THE ULTIMATE OTHER OF THE 21ST CENTURY: THE MUSLIM TERRORIST IN THE MASS-MEDIA AND CONTEMPORARY FICTION

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Abstract : In an age of mass communication in which the boundaries between arts and media(ted) discourse have become effaced, literature attempts to translate contemporary societal issues, from the actual world, where they are met with silence, coercion, manipulation, etc. into an imaginary one in which truth(s) can conveniently pass as fiction. Thus emerges a (re)new(ed) type of realism, which adapts and fictionalises today's media and political discourses, exploiting or disclosing their manipulation strategies and their imposing power structures.

This paper aims at deconstructing Iain Banks's novel Dead Air (2002) from this perspective of media discourse adaptation into fiction. Set against the background of the events of 9/11, and barely disguising the implied author's political views behind the first person unreliable narrator Ken Nott, who voices major concerns of the twenty-first century, like terrorism, racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, Euro-scepticism, the novel unfolds as a commentary on historical and political issues of the present day society. An important aspect that will be dealt with is the extreme 'othering' of the Muslims after the attacks on World Trade Center, both in the media and in the literary work in focus.

Keywords: 9/11 fiction; media; manipulation; otherness, New Historicism.

> *L'enfer, c'est les autres*
> (J.P. Sartre)

1.1.   Aims, approach and corpus

The events at the World Trade Center at the turn of the millennium have set the directions on the contemporary stage for many years ahead. We are still facing their effects at all levels, from foreign policy and wars waged against (alleged) perpetrators, to limitation, if not cancellation of individual freedoms. The media have reacted to the changes affecting the world since 9/11 in two ways: either supporting the body politic in informing/ manipulating/ convincing the population, or, on the contrary, striving to identify various disparities in the official accounts. Against this background, literature finds new resources, and a renewed type of Realism[1] conventionally named 'post 9-11 fiction' brings to the fore present political issues.

In what concerns the literary representation of terrorism, this paper discusses a few excerpts from Iain Banks's 2002 novel, *Dead Air.* Relying on a contextual analysis inspired by New Historicist critical readings and moving constantly between the media and literary discourse, the present undertaking aims at identifying the way in which the representation of the Muslim *Other* as evil has contaminated the Western mindset, and the way in which this representation is mirrored in the contemporary writings, whether openly acknowledged as fictional or not.

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[1] The term is not used in the sense of an objective and mimetic representation of reality, but rather in that of its grounding in and foregrounding of actual, verifiable events. In what narrative technique is concerned, twenty-first century literature has little to do with the tenets of nineteenth century Realism.

1.2.   New Historicism in a nutshell

Apart from its obvious metatextual function, critical theory has its own hypertextual games, in which various modes of approaching the literary text are inspired from and, more often than not, represent a reaction to others. New Historicism is no exception: emerging from Marxist criticism and Poststructuralism, and foregrounding ideological structures at work within discourse, this critical mode relies on parallel readings of literary and non-literary texts without making "a hierarchical separation between the literary text […] and the historical background" (Barry 1995: 174). Although New Historicist readings are based on context, they are less likely inclined to regard literature as a mere product of its historical moment of production, primarily due to the Poststructuralist/ Deconstructivist influence which makes them question (if not deny) ontological truths and spirit(s) of the ages. Under Derrida's influence, New Historicist critics acknowledge that 'textualisation' of the past is processed through "ideology or outlook or discursive practice of its own time, then through those of ours and finally through the distorting web of language itself" (Barry 1995: 175).

In an article entitled 'Literary Criticism and the Politics of New Historicism' (1989: 221) published in a key work on New Historicism (Harold Veeser, *The New Historicism)*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese rightfully remarks that "texts do not exist in a vacuum. They remain hostage to available language, available practice, available imagination. Language, practice, and imagination all emerge from history understood as **structure**, as sets or systems of relations of superordination and subordination". "The excesses of post-structuralism" have "surfeited" literary criticism (1989: 213) and their influence is undeniable in New Historicist readings, yet it is the latter's merit to have simplified the metalanguage and to have redefined the boundaries of historical inquiries, under the influence of Michel Foucault's writings. In Foucault's view, historical events are interconnected with a multitude of economic, social and political factors. The concepts and hierarchies within discourse are "both products and propagators of 'power' or social forces and, as a result, the particular discursive formations of an era determine what is at the time accounted 'knowledge' and 'truth' "(Abrams 1999: 183).

Along these lines, the New Historicist critics consider, together with the French social theorist, that 'knowledge' and 'truth' are politically and historically determined, and consequently start from the premise that "no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths, nor expresses inalterable human nature" (Veeser 1989: xi). Approaching literary texts in relation to their non-literary co-texts (without favouring the former), New Historicism lays emphasis on *representation* and *textualisation* instead of slippery concepts like "historical truth", "developing terms to describe the ways in which material – here, official documents, private papers, newspaper clippings and so forth – is transferred from one discursive sphere to another and becomes aesthetic property" (Greenblatt 1989: 11).

New Historicism has been traditionally employed in the analysis of literary texts that belong to a fairly distant past (*e.g.*, Renaissance or Victorian texts), assuming, perhaps, that the critical reading would be rendered more objective if the critic were not subjected to the discursive formations involved in the construction of the respective text. Nonetheless, it may prove useful in decoding contemporary texts as well, especially if one takes into consideration the availability of co-texts in the information era. In the tradition of this critical reading, the next subsection attempts to recreate the historical context for the literary text in focus.

1.3.   State of mind(set)

In the last decade, many Western discursive sources – the street, the press or fiction – have revealed the Muslim Arab as the ultimate 'Other' of the new millennium, where ***terror*** and ***terrorism*** have become the newest Boogieman in the cultural mindset of the Western civilisation. In the preface to the third edition of *Orientalism*, Edward Said casts the blame for this '*terror-isation*' of the Muslim Other exclusively on the media:

> *Today, bookstores in the US are filled with shabby screeds bearing screaming headlines about Islam and terror, Islam exposed, the Arab threat and the Muslim menace, all of them written by political polemicists pretending to knowledge imparted to them and others by experts who have supposedly penetrated to the heart of these strange Oriental peoples over there who have been such a terrible thorn in "our" flesh. Accompanying such warmongering expertise have been the omnipresent CNNs and Foxs of this world, [...] plus innumerable tabloids and even middle-brow journalists, all of them re-cycling the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalizations so as to stir up "America" against the foreign devil (2003: xvi).*

Terror, ***threat*** and ***menace*** are just three of the concepts associated with Islam after 9/11 and they all contribute to the portrayal of 'the devil', as Said notices. Of course, the theorist may be subjective and a superficial analysis of the word choice in the quotation above indeed deems him so. ***Shabby screeds***, ***screaming headlines***, ***tabloids***, ***middlebrow***, ***recycling*** and ***generalisation*** point to derogation and so does ***fiction***, in this context, especially as it is 'unverifiable'. (Why should fiction be verifiable, anyway?). Said himself borrows specific phrases from the journalistic discourse – the adverb ***supposedly*** is used in the sense of 'true on inconclusive grounds', therefore, not far from 'false', just like the verb ***pretending***. In addition, the adjectives ***omnipresent*** and ***innumerable*** reinforce 'the might is right' – the imposing power structures represented here by the huge television networks. What is more, America is written within inverted commas, which points to a *totum pro parte* synecdoche that may be read as standing for 'Westerner' in general, in the context of the effacing boundaries between globalisation and Americanisation. Last but not least, the phrasal verb ***to stir up*** pairs with the adjective ***warmongering*** to suggest manipulation, or even more, instigation.

All these point to Said's subjectivity in relation to the Western world and to his assumed standpoint as 'other' (despite his American citizenship). Notwithstanding the textual deconstruction above, the thesis of the present paper is not far from his view. The main means of mass communication, i.e., 'the media', do not represent only a communication vehicle, but also the manipulative force acting on the collective mindset. "Sixty-two thousand four hundred repetitions make one truth", Huxley (2006: 34) remarked in his bitter dystopia, *Brave New World*. The media of today seem to have appropriated this principle, therefore they have come to impose a certain state of mind, a certain set of beliefs and, ultimately, a certain ***truth*** on their audience. Now more than ever, one of these powerful "truths" is that Muslim equals evil and Arab equals terrorism. To provide only two examples: the political activist and theorist Noam Chomsky cites from the leading article of *The New York Times*, September 16 2001: "the perpetrators acted out of hatred for the values cherished in the West as ***freedom***, ***tolerance***, ***prosperity***, ***religious pluralism*** and ***universal suffrage***". In his opinion, such statements are meant to "ignore all the facts and wallow in self-indulgent fantasies" (2001: 28), but this seems to be just the opposite side of the same subjectivity which characterises

Edward Said. The same publication cites the US President (in office at that time), George W. Bush, who "vows to exact punishment for *evil*" (Schmemman 2001). Chomsky chooses to regard the inflammatory discourse of *The New York Times* as proof of ignorance and not as manipulation, although, even accepting the "heat of the moment" excuse, it is obvious that the reference to any threat against freedom, prosperity and… universal suffrage could only 'stir up' the masses.

1.4.   History of the present and the novel

It goes without saying that the events of September 11 2001 have had a significant effect on present-day politics at world level, not only for the United States as a political entity, but for all the actors involved in the making of history. The world has inevitably reacted against the unspeakable deed that brought about the death of 3,000 civilians. The website of the Federation of American Scientists provides the translation of the *fatwa* which is considered part of the evidence that links the Al-Qaeda to the September 11 terrorist attacks. The text contains direct references to the Muslims' holy obligation to "kill the Americans and their allies -- civilians and military", arguing that "for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbours" (World Islamic Front Statement, 23 February 1998). Despite this statement, the declarations of the Al-Qaeda leaders have constantly denied responsibility for the attacks. On September 16 2001, CNN cites the prime suspect Osama bin Laden: "The U.S. government has consistently blamed me for being behind every occasion its enemies attack it. I would like to assure the world that I did not plan the recent attacks, which seem to have been planned by people for personal reasons" (CNN 2001). Interestingly, Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for two subsequent terrorist attacks (Madrid on March 11 2004 and London on July 7 2005), but it took them much longer to finally admit to be the perpetrators of the attacks on WTC. It did not matter. In the eyes of the West, Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden (the face of otherness) have become synonymous with Muslim and, conversely, Muslim has become synonymous with terrorism. The 'War on Terror' (a phrase coined by President George W. Bush) was to sweep over Afghanistan and Iraq for the next years, in a conjugated military effort of the United States and its allies, culminating in the killing of Osama bin Laden on May 2nd, 2011.

As any momentous event in the world's history[2], the tragedy at the World Trade Center has brought forth a plethora of literary productions relating it or rather related to it, so that literary history has already labelled them as 'post 9/11 fiction'. According to the editors of the volume *Literature after 9/11*, Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee-Quinn (2008: 2), literature "has participated in the larger cultural process of representing and interpreting the events of September 11 2001, while also revealing the difficulties of doing so when cataclysmic events are still so recent". This recentness is, in their opinion, also accountable for the formal 'innovations' in these novels: "self-reflexive metanarratives, disrupted

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[2] In Derrida's words: "Something *fait date*, […], something [that] marks a date, a date in history; that is always what's most striking, the very impact of what is at least felt, in an apparently immediate way, to be an event that truly marks, that truly makes its mark, a singular and, as they say here, 'unprecedented' event" (Borradori, G., J. Derrida 2003: 85-86).

temporality, multiple viewpoints" (2008: 4), although this is debatable: neither of these has been invented in the years 2000s.

However, it is undeniable that an event with such symbolic charge as the fall of the two towers was bound to create a momentum in literature inasmuch as in other media. Jürgen Habermas notes: "What was new was the symbolic force of the targets struck. The attackers did not just physically cause the highest buildings in Manhattan to collapse; they also destroyed **an icon** in the household imagery of the American nation" (Borradori, G., J. Habermas 2003: 28), while Jean Baudrillard also insists on the symbolism of the two towers' collapse: "the two towers are both a physical, architectural object and a symbolic object (symbolic of financial power and global economic liberalism). The architectural object was destroyed, but it was the symbolic object which was targeted and which it was intended to demolish" (2003: 43). And apart from the symbolism of the target, there is also that of the mysterious other and – cynical as it may sound – there is exposure, which cannot be neglected in a consumerist era.

In a recent book dealing with post 9/11 fiction suggestively entitled *After the Fall: American Literature since 9-11*, Richard Gray, expert in the history of American literature, enlarges upon Habermas' statement that "the whole world population was a benumbed witness":

> With 9/11, that global public was in the unique position of watching the event as it occurred; the impact, the explosion, the fall of the towers were there for all to see in what media people like to call "**real time**". Not only that, every moment could be **replayed**, **slowed down**, **speeded up**, **put in freeze frame** or **in a wider or narrower perspective**: in short, placed under obsessive, compulsive scrutiny. One vital consequence of this, for writers, was that the traumatic moment was also an iconic one. The fall of the towers, as we shall see – and, for that matter, the fall of people from the towers – has become a powerful and variable visual equivalent for other kinds of fall (2011: 7).

Gray's account of the media exposure of the event is reminiscent of the analyses practised in the domain of Film Studies. Many have declared after watching the fall of the towers on television that they thought that they were watching an apocalyptic film. Thus, the event has been transferred to the sphere of hyperreality. It was iconized, as the British critic remarks, but it was also fictionalized. It is, probably, the first example of instant fictionalization of actual events. The narrative of 9/11 was written in the newsrooms of the world by the editors of *Breaking News*. What the novelists have done afterwards is simply to intertextually embed this narrative into their stories.

1.5. Politics and media discourse in Iain Banks's *Dead Air*

Not only have the Americans tackled 9/11 in their narratives, but this is easily accountable on the grounds of historical facts and consequences of the event at the global level. In Tony Blair's words:

> Round the world, 11 September is bringing Governments and people to reflect, consider and change. And in this process, amidst all the talk of war and action, there is another dimension appearing. There is a coming together. The power of community is asserting itself. We are

realising how fragile are our frontiers in the face of the world's new challenges. Today conflicts rarely stay within national boundaries (The Guardian, October 2ⁿᵈ 2001).

Traditional ally of the United States, the United Kingdom joins the Americans in their 'holy war' against terrorism, exposing their citizens to a similar terrorist attack that was to strike London in July 2005. The discourse of the British Prime Minister (in office at that time), Tony Blair, carries overtones strikingly resembling Bush's 'call to arms': ***an act of evil***, ***the shadow of evil***, ***savagery of the fanatic***, ***cruelty beyond comprehension***, ***bloodlust***, etc. (2001). His feeble attempt to make people understand that *Islam is not terrorism* is lost in a sea of awe-inspiring buzzwords.

We do not act against Islam. The true followers of Islam are our brothers and sisters in this struggle. Bin Laden is no more obedient to the proper teaching of the Koran than those Crusaders of the 12ᵗʰ century who pillaged and murdered, represented the teaching of the Gospel. It is time the west confronted its ignorance of Islam. Jews, Muslims and Christians are all children of Abraham (2001).

Unsurprisingly, contemporary British fiction provides an array of literary representations of 9/11 and its effects on the global stage. It is rather difficult *not* to identify political discourses at work with the most renowned British novelists of today, like Martin Amis or Ian McEwan, to name only a few. Political awareness and engagement within the literary text seem to spring from what Salman Rushdie names "a culture of offendedness"[3] (*The Independent* 2013), from the writers' sheer need to get involved as authoritative voices, or as a counter-reaction to the fuzzy and slippery metanarratives of postmodern fiction[4]. In the volume *The Mourning After: Attending the Wake of Postmodernism*, Josh Toth and Neil Brooks mark 9/11 as *the* shifting point in the literary paradigm:

Of course, many might view our locating some shift in the zeitgeist with the fall of the Berlin Wall or any other late twentieth century signifier we might choose as misleading (if not simply erroneous), as the most obvious marker of a new cultural dominant must certainly be the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001 and the culture of fear they initiated. [...] Quite simply, a culture demanding a shared sense of "moral outrage" doesn't seem reconcilable with a sustained rejection of metanarratives and a demand for stylistic experimentation. So, indeed, if postmodernism became terminally ill sometime in the late-eighties and early-nineties, it was buried once and for all in the rubble of the World Trade Center (2007: 3).

Against this shifting paradigms background, the Scottish novelist Iain Banks publishes *Dead Air* in 2002, a novel specifically set on the day of the attacks on the World Trade Center. Banks has been known for experimenting along his entire career (from horror and Science Fiction utopias to Existentialist novels), but also for his political activism. A notorious example in this respect is his protest against the invasion of Iraq, in 2004, when he

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[3] "I do think that one of the characteristics of our age is the growth of this culture of offendedness. It has to do with the rise of identity politics, where you're invited to define your identity quite narrowly – you know, Western, Islamic, whatever it might be" (Salman Rushdie cited in *The Independent,* August 10ᵗʰ, 2013).
[4] According to Linda Hutcheon's final statement in the 2002 edition of *Politics of Postmodernism,* "the postmodern moment has passed, even if its discursive strategies and its ideological critique continue to live on – as do those of modernism – in our contemporary twenty-first century world" (2002: 181).

cut his passport into pieces and posted it to 10 Downing Street, arguing that: "it was Blair's war. There is the technicality of cabinet responsibility, but it was Blair who bowed to Bush in the first place, and Blair who convinced the Labour party and parliament of the need to go to war with a dossier that was so close to lying that it makes no difference" (*The Guardian*, May 25th 2007). Such unequivocal statements permeate the catalogue of Banks's literary productions in the 21st century, which proves – if evidence is furthermore needed, as he admits it loud and clear – that his characters voice "vicarious ranting" and "authorial opinion" (Cambridge online 2008). So much with *the death of the author*!

Banks's past sense of metaphor and allusiveness seems to have been limited to the title of his 2002 novel. *Dead Air* "is the terrifically technical term […] radio boffins use for silence" (2002: 29), but in combination with the symbolic visual representation of two towers with a plane flying above them used as a powerful paratextual element on the front cover, the phrase rather seems to connote towards the smoke and ashes filling up the emptiness left on the New York sky after the collapse of the two towers, or directly to death. As for the rest, *Dead Air* develops along the lines of a fairly unconvincing plot. The events on 9/11 remain only in the background, life goes on along new coordinates and this is exactly where the novel actually gains the credibility which Banks seems to have sought for. *Dead Air* is not a novel about 9/11; it is a novel about identity (and partly about national identity), about the relationship between an average individual and history, about shifting in the collective mindset, about media manipulation and, of course, about politics. The latter is forwarded in unequivocal terms, using the media convention: the narrator-protagonist, Ken Nott, is a Scottish leftist shock-jock whose role is to debunk and mock various political misconceptions induced to his audience by other media. Of course, 9/11 and the Muslim other are often present in Ken's conversations. Since the scope of this paper is limited to the representation of otherness, the text samples selected for analysis concern only this aspect, although the discussion of politics in *Dead Air* covers a wide range of topics: the Scots, Euro-scepticism, racism, the Holocaust, globalization, domestic affairs, etc.

As any civilised and humane person, Ken Nott disapproves the atrocity that took the lives of 3,000 civilians in the morning of September 11, 2001 and expresses himself openly for revenge:

> *'If you do find and kill Bin Laden, **assuming he is the piece of scum behind this**, or even if you just find his body… […] Wrap him in pigskin and bury him under Fort Knox. I can even tell you how deep: thirteen hundred and fifty feet. That's one hundred and ten storeys. […] oh, one last thing: as it stands, what happened last week wasn't an attack on democracy; if it was they'd have crashed a plane into Al Gore's house' (Banks 2002: 30).*

What is relevant is that the fictional representation of the journalist takes into consideration the possibility that Bin Laden might not have been behind the attacks. In general, as already mentioned, the political leaders and their speaking trumpet, the media, be it written or audio-visual, did not even consider such a possibility. This is a first signal that the character will stand against the official discourse on every occasion. After bringing into discussion Fort Knox, one of the most important military bases of the United States (a symbol of authority) and alludes to the approximate height of the two collapsed towers, Ken Nott openly attacks the American administration with his reference to Al Gore, former vice-president of the

United States during Bill Clinton's mandate. In his view, the Democrat politician represents American democracy, the implicature being that the Republican administration in force at the date of the attacks does not.

As if inspired by Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*, the events at WTC are rapidly transferred from reality ("It's Pearl Harbour II. They'll fucking nuke Baghdad" (Banks 2002: 31)) into hyperreality. Baudrillard noted that "in a violent and contemporary period of history […], it is myth that invades cinema as imaginary content. […]. Myth, chased from the real by the violence of history, finds refuge in cinema" (1994: 43). Banks does just the opposite: he throws the immediate reality in the world of cinema and transforms it into myth:

> *'Where's Superman? Where's Batman? Where's Spiderman?' 'Where's Bruce Willis or Tom Cruise, or Arnie, or Stallone?' 'The barbarians have seized the narrative.' 'Fuck, the bad guys are re-writing the scripts…! Challenger and Chernobyl were SF, Aum Shinrikyo and the Tokyo Underground was manga; this is a disaster movie directed by Satan' (Banks 2002: 47).*

The cultural reference to American superheroes and Hollywood actors of action films and the mention of a script of a disaster movie seems to imply that there is something *unreal* or, at least, *not-so-real* about the 9/11 events. The questions hint ironically at the myth of American invincibility and superpowers, myth inoculated by the media and proven false on September eleventh. Past tragedies, like the space shuttle Challenger disintegration (1986), the nuclear catastrophe from Chernobyl (1986) or the terrorist sarin attack on the Tokyo underground (1995), have already entered the category of myth with the passing of time. Interestingly enough, they are associated with *simulacra* specific to the nature of the events: Science Fiction in the first two cases, and manga (Japanese comics) in the case of the latter. The attacks on the World Trade Center, the most recent *narrative*, are associated with *disaster movies* and, therefore, regarded as simulation of the real. *Satan* as director of this film may be an influence from the political discourse and the mass media which repeatedly used the word *evil* in their texts, as shown above.

There are numerous references to Muslims in *Dead Air.* Generally, they are regarded as *the other.* Islamist women's status is referred to as secondary in many instances in the novel: "They oppress you and scorn you and yet they are frightened of you; why else would they keep you from power and the sight of other men?" (Banks 2002: 70); "we didn't force Muslim women in this country to wear mini-skirts and bikinis, whereas a Western woman going to Saudi has no choice but to conform to their dress-code" (69) ; "if the choice is between American democracy and murderous *misogynists* and a state governed by diktat and sharia, believe me I am on your side" (54). It seems common place in the Western culture to regard the treatment of Islamist women as misogynistic and unfair – yet such judgements stand valid only in accordance with the Western system of values, which proves a lack of understanding towards the traditions and culture of the other similar to that depicted by E.M. Forster with regard to India in the first decades of the twentieth century. It is just a different other today: stereotypes remain the same. There is textual evidence in *Dead Air* that stereotyping otherness is ingrained in the Western mentality: "Nordic/ Aryan/ Christian/ straight equals good… everything else is just shades of evil" (72)

The Americans are, on the other hand, represented as brainwashed by political and media discourse. In a telephonic intervention during broadcast, an American passes a racist

remark with regard to the number of Arab immigrants in London: "I could not believe that which I was hearing here in the city of London was not really coming out of Kabul or Baghdad" (72), then he sets out on a speech in which he quotes from George W. Bush: "When the President said that you're either for us or against us, he spoke for all decent Americans. Your Mr Blair's chosen which side he's on and we'd like to think he speaks for all decent English people" (54) and "'we have a right to defend ourselves, sir. We had that right before nine-eleven. Now we have the right to demand it. And we're going to have it whether it suits people like you or not. If you want to be part of it, fine. *But if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem*.'" (72) The sentence emphasised has become a *locus comunnis* in the United States' foreign policy in the twenty-first century, a policy based not on 'the right to defend', but on 'the right to demand'.

Unlike American writers who integrated the September 11 tragedy into their fiction (*e.g.* Don DeLillo, in *Falling Man* or John Updike, in *Terrorist*), the Scottish Iain Banks is unaffected by trauma. Consequently, his narrator is able to provide a more detached interpretation of the events, either by hinting at various conspiracy theories that were to make up the content for the alternative media in the following years ("the September eleventh attacks were organised by the International Zionist Conspiracy to discredit Islam and give Sharon carte blanche against the Palestinians" (54)), or by casting the blame for the attacks on the American government directly: "but don't forget you helped put them there; you funded the Mujahidin and you armed Bin Laden and supported the Pakistani security service, like you once supported the dictator Saddam Hussein because you needed him" (72).

1.6.   Final remarks

Although it goes constantly against the flow, subverting official accounts present in the politicians' speeches and in the media, Iain Bank' *Dead Air* cannot escape its status and remains, ultimately, a sample of Western pattern of thought when it comes to the depiction of *the Other*. As the present paper has strived to prove, it does not matter whether the media fictionalises or whether fiction turns to history to create alternative worlds. In these worlds, *the Other* remains the same projection of the collective mindset and today this *Other* is most often represented as a man following Muhammad's teachings, full of hatred and ready to commit suicide for his beliefs, and as a woman with a headscarf, oppressed by her culture and religion.

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