and transformed by interests much larger than themselves" (Bidisha 2011: n.p.). When her mother is diagnosed with cancer, even Maya nearly succumbs to the lure of security and escapism from the world's evils that orthodox religiosity promises. Unsettled and worried, she is "tired of letting everything break her heart" (TGM 157) and finds comfort in the company of Tablighi Jamaat. Islamic fundamentalism is not presented as political but as a chance to retreat from politics and a source of communal identity. It is made clear that without war Sohail would not have turned to orthodoxy. The focus on religious fundamentalism as an anchor for its adherents and a political tool for the powerful might be the reason why Sohail's beliefs are never outlined in detail. Anam primarily explores the reasons for her protagonist's turn towards religious fundamentalism and the consequences for his family. Not much interest is invested in the content of religious dogma. Moreover, the novel focuses on Sohail's personal fate. Even though his destiny could be seen as representative for his generation, no information is given about the motives of the other members of Tablighi Jamaat.

Despite the above-mentioned cruelties connected to orthodox beliefs, Islamic fundamentalism is only one source of violence in a cruel world. The many references to rape and other war crimes point to the fact that Sohail's transformation is induced by even greater evil. Just as in *The Sirens of Baghdad* or *The Attack,* the abyss of human brutality is omnipresent. And just like these novels, *The Good Muslim* is a story about personal and communal responsibility and about the question of how a community can build a joint future when victims as well as offenders can be found on all sides. The experience of torture (cf. TGM 192), rape (cf. TGM 69) and enforced abortions (cf. TGM 142) is deeply burrowed in collective memory. Thirteen years after the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

war people are still revengeful because war crimes have never been atoned for. The country is torn by coups and dictatorships. And Islam is used as a strategic tool to appeal to a joint religion in order to subdue political upheaval (cf. TGM 42). Religion is presented as an empty shell used for appeasement and the accomplishment of political and military aims. Islamic leaders are the last ones to follow Islamic rules of propriety and indulge in luxury and sexual promiscuity. Demonstrations are brutally crushed and protesters arrested and beaten up (cf. TGM 105). Islam is depicted as nothing more than a pawn moved by Muslim fundamentalists as well as politicians alike to undergird their power. With respect to the simple rural people, religious justifications are used for practices which are largely determined by culture, tradition or superstition. As in the novels by Aslam and Khadra, religious, cultural and political influences are inextricably linked to each other.

The Good Muslim offers no one-dimensional answers. All characters possess negative and positive qualities and their respective points of view follow an inner logic. As Chambers argues, the novel subverts binary thinking by granting moments of compassion and insight to more than one side (Chambers 2011: 161). The depiction of the poor, uneducated and violent rural Bangladeshis seems to confirm prejudices. Nonetheless, Anam's novel is never generalising. It clearly distinguishes between Islam and Islamic fundamentalism. Especially Maya as a well-educated, compassionate, strong and emancipated woman defies all prejudices, and her tolerant and loving mother Rehana serves as a positive example of Muslim piety. Talking about the tenor of *The Good Muslim*, Anam claims:

> I didn't write this novel as a kind of anti-fundamentalist tract. I could have, because I think the rise of the Islamic Right has been dangerous in Bangladesh. I'm totally against everything that it stands for: that anti-feminist, anti-progressive movement has nothing to recommend it. Having said that, I think every character in a novel has to be understood by the writer and can't just be portrayed as representing something bad. Even though I disagree with a lot of the things that Sohail does in *The Good Muslim,* I had to write about him from the inside. There's an explicit logic in his mind to everything he does, and that logic is very important. You can decide if you want to judge him or not (Chambers 2011: 173).

6.2) Explaining fundamentalism: the role of identity in radicalisation processes

As has been shown in the previous analytical chapters, processes of identity formation and crisis are identified as important catalysts for radicalisation by many of the texts at hand. These four works also focus on the topic of identity in many different forms: Updike's novel deals with processes of teenage identity formation, Khadra explores the force of ethnic identity in political conflicts, Aslam stages the conflicting demands between individual and communal identity and Anam focuses on identity conflicts which are caused by the trauma of war.

Terrorist can clearly be regarded as a coming-of-age novel. The protagonist is 18 years old, lonely and disoriented. He is confused by his sexual longings and misses his

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

father. His turn towards fundamentalism is recurrently connected to the topic of teenage rebellion:

> 'How old were you when you ... when you found your faith?' 'Age eleven, sir.' 'Funny – that's the age when I announced I was giving up the violin. Defied my parents. Asserted myself. The hell with everybody.' [...] Ahmad's clasped hand is so limp and damp Jack is startled: still a shy kid, not yet a man (T 40).

Ahmad is presented as a sensitive and caring boy whose defiant behaviour and hateful remarks do not seem to match his personality. The impression that his radicalisation might have been triggered by a search for orientation is aggravated by the inconsistency and wavering of his views. Ahmad's mother does not believe in parental guidance and control, failing to give him the orientation he needs. The protagonist's most noticeable condition is his loneliness: "[‘] In the Qur'an, He is called the Loving, the Self-Subsistent. I used to think of the love; now I'm struck by the self-subsistence, in all that emptiness [']" (T 222), he confesses to Joryleen.[173] The boy's loneliness is recurrently underlined – by other characters like his mother as well as by the narrator who implies that Ahmad might not have to search for company, love and orientation in Allah if he had the company of other people (T 192). He feels like "an object of indifference" (T 209) to his mother and seems to be unable to express the "abyss of need within him" (T 238). Ahmad's final change of mind is triggered by the view of two children, which makes him realise that it might not be God's will to destroy his creation, because "He wills life" (T 302). His sudden change is not very plausible. However, this lack of plausibility also underlines Ahmad's process of adolescence. Fundamentalist attitudes have only been a phase in the protagonist's life during his search for meaning. His process of maturation coincides with a rejection of violent jihad and an estrangement from God in general. What remains is a vibrant and bustling city similar to Faulks' London, self-immersed in its daily problems – a city in which God does not seem to have a place: "*These devils*, Ahmad thinks, *have taken away my God*" (T 305).

Similar to the protagonists in *The Black Album*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* or *A Week in December*, Ahmad undergoes a severe crisis of identity. In line with an individualistic view, Ahmad picks and chooses his identity. But in this case, he embraces something he did not inherit. He embraces Islam in the hope to "find in this religion a trace of the handsome father who had receded at the moment his memories were beginning" (T 97). Ahmad rejects his ethnic hybridity and the culture he grew up in. His identification with a father he can barely remember, who left the family in a lurch and whose cultural roots he knows nothing about, however, lacks credibility. Däwes, for instance, criticises: "Resorting to the soothing and controllable narrative of human weakness, Updike reduces the complex dynamics of violence in a globalized world to one individual's neuroses and avoids the larger, much more heterogeneous

173 As Boswell explains, this vision of God as "'Wholly other' (*totaliter aliter*)" (Boswell 2006: 45) also seems to be part of Updike's own religious understanding. "Barth's serenely Wholly Other God continues to preside over Updike's work" (Boswell 2006: 46) and this understanding seems to be independent of the fact that he addresses Islam in this novel.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

context" (Däwes 2010: 514). Several critics find fault with the construction of Ahmad as a rather artificial character (cf. Ulvydiene 2010: 69; Encke 2006: n.p.). Even though the other novels in the literary corpus also focus on the plight of one individual, they are more successful in embedding their characters in a larger political, cultural and religious context. It turns out that, apart from his longing to achieve something great, to be special (e.g. T 234), the protagonist is above all a boy who longs for love. "We seek attachments, however unfortunate" (T 224) is one of the central sentences in Updike's novel.

Maps for Lost Lovers explains very different reasons for a turn towards fundamentalism and reverses the generational conflict. Coming-of-age processes do not promote a turn towards Islamic fundamentalist ideas as they do in the novels by Faulks, Kureishi or Updike, but lead to a dissociation of the parental generation who still adheres to an orthodox way of life. This process is presented as conflictual and painful for both sides. In one of the key scenes Mah-Jabin accuses her mother Kaukab of bereaving her of self-determination and expresses the pain involved in the process of asserting individual identity against cultural forces:

> ['I]f the bitch decides to take matters into her own hands and finds someone herself then raise the fucking knives and cut her to pieces.' 'Not everyone has the freedom to walk away from a way of life,' Kaukab says quietly. 'The fact that you have managed to do it easily has made you arrogant and heartless.' 'It was not easy! It is still a torment. What hurts me is that you could have given me that freedom instead of delivering me into the same kind of life that you were delivered into [']" (MLL 114-115).

Inter-generational conflicts of this kind lie at the heart of the novel, which exemplifies the strong forces of communal identity. For first-generation migrants, identity is unalterably moulded by the religion and culture of their home-country. The second generation grows up in a totally different environment, but communal forces are strong and free thinking is sanctioned. As McCulloch notes, the murdered Jugnu as "a cosmopolitan world citizen" stands for "the desire for rational enlightenment", and represents everything that Islamic fundamentalism loathes (McCulloch 2012: 84). The novel demonstrates how facets of individual identity such as gender or sexuality constantly come into conflict with fundamentalist religious identity. Some individuals escape from this system at the expense of breaking with their family. For others, there is no escape as the honour killing exemplifies. The young people in Aslam's fiction embrace liberal concepts of the self and want to choose their own beliefs. The older generation, in contrast, becomes lonely in their subordination to orthodox religious laws and outdated traditions. "For all the alienation of their exile, his characters' most devastating and irredeemable loneliness is within" (Kapur 2005: n.p). Exile penetrates the core of their identity and is generated by a static view of identity and an inability to accept changes. While Shamas and his children seem to believe that you can be who you want to be, Kaukab has never experienced this notion of choice. The centrality of this inter-generational conflict also underlines that there are no clear-cut distinctions between male proponents of Islamic fundamentalism (or perpetrators) and female victims. Even though the community represented is based on gender inequality and an oppression of women, the novel also features male victims and a male protagonist

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

who clearly distances himself from fundamentalist practices in contrast to his wife, who continuously tries to enforce her beliefs on her children (cf. Moore 2009: 16).

The Attack in a way challenges the notion of a subjectivist concept of identity and raises the question if free choice is really always possible. With his decision to acquire Israeli citizenship, the protagonist tried to determine his own identity and to emancipate himself from his Arab and Bedouin background which constituted an obstacle for his career:

> For an Arab who stood out from the rest – and who gave himself the satisfaction of graduating first in his class – the least mistake could have been fatal. Especially when he was the son of a Bedouin, stumbling under the weight of the prejudices his ancestry entailed. I lugged the caricature of that ancestry around with me like a convict's ball and chain; it frequently exposed me to general human meanness, sometimes turned me into an object; at other times, it demonized me, and, most often, it disqualified me. [...]Thoroughly against my will, I found myself representing my community. To some extent, the community was the chief reason why I had to succeed (TA 97).

The novel confirms Bredella's claim that people always relate to their collective identity – whether they affirm or reject it. Sihem resorts to violence due to her identity as a Palestinian. Jaafari alike realises that Jewish Israelis always judge him in relation to his identity as an Arab and tries to counter their prejudice by negating this part of his identity. However, the success achieved by assimilation is shallow and reduced to nothing by the attack. Israeli identity politics deny him the right to be who he is – both Israeli and Arab. Jaafari's crisis following the attack is not only caused by his loss but aggravated by the sudden rejection of a society he wished to belong to. Communal pressures in the end determine his destiny. In a country like Israel, neutrality seems impossible, as an imam underlines: "For the real bastard isn't the man who doesn't know his father; it's the man who doesn't know his tradition [']" (TA 150). Communal pressures are inextricably bound to political and economic interests, which are presented as the main causes of conflict. No loss of love or search for spiritual guidance is responsible for Sihem's deed, which distinguishes the novel from the examination of identity conflicts in the novels by Kureishi, Faulks or Updike. Khadra's work rather deals with aspects central to Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, namely personal responsibility, loyalty towards one's own culture as well as the necessity to choose sides and the impossibility of neutrality when it comes to questions of identity.

The Good Muslim accentuates the importance of religious community as 'fictive kin', as unifying principle as strong as war in bringing people together to fight for a joint cause:

> Suddenly it did not matter that they had grown up without a father, that their relations were a thousand miles away and had abandoned them, because all the fighters, and their mothers and sisters, were kin, their very own people, as though they shared features, histories, bloodlines. But all of this was before Silvi and Sohail made their own family, with followers and supplicants. They wouldn't need war after that, or even their own blood (TGM 178).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

This need for a community, however, does not emerge in demarcation against foreign influences or a common enemy. Sohail is more afraid of his own moral failure than of the moral amorphousness of the world around him. He needs the positive reassurance of his personality and identity by God. Social injustice, unequal development, the rejection of economic, political, cultural and military practices and the feeling of being torn between two cultures – factors which play such a large role for the identity formation of characters in the novels by Hamid, Kureishi, Faulks or Aslam – are of no great importance in *The Good Muslim*. In redefining his identity, the protagonist seeks to be part of a community that allows him to forget his past life and experience. An elimination of trauma is only possible through a turn towards a new, isolated community. Consequently, the novel at the same time promotes a communal and liberal concept of the self. It elucidates the force and oppressive power of communal norms but simultaneously identifies the opportunity for individuals to reinvent themselves by means of choosing a new religious identity. This chance, however, seems to be mostly reserved for men. The female characters in the novel cannot escape communal concepts of honour and shame and may only under great pressures and sacrifices manage to achieve independence.

The works at hand attribute the popularity of Islamic fundamentalist movements to two major factors influencing radicalisation processes. First, crises of identity related to the experience of migration and the feeling of not belonging are identified as catalysts. Second, political, military and economic conflicts of interest are seen to trigger fundamentalist resistance. In this context, *The Good Muslim* introduces a third dimension which in a way combines both factors by presenting an escapist urge as a reason to turn to the easy answers fundamentalism offers. This escapist urge in this case is triggered by an identity crisis caused by a military conflict. As we can see, the literary corpus depicts the relationship between individual and communal identities as very complex and often conflictual. Especially in the context of globalisation and migration, issues connected to cultural and ethnic hybridity complicate the process of identity formation. The loss of love or unrequited love and the longing of any individual for a home, orientation and spiritual guidance are core aspects of all works and are presented as important catalysts for radicalisation processes.

6.3) Ethical criticism and the importance of literature, art and the intellectual

"'A novel begins with a wish to make a statement of a fairly large order about the society'" (De Bellis 2000: 308), De Bellis quotes John Updike. *Terrorist* makes such a statement about the reality of living in contemporary North America. The novel shows us a world in which young people suffer from a concomitance of too much responsibility and a lack of guidance:

> 'Kids today have more to worry about than we did. [...] It's not just AIDS and the rest; there's a certain hunger for, I don't know, the absolute, when everything is so relative, and all the economic forces are pushing instant gratification and credit-card debt at them. [...]

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

> The crazy Arabs are right – hedonism, nihilism, that's all we offer. [...] Nobody accepts responsibility, so the kids, some of the kids, take it on [’] (T 202).

Like Kureishi and Faulks, Updike underlines that the spiritual needs of the individual have to be met for a dignified life – not only the material ones. And like the works by these two authors *Terrorist* can also be regarded as a 'state of the nation' novel that comments on contemporary popular culture as well as foreign and domestic policies. Class plays as large a role as cultural or religious issues. Ahmad embraces religion as a protest against the parental generation but is in doubt where religious dogma contradicts humanist values such as mercy, forgiveness and community. The novel seems to tell us that we should enjoy the gift of life and all the love it has to offer. Even if the present seems to be hopeless, the belief in prospects and a better future shall not be abandoned. As the protagonist proclaims in the end, nothing stands above the value of human life. Like Faulks, Updike warns us against the lure of consumerism or entertainment, which only distract us from what really matters in life.

Aslam's novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* similarly addresses the fundamental responsibility of all human beings to face reality and give the next generation a chance to flourish and develop. Neither living in the past nor dreaming about the future can give the second generation of migrants a chance to live a self-determined life. Nostalgia, ideology and essentialisms of all kind are highlighted as detrimental to the development of communal and personal life and described as a means to enslave people and deprive them of their free will. Aslam believes that a turn of young Muslims to radical Islam can be seen as an escape from a precarious and dismal reality. He urges people to be courageous and fight for change: "Yes the world is unjust, but we shouldn't want to escape from it or try to find solace only on a personal level – we should try change the world for everyone. So don't run away – get involved" (O'Connor n.p., emphasis in original). The novel takes us into a world of desolation, pain and claustrophobia, but it does not tell us to endure it. The strong focus on Shamas' humanist perspective as well as the drastic description of brutal events and the detailed insights into the characters' painful emotions lead the reader to reject all fundamentalist concepts. All topics that the novel deals with are inherently ethical. It is concerned with murder and violence, otherness and the tensions between communal and individual responsibility. Aslam feels this responsibility most acutely as a writer. Even though MLL does not deal with any form of jihadism, Aslam draws parallels to the topic of terrorism and appeals to the responsibility of moderate Muslims to raise their voice:

> 'I asked myself whether in my personal life and as a writer I had been rigorous enough to condemn the small scale September 11 s that go on every day. […] Most ordinary Muslims say. 'We just want to get on with our lives. Don't identify us with the fundamentalists.' But it's a luxury. We moderate Muslims have to stand up [’] (Brace 2004: n.p.).

The novel raises questions concerning the sources and authorities which are allowed to decide what is morally inoffensive or reprehensible. How can a society deal with people who follow radically different ethical logics and standards? MLL points to the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

fact that the law of a country, personal ethics and the moral values enforced by different religious, cultural or political communities may be three radically different things.

The novel successfully engages the reader in contemplating conflicting beliefs and desires. This juxtaposition of different world-views, however, does not imply that Aslam's work lacks a hierarchy of values. The novel mirrors a clear rejection of religious fundamentalism. Religious orthodoxy is presented as causing only war, pain and the destruction of human life and autonomy. "Human beings and chains, it is the oldest acquaintanceship in the world" (MLL 176), the narrator tells us. Like the novel by Faulks, Aslam's work rouses the question of how inner paralysis can be overcome and a remedy for shortcomings can be found. "Most of us don't know *how* to think – we've been taught *what* to think instead" (MLL 282), Shamas deplores. MLL underlines the responsibility of every individual to make an effort to liberate themselves from these chains. This duty is presented as a burden but also as a great chance. Everybody is alone with these questions and moral choices. People can retreat to an essentialist system, which relieves them of the necessity to decide, or they can embrace their responsibility. The novel leaves no doubt about which option is to be preferred. Even in the moment of greatest desperation the protagonist understands: "If a calamity is coming then where else would he rather be than with his fellow humans? What else is there but them?" (MLL 369).

The Attack portrays the vicious circle of aggression and retribution in a war-torn country. The novel addresses the fragility of life and the cruelty of fate, which, from one second to the next, may make you "realize that your life, your *whole* life – with its ups and downs, its pains and pleasures, its promises and failures – hangs and has always hung by a thread as flimsy and imperceptible as the threads of a spider's web" (TA 71). Khadra shows us the extent of injustice that happens in wars and points to the impossibility of staying neutral. But despite the gruesome scenes of cruelty and desperation, the morale of the novel seeks to reinforce the worth of life. The humanist attitude which shines through the novel is presented as rooted in Bedouin philosophy and values:

> My father said, 'Anyone who tells you that a greater symphony exists than the breath in your body is lying. He wants to undermine your most beautiful possession: the chance to profit from every moment of your life. If you start from the principle that your worst enemy is the very person who tries to sow hatred in your heart, you're halfway to happiness. […] There's nothing, *absolutely nothing*, more important than your life. And your life isn't more important than other people's lives' (TA 99-100).

Through the shocking and strongly emotional quality of narrated events, *The Good Muslim* contains clear moralising effects that bear strong parallels to the novels by Khadra and Aslam. The work appeals to our emotion and rouses moral indignation. By means of spreading the narrated time over a larger time span and using recollections of past events, the author creates a reflective distance in a double sense. Thereby, she manages to direct the readers' sympathy in favour of the female protagonist, who is represented as a defender of humanist values. TGM implies a rejection of any system of belief that claims blind allegiance: superstition and cultural traditions are blamed as much as Islamic dogmatism. By using both Maya and Sohail as focalisers,

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

the novel enables the reader to see and experience diverse points of view to show the whole extent of the moral dilemma: The reader gets to know Sohail as a moral person who turns to an essentialist ideology exactly because he does NOT want to eschew his personal responsibility. The novel underlines the fatal consequences of this decision but submits that the motifs behind such a decision might be noble.

Another important topic repeatedly addressed in this study is the societal relevance of fictional literature dealing with Islamic fundamentalism and the ethical potential of this literary corpus to subvert dichotomies. The works at hand not only inspire political discussions, but they also address the great potential of literature and arts to function as a recluse from a desperate reality, a uniting element between different cultures and a last haven of free thinking. Moreover, the authors underline the responsibility of the writer to fight essentialisms and make readers understand other points of view.

Ahmad's mother Teresa in Updike's novel believes in freedom and rejects all dogmatism. Religion in her eyes lacks any vitality and joy of living (cf. T 237). As an artist and painter she views herself as a person who longs to see the beauty of the world and celebrate God's creation with her work. Updike contrasts the work of the artist with the pressures of the capitalist world. In an interview Updike states: "Most jobs in the world were competitive, you had to push someone aside, but writing and art I thought weren't like that. You brought something new into the world without displacing anything else" (Brown 2008: n.p.).

In *Maps for Lost Lovers* the fight between Shamas and his wife Kaukab also takes place on a symbolical level as a contention between humanism, embraced and promoted by literature and art and fundamentalism, which strictly rejects these things. Kaukab only believes in one book. Shamas, on the other hand, believes in a multiplicity of meanings, in love and beauty that is expressed through art. He adores poetry and uses it as an antidote to Kaukab's religious orthodoxy. The realm of everyday life belongs to Kaukab's religious rules, but the realm of dreams, hope and love to Shamas' literature. Tellingly, it is a bookshop where his affair with another woman takes place. Literature is not only a symbol of freedom but also amounts to an emblem of cultural hybridity. As Pesso-Miquel notes, "Aslam uses images and devices borrowed from the masters of Urdu poetry, thus turning his novelistic prose into a poetic hybrid" (Pesso-Miquel 2011: 132).[174] When Kaukab destroys her wedding dress in which she had embroidered Shamas' poetry, she not only destroys love and trust but also a part of her husband as a creative being. Kaukab's isolation and lack of joy and sensuality is depicted in stark contrast to the warm-hearted atmosphere and unifying potential radiated by music, literature and art. Aslam presents art as something human beings have a natural need for, as something which widens their heart and gives them hope. Music is described as facilitator of intercultural exchange with the power "to light up the distance between two human beings" (MLL 13), blending "together all that life

174 For a more detailed description of the ways in which Aslam employs metaphors and imagery from Urdu poetry, using a hybrid aesthetic that includes elements from different cultural backgrounds see Green/Childs (2013).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

contains, the real truth, the undeniable last word, the innermost core of all that is unbearably painful within a heart and all that is joyful" (MLL 13). These religious connotations underline that art achieves what religion is not able to do: it bridges divides and instils love in the hearts of men. Art is described as essence of life and the artist is charged with the special task to "tell us what we should aim for, […] what's truly worth living for, and dying for, in life" (MLL 168). Aslam himself takes a determined stance with respect to the power of literature to undermine essentialist discourses:

> Coming from the culture and country I come from – Pakistan – I was always aware of the potential for truth-telling that existed in any form of artwork – painting, music, the written word, cinema. In any of these art forms you could do things that – because they told the truth about existence – could offend the powerful who had heavy investments in lies (O Connor: n.p.).

The Attack features no particular references to the role of the writer, but it hints at the role of Palestinian intellectuals or well-educated people to set a good example for their community concerning integration and peaceful coexistence. Fundamentalism is presented as opposed to love and art. Even in the last seconds of his life Jaafari affirms the power of imagination and dreams in a world of war, where everything is painted in black and white and you can only choose one side, but nothing in between: "*They can take everything you own – your property, your best years, all your joys, all your good works, everything down to your last shirt – but you'll always have your dreams, so you can reinvent your stolen world*" (TA 257).

In *The Good Muslim*, the fundamentalist characters reject literature as non-canonical writing. The protagonist always loved art and literature but after his turn to orthodoxy burns his books because "his new love allowed him only one poet" (TGM 241). The description of the book-burning as "Hitler-style" (TGM 216) underlines the total destruction of imagination and free thought. The ban on these things in Sohail's community causes a stifling atmosphere and a lack of knowledge about the world. Traumatised by the war, the protagonist can no longer cope with a multiplicity of readings and wants to leave all doubt behind. Despite the psychological plausibility of Sohail's motives, the heart-breaking denial of his little son's longing to learn how to read entails a clear ethical judgement of this choice. Anam underlines the liberating and empowering effect of literature. Organising an annual literary festival in Bangladesh, she describes how literature not only contributes to the visibility of women but also engenders open discussions about topics which are usually tabooed in Bangladeshi society (Shook 2012: 47). Literature is described by all novels as extremely powerful tool or the proverbial "banana peel on which all dogmas slip" (Hassan 2008: 22).

6.4) Potential functions as culture-critical metadiscourse, counter-discourse or reintegrative interdiscourse

As already indicated, the works in this literary corpus share their potential to function as culture-critical metadiscourse and counter-discourse but vary in their stance to-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

wards a reintegration of different discourses. Updike paints a rather positive picture with respect to the possibility of a reintegration. This potential is connected to the fact that the coming-of-age process plays such a large role in the text. The young protagonist utters criticism of contemporary American society and claims to be a representative of a Muslim minority that voices a 'counter-discourse' against its marginalisation. This minority status, however, is presented as highly artificial and a part of teenage rebellion. Adopting a Muslim identity he does not possess, Ahmad dissociates himself from his mother and the social problems that characterise his surroundings. Since the conflict in *Terrorist* does only on the surface emanate between people of different religions, it does not come as a surprise that the end of the novel concedes the possibility of a reintegration of different discourses. Not only an acceptance of the older generation and their way of life seems possible, but also a levelling of conflicts between people of different religions. In the end, Jack Levy is considered as a father figure by the protagonist despite their different creeds.

As has been outlined, *Maps for Lost Lovers* expatiates on the deficits of present day multicultural societies as prone to racism and religious essentialism. The stasis of this system leads to "chronic states of self-alienation, failed communication and paralyzed vitality" (Zapf 2007: 155). A significant problem in this respect is not only the exclusion of a migrant minority by a white English majority but also the conscious segregation of this minority. As Butt outlines "the uniqueness of the novel does not merely lie in charting 'a clash of civilisations' in fiction between the West and Islam, but between Islamic fundamentalism and secular Muslims within one ethnic group" (Butt 2008: 154-155). Thus the novel cannot primarily be read as a counter-discourse against the white majority but against the Islamic fundamentalist dictate of a minority. Especially women and young people are marginalised by this system and Aslam makes their voices heard. This marginalisation also affects the characters that represent the dominant system of power. Kaukab as the major representative of a strictly orthodox Islamic system is an emblem of the 'death-in-life' motif, which seems to be omnipresent in the images used by Aslam, Khadra and Anam. The novel leaves us in doubt about whether a reintegration of different religions, generations and worldviews could ever be possible. The author seems to deny this possibility as long as religious essentialisms are involved. Dasht-e-Tanhaii is a static community and Kaukab a character who never learns to scrutinise the principles leading to so much misery. Incidents of interreligious reconciliation and understanding are scarce and only possible through art and love, as the example of the forbidden love between Kaukab's Muslim brother and the Sikh woman Kiran exemplifies. "She doesn't know this but her lover eventually named his baby daughter after her – Kiran, it being a name acceptable to both Sikhs and Muslims. A ray of light" (MLL 13), the narrator tells us. This ray of light is there, but the reader is left in doubt whether it is enough to light up the darkness that surrounds it.

The Attack contributes to the cultural memory of a historical conflict and strives to create empathy for the Palestinian people. The novel functions as culture-critical metadiscourse in that it highlights the double-standards present in Israeli society and criticises the mutual distrust and hatred inherent to the system. Sihem is presented as

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

an example of 'failed community' and 'self-alienation' even though she seems to stand for successful integration. The element of counter-discourse is visible on two levels. Even though Sihem neither seems to be economically or personally marginalised, she is still a representative of a group of Arabic Palestinians who suffer from discrimination. Her husband Amin, in contrast, represents a voice which is suppressed and rejected by Palestinian culture. The element of counter-discourse is thus mirrored and identified on both sides. A reintegration of these discourses does not seem possible on the level of action. Similar to Aslam, Khadra does not seem to believe in an end of these conflicts and leaves us with a picture of a vicious circle of violence which continues to cause death and destruction. The search of the protagonist for reconciliation with the deed of his wife finds a sudden end when he is himself killed in the conflict. In the moment of death, however, his mind conjures up a dream that nearly sounds conciliatory. In his last seconds, the protagonist sees his ancestors' house where his life began. The tenor of the ending celebrates the power of imagination and dreams to overcome all evil.

The Good Muslim also identifies numerous deficits of the presented system in power: from war crimes that remain unpunished, via the practices in a dictatorship, to the ignorance and superstition of people and the oppression and sexual abuse of women in Bangladesh. The female protagonist represents a counter-discourse against the depicted grievances. She stands for everyone who speaks up against injustice and, as a journalist who takes a stand for official court hearings, gives war victims a voice. Simultaneously, she tries to defend and stand in for the little boy Zaid as another marginalised and powerless voice in the novel. Just as the texts by Aslam and Khadra, Anam's novel is crossed by a multitude of complex violent conflicts to which no solution can be worked out. The central problems in Bangladesh continue to have an effect, just like the personal estrangement between Maya and her brother Sohail. When he parts for Saudi-Arabia, Maya contemplates: "There could be no sense between them. He would remain a hallucination to her, the ghost of a man she used to love. And she would remain a stranger to him" (TGM 289). However, the epilogue offers a glimpse of reconciliation and a shared fate that connects all characters. Piya Islam, a woman saved by Sohail, gives testimony of her torture during the war and reminds Maya of the good nature of her brother:

> 'This is my son. His name is Sohail. I named him after the man who rescued me from that place. The man who saved my life.' Piya steps down from the witness box. Maya reaches for her, and in front of all these people, the people who have come to bear witness and the ones who have come to tell their stories, they embrace. All that is good in her brother, and all that is good in her, is in this field [. ...] But she recognises the wound in his history, the irreparable wound, because she has one too. His wound is her wound. Knowing this, she finds she can no longer wish him different (TGM 293).

These last words of the novel can be seen as a moment of regeneration or of coming to terms with personal and collective trauma, which might ultimately lead to cultural renewal even though there is no harmonisation on the level of action and no outspoken reconciliation between Sohail and Maya. As Smith mentions, the act of finally being

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

able to make one's voice heard might not solve all problems but initiates a process of healing and mutual understanding (Smith 2011: n.p.).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

7) Conclusion

> The beautiful thing about writing is that it's a global community and on your bookshelf are all the teachers you could possibly want
> (Hamid 2013, BBC Talking Books Interview).

The literary corpus impressively demonstrates the potential of literature as an interdiscourse to negotiate a variety of different specialised subdiscourses from the fields of politics, history, economics and religious or Islamic studies. The approach developed combined political theory (to provide background knowledge about the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism, answering the central question of *what* is represented by the novels) with narrative methodology (which was used to examine *how* these phenomena are represented). The interconnection between form and content was then developed with recourse to works in the field of ethical criticism, which complements theory and methodology by linking them on a meta-level. Approaches of ethical criticism have proven to be highly beneficial for the formulation of hypotheses concerning the potential functions of the works at hand. In this context, an analysis of the correlations between political or religious content and stylistic form has facilitated a nuanced analysis of the representation of the ethical dimension and the depiction of different value systems. The connection of Nussbaum's main areas of interest with the narrative typology (including point of view and multiperspectivity, relationships of contrast and correspondence or strategies to trigger sympathy) constitute a further development of approaches in the field of ethical criticism, which often pay little attention to structural criteria.

The **first major focus of this study** aimed at the representation of 'Islamic fundamentalism'. The literary corpus impressively affirms my first hypothesis that representations of Islamic fundamentalism are not imaginable without an antipole and that religious fanaticism is not always the sole or even main target of criticism. The antipole against which Muslim fundamentalist characters react, according to the literary corpus, assumes many different guises. It may take the form of Western hedonism and consumerism, of an economic libertarianism that promotes an unjust global division of wealth, of perceived moral decay and sexual promiscuity, of racism, of a Western political and military influence that is rejected, or of the parental generation. The literary corpus offers diverse answers to the question of which catalysts drive Islamic fundamentalists to violent action. As diverse as the nature of 'the antipoles' is the reaction of the literary characters to the challenges. In this context, fictions of migration often keep track of a process in which resistance follows a phase of attempted and failed assimilation and disappointed hope. In novels set in war zones, this antipole is often strongly connected to foreign invaders and the traumatic experience of war.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The analysis of the religious, political, economic or cultural criticism addressed at 'Islamic fundamentalism' and its antipoles by the works at hand reflects diverse approaches. Khadra and Anam, for instance, particularly underline the political sphere. Violent struggles and war serve to promote radicalism and a climate where people feel so cornered that violence seems the only option. In *The Good Muslim* as well as in *The Sirens of Baghdad* and *The Attack* scenarios of war, civil war and resistance gain centre stage. These military conflicts and political problems are then aggravated by social problems, such as a lack of education and the undaunted power of cultural traditions and morals. The works vary in the degree to which oppressive cultural norms are linked to religious beliefs. It is noticeable how orthodox Muslim belief plays only little or no role at all in explaining the reasons for radicalisation processes. Where communal pressures and cultural norms play a large role, tribal systems and notions of honour and shame do not seem to have a strong connection to Islam. *The Attack* goes even further in that it explicitly deals with the Palestinian cause as a political liberation movement and reactive phenomenon to Israeli policies which dissociates itself from Islamic fundamentalism. Religion is presented as a part of culture but is not of major significance. A turn towards extremism does not arise from orthodox Muslim belief but from the decision to participate in a violent conflict about power, land and self-determination – or from the wish to escape this struggle. The settings of these novels do not allow much room for personal choice. The turn to Islamic fundamentalism is in all works determined by the setting, cultural background and regional particularities, even though all authors focus on the perspective of the individual and do not strive to render profound political analyses. After the attacks on the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, Khadra criticised fundamentalist violence but also made a plea for a dialogue instead of perpetuating essentialist positions on both sides:

> We are seeing a battle of extremes. On one side, in France, for example, freedom of speech is sacred. On the other, for all those who believe, religion is sacred. Of course, both are right to defend their values. But both are wrong to impose their values upon others. […] We must respect other peoples' faiths and other peoples' cultures. We must respect other peoples' mentalities ... If we all stay in our corners, isolated, not wanting to see each other, it's a dialogue of the deaf. And a dialogue of the deaf has never shed any light on this nebulous ideology we call Islamism (Khadra 2015: n.p.).

The works by Faulks, Kureishi, Hamid and Updike, in contrast, focus on the life of first and second-generation migrants in England and the US and the crises of identity these people might experience. Faulks and Kureishi focus on London as a symbolic biotope of 'Western decadence', and Hamid embeds his story in the context of the political and social repercussions of 9/11. In addition to political and military conflicts, the global economic order and 'Western' neolibertarian policies are heavily criticised in the novels by Hamid and Faulks. Faulks envisions a 'Hobbesian' setting in which the development of parallel societies is not connected to the topic of migration but to a climate of political apathy and the arrogance of financial circles that clearly possess fundamentalist characteristics. Greed, social alienation, loneliness and the flight of people into virtual reality indicate that the 'Western' way of life does not necessarily fulfil people's basic needs. This disparity between material wealth and a lack of hu-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

manist values is also evident in Hamid's novel. It criticises the lack of respect for Muslims in the West, the unequal global distribution of wealth and power and the double standards employed for justifying 'Western' dominance. Kureishi is not that explicit in his economic criticism, but similarly describes a society which sold its soul to hedonism, consumerism and the pleasure principle. In this environment, life can become meaningless and people may turn to fundamentalist alternatives to find some orientation and certainty.

As a result, the works at hand present a variety of different catalysts and motivations for a turn towards Islamic fundamentalist ideas. The authors skilfully subvert assumptions about a supposedly substantial connection between religiosity or Islam and fundamentalism. This literary corpus strongly underlines the same capacity for violence and dehumanisation in antagonists of fundamentalist Muslim beliefs. The political and military interest groups described by Khadra bear as many fundamentalist characteristics as the world of high finance described by Faulks, as has been analysed with reference to the criteria outlined by the *Fundamentalism Project*. The equally fundamentalist alternatives to religious essentialism come in the guise of capitalism, profit and consumerism, popular culture with its shallow entertainment, drugs and hedonism as well as interest-driven politics. In the end, all essentialist worldviews turn out to be empty promises. The only thing that seems to give a little hope is love, family ties and the recollection of humanist values. Easy answers and blunt stereotypes are always questioned and sometimes ironically undermined. Thus, the works at hand do not contribute to a "neo-Orientalist rhetoric about 'Muslim terrorists'" (Morton 2012: 18) or a prejudiced equation of Muslims with extremists, as Morton accuses many post-9/11 novels of doing. The reasons behind fundamentalism are depicted as diverse and multifaceted. The notion of an inseparability of religious, cultural and political determinants is exemplified by all works in the literary corpus. Boundary-setting and the exclusion of an enemy do not necessarily happen on grounds of religion but also due to cultural and ethnic differences, political reasons or class-issues.

As we have seen, the works pick up and comment on many of the features of fundamentalism that have been outlined by the authors of the *Fundamentalism Project*. Notable features such as the mechanisms of 'boundary setting' and the exclusion of an 'enemy', 'moral Manicheanism', 'absolutism', 'strict behavioural requirements', 'authoritarian organisation' or 'a lack of humour' are omnipresent in the works discussed. According to the literary corpus, the described radical forms of Islam are endowed with these features – no matter whether violent jihadist forms of Islamic fundamentalism are described or other forms of religious orthodoxy (which find their expression in Sharia law or the private enforcement of rigid Islamic moral norms in specific communities). Not surprisingly, all texts at hand criticise and reject Islamic fundamentalism as a tool to control and oppress people. Followers of radical circles are either lured or forced into fundamentalist thinking. Yet, the criticised antipoles to Islamic fundamentalism are likewise associated with a fundamentalist potential and function in a very similar way by means of demarcation, authoritarian organisation and the claim to possess the truth. Fundamentalist systems are attractive because they seem to cater to the basic needs of human beings and can give followers moral guidance,

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

structure and orientation in life. This claim of moral Manichaeism and inerrancy is, however, dismantled by all texts as false promise which is based on double standards and the oppression of the individual. No fundamentalist movement is presented as promoting social justice or the well-being of people.

What might come as a surprise to the reader is the realisation that religiosity or the Muslim belief plays hardly any role in the explanation for a turn towards Islamic fundamentalism. Religion is never depicted as the root cause of a problem but as a symptom of or a supposed remedy to other predicaments. The turn of an individual to violent action and fundamentalist belief is mostly described as a cry for help. It functions as a means of empowerment for the powerless, a way of escaping a brutal reality and finding stability in chaos or is seen as sign of a teenage search for identity or a rebellion against the parental generation. Islam, in this context, is portrayed as a remedy or anchor, a disguise or tool, but never as the real cause of fundamentalist violence. Not even religious leaders are depicted as outstandingly religious in any of the works. Their motives range from political and military aims (*The Attack*) via the accumulation of power and money (*The Sirens of Baghdad, The Good Muslim*) and enjoying authority over other people (*Maps for Lost Lovers*), to vanity (*The Black Album*) or a simple human longing to be somebody, do something that matters, enjoy the comfort of a community or purify oneself of a burdensome past (Sohail in *The Good Muslim*). In all novels 'religious' leaders instrumentalise their followers for their own plans, which are based on a wish for self-aggrandisement, greed or the fight for power and control over territory and resources. They are shown to be polemical, vain, aggressive, demagogic and anti-intellectual. Fundamentalist leaders are presented as dangerous – at best they are also pitiful figures who can be mocked ironically.

The novels slightly vary with respect to whether 'Islamic fundamentalism' is presented as a serious threat or ridiculed by irony. While the fundamentalists described by Kureishi and Faulks are clumsy, unorganised and a source of ridicule, all other authors present fundamentalist leaders and groups as extremely threatening. They are either absent from the plot and not described in detail or described in a very negative way. The leaders are at best presented as selfish and vain power seekers and at worst as dangerous, vindictive criminals. Noticeably, all novels, however, make a distinction between fundamentalist leaders and their followers. While the leaders remain alien, incomprehensible and unsympathetic to the readers, all authors put a lot of effort into giving readers an insight into the emotional life of their followers. The stories of individual characters serve to dismantle the dangerous seductive potential of Islamic fundamentalism. These individuals are mostly desperate figures with likeable character traits. Even though not every character described as follower of Islamic fundamentalism might rouse sympathy, the novels by and large do not fail to trigger empathy and make a turn to fundamentalism psychologically plausible. By means of a skilful use of focalisation and a focus on emotions and moral dilemmas, all novels give the reader an insight into the multifaceted reasons why people might resort to violence.

The analysis shows that the authors at hand, irrespective of their own religious or cultural background, all criticise Islamic fundamentalism but do not use generalisations or extend their criticism to Islam as such. All authors distinguish between Islam

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

and its fundamentalist excesses. No matter whether the authors are religious or not, they strive to clarify that the violence and conflicts they depict derive from a very narrow and essentialist interpretation of religion or can be attributed to political and economic interests, but not to a supposedly violent nature of Islam. Many of the novels feature Muslim characters that are tolerant, likeable and advocates of humanism. The familiarity of an author with Islamic fundamentalism influences the fictional representation of the phenomenon. Authors such as Khadra, who fought against Islamic fundamentalists in a civil war, or Aslam, whose father fled General Zia ul-Haq's Islamic regime in Pakistan, necessarily have a very different familiarity with the topic and describe the phenomenon in more threatening terms. Since prejudice and fear are often inspired by ignorance, it is intriguing that none of the authors mainly criticises the cultural or religious concepts they are not familiar with. Independent from their own backgrounds, they criticise essentialisms of all sorts. Often the type of fundamentalism most harshly criticised is the form an author knows best, not the feared 'other'.

Concerning the **second major focus of this study**, it can be argued that the analysed fictions of migration indeed tend to put a strong emphasis on issues of identity, alterity and belonging as major triggers for an embrace of fundamentalism. Works not set in a migrant context, in contrast, tend to stress conflicts of interest – be they political, economic or military – as major catalysts for radicalisation. The motivations for a turn to fundamentalism are described as complex and are often linked to coming of age processes and identity crises. Conflicts of interest and identity intermingle in most works, but the latter gain centre stage in fictions of migration focusing on divided loyalties and the potential clash between different value-systems. In the works by Kureishi, Faulks, Hamid, Updike and Aslam, which are set in migrant communities or at least play with the notion of cultural hybridity, we can detect a strong correlation between religiosity and crises of identity. These crises are mostly connected to the process of adolescence and a teenage need for guidance, stability and orientation, which fundamentalist beliefs seem to offer. This choice, however, is only temporary and can be revised once the protagonists have matured. By the same token, radicalisation can be promoted by economic, political and military developments that force migrants into the feeling of divided loyalties. Moreover, the loss of love or unrequited love for a new country are presented as important catalysts for radicalisation processes. Either the disappointment with a system or the rejection by the majority society and the feeling of loneliness exert a strong influence on the psychological state of migrants and may lead to violent action. In this context, the tensions between individual and communal concepts of identity play a large role. Despite the various depictions of communal pressures, the novels feature a microscopic focus. Even in difficult situations, which severely circumcise the individual sphere of influence, the authors point to the power of each person to resist fundamentalist claims and their responsibility to defend the value of human life.

As a result, the protagonists are usually described in lifelike detail. Some of the authors employ stereotypical, flat characters but only as an efficient narrative strategy to outline different ideological positions and to ridicule essentialist systems. All nov-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

els work with marked relationships of contrast between fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist characters. Thus, Islamist leaders tend to be presented as flat and static characters, whereas the depiction of the individual protagonists overcomes simple categorisations. The followers and victims of fundamentalist circles are presented as round, dynamic and multidimensional characters and often serve as foils. Frequently, correspondences are identified between representatives of the same generation or between adherents to a liberal, humanist worldview, irrespective of their cultural, ethnic or religious differences. Most of the texts feature the common prejudices and stereotypes that are reflected in the poll ratings of the *Pew Global Attitudes Project* but undermine them at the same time to a certain extent. Some authors, such as Khadra, subvert stereotypes by an inversion of common ideas about civilisation and savagery. Other authors dismantle prejudices by employing irony and skilfully directing the readers' sympathy towards a rejection of prejudice. Most works show a broad spectrum of approaches to life and ethics. With the notable exception of Updike's novel, most authors succeed in depicting nuances and lifelike characters that are not reducible to ethnic or religious stereotypes. The supposedly inferior role of women in Islam is a good example for the novels' accentuation of pluralism. The reader encounters a broad spectrum from suffering, poor and oppressed to strong, intelligent and emancipated female characters.

As far as the question whether the works affirm transcultural and transreligious elements or underline dividing factors is concerned, the study shows that both facets are explored by the literary corpus. The novels by Khadra as well as Aslam, for instance, strongly focus on doubly marginalised groups and the development of subcultures, describing intercultural and interreligious conflicts. Nevertheless, conflicts are as manifold between different people within one of these groups. Age, class, political standpoint or education are presented as powerful dividing factors. Furthermore, all authors embrace humanist principles and the protection of human life as the most important values which cross cultural or religious borders. The real dividing line is not established between characters of different cultures and creeds but between humanism and various forms of fundamentalism.

The application of major approaches in ethical criticism to the analytical chapters has proven to be beneficial in describing how ethical controversies and moral values are negotiated. One of the central concerns, outlined in chapter three, was how the texts at hand evoke empathy for the plight of the individual, which may direct the reader to embrace or reject specific moral standards. As outlined above, the reader's sympathy is considerably influenced by contrasts between different characters which are developed by means of explicit as well as implicit characterisation. Passages of explicit figural characterisation of an 'other' by fundamentalist leaders are mostly so fraught with prejudices that these passages serve much more as an implicit autocharacterisation of the speaker than as a form of explicit alterocharacterisation that can be taken to convey veritable information. Furthermore, the rejection of fundamentalist ideas is visible on a symbolical level. As McCulloch explains referring to *Maps for Lost Lovers*, darkness is the state which the fundamentalist characters reside in, whereas humanism or art are associated with light and birds as symbols of imagination and

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

freedom (McCulloch 2012: 91 and 100). All authors arguably manage to arouse empathy by credible descriptions of individual motives and in some cases also very emotional and detailed descriptions of bloodshed and injustice. Without trivialising the disastrous and dangerous consequences of Islamic fundamentalist beliefs, the authors aim at describing the human and often comprehensible motives of individuals who turn to fundamentalist ideas. Especially works in which the mimetic components of character dominate (cf. Margolin 2009 (b): 57) manage to evoke much sympathy for the individual.

The central importance of empathy, moral questions and an insight into diverse perspectives is also reflected by the novels' style and structure. In chapter four, several questions were raised concerning the effects of focalisation and the role of the narrator (connected in particular to the use of value judgments) and the choice of language, the analysis of which shall be summarised below.

The use of variable focalisation in many novels gives us access to different minds and very diverse points of view, which are often contrasted with each other by means of abrupt shifts from one perspective to a very different one. This strategy suggests, as Chatman puts it, "that despite close physical proximity and the thinness of characters' skins and membranes, wholly different mental universes exist only inches apart" (Chatman 1986 [1978]: 216). All texts feature an open structure with many different perspectives that are difficult to reconcile. Nünning/Nünning claim that the more a text tends towards an open perspective structure with real polyphony and a kaleidoscopic variety of perspectives, the more contradictory these visions become (Nünning/Nünning 2000 (b): 61-62). This is exactly what the literary corpus exemplifies. The juxtaposition of many contradictory visions gives us an insight into antagonistic views. This, however, does not diminish the notion of some sort of 'objective' truth or ethical standard against which we are led to judge the plot. The reader's evaluation is guided by the selection of insights into the consciousness of different characters. By means of multiperspectival focalisation we get profound insights into the minds of the followers of fundamentalist movements. Their motives are made psychologically plausible, whereas none of the texts gives us real insight into the hearts and minds of fundamentalist leaders. Multiperspectivity, in this context, serves a didactic function, a moral-social balancing function as well as a normative and ideological function in that it privileges marginalised voices for the purpose of social criticism (for these categories cf. Nünning/Nünning 2000 (a): 29-30). The qualitative and quantitative bias in favour of non-essentialist perspectives indicates that fundamentalist perspectives are very limited and one-sided. Even though we get a polyphony of voices, we still know which norms and values to privilege.

The choice of narrators in the literary corpus serves the same functions as the choice of focalisers. The novels tend to feature either an intra- autodiegetic narrator or make use of variable focalisation where an extradiegetic narrator is used. While intradiegetic narrators cannot be neutral, extradiegetic narrators are not necessarily biased. Apart from novels in which the narrator is visible through the use of irony and interfering with the text (e.g. in Faulks' *A Week in December*), narrators tend to be rather covert. Despite this supposed neutrality and the absence of a judgmental narra-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

torial voice, these texts implicitly convey a multitude of ethical evaluations. Implicit judgments are promoted by purposefully directing the readers' opinion in favour of humanist positions. As outlined above, ethical effects are often achieved by the duality of two or more contrasting perspectives or worldviews. All texts that do not feature autodiegetic narrators are multiperspectively focalised. Texts not written in the first person feature polyperspectival internal focalisation (sensu Nünning/Nünning 2000 (a): 44) introducing us to a variety of diverse religious, ideological and political points of view. While the narrators predominantly abstain from interpretation, judgment or generalisations, the characters indulge in these practices in many different ways and thus invite the readers to contrast and evaluate their judgments. The often drastic or ridiculous nature of their actions guide us to judge fundamentalist leaders without the guidance of a narrator. It is not the narrators who adopt an appellative function but the humanist characters, whose views we are invited to share. All authors use a wide range of characters with different concepts of reality and place them in sharp contrast against each other. At the same time, they imply a common human core and needs that are innate to every human being, such as the wish to be loved and the need for community, spirituality and moral guidance.

In line with the use of rather covert narrators, the novels also feature a lower degree of psycho-narration. There are passages of reported thought, but these passages are mostly "consonant" in that "the effaced or covert narrator readily fuses with the narrated consciousness […and] tends not to make general statements, indulge in speculative or explanatory commentary, employs [sic.] analytical and conceptual terms, or use cognitive and ethical privilege" (Palmer 2005: 604). Thus, consonant thought report is quite similar to free indirect thought, which is used quite often in all novels. Ideological points of view are mostly developed in quoted dialogues that stage a variety of contradictory views or with the help of free indirect discourse, which "is noted for its liveliness, evocation of realistic effect, and ironic potential" (Fludernik 2005 (b): 562). This narrative method not only blurs the boundaries between narrators and characters but also "casts a peculiarly penumbral light on the figural consciousness, suspending it on the threshold of verbalization in a manner that cannot be achieved by direct quotation" (Cohn 1978: 103). In this manner, the characters' silent doubts, musings and feelings, which shape their turn towards fundamentalist ideas, become visible to the readers in a way that gives them the opportunity to enter a personal process of heart-searching and come to their own ethical conclusions, uninterrupted by a judgmental narratorial voice. This "dubious attribution of language to the figural mind, and its fusion of narratorial and figural language charge it with ambiguity" (Cohn 1978: 107) – an ambiguity which is very suitable to visualise the protagonists' insecurity during their search for moral orientation and community. Moreover, these forms of depicting consciousness lend the texts at hand a feeling of immediacy, which is, according to Palmer, "very suitable for use in situations of tension, crisis, upheaval, turmoil, spiritual searching and inward struggle" (Palmer 2005: 605). Most novels feature a high degree of immediacy, despite a quite balanced relationship between mimetic and diegetic passages. Some works even enhance this tendency by the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

use of present tense, the emotional quality of descriptions or a high degree of eventfulness.

Concerning the choice of language and its potential religious and cultural connotations, it is significant that foreign language elements are not foregrounded in most novels, with Updike's *Terrorist* as a notable exception. This tendency entails once more that most authors do not strive to highlight the alterity of the protagonists they present but the common human needs and flaws. The extensive use of Koranic quotes and other passages in Arabic in Updike's novel, in contrast, has the opposite effect and contributes to our alienation from the protagonist and the constructed character of the text as a whole.[175] The majority of the novels discussed in this study, however, use no or only a very limited amount of code switching in the form of single words, which are translated or self-explanatory in their context. In texts that examine Islamic fundamentalism in the context of Muslim migration to the West, language and other cultural references are used to indicate the characters' cultural hybridity, which is visible in the choice of names, the use of locutions and references to popular culture. Beyond this usage, language is not only indicative of geographical origin but also of social background. Kureishi, for instance, tends to employ language primarily as an indicator of class and education. Another important aspect is the changes in place and time used by Khadra, Anam, Hamid and Aslam which often come along with flashbacks and flashforwards. This style expresses a strong connection between past and present, here and there.

The structure and methodology of the analysis served to underline the strong interrelationship between ethics and aesthetics. On this basis, the study achieved an exploration of the potential functions of the literary corpus in the context of Nussbaum's concept of fictional literature as genre of empathy and Zapf's notion of literature as cultural ecology. The literary corpus clearly exemplifies what Düwell states on the interrelationship between ethics and literature. He explains that literature addresses immoral as well as moral behaviour and deploys a manipulative, ideological potential by appealing to the readers' emotions and by rousing moral indignation (cf. Düwell 2000: 11-12). The works at hand question dominant discourses and help us to see the world with different eyes. We are invited to experience new perspectives we might not be able to experience in real life, to empathise with a diverse range of positions or are encouraged with the help of an ironic stance to look at different value systems from a reflective distance. As quoted in the chapter on ethical criticism, Rorty believes the novel to "help forge a democratic moral community of citizens attuned to suffering and more likely to see those different from themselves as 'one of us.' [... Thus, he sees

175 It has to be noted, however, that we cannot assume a purely ideological use of language, in this respect, since Updike is known for using a large variety of languages in his works which are inserted through many passages of code switching. De Bellis explains that Updike already used Berber, Czech, French, Hindi, Portuguese, Japanese, Hebrew, Korean, Spanish, German, Russian, Greek, Sanskrit and Yiddish "to establish the reality of the setting, add to characterization and create atmosphere" (De Bellis 2000: 243). Thus, his use of Koranic quotes in Arabic might not have been intended to highlight Islam as incomprehensible 'other' but could also be attributed to the writer's fascination with languages.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

the novel as] linked to the pursuit of justice, understood as a form of loyalty to other human beings" (Voparil 2006: 61). This statement has proven to be true for the works at hand, because they recognise "human needs that transcend boundaries of time, place, class, religion, and ethnicity" (Nussbaum 1998: 242).

The literary corpus also addresses the great potential of literature and arts to function as a recluse from a desperate reality and a last haven of free thinking and humanist ideas. Fundamentalism (regardless of which kind) is always associated with a lack of humour and a disregard for humanist principles and the intellectual freedom of the individual. Especially Islamic fundamentalism is presented as the enemy of the writer or the artist in general. On a related note, most authors underline the special potential of literature and art to undermine essentialist discourses and the responsibility of the writer to call attention to societal grievances. All authors seem to share a humanist vision of the world and a belief in the power of writers to change people's perception of problems.

Turning to the **third major focus of this study**, concerning the three central functions of literature as culture-critical metadiscourse, imaginative counterdiscourse and reintegrative interdiscourse, the study confirms that all novels fulfil the first two functions but vary in their answers to the question of whether a reintegration of heterogeneous discourses is possible. All works manage to open up a dialogue between antagonistic worldviews, irrespective of whether a text ends on a positive, conciliatory note or violent conflicts remain. The literary corpus thereby shows the great potential of fictional literature as a special discourse to incite a process of healing and mutual understanding even if conflicts and differences prevail. In his seminal work *Literatur als kulturelle Ökologie*, Zapf claims that analogies between ecology and literature can help to underline the cultural significance of imaginative literature from an interdisciplinary perspective and to shed light on the 'inner nature' of men and their relationship towards the culture they live in (Zapf 2002: 4). This is exactly what the authors of this literary corpus do: they address individual experience and the potential conflicts between these individuals and dominant hegemonic discourses. They focus on the psychological struggle within an individual as well as on the struggle between different sources of meaning and systems of power. Moreover, all texts point to the great pressures on the individual as a member of a community, underlining Zapf's notion of 'individuality-in-interrelationship'. As Zapf notes, literature with its balancing and revitalising function has for centuries been staging the dream of individual self-fulfilment and simultaneously disclosed its limits (Zapf 2002: 7). Peer pressure and communal demands play a large role – be they political, cultural or religious. In line with Zapf's holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of all things, the works stress the complexity of all systems and describe the limits of modern individual autonomy. Some authors appeal to the responsibility of the individual to establish, against all odds, a counter-discourse to the dominant essentialist and destructive systems of power (Kureishi, Faulks, Updike). Others highlight the destructive force of communal pressures which constrain the scope of action and the sphere of influence of an individual so much that an assertion of individual autonomy may mean a sacrifice of one's life without any opportunity to change the dominant system (Aslam, Anam, Khadra).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

All works also reflect the close link between body and spirit embodied in Zapf's approach. The interrelationship becomes visible in the simultaneous physical and mental disintegration of many characters. Everything is interconnected as in an ecological system – especially the personal and the political sphere. These connections are established between a variety of discourses. Zapf highlights the discrepancy between the ephemerality of many political, economic and medial approaches and the long-term concerns of literature (Zapf 2002: 56). The works at hand address topics of general and long-lasting concern and significant ethical relevance. As Zapf underscores, the inclusion of historical background can serve as a fruitful means to point out generalisable problem structures and illustrate them with concrete individual cases (Zapf 2002: 159).

Whereas all texts are united in their function as 'culture-critical metadiscourse' and 'imaginative counter-discourse', they vary in their potential to serve as 'reintegrative interdiscourse'. On the story-level, many texts feature a catastrophic ending which marks the culmination of a clash between different value systems and the failure of a fight against essentialist discourses. These texts either end in violence and death or a continuation of stasis and self-alienation. Other texts, however, grant the possibility of renewal and a positive renegotiation of positions. As we have seen, this applies mostly to the plots that focus on a teenage search for identity and for this reason allow more flexibility. Nevertheless, all texts represent an interaction between antagonistic discourses. Even though no peaceful reconciliation might be achieved on the story-level, literature still serves as a platform for diverse views to engage in contact. This causes friction but an insight into different perspectives may empower readers to balance these positions and reintegrate them during the reception process.

The preceding analyses show that there are several author-specific features, and some which seem to connect all works under discussion. Whereas the uniting aspects mainly concern ethical content, the author-specific elements predominantly refer to structure and narrative strategies (such as the use of language, the choice of perspective, the degree of eventfulness and the use of irony). Moreover, the novels display differences in terms of the application of stereotypes and references to concrete historical backgrounds. According to these different settings, the authors also describe diverse catalysts and motivations for fundamentalist beliefs that are inextricably bound to regional and cultural specifics.

Albeit these textual differences, all works express an unbreakable belief in the importance of empathy for building bridges between different cultures and religions. They all emphasise the plight of the individual in a globalised world in which orientation, stability and easy answers seem to be impossible to find. The literary corpus echoes the longing of any individual for a home, for orientation, community and spiritual guidance. Fundamentalism seems to offer this at first sight, but is unmasked as a shallow and dangerous response to the problems of our times. Consequently, the harshest criticism is for the leaders who use religion as a tool to exploit the problems, longings and inadequacies of other human beings for their own selfish purposes. A central common denominator is the rejection of all essentialist systems. In most novels, more than one form of fundamentalism is involved, Islamic fundamentalism not

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

being the only point of criticism. On the contrary: most authors strive to clarify that political and economic ideologies can similarly develop a fundamentalist potential. No matter whether communism, economic libertarianism or cultural systems like tribal structures are depicted: they are all united by their responsibility for the exploitation and death of an uncountable number of people and a denial of the worth of the individual. Essentialist ideologies always harm the people they pretend to protect and provide no answer or solution to any of our human problems and needs. Significantly, religion in general or Islam in particular is never foregrounded as a major topic. It only plays a minor role – if any role at all – in explaining the symptoms and catalysts of fundamentalist radicalisation. Conflicts are not attributed to supposedly 'clashing' cultures or an alleged incompatibility of Islam with other 'civilisations' but to economic inequalities, political conflicts or individual crises, which are often caused by a context of migration and rootlessness. All novels are indicative of a close interrelationship between religion, culture, politics and economics. They emphasise blurring borders that make it nearly impossible to separate these influences when talking about a phenomenon such as Islamic fundamentalism.

In this context, the personal responsibility of the individual as a member of civil society is singled out as a central topic. All authors seem to share a humanist vision of the world and a belief in the power and accountability of citizens in general and intellectuals or authors in particular to call attention to abuses. Fictional literature is highlighted in its role as powerful weapon against essentialist ideologies of any kind. It provides a platform for the negotiation of different worldviews and an invitation to enter into a dialogue. The novels at hand stress our duty as citizens to question easy answers and religious or cultural prejudices. Human life is seen as the ultimate value that has to be protected against all obstacles and adversaries. As the topic of Islamic fundamentalism continues to gain notoriety in the face of numerous attacks against Western societies, serious engagement with the phenomenon becomes more and more pressing. Islamic fundamentalism does not only instil fear and pose a threat for the lives of people, it also embodies the rejection of a 'Western' model of politics and economics, of liberal values and an entire way of life. In the light of these developments the power of fictional literature to promote dialogue and change the readers' perspective is of paramount importance to promote a change in thinking that may lead to action, which not only fights the symptoms but addresses the roots of fundamentalist violence.

Comparing the current situation to the point in time when I started researching for this study, we find continuity as well as an acceleration of developments. Some of the works continue to receive much attention and generate new readings from different angles, such as genre theory (Daily-Bruckner 2016: 224). Most authors remained preoccupied with the topics central to this literary corpus. In his latest novel *The Last Word* (2014), Kureishi again examined some of his favourite topics, such as the role of the writer, the powerful potential of storytelling and the creation of individual identity (cf. Fischer 2015: 115-130). Hamid intensified his engagement with the downturns of global capitalism in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013). Khadra, meanwhile, returned to his most prominent topic: the painful history and insecure

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

present of Algeria. However, his latest works not only show his concern about his home-country but also his strong interest in works on the borderline between fact and fiction. His novel *La dernière nuit du Raïs* (2015), for instance, is a novel biography about the life of Muammar al-Gaddafi, which skilfully mingles fact and fiction in order to achieve an approximation to this difficult and influential despot.

The interdisciplinary and broad design of this study may serve as a starting point for a variety of further applications. An interesting way of developing this study would, for instance, be a focus on the oeuvre of only one author, using an approach which not only encompasses fictional literature but also political texts and more biographical background information. Especially the works by Yasmina Khadra and Mohsin Hamid would be very suitable for such a contextualisation. The central moral dilemmas at the heart of this study play a significant role in all writings by Khadra and Hamid. Both authors are politically involved and do not hesitate to comment on the politics of the day. Apart from being novelists, they give numerous interviews, write newspaper columns, political essays and blogs that remind us of the blurring between nonfiction and fiction. "Fiction can say publicly what might otherwise appear unsayable", Hamid explains and claims that all fiction is political and influenced by politics.[176] A study of the interactions between fiction and nonfiction in the oeuvre of a specific author (concerning style, structure and ethical content) would be an interesting basis for a critical appraisal of their complete works and their contributions to public discourse as political writers as well as novelists.

Moreover, a consultation of the findings of 'reader-response' criticism could be an interesting approach to verify whether the narrative strategies analysed in this study as central to directing sympathy and influencing the judgment of ethical concerns really have the assumed effects on the readership. The work of experimental psychologists and new developments in neuroscience create opportunities to explore the emotional responses of readers. Experiments could be used to provide empirical evidence for or against the claim that literature can function as a 'genre of empathy'. The *International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature (IGEL)* has developed innovative approaches for a combination of empirical studies and literary theory. The articles published in its official journal *Scientific Study of Literature* (SSOL) combine an analysis of literary texts from different genres with the experimental methodology of diverse disciplines such as cognitive science, applied linguistics, psychology, computational science, sociology or neuroscience. The *International Association of Empirical Aesthetics* (IAEA) similarly combines scientific methods from various disciplines to investigate aesthetic experience. Both societies not only focus on literature but also on music, art, theatre and film. In this context, a comparison of reader-responses to the texts at hand with reader-responses to theatrical or filmic adaptations might be worthwhile additions that are interesting with respect to the works by Hamid and Kureishi. I strongly believe that the popularity of interdisciplinary approaches will continue to grow as they enrich literary studies and can serve to shed light on the powerful potential and social relevance of fiction.

176 Hamid 17.02.2015: n.p.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Moreover, not only literary but also political approaches undergo constant revision. It is remarkable how the topic of Islamic fundamentalism has increased in urgency and importance since the beginning of my research project. The fight against the Islamic State in many war-torn and destabilised countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa and an alarming rise of attacks on the civilian population in countries all over the world cause international concern. Eminent political scientists continue to argue about the role of religion in fundamentalist radicalisation processes, which is one of the central questions raised in this study. Whereas the novels ascribe no or only very little importance to the nature of Islam and religious orthodoxy, the discussions in the field of political science are controversial, as the fierce argument between Olivier Roy and Gilles Kepel in summer 2016 indicated. The one-time friends have become bitter enemies over the role of religion for the emergence of Islamist terrorism. Kepel ascribes the current rise of terrorist attacks to a 'radicalisation of Islam' in the West, which is not only promoted by a failure of integration but also by the inherently militant nature of Muslim movements such as Salafism. Roy, in contrast, believes in an 'Islamicisation of radicalism.' In his opinion, Islamic fundamentalist movements only offer a platform and an excuse for the justification of excessive violence. According to Roy, the motives for a use of violence are always individual and can often be traced back to socio-economic and political marginalisation (Nossiter 2016: n.p.). There might never be sufficient evidence to prove whose assessment of Islamic fundamentalism is right. However, the stance taken by Roy and the authors discussed in this study might offer a chance to address current conflicts in a way that does not place Muslims under general suspicion but may open a public dialogue. No society can eliminate radical ideologies – but it can try to understand and eliminate the catalysts for these ideologies by creating a community in which less citizens feel excluded and marginalised.

The literary corpus represents a search for potential motives that becomes ever more important when we want to address the roots of home-grown terrorism and stop recruitment and radicalisation processes in Western countries. Only when we come closer to an understanding of the causes, we will be able to react adequately and address underlying problems. We experience how terrorist networks focus on the recruitment of young people who lack prospects in life: traumatised refugees from Syria, poor people from North African countries without the right of continued abode in the states they flew to, young Western citizens with a migrant background, who lack education and chances for social upward mobility. I believe that it is not only the duty of governments but of all of us to build a community that is strong enough to address the problems of these people to counter the lures of violent essentialisms.

Literature can help to raise awareness of these problems and to counter dominant stereotypes. The continuing attention given to literature which addresses the conflictual relationship between Islam and the West underlines its power as a vehicle of social, political and religious criticism. Authors engaging with the topic in a reflective and conciliatory way may gain a large influence on public discussion and become positive role models. They often seem to be perceived as promoting a reintegration of diverse discourses that can be useful for the construction of national identity in times

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

of crisis, anxieties and a reductive public rhetoric. The fact that the German-Iranian writer Navid Kermani was talked about as the next Federal President of Germany in summer 2016 impressively attests to this tendency. Kermani is an Orientalist who writes novels as well as non-fiction. He received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade and his works recurrently addressed the roots of and the changeful interrelationship between Islam and Christianity. A writer suddenly attracts the attention of politicians who see the strong potential of a man who is a fervent admirer of the German Basic Law and a liberal humanist but also an intellectual with a Muslim background and the son of immigrants who knows the difficulties of a hybrid cultural identity. Kermani – as a writer and a personality – embodies the powerful potential of a cultural and religious mediator to express different facets of what it may mean to be German today.

The 'global community' on a bookshelf Hamid praises may not be able to solve our most urgent problems, but it might initiate a dialogue which undermines the brutalisation of language that currently seems to dominate public discourse. When I started this study, no one could pre-empt the 'refugee crisis' that poses such a great challenge to the world community in 2016. The large flow of predominantly Muslim refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and North Africa to European countries triggered renewed discussions about the compatibility of Islam with our idea of democracy. I could not foresee these developments when I started exploring the topic some years ago. Disputes about the potential necessity of a burqa ban, the right attitude to cases of child marriage and about ways to stop the infiltration of refugee hostels by fundamentalist Muslim groups reinforced negative stereotypes of Islam. The conviction that our liberal-democratic order needs to be defended seems to be widespread. These anxieties are not always ungrounded, but they are increasingly exploited by right-wing populist groups. Fear is a bad guide – in the personal as well as in the political realm. As I am now working as a political advisor to the Christian Democrats in Frankfurt on the topic of integration, I know the large efforts political parties try to make in order to undermine populism without failing to address the needs and anxieties of common citizens. Frankfurt is home to 44 Muslim communities and people from more than 170 different nations. 25% of its citizens do not own a German passport, many more possess dual citizenship or a migrant background. Mutual reservations between citizens with different cultural and religious backgrounds cannot always be adequately addressed by politics, because they reach deep into the private realm. In this context, however, the *Frankfurt Book Fair* is an event which makes a major contribution to the establishment of a positive view on diversity. Especially accompanying events such as the *Open Books Reading Festival* serve as a platform to address topical issues without resorting to simple polemics. These events are free of charge and invite not only an intellectual elite but also common people to get involved with these topics from different vantage points. Reading cannot change the world – but it might be able to change our view of the world and make us recognise its complexity.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Bibliography

Primary sources (cited)

Anam, Tahmima. *The Good Muslim*. New York: Harper, 2011.

Aslam, Nadeem. *Maps for Lost Lovers*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004.

--- *The Wasted Vigil*. London: Faber and Faber, 2009.

Faulks, Sebastian. *A Week in December*. London: Vintage Books, 2010.

Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Austin et al.: Harcourt, 2007.

--- *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2013.

Khadra, Yasmina. *The Sirens of Baghdad* [translated by John Cullen]. New York et al.: Random House, 2007.

--- *The Attack*. London: Vintage Books, 2007.

--- *La dernière nuit du Raïs*. Paris: Éditions Julliard, 2016 [2015].

Kureishi, Hanif. "My Son the Fanatic". London: Faber and Faber, 1994.

--- *The Black Album*. London: Faber and Faber, 2000 [1995].

Updike, John. *Terrorist*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2007 [2006].

Primary sources (referred to)

Ali, Latifa (with Richard Shears). *Betrayed*. Sydney et al.: New Holland Publishers, 2014.

Latifa. *My Forbidden Face. Growing up Under the Taliban: A Young Woman's Story*. London: Virago Press, 2002.

Leila. *Married by Force*. London: Piatkus, 2007.

Mernissi, Fatima. *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Sanghera, Jasvinder. *Daughters of Shame*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009.

Shah, Hannah. *The Imam's Daughter*. London: Rider, 2009.

Secondary sources

Abbas, Tahir. "Islamophobia in the United Kingdom: Historical and Contemporary Political and Media Discourses in the Framing of a 21st-Century Anti-Muslim Racism." In: John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (eds.). *Islamophobia. The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century*. Oxford: University Press, 2011. 63-76.

Abdel-Malek, Anouar. "Orientalism in Crisis." In: A.L. Macfie (ed.). *Orientalism. A Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2000 [1963]. 47-56.

Abrahamian, Ervand. "The US Media, Huntington and September 11." In: *Third World Quarterly* 24.3 (2003): 529-544.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Honor and the Sentiments of Loss in a Bedouin Society." In: *American Ethnologist* 12.2 (1985): 245-261.

Adams, Guy B., Danny L. Balfour and George E. Reed. "Abu Ghraib, Administrative Evil, and Moral Inversion: The Value of 'Putting Cruelty First.'" In: *Public Administration Review* 66.5 (2006): 680-693.

Adams, Lorraine. "Suicide Girl." In: *The New York Times*, 21.05.2006, n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/21/books/review/21adams.html [1.6.2012].

Adamson, Jane. "Against tidiness. Literature and/versus moral philosophy." In: Jane Adamson, Richard Freedman and David Parker (eds.). *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy and Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 84-110.

Afp. "Tunisia arrests official after riots over 'un-Islamic' art." In: *Al Arabia*, 21.06.2012, n.p. http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/06/21/221794.html [24.08.2014].

Ahmad, Aijaz. "Between Orientalism and Historicism.". In: A.L. Macfie (ed.). *Orientalism. A Reader.* New York: New York University Press, 2000 [1991]. 285-297.

Ahmed, Rehana, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin. "Introduction." In: Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin (eds.). *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing.* London and New York: Routledge, 2012. 1-17.

Ahrens, Rüdiger and Laurenz Volkmann. "Preface." In: Rüdiger Ahrens and Laurenz Volkmann (eds.). *Why Literature Matters. Theories and Functions of Literature.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996. 1-10.

Akbarzadeh, Sharam and Fethi Mansouri (eds.). *Islam and Political Violence. Muslim Diaspora and Radicalism in the West.* London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

Alber, Jan. "Natural Narratology." In: David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.* London and New York: Routledge, 2005. 394-395.

Al-Dabbagh, Abdulla. *Literary Orientalism, Postcolonialism and Universalism.* New York et al.: Lang, 2010.

Alessandrini, Anthony C. "Humanism in Question: Fanon and Said." In: Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (eds.). *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies.* Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 431-450.

Ali, Dilshad D. "How a Terrorist is Made. In John Updike's 'Terrorist.' The post – 9/11 world teeters on edge while the U.S. faces its worst demons from within." In: *Beliefnet.com*, 2006, n.p. http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Islam/2006/07/How-A-Terrorist-Is-Made.aspx?p=2 [15.10.2013].

Almond, Gabriel A., Emmanuel Sivan and R. Scott Appleby. "Fundamentalism: Genus and Species." In: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 5]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995 (a). 399-424.

---"Explaining Fundamentalisms." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 5]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995 (b), 425-444.

---"Examining the Cases." In: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 5]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995 (c), 445-482.

---"Politics, Ethnicity, and Fundamentalism." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 5]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995 (d), 483-504.

An-na'im, Abdullahi A. "Political Islam in National Politics and International Relations." In: Peter L. Berger (ed.). *The Desecularization of the World.* Washington D.C. and Grand Rapids: Ethics and Public Policy Center/William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999. 103-121.

Anscombe, Frederick F. "The Balkan Revolutionary Age." In: *The Journal of Modern History* 84.3 (2012): 572-606.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Anthony, Andrew. "The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid – review." In: *The Observer,* 23.12.2012, n.p. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/dec/23/reluctant-fundamentalist-mohsin-hamid-review [26.03.2013].

Antor, Heinz. "The Ethics of Criticism in the Age After Value." In: Rüdiger Ahrens and Laurenz Volkmann (eds.). *Why Literature Matters. Theories and Functions of Literature.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996. 65-85.

---"Ethical criticism." In: Ansgar Nünning (ed.). *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie. Ansätze, Personen, Grundbegriffe.* Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2013 (5th updated and extended edition). 193-195.

Antoun, Richard T. *Understanding Fundamentalism. Christian, Islamic and Jewish Movements.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.

Apel, Dora. "Torture Culture: Lynching Photographs and the Images of Abu Ghraib." In: *Art Journal* 64.2 (2005): 88-100.

Arjomand, Said Amir. "Unity and Diversity in Islamic Fundamentalism." In: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 5]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995. 179-198.

Armajani, Jon. *Modern Islamist Movements. History, Religion, and Politics.* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures.* London and New York: Routledge, 1989.

Baier, Annette C. "Ethics in many different voices." In: Jane Adamson, Richard Freedman and David Parker (eds.). *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy and Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 247-268.

Bal, Mieke. *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative.* Toronto: Toronto University Press, 3rd ed. 2009 [1985].

Banerjee, Mita. "'Whiteness of a Different Color'? Racial Profiling in John Updike's *Terrorist*." In: *Neohelicon: acta comparationis litterarum universarum* 35.2 (2008): 13-28.

Banita, Georgiana. *Plotting Justice. Narrative Ethics and Literary Culture after 9/11.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2012.

Barsch, Achim. "Russischer Formalismus." In: Ansgar Nünning (ed.). *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie. Ansätze, Personen, Grundbegriffe.* Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2013 (5th updated and extended edition). 668-670.

Barthes, Roland. "Der Tod des Autors" [1968]. In: Fotis Jannidis et al. (eds.). *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000. 185-193.

---"Der Tod des Autors" [1968]. In: Fotis Jannidis et al. (eds.). *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 2009. 185-193.

Basu, Shrabani. "The Crescent and the pen." In: *The Telegraph Calcutta*, 7.10.2007, n.p. http://www.telegraphindia.com/1071007/asp/7days/story_8405194.asp [26.03.2013].

Baumbach, Sibylle, Herbert Grabes and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Literature and Values. Literature as a Medium for Representing, Disseminating and Constructing Norms and Values* [Giessen Contributions to the Study of Culture 2]. Trier: WVT, 2009.

Bbc. "Talking Books interview with Mohsin Hamid." In: *BBC*, 06.05.2013, n.p. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0184xn9 [25.06.2016].

---"Charlie Hebdo: Gun attack on French magazine kills 12." In: *BBC*, 07.01.2015, n.p. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30710883 [05.11.2015].

Beiner, Ronald. *Civil Religion. A Dialogue in the History of Political Philosophy.* Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Bendaoud, Slemnia. *Mohamed Moulessehoul: l'autre Yasmina Khadra.* Paris: Éditions Edilivre Aparis, 2010.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Bennoune, Karima. *Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here: Untold Stories from the Fight Against Muslim Fundamentalism.* New York: WW Norton and Co, 2013.

Berger, Lars. *Die USA und der islamistische Terrorismus. Herausforderungen im Nahen und Mittleren Osten.* Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 2007.

Berger, Peter L. "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview." In: Peter L. Berger (ed.). *The Desecularization of the World.* Washington D.C. and Grand Rapids: Ethics and Public Policy Center/William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999. 1-18.

Berman, Russell A. *Freedom or Terror. Europe Faces Jihad.* Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2010.

Berning, Nora. *Towards a Critical Ethical Narratology. Analyzing Value Construction in Literary Non-Fiction across Media* [Studien zur Medienkulturwissenschaft 9]. Trier: WVT, 2013.

Bernstein, Richard J. "Richard Rorty's Deep Humanism." In: *New Literary History*, Remembering Richard Rorty, 39.1 (2008): 13-27.

Bhabha, Homi. "The Other Question." In: Padmini Mongia (ed.). *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory. A Reader.* London et al.: Arnold, 1996. 37-54.

---"Signs Taken for Wonders." In: Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.). *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.* London and New York: Routledge, 2006 [1985]. 38-43.

---"Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences." In: Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.). *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.* London and New York: Routledge, 2006 [1988]. 155-157.

---"Globalisierung und Ambivalenz". In: Isolde Charim and Gertraud Auer Borea (eds.). *Lebensmodell Diaspora. Über moderne Nomaden.* Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012. 53-64.

Bhattacharya, Soumya. "Goodbye young lovers." In: *The Observer,* 18.07.2004, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/jul/18/fiction.features/print [14.10.2013].

Bidisha. "The Good Muslim by Tahmima Anam – review." In: *The Observer*, 05.06.2011, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jun/05/good-muslim-tahmima-anam/print [15.10.2013].

Bilgrami, Akeel. "The Clash within Civilizations." In: *Daedalus* 132.3 (2003): 88-93.

Biriotti, Maurice. "Introduction: authorship, authority, authorization." In: Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller (eds.). *What is an author?* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993. 1-16.

Birk, Hanne and Birgit Neumann. "Postkoloniale Erzähltheorie." In: Ansgar Nünning and Vera Nünning (eds.). *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie* [WVT-Handbücher zum literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium 4]. Trier: WVT, 2002. 115-152.

Bjerre, Thomas Aervold. "Post-9/11 Literary Masculinities in Kalfus, DeLillo, and Hamid." In: *Orbis Litterarum* 67.3 (2012): 241–266.

Buruma, Ian and Avishai Margalit. *Occidentalism. The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies.* London et al.: Penguin, 2005.

Blake, Andrew. *Salman Rushdie. A Beginner's Guide.* Abingdon: Hodder & Stoughton, 2001.

Blakeley, Ruth. "Why Torture?" In: *Review of International Studies* 33.3 (2007): 373-394.

Bode, Christoph. "Why Theory Matters." In: Rüdiger Ahrens and Laurenz Volkmann (eds.). *Why Literature Matters. Theories and Functions of Literature.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996. 87-100.

Bookbrowse.com. "Nadeem Aslam Biography", 2008, n.p. http://www.bookbrowse.com/biographies/index.cfm/author_number/1149/nadeem-aslam [14.10.2013].

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1969 [1961].

--- "Are Narrative Choices Subject to Ethical Criticism?" In: James Phelan (ed.). *Reading Narrative. Form, Ethics, Ideology.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989. 57-78.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

--- "Why Ethical Criticism Can Never Be Simple." In: Stephen K. George (ed.). *Ethics, Literature & Theory. An Introductory Reader* [2nd ed.]. Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. 23-35.

--- "Who Is Responsible in Ethical Criticism?" In: Stephen K. George (ed.). *Ethics, Literature & Theory. An Introductory Reader* [2nd ed.]. Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. 79-98.

Boswell, Marshall. "Updike, religion, and the novel of moral debate." In: Stacey Olster (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to John Updike.* Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 43-57.

Boyer, Paul. "American Challenges to Secularization." In: Jeanne Cortiel et al. (eds.). *Religion in the United States.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011. 292-294.

Brace, Marianne. "Nadeem Aslam: A question of honour." In: *The Independent* 11.06.2004, n.p. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/nadeem-aslam-a-question-of-honour-6167858.html?printService=print [14.10.2013].

Bragard, Véronique, Christopher Dony and Warren Rosenberg. "Introduction." In: ebd. (eds.). *Portraying 9/11. Essays on Representations in Comics, Literature, Film and Theatre.* Jefferson and London: MacFarland and Company, 2011.

Brah, Avtar. "Difference, diversity and differentiation." In: James Donald and Ali Rattansi (eds.). *'Race', Culture and Difference.* London and New Delhi: SAGE, 1995. 126-145.

--- "Feminism, 'Race' and Stuart Hall's Diasporic Imagination." In: Brian Meeks (ed.). *Culture, Politics, Race and Diaspora. The Thought of Stuart Hall.* London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2007. 73-82.

Braukämpfer, Ulrich. "Bedouin." In: Georg Pfeffer and Deepak Kumar Behera (eds.). *Contemporary Society: Tribal Studies* [Vol. 5: Concept of Tribal Society]. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2002. 283-306.

Bredella, Lothar. "Aesthetics and Ethics: Incommensurable, Identical or Conflicting?" In: Gerhard Hoffmann and Alfred Hornung (eds.). *Ethics and Aesthetics. The Moral Turn of Postmodernism.* Heidelberg: Winter, 1996 (a). 29-51.

--- "How Can Literary Texts Matter?" In: Rüdiger Ahrens and Laurenz Volkmann (eds.). *Why Literature Matters. Theories and Functions of Literature.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996 (b). 101-115.

--- "The Significance of Empathy in the Moral and Aesthetic Experience." In: Sibylle Baumbach, Herbert Grabes and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Literature and Values. Literature as a Medium for Representing, Disseminating and Constructing Norms and Values.* Trier: WVT, 2009. 19-42.

--- *Das Verstehen des Anderen. Kulturwissenschaftliche und literaturdidaktische Studien.* Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2010.

Brighton, Shane. "British Muslims, Multiculturalism and UK Foreign Policy: 'Integration' and 'Cohesion' in and beyond the State." In: *International Affairs* 83.1 (2007): 1-17.

Brown, Lillie Anne. "Suited Up in the Compositional Realm of Morrison, Walker, Wright, Ellison, and the 'The Artist Formerly Known as Prince': Identity, Belonging, and Acceptance in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*." In: *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* 3.3 (2011): n.p.

Brown, Mick. "John Updike: descent of man" (Interview with John Updike). In: *The Telegraph* 26.10.2008, n.p. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/donotmigrate/3562574/John-Updike-descent-of-man.html [15.10.2013].

Bruns, Gerald L. "Literature and the Limits of Moral Philosophy: Reflections on Alasdair MacIntyre's Project." In: Leona Toker (ed.). *Commitment in Reflection. Essays in Literature and Moral Philosophy.* New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1994. 245-277.

Buchan, James. "Beyond belief. A suicide bombing provides an unusual plot for Yasmina Khadra's *The Attack.*" In: *The Guardian* 01.07.2006, n.p. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2006/jul/01/featuresreviews.guardianreview16?INTCMP=SRCH [1.6.2012].

--- "Between two worlds." In: *The Guardian* 20.09.2008, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/sep/20/fiction2/print [14.10.2013].

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Buchanan, Bradley. *Hanif Kureishi.* Basingstoke et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Burke, Seán. *The Death and Return of the Author. Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 3rd ed. 2008 [1992].

Butt, Nadia. "Between Orthodoxy and Modernity: Mapping the Transcultural Predicaments of Pakistani Immigrants in Multi-Ethnic Britain in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004)." In: Lars Eckstein et al. (eds.). *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+. New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts.* Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008. 153-169.

Carrol, Noel. "Moral Realism in the Age of Postmodernism." In: Gerhard Hoffmann and Alfred Hornung (eds.). *Ethics and Aesthetics. The Moral Turn of Postmodernism.* Heidelberg: Winter, 1996. 87-96.

Casanova, José. "Secular Imaginaries: Introduction." In: *Int J Polit Cult Soc* 21:1–4 (2008), n.p. http://www.springerlink.com/content/0329w28014287223/fulltext.pdf [28.09.2011].

--- "Religion in Modernity as Global Challenge." In: José Casanova and Hans Joas et al. (eds). *Religion und die umstrittene Moderne.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010. 1-16.

Cesari, Jocelyne. "Islamophobia in the West: A Comparison between Europe and the United States." In: John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin. *Islamophobia. The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century.* Oxford: University Press, 2011. 21-43.

Chambers, Claire. *British Muslim Fictions. Interviews with Contemporary Writers.* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989 [1978].

--- "The 'Rhetoric of Fiction'." In: James Phelan (ed.). *Reading Narrative. Form, Ethics, Ideology.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989. 40-56.

Child, Ben. "Iran berates Berlin film festival over Panahi report." In: *The Guardian* 19.02.2013, n.p. http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2013/feb/19/iran-berlin-film-festival-panahi [6.5.2013].

Childs, Peter and Patrick Williams. *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory.* London et al.: Prentice Hall, 1997.

Chiozza, Giacomo. "Is There a Clash of Civilizations? Evidence from Patterns of International Conflict Involvement, 1946-97." In: *Journal of Peace Research* 39.6 (2002): 711-734.

Choueiri, Youssef M. *Islamic Fundamentalism 3rd Edition. The Story of Islamist Movements.* London and New York: Continuum, 2010.

Clarke, Brock. "What Literature Can and Cannot Do: Lionel Trilling, Richard Rorty, and the Left." In: *The Massachusetts Review* 41.4 (2000/2001): 523-539.

Claviez, Thomas, Ulla Haselstein and Sieglinde Lemke (eds.). *Aesthetic Transgressions: Modernity, Liberalism, and the Function of Literature.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006.

Coady, C.A.J. and Seumas Miller. "Literature, Power, and the Recovery of Philosophical Ethics." In: Jane Adamson, Richard Freedman and David Parker (eds.). *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy and Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 201-221.

Cohn, Dorrit. *Transparent Minds. Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

--- *Transparent Minds. Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction.*

Cole, Donald P. "Where have the Bedouin Gone?" In: *Anthropological Quarterly* 76.2 (2003): 235-267.

Collins, Carole. "Chronology of the Israeli Invasion of Lebanon June-August 1982." In: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Special Issue: The War in Lebanon, 11.4 – 12.1 (1982): 135-192.

Conermann, Stephan. "Re-Islamisierung." In: Ralf Elger (ed.). *Kleines Islam-Lexikon. Geschichte, Alltag, Kultur.* Bonn: BpB, 2004. 263-264.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

--- "Traditionalismus." In: Ralf Elger (ed.). *Kleines Islam-Lexikon. Geschichte, Alltag, Kultur.* Bonn: BpB, 2004. 305.

--- "Modernismus." In: Ralf Elger (ed.). *Kleines Islam-Lexikon. Geschichte, Alltag, Kultur.* Bonn: BpB, 2004. 203-204.

--- "Reformislam." In: Ralf Elger (ed.). *Kleines Islam-Lexikon. Geschichte, Alltag, Kultur.* Bonn: BpB, 2004. 260-262.

Cornils, Anja and Wilhelm Schernus. "On the Relationship between the Theory of the Novel, Narrative Theory, and Narratology." In: Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (eds.). *What is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory* [Narratologia 1]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003. 137-174.

--- "Introduction." In: Jeanne Cortiel et al. (eds.). *Religion in the United States.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011. ix-xvi.

Dabashi, Hamid. *Post-Orientalism. Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror.* New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2009.

Daily-Bruckner, Katie. "Reimagining Genre in the Contemporary Immigrant Novel." In: Tim Lanzendörfer (ed.). *The Poetics of Genre in the Contemporary Novel.* Lanham et al.: Lexington Books, 2016. 219- 235.

Daloglu, Tulin. "Religion and the War on Terror." In: *The Washington Times* 23.10.2006, n.p. http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2006/oct/23/20061023-095020-4802r/ [20.09.2011].

Davidson, Lawrence. *Islamic Fundamentalism. An introduction.* Santa Barbara: ABC-clio, 3rd edition 2013.

Davie, Grace. "Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?" In: Peter L. Berger (ed.). *The Desecularization of the World.* Washington D.C. and Grand Rapids: Ethics and Public Policy Center/ William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999. 65-83.

Darda, Joseph. "Precarious World: Rethinking Global Fiction in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*." In: *Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature* 47.3 (2014): 107-122.

Däwes, Birgit. "'Close Neighbors to the Unimaginable': Literary Projections of Terrorists' Perspectives (Martin Amis, John Updike, Don DeLillo)." In: *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, Trauma's Continuum—September 11th Reconsidered, 55.3 (2010): 495-517.

--- *Ground Zero Fiction. History, Memory, and Representation in the American 9/11 Novel* [American Studies 208]. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011.

Dazhi, Yao and Xiang Yunhua. "Postmodernist Liberalism: A Critique of Richard Rorty's Political Philosophy." In: *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 3.3 (2008): 455-463.

De Bellis, Jack. *The John Updike Encyclopedia.* Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2000.

Decker, Jeffrey Louis. "Gatsby's Pristine Dream: The Diminishment of the Self-Made Man in the Tribal Twenties." In: *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 28.1 (1994): 52-71.

De Graaf, Mia. "Iranian mullah revives death fatwa against Salman Rushdie over Satanic Verses 25 years after it was issued." In: *Daily Mail* 16.02.2014, n.p. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2560683/Iranian-mullah-revives-death-fatwa-against-Salman-Rushdie-Satanic-Verses-25-years-issued.html [24.04.2016].

Diamond, Cora. "Martha Nussbaum and the Need for Novels." In: Jane Adamson, Richard Freedman and David Parker (eds.). *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy and Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 39-64.

Diment, Galya. "Andrei Platonov: The Ethical Engagement of the Writer and His Readers." In: Leona Toker (ed.). *Commitment in Reflection. Essays in Literature and Moral Philosophy.* New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1994. 143-167.

Dodd, Peter C. "Family Honor and the Forces of Change in Arab Society." In: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4.1 (1973): 40-54.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Doty, Roxanne Lynn. "Immigration and National Identity: Constructing the Nation." In: *Review of International Studies* 22.3 (1996): 235-255.

Douin, Jean-Luc. "Yasmina Khadra se démasque." In: *Le Monde* 12.01.2001, cited in Françoise Naudillon. *Les Masques de Yasmina. Les romans policiers algériens de Yasmina Khadra.* Yaoundé: Éditions Nouvelles du Sud, 2002. 29.

Dugdale, John. "London 2012: Shakespeare is no Olympic Champion." In: *The Guardian* 27.07.2012, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2012/jul/27/london-2012-shakespeare-olympic-champion [7.3.2015].

Düwell, Marcus. "Ästhetische Erfahrung und Moral." In: Dietmar Mieth (ed.). *Erzählen und Moral. Narrativität im Spannungsfeld von Ethik und Ästhetik.* Tübingen: Attempto Verlag, 2000. 11-35.

Eaglestone, Robert. "Flaws: James, Nussbaum, Miller, Levinas." In: Dominic Rainsford and Tim Woods (eds.). *Critical Ethics. Text, Theory and Responsibility*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999. 77-87.

Eagleton, Terry. "Self-authoring subjects." In: Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller (eds.). *What is an author?* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993. 42-50.

Eckstein, Lars et al. "A Divided Kingdom? Reflections on Multi-Ethnic Britain in the New Millennium." In: Lars Eckstein et al. (eds.). *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+. New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts.* Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008. 9-21.

Eder, Jens. "Narratology and Cognitive Reception Theories." In: Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (eds.). *What is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory* [Narratologia 1]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003. 277-301.

Edwards, Justin D. *Postcolonial Literature. A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism.* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. "Fundamentalism, Phenomenology, and Comparative Dimensions." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 5]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995. 259-276.

--- *Die Vielfalt der Moderne.* Übersetzt und bearbeitet von Brigitte Schluchter. Weilerswist: Welbrück Wissenschaft, 2000 (a).

--- "Fundamentalist Movements in the Framework of Multiple Modernities." In: Almut Höfert and Armando Salvatore (eds.). *Between Europe and Islam. Shaping Modernity in a Transcultural Space.* Bruxelles et al.: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2000 (b). 175-196.

Emerson, Michael O. and David Hartman. "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism." In: *Annual Review of Sociology* 32 (2006): 127-144.

Encke, Julia. "Neues Roman-Genre. John Updike im Kopf eines Verführten: 'Terrorist.'" In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* 27.08.2006, n.p. http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/neues-roman-genre-john-updike-im-kopf-eines-verfuehrten-terrorist-1354669.html#Drucken [15.10.2013].

Ensink, Titus and Christoph Sauer. "Social-functional and cognitive approaches to discourse interpretation: The role of frame and perspective." In: Titus Ensink and Christoph Sauer (eds.). *Framing and Perspectivising in Discourse.* Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003. 1-21.

Erickson, John. *Islam and Postcolonial Narrative.* Cambridge: University Press, 1998.

Erll, Astrid und Simone Roggendorf. "Kulturgeschichtliche Narratologie: Die Historisierung und Kontextualisierung kultureller Narrative." In: Ansgar Nünning and Vera Nünning (eds.). *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie* [WVT-Handbücher zum literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium 4]. Trier: WVT, 2002. 73-113.

--- "Cultural Studies Approaches to Narrative." In: David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.* London and New York: Routledge, 2005. 89-93.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Esposito, John L. "Introduction." In: John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (eds.). *Islamophobia. The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century.* Oxford: University Press, 2011. xxi-xxxv.

European Values Study. "Religion." In: http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/evs/research/themes/religion/ [19.09.2011].

Ezard, John. "Award for novel of love and racism." In: *The Guardian* 30.03.2005, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/mar/30/race.books/print [14.10.2013].

Fachinger, Petra. "The Making of a 'Terrorist': John Updike's *Terrorist* and Christoph Peters's *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges*." In: *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* December 2007: 410-422.

Falah, Ghazi-Walid, Colin Flint and Virginie Mamadouh. "Just War and Extraterritoriality: The Popular Geopolitics of the United States' War on Iraq as Reflected in Newspapers of the Arab World." In: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96.1 (2006): 142- 164.

Faulks, Sebastian. "Sebastian Faulks: The book I really can't put down. Sebastian Faulks apologises if his comments about the Koran have offended Muslims." In: *The Telegraph* 24.08.2009, n.p. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/6083338/Sebastian-Faulks-The-book-I-really-cant-put-down.html [12.10.2011].

--- *Faulks on Fiction. Great British Characters and the Secret Life of the Novel.* London: BBC Books/Ebury Publishing, 2011.

Field, Ophelia. "The Good Muslim by Tahmima Anam: review. A dark tale of post-war idealism in Bangladesh." In: *The Telegraph* 11.05.2011, n.p. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/8478508/The-Good-Muslim-by-Tahmima-Anam-review.html [15.10.2013].

Finck, Shannon. "'Most Lives Make No Sense': Interro(r)gating the Postmodern Subject in 9/11 Fiction." In: *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 26.1 (2015): 22-41.

Fischer, Karsten. *Die Zukunft einer Provokation. Religion im liberalen Staat.* Berlin: Berlin Univ. Press, 2009.

Fischer, Susan Alice. "Hanif Kureishi's 'Better Philosophy': From *The Black Album* and *My Son the Fanatic* to *The Word and the Bomb.*" In: Susan Alice Fischer (ed.). *Hanif Kureishi.* London et al.: Bloomsbury, 2015. 69-84.

Flood, Alison. "Sebastian Faulks moves to head off Islam row." In: *The Guardian* 24.08.2019, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/aug/24/sebastian-faulks-attacks-quran [04.04.2015].

Fluck, Winfried. "Literature, Liberalism, and the Current Cultural Radicalism." In: Rüdiger Ahrens and Laurenz Volkmann (eds.). *Why Literature Matters. Theories and Functions of Literature.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996. 211-231.

--- *Das kulturelle Imaginäre. Eine Funktionsgeschichte des amerikanischen Romans 1790s-1900.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997.

Fludernik, Monika and Greta Olson. "Introduction." In: Greta Olson (ed.). *Current Trends in Narratology* [Narratologia 27]. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2011. 1-33.

Fludernik, Monika. *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology.* London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

--- "Histories of Narrative Theory (II): From Structuralism to the Present." In: James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (eds.). *A Companion to Narrative Theory.* Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell, 2005. 36-59.

--- "Speech Representation." In: David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.* London and New York: Routledge, 2005. 558-563.

--- *Erzähltheorie. Eine Einführung.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2nd edition 2008 [2006].

Ford, Peter. "Europe cringes at Bush 'crusade' against terrorists." In: *The Christian Science Monitor* 19.09.2001, n.p. http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/0919/p12s2-woeu.html [20.09.2011].

Foucault, Michel. "Was ist ein Autor?" [1969]. In: Fotis Jannidis et al. (eds.). *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000, 194-229.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Fox, Jonathan. "Two Civilizations and Ethnic Conflict: Islam and the West." In: *Journal of Peace Research* 38.4 (2001): 459-472.

--- "Ethnic Minorities and the Clash of Civilizations: A Quantitative Analysis of Huntington's Thesis." In: *British Journal of Political Science* 32.3 (2002): 415-434.

Frank, Michael C. and Eva Gruber. "Literature and Terrorism: Introduction." In: Michael C. Frank and Eva Gruber (eds.). *Literature and Terrorism. Comparative Perspectives.* Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012. 1-23.

Frawley, Oona. "Global civil war and post-9/11 discourse in *The Wasted Vigil*." In: *Textual Practice* 27.3 (2013): 439-457.

Frederick, Robert. "Global Business Ethics." In: Hugh LaFolette (ed.). *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics.* New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2013. 2133-2141.

Freeman, Sophie. "Author Sebastian Faulks risks Muslim fury by describing the Koran as the 'depressing rantings of a schizophrenic'". In: *Dailymail* 24.08.2009, n.p. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1208629/Author-Sebastian-Faulks-risks-Muslim-fury-describing-Koran-depressing-rantings-schizophrenic.html#ixzz3WM8Tj7vi [04.04.2015].

Fricke, Harald. "Funktion". In: Klaus Weimar (ed.). *Reallexikon der Deutschen Literaturwissenschaft* [Bd. 1]. Berlin und New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997. 643-646.

Früchtl, Josef. *Ästhetische Erfahrung und moralisches Urteil. Eine Rehabilitierung.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996.

Gabrieli, Francesco. "Apology for Orientalism" [1965]. In: A.L. Macfie (ed.). *Orientalism. A Reader.* New York: New York University Press, 2000. 79-85.

Gaita, Raimond. "Common understanding and individual voices." In: Jane Adamson, Richard Freedman and David Parker (eds.). *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy and Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 269-288.

Gamal, Ahmed. "The global and the postcolonial in post-migratory literature." In: *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 49.5 (2013): 596–608.

Gamm, Gerhard. *Philosophie im Zeitalter der Extreme.* Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2009.

Garcia, J.L.A. "Modern(ist) Moral Philosophy and MacIntyrean Critique." In: Mark C. Murphy (ed.). *Alasdair MacIntyre* [Contemporary Philosophy in Focus]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 94-113.

Gardell, Mattias. "'Every Man and Woman is God's Caliph': The Rise of the Islamic Democratic Mainstream." In: Ulrika Mårtensson et al. (eds.). *Fundamentalism in the Modern World. Fundamentalism, Politics and History: The State, Globalisation and Political Ideologies* [Vol. 1]. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011. 240-265.

Garvey, John H. "Introduction: Fundamentalism and Politics." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and the State. Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 3]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993. 13-27.

Gemein, Gisbert and Hartmut Redmer. *Islamischer Fundamentalismus.* Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2005.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse* (translated by Jane E. Lewin). Oxford: Blackwell, 1980 [1972].

--- *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (translated by Jane E. Lewin). Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1990 [1983].

--- "Implizierter Autor, implizierter Leser?" [1983]. In: Fotis Jannidis et al. (eds.). *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000. 233-246.

George, Stephen K. (ed.). *Ethics, Literature, & Theory. An Introductory Reader* [2nd ed.]. Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

Gershkoff, Amy and Shana Kushner. "Shaping Public Opinion: The 9/11-Iraq Connection in the Bush Administration's Rhetoric." In: *Perspectives on Politics* 3.3 (2005): 525-537.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Ghose, Sheila. "Brit Bomber: The Fundamentalist Trope in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* and 'My Son the Fanatic.'" In: Graham Macphee and Prem Poddar (eds.). *Empire and After: Englishness in Postcolonial Perspective.* New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007. 121-138.

Godlasky, Rebecca S. "Revising Englishness: Embracing Hybridity in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*." In: *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies (JCPS)* 13.1 (2006): 1-16.

Goodman, Robin Truth. *Policing Narratives and the State of Terror.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009.

Goodstein, Laurie. "The Nation: A President Puts His Faith in Providence." In: *The New York Times* 09.02.2003, n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/09/weekinreview/the-nation-a-president-puts-his-faith-in-providence.html [20.09.2011].

Gordon, David. "Iraq, War and Morality." In: *Economic and Political Weekly* 38.12/13 (2003): 1117-1120.

Gottowik, Volker. *Konstruktionen des Anderen. Clifford Geertz und die Krise der ethnographischen Repräsentation.* Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1997.

Grabes, Herbert. "Ethics, Aesthetics, and Alterity." In: Gerhard Hoffmann and Alfred Hornung (eds.). *Ethics and Aesthetics. The Moral Turn of Postmodernism.* Heidelberg: Winter, 1996. 13-28.

--- "What Exactly is the Case? Ethics, Aesthetics, and Aisthesis." In: Sibylle Baumbach, Herbert Grabes and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Literature and Values. Literature as a Medium for Representing, Disseminating and Constructing Norms and Values.* [Giessen Contributions to the Study of Culture 2]. Trier: WVT, 2009. 43-53.

--- "The Impact of 'September 11': Dramatic and Narrative Creations." In: Michael C. Frank and Eva Gruber (eds.). *Literature and Terrorism. Comparative Perspectives.* Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012. 249-262.

Gray, Richard. "Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis." In: Richard Gray (ed.). *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American South.* Oxford: University Press, 2008. 128-151.

Green, E.H.H. "Thatcherism. An Historical Perspective." In: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999): 17-42.

Green, James and Peter Childs. *Aesthetics and Ethics in Twenty-First Century British Novels.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

Gregory, Marshall. "Ethical Criticism: What It Is and Why It Matters." In: Stephen K. George (ed.). *Ethics, Literature, & Theory. An Introductory Reader*. Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2nd edition 2005. 37-61.

Greiner, Norbert and Felix Spang. "Terror, Terrorismus – Lesarten und Präsentationsformen." In: ebd. (eds.). *Lesarten des Terrorismus.* Trier: WVT, 2011. 1-18.

Grossberg, Lawrence. "Stuart Hall on Race and Racism: Cultural Studies and the Practice of Contextualism." In: Brian Meeks (ed.). *Culture, Politics, Race and Diaspora. The Thought of Stuart Hall.* London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2007. 98-119.

Gui, Weihsin. "Creative Destruction and Narrative Renovation: Neoliberalism and the Aesthetic Dimension in the Fiction of Aravind Adiga and Mohsin Hamid." In: *The Global South* 7.2 (2014): 173-190.

Günther, Klaus. "Das gute und das schöne Leben. Ist moralisches Handeln ästhetisch und läßt sich aus ästhetischer Erfahrung moralisch lernen?" In: Gerhard Gamm and Gerd Kimmerle (eds.). *Ethik und Ästhetik. Nachmetaphysische Perspektiven* [Tübinger Beiträge zu Philosophie und Gesellschaftskritik Bd. 2]. Tübingen: Fuldaer Verlagsanstalt, 1990. 11-37.

Gupta, Meenu. *Salman Rushdie. Re-Telling History through Fiction.* New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2009.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Gymnich, Marion and Ansgar Nünning. "Funktionsgeschichtliche Ansätze: Terminologische Grundlagen und Funktionsbestimmungen von Literatur." In: Marion Gymnich and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Funktionen von Literatur. Theoretische Grundlagen und Modellinterpretationen* [ELCH 16]. Trier: WVT, 2005 (a). 3-27.

--- "'Writing back' als Paradigma der postkolonialen Literatur." In: Marion Gymnich, Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Kulturelles Wissen und Intertextualität. Theoriekonzeptionen und Fallstudien zur Kontextualisierung von Literatur* [Studien zur Englischen Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft 22]. Trier: WVT, 2006. 71-86.

--- "Funktionen postkolonialer und interkultureller Literatur aus kulturökologischer Sicht." In: Hubert Zapf (ed.). *Kulturökologie und Literatur. Beiträge zu einem transdisziplinären Paradigma der Literaturwissenschaft.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008. 105-120.

Gymnich, Marion. "Formen und Funktionen multiperspektivischen Erzählens in ausgewählten Romanen englischer Autorinnen nach 1945: Pat Barker, Brigid Brophy, Maureen Duffy, Eva Figes, Sara Maitland, Elizabeth Taylor, Fay Weldon." In: Vera and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Multiperspektivisches Erzählen. Zur Theorie und Geschichte der Perspektivenstruktur im englischen Roman des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts.* Trier: WVT, 2000. 243-260.

--- "The Functions of Literature from the Point of View of Postcolonial Literary Studies." In: Marion Gymnich and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Funktionen von Literatur. Theoretische Grundlagen und Modellinterpretationen* [ELCH 16]. Trier: WVT, 2005. 121-140.

--- *Metasprachliche Reflexionen und sprachliche Gestaltungsmittel im englischsprachigen postkolonialen und interkulturellen Roman* [ELCH 24]. Trier: WVT, 2007.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Modernity: An Unfinished Project" [1981]. In: Maurizio Passerin D'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib (eds.). *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity. Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. 38-55.

Hadfield, Andrew, Dominic Rainsford and Tim Woods. "Introduction: Literature and the Return to Ethics." In: Andrew Hadfield, Dominic Rainsford and Tim Woods (eds.). *The Ethics in Literature.* Basingstoke et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999. 1-14.

Haines, Simon. "Deepening the Self. The Language of Ethics and the Language of Literature." In: Jane Adamson, Richard Freedman and David Parker (eds.). *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy and Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 21-22.

Haker, Hille. "Narrative und moralische Identität." In: Dietmar Mieth (ed.). *Erzählen und Moral. Narrativität im Spannungsfeld von Ethik und Ästhetik.* Tübingen: Attempto Verlag, 2000. 37-65.

Hall, David. "Secularization in Comparative Perspective." In: Jeanne Cortiel et al. (eds.). *Religion in the United States.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011. 287-291.

Hall, Ronald L. *The Human Embrace. The Love of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Love. Kierkegaard, Cavell, Nussbaum.* Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Hall, Stuart. "Das Lokale und das Globale: Globalisierung und Ethnizität." In: Ulrich Mehlem et al. (eds.). *Stuart Hall. Rassismus und kulturelle Identität.* [Ausgewählte Schriften 2]. Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 1994 (a). 44-64.

--- "Alte und neue Identitäten, alte und neue Ethnizitäten." In: Ulrich Mehlem et al. (eds.). *Stuart Hall. Rassismus und kulturelle Identität* [Ausgewählte Schriften 2]. Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 1994 (b). 66-87.

--- "Der Westen und der Rest: Diskurs und Macht." In: Ulrich Mehlem et al. (eds.). *Stuart Hall. Rassismus und kulturelle Identität.* [Ausgewählte Schriften 2]. Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 1994 (c). 137-179.

--- "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." [1990] In: Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin (eds.). *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.* London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 435-438.

--- "New Ethnicities." [1989] In: Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin (eds.). *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.* London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 199-202.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

--- "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" [1996]. In: Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.). *Questions of Cultural Identity.* London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003. 1-17.

--- "Museums of Modern Art and the End of History." In: Sarah Campbell and Gilane Tawadros (eds.). *Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj. Modernity and Difference.* London: Institute of Visual Arts, 2001. 8-25.

--- "Das Spektakel des 'Anderen'." In: Juha Koivisto and Andreas Merkens (eds.). *Ideologie, Identität, Repräsentation* [Ausgewählte Schriften 4]. Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 2004 (a). 108-166.

--- "Wer braucht 'Identität'?" In: Juha Koivisto and Andreas Merkens (eds.). *Ideologie, Identität, Repräsentation* [Ausgewählte Schriften 4]. Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 2004 (b). 167-187.

--- "The Work of Representation." In: Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans and Sean Nixon (eds.). *Representation.* Los Angeles et al.: Sage, 2nd edition 2013. 1-47.

Hall, Stuart and Sarat Maharaj. "Modernity and Difference. A Conversation between Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj." In: Sarah Campbell and Gilane Tawadros (eds.). *Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj. Modernity and Difference.* London: Institute of Visual Arts, 2001. 36-56.

Hallet, Wolfgang. "Intertextualität als methodisches Konzept einer kulturwissenschaftlichen Literaturwissenschaft." In: Marion Gymnich, Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Kulturelles Wissen und Intertextualität. Theoriekonzeptionen und Fallstudien zur Kontextualisierung von Literatur* [Studien zur Englischen Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft 22]. Trier: WVT, 2006. 53-70.

Halliday, Fred. "'Orientalism' and Its Critics." In: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20.2 (1993): 145-163.

Halman, Loek, Ruud Luijkx and Marga van Zundert. *Atlas of European Values* [European Values Study]. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

Halman, Loek, Inge Sieben and Marga van Zundert. *Atlas of European Values. Trends and Traditions at the turn of the Century* [European Values Study]. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Hamid, Mohsin and Francine Prose. "Does Fiction have the Power to Sway Politics?" In: *The New York Times*, Sunday Book Review 17.02.2015, n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/22/books/review/does-fiction-have-the-power-to-sway-politics.html?_r=0 [25.06.2016].

Hamid, Mohsin. Essay. "My Reluctant Fundamentalist." March 2007 (a). n.p. http://www.powells.com/essays/mohsin.html [26.03.2013].

--- "Why Do They Hate Us?" In: *The Washington Post* 22.07.2007 (b). n.p. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/20/AR2007072001806.html [26.03.2013].

--- "After 60 Years, Will Pakistan Be Reborn?" In: *The New York Times* 15.08.2007 (c). n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/15/opinion/15hamid.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 [26.03.2013].

--- "Harcourt Interview with Mohsin Hamid." March 2007 (d). n.p. http://www.mohsinhamid.com/interviewharcourt2007.html [26.03.2013].

---"Op-ed Contributor; Flailing, but Not Yet Failing." In: *The New York Times* 18.03.2009 (a). n.p. http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B06E4D6173FF93BA25750C0A96F9C8B63 [26.03.2013].

---"Slaying Dragons: Mohsin Hamid discusses The Reluctant Fundamentalist." In: *Psychoanalysis and History* 11.2 (2009) (b): 225-238.

--- "Discontent and Its Civilizations." In: *The New York Times* 02.12.2010. n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/02/opinion/global/02iht-GA07Hamid.html [25.03.2013].

--- Interview with Nina Liewald, 16.08.2012 (a). n.p.

--- "Letter from Lahore: 'Don't angry me'." In: *The New Yorker* 24.09.2012 (b). n.p. http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2012/09/the-riots-in-lahore-dont-angry-me.html [27.03.2013].

Hamilton, Hamish. Interview with Mohsin Hamid. February 2007. http://www.mohsinhamid.com/interviewhh2007.html [26.03.2013].

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Hammond, Andrew. "The Hybrid State: Hanif Kureishi and Thatcher's Britain." In: Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman (eds.). *Reconstructing Hybridity. Post-Colonial Studies in Transition* [Studies in Comparative Literature 51]. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007. 221-240.

Hardacre, Helen. "The Impact of Fundamentalisms on Women, the Family, and Interpersonal Relations." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and Society* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 2]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993. 129-150.

Harmanşah, Ömür. "ISIS, Heritage, and the Spectacles of Destruction in the Global Media." In: *Near Eastern Archaeology* [Special Issue: The Cultural Heritage Crisis in the Middle East], 78.3 (2015): 170-177.

Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. *Getting it Right. Language, Literature, and Ethics.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

hartnell, Anna. "Moving through America: Race, Place and Resistance in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*". In: *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46.3-4 (2010): 336-348.

--- "Writing Islam in Post-9/11 America. John Updike's *Terrorist.*" In: Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin (eds.). *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing.* London and New York: Routledge, 2012. 135-148.

Hassan, Ihab. "Fundamentalism and Literature." In: *The Georgia Review* 62.1 (2008): 16-29.

Hawkins, Hunt. "Conrad's Critique of Imperialism in Heart of Darkness." In: *PMLA* 94.2 (1979): 286-299.

Hegghammer, Thomas. "Global Jihadism after the Iraq War." In: *Middle East Journal* 60.1 (2006): 11-32.

Heilman, Samuel C. "The Vision from the Madrasa and Bes Medrash: Some Parallels between Islam and Judaism." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 5]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995. 71-95.

Heinze, Rüdiger. "'The Return of the Repressed': Zum Verhältnis von Ethik und Literatur in der neueren Literaturkritik." In: Jutta Zimmermann und Britta Salheiser (eds.). *Ethik und Moral als Problem der Literatur und Literaturwissenschaft.* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2006. 265-281.

Henderson, Errol A. and Richard Tucker. "Clear and Present Strangers: The Clash of Civilizations and International Conflict." In: *International Studies Quarterly* 45.2 (2001): 317-338.

Herman, David (ed.). *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999.

--- "Histories of Narrative Theory (I): A Genealogy of Early Developments." In: James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (eds.). *A Companion to Narrative Theory.* Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell, 2005. 19-35.

--- "Introduction." In: David Herman (ed.). *The Emergence of Mind. Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2011 (a). 1-40.

--- "1880-1945: Re-minding Modernism." In: David Herman (ed.). *The Emergence of Mind. Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2011 (b). 243-272.

Herman, David, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.* London and New York: Routledge, 2005.

Herman, Luc and Bart Vervaeck. *Handbook of Narrative Analysis.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

Herman, Peter C. "Terrorism and the Critique of American Culture: John Updike's *Terrorist.*" In: *Modern Philology* 112.4 (2015): 691-712.

Hesford, Wendy S. "Staging Terror." In: *TDR* 50.3 (2006): 29-41.

Hill, Clifford. *A Prophetic People.* London: Fount, 1986.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Hillis Miller, J. "Is There an Ethics of Reading?" In: James Phelan (ed.). *Reading Narrative. Form, Ethics, Ideology.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989. 79-101.

Höfert, Almut and Armando Salvatore. "Introduction. Beyond the Clash of Civilisations: Transcultural Politics between Europe and Islam." In: Almut Höfert and Armando Salvatore (eds.). *Between Europe and Islam. Shaping Modernity in a Transcultural Space.* Bruxelles et al.: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2000. 13-35.

Hoffman, Valerie J. "Muslim Fundamentalists: Psychosocial Profiles." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 5]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995. 199-230.

Holmes, Frederick. "The Postcolonial Subject Divided between East and West: Kureishi's *The Black Album* as an Intertext of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses.*" In: *Papers on Language and Literature* (2001): 296-314.

Hooks, Gregory and Clayton Mosher. "Outrages against Personal Dignity: Rationalizing Abuse and Torture in the War on Terror." In: *Social Forces* 83.4 (2005): 1627-1645.

Hornung, Alfred. "Ethnic Fiction and Survival Ethics: Toni Morrison, Louise Erdreich, David H. Hwang." In: Gerhard Hoffmann and Alfred Hornung (eds.). *Ethics and Aesthetics. The Moral Turn of Postmodernism.* Heidelberg: Winter, 1996. 209-220.

--- "Introduction." In: Jeanne Cortiel et al. (eds.). *Religion in the United States.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011. 285-287.

Hühn, Peter et al.(eds.). *Handbook of Narratology* [Narratologia 19]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009.

Hunt, Lester H. "Libertarianism." In: Hugh LaFolette (ed.). *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics.* New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2013. 3022-3030.

Hunt, Michael H. "In the Wake of September 11: The Clash of What?" In: *The Journal of American History* 89.2 (2002): 416-425.

Huntington, Samuel P. "The Clash of Civilizations?" In: *Foreign Affairs* 72.3 (1993) (a): 22-49.

--- "If Not Civilizations, What? Paradigms of the Post-Cold War World." In: *Foreign Affairs* 72.5 (1993) (b): 186-194.

--- "The West Unique, Not Universal." In: *Foreign Affairs* 75.6 (1996): 28-46.

--- "Try again: A Reply to Russett, Oneil and Cox." In: *Journal of Peace Research* 37.5 (2000): 609-610.

Hussein, Aamer. "The Good Muslim by Tahmima Anam – review." In: *The Guardian* 28.05.2011, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/may/29/good-muslim-tahmima-anam-review [15.10.2013].

Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony's edge. The theory and politics of irony.* London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Ilott, Sarah. "Generic frameworks and active readership in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.*" In: *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 50.5 (2014): 571–583.

Inglehart, Ronald and Pippa Norris. "The True Clash of Civilizations." In: *Foreign Policy* 135 (2003): 62-70.

Ikenberry, G. John. *Liberal Leviathan. The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Ireland, Susan. "Visions of Islam in Contemporary Algerian Fiction Written in French." In: *World Literature Today* 76.3/4 (2002): 54-61.

Irwin, Robert. *For Lust of Knowing. The Orientalists and their Enemies.* London and New York: Penguin, 2006.

Iser, Wolfgang. "Why Literature Matters." In: Rüdiger Ahrens and Laurenz Volkmann (eds.). *Why Literature Matters. Theories and Functions of Literature.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996. 13-22.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Jaggi, Maya. "Nadeem Aslam: A Life in Writing." In: *The Guardian* 26.01.2013, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/jan/26/nadeem-aslam-life-in-writing/print [14.10.2013].

Jahn, Manfred. "Windows of Focalization: Deconstructing and Reconstructing a Narratological Concept." In: *Style* 30.2 (1996): 241-267.

--- "Frames, Preferences, and the Reading of Third-Person Narratives: Towards a Cognitive Narratology." In: *Poetics Today* 18.4 (1997): 441-468.

--- *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative.* English Department, University of Cologne, 2005.

Jamal, Amina. "Piety, Transgression, and the Feminist Debate on Muslim Women: Resituating the Victim-Subject of Honor-Related Violence from a Transnational Lens." In: *Signs* 41.1 (2015): 55-79.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* London: Routledge, 1996 [1981].

--- *The Cultural Turn. Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998.* London and New York: Verso, 2000 [1998].

Jannidis, Fotis et al. "Einleitung. Autor und Interpretation." In: Fotis Jannidis et al. (eds.). *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000. 7-29.

Jannidis, Fotis. *Figur und Person. Beitrag zu einer historischen Narratologie.* [Narratologia 3]. Berlin und New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004.

--- "Character." In: Peter Hühn et al. (eds.). *Handbook of Narratology* [Narratologia 19]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 14-29.

Jeffries, Stuart. "Reader, I'm a he." In: *The Guardian* 22.06.2005, n.p. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/jun/22/france.world [01.11.2017].

Jeory, Ted. "Muslim Cleric: Sebastian Faulks Should Face Sharia Justice." In: *Sunday Express* 03.09.2009, n.p. http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/124847/Muslim-cleric-Sebastian-Faulks-should-face-Sharia-justice [04.04.2015].

Jesch, Tatjana and Malte Stein. "Perspectivization and Focalization: Two Concepts One Meaning? An Attempt at Conceptual Differentiation." In: Peter Hühn, Wolf Schmid and Jörg Schönert (eds.). *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization. Modeling Mediation in Narrative* [Narratologia 17]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 59-77.

Juris, Jeffrey S. "Reflections on # Occupy Everywhere: Social media, public space, and emerging logics of aggregation." In: *American Ethnologist* 39.2 (2012): 259-279.

Kacou, A. "John Updike. Terrorist. Perspectives on Terrorism." In: *North America* 06.10.2012, n.p. http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/225 [15.10. 2013].

Kadari, Louiza. *De l'utopie totalitaire aux oeuvres de Yasmina Khadra, Approches des violences intégristes.* Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007.

Kafalenos, Emma. "Indeterminacy." In: David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.* London and New York: Routledge, 2005. 241-242.

Kaleta, Kenneth C. *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998.

Kalin, Ibrahim. "Islamophobia and the Limits of Multiculturalism." In: John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (eds.). *Islamophobia. The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century.* Oxford: University Press, 2011. 3-20.

Kapur, Akash. "*Maps for Lost Lovers*: Little Murders." In: *The New York Times* 22.05.2005, n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/22/books/review/22KAPURL.html?ref=bookreviews&_r=0 [15.10.2013].

Kassindja, Fauziya (with Leila Miller Bashir and Gini Kopecki). *Do They Hear You When You Cry.* New York: Delacorte Press, 1998.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Kayser, Wolfgang. "Wer erzählt den Roman?" [1957]. In: Fotis Jannidis et al. (eds.). *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 2009. 127-137.

Keen, Suzanne. "A Theory of Narrative Empathy." In: *Narrative* 14.3 (2006): 207-236.

Kelsay, John. "Islamic Ethics." In: Hugh LaFolette (ed.). *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics.* New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2013. 2801-2813.

Kenneally, Michael, Rhona Richman Kenneally and Wolfgang Zach. "Introduction." In: ebd. (eds.). *Literatures in English: New Ethical, Cultural and Transnational Perspectives* [Studies in English and Comparative Literature 23]. Tübingen: Stauffenberg Verlag, 2014. 11-15.

Kepel, Gilles. *Die neuen Kreuzzüge. Die arabische Welt und die Zukunft des Westens.* München: Piper, 2004.

Kersting, Wolfgang. *Verteidigung des Liberalismus.* Hamburg: Murmann, 2nd edition 2010.

Khadra, Yasmina. "La littérature n'est qu'un miroir." In: *Le Journal de Saône et Loire* 18.08.2013, n.p. http://www.lejsl.com/actualite/2013/08/18/yasmina-khadra-la-litterature-n-est-qu-un-miroir [06.11.2017].

---"A battle of extremes." In: *Al Jazeera* 18.01.2015, n.p. http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talkt ojazeera/2015/01/yasmina-khadra-battle-extremes-20151171014288173l2.html [01.11.2017).

Khalaf, Sulayman N. "Settlement of Violence in Bedouin Society." In: *Ethnology* 29.3 (1990): 225-242.

Khan, Muqtedar. "European Fears: The End of Secularism?" In: Jeanne Cortiel et al. (eds.). *Religion in the United States.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011. 294-299.

Kim, Nam-Kook. *Deliberative Multiculturalism in Britain. A Response to Devolution, European Integration, and Multicultural Challenges* [Labour, Eduction & Society 23]. Frankfurt et al.: Peter Lang, 2011.

Kim, Youngmin. "The Genealogy of Othering in Postcolonialism/Diaspora & Postnationalism/ Transnationalism." In: Michael Kenneally, Rhona Richman Kenneally and Wolfgang Zach (eds.). *Literatures in English: New Ethical, Cultural and Transnational Perspectives* [Studies in English and Comparative Literature 23]. Tübingen: Stauffenberg Verlag, 2014. 205-217.

Kindt, Tom and Hans-Harald Müller. "Narrative Theory and/or/as Theory of Interpretation." In: Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (eds.). *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory* [Narratologia1]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003. 205-219.

--- *The Implied Author. Concept and Controversy.* Berlin et al.: de Gruyter, 2006.

Kinson, Sarah. "Mohsin Hamid. The author of The Reluctant Fundamentalist explains why he's always had an unusual compulsion to share his fantasies." *The Guardian* 06.06.2008, n.p. http://ww w.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jun/06/whyiwrite [26.03.2013].

Kirchhofer, Anton. "The Religious Turn in Literary and Cultural Studies: Introduction." In: Lars Eckstein and Christoph Reinfandt (eds.). *Anglistentag 2008 Tübingen. Proceedings.* Trier: WVT, 2009. 3-8.

Klepper, Martin. *The Discovery of Point of View. Observation and Narration in the American Novel 1790-1910.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011.

Kneale, J. Douglas. "Deconstruction." In: Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth (eds.). *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism.* Baltimore and London: Hopkins University Press, 1994. 185-191.

Koff, David. "Chronology of the War in Lebanon, September – November, 1983." In: *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13.2 (1984): 127-157.

Korthals Altes, Liesbeth. "Ethical Turn." In: David Herman and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. London: Routledge, 2004. 142-146.

--- *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation. The Negotiation of Values in Fiction.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2014.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Kraidy, Marwan M. *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005.

Kumar, Krishan. "Modernization." In: *Encyclopedia Britannica Online Academic Edition* (2013), n.p. http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/387301/modernization/12019/The-nature-of-modern-society [24.07.2013].

Kumar, Malreddy Pavan. "Introduction: Orientalism(s) after 9/11." In: *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48.3 (2012): 233-240.

Kuran, Timur. "Fundamentalisms and the Economy." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and the State. Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 3]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993 (a). 289-301.

--- "The Economic Impact of Islamic Fundamentalism." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and the State. Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 3]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993 (b). 302-341.

Kureishi, Hanif. *Dreaming and Scheming. Reflections on Writing and Politics.* London: Faber and Faber, 2002.

--- *Collected Essays.* London: Faber and Faber, 2011.

--- "Newness in the World." In: *Collected Essays.* London: Faber and Faber, 2011. 112-119.

Kurtén, Marina. "Negotiating Identities. Expressions of 'Culture' in British Migrant Literature." In: *The Atlantic Literary Review* 3.2 (2002): 47-55.

Lal, Vinay. "The Dead in Iraq and the War of Numbers." In: *Economic and Political Weekly* 41.49 (2006): 5028-5029.

Lanser, Susan Sniader. *Fictions of Authority. Women Writers and Narrative Voice.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992.

Laqueur, Walter. *Krieg dem Westen. Terrorismus im 21. Jahrhundert.* München: Propyläen, 2003.

Lasdun, James. "The Empire Strikes Back." In: *The Guardian* 03.03.2007, n.p. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/mar/03/featuresreviews.guardianreview20 [27.03.2013].

Laure, Marie. "Interview avec Yasmina Khadra." In: *Rue des Livres* 19.11.2007, n.p. http://www.yasmina-khadra.com/artic.php?id=14 [31.10.2017].

Leggewie, Claus. "Globaler Kulturkampf um einen 'blasphemischen' Roman. *Die Satanischen Verse* von Salman Rushdie (1988)." In: Dirk van Laak (ed.). *Literatur, die Geschichte schrieb.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011. 268-282.

Lemke, Cordula. "Racism in the Diaspora. Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004)." In: Lars Eckstein et al. (eds.). Multi-ethnic Britain 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008.

Lewis, Bernhard. "The Question of Orientalism." In: A.L. Macfie (ed.). *Orientalism. A Reader.* New York: New York University Press, 2000. 249-270.

--- *What Went Wrong? The Clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East.* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002.

Leypoldt, Günter. "Uses of Metaphor: Richard Rorty's Literary Criticism and the Poetics of World-Making." In: *New Literary History*, Remembering Richard Rorty, 39.1 (2008): 145-163.

Liewald, Nina. "'Do not be frightened by my beard. I am a lover of America' – Fear and Nostalgia in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.*" In: Marion Gymnich (ed.). *Who's afraid of…? Facets of Fear in Anglophone Literature and Film.* Goettingen: V&R Unipress/Bonn University Press, 2012. 245-258.

Lindner, Andrew M. "Among the Troops: Seeing the Iraq War Through Three Journalistic Vantage Points." In: *Social Problems* 56.1 (2009): 21-48.

Link, Jürgen. "Literaturanalyse als Interdiskursanalyse. Am Beispiel des Ursprungs literarischer Symbolik in der Kollektivsymbolik." In: Jürgen Fohrmann and Harro Müller (eds.). *Diskurstheorien und Literaturwissenschaft.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988. 284-307.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Locatelli, Angela. "The Ethical Use(s) of Literary Complexity." In: Sibylle Baumbach, Herbert Grabes and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Literature and Values. Literature as a Medium for Representing, Disseminating and Constructing Norms and Values* [Giessen Contributions to the Study of Culture 2]. Trier: WVT, 2009. 67-76.

Lützeler, Paul Michael and Jennifer M. Kapczynski (eds.). *Die Ethik der Literatur. Deutsche Autoren der Gegenwart.* Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2011.

Lützeler, Paul Michael. "Einleitung: Ethik und literarische Erkenntnis." In: Paul Michael Lützeler and Jennifer M. Kapczynski (eds.). *Die Ethik der Literatur. Deutsche Autoren der Gegenwart.* Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2011. 9-28.

Lydon, Chris. "Mohsin Hamid: on a 'Pakistan-like' trend in America." *Radio Open Source* 25.08.2011, n.p. http://www.radioopensource.org/mohsin-hamid-on-an-increasingly-pakistan-like-america/ [26.03.2013].

Macfie, A.L. "Introduction." In: A.L. Macfie (ed.). *Orientalism. A Reader.* New York: New York University Press, 2000. 1-8.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue.* London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011 [1981].

Mahmood, Saba. "Islamism and Fundamentalism. The Fundamentalism Project by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby." In: *Middle East Report* 191 (1994): 29-30.

Maier, Hans. "Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)." In: Hans Maier and Horst Denzer (eds.). *Klassiker des politischen Denkens. Von Locke bis Max Weber* [Band 2]. München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2001. 57-72.

Maira, Sunaina. "Islamophobia and the War on Terror. Youth, Citizenship, and Dissent." In: John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (eds.). *Islamophobia. The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century.* Oxford: University Press, 2011. 109-125.

Majed, Hasan Saeed. *Islamic Postcolonialism: Islamic and Muslim Identities in Four Contemporary British Novels.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Mansutti, Pamela. "Ethno-religious Identities and Cosmopolitan Echoes in John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) and Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2008)." In: *Other Modernities* 9/11/2011 – 11/2011: 105-123.

Margolin, Uri. "Narrator". In: Peter Hühn et al. (eds.). *Handbook of Narratology* [Narratologia 19]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009 (a). 351-369.

--- "Focalization: Where Do We Go from Here?" In: Peter Hühn, Wolf Schmid and Jörg Schönert (eds.). *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization. Modeling Mediation in Narrative* [Narratologia 17]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009 (b), 40-57.

Mars-Jones, Adam. "Anything to see those paper eyes." In: *The Observer* 12.10.2008, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/oct/12/fiction2/print [14.10.2013].

Mårtensson, Ulrika, Jennifer Bailey, Priscilla Ringrose and Asbjorn Dyrendal. "Introduction. Fundamentalism, Politics and History: The State, Globalisation and Political Ideologies." In: Ulrika Mårtensson et al. (eds.). *Fundamentalism in the Modern World. Vol. 1: Fundamentalism, Politics and History: The State, Globalisation and Political Ideologies.* London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011 (a). 1-23.

--- "Introduction. Fundamentalism and Communication: Culture, Media and the Public Sphere." In: Ulrika Mårtensson et al. (eds.). *Fundamentalism in the Modern World. Vol. 2: Fundamentalism and Communication: Culture, Media and the Public Sphere].* London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011 (b). 1-24.

Martin, David. "The Evangelical Upsurge and Its Political Implications." In: Peter L. Berger (ed.). *The Desecularization of the World.* Washington D.C. and Grand Rapids: Ethics and Public Policy Center/William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999. 37-49.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Martin, Richard C. "Review of Fundamentalisms Observed: A Study Conducted by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 1 by Martin E. Marty; Scott Appleby; Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective by Lawrence Kaplan." In: *History of Religions* 34.2 (1994): 194-196.

Marty, Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby. "Introduction. The Fundamentalism Project. A User's Guide." In: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Observed* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 1]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991 (a). vii-xiii.

--- "Conclusion: An Interim Report on a Hypothetical Family." In: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Observed* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 1]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991 (b). 814-842.

--- "Introduction: A Sacred Cosmos, Scandalous Code, Defiant Society." In: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and Society* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 2]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993 (a). 1-19.

--- "Introduction." In: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and the State. Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 3]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993 (b). 1-9.

--- "Conclusion: Remaking the State: The Limits of the Fundamentalist Imagination." In: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and the State. Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 3]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993 (c). 620-644.

--- "Introduction." In: Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 5]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995. 1-7.

Maslin, Janet. "In *The Attack,* an Arab-Israeli Learns Too Late of a Terrorist Stranger in the Family." In: *The New York Times* 15.05.2006, n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/15/books/15masl.html?_r=1 [1.6.2012].

--- "Terrorists Reel in a Pawn from Small-Town Iraq." In: *The New York Times* 26.04.2007, n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/books/26masl.html?_r=2 [29.07.2012].

Matlock, Jack F. Jr. "Can Civilizations Clash?" In: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 143.3 (1999): 428-439.

Maurer, Michael. *Kleine Geschichte Englands.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002.

Mayer, Ann Elizabeth. "The Fundamentalist Impact on Law, Politics, and Constitutions in Iran, Pakistan, and the Sudan." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and the State. Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 3]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993. 110-151.

Mayer, Ewa und Verena-Susanna Nungesser. "Grenzgänger zwischen Kulturen: Zum Funtionspotential interkultureller Literatur am Beispiel von Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézios *Désert* und Michael Ondaatjes *Running in the Family.*" In: Marion Gymnich and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Funktionen von Literatur. Theoretische Grundlagen und Modellinterpretationen.* Trier: WVT, 2005. 247-262.

Mazzeno, Laurence W. *Becoming John Updike. Critical Reception, 1958-2010.* Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2013.

McCann, Graham. "Distant voices, real lives: authorship, criticism, responsibility." In: Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller (eds.). *What is an author?* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993. 72-82.

McCarthy, Rory. "Wedding Party Massacre." In: *The Guardian* 20.05.2004, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/may/20/iraq.rorymccarthy [03.01.2016].

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

--- "Wedding party video casts doubt on American version of attack that killed 42." In: *The Guardian* 25.05.2004, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/may/25/usa.iraq7 [03.01.2016].

McCulloch, Fiona. *Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary British Fiction: Imagined identities.* Basingstoke et al: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

McNeill, William H. "Epilogue. Fundamentalism and the World of the 1990 s." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and Society* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 2]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993. 558-573.

Mead, Walter Russell. "God's Country?" In: *Foreign Affairs* 85.5 (2006): 24-43.

Megdiche Meziou, Dorra. "Tunisia's Salafists Wage Campaign Against 'Un-Islamic' Art." In: *Al-monitor* 22.08.2012, n.p. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ar/politics/2012/08/tunisia---salafists-return-from.html# [24.08.2014].

Meisel, Perry. "Decentering 'Heart of Darkness'." In: *Modern Language Studies* 8.3 (1978): 20-28.

Melman, Billie. *Women's Orients. English Women and the Middle East 1718-1918.* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992.

Messina, Anthony M. "The Impacts of Post-WWII Migration to Britain: Policy Constraints, Political Opportunism and the Alteration of Representational Politics." In: *The Review of Politics* 63.2 (2001): 259-285.

Metzinger, Udo M. *Die Huntington-Debatte. Die Auseinandersetzung mit Huntingtons „Clash of Civilizations" in der Publizistik* [Kölner Arbeiten zur Internationalen Politik 13]. Köln: SH Verlag, 2000.

Mieth, Dietmar (ed.). *Erzählen und Moral. Narrativität im Spannungsfeld von Ethik und Ästhetik.* Tübingen: Attempto Verlag, 2000.

Miller, Nancy. "Changing the subject: authorship, writing and the reader." In: Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller (eds.). *What is an author?* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993. 19-41.

Miller, Quentin. *John Updike and the Cold War. Drawing the Iron Curtain.* Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2001.

Milton-Edwards, Beverley. "Islamist Versus Islamist: Rising Challenge in Gaza." In: *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26:2 (2014): 259-276.

Mishra, Pankaj. "The End of Innocence." In: *The Guardian* 19.05.2007, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/may/19/fiction.martinamis [29.08.2015].

Moore, Lindsey. "British Muslim Identities and Spectres of Terror in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers.*" In: *Postcolonial Text* 5.2 (2009): 1-19.

Moore-Gilbert, Bart, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley. "Introduction." In: Ibid. (eds.). *Postcolonial Criticism.* London and New York: Longman, 1997. 1-72

Moore-Gilbert, Bart. *Hanif Kureishi.* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001.

--- "From 'the Politics of Recognition' to 'the Policing of Recognition': Writing Islam in Hanif Kureishi and Mohsin Hamid." In: Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin (eds.). *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing.* London and New York: Routledge, 2012. 183-199.

Morey, Peter. "'The rules of the game have changed': Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and post-9/11 fiction." In: *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47.2 (2011): 135-146.

Morton, Stephen. *Salman Rushdie. Fictions of Postcolonial Modernity.* Basingstoke et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

--- "Writing Muslims and the Global State of Exception." In: Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin (eds.). *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing.* London and New York: Routledge, 2012. 18-33.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Munos, Delphine. "Possessed by Whiteness: Interracial Affiliations and Racial Melancholia in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*". In: *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48.4 (2012): 396-405.

Murphy, Mark C. (ed.). *Alasdair MacIntyre* [Contemporary Philosophy in Focus]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Naudillon, Françoise. *Les Masques de Yasmina. Les roman policies algériens de Yasmina Khadra.* Yaoundé: Éditions Nouvelles du Sud, 2002.

Neumann, Birgit and Ansgar Nünning. "Kulturelles Wissen und Intertextualität: Grundbegriffe und Forschungsansätze zur Kontextualisierung von Literatur." In: Marion Gymnich, Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Kulturelles Wissen und Intertextualität. Theoriekonzeptionen und Fallstudien zur Kontextualisierung von Literatur* [Studien zur Englischen Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft 22]. Trier: WVT, 2006. 3-28.

Neumann, Birgit. "Kulturelles Wissen und Literatur." In: Marion Gymnich, Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Kulturelles Wissen und Intertextualität. Theoriekonzeptionen und Fallstudien zur Kontextualisierung von Literatur* [Studien zur Englischen Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft 22]. Trier: WVT, 2006 (a). 29-51.

--- "Performanz und Literatur: Vorschläge zur Konzeptualisierung der Text-Kontext-Relationen." In: Marion Gymnich, Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Kulturelles Wissen und Intertextualität. Theoriekonzeptionen und Fallstudien zur Kontextualisierung von Literatur* [Studien zur Englischen Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft 22]. Trier: WVT, 2006 (b). 87-106.

Newall, Paul. "Introducing Philosophy 11: Ethics." In: *The Galilean Library*, n.p. http://www.galilean-library.org/manuscript.php?postid=43789 [03.05.2012].

Niederhoff, Burkhard. "Focalization". In: Peter Hühn et al. (eds.). *Handbook of Narratology* [Narratologia 19]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009 (a). 115-123.

--- "Perspective/Point of View." In: Peter Hühn et al. (eds.). *Handbook of Narratology* [Narratologia 19]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009 (b). 384-397.

Nieuwenhuys, Eva. "Social, Sustainable Globalisation Requires a Paradigm Other Than Neo-Liberal Globalism." In: Eva Nieuwenhuys (ed.). *Neo-Liberal Globalism and Social Sustainable Globalisation.* Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006. 57-73.

Nikolaev, Alexander G. and Douglas V. Porpora. "Talking War: How Elite US Newspaper Editorials and Opinion Pieces Debated the Attack on Iraq." In: Steven Carlton-Ford and Morten G. Ender (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of War and Society: Iraq and Afghanistan.* London et al.: Routledge, 2011. 222-232.

Nimer, Mohamed. "Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism: Measurements, Dynamics, and Consequences." In: John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (eds.). *Islamophobia. The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century.* Oxford: University Press, 2011. 77-92.

Nolte, Ernst. *Die Dritte Radikale Widerstandsbewegung: Der Islamismus.* Berlin: Landt Verlag, 2009.

Nossiter, Adam. "'That Ignoramus': Two French Scholars of Radical Islam Turn Bitter Rivals." In: *The New York Times* 12.07.2016, n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/world/europe/france-radical-islam.html?_r=0 [26.08.2016].

Nugent, David. "Commentary: Democracy, Temporalities of Capitalism, and Dilemmas of Inclusion in Occupy Movements." In: *American Ethnologist* 39.2 (2012): 280-283.

Nünning, Ansgar. "Towards a Cultural and Historical Narratology: A Survey of Diachronic Approaches, Concepts, and Research Projects." In: Bernhard Reitz and Sigrid Rieuwerts (eds.). *Anglistentag 1999 Mainz. Proceedings* [Proceedings of the Conference of the German Association of University Teachers of English 21]. Trier: WVT, 2000. 345-373.

--- "Funktion." In: Ansgar Nünning (ed.). *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie. Ansätze-Personen-Grundbegriffe.* Stuttgart und Weimar: Metzler, 2008. 223-224.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Nünning, Vera and Ansgar Nünning. "Von ‚der' Erzählperspektive zur Perspektivenstruktur narrativer Texte: Überlegungen zur Definition, Konzeptualisierung und Untersuchbarkeit von Multiperspektivität." In: Vera and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Multiperspektivisches Erzählen. Zur Theorie und Geschichte der Perspektivenstruktur im englischen Roman des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts.* Trier: WVT, 2000 (a). 3-38.

--- "Multiperspektivität aus narratologischer Sicht: Erzähltheoretische Grundlagen und Kategorien zur Analyse der Perspektivenstruktur narrativer Texte." In: Vera and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Multiperspektivisches Erzählen. Zur Theorie und Geschichte der Perspektivenstruktur im englischen Roman des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts.* Trier: WVT, 2000 (b). 39-77.

--- "Von der strukturalistischen Narratologie zur ‚postklassischen' Erzähltheorie: Ein Überblick über neue Ansätze und Entwicklungstendenzen." In: Ansgar Nünning and Vera Nünning (eds.). *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie* [WVT-Handbücher zum literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium 4]. Trier: WVT, 2002. 1-33.

--- "Narratology or Narratologies?" In: Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (eds.). *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory.* [Narratologia 1]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003. 239-275.

Nünning, Vera. "From Theory to Practice: New Approaches to Narrative." In: Vera Nünning (ed.). *New Approaches to Narrative. Cognition – Culture – History*. Trier: WVT, 2013. 1-19.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *Love's Knowledge. Essays on Philosophy and Literature.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992 [1990].

--- "The Literary Imagination in Public Life." In: Jane Adamson, Richard Freedman and David Parker (eds.). *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy and Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 222-246.

--- "The Absence of the Ethical: Literary Theory and Ethical Theory." In: Stephen K. George (ed.). *Ethics, Literature, & Theory. An Introductory Reader*. Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2nd edition 2005 (a). 99-106.

---"The 'Ancient Quarrel': Literature and Moral Philosophy." In: Stephen K. George (ed.). *Ethics, Literature, & Theory. An Introductory Reader*. Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2nd edition 2005 (b). 139-152.

Odeh, Lama Abu. "Honor Killings and the Construction of Gender in Arab Societies." In: *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 58.4 (2010): 911-952.

O'Connor, M. "Writing Against Terror – Nadeem Aslam". In: *Three Monkeys Online,* n.p. http://www.threemonkeysonline.com/writing-against-terror-nadeem-aslam/2/ [14.10.2013]

O'Hagan, Jacinta. "Civilisational Conflict? Looking for Cultural Enemies." In: *Third World Quarterly* 16.1 (1995): 19-38.

Olson, Greta (ed.). *Current Trends in Narratology* [Narratologia 27]. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2011.

Olsson, Karen. Review. "I Pledge Allegiance." *The New York Times* 22.04.2007, n.p. http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D07E5D7123FF931A15757C0A9619C8B63 [25.03.2013].

Onega, Susana. "The Ethics of Fiction: Writing, Reading and Representation in Contemporary Narrative in English: A Research Project." In: Wolfgang Zach and Michael Kenneally (eds.). *Literatures in English: Priorities of Research* [Studies in English and Comparative Literature 21]. Tübingen: Stauffenberg Verlag, 2008. 57-64.

Open Society Foundations. *At Home in Europe Project. Muslims in Europe. A Report on 11 EU Cities* (2010). In: http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/a-muslims-europe-20110214_0.pdf [24.07.2013].

Open Society Foundations. *At Home in Europe Project. Muslims in London. Findings and Recommendations* (2012) (a). In: http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/muslims-london-findings-recommendations-20120715.pdf [24.04.2013].

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Open Society Foundations. *At Home in Europe Project. Muslims in Paris. Findings and Recommendations.* (2012) (b). In: http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/muslims-paris-factsheet-20120723.pdf [24.04.2013].

Oppenheim, Carol. *Poverty: The Facts*. London: Child Poverty Action Group, 2nd edition 1993 [1990].

O'Shea-Meddour, Wendy. "Deconstructing Fundamentalisms in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*." In: Catherine Pesso-Miquel and Klaus Stierstorfer (eds.). *Fundamentalism and Literature.* Basingstoke et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 81-100.

Ostendorf, Berndt. "Die historischen Ursachen der religiösen Vielfalt in den USA. Eine kurze Entwicklungslogik der diversen Schichten der religiösen Energie." In: José Casanova and Hans Joas et al. (eds). *Religion und die umstrittene Moderne.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010. 66-88.

Pakistan today. "Afghan singer Gulnaz shot dead in Peshawar." In: *Pakistan Today* 19.06.2014, n.p. http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/06/19/national/pashto-singer-gulnaz-shot-dead-in-peshawar/ [24.08.2014].

Palmer, Alan. "Thought and Consciousness Representation (Literature)." In: David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.* London and New York: Routledge, 2005. 602-607.

--- "1945-: Ontologies of Consciousness." In: David Herman (ed.). *The Emergence of Mind. Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2011. 273-297.

Parker, David. *Ethics, Theory and the Novel.* Cambridge: University Press, 1994.

---"Introduction: The Turn to Ethics in the 1990 s." In: Jane Adamson, Richard Freedman and David Parker (eds.). *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy and Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 1-17.

Passerin D'entrèves, Maurizio. "Introduction." In: Maurizio Passerin D'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib (eds.). *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity. Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. 1-37.

Pearson, Roger L. "Gatsby: False Prophet of the American Dream." In: *The English Journal* 59.5 (1970): 638-642 + 645.

Perfect, Michael. "The Enigma of Abandonment: Rethinking Hanif Kureishi's Importance for Multiculturalism." In: Susan Alice Fischer (ed.). *Hanif Kureishi.* London et al.: Bloomsbury, 2015. 7-20.

Perlez, Jane. "The Saturday Profile. A Pakistani-American Voice in Search of a True Home." In: *The New York Times* 13.10.2007, n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/13/world/europe/13hamid.html?pagewanted=print [25.03.2013].

Perner, Claudia. "Tracing the Fundamentalist in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*." In: *Ariel* 41.2-3 (2011): 23-31.

Perry, Catherine. "Migrant Muslim Writers Challenging Western Preconceptions." In: *Religion & Literature* 43.1 (2011): 122-126.

Pesso-Miquel, Catherine. "Unseen Cities: Representations of Diasporic Experience in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers.*" In: Rita Christian and Judith Misrahi-Barak (eds.). *India and the Diasporic Imagination.* Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2011. 127-147.

Pesso-Miquel, Catherine and Klaus Stierstorfer (eds.). *Fundamentalism and Literature.* Basingstoke et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

--- *Burning Books. Negotiations between Fundamentalism and Literature.* New York: AMS Press, 2012.

--- "Introduction." In: Catherine Pesso-Miquel and Klaus Stierstorfer (eds.). *Burning Books. Negotiations between Fundamentalism and Literature.* New York: AMS Press, 2012. vii-xix.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Petrey, Sandy. "Language Charged with Meaning." In: *Yale French Studies*, French and Francophone: The Challenge of Expanding Horizons, 103 (2003): 133-145.

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press and The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. "Post 9-11 Attitudes: Religion more prominent, Muslim Americans more accepted." 6.12.2001. In: http://www.pewforum.org/press-room/press-releases/new-pew-research-center-survey-finds-moderate-attitudes-among-muslim-americans.aspx [07.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press and The Pew Global Attitudes Project. "What the World thinks in 2002. How Global Publics View: Their Lives, Their Countries, The World, America." 04.12.2002. In: http://www.people-press.org/2002/12/04/what-the-world-thinks-in-2002/ [07.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press and The Pew Global Attitudes Project. "A Year After Iraq War. Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists." 16.03.2004 (a). In: http://www.people-press.org/2004/03/16/a-year-after-iraq-war/ [07.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press. "Eroding Respect for America Seen as Major Problem. Foreign Policy Attitudes Now Driven by 9/11 *and* Iraq." 18.08.2004 (b). In: http://www.people-press.org/2004/08/18/foreign-policy-attitudes-now-driven-by-911-and-iraq/ [07.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press and The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. "Fewer Say Islam Encourages Violence. Views of Muslim-Americans Hold Steady after London Bombings." 26.07.2005. In: http://www.people-press.org/2005/07/26/views-of-muslim-americans-hold-steady-after-london-bombings/ [07.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press and The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. "Muslim Americans. Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream." 22.05.2007. In: http://www.people-press.org/2007/05/22/muslim-americans-middle-class-and-mostly- [07.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press. "Majority of Republicans Say U.S. Is Less Respected. More See America's Loss of Global Respect as Major Problem." 16.06.2008 (a). In: http://www.people-press.org/2008/06/16/more-see-americas-loss-of-global-respect-as-major-problem/ [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press and The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. "Some Social Conservative Disillusionment. More Americans Question Religion's Role in Politics." 21.08.2008 (b). In: http://www.people-press.org/2008/08/21/more-americans-question-religions-role-in-politics/ [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press. "Reviewing the Bush Years and the Public's Final Verdict. Bush and Public Opinion." 18.12.2008 (c). In: http://www.people-press.org/2008/12/18/bush-and-public-opinion/ [11.05.2013]

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press and The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. "Views of Religious Similarities and Differences. Muslims Widely Seen as Facing Discrimination." 2009. In: http://www.people-press.org/2009/09/09/muslims-widely-seen-as-facing-discrimination/ [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press. "Energy Concerns Fall, Deficit Concerns Rise. Public's Priorities for 2010: Economy, Jobs, Terrorism." 25.01.2010 (1). In: http://www.people-press.org/2010/01/25/publics-priorities-for-2010-economy-jobs-terrorism/ [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press and The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. "NYC Mosque Opposed, Muslims's Right to Build Mosques Favored. Public Remains Conflicted Over Islam." 24.08. 2010 (b). In: http://www.people-press.org/2010/08/24/public-remains-conflicted-over-islam/ [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press and The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. "Religion and the Issues. Few Say Religion Shapes Immigration, Environment Views." 17.09.2010 (c). In: http://www.people-press.org/2010/09/17/few-say-religion-shapes-immigration-environment-views/ [11.05.2013].

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press. "Continuing Divide in Views of Islam and Violence." 09.03.2011 (a). In: http://www.people-press.org/2011/03/09/continuing-divide-in-views-of-islam-and-violence/ [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre, Global Attitudes Project. "Common Concerns about Islamic Extremism. Muslim-Western Tensions Persist." 21.07.2011 (b). In: http://pewglobal.org/files/2011/07/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Muslim-Western-Relations-FINAL-FOR-PRINT-July-21-2011.pdf [18.09.2015].

Pew Research Centre. "Muslim Americans. No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism." August 2011 (c). In: http://www.people-press.org/2011/08/30/muslim-americans-no-signs-of-growth-in-alienation-or-support-for-extremism/ [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press. "A Political Rhetoric Test. Little Change in Public's Response to 'Capitalism', 'Socialism'." 28.12.2011 (d). In: http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/28/little-change-in-publics-response-to-capitalism-socialism/ [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Center. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and the Project for Excellence in Journalism. "Religion in the News. Islam and Politics Dominate Religion Coverage in 2011." 23.02.2012 (a). In: http://www.pewforum.org/Government/Religion-in-the-News--Islam-and-Politics-Dominate-Religion-Coverage-in-2011.aspx [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Center. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. "The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity." 09.08.2012 (b). In: http://www.pewforum.org/the-worlds-muslims.aspx [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Center. "Republican Support for War at All-Time Low. A Decade Later, Iraq War Divides the Public." 18.03.2013 (a). In: http://www.people-press.org/2013/03/18/a-decade-later-iraq-war-divides-the-public/ [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Center. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. "The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society." 30.04.2013 (b). In: http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious_Affiliation/Muslim/the-worlds-muslims-full-report.pdf [11.05.2013].

Pew Research Center. "But Little Agreement on Specific Approaches. Most Say Immigration Policy Needs Big Changes." 09.05.2013 (c). In: http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/5-9-13%20Immigration%20Release.pdf [26.10.2014].

Pew Research Centre. Religion and Public Life Project. "Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High." 14.01.2014 (a). In: http://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high/ [12.02.2014].

Pew Research Center. Pew Research Global Attitudes Project. "Concerns about Islamic Extremism on the Rise in Middle East. Negative Opinions of al Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah widespread." 01.07.2014 (b). In: http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/01/concerns-about-islamic-extremism-on-the-rise-in-middle-east/ [25.10.2014].

Pew Research Center. "Extremism Concerns Growing in West and Predominantly Muslim Countries." 16.07.2015. In: http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/07/16/extremism-concerns-growing-in-west-and-predominantly-muslim-countries/ [03.09.2016].

Pew Research Center. "Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs." 11.07.2016. In: http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-will-mean-more-terrorism-fewer-jobs/ [03.09.2016].

Pfiffner, James P. "Did President Bush Mislead the Country in His Arguments for War with Iraq?" In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34.1 (2004): 25-46.

Phelan, James and Peter J. Rabinowitz (eds.). *A Companion to Narrative Theory.* Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell, 2005.

Pomar Amer, Miquel. "Kaukab in *Maps for Lost Lovers* by Nadeem Aslam: Representing and Subverting the Unspeakability of the Subaltern." In: *ES. Revista de Filología Inglesa* 33 (2012): 253-270.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Poole, Steven. "Driven to Destruction. Steven Poole on Yasmina Khadra's *Sirens of Baghdad*, a Novel of the Current Iraq War." In: *The Guardian* 14.07.2007, n.p. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/jul/14/featuresreviews.guardianreview22 [29.07.2012].

Posner, Richard A. "Against Ethical Criticism." In: Stephen K. George (ed.). *Ethics, Literature, & Theory. An Introductory Reader*. Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2nd edition 2005. 63-77.

Posner, Roland. "Kultursemiotik". In: Ansgar Nünning and Vera Nünning (eds.). *Konzepte der Kulturwissenschaften. Theoretische Grundlagen – Ansätze – Perspektiven.* Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2003. 39-72.

Poster, Jem. "Paradise lost." In: *The Guardian* 05.08.2006, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/aug/05/shopping.fiction/print [15.10.2013].

Powell, Enoch. "Enoch Powell's 'River of Blood' Speech." In: *The Telegraph* 06.11.2007, n.p. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643823/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html [19.07.2015].

Prince, Gerald. *Narratology. The Form and Functioning of Narrative.* Berlin, New York and Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers, 1982.

--- "Surveying Narratology." In: Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (eds.). *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory* [Narratologia1]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003. 1-16.

Pugliese, Joseph. "Abu Ghraib and its Shadow Archives." In: *Law and Literature* 19.2 (2007): 247-276.

Queder, Sarab Abu-Rabia. **"**Permission to Rebel: Arab Bedouin Women's Changing Negotiation of Social Roles." In: *Feminist Studies* 33.1 (2007): 161-187.

Railton, Ben. "Novelist-Narrators of the American Dream: The (Meta-)Realistic Chronicles of Cather, Fitzgerald, Roth, and Díaz." In: *American Literary Realism* 43.2 (2011): 133-153.

Rainsford, Dominic and Tim Woods. "Introduction: Ethics and Intellectuals." In: Ibid. (eds.). *Critical Ethics. Text, Theory and Responsibility*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999. 1-19.

Rajaee, Farhang. "Islam and Modernity: The Reconstruction of an Alternative Shi'ite Islamic Worldview in Iran." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and Society* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 2]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993. 103-125.

Ranasinha, Ruvani. *Hanif Kureishi.* Horndon et al.: Northcote House, 2002.

Randall, Martin. *9/11 and the Literature of Terror.* Edinburgh: University Press, 2011.

Reichl, Susanne. "Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia.* Performing Identity in Postcolonial London." In: Tobias Döring (ed.). *A History of Postcolonial Literature in 12 ½ Books.* Trier: WVT, 2007. 139-154.

Reidy, Padraig. "Twenty-five years under the fatwa." In: *Index on* Censorship 14.02.2014, n.p. https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2014/02/twenty-five-years-fatwa/ [19.06.2016].

Ricci, Ilaria. "Sign o' the Times. Pop and Identity in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*." In: Nicoletta Vasta et al. (eds.). *Identities in transition in the English-speaking world.* Udine: Forum, 2011. 243-251.

Richardson, Michael. "Enough Said." [1990]. In: A.L. Macfie (ed.). *Orientalism. A Reader.* New York: New York University Press, 2000. 208-216.

Richter, Jörg Thomas. "John Updike, *Terrorist* (2006)." In: Susanne Peters, Klaus Stierstorfer and Laurenz Volkmann (eds.). *Novels. Part II.* Trier: WVT, 2008. 481-493.

Rorty, Richard. "Tales of Two Disciplines." In: *Callaloo* 17.2 (1994): 575-585.

--- "The Demonization of Multiculturalism." In: *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 7 (1995): 74-75.

--- "Religion in the Public Square: A Reconsideration." In: *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 31.1 (2003): 141-149.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

--- "Antiklerikalismus und Atheismus." In: Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo (eds.). *Die Zukunft der Religion.* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2006 (a). 33-47.

--- "On Philosophy and Politics. Interview by Chronis Polychroniou." In: Eduardo Mendieta (ed.). *Take care of freedom and truth will take care of itself. Interviews with Richard Rorty.* Stanford: University Press, 2006 (b). 89-103.

--- "On September 11, 2001. Interview by Eduardo Mendieta" In: Eduardo Mendieta (ed.). *Take care of freedom and truth will take care of itself. Interviews with Richard Rorty.* Stanford: University Press, 2006 (c). 114-119.

---"Worlds or Words Apart? The Consequences of Pragmatism for Literary Studies. Interview by Chronis Polychroniou." In: Eduardo Mendieta (ed.). *Take care of freedom and truth will take care of itself. Interviews with Richard Rorty.* Stanford: University Press, 2006 (d). 120-147.

---*Contingency, irony, and solidarity.* Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2008 [1989].

Rorty, Richard, Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala. "Die Zukunft der Religion nach der Metaphysik. Ein Gespräch." In: Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo (eds.). *Die Zukunft der Religion.* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2006. 65-96.

Rosenstand, Nina. "Stories and Morals." In: Stephen K. George (ed.). *Ethics, Literature & Theory. An Introductory Reader*. Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2nd edition 2005. 153-171.

Rosiny, Stephan. "'Der Islam ist die Lösung' Zum Verhältnis von Ideologie und Religion im Islamismus." In: Walter Feichtinger and Sibylle Wentker (eds.). *Islam, Islamismus und Islamischer Extremismus. Eine Einführung.* Wien et al.: Böhlau, 2008. 61-76.

Roy, Bidhan Chandra. The Tragic Mulatto Reconfigured: Post 9/11 Pakistani-American Identities in H.M Naqvi's *Home Boy* and Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.*" In: *Reconstruction* 11.2 (2011): n.p. http://reconstruction.eserver.org/Issues/112/Roy.shtml [26.09.2015].

Roy, Olivier. *Der islamische Weg nach Westen. Globalisierung, Entwurzelung und Radikalisierung.* Translated by Michael Bayer, Norbert Juraschitz and Ursel Schäfer. München: Pantheon, 2006.

--- *Secularism confronts Islam.* Translated by George Holoch. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

--- *Holy Ignorance. When Religion and Culture Part Ways.* Translated by Ros Schwartz. London: Hurst & Company, 2010.

Rubenstein, Richard E. and Jarle Crocker. "Challenging Huntington." In: *Foreign Policy* 96 (1994): 113-128.

Russett, Bruce M., John R. Oneil and Michaelene Cox. "Clash of Civilizations or Liberalism and Realism Déjà Vu? Some Evidence." In: *Journal of Peace Research* 37.5 (2000): 583-608.

Rustin, Michael. "'Working from the Symptom': Stuart Hall's Political Writing." In: Brian Meeks (ed.). *Culture, Politics, Race and Diaspora. The Thought of Stuart Hall.* London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2007. 19-44.

Rustin, Susanna. "Sebastian Faulks: A life in Writing." In: *The Guardian* 14.09.2012, n.p. http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2012/sep/14/sebastian-faulks-life-in-writing?newsfeed=true [1.10.2012].

Ruthven, Malise. *Fundamentalism. The Search for Meaning.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

--- *Fundamentalism. A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Ryan, Sheila. "Israel's Invasion of Lebanon: Background to the Crisis." In: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Special Issue: The War in Lebanon, 11.4 – 12.1 (1982): 23-37.

Ryu, Honglim. "Ethics of Ambiguity and Irony: Jacques Derrida and Richard Rorty." In: *Human Studies*, Intertexts: Philosophy, Literature and the Human Sciences in Korea, 24.1/2 (2001): 5-28.

Saadi, Suhayl. "Under the Gas cooler: Fundamentalism and Literature." In: Catherine Pesso-Miquel and Klaus Stierstorfer (eds.). *Burning Books. Negotiations between Fundamentalism and Literature.* New York: AMS Press, 2012. 1-17.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Saage, Richard. *Demokratietheorien. Eine Einführung.* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005.

Said, Edward. "Orientalism Reconsidered." In: Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley (eds.). *Postcolonial Criticism.* London and New York: Longman, 1997. 126-144.

--- "Shattered Myths." [1975]. In: A.L. Macfie (ed.). *Orientalism. A Reader.* New York: New York University Press, 2000. 89-103.

--- "Arabs, Islam and the Dogmas of the West." [1976]. In: A.L. Macfie (ed.). *Orientalism. A Reader.* New York: New York University Press, 2000. 104-105.

--- *Out of Place. A Memoir.* New York: Vintage Books, 2000 [1999].

--- *Orientalism.* London et al.: Penguin, 2003 [1978].

Salomon, Bettina. "'Confessions of a Dangerous Mind': Zum Verhältnis von Terror und Trauma in Martin Amis' *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* und Mohsin Hamids *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.*" In: Norbert Greiner and Felix Spang (eds.). *Lesarten des Terrorismus.* Trier: WVT, 2011. 145-160.

Sanga, Jaina C. *Salman Rushdie's Postcolonial Metaphors. Migration, Translation, Hybridity, Blasphemy, and Globalization* [Contributions to the Study of World Literature 109]. Wesport and London: Greenwood Press, 2001.

Scanlan, Margaret. "Migrating from terror: The postcolonial novel after September 11." In: *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46.3-4 (2010): 266-278.

--- "After the Apocalypse: Novelists and Terrorists since 9/11." In: Michael C. Frank and Eva Gruber (eds.). *Literature and Terrorism. Comparative Perspectives.* Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012. 141-154.

Schaar, Stuart. "Orientalism at the Service of Imperialism" [1979]. In: A.L. Macfie (ed.). *Orientalism. A Reader.* New York: New York University Press, 2000. 181-193.

Schäfer, Heinrich Wilhelm. *Kampf der Fundamentalismen. Radikales Christentum, radikaler Islam und Europas Moderne.* Frankfurt am Main und Leipzig: Verlag der Weltreligionen im Insel Verlag, 2008.

Schirrmacher, Christine. "Konvertiten zum Islam: Je gläubiger – je radikaler? Wege der Radikalisierung bei Muslimen in Europa." In: R. Hempelmann (ed.). *Religionsdifferenzen und Religionsdialoge. 50 Jahre EZW* [EZW-Text 210]. Berlin: Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen, 2010. 129-145.

Schirrmacher, Christine and Ursula Spuler-Stegemann. *Frauen und die SCHARIA. Die Menschenrechte im Islam.* München: Hugendubel, 2004.

Schleifer, Ronald. "Structuralism." In: Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth (eds.). *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism.* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. 696-701.

Schmid, Wolf. "Narrativity and Eventfulness." In: Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (eds.). *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory* [Narratologia 1]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003. 17-33.

--- "Implied Author". In: Peter Hühn et al. (eds.). *Handbook of Narratology* [Narratologia 19]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 161-173.

--- *Narratology. An Introduction.* Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010.

Schmidt-Haberkamp, Barbara. *Die Kunst der Kritik. Zum Zusammenhang von Ethik und Ästhetik bei Shaftesbury.* München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2000.

Schneider, Ralf. "Towards a Cognitive Theory of Literary Character: The Dynamics of Mental-Model Construction." In: *Style* 35.4 (2001): 607-640.

Schönert, Jörg. "Author." In: Peter Hühn et al. (eds.). *Handbook of Narratology* [Narratologia 19]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 1-13.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Schwan, Siegfried. *Huntingtons These vom "Clash of Civilizations". Untersucht am Beispiel des Konfliktes zwischen der Islamischen und der Westlichen Zivilisation* [Beiträge zur inneren Sicherheit 15]. Brühl: Fachhochschule des Bundes, 2001.

Sen, Amartya. *Identity and violence: The Illusion of Destiny.* New York and London: Norton, 2006.

Senapati, Su. "Review of *The Sirens of Baghdad.*" In: *Modern Language Studies*, Special issue: nine eleven + ten in literature, popular culture, and the classroom, 41.1 (2011): 124-125.

Senghaas, Dieter. "Review: A Clash of Civilizations. An Idée Fixe?" In: *Journal of Peace Research* 35.1 (1998): 127-132.

Shamsie, Kamila. "All you need is love." In: *The Guardian* 26.06.2004, n.p. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/jun/26/featuresreviews.guardianreview17/print [14.10.2013].

Shamsie, Muneeza. "Covert Operations in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction." In: *Commonwealth* 31.2 (2009): 15-25.

--- "South Asian Muslims: Fiction and Poetry in English." In: *Religion & Literature* 43.1 (2011): 149-157.

Shane, Scott and Ben Hubbard. "ISIS Displaying a Deft Command of Varied Media." In: *The New York Times* 30.08.2014, n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/world/middleeast/isis-displaying-a-deft-command-of-variedmedia.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar%2C%7B%221%22 %3A%22RI%3A11%22%7D [04.09.2016].

Shaukat, Aroosa. "The Creative Process: Novelist Looks Forward to Movie, New Book in 2013." *The Express Tribune* 26.04.2012, n.p. http://tribune.com.pk/story/369883/the-creative-process-novelist-looks-forward-to-movie-new-book-in-2013/ [26.03.2013].

Shaw, Katy. "'Capital' City: London, Contemporary British Fiction and the Credit Crunch." In: *The Literary London Journal* 11.1 (2014): 44–53.

Shook, David. "Opening Bangladesh to the World. A Conversation with Four Contemporary Writers." In: *World Literature Today* May-June (2013): 45-48.

Shriver, Lionel. "Exposed to the Gates of Hell. Lionel Shriver Reviews *Sirens of Baghdad* by Yasmina Khadra, translated by John Cullen." In: *Telegraph* 26.07.2007, n.p. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/fictionreviews/3666776/Exposed-to-the-gates-of-hell.html [29.07.2012].

Shusterman, Ronald. "Ethics, Science, and Literature, or Is There Madness in This Reason?" In: Sibylle Baumbach, Herbert Grabes and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Literature and Values. Literature as a Medium for Representing, Disseminating and Constructing Norms and Values.* [Giessen Contributions to the Study of Culture 2]. Trier: WVT, 2009. 55-66.

Siebers, Tobin. *Morals & Stories.* New York and Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1992.

Silber, Mitchell D. and Arvin Bhatt. *Radicalization in the West. The Homegrown Threat* [NYPD Intelligence Division Report 2007]. In: http://www.nypdshield.org/public/SiteFiles/documents/NYPD_Report-Radicalization_in_the_West.pdf [24.04.2013].

Singh, Harleen. "Deconstructing Terror: Interview with Mohsin Hamid on *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007)." In: *Ariel* 42.2 (2012): 149-156.

Skellington, Richard. *'Race' in Britain Today*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE, 2nd edition 1996 [1992].

Smith, Wendy. "Book review: *The Good Muslim*, by Tahmima Anam." In: *The Washington Post* 12.08.2011, n.p. http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-08-12/entertainment/35269052_1_tahmima-anam-sohail-war-criminals [15.10.2013].

Solomon, David. "MacIntyre and Contemporary Moral Philosophy." In: Mark C. Murphy (ed.). *Alasdair MacIntyre* [Contemporary Philosophy in Focus]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 114-151.

Solomon, Deborah. "Questions for Mohsin Hamid. The Stranger. Interview by Deborah Solomon." *The New York Times* 15.04.2007, n.p. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/15/magazine/15wwlnQ4.t.html?_r=0 [25.03.2013].

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Sommer, Michael. "IS-Vormarsch auf Palmyra. Was der Welt verloren geht." In: *Spiegel Online* 24.05.2015, n.p. http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/is-bedroht-palmyra-nimrud-hatra-aufsatz-michael-sommer-a-1035171.html [05.11.2015].

Sommer, Roy. *Fictions of Migration. Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Gattungstypologie des zeitgenössischen interkulturellen Romans in Großbritannien* [Studies in English Literary and Cultural History 1]. Trier: WVT, 2001.

--- "Funktionsgeschichten: Überlegungen zur Verwendung des Funktionsbegriffs in der Literaturwissenschaft und Anregungen zu seiner terminologischen Differenzierung." In: *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 41 (2000): 319-341.

--- "From Cultural Studies to the Study of Culture: Key Concepts and Methods." In: Ansgar Nünning and Jürgen Schlaeger (eds.). *English Studies Today: Recent Developments and New Directions.* Trier: WVT, 2007. 165-191.

Srivastava, Neelam. "Reading after Terror. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and First-World Allegory." In: Bethan Benwell, James Procter and Gemma Robinson (eds.). *Postcolonial audiences. Readers, viewers and reception.* New York and London: Routledge, 2012. 171-183.

Stähler, Axel and Klaus Stierstorfer. "Introduction." In: Axel Stähler and Klaus Stierstorfer (eds.). *Writing Fundamentalism.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. vii-xvii.

Steele, Meili. "How Philosophy of Language Informs Ethics and Politics: Richard Rorty and Contemporary Theory." In: *boundary* 2 20.2 (1993): 140-172.

Stein, Mark. *Black British Literature. Novels of Transformation.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004.

Stewart, Dona J. "Economic Recovery and Reconstruction in Postwar Beirut." In: *Geographical Review* 86.4 (1996): 487-504.

Stierstorfer, Klaus. "Introduction." In: Klaus Stierstorfer and Annette Kern-Stähler. *Literary Encounters of Fundamentalism. A Case Book.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008. 7-11.

Strasen, Sven. "Zur Analyse der Erzählsituation und der Fokalisierung." In: Wenzel, Peter (ed.). *Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse. Kategorien, Modelle, Probleme* [WVT-Handbücher zum literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium 6]. Trier: WVT, 2004. 111-140.

Surkamp, Carola. *Die Perspektivenstruktur narrativer Texte. Zu ihrer Theorie und Geschichte im englischen Roman zwischen Viktorianismus und Moderne* [Studies in English Literary and Cultural History 9]. Trier: WVT, 2003.

Tanner, Stephen L. "The Moral and the Aesthetical: Literary Study and the Social Order." In: Stephen K. George (ed.). *Ethics, Literature, & Theory. An Introductory Reader*. Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2nd edition 2005. 115-127.

Tarpley, James H. "Review of Les Sirènes de Bagdad." In: *The French Review* 81.6 (2008): 1306-1307.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age.* Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

Tehranian, Majid. "Fundamentalist Impact on Education and the Media: An Overview." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and Society* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 2]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993 (a). 313-340.

--- "Islamic Fundamentalism in Iran and the Discourse of Development." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and Society* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 2]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993 (b). 341-373.

Tétreault, Mary Ann. "The Sexual Politics of Abu Ghraib: Hegemony, Spectacle, and the Global War on Terror." In: *NWSA Journal*, Feminist Perspectives on Peace and War: Before and after 9/11, 18. 3 (2006): 33-50.

Thatcher, Margaret. "TV interview for Granada World in Action." 27.01.1978. In: http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103485 [19.07.2015].

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public life. "New Pew Research Center Survey Finds Moderate Attitudes Among Muslim Americans." 30.08.2011. http://www.pewforum.org/press-room/press-releases/new-pew-research-center-survey-finds-moderate-attitudes-among-muslim-americans.aspx [27.03.2013]

The White House. "President Discusses Beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom." In: *Archives*, Operation Iraqi Freedom, 22.03.2003, http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030322.html [20.03.2016].

Thomas, Susie. "'Prince of Darkness Meets Princess of Porn': *The Black Album* (1995)." In: Susie Thomas (ed.). *Hanif Kureishi.* Basingstoke et al: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 101-118.

--- "*The Last Word* on Hanif Kureishi." In: Susan Alice Fischer (ed.). *Hanif Kureishi.* London et al.: Bloomsbury, 2015. 115-130.

Tibawi, A.L. "English-Speaking Orientalists." In: A.L. Macfie (ed.). *Orientalism. A Reader.* New York: New York University Press, 2000 [1964]. 57-76.

Tibi, Bassam. "The Worldview of Sunni Arab Fundamentalists: Attitudes Toward Modern Science and Technology." In: Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby (eds.). *Fundamentalisms and Society* [The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 2]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993. 73-102.

--- *Die Neue Weltunordnung. Westliche Dominanz und islamischer Fundamentalismus.* Berlin: Propyläen, 1999.

--- *Fundamentalismus im Islam. Eine Gefahr für den Weltfrieden?* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000.

--- "Jihadism and Intercivilisational conflict. Conflicting Images of the Self and of the Other." In: Sharam Akbarzadeh and Fethi Mansouri (eds.). *Islam and Political Violence. Muslim Diaspora and Radicalism in the West.* London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010. 39-64.

Toker, Leona. "Introduction." In: Leona Toker (ed.). *Commitment in Reflection. Essays in Literature and Moral Philosophy.* New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1994. xi-xxxii.

Toumi, Alek Baylee. "Literature and Power: Muslims vs. Islamists." In: *Religion & Literature* 43.1 (2011): 126-132.

Toye, Margaret. "Care of the Self or Care of the Other? Towards a Poststructuralist Ethics of Pedagogy." In: Dominic Rainsford and Tim Woods (eds.). *Critical Ethics. Text, Theory and Responsibility.* Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999. 203-219.

Travis, Allen. "The making of an extremist. Study identifies those at risk of radicalisation, those who recruit them - and what can be done" (Background: MI5 report). In: *The Guardian* 20.08.2008, n.p. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/aug/20/uksecurity.terrorism [24.04.2013].

Turner, Bryan S. *Orientalism, postmodernism and globalism.* London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

--- (ed.). *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion.* Chichester: Blackwell, 2010.

Turner Johnson, James. "Moral Traditions and Religious Ethics: A Comparative Enquiry." In: *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 25.3 (1997): 77-101.

Tusicisny, Andrej. "Civilizational Conflicts: More Frequent, Longer, and Bloodier?" In: *Journal of Peace Research* 41.4 (2004): 485-498.

Ulvydiene, Loreta. "Literature after 9/11: John Updike's *Terrorist.*" In: *Respectus philologicus: mokslinis te stinis leidinys* 18.23 (2010): 64-73.

United States Central Intelligence Agency. "Lebanon." In: *The World Factbook, n.p.* https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html [20.03.2016].

Upstone, Sara. "A Question of Black or White: Returning to Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album.*" In: *Postcolonial Text* 4.1 (2008): 1-24.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Valentin, Emilie. „Interview de Yasmina Khadra pour Evene.fr: Interpeller avec force." In: *Le Figaro* 9.10.2006, n.p. http://evene.lefigaro.fr/livres/actualite/interview-yasmina-khadra-sirenes-bagdad-499.php [31.10.2017].

Van Laak, Dirk. "Einleitung." In: Dirk van Laak (ed.). *Literatur, die Geschichte schrieb.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011. 9-29.

Vaughn, Kyle. "Reading the Literature of War: A Global Perspective on Ethics." In: *The English Journal* 100.6 (2011): 60-67.

Virdee, Satnam. "Racial Harassment." In: Nicholas Abercrombie and Alan Warde (eds.). *The Contemporary British Society Reader.* Cambridge: Polity, 2001. 126-134.

Voparil, Christopher. *Richard Rorty. Politics and Vision.* Lanham (et al.): Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.

Warraq, Ibn. *Defending the West. A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism.* New York: Prometheus Books, 2007.

Waterman, David. "Memory and Cultural Identity: Negotiating Modernity in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*." In: *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* 2.2 (2010): 18-35.

--- "The Contact Zone in Wartime: Hybridity's Promise and Terror in Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*." In: Vanessa Guignery, Catherine Pesso-Miquel and François Specq (eds.). *Hybridity: forms and figures in literature and the visual arts.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publ., 2011. 250-259.

--- "'Focus on the Fundamentals': Personal and Political Identity in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*." In: David Waterman (ed.). *Where Worlds Collide: Pakistani Fiction in the New Millennium*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 121-136.

Wentker, Sibylle. "Grundfragen des Islam." In: Walter Feichtinger and Sibylle Wentker (eds.). *Islam, Islamismus und Islamischer Extremismus. Eine Einführung.* Wien et al.: Böhlau, 2008. 17-31.

--- "Fundamentalismus und Islamismus Definition und Abgrenzung." In: Walter Feichtinger and Sibylle Wentker (eds.). *Islam, Islamismus und Islamischer Extremismus. Eine Einführung.* Wien et al.: Böhlau, 2008. 33-44.

--- "Historische Entwicklung des Islamismus." In: Walter Feichtinger and Sibylle Wentker (eds.). *Islam, Islamismus und Islamischer Extremismus. Eine Einführung.* Wien et al.: Böhlau, 2008. 45-59.

Westergaard, John. "The Persistence of Class Inequalities." In: Nicholas Abercrombie and Alan Warde (eds.). *The Contemporary British Society Reader.* Cambridge: Polity, 2001. 68-79.

Whatts, Cedric. "'A Bloody Racist': About Achebe's View of Conrad." In: *The Yearbook of English Studies,* [Vol. 13, Colonial and Imperial Themes Special Number] (1983): 196-209. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3508121 [10.10.2015].

Wilson, Adrian. "Foucault on the 'Question of the Author': A Critical Exegesis." In: The *Modern Language Review* 99.2 (2004): 339-363.

Wilson, Janet. "The Contemporary Terrorist Novel and Religious Fundamentalism: Richard Flanagan, Mohsin Hamid, Orhan Pamuk." In: Catherine Pesso-Miquel and Klaus Stierstorfer (eds.). *Burning Books. Negotiations between Fundamentalism and Literature.* New York: AMS Press, 2012. 91-107.

Wimsatt Jr, W.K. and M.C. Beardsley. "The Intentional Fallacy". In: *The Sewanee Review* 54.3 (1946): 468-488.

Wimsatt, William and Monroe C. Beardsley. "Der intentionale Fehlschluss" [1946]. In: Fotis Jannidis et al. (eds.). *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 2009. 84-101.

Winkgens, Meinhard. "Hybride Identitätskonstruktion zwischen einer 'Politik kultureller Differenz' und individueller Authentifizierung in den Fiktionen Hanif Kureishis – Anmerkungen zu *The Buddha of Suburbia* und *The Black Album.*" In: Stefan Glomb and Stefan Horlacher (eds.). *Beyond Extremes. Repräsentation und Reflexion von Modernisierungsprozessen im zeitgenössischen britischen Roman.* Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2004. 173-213.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Wolff, Martina. "Self, Identity and Terrorism in Current American Literature: *American Pastoral* and *Terrorist*." In: Michael C. Frank and Eva Gruber (eds.). *Literature and Terrorism. Comparative Perspectives.* Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012. 103-122.

Worcester, Ken. "Ten years of Thatcherism." In: *World Policy Journal* 6.2 (1989): 297-320.

Yaniv, Avner and Robert J. Lieber. "Personal Whim or Strategic Imperative?: The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon." In: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Special Issue: The War in Lebanon, 11.4 - 12.1 (1982): 23-37.

Yaqin, Amina. "Muslims as Multicultural Misfits in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*." In: Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin (eds.). *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing.* London and New York: Routledge, 2012. 101-116.

Yehoshua, Abraham B. "The Moral Connections of Literary Texts." In: Stephen K. George (ed.). *Ethics, Literature, & Theory. An Introductory Reader*. Lanham et al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2nd edition 2005. 11-21.

Yousaf, Nahem. *Hanif Kureishi's* The Buddha of Suburbia. *A Readers Guide.* New York and London: Continuum, 2002.

Zapf, Hubert. *Literatur als kulturelle Ökologie. Zur kulturellen Funktion imaginativer Texte an Beispielen des amerikanischen Romans.* Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002.

--- "Das Funktionsmodell der Literatur als kultureller Ökologie: Imaginative Texte im Spannungsfeld von Dekonstruktion und Regeneration." In: Marion Gymnich and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Funktionen von Literatur. Theoretische Grundlagen und Modellinterpretationen* [ELCH 16]. Trier: WVT, 2005. 55-77.

--- "Literature and Ecology: Introductory Remarks on a New Paradigm of Literary Studies." In: *Anglia. Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie,* Special Issue: Literature and Ecology, 127.1 (2006): 1-10.

--- "New Directions in American Literary Studies: Ecocriticism and the Function of Literature as Cultural Ecology." In: Ansgar Nünning and Jürgen Schlaeger (eds.). *English Studies Today: Recent Developments and New Directions.* Trier: WVT, 2007. 139-164.

--- "Literary Ecology and the Ethics of Texts." In: *New Literary History* 39.4 (2008) (a): 847-868.

--- "Kulturökologie und Literatur. Ein transdisziplinäres Paradigma der Literaturwissenschaft." In: Hubert Zapf (ed.). *Kulturökologie und Literatur. Beiträge zu einem transdisziplinären Paradigma der Literaturwissenschaft.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008 (b). 15-44.

--- "Kulturelle Ökologie und literarisches Wissen: Perspektiven einer kulturökologischen Literaturwissenschaft an Beispielen der American Renaissance." In: *KulturPoetik* 8.2 (2008) (c): 250-266.

Zebiri, Kate. *British Muslim Converts. Choosing Alternative Lives*. Oxford: One World, 2008.

--- "Orientalist Themes in Contemporary British Islamophobia." In: John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (eds.). *Islamophobia. The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century.* Oxford: University Press, 2011. 173-190.

Zeidan, David. *The Resurgence of Religion. A Comparative Study of Selected Themes in Christian and Islamic Fundamentalist Discourses.* Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003.

zerweck, Bruno. "Der *Cognitive Turn* in der Erzähltheorie: Kognitive und 'Natürliche' Narratologie." In: Ansgar Nünning and Vera Nünning (eds.). *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie* [WVT-Handbücher zum literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium 4]. Trier: WVT, 2002. 219-241.

Zimmermann, Jutta. "Einleitung: Ethik und Moral als Problem der Literatur und Literaturwissenschaft." In: Jutta Zimmermann and Britta Salheiser (eds.). *Ethik und Moral als Problem der Literatur und Literaturwissenschaft.* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2006. 9-23.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Appendix

Interview with Sebastian Faulks, London, 14 October 2012

In a Guardian interview in September 2012 you once said that all of your books are about one major idea and two or three subsidiary ones.
Can you summarise in a few words the overarching theme of *A Week in December* and why you thought that a mosaic of many different perspectives would be most suitable for the representation of this theme?

I think what unites all the different strands and all the different characters in the book is that they are all detached from reality. You know, you have the hedge fund guy, the financier who's dealing in bets on bets on bets and the likelihood of other bets failing, which doesn't have to do with anyone actually producing anything of value. You have his son, who's watching reality television, this sort of imaginary world. You have the lawyer whose brother is a schizophrenic, who lives in a world in which he can't tell reality from illusion. There is this story about mobile phones and the internet. And then you have the student Hassan. His religion is based on a man in a cave having heard a voice hundreds of years ago. And who knows? There may be some eternal truth – maybe God did speak to him – I'm not saying he didn't. All I'm saying is that these stories are all about people living in different virtual worlds. This unites the whole thing.

Another unifying element of *A Week in December*, to my mind, is the ironic tone of the narratorial voice that gives us an insight into the thoughts and feelings of many different characters.
Could you comment on the form of the narrator and his role for the narrative?

I don't really think of there being a narrator in *A Week in December.* There are probably five major strands to the story. I wrote it quite mathematically, trying to divide it up, so that no one had too much of the book and no one had too little, trying to reassign parts within the days of the week. If there was too much of one character on Tuesday, I tried to put it into Thursday. My essential aim during that time was simply to write from the point of view of the character I was writing about –as sympathetically as possible. So if you hear a narrative voice that's probably, in my view, not a good thing. I would like the narrative voice to be neutral, merely expressing the story through the feelings and the situation of each character. Of course, this is difficult to do. You may well sense that I am more sympathetic to Gabriel, the lawyer, than I am to Veals, the hedge fund manager. A little bit of leaking is okay. But by and large, I

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

tried to see each scene wholeheartedly from the perspective of the character I am talking about. And I think that makes it much more dramatic.

Indeed, I perceived the narrator to be very covert. We do not get any information about the narrating instance and a lot of insight into the consciousness of different characters. However, I perceived a narratorial voice in the ironic tone of description, which, to me, implied certain value judgments.

I think that's probably a leakage. I mean, it's very difficult to describe very straight-faced. I wanted to be humorous. If you think of the scene in which there is this big auction in which all these financiers are bidding for artistic things, they don't have any knowledge of. If you analyse this scene sentence by sentence: I don't think you'll find many adjectives or adverbs that are pushing at you, the reader. In my opinion it's a very flat account of what takes place. And I guess you felt that it was ironic or humorous because it is! Or when you look at the description of the television programme 'It's Madness', when it describes finally this person hanging. Read it very closely and I think you won't find on the page any particular adjective or adverb which is saying 'horrendously' or 'appallingly' or 'tragically'. It's just a very blank description, and you are free to read it how you wish.

Contrary to this freedom of interpretation, your novel also features large passages which contain pure economic details. Why did you include specialised terminology, which is a challenge for average readers without much economic background knowledge?

I think a lot of people found it hard to follow, but all I can say is that the first draft of the book had a lot more and I cut it by half. Simply what happened is that people like Veals, and people working in banks, have effectively bankrupted this country and several other countries. And a lot of people say: 'Oh – it's all very complicated. I can't be bothered to understand this!' And I'm trying to explain to them that it's not THAT complicated. It's a little bit complicated, but it's not THAT complicated. And if someone – heaven forbid – set fire to your house, I don't think you would say: 'Oh –it's all complicated. I don't know who did it…' NO! I think you'd say: 'Let's find out who did this! Let's get him put in prison. Let's find out WHY he did it and try to make sure it doesn't happen again!' This book in a way is trying to do that. And if it gets a little bit difficult in some places, I'm sorry, but I made it as easy as I could.

And in this way people start thinking about the topic who might not have bought a book on economics.

Certainly, I would hope so. I would hope that it would have given some information to people and would have increased their anger, but also would have increased their knowledge about how it was done. All you can do is contribute to these things and

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

then we will all be more aware, and it won't happen so much in the future. – Except that people are lazy and they can't be bothered. So it may happen again, but I hope not. All one can do as a citizen, let alone as a writer, is try to help.

I guess that's a problem of our globalised age. We have so many opportunities but just do not know how to handle this whole range of choices. Many people lack orientation and values that could guide them.

Yes, and literature could really help here. Let me give you an example: The basic problem with the financial crisis was that the bankers and the hedge fund managers used the wrong metaphor. It was a very literary term. They believed they had created these products that they could slice up, redice, reslice and sell on and on and that they would spread the risk so thin over the world that it would be like water spreading over the world. It would never be more than a millimetre deep – so there would never be a tidal wave. That was the metaphor they used. The metaphor they should have used was contagion. A germ, a plague, once in one country, goes through the entire population. They just had the very wrong metaphor in their heads. If they had thought 'contagion', they might have been more careful.

Speaking of this contagious potential of the global economic system: To my mind, *A Week in December* draws many parallels between followers of 'Islamic fundamentalist' beliefs and worshippers of the neoliberal economic order. You describe predatory capitalism as an exclusive circle with hardly any contact to reality that demands the blind allegiance of its members.
Do you believe that the neoliberal economic order also has a 'fundamentalist' dimension?

We need to be quite careful with this term. I mean, 'fundamentalist' does not equal 'bad', or 'aggressive', or 'wrong'. It just means 'fundamentalist'. And there is a certain fundamentalist requirement of Islam: That you believe that the Koran is the uncreated word of God – not touched by human hand. And if you don't believe that, then you cannot be a strict Muslim.

Roman Catholicism has a fundamentalist requirement: That you believe that the Holy Communion literally becomes the body of Christ and the blood of Christ in you. And then he rose literally from the dead. And if you don't believe this, you cannot be a Roman Catholic. These are FUNDAMENTAL requirements. That doesn't mean to say that people who believe them are wrong or bad. But if you don't believe that, you can't truly belong to the faith.

The fundamental requirement of modern finance is that there is only one thing that counts and that is profit. There are no contingent thoughts. You exist in a world of profit and loss which is in a bubble apart from the rest of society. And that is the fundamental requirement of that world. If you believe that what you do is connected

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

to other parts of society and that you have a responsibility for other parts of society, then you are not really going to be able to function in the world of modern finance.

Speaking about these extremely elusive terms: What is 'fundamentalism'? What is 'liberalism'? What is your own definition of these terms?

Fundamentalism, I just defined for you. If you don't believe in the fundamental requirements, then you can't do it. In a soccer game, for example, there have to be eleven people. If you are only with ten – you can't start. Most religions have some fundamental requirements, apart actually from the Church of England, in which you don't really have to believe very much. And, as I just said, it's not a good thing or a bad thing. It's a question of how you use that fundamental belief.

Liberalism, of course, is a rather more slippery idea, because it depends on the context. So in social terms being 'liberal', I suppose, means saying: 'We accept that people's sexuality is their private matter and they must be free to exercise it, as they wish.' It's a question of being tolerant. Whereas in economic terms, liberalism means, I suppose, that you believe capitalism should have as few constraints as possible imposed on it by the government. And that this is the way to generate more money, a fitter economy, more wealth. There is also the term 'libertarianism', which is the more fundamentalist type of liberalism and resents any state interference or law making at all.

I think of myself as a liberal, basically in terms of being tolerant towards other people, respecting their beliefs and their preferences in life. I'm sure we all do these days. But quite clearly, in order to function properly, society must have some laws and regulations to protect the weak.

Your novel describes the form of libertarianism, you just mentioned, as an epitome of greed, unscrupulousness and moral decay. Even though Islamic fundamentalism is depicted as a brutal and abusive strategy, the criticism of economic libertarianism is essential to the novel.
What is your opinion on the interrelationship of Western politics and economics and the development of home-grown Islamist terrorism?

I think it would be very hard to prove a direct correspondence between the two. Part of the problem with home-grown terrorism in Britain is that there are too many immigrants at one time. A lot of people, for instance, came from the Mirpur valley in Kashmir where they flooded the valley to later build a hydroelectric dam. And they were simply transported – tens of thousands of people – and put down in an industrial city in the north of England and told to get on with things. It's just bad for everyone. You feel lonely, homesick, afraid. And the locals felt invaded. This was just terrible government policy.

In my opinion, immigration is a really good thing. People have to be free to move around. It revitalises societies to have a constant inflow of people coming and going

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

from different cultures. I think it's marvellous. But it's a question of numbers. That was by far the biggest influence on home-grown terrorism in this country – the overwhelming numbers of displaced people who felt sad, alone, afraid and unable to fit in.

In my opinion, Hassan's example moved the whole topic of identity, hybridity, and the question of how you fit into a society and define your own identity to the forefront.

Yes – and then you become vulnerable. You become prey to people with strong political agendas. And these are horrible people.

Some of the authors in my analysis have strong links to countries in which political and religious struggles are taking place at the moment. Some of them view Islamic fundamentalism more as a goal conflict (or a struggle about power and different social, political and economic concepts) than a religious conflict, whereas authors who migrated to Western countries and have been living here for some time are more focused on identity politics and challenges of hybridity and multiculturalism in Britain.
Do you view Islamic fundamentalism primarily as a 'goal conflict' or an identity conflict?

I don't think that all immigrants had a good deal – economically. But most of them are pretty okay with life and not many of them would actually choose to go back to the place their parents or grandparents came from. So it's not a complete disaster. It's just a question of volume. You said that the fundamentalist problem was perceived differently in different places. But I think that part of the problem is that there has never been a Muslim state which was satisfactory to fundamentalist Muslim criteria. And I mean – it would be wonderful if you could take the most responsible, learned Muslim scholars and politicians, give them a country and therewith a sort of focus of a society that they admired and liked as presumably Jewish people world-wide look to Israel. That's a really underrated part of the problem that no really strict Muslim feels that there is any country in the world that's right for them. They especially recoil from the so-called Arab Muslim states, because Islam does not ask for kingdoms, theocracies or dictatorships.

Contrary to other novelists, whose stories are set in multicultural societies, you do not place much stress on the tensions and antagonisms caused by cultural diversity and hybridity. *A Week in December* seems to portray British society as shaped more by divisions of class and money than by differences in ethnicity, religion or culture. Do you agree?

That's a huge question. I think, Britain is a reasonably tolerant country as far as different ethnic groups and different religions are concerned. And I think, we are really

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

past 'that person has the wrong colour of skin' kind of thing. To my mind, we are over that and alright with that. I perceive the big sort of divisions in this country to be economic, really. A large number of more recently immigrated people are in the lower half. The country is driven by London. It's like a train and London is the locomotive, and the rest are just carriages which are pulled along. If you are north of Birmingham, the figures are really appalling. It's something like 90% of the people are employed by the government. They basically work at the local council, at the offices collecting rents, cleaning streets… That's the major division in British society. We are a train with London as its locomotive, and there is a little bit of push coming from other places but not very much. That's really a problem. Therefore, a lot of people don't feel part of the process. A lot of people don't vote. And that's really sad.

During your BBC series *Faulks on Fiction* you said that the protagonists of the fiction we read have the most important and lasting influence on us and are much more significant than the authors or their biographies. Still, personal (sometimes also political) involvement plays a large role for many authors, who are dealing with the topics of Islamic fundamentalism and Western liberalism.
To what extent does the authors' individual experience, in your opinion, shape the way they approach these topics?

There are simply no rules. Every culture and every writer will approach these things differently. I personally don't enjoy reading fiction which I believe is based on the author's life, because I think that's what journalism or autobiography are for. Nevertheless, some of the greatest novels ever written had large autobiographical elements, such as Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. There really are no rules. It's just that my personal preference is for writers to invent and to project themselves into the minds and lives of other people. And I think, in general, that makes better books.

So what prompted you to write about Islamic fundamentalism? Did some kind of event or personal encounter arouse your interest in the topic?

Of course, 9/11 and the bombings in London roused my interest. Furthermore, I know some Muslim people. I wanted to better understand this. If you are a responsible grown-up human being living in the Western world in this decade, you have a kind of responsibility to try to understand what's going on in the world. I thought it would be interesting to find out. So I read some books about Islam and the history of it and I read the Koran, and I tried to sort of grapple with this. And it was interesting.

However, my interest isn't really in Islam. My interest was in finding something that would fit in with my novel. To me, I'm an artist first. If you think of a painter and part of his painting is the portrait of a dog you can state that sure, he's interested in dogs and sure he's trying to get the dog right, but he's really interested in what the dog can contribute to the painting. I had quite a religious upbringing myself. I'm not a very religious person, but I know a lot about Christianity and I was just interested to

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

find out what this very popular world-wide religion of Islam offered to all the millions of people who subscribed to it.

Islamic fundamentalism is a topic that continues to inflame passions, as the demonstrations in several countries against the movie 'The Innocence of Muslims' just reaffirmed. What is your reaction to these heated controversies and to the criticism surrounding your novel? Do you still position yourself publicly concerning the topic or are you trying to stay out of these struggles?

I don't have any public position at all on Islam. What simply happened was that in a conversation with a journalist I used words which were very forceful and which I did not expect her to repeat. And of course, it was MY fault. Because I didn't turn off her machine and I didn't say: 'This is not to be repeated.' And I regret it. But I've written another book since then. I've moved on. You know: That was that dog in the painting. I think that this film was a terrible piece of work. I haven't seen it myself but a friend has seen it and said it was pornographic, insulting, low-grade, awful – just trying to be offensive. And I'm totally against that.

One of the basic difficulties of Islam is the scripture. When in Judaism scholars discover new evidence about the texts of the Old Testament they rejoice, and they share the light that it has shed on their great faith. And in Christianity, when you discover that maybe St. Mark's gospel, which we'd always thought was largely the work of St. Peter, was actually written in conjunction with a new person: That's really exciting! Sadly, there is no scriptural scholarship like that applied to the Koran as it has been in other religions. In Germany there is actually a lot of analysis of Koran-texts going on, now. But if it shows that this is not the uncreated word of God, but it's the work of well-meaning, holy, religious men, Muslims would not be able to react in the same way as let's say Jews, Hindus and Christians saying: 'That's fantastically interesting!' They would react, sadly, in a very different way. They would resist and dispute the new scholarship because the implications would be too great. I love it that, by contrast, the holy books of the New Testament draw attention to their own unreliability "according to St John", "according to St Luke". That's the human credibility gap where faith can grow.

You already indicated that literature might help people to obtain more knowledge about the world and a better understanding of how things are interrelated. Moreover, a *Guardian* article in Sep 2012 quoted you saying about the worth of literature: "I don't know how you can understand other people or yourself if you haven't read a lot of books. […] I just don't think you're equipped to deal with the demands and decisions of life, particularly in your dealings with other people."[177]

177 Rustin, Susanna. "Sebastian Faulks: A life in Writing." In: *The Guardian*, 14 Sep 2012, http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2012/sep/14/sebastian-faulks-life-in-writing?newsfeed=true [1.10.2012].

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Do you wish to instil an empathic capacity in the reader, and do you also believe in the political and social influence of literature as a weapon against essentialist ideologies of all kind?

Very much so! And although *A Week in December* is a rather angry and satirical book. If you take the character of Hassan, for instance: If you read about him in a newspaper you'd say: 'Who is this guy who's about to murder people?' But if you follow him through the book, you might think: 'Who is this nice boy who's been led astray by these bad people?' And: 'How good that he finds it in himself!' Probably, because of the strength of his parents to change his mind. And that's what life is and about what novel-writing is. It is to try to explain to people: He's not a headline in a newspaper! Every individual has a life and a drama. They are neither good nor bad, they are what they are. I think people who have read novels understand that about people and people who haven't – they just look at the newspapers and say: 'What a monster!' Or: 'What a hero!' And they are constantly surprised when the hero, like Lance Armstrong, turns out to be a monster, after all. Or the villain, like Hassan almost is, turns out to be a really sweet boy with very nice parents. I think that is a big contribution towards people's understanding.

Speaking of this empathic ability, we have just talked about: The American moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum claims that we have to ask ourselves when reading a text what it shows about 'human life, about knowledge, about personality, about how to live'. Do you agree?

Totally! That's why I read and why I write.

So what does your novel tell us about how to live?

What *A Week in December* tells us about how to live is that you cannot live in a virtual world. You have to make the effort to relate to other people in a real way. It tells us that you can't retreat from reality by using skunk or by just dealing in imaginary financial instruments – because that way leads to disaster. You have to engage with other people face to face in a real way. Sometimes this is painful, difficult and frequently boring, but it's the only way that human beings have a future. That doesn't mean that I'm against using email or do not watch television. We all do. But it's not a substitute for life.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Interview with Mohsin Hamid, Bonn – Lahore, 16 August 2012

My first question concerns the style of your novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. In previous interviews you mentioned the influence of Camus and other authors on your writing. Are there also specific Eastern storytelling traditions and styles which inform your work?

I don't really know the answer to that. The question is quite tricky, because I have mainly read writers who are from the West. This does not apply to music and poetry: I listen a lot to music from Pakistan and the poetry from this part of the world is very powerful. But concerning the form of the novel, I have to say that I do not have a particularly deep connection to the Urdu novelistic tradition. It has got a wonderful short-story tradition with writers like Saadat Hasan Manto. But I read mainly in English (including translations from Japanese, Russian or other languages). So, if I think about Eastern traditions, I could say that I am a fan of Haruki Murakami as an Eastern writer. But Murakami, because he is Japanese, is as foreign to me in a way as to you.

I really think of myself as a cosmopolitan in terms of reading. I am happy to read Gabriel Garcia Marquez, I am very happy to read Tony Morrison, Haruki Murakami or Albert Camus. I do not really think of Eastern tradition in that sense. For me the 'Eastern' comes more from a subject matter of perspective. In other words, I clearly have my base in the East: The life-experiences there, my family, the culture that I was born into – all these influences shaped me but not so much literature from the East.

Moreover, I came to like writers more than countries. Talking about American fiction: I don't like American fiction necessarily, but I like Morrison, or Pynchon, or Hemingway. It's not that I like French literature necessarily, but I do like Camus. Thus, I like writers, not traditions. But every writer I like naturally plays with styles and forms, and I'm interested in that form of playfulness. Furthermore, I'm interested in voice. Novels either have a literary voice that appeals to me or they do things that I think are fresh, wherever they come from – be they Pakistani, Japanese, French or American.

Mentioning your cosmopolitan stance in terms of reading: Which role does the choice of language play for your work in this context? Why did you decide not to use any foreign language elements in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist?* Did you have a specifically Western audience in mind?

In my first novel, *Moth Smoke*, there are several words that come from Urdu or Punjabi. And I made it a point not to explain those words: They just sit there – similar to slang. I thought, I just use whatever words are common here and let the reader figure them out for themselves.

When I was writing *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* though, I intentionally wanted to remove that use of words. I wanted to achieve the effects I had in mind using just

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

an English language pallet. The tone of voice, the cultural aura: I wanted to paint that, using English and not other words in Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Hindi, etc. In the same way, I also did not want to talk about religion. So there is no real talk about religion at all in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. There is talk about people who belong to a particular religious group. But there is no talk about religion *per se*. To my mind, writing is about accepting certain constraints and then working inside them. That is where the creativity comes from. So it's not talking about religion, not using any foreign words, but still having to encounter these notions.

So is this why you chose a title which rouses expectations that are undermined by the content of your novel in a surprising and positive way?

For me, it is a novel about how readers bring their own biases to stories. Observers are all biased observers. So yes: the title does many things to encourage biases to come up, and to allow people to make certain decisions and interpretations. And there might not be enough information to resolve those interpretations. So you are left with what you imagine the novel to be. In that sense, the novel does perform more as a mirror.

What do you want to achieve by holding up a mirror to your readers? In this context, you have frequently been underlining the importance of empathy. Do you wish to help readers to build an empathic capacity through your writing, and do you also believe in the political and social influence of literature as a weapon against essentialist beliefs?

For me, my whole writing is an act of empathy. My job is to imagine being other people, so that I can write about them. And what I sell to my audience, my readers, is for them to imagine other lives. Empathy is the business that I'm in and I tend to think that it is an important business. It is a good business. It's a very human need.

I feel that connecting to other beings and transcending your own self is interesting. In terms of the power, the potential of literature: I wouldn't know the answer to the question how powerful literature is and what it does. And I do not think that anyone knows. How powerful are we as individuals? How powerful is it for you to decide to be nice to people for one day? No one knows. But acting in whatever way you deem to be right, as often as you can, seems to be a good guideline for conducting oneself. We all fail at that, but it seems to be a basic standard that many of us like to hold ourselves to. And I think literature is doing exactly the same thing. It's trying to put out into the world something that you think has some degree of good in it.

I agree with you. During a talk with students in Lahore in April 2012 you already said: "Art should be about expressing what one believes and thinks." This stance reminds me of the approach promoted, for instance, by the American moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum concerning the ethical dimension of literature.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

She claims that we have to ask ourselves when reading a text what it shows about 'human life, about knowledge, about personality, about how to live'. Do you agree? And if so: What does this mean with regard to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*? Or provocatively speaking: What does it say about 'How to live'?

I do not think we have to do anything that we read. The lovely thing about reading is that (even though you may have an e-book-reader nowadays) there is normally no technology, no television involved: It's just you. I do not have any suggestions on how one SHOULD read. When I think about *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* I imagined a reader who was something like me but obviously different from me, who might enjoy some of the things that I enjoy, might find interesting some of the things that I find interesting, wants to play the kind of games that I like to play. I tried to create a novel that I would enjoy reading and find useful reading. I guess, I write novels I wish somebody had written and given to me.

Which role does the topic of 'hybridity' then play for your work? Since it has a very prominent role in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* you must find the topic important and useful to read about. However, I was confused concerning your stance on this issue.
On the one hand, you said during your last BBC interview in 2011: "I think it is essential to try to be a hybridized person, to not attempt to repurify yourself once you've been contaminated by living in different places, but rather to just become comfortable with that contamination, fertilization." On the other hand, the plot development of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* accentuates the tensions and antagonisms which hinder a fusion of different cultures and result in mutual disappointment and distrust.
So do you see hybridity primarily as a chance or a problematic challenge?

It's both! I think the way it goes together is that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is partly a cautionary tale of what happens when an individual, or multiple individuals, or societies try to purify themselves. So the protagonist of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is not me. In my own life I think that, at the end of the day, impurity wins! You know – whether it's in chemistry, or it's in human society: people will come and they will mix. Homo sapiens did not evolve in Europe – it evolved in Africa and moved from there. The whole history of our species is characterised by change, movement, evolution, impurity. So the question comes: Do we try to reject this notion of impurity, which all societies to a certain extent try to do? We have to find a way to accept impurity and to understand that we are impure ethnically, racially, culturally and even with respect to our personality. People are one self with spouse, one self with their child, one self with their parents, one self with their boss…We have many different personas.

What you are saying is close to Stuart Hall's vision of 'cross-cutting identities'. He also underlines that we are not only influenced by our culture or ethnicity or reli-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

gion, but that we are also determined by our sexuality, by class issues, by our role in society, by our role in our family and the attitude we adopt towards other human beings.

Absolutely. And additionally, we are also determined by how much food we have to eat! I think we don't have a personality conceived as a sort of chiselled stone. It's not what a human being is. A human being is a very fluid kind of cloud, which is not just one multi-facetted diamond with a sexuality facet, a religious facet and ethnic facet and so on. Actually, identity is not just multi-facetted, it's permeable and it is shifting in shape. So someone determined by the same facets of religion, sexuality or ethnicity as I am – on a bad day – is a different person; after hearing a great joke, is a different person.

Even if we look at the neuro-sciences, we find that our personality is actually a cognitive construct that our brain froze together to help us make sense of the world around us. It isn't actually true, for as we all know, we can think of so many things where we later think: 'How could I have done that?'; 'I'm embarrassed by what I did' or 'I'm shocked that I'm behaving this way'. The shock, however, is only due to the fact that the original view of our personality is false. It's not that the way we behaved isn't true to ourselves. Our behaviour is absolutely true to ourselves. It's just that we do not accept that it shows who we are. So I think, for me, this is a different way of thinking about personality itself.

That is really interesting and a good point. Your novel also points to different determinants of identity. However, the issue of identity is also partly superseded by political, economic and social issues. On the one hand, you said in your last BBC Radio 4 Bookclub interview in September 2011 that it's politics where the problem is and where the solutions lie. On the other hand, your novel underlines the importance of individual identity and belonging for an orientation towards or an aversion to different kinds of fundamentalist beliefs.
Do you view Islamic fundamentalism primarily as a 'goal conflict' (struggle around political, social and economic differences) or an identity conflict?

First of all, we have Islam. Let's say that Islamic fundamentalists tend to assume that there is some monolithic version of Islam about which one can have fundamental assumptions. I do not think that this is true. The cross-dressing Pakistani Muslim fashion designer and Osama bin Laden may both be Muslims: But is their Islam the same thing in any meaningful sense? Maybe in the same way that Pamela Anderson and the Pope's Christianity is the same thing. You know: It becomes ridiculous to call these things the same thing – it's just that they have the same name. I believe that there are probably a billion of 'Islams' out there with many similarities, but each individual's Islam is certainly different from another individuals' Islam. So first of all, Islam becomes just a label that we apply to people who use this word themselves.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Then fundamentalism: What do we mean when we say fundamentalist? Because it depends on which fundamentals Islam deemed to be fundamental. So if, let's say, someone's fundamental about Islam is that they think they should be a very charitable person, and otherwise they behave in the same way as everybody else in the society they live in (let's say Amsterdam), you would not think that they are Islamic fundamentalists! If people have attitudes towards sexuality and do not want to have sex outside of marriage but otherwise dress in very modern ways, drink booze, go to night clubs etc., you do not think of them as fundamentalist.

We use the term fundamentalist when we try to describe the behaviour they choose in a particular way, which has not necessarily to do with the fundamentals of Islam, but has to do with certain sets of behaviour that are visibly or politically identifiable. If we are talking about Islamic fundamentalism, I think, we really are not talking about religion. We are talking about identity at a personal level, communal identity which is either fabricated from the outside or from the inside, and we are talking about politics. I mean, I would not call somebody with a hippy tied-eyed t-shirt and flip-flops a Californian fundamentalist… I think that is as bizarre as the term 'Islamic fundamentalism'. I can understand where it comes from. But I think it is worth looking closely, and I do not think the term is very helpful.

Asking the question how to define 'Islamic fundamentalism', I think we first have to ask: 'What is our purpose in defining all these things?' That tells us a lot. If the purpose is to unite our group to fight outsiders, whether it is as Muslims or as non-Muslims, it is worth knowing that purpose. Why are we investigating this term? Usually the reason we are investigating it will shape our answer of what it is. If I am calling myself a Muslim fundamentalist, it is because I want to say that other Muslims should follow me, perhaps. You are employing the term Muslim fundamentalist to others in order to say that you are a normal person, to whatever your average definition of normal is. The real thing is: Here we have a bunch of people, some of whom may look similar or do not look similar, act in similar ways or do not act in similar ways. Maybe there are more careful and varied set of terms to describe them.

But still people continue to apply all kinds of terms to new phenomena in their search for orientation and explanation. You referred to some kind of terminology as well, when you called yourself a 'liberal Pakistani'. What does this entail? And – if you don't mind my forthright questioning: Which role do nationality and religion play for your personal life?

For me religion is a lot like sexuality, in the sense that it is one thing to speak about it in the abstract or in the fictional, but when you start discussing it regarding yourself specifically, then you are in a very, very personal domain. When I came back from college with all these radical ideas, and I was talking to one of my aunts about religion she said to me: 'Look, I don't want to answer your questions.' I asked: 'Why don't you answer my questions? Don't you have enough faith to stand my questioning?' And she said: 'Look: It's not about that we have faith or don't have faith. It's that it's personal.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

It's between me and my God!' And I think that is a really good answer. As far as my own sort of spirituality is concerned, I avoid speaking about it, because I think it is something personal. There is an intimacy involved in these things that requires a certain context to discuss.

When you ask generally what I mean when I say that I am a 'liberal Pakistani' (which is also a very clumsy term), I can say from a political outlook that I certainly believe in equal rights for women, homosexuals, different races, ethnicities, religious groups. I believe in the protection of minorities and in freedom of expression. I support the legalisation of drugs. I support a world where nobody ever had to carry a passport. I am a believer in any kind of equality between human beings that should not be denied on the basis of citizenship, or sexuality, or religion, or expression, or race. That does not mean that I don't believe in the role of the state …I do think states are important. But the various ways in which we divide people and then treat them differently legally are almost all unfounded. In that sense I consider myself to be a liberal.

These beliefs you are mentioning now are not inherently religious values, they are humanist values. Reading your novel, I got the feeling that humanist values are the ones which last and should not be overridden by any other ideologies or creeds. Do you agree and would you call yourself a humanist?

It depends on what you mean by the term 'humanist'. I believe in human beings determining things for themselves, and I believe that the human being is to be respected and venerated and exalted. Unfortunately, what you have a lot of in Europe (less of in America, but very much in Europe) is a kind of militant anti-religiosity that also calls itself 'human'. I find that disturbing, because I do not think it is my place to come between people and what their notion of the divine is, and try to strike down the stories and systems that they have constructed to make their lives more meaningful. So if 'humanism' implies 'anti-religiousness', I am not a humanist, because certain non-religious belief-systems can be even more constructed than religious belief-systems. I believe in the right of people to practice whatever faith they have, and I also believe that this should be done in a climate where they are not considered barbarians for having faith.

I definitely agree with you. By humanism I was referring to the more basic notion that all people have dignity and that human life is to be protected and should be at the centre-stage of all considerations. This implies that people must not be instrumentalised or sacrificed for any reasons: not for religious reasons and not for political reasons.

I would agree with that last statement you made.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Coming back to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the challenges of hybridity we have just discussed: The novels *A Week in December* by Sebastian Faulks and *The Black Album* by Hanif Kureishi also display the challenges of multiculturalism – but with respect to England.
Having lived in both countries: Where would you see the main differences between the political, cultural and religious frameworks in England and the US with regards to issues surrounding multiculturalism, national identity, hybridity and the integration of people from other cultures and creeds?
Are there any US-specific political discourses your novel reacts to or interacts with?

I think that America has a longer history of immigration, of racial differences and encounters. When I was living in New York or in California these places did, to a certain extent, feel to me racially more 'advanced' than Europe or Britain. But things have changed since September 11th. Before, I was just somebody who has brown skin, but who was well-educated and spoke English very well. I got along quite well in America. Ever since September 11th two things happened: Muslims in particular have become a suspect group. So Muslims are now more like African-Americans used to be. I never had an African-American experience, but I think the Muslim-American experience has many similarities to the African-American experience, now. It is less pleasant – in a nutshell. And America has also become much more anti-immigrant, because of this fear of predominantly Latin-American immigration. In that sense, America has become quite different from what it felt like, to me, twenty years ago.

In the UK and in Europe, I think, there is still very much an underlying ethnic tribalism. Generally speaking, I find race relations more problematic in Europe than in America. The tribe has constructed these institutions: the welfare state, the national health service, etc. But they are still tribal institutions, and when somebody not from the tribe, like an immigrant, comes, the tribe is reactive to this. The immigrant experience in Europe is often much more ghettoised and circumscribed than in the United States. Whereas Europe speaks much more about solidarity, Americans do not speak about solidarity very much, at all. The European solidarity is built on an insider vs. outsider solidarity. In other words: 'We must have solidarity in the face of our common foe' as opposed to 'All humans must have solidarity.'

America does not really do very much providing solidarity services to its citizenry in education, or health or any other area. But yet the American moral embraces solidarity more in the sense that every immigrant who comes to America becomes American and part of a certain sense of solidarity. In Europe there is a strong solidarity which can also be anti-immigrant at times. In America you have much less solidarity, but more inclusiveness of immigrants and other races. Each have their problems, but in a different way.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

This is an interesting point you make. Germany, for instance, saw heated media debates in April 2012 surrounding the assumptions of the German Christian Democrat politician, Volker Kauder, who claimed: "Islam is not a part of our tradition and identity in Germany and thus does not belong to Germany. But Muslim people do belong to Germany as citizens." So this seems to exemplify the kind of demarcation you just mentioned: categories based on religion, culture or ethnicity are used to draw boundaries and distinguish between insiders and outsiders.
How do you see the role of Islam in contemporary Western societies, in this respect?

I believe that it is a falsehood to say that Islam is not a deep part of European culture. The connection that Europe has with classical Greece is intermediated by Islam. In the Renaissance we didn't just rediscover Greek theories. Classical European antiquity was kept alive by Arab librarians, by Arab and Muslim mathematicians and philosophers and scientists and then reintroduced to Europe, in the Islamic conquest of Spain and then in the occupation of Sicily and the victory of Petra. And so, the Judeo-Christian classical-modern links came to Europe through Islam. Whether that is Arabic numerals as opposed to Roman numerals, whether it is many of the classical Greek texts or philosophy …The Islamic heritage in Europe is visible in every sculpture, building or canal.

There is a lot of constraint by these sorts of terms: 'Muslim', 'Christian'. You know 'Pi' is not a Muslim number or a Christian number or a Jewish number, it is a mathematical number. The way in which you design a telescope or peer review an academic journal – much knowledge we take for granted in Europe today existed in predominantly Muslim civilisations in Northern Africa and the Middle East and came back to Europe through these civilisations. So, speaking of the Northern part of the Mediterranean and the places north of that as separate from the Southern part of the Mediterranean is the same thing as if you would say that the parts east of the Rhine are not European. It is absurd.

I guess that many people do not have that much knowledge anymore about their own cultural heritage and about how it was influenced by other cultures and creeds. Take as a similar example the increasing complaints about the loss of language and the increasing importance of English and other foreign influences: People do not want to realise that languages are no static systems but have evolved at all times. People created new words for things that did not exist before, were influenced by migrants and invaders from other parts of the world and borrowed terms from other tongues. Many of these terms might not be recognised as foreign words today but have never been indigenous to our own language system.

Yes. What you call something now did not exist 2000 years before, and it will not exist 2000 years from now. It's like being married to the idea of 'Windows 95'. I cannot be-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

lieve that all those new things came through Windows 95 and that you have so many possibilities now that you did not have a couple of years before. And in this context you do not complain: 'This is not the real Windows 95!' That is an absurd argument. I think people are engaged in these absurd arguments because they do not confront the real thing, namely that everything – just as every human being – must die, and that you have to take this into account, whatever your belief-system is (whether it is religious or unreligious). In precisely the same way every national tribe will die: You are a group of people who currently call yourself Germans – you were Middle-Eastern farmers – the people who genetically now live in Germany. Time is changing. The world is changing, and the nation-state promised to protect us from change: It lied! And we must now accept that it has lied and must try to oppose the illusion of purity. Just accept the nation- state is an imperfect protector and it cannot stop time.

In my opinion, the German case is really interesting because it poses the question: 'What will you do?' Because the attempt at exterminating other groups did not succeed (there are still Jews and people of other races and creeds living in Germany); and it certainly did not succeed in keeping Germany safe; and it certainly did not succeed in preserving the purity of Germany. Look at the other immigrant groups that have come into the country later. So I suspect that the extermination-option now is discredited – hopefully forever. But then you have to ask what you are prepared to do. Is it that you will round people up and expel them, when you cannot put them into camps and kill them? But then, will you deny citizenship? Will you deny other rights? What kind of sanctions will you impose? Any sanctions short of extermination will fail and extermination itself requires a degree of violence to the group that is perpetrating the extermination that dehumanises them to such an extent that it does not seem like an appealing option. The better option is: Germany can be a country of people who can speak all kinds of languages and look all sorts of different ways, where we can figure out a way of coming to terms with difference instead of preventing it.

I'm quite opposed to the thought of the nation. I feel that countries are becoming a problem because people think in these categories. Why should Germans, for example, determine which beings are entitled to enter Germany? There is no reason why they should be able to determine that. If we say that one German can move freely within Germany – on what moral basis do we say that others cannot cross its boundaries? On what moral basis can we say that the Somali man, who is at risk of death and faces enormous difficulties, arrives in Germany with his family, hoping for a new life, cannot stay? In what way is his right to be there less than the German father from Hamburg?

Well, the decisive factor is the historical rule of the strongest and the protection of economic property, I guess.

Exactly, and so therefore, let us just be simple about it. Let us not talk about Germany and rights and immigrants. Let us just say: 'We are strong and we want to stop these people.' And then let us ask ourselves: 'How strong are we?' I think we have recently

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

discovered that we are not strong enough. And once we've discovered that, the rest is inevitable. You cannot stop the Somalis and the Muslims and everybody else who is coming in. We do not have the strength: They will come!

I think that you are right in your prognosis that things will change with an increasingly fast pace and that Europeans will have to adjust to these new situations and have to reconsider their political stance towards elder power-claims and hierarchies.

Speaking of developments: Seeing the events in many countries following the Arab spring, the long-lasting effects of the international financial crisis as well as ongoing racial tensions in Britain and France:
Would you add anything to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from your present point of view? Or are you trying to come to terms with these new developments in your new novel, which comes out in March 2013. What is the topic of your third work?

You have to read it! (laughs) My new novel does different things than *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* My second novel was different to my first – with some similarities, and my third will be different from both of them – with some similarities. It pretends to be a self-help book on 'How to get rich'. But that is not really, I guess, what it is. It does not say, where it is set. Although it says that it is set somewhere in Asia but you do not have to know where. It has to do more with the changes that are happening in Asia now: urbanisation, consumerism, and capitalism.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

> The beautiful thing about writing is that it's a global community and on your bookshelf are all the teachers you could possibly want
> (Hamid 2013, BBC Talking Books Interview).

Literatur verbindet Menschen weltweit. Sie lehrt uns, zeigt uns andere Sichtweisen auf und fordert uns heraus. Gerade diese Herausforderung, die Infragestellung von Weltbildern und Auffassungen hat im Zusammenhang mit einer Thematisierung des Islam und seiner fundamentalistischen Formen große politische Sprengkraft entwickelt. Weltweite Proteste und gewalttätige Ausschreitungen gegen die dänische Zeitung *Jyllands Posten* infolge der Veröffentlichung islamkritischer Karikaturen im Jahr 2005, die Erhöhung des Kopfgeldes für die Tötung Salman Rushdies 25 Jahre nach Verhängung der Fatwa im Jahr 2014, das Attentat auf das französische Satiremagazin Charlie Hebdo, welches im Januar 2015 zwölf Menschenleben kostete: Zahlreiche Ereignisse verdeutlichen die politische Brisanz von Literatur und Kunst. Autoren, die sich kritisch mit dem Islam auseinandersetzen, sehen sich mit einer unkalkulierbaren Gefährdung ihrer persönlichen Sicherheit und Anfeindungen durch muslimisch-fundamentalistische Kreise weltweit konfrontiert. Dennoch findet das Thema in der Literatur zunehmende Beachtung – nicht nur in Form von politik- oder religionswissenschaftlichen Abhandlungen und autobiographischen Arbeiten. Auch Romanautoren treten mit ihren Werken immer wieder mit der breiten Öffentlichkeit in einen spannungsgeladenen Diskurs. Die zum Teil gewalttätigen Reaktionen verweisen auf die gesellschaftliche Relevanz von Literatur als Medium zur Äußerung von Kritik, als Plattform zur Verhandlung unterschiedlicher Positionen und wirksames Mittel zur Unterminierung fundamentalistischer Ideologien. Trotz ihres oftmals satirischen Charakters wird Literatur von islamischen Fundamentalisten häufig als gefährlich eingestuft, da sie Widerstand ausdrückt, die öffentliche Meinung zu beeinflussen vermag und gesellschaftlichen Wandel unterstützen kann. Die Verbreitung einer solchen literarischen Infragestellung des eigenen Machtanspruches und ihre Urheber gilt es aus fundamentalistischer Sicht zu bekämpfen.

Die vorliegende Studie untersucht narrative Repräsentationen von islamischem Fundamentalismus in seiner Wechselwirkung mit verschiedenen ‚Gegenpolen', in ausgewählten Romanen von den 1990er Jahren bis heute. Im Spannungsfeld zwischen islamischem Fundamentalismus und der Kritik an ökonomischen, politischen und sozialen gesellschaftlichen Aspekten erforscht die Arbeit das Funktionspotential von Literatur als Spezialdiskurs, der einen produktiven Dialog zwischen unterschiedlichen Positionen und Weltbildern eröffnen kann.

Dabei liegt der besondere Fokus auf Werken, die literarische ‚Innensichten' vermitteln und dem Leser das Thema aus fiktionaler fundamentalistischer Perspektive näherbringen. Vorangegangene Studien zur Darstellung von Fundamentalismus in Literatur weisen entweder einen sehr breiten Fokus bezüglich der Form dargestellter Fundamentalismen auf, oder sie spezialisieren sich auf einen bestimmten Autor oder die Aufarbeitung eines historischen Ereignisses wie den Terroranschlägen von 9/11.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Ferner ist entweder eine Fokussierung auf den ideologischen Kontext der Texte oder auf die Analyse narrativer Strategien und Strukturen zu konstatieren. Meist fehlt eine ausgewogene Verbindung von Ethik und Ästhetik sowie ein ausführlicherer Miteinbezug des politischen Kontextes. Mit der vorliegenden interdisziplinär und breit angelegten Studie soll diese Lücke geschlossen werden. Das diskutierte Phänomen hat eine globale Dimension und wird in einer Vielzahl unterschiedlicher wissenschaftlicher Disziplinen diskutiert, weswegen ein Blick über den disziplinären Tellerrand die literaturwissenschaftlichen Untersuchungen bereichert. Die Verwendung von Ansätzen aus dem Forschungsfeld der ethischen Literaturkritik dient einer fruchtbaren Synthese der Analysen von Inhalt und Form auf einer Metaebene. Dies bietet einen guten Ausgangspunkt für die Untersuchung des Funktionspotentials der ausgewählten Werke mithilfe von Hubert Zapfs Modell von ‚Literatur als kultureller Ökologie'. Die Studie stellt das Modell, das bislang hauptsächlich im Forschungsfeld des Ecocriticism Anwendung fand, in einen neuen inhaltlichen Zusammenhang. Dabei erweist sich Zapfs Theorie als sehr fruchtbar für die Untersuchung von Literatur als Medium welches die Macht hat dominante Diskurse zu hinterfragen, marginalisierten Gruppen eine zu Stimme verleihen sowie antagonistische Weltbilder zu verhandeln und zu reintegrieren.

Grundlage der Untersuchung sind fiktionale Texte von englischen, US-amerikanischen und postkolonialen Autoren mit ganz unterschiedlicher Herkunft und religiöser Prägung. In vier Hauptanalysekapiteln wird die Darstellung des Spannungsfeldes zwischen Islamischem Fundamentalismus und antagonistischen Diskursen untersucht. Als Basis dienen Hanif Kureishis *The Black Album* (1995), Mohsin Hamids *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Yasmina Khadras *The Sirens of Baghdad* (2007) und Sebastian Faulks *A Week in December* (2009). In einem abschließenden Ausblick werden mit Nadeem Aslams *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), John Updikes *Terrorist* (2007), Yasmina Khadras *The Attack* (2007) und Tahmima Anams *The Good Muslim* (2011) vier weitere Romane betrachtet. Der Textkorpus spiegelt ein breites Spektrum an literarischen Repräsentationen von islamischem Fundamentalismus mit einer Vielzahl an Schauplätzen wider, wobei die Heterogenität der Werke nicht nur inhaltlich, sondern auch strukturell Ausdruck findet. Die ausgewählten Werke lassen sich nicht in eine Kategorie einordnen. Während die Themen Migration und Diaspora in den Werken von Kureishi, Hamid und Aslam zentral sind, spielen sie kaum eine Rolle in Faulks *A Week in December* und überhaupt keine in den Romanen von Khadra, Updike oder Anam. Ferner sind die Hauptautoren zu einem sehr unterschiedlichen Grad mit dem Thema Fundamentalismus vertraut. Während der englische, christliche Autor Sebastian Faulks sich primär intellektuell mit dem Phänomen auseinandersetzte, kämpfte der algerische Muslim Mohammed Moulessehoul jahrzehntelang als Armeeoffizier in einem gewaltsamen Konflikt gegen islamische Fundamentalisten. Aus Angst vor Verfolgung veröffentlichte er seine Arbeiten unter dem Pseudonym Yasmina Khadra. Die vorliegende Studie zeigt auf, dass die untersuchtenWerke trotz der kulturellen, ethnischen und religiösen Heterogenität der Autoren eine große verbindende Gemeinsamkeit aufweisen. Der literarische Korpus reflektiert die Opposition gegen fundamentalistische Machtstrukturen und Essentialis-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

men gleich welcher Art und ist ein Plädoyer für die Würde des Menschen und die Verantwortung des Individuums.

Die Analyse der genannten Werke ist von drei zentralen Interessenschwerpunkten geleitet. Der erste Interessenfokus der Studie liegt auf der Darstellung möglicher ‚Gegenpole' von islamischem Fundamentalismus und der Frage, ob religiöser Fanatismus tatsächlich das Hauptziel der Kritik darstellt. Es besteht Grund zu der Annahme, dass der Textkorpus vielmehr das Spannungsfeld zwischen einer Vielzahl essentialistischer Sichtweisen darstellt und dass auch andere ideologische Systeme kritisiert werden. Die beschriebenen Alternativen zu islamischem Fundamentalismus nehmen häufig die Rolle antagonistischer Weltbilder und Moralvorstellungen ein, welche die Entstehung von islamischem Fundamentalismus befördern. Zentrale Fragen richten sich in diesem Zusammenhang auf die Art dieser ‚Gegenpole' und die Form, in der religiöse, politische, ökonomische oder kulturelle Aspekte kritisiert werden. Ferner ist von Interesse, welche Katalysatoren essentialistische Weltbilder befördern und die Frage, ob Religion als Hauptursache des untersuchten Phänomens dargestellt wird.

Der zweite Interessenschwerpunkt liegt auf der der Rolle von Identität und der Darstellung persönlicher Beweggründe für eine Radikalisierung. Es wird der Frage nachgegangen, ob sogenannte ‚fictions of migration' den Themenkomplexen Identität und Alterität sowie der Sehnsucht nach Zugehörigkeit eine größere Bedeutung beimessen als andere Werke. Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht, ob Identitätskrisen oder aber politische und ökonomische Interessenkonflikte als Triebfeder der Radikalisierung identifiziert werden. Für eine Analyse der Sympathielenkung wird ferner erforscht, ob der Textkorpus ethnische oder religiöse Stereotype perpetuiert oder unterminiert und die dargestellten Charaktere individualisiert werden oder einem Typus entsprechen. Darüber hinaus soll die Frage beantwortet werden, ob die ausgewählten Werke verbindende Elemente zwischen verschiedenen Religionen und Kulturen in den Vordergrund stellen oder unüberbrückbare Konflikte und Differenzen. Migration, Identität und Hybridität sind zentrale Begriffe, die in vielen der Romane aufgegriffen werden. Dabei wird Identität als komplexes Konstrukt identifiziert. Es speist sich aus individueller Biographie, Selbstkonzepten und Erinnerungen, wird jedoch auch beeinflusst durch kollektive Identitäten, die geprägt sind durch Geschlecht, Klasse, Ethnizität, Rasse, Religion oder Nationalität (Sommer 2001: 62-63).

Der dritte Interessenschwerpunkt liegt auf der Analyse des Funktionspotentials der ausgewählten Werke. Im Rückgriff auf Hubert Zapfs triadisches Modell von ‚Literatur als kultureller Ökologie' werden potentielle Funktionen des Textkorpus als „kulturkritischer Metadiskurs", „Gegendiskurs" oder „reintegrativer Interdiskurs" (siehe Zapf 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 (a) (b) (c)) einer näheren Betrachtung unterzogen. Die vorliegende Studie untersucht bis zu welchem Grad und in welcher Weise die Werke gesellschaftliche Defizite aufzeigen und marginalisierten Gruppen eine Stimme verleihen. Alle Texte eröffnen einen Dialog zwischen verschiedenen Auffassungen, es bleibt jedoch zu erforschen, ob auch die Möglichkeit einer wirklichen Reintegration unterschiedlicher Diskurse gesehen wird.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Dabei basiert die Studie auf fünf zentralen Vorannahmen. Erstens wird Literatur als integraler Bestandteil eines kulturellen Kontextes gesehen und als Antwort auf Herausforderungen, die in diesem kulturellen Zusammenhang entstehen (vgl. Erll 2005: 91). Narrative und inhaltliche Detailanalysen der Werke werden daher in den politischen und kulturellen Kontext ihrer Entstehung eingebettet. Zweitens geht die Arbeit davon aus, dass die literarische Darstellung politischer Themen große gesellschaftliche Relevanz besitzt – unter anderem, da Literatur als Teil der Kulturwissenschaften auch zu einer Ausbildung und Veränderung kollektiver Identitäten beitragen kann (vlg. Sommer 2007: 165). In diesem Zusammenhang ist es wichtig, welche historischen Ereignisse behandelt werden, aus wessen Perspektive sie dargestellt werden und in welcher Form dies erfolgt. Drittens teilt die Autorin die Überzeugung der amerikanischen Moralphilosophin Martha Nussbaum von der besonderen Eignung des Romans als Medium zur Verhandlung moralischer Fragestellungen. Der Roman als fiktive ‚Fallstudie' vermag dem Leser einen Einblick in andere Sichtweisen zu vermitteln und darzulegen, wie abhängig ethische Entscheidungen von persönlichen Begleitumständen sind. Nussbaum betont insbesondere den „ethical value of emotions" (Nussbaum 1992: 40). Die Kraft von Emotionen Einstellungen und Werturteile zu beeinflussen kann im Sinne einer Sympathielenkung genutzt werden, um die Hinwendung zu radikalen Sichtweisen psychologisch plausibel zu machen. Viertens dient Literatur im Sinne der Terminologie von Jürgen Link als „Interdiskurs", der in der Lage ist, eine Reihe unterschiedlicher spezialisierter Subdiskurse zu verhandeln und eine Reintegration dieser Diskurse zu erreichen (vgl. Link 1988). Die letzte Vorannahme basiert auf Hubert Zapfs Vorstellung von „Literatur als kultureller Ökologie". Aufbauend auf einer Analogie zwischen Literatur und Ökologie sieht Zapf literarische Werke als „imaginative biotopes" und „laboratories of human self-exploration" (Zapf 2007: 155) in denen sich die genannten potentiellen Funktionen als „kulturkritischer Metadiskurs", „Gegendiskurs" oder „reintegrativer Interdiskurs" entfalten können.

Auch wenn die vorliegende Arbeit sich klar in der Disziplin der Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften positioniert und Literatur die Wirklichkeit niemals mimetisch abbildet, so ist das untersuchte Thema doch untrennbar mit historischen und politischen Hintergründen verbunden. Aus diesem Grund erfolgt zu Beginn der Studie eine theoretische Annäherung an das Phänomen des islamischen Fundamentalismus, die eine Einordnung der Analyse in politische und öffentliche Diskurse ermöglicht. Wertvolle Informationen für eine Beschreibung der dargestellten Phänomene liefern vor allem die Ergebnisse des von Martin Marty und Scott Appleby geleiteten, und von der American Academy of Arts and Sciences 1987-1995 geförderten, *Fundamentalism Project.* Die fünf Bände des breit angelegten, internationalen und interdisziplinären Forschungsprojektes beschreiben nicht nur verbindende Hauptcharakteristika von islamisch-fundamentalistischen Bewegungen, sondern geben auch Aufschluss über Gründe für die Entstehung dieser radikalen Gruppen. Des Weiteren thematisiert das zweite Kapitel die Wechselwirkung zwischen Literatur und Fundamentalismus und behandelt bisherige Beiträge der Literaturwissenschaften zu dem Thema. Den dritten Schwerpunkt dieses Teils der Arbeit bilden Einblicke in populäre politische Debatten

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

und Ansätze zur Erklärung der Entstehung von Stereotypen im Spannungsfeld zwischen ‚orientalistischen' und ‚okzidentalistischen' Diskursen. Empirische Daten aus den Meinungsumfragen des *PEW Global Attitudes Project* liefern darüber hinaus wichtige Informationen zur Wahrnehmung von Integration und Identität sowie vorherrschenden Vorurteilen in muslimischen und nicht-muslimischen Ländern.

Kapitel drei thematisiert zentrale Ansätze im Bereich der ethischen Literaturkritik, was der Synthese der Analysen von Form und Inhalt dient. Um Verbindungen zwischen Ethik und Ästhetik zu identifizieren werden Beziehungen zwischen Inhalt, Stil, Struktur und der Darstellung moralischer Werturteile aufgezeigt. Zentral ist hier der in Werken wie *Love's Knowledge* (1992) zum Ausdruck kommende humanistische Ansatz von Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaums Ideen basieren auf dem Glauben daran, dass Literatur die Macht besitzt Empathie zu wecken, antagonistische Positionen zu verhandeln und damit letztlich auch einen Wandel von Sichtweisen zu befördern. Nussbaums Ansatz erweist sich als besonders fruchtbar, da die Moralphilosophin konkrete stilistische Kriterien beschreibt, die für eine Verhandlung von Ethik in Literatur von Interesse sind. Diese Kriterien werden im narratologischen Methodenkapitel weiterentwickelt und in den Analysekapiteln angewandt. Ferner sind Ansätze aus dem Bereich der politischen Ethik von Bedeutung da sie interessante Aspekte in Bezug auf Machtstrukturen und die Rolle individueller Identität beleuchten. Stuart Halls Konzept der ‚cross-cutting identities' ist insbesondere für die ausgewählten ‚fictions of migration' und die Beschreibung von Identität, Alterität und Hybridität interessant. Da alle vier Autoren sich offen politisch zu der Thematik ihrer Romane positionieren, werden auch ihre Aussagen als mögliche Ansatzpunkte für eine Interpretation herangezogen.

Kapitel vier gibt darauf aufbauend einen Einblick in die narratologische Methodik, die in den Analysekapiteln Anwendung findet. Aufbauend auf Gérard Genettes etablierten erzähltheoretischen Kategorien wird die Rolle von Stimme, Perspektive und dem Phänomen der Multiperspektivität untersucht. Die Art der Darstellung von Erzählern, Fokalisierungsinstanzen und deren Beziehungen untereinander beeinflusst die Wahrnehmung der ethischen Werte, die von den einzelnen Charakteren vertreten werden. Gleichsam sind Faktoren wie Ereignishaftigkeit, die Konstruktion von Kontrast- und Korrespondenzrelationen sowie die Darstellung von Gefühlen und Gedanken der Figuren zentral, um nur einige Aspekte zu nennen. All diese strukturellen Elemente beeinflussen zu einem nicht geringen Anteil die Sympathielenkung des Lesers und somit auch das Funktionspotential, das ein Werk in diesem Kontext entfalten kann.

Die beschriebenen theoretischen Vorüberlegungen und methodischen Ansätze finden Anwendung in den Kapiteln fünf und sechs, die detaillierte Werkanalysen beinhalten. Um politische Zusammenhänge aufzuzeigen enthält der Anhang selbst durchgeführte Interviews mit Sebastian Faulks und Mohsin Hamid. Da die genannten Autoren offen ihre Meinungen zu politischen und religiösen Themen vertreten und sich auch in Form von Zeitungsbeiträgen, Essays und einer Vielzahl von Interviews zu dem Phänomen des islamischen Fundamentalismus geäußert haben, erscheint es gerechtfertigt, ihre Sichtweisen in eine Interpretation des literarischen Korpus

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

miteinzubeziehen. Die ethische Bedeutung und Schlagkraft von Literatur und die wichtige Rolle von Intellektuellen in ethischen Diskursen wird nicht nur von den Autoren betont, sondern wird auch in den Romanen selbst aufgegriffen.

Während verbindende Elemente zwischen den ausgewählten Werken sich hauptsächlich auf die Auseinandersetzung mit ethischen Fragestellungen beziehen, erweisen sich strukturelle Elemente und narrative Strategien (wie der Gebrauch fremdsprachlicher Elemente, die Wahl von Schauplatz und Perspektive oder die Verwendung von Ironie) als autorspezifisch. Es werden ganz unterschiedliche Katalysatoren radikaler Einstellungen und Motivationen für eine Hinwendung zu islamischem Fundamentalismus identifiziert. Auch bewerten die Werke die Möglichkeit für eine Reintegration gegensätzlicher Diskurse sehr unterschiedlich. Trotzdem vereint alle untersuchten Romane der Ausdruck eines unerschütterlichen Glaubens an die Bedeutung von Empathie für den Bau von Brücken zwischen verschiedenen Kulturen und Religionen. Alle Texte betonen die schwierige Lage des Individuums in einer globalisierten Welt, in der es an Orientierung und Stabilität zu fehlen scheint und es keine einfachen Antworten auf die Vielzahl an Fragen der Menschen gibt. Universale menschliche Bedürfnisse nach Heimat, Gemeinschaft und spirituellen Leitbildern rücken in den Vordergrund. Fundamentalismen scheinen diese Bedürfnisse auf den ersten Blick zu befriedigen, werden jedoch durch den vorliegenden Textkorpus als oberflächliche und gefährliche Antworten auf die Probleme unserer Zeit entlarvt. Die schärfste Kritik gilt den Führern fundamentalistischer Bewegungen, die Religion als ein Mittel dazu verwenden die Bedürfnisse und Unzulänglichkeiten anderer Menschen für ihre eigenen egoistischen Zwecke auszunutzen. Religiöser Fanatismus wird dabei in allen Fällen nur als Symptom – niemals jedoch als Ursache – des Problems bewertet. Die Sympathielenkung zugunsten einer humanistischen Weltanschauung wird gezielt durch die Perspektivenstruktur gefördert. Während der Leser detaillierte Einblicke in das seelische Innenleben der Charaktere erhält die sich fundamentalistischen Kreisen anschließen und ihnen zum Opfer fallen, werden keine Einblicke in die Gefühle und Gedanken der Drahtzieher und Führer gewährt, die oft statisch und leblos wirken. Im Gegensatz dazu werden die Anhänger radikaler Gruppen meist als tragische Figuren mit durchaus liebenswerten Charaktereigenschaften beschrieben, deren Radikalisierung nicht entschuldigt oder verharmlost jedoch psychologisch plausibel gemacht wird. Wie Nussbaum es beschreibt, gibt dies dem Leser die Möglichkeit neue Blickwinkel einzunehmen, aus der Distanz heraus verschiedene Wertvorstellungen miteinander zu vergleichen und eigene (Vor)urteile zu reflektieren. Die Erkenntnis universeller menschlicher Bedürfnisse, die über die Grenzen von Ort, Zeit, Religion, Klasse oder Ethnizität hinausweisen, kann die Wirkmacht entfalten Empathie für das Leid anderer Menschen und moralischen Gemeinschaftssinn zu fördern (Nussbaum 1998: 242).

Die untersuchten Werke sind getragen vom Glauben an den inhärent gewalttätigen und selbstzerstörerischen Charakter aller essentialistischen Systeme. Die Mehrzahl der Werke verweist auf die Existenz von mehr als nur einer Form des Fundamentalismus und unterstreicht, dass auch politische und ökonomische Ideologien ein fundamentalistisches Potential entwickeln können und alle gleichsam den

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

Wert des Individuums negieren. Dabei stellt das Phänomen des islamischen Fundamentalismus nicht immer das Ziel der größten Kritik dar. Religion im Allgemeinen oder der Islam im Besonderen spielen sogar nur eine sehr untergeordnete oder überhaupt keine Rolle. Vielmehr wird die Radikalisierung von Individuen auf wirtschaftliche Ungleichheit, politisch-militärische Konflikte oder persönliche Identitätskrisen infolge von Migration und Entwurzelung zurückgeführt. Auch wenn Motive stets als facettenreich beschrieben werden, zielen Autoren deren Werke das Leben von Migranten in den Mittelpunkt stellen insbesondere auf Fragen von Zugehörigkeit und Alterität ab. Sie verweisen auf gespaltene Loyalitäten, den Zusammenprall unterschiedlicher Wertvorstellungen und Identitätskonflikte als zentrale Katalysatoren für fundamentalistische Radikalisierung. Die Autoren die sich weniger mit dem Thema Diaspora als mit ausgewählten Kriegsszenarien beschäftigen betonen hingegen die Bedeutung von militärischen, politischen und ökonomischen Interessenkonflikten für die Entstehung und den Erfolg islamistischer Gruppierungen weltweit.

Ambivalenz und die Verschmelzung unterschiedlicher Faktoren machen eine Trennung verschiedener Einflüsse unmöglich und tragen so der Komplexität des Phänomens Rechnung. Die untersuchten Werke differenzieren klar zwischen dem Islam und seinen fundamentalistischen Auswüchsen und stellen ein breites Spektrum muslimischer Lebensweisen und Auffassungen dar. Stereotypisierungen im Sinne ‚orientalistischer' oder ‚okzidentalistischer' Vorstellungen fehlen entweder völlig oder werden aufgegriffen, um dem Leser prävalente Vorurteile bewusst zu machen und diese gleichzeitig ironisch zu unterminieren. Spannungen werden nicht primär zwischen verschiedenen Kulturen oder Muslimen und anderen Glaubensrichtungen lokalisiert. Der Hauptkonflikt besteht zwischen humanistischen Werten und essentialistischen Ideologien – gleich welcher Ausprägung. Hinzu kommen Konflikte zwischen ethischen Vorstellungen verschiedener Generationen sowie zwischen sozialen Klassen. Ökonomische Ungleichheit und soziale Marginalisierung werden nicht von allen, so doch von einigen Autoren, als Nährboden für eine Hinwendung zu fundamentalistischen Ideologien beschrieben.

Der Textkorpus spiegelt Hubert Zapfs Überzeugung von der engen Verbindung zwischen Körper und Geist wider, die sich in dem simultanen psychischen und physischen Verfall vieler Charaktere ausdrückt. Alles ist wie in einem ökologischen System miteinander verbunden – so auch die persönliche und politische Sphäre. Die untersuchten Werke beleuchten potentielle Konflikte zwischen Individuen und dominanten hegemonialen Diskursen. Sie verweisen auf Zapfs Überzeugung, dass Individualität immer in Wechselbeziehung zu einer Gemeinschaft besteht und zeigen auf, welch große Rolle gesellschaftliche Normen spielen und welch hohen Druck die Gruppe auf das Individuum ausübt. Einige Autoren (Kureishi, Faulks, Updike) appellieren an die Verantwortung des Individuums essentialistischen Systemen einen ‚Gegendiskurs' entgegenzusetzen. Andere Autoren (Aslam, Anam, Khadra) betonen wiederum den oft sehr geringen Handlungsspielraum in zerstörerischen Konflikten, die den Einflussbereich des Einzelnen weit übersteigen und keine Möglichkeit zu einem Kampf gegen fundamentalistische Machtausübung erkennen lassen. Einige der Romane enden mit Tod, Zerstörung und einem Scheitern des Kampfes gegen Funda-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.

mentalismen. Auf der Handlungsebene ist hier keine Reintegration antagonistischer Diskurse möglich. Andere Romane räumen die Möglichkeit einer Erneuerung und positiven Neuverhandlung unterschiedlicher Positionen ein. Unabhängig von diesem Unterschied auf der inhaltlichen Ebene fungieren jedoch alle Werke als Plattform, auf der unterschiedliche Sichtweisen miteinander in Dialog treten. Dies erzeugt Spannungen, der Leser erhält jedoch durch Literatur gleichzeitig die Möglichkeit, verschiedene Positionen miteinander zu vergleichen, abzuwägen und letztlich auch im Rahmen des Rezeptionsprozesses zu reintegrieren.

In diesem Kontext wird der ethischen Verantwortung des Individuums große Bedeutung beigemessen. Alle Autoren teilen ein humanistisches Weltbild und wollen die Leser zu Achtsamkeit und Handeln auffordern. Fiktionale Literatur erhält auf diese Weise eine herausgehobene Rolle als Waffe gegen essentialistische Ideologien ganz unterschiedlicher Art. Der Leser wird in seiner Funktion als mündiger Bürger dazu aufgerufen einfache Antworten und religiöse oder kulturelle Vorurteile zu hinterfragen und sich mit anderen Auffassungen auseinanderzusetzen. Menschliches Lebens wird als ultimativer, nicht verhandelbarer Wert betrachtet, der um jeden Preis verteidigt werden muss.

Infolge der zunehmenden traurigen Berühmtheit des Themas angesichts immer neuer Anschläge islamischer Fundamentalisten gegen westliche Gesellschaften, gewinnt die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Forschungsgegenstand aus unterschiedlichen disziplinären Blickwinkeln auch weiterhin an Bedeutung. Nicht nur die Verbreitung von Angst und der Angriff auf menschliches Leben, sondern die komplette Ablehnung politischer und ökonomischer Modelle, liberaler Wertvorstellungen und einer ganzen Lebensweise stellen westliche Gesellschaften vor große Herausforderungen. Eine erfolgreiche Lösung der Probleme kann jedoch nur gefunden werden, wenn sie nicht bei den Symptomen ansetzt. Hier birgt die Wirkungskraft fiktionaler Literatur zur Veränderung von Sichtweisen und zur Weckung von Empathie für menschliche Beweggründe eine große Chance. Sie kann dazu beitragen ein Umdenken zu befördern, das langfristig zur Entwicklung von Handlungsstrategien beiträgt, die nicht nur die Symptome, sondern auch die Wurzeln fundamentalistischer Gewalt adressieren.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828869028 - Generiert durch IP 216.73.216.36, am 22.01.2026, 06:16:26. © Urheberrechtlich geschützter Inhalt. Ohne gesonderte Erlaubnis ist jede urheberrechtliche Nutzung untersagt, insbesondere die Nutzung des Inhalts im Zusammenhang mit, für oder in KI-Systemen, KI-Modellen oder Generativen Sprachmodellen.