Terrorism in Two Novelistic Appropriations of *Hamlet*

Mohammad Safaei
safaeim@hotmail.com
School of English,
The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus

ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, as a revenge tragedy, demonstrates an ambience of terror. This ambience emerges in two works which have appropriated the play: *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* by David Wroblewski (2009) and *The Dead Fathers Club* by Matt Haig (2006). However, the present article tends to presume the contemporary history, i.e. post 9/11 era, as the basis for investigating a variety of themes and relations between *Hamlet* and its two novelistic appropriations. Drawing upon the work of experts in terrorism psychology, I explore the psychological commonalities of the modern Hamlets, who can be distinguished by their isolation, vulnerability, and self-delusion. Attempts are also made to investigate the psychological bases for the juxtaposition of the specters in the two novels with the terrorist leadership in today's world. Appropriative literature is often denigrated for its lack of originality and being indebted to its canonical sources; such a reductionist assumption stems from our conception of appropriative literature as the recycling of previous literary works. This paper attempts to demonstrate that the two novels are not to be readily categorized as cultural or artistic reuse of *Hamlet*. In the same way that *Hamlet* reveals the political tensions of Elizabethan reign, its two modern appropriations can arguably reflect the social and psychological symptoms of terrorism in our era.

Keywords: hamlet; ghost; appropriative literature; terrorism psychology; 9/11

INTRODUCTION

That *Hamlet* engenders an ambience of terror or even terrorism is a theme which has been addressed by various critics. One of the speculations which have been posited on Hamlet's delay is that the ghost's primary intent is not to inflict a hasty revenge but to impart, through Hamlet, a relentless sensation of fear to the treacherous king (Williams, 1936, p. 200). Hamlet's lunacy per se alarms Ophelia and her father and fills the fledgling king with apprehensions not only regarding his nephew's "transformation" (2.2.5) but as to his menacing vow that "Those that are married already, all but one, shall live" (3.1.149-50); with Gertrude's timorous question, "Thou wilt not murder me?" (3.4.20), and her desperate cry for help, Hamlet's intimidating behavior claims its first victim: the old councilor behind the arras (Bradley, 1960, pp. 103-9). The Mousetrap, too, terrifies the king, for it portrays how Lucianus, a murderous nephew, pours the poison in the ears of slumbering Gonzago, his uncle. As such, Claudius, instead of being witness to a replica of his own treachery and fratricide, is unequivocally exposed to his own nephew's theatrical vengeance (Danner, 2003, p. 32). Directors may adopt varied techniques to evoke the sensation of terror in Elsinore. For instance, towards the closing of the prayer scene in a filmic production of *Hamlet*, the vacillating prince lays his rapier beside Claudius so that the praying king would eventually sense the imminence of retaliation and death in the vicinity of his own court (Jackson, 1994, p. 333). What is at stake in this article is a departure from the domain of sheer emotional threat and coercion among the elite in the Danish court so as to investigate the origins of a

contrapuntal mode of terrorism which involves indiscriminate forms of violence, resembling terrorism in our era.

Prior to my explications on the roots of terrorism and the application of terrorism psychology to the two novelistic appropriations, namely *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* and *The Dead Fathers Club*, a brief account of two broad approaches to the study of appropriative literature is necessary. In the first approach, as extensively surveyed by Desmet and Iyengar (2015), attention is accorded to the ethics of appropriation and the theorization of the very practice of seizing, absorbing, and transforming Shakespeare. They discuss whether appropriation, as a cultural practice, can be considered as an innate, artistic, or tendentious feature of man's life and its relation to his material world. Shakespeare arguably provides the cultural capital which is constantly drawn upon for the creation of new works. This serves as the momentum for the further investigation of Shakespeare appropriations. Clement (2015) also addresses the issue of Shakespeare's prevalent influence and cultural authority in adaptive and appropriative literature; further, she approaches the problematic of categorizing varied modes of Shakespeare's recurrence, recycling or transformation in literature and movies, although she simultaneously reminds the readers of her impatience with discussions on classification, for they "all too easily segue into endless debates on which terms are more accurate or appropriate" (p. 6).

In the second approach, as exposited by Safaei (2014), emphasis is laid upon the historical context of the appropriative literature, for he is convinced that the interpretation of an appropriative work with regard to its assumed source or intertext overshadows the significance of the work within its own socio-political context. An appropriative work written, for instance, by an American or British author is not necessarily an intended decision to imitate, revise, or subvert a precursor such as Shakespeare; it may, among others, be a mode of resistance or criticism of the author's coetaneous political system; it may reflect the eruption of some religious zeal or psychological tension which has been suppressed. The historical horizon of a work, one has to observe, is not a homogenous space; it is "the complex and partially incomprehensible yet evolving historical horizon of understanding" in which the assumed canonical work and its appropriation are approached by the reader (pp. 25, 28). This latter conception of appropriative literature is in accordance with the concept of intertextuality in its broader sense, not as a theory of allusion with focus on the intersubjective or dialogical relation between the new work and its intertext, but, as Eisenhauer (2013) asserts, as the investigation of the new work's socio-historical context and its interaction with various discourses which engulf the text and its reader.

The present essay acknowledges the intertextual relations between *Hamlet* and its two novelistic appropriations (*The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* and *The Dead Fathers Club*). Nonetheless, unlike the conventional approaches (e.g. Safaei and Ruzy 2012a; Sinha 2010) to intertextuality which concentrate on the psychological aspects or modes of transformation and resistance between the works and their assumed sources, I attempt to demonstrate how the literature on terrorism psychology can inform our reading of these two appropriations which are published a few years after 9/11 by an American and a British writer. Hence, I proceed, after presenting a brief review of terrorism psychology, with an analysis of two protagonists, Philip in *The Dead Fathers Club* and Edgar in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, and the specters of their revengeful fathers. To underline a caveat, at the outset, is necessary. The historical context of a work, as Gadamer (1989) contends, must not be construed as the inclusion of evidentiary facts from a historicist perspective which assumes that there is an invariable concordance between the events in a work and those within its cultural or historical milieu. On the contrary, the history of a work must be conceived of as a mode of occasionality or epochal significance which affects the ambience of a literary text. In other words, it is not the exact replication of historical events in *Hamlet* which distinguishes its

epochal intimation from the works in the other periods, but the existence of political tensions in *Hamlet* which can be construed as a reflection of political volatility in Elizabethan age.

TERRORISM AND MODERN HAMLETS

The origins of terrorism, as Eagleton (2005) explains, can be traced to Dionysus, the god of wine and blood, hedonism and tyranny. The god that advocates mindless orgies is paradoxically merciless in chastising any forms of defiance; the prevalence of this oxymoronic and yet inseparable composite of benignity and brutality can be discerned in two major groups of people in today's world: in the staunch followers of a variety of religious denominations who decapitate their innocent victims in the name of an all-compassionate deity and in the promoters of certain political ideologies who murder civilian populations under the banner of liberation and democratization. Terrorism is the legacy of the age of barbarity (pp. 2-3). That the term 'terrorism' as a label is evaded by terrorists themselves does not imply that they do not use it to denounce their opponents. Many terrorist activities, in today's world, are religious in nature; yet religious violence, albeit brutal and horrendous, is never judged by its practitioners as terrorism, for it is not only sanctified but perceived vital on the grounds of theological doctrines. Bloodshed at times constitutes an indispensable part of rituals and without it, worship becomes impossible. The problem arising from ritualistic crime or terrorism is that the contours of religious terrorism are not indisputable. Religious conceptions of a deity or God fundamentally differ from one to another; a terrorist in one culture is regarded a freedom fighter in the other (Perlmutter, 2004, p. 1).

The epochal events of 9/11 gave momentum to the growth of terrorism psychology and its basic question: whether terrorism must be considered as an individual or socio-political phenomenon. There is substantial evidence that terrorism is more psychological than social, yet it must also be acknowledged that any terrorist activity originates within a political and social context, for never can one consider terrorism emerging within a state of void. Nonetheless, the majority of observers are of the opinion that the person who perpetrates a terrorist activity such as detonating a public transportation vehicle is, in certain respects, abnormal (Horgan, 2005a, p. 33). Conversely, it has also been argued that a common trait among many individuals engaged in terrorism is their normality, athough this does not imply that no pathological problem is traceable to the individual who resorts to extreme forms of violence. The literature on terrorism, including records, documents, and court proceedings, has corroborated that terrorists are often frustrated people with proclivity to designate an external cause for their failures in life. Individuals, who have experienced a number of educational and social failures, "need a target to blame and attack for their own inner weakness, inadequacies and lack of success" (Post 2005, p. 55). The other denominator among people engaged in today's terrorism is that "individuals most easily manipulated by terrorist organizations . . . tend to be young and impressionable" (Bloom, 2006, p. 36).

Philip and Edgar's immaturity and incompetence prove an unbridgeable gulf between them and their communities to the extent that the protagonists of the two novels appear as dwarfs in confrontation with a world of giants. The eleven year old Philip, in *The Dead Fathers Club*, is exposed to a world populated with monsters. Alan, Philip's uncle, appears with a menacing size, a "big blue giant" (Haig, 2006, p. 260) with "big hands" (p. 1) and "elephant steps" (p. 250); the female clerk in the Registry Office is "a two meters tall woman" (p. 256); the staff in a local bank are not only huge but eerie creatures with "robot eyes" (p. 26) and "weird shoulders" (p. 26); the banking system is desirous to "swallow" (p. 26) ATM cards and "squeeze" (p. 26) customers. These are not the only places where Philip feels imperiled by colossal as well as menacing figures; he compares the entrance gate of his school to a beast, "with bars like teeth" (p. 107), that devours the time, and by innuendoes,

the life of the students. He is physically inferior to almost all his classmates; he "can't even do one press up" (p. 49). Philip is often harassed by his classmates; he recalls that "Dominic and Jordan got me to the post" (p. 195); the two giants humiliatingly drag him, with his "bare back … scraping the ground" (p. 195). The students, witness to this harassment, appear as a throng of unsympathetic aliens with "faces of giants" (p. 195).

The fourteen year old Edgar, in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, suffers from lack of voice as a result of some abnormal congenital malfunction of his vocal cords; he is also physically weaker than most people around him. Edgar's feeling of being suppressed in a world overwhelmed with colossal inhabitants is predominant. When he shakes hands with his uncle, "he was surprised at how hard Claude squeezed, how it made him aware of the bones in his hands" (Wroblewski 2009, p. 69); Claude is a gregarious navy veteran with a still "athletic" (p. 496) body at forty, and a "hand made of wood" (p. 69). Old Papineau, a veterinarian and family friend, is also "surprisingly strong. He lifted Edgar . . . by the back of his shirt" (p. 147). The other gigantesque figure in the novel is the town sheriff, Glen, "an enormous broad man, a giant" (p. 149), a "massive figure" (p. 384) with a "body rigid as a log" (p. 165). One can observe that the disconcerting sensation of being 'squeezed' and menaced exists in both Philip and Edgar's daily socialization with other people. The two sons, even though to differing extents, discover themselves vulnerable and at times subjugated by people who are superior to them not only physically but even in regard to their intellectual capacity and social status.

There is a plethora of studies which demonstrate people who commit terrorist actions or organize terrorist groups have often failed in their professional or educational lives. Unlike the other individuals or social groups who may maximize their endeavors to improve their lives, terrorist circles commonly resort to the logic that 'other' is the root of their problems (Horgan, 2005a. p. 55). The logic of incriminating 'other' and hence the dichotomization of the world into 'us' versus 'them' or good against evil is interconnected with other factors such as vulnerability, mental illness, and identity confusion which will be elaborated throughout this paper. Philip is convinced of his mediocrity and all his aspiration, when two of the students are selecting their team members for rugby, is that he "might not be last [member chosen] for once" (Haig, 2006, p. 111); being an object of ridicule, he feels exasperated because of his physical diminutiveness; in order not to be the last player selected, he momentarily imagines himself to possess the elasticity of a balloon; he sucks "air" so as to "look bigger," yet he feels rueful that he appears no more than "a full stop next to the H." (p. 112). Edgar, in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, undergoes a more perturbing experience; he is not only without voice but socially invisible. When Edgar is brought home after his birth, he is recognized not by his physical body or audible cry, but by his "faint huffing sounds" emanating from beneath a blanket (Wroblewski, 2009, p. 38); there is anguish in his parents, insinuating "that something wasn't right" (p. 38). Almondine, a pet dog, recognizes, in the breathing rhythm of newly born Edgar, signs of repressed "distress" (p. 39). Without the assistance of the dogs, especially Almondine, Edgar is a perishable creature; when he is filled with agony, the only sound heard is "Almondine's barking" (p. 54) and then the barking of all "the kennel dogs" (p. 54).

The two protagonists are beset by more competent, more talented, and more powerful people; they feel oppressed by a variety of social and human relations. However, social inadequacies, physical vulnerabilities, siege mentality, and being situated in a world of monsters are not the only factors which enforce a person, either abnormal or normal, to opt for violence against 'them'. Alhough terrorist groups generally decline to recruit people with unpredictable emotional behavior, some studies demonstrate that people with a history of sadistic penchant or symptoms of schizophrenia or depression have occasionally been recruited for extremely dangerous operations. To engage in a terrorist activity, such as

leaving a bomb in a public place, entails a certain degree of psychological readiness, i.e. mental illness (Horgan, 2009, p. 6). Philip and Edgar, the new transformations of Hamlet, reveal some singularities of a compulsive mentality which may be juxtaposed with the findings of psychological studies on terrorism. The term "skitso" [slang term for a schizophrenic individual] is commonly used as an epithet to address Philip (Haig, 2006, p. 156). Philip's conversation with the ghost, which is often interpreted by others as the boy's talking to himself, usually continues utill it is interrupted either by an external incident or by an eavesdropper's derision: "And then I heard laughing . . . and I kept the toilet door locked until the laughing boys disappeared" (p. 170). The physically and socially vulnerable Philip breaks dishes and windows, steals the school minibus, smashes his new PlayStation, and upturns tables. Eventually, he is required by school authorities to meet a counselor regularly; he is also prescribed to consume "diazepam" (p. 236) to alleviate his psychological disorder. Mention must be made briefly that psychological counseling and medical treatment are only responses to the compulsive actions that are discovered and for which Philip receives either reprehension or commiseration; his use of poison, stealing explosive chemicals, several attempts of murder, paranoia, arson, and manslaughter (themes which will be explored in this essay) remain concealed from others.

Edgar, too, reveals symptoms of behavioral disorder. The trauma of his father's death leaves Edgar with an eccentric habit: striking his chest in sleep which lasts for months. To avoid the habit, which initially appears to Edgar odious, he fastens his own hands to his bed. With the emergence of the ghost and the surge of vengeful intentions in Edgar, he rediscovers an "exquisite" pleasure in punching his chest in front of a mirror (Wroblewski, 2009, p. 318). There can also be observed in Edgar symptoms of a mode of schizophrenic behavior which commonly deteriorates in his moments of loneliness. In general, communication with the world of apparitions is not exclusive to the wraith of his father. After his murder of Dr. Papineau, an incident which will be explored later in this article, Edgar is urged to leave the farm temporarily. He is eventually lodged by a young man living in a caravan in the woods. While being engaged in doing chores in return for his accommodation and food, Edgar notices the conversation of an old man with a "slump-shouldered" torso (p. 460) "in the depths of the shed" (p. 459); however, any time he determines to see the figure "squarely", the figure vanishes (p. 460). The text is mute regarding the hallucinatory nature of this communication, yet it seems that the wraith, the former proprietor of the place, can read sign language. Without looking straightly at the apparition, Edgar asks the man how long he has resided there, and "Thirty-seven years" is the response (p. 461). Both Edgar and Philip are psychologically prone to engage in a violent confrontation against 'them'.

Victoroff (2005) explains that terrorists have conviction in the existence of a distinct border between 'us' and 'them'. This belief constitutes the logical foundation of their activities. 'Them' is starkly judged as the absolute erroneous and the font of evil. The linearity of deductive reasoning in a terrorist's mind is appalling: there are people who are the cause of 'our' problem and in order to thrive, 'they' must be destroyed. With the acceptance of the premises as facts, the reasoning appears veritable truth. The terrorist syllogism has a morbid facet, for investigations have revealed that those who engage in terrorism have often experienced serious setbacks in their lives. Besides inadequacies and failures which make the terrorist-minded people regard the more talented and successful people as evil, some terrorist ideologies, especially those which are founded on a messianic figure, specifically appeal to youngsters. The propagators of these cultish ideologies persuade young individuals to perceive their world as one already perverted and dominated by nefarious powers. The followers conceive of themselves as the army of good, and their zeal to fight the demonic forces gives them identity and enables them to endure the psychological stress of being nonentities within their own societies.

Unlike skeptical Hamlet who is merged in a state of irresolution, the two modern Hamlets, Philip and Edgar, self-assuredly seek their meaning in war with evil: 'us' against 'them'. 'Them' in the two appropriations of *Hamlet* is the avuncular figure: Claude, in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle,* and Alan, in *The Dead Fathers Club*. According to Victoroff (2005), the recognition of 'them' as the root of perversities is typically commingled with identity confusion. The elders expect Philip to endure the experience of bereavement like a man, and yet Philip feels degraded by being addressed a "bairn" (Haig, 2006, p. 2) or treated as "a puppy or a baby" (p. 132). Philip's isolation, vulnerability, and exposure to a world of monsters make him to define his own identity not merely as a man but as the hero who is destined to stand against demonic 'them', i.e. Uncle Alan, a fifty year old generous hardworking mechanic who has no enemy in the whole world except his insidious nephew. In *The Dead Fathers Club,* a range of mishaps are ascribed to Uncle Alan, namely, among others, the death of Philip's father, a burglary, and the death of a few fish, incidentally cooked in a fish tank. Uncle Alan embodies the vice which Philip must exterminate. Philip tends to exaggerate the scope of his uncle's assumed crimes; he not only regards Alan as the murderer of his father but the slaughterer of his each and every fish in his aquarium which he recalls by their names: "And I was . . . to kill Uncle Alan and revenge for Dad and Gertie and the Mollies and the five Guppies" (Haig, 2006, p. 185). Gradually, Philip's paranoiac compulsion deteriorates; all the people around him, even those with friendly manners, are suspected as the agents and spies of his uncle: "You can't trust anyone" (p. 281). Identity confusion in Philip is not simply to be construed as his dubieties concerning his manhood or his puerile identification with fictitious "Spiderman" against his uncle as "the Green Goblin" (p. 101), but as his delusion to define himself as the 'one' in combat with the source of all his troubles.

To Edgar, the borders between the world of fantasy and reality are nebulous. He lives in the dreamlike world of literary works. The characters in Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* are central to his sense of recognition and identification. He compares his angry mother to "Raksha…Mother Wolf" (Wroblewski, 2009, 372) and would "fall asleep with Mowgli and Bagheera still in his mind" (p. 55). What makes the life in such a dreamlike space immensely disturbing is that Edgar, like Philip, separates the world into black and white, conceiving of himself as the epitome of good at odds with his uncle as the embodiment of all evil. This delusion is intermingled with divinity, for people tend to believe that Edgar has received a "secret" message from God (p. 192). Edgar has the illusion that his actions have divine origins; he, quixotically, is suffused with "the desire to stand between Claude and the world" (p. 349). Further, anyone who befriends Claude is also judged by Edgar as evil and already incriminated as an accomplice in the death of his father. During a violent struggle with his mother Trudy, who is appalled by her son's frenetic manners, Edgar "knelt over her and pinned her arms" (p. 370), accusing her of suspicious collaboration with Claude. Interpreting his mother's naïve replies as prevarication, he frenetically "began to lug her toward the mow door" (p. 370). A few seconds later, with "the hay hook…in his hand" (p. 370), he ruthlessly charges at the silhouette of a figure which apparently belongs to his uncle; old Dr. Papineau, though not hit directly by the hay hook, falls off the stairs and dies, and Edgar has no misgivings that his victim "wasn't innocent" (p. 371). Edgar believes that his dog, by looking affectionately at Claude, has "acted unforgivably" (p. 351). The image of his dog's sedate behavior in front of Claude provokes Edgar's indignation as if the dog has "wounded" Edgar's heart (p. 354). He loves the dog, "yet he couldn't forgive her" (p. 354). To achieve identity, Edgar tendentiously attempts to distance himself from 'them', i.e. his uncle. Hence, despite Claude's endeavors to integrate his nephew, Edgar willfully declines all overtures for reconciliation or friendship by often responding to his uncle "in slashing, incomprehensible torrents of sign" (p. 308). To baffle his versatile uncle affords Edgar a pleasurable sensation

of supremacy which only aggravates his isolation. In terrorism psychology, isolation is considered a catalyst for terrorist behavior. This factor will be elaborated in the following discussions.

Terrorism psychology is not merely concerned with pathological symptoms, mental compulsions, or self-delusion. Any object which is utilized by a terrorist may provide an insight into a terrorist's psyche. Edgar and Philip's choice of weaponry, with regard to terrorism psychology, demands some degree of attention. Edgar's murder weapons are bizarrely crude; for instance, whereas there is a rifle in the farm, an heirloom which is sometimes used by Claude for illegal hunting, Edgar uses a hay hook. According to Dolnick and Gunaratna (2006), the choice of weaponry, i.e. the manipulation of technologically crude weapons such as edged instruments or unsophisticated bombs and relapsing into barbaric methods of murder such as decapitation, is a prevalent and yet enigmatic facet of today's world of terrorism (p. 39). To envision "crashing" the face and head of his uncle with "the steel head of the hammer" (Wroblewski, 2009, pp. 286-7) must not be appraised as a common form of violence for the fourteen year-old Edgar however he is overwhelmed with animosity toward a murder suspect. The use of hammer and hay hook instead of a rifle which renders a 'clean death' possible is not without significance. Philip, too, among several unsophisticated instruments for murder, such as "knife," "hammer," and "pillow" (Haig, 2006, p. 126), which he assesses in his mind in regard to their efficiency, prefers "the poker by the fire" (p. 124).

The utilization of unsophisticated weaponry by terrorists manifests a salient feature of contemporary terrorism which requires elaboration. Despite the availability of advanced technologies, which make a terrorist operation from a safe distance possible and diminish the risk of hesitations and second thoughts as a result of proximity with the victims, the use of primitive weapons, such as edged instruments, marks the terrorists' endeavor in demonstrating their enormous resolve and extreme insensitivity to the sufferings of their victims (Dolnik & Gunaratnam, 2006, pp. 25-6). The first victims of Edgar and Philip's revenge are innocent people. Dr. Papineau, in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, who is a family friend and a regular visitor of the kennel, cannot be simply juxtaposed with Polonius, even though he is inadvertently killed; nor should Alan's business partner, Mr. Fairview, in *The Dead Fathers Club*, be characterized as another modern Polonius, for he is not but a victim of terrorism, one who is cremated alive by eleven-year old Philip in cold blood. The two modern transformations of *Hamlet* have to be analyzed in the light of what in actual is happening in today's world of terrorism where, according to Wilkinson (2006), innocent people, tourists, spectators who have no engagement in any form of crime or violence are the victims of terrorist attacks (p. 16).

As Post (2005) asserts, young people who are exploited by terrorist groups are often unmarried with no decent education or employment. Such young failures are exhorted to engage in extreme forms of violence to attain prominence and renown in their lives (p. 64). In the Hamletian world, there is an element which, more than any other factor, either political or psychological, enkindles the sense of retaliation; it is the ghost which enjoins Hamlet to avenge his father's death. The ghost, Hamlet, and revenge constitute a triangle of pivotal significance in *Hamlet* (Cefalu, 2000, p. 158). The next section of this article addresses—along with more discussions on terrorist psychology and the characterization of modern Hamlets—the nature of the ghost, not in the context of Christian eschatology or beliefs regarding demons, apparitions, and purgatory, but principally within the world of terrorism.

TERRORISM AND MODERN GHOSTS

The general assumption is that Hamlet's feigned or real insanity terrorize the courtiers at Elsinore. Conversely, this is the ghost which unleashes terror in *Hamlet*. The specter possesses an undeniable centrality in the play; it resembles no other apparition in any historical or literary work; its presence is meager, yet its character is aesthetically vivid and peculiarly disconcerting (Greenblatt, 2001, p. 4). How to interpret the emergence of the ghost in the appropriations of *Hamlet* is an issue which needs to be addressed. In the postmodern era, the prevalent assumption is that creativity and novelty are merely a myth: that is, literary works are not but the recycling or recontextualization of the previous forms. Recontextualization also implies, among others, that our present world is the bearer of historical traces. A possible corollary of this argument is that a Shakespearean play can be read, for instance, in the light of current political crises in Iraq (Currie, 2007, p. 10). The ghost and the theme of revenge in *Hamlet* have, among others, been subject to recontextualization. The emergence of a ghost with vengeful intents was a dramaturgic convention in Shakespeare's era, yet it has received a different mode of critical acclamation which distinguishes it from other specters in literature. The ghost, from a Derridean perspective, reflects the constancy of a haunting pattern which has permeated history; it is specifically associated with political tensions or nationwide consternations (Garber, 2008, p. 218).

Safaei and Ruzy (2012b) argue that the relation between an appropriative work and its original, for instance, *Hamlet,* is affected by two factors: first, the critical perspective of a writer toward *Hamlet* and even its author, i.e. Shakespeare, which makes him to appropriate particular elements in the work or even transform them in his own way; and second, a heterogeneous socio-political context in which a writer is situated (24, 30). The remnants of terrorism can be detected in *Hamlet*. The theme of indiscriminate carnage, resembling contemporary terrorist activities, can be perceived in Horatio's rueful account of the bloodshed in Elsinore and "casual slaughters" (5.2.387). From a presentist perspective, Horatio's observation regarding "casual" or haphazard bloodshed in Denmark sheds light on terrorism in our era (Fernie, 2005, p. 182). I, however, argue that by succumbing to Fernie's (2005) interpretation of "casual slaughters" as an explanation for terrorism in our era, we ineluctably mutilate our inquiry into the intricate socio-political issues of our world. What is at stake in this article is a departure from recontextualizing *Hamlet* and from the domain of "carnal, bloody" deeds (5.2.386) in the court of Elsinore so as to ponder an explanation for the emergence of the ghost and its functions within both *The Dead Fathers Club* and *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*. As such, I intend to explore the significance of the ghost in relation to the element of leadership in terrorism, for, as Horgan (2005a) argues, any "terrorist activity requires some leadership function to exist, and within even relatively small size terrorist groups . . . there are people who are responsible for management functions" (p. 33). A leader, in the world of terrorism, is not a mere crafty manager or an austere commander. He is a leader with a charismatic aura who generates impetus for terrorist attacks and has the authority to justify any kind of violence. It is one of such leaders who, during a sermon, reminded his followers of an aphoristic observation: that there is mercy in murder (Post, 2005, p. 58).

The ghosts in the two appropriations of *Hamlet* are not truly charismatic, yet they possess an aureole of mystifying spirituality which makes them loom formidable. A crucial difference between the ghost in *Hamlet* and the two ghosts in the novels is that the former is amenable to the laws of nature and subject to divine chastisement till his "foul crimes . . . Are burnt and purg'd away" (1.5.12-13); it appears at midnight and fades "on the crowing of the cock" (1.1.162). Unlike their repentant prototype, the ghosts in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*

and *The Dead Fathers Club* are not susceptible to, but, in command of, natural phenomena. The ghost in the former novel often emerges in a commixture of "rain," "dust," and "gust of wind" (Wroblewski 2009, p. 363). The association of powerful climatic events with the ghost is, in Edgar's mind, so obvious, that "if rain had been falling, he wouldn't have the courage to stay out" (p. 294). The ghost has supreme authority and can wreak havoc; he is the spiritual leader who penetrates the hearts of his followers: the ghost sets its hand on Edgar's breast and the impression is so profound and peculiar that "Edgar thought his heart would stop" (p. 273). The encounter with the ghost suffuses Edgar with both wonder and horror; he "fell to his knees" and "emptied his stomach into a pool of rainwater" (p. 274). Edgar cannot defy the presence and the insinuations of a mighty ghost.

There are a few ghosts in *The Dead Fathers Club,* with some of them empowered to command wind for various purposes, including intimidation. Being harassed by one of his classmates in the graveyard, Philip invokes the ghost of his father, and the invocation is ensued by a strong gust of wind "blowing really hard" (Haig, 2006, p. 149) till the browbeating boy "rode off with the other boys chasing their caps" (p. 149). The ghost is not merely a powerful ally that can be solicited in moments of loneliness or emergency; it is an authoritative figure that demands obeisance: "When the wind stopped I … followed Dad's Ghost" (p. 149). The apparition has the capacity to inculcate beliefs; Philip has to end his friendship with his girlfriend Leah, for, as the ghost articulates, "Friends stop you thinking in a straight line" (p. 194). Philip has unwavering faith in the ghost's command, for if he does not end his friendship, he will "never dare kill Uncle Alan" (p. 190). Faith in the leader's spirituality accords a divine aura to violence. Moments before Edgar's attack with a hay hook, "a savage, godish electricity ran through his nerves" (Wroblewski, 2009, p. 370). Edgar's attack reveals the "godish" and "savage" facets of his Dionysian terrorism: a fusion of divinity and bestiality. And this is the reason, Eagleton (2005) argues, that terrorism, despite the assertions of those who ascribe it to political causes or categorize it as a form of guerilla warfare, is, in fact, a consequence of deeply entrenched and culturally primitive concepts and beliefs regarding such notions as good, evil, life, sacrifice, death, hereafter (p. vi).

The terrorist activities, to some observers, may appear haphazard and arbitrary, yet terrorist leadership provides sophisticated reasoning reinforced by professional media coverage to justify their cause and to exhort their communities to have faith in the ethical basis of their violence. Being exposed to the methodical indoctrination of values, terrorist groups and organizations are commonly desensitized to the brutality of their activities (Horgan, 2005b, p. 25). Arbitrary or justified enforcement of punishment or retaliation is not without precedence. Revenge is a prehistoric form of justice and despite the establishment of civil society, it is still predominant. Thus retaliation, often regarded as a family issue than a matter which has to be resolved by an authorized entity, is sometimes conducive to the cycle of vendetta (Bevington, 2008, p. 45). Alhough the ghost's injunction to revenge is against Christian teachings, revenge in *Hamlet* apparently concords with the ancient tradition of *lex talionis*, based on which the nearest of kin to a murdered person is required to take vengeance (Levin 1959, p. 23). Perhaps, it is because of biblical aversion to revenge that the initial impetus for a swift retaliation in *Hamlet* gradually vanishes, and the ostensibly revenge tragedy approximates an anti-revenge play (Mackay, 2010, p. 112).

The Dead Fathers Club and *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* are situated in a historical period when an array of legal institutions for the investigation and enforcement of justice are available. Paradoxically, when Philip and Edgar are made aware of the crime (i.e. the alleged murder of their fathers), the ghosts suggest that the police and the judicial system are too inefficient to bring the perpetrators to justice. The ghost of Edgar's father bluntly proclaims, "*They won't believe you*" (Wroblewski, 2009, p. 274). A congruously disheartening response

is articulated by the ghost in *The Dead Fathers Club*: "You can't tell the police Philip; there's no evidence" (Haig, 2006, p. 23). Ironically, in both novels the ghosts disclose certain clues regarding their murder so as to instigate their sons to retaliate without any recourse to a lawful authority. For instance, Edgar, with the ghost's instructions, finds a syringe still containing "two glassy" drops of poison (Wroblewski, 2009, p. 273), yet the apparition convinces his son that the police will not believe him. Further, the specter's knowledge is beyond earthly science and forensic medicine, for an autopsy revealed that Edgar's father died of "an aneurysm" in his brain (p. 172). A partially congruent incident occurs in *The Dead Fathers Club*. The wraith of Philip's father reveals that his death "wasn't an accident" (Haig p. 10) but a murder by his brother Alan who had manipulated the braking system of his car. However, the ghost persuades Philip to concede that the police will not believe him. To evade the burden of a homicide, Philip suggests a variety of options, but the ghost is persistent in his demand: "You must kill him [your uncle], Philip" (p. 23). The presence of the ghost in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* is much less than that of the ghost in *The Dead Fathers Club*, yet both apparitions stay in command of their sons toward catastrophic ends.

The authority in terrorist groups is despotic and beyond accountability; the inculcation of teachings and subservience to authority commence at a young age. An authority's command is per se its own justification. If the leader is believed to have jurisdictional power to issue decrees, then a terrorist is assured that he will attain eternal felicity in recompense for his devoted service. He feels no anguish as to his own death; nor does he need to have remorse of conscience regarding his violent act (Horgan, 2005b, p. 66). Hamlet's inscription of the Ghost's dictum, "Adieu, adieu, remember me" (1.5.111) is assuredly the consequence of ghost's spiritual ethos and its possible sacredness in Hamlet's opinion. It is for the same reason that Hamlet is resolved to cherish the ghost's command in his book of mind (Watson, 2004, p. 486). Within *Hamlet*, stress is laid on remembrance which implies abidance by the law of revenge, for oblivion is the preliminary stage of reconciliation and forgiveness. The ghost's insistence on "remember me" (1.5.111) signifies an inviolable behest for revenge: neither to forget nor to forgive (Alexander, 1971, p. 38; Knight, 1949, p. 19). The ghost of Edgar's father neither issues a categorical order for revenge nor has an incessant presence like that of the ghost in *The Dead Fathers Club*; yet the ghost, in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, not only after the revelation of his murder but on different occasions intensifies Edgar's thirst for revenge with "*Remember me*" (Wroblewski, 2009, pp. 275, 369, 608). The recurrence of "Remember me" is interconnected with devastating incidents; the command reverberates in the kennel a few minutes before Edgar's murderous attack which leads to Dr. Papineau's death; on another occasion, it coincides with conflagration in the barn and the annihilation of more lives.

Whereas in *Hamlet* the ghost disappears after the closet scene in act 3, the ghosts in both appropriations, specifically in *The Dead Fathers Club*, prove intrusive throughout the whole novels; this intrusion is not only verbal but spiritual in the form of natural phenomena: rain, wind, and storm. In the world of terrorism, according to O'Brien (2004), a leaders' presence is not necessarily physical, and the existence of a terrorist leader is occasionally overshadowed by dubieties regarding his death (p. 144). What can be extrapolated from O'Brien's argument is that terrorist leaders, at times, function as ghosts, with their existence based upon unwarranted assumptions. Within the context of *Hamlet*, the existence of an apparition can be explained as hallucination, concretized superstition, resurgence of Catholic dogmas regarding spirits and purgatory; it can also reflect a mere theatrical convention like the other spirits, pagan gods, sorcerers and magicians in Shakespeare (Spinrad, 2005, p. 458). Bennett and Royle (2004) argue that the ghosts of twenty-first century essentially differ from those in the previous centuries, for they represent varied beliefs and phenomena which distinguish one period from another. In our own era, they may not only represent beliefs but

new technologies, modern telecommunication systems or the Internet (p. 138). In the context of literature on terrorism, one has to suggest a more tangible explanation for the devastating interference of the ghosts in the two appropriations of *Hamlet*. O'Brien (2004) remarks that the Internet and other advanced telecommunication technologies have reformed the strategies of terrorist groups as they are no longer restricted to a limited boundary within a country or region; as a result, there is no spatial or temporal confinement for modern terrorism (p. 127). A conspicuous feature of the ghosts in the two novels is their dual role as leaders and as the embodiment of the very message which is conveyed. The instances of such a function are not very rare in both novels. Like electronic signals in telecommunication systems, the figure of a ghost may fluctuate; in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, the ghost "flickered" (Wroblewski, 2009, p. 268), and in *The Dead Fathers Club* it "flickers on and off like a bad light bulb" (Haig, 2006, p. 59). There are moments when Edgar cannot cognize the content of the message, complaining that he "couldn't read that" (Wroblewski, 2009, p. 274). Nor can Philip always receive the ghost's message thoroughly, for the ghost "was flickering" and all he "could hear was 'It wasn't'" (Haig, 2006, p. 7).

It is a regrettable irony that, despite academic discussions on the insufficiency of expertise on terrorist psychology, leaders of terrorist groups are quite capable of mobilizing people who are psychically and emotionally inclined to commit terrorist activities; thus a terrorist mastermind, moments before an operation, possesses the capacity "to maximize psychological cohesion and mutual solidarity in the face of self-doubt, wavering commitment or a partial lack of focus" (Horgan, 2005a, p. 34). Recruitment of terrorists is concurrent with a particular mode of education. Isolation, whether self-incurred or imposed by society or a terrorist authority, is a means by which, terrorist leaders manipulate their agents. Isolation is a priority in the education of a terrorist. The investigation of the life of hundreds of terrorists and militant groups has revealed that isolation not only intensifies alienation from social realities but leads to further ossification of extremist thoughts in the minds of terrorists (Victoroff, 2005, p. 30).

Hamlet's isolation is self-imposed. In other words, this is the prince who determines to devote himself to vengeance by renouncing all interfering earthly knowledge that he has attained throughout his life (Cefalu, 2000, p. 413). To revere the ghost and to be focused on its command, Hamlet opts for seclusion. He feigns madness and harshly alienates Ophelia, "the one creature who ties him inextricably . . . to the corrupt world of Elsinore" (Hunt, 1988, p. 37). Philip, in *The Dead Fathers Club*, is enticed to terminate his relations with Leah, the girl he loves, not because Leah is connected to the world of vice, but because she is, according to Safaei and Ruzy (2013), Philip's major psychological solace and a crucial link for his social integration. This is the reason that the ghost conceives of Leah and Philip's affection for her as lack of concentration on his mission. Philip must not meet Leah; nor must he have any socialization with other people; he is commanded to have "no friends" until his revengeful mission is accomplished (Haig, 2006, p. 147). Isolation, even if inflicted as a punitive measure, will only exacerbate a terrorist's desire for violence, for isolation is itself the *raison d'être* in struggle with the mighty 'other', the source of all evil (Goerzig, 2010, p. 119). Before the murder of Dr. Papineau, in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, Edgar withdraws from his mother and leads a solitary life in the kennel; the homicide enforces Edgar to escape and suffer further isolation. His escapade aggravates Edgar's violent and vengeful sentiments. His journey in the wilderness is fraught with hunger, mosquito bites, and numerous instances of theft in the form of ransacking the empty caravans to provide food and drink for himself and the few dogs which are accompanying him. Consequently, his return to the farm is marked by more animosity toward his uncle, brutal confrontation with the sheriff, and the subsequent tragic incidents.

The corpus of terrorism psychology which has already been drawn upon in this paper, demonstrate that a terrorist leader does not communicate with everybody as a potential terrorist. Not only is he an aloof and isolated figure, leading an underground life; he addresses certain individuals who are already indoctrinated, isolated, or psychologically prepared to be further brainwashed for violent missions. There is a gruesome trait in the characters of eleven-year-old Philip and fourteen-year-old Edgar. They have no misgivings regarding their status as the rightful agents for the establishment of a brutal form of justice. Philip steals, with the ghost's instructions, explosive chemicals from his school laboratory to detonate his uncle; eventually, he sets fire to the garage of his uncle to burn him. When he hears the vehement "screaming" of someone entrapped in flames, he is overwhelmed with the sense of a sweet revenge, repeating "It's him! It's him!" (Haig, 2006, p. 264). Inadvertently, Edgar attacks Dr. Papineau with a hay hook; yet learning that he has murdered the wrong man, he does not accuse the doctor of complicity in his father's death but of mere speaking to his uncle. Being urged by his mother to explain the reason of his frenzied homicide action, Edgar, with an air of self-assurance, replies, "He wasn't so innocent. I heard them talking" (Wroblewski, 2009, p. 371). Mere "talking" to uncle Claude is, in Edgar's opinion, a condemnable deed and affords him sufficient justification to feel no contrition in the murder of an old man who once rescued his life "out of the snow" (p. 371). The analysis of the two characters demonstrates the considerable impressionability of both modern Hamlets in the two novels; this psychological feature coupled with inexperience and social failures appear to be the principal assets which are misused by terrorist masterminds.

CONCLUSION

There are vestiges of a Hamletian world in both *The Dead Fathers Club* and *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*. However, in the same way that *Hamlet* reveals the political tensions of its own time, primacy, in this paper, was given to the historical context of the two appropriations of *Hamlet*. I drew upon terrorism psychology as one of the possible theoretical approaches which can shed light on the emergence of ghosts and vengeful characters in the two novels. Terrorism psychology has demonstrated that not only are frustration and setbacks in the achievement of personal objectives common among individual terrorists, but communities that feel victimized or underprivileged are desirous to resort to pugnacious behavior of a terrorist nature. Philip and Edgar do not merely typify two isolated young deluded individuals involved in juvenile crime and violence; nor can they be regarded as transpositions of Hamlet in the sense that the Shakespearean protagonist, for instance, is the prince of Denmark, and Philip and Edgar are two antiheroes destined to fight a real or an illusory evil. Edgar and Philip may exemplify not only the individuals but the insular communities who are, in one way or another, prone to engage in terrorism. The analysis of the ghosts, as terrorist leaders or masterminds, demonstrates the complexity of their spiritual influence, their constant though invisible presence, and their awareness in the recruitment and psychological training of young impressionable individuals.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mohammad Safaei is an Assistant Professor at the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus. He specializes in Shakespeare, early modern drama, and appropriation.