

Richard Flanagan's the Unknown Terrorist-A Novel about the "War on Terror"- A Critical Elucidation

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Abstract: *Richard Flanagan, in full Richard Miller Flanagan, Longford, Tasmania, an Australian writer who was known for a series of critically acclaimed works and widely considered the finest Australian novelist of his generation'. In the present novel The Unknown Terrorist, he delivers a mesmerizing thriller that demonstrates the breadth of his range and vision and it is one of the most brilliant work in the English language today and turns his attention to the most timely of subjects. It is an extraordinary achievement, chilling, impossible to put down, and all too familiar, The Unknown Terrorist is an exercise in genre fiction –a thriller that happen to be genuinely thrilling. It's a novel about the state of a nation, its apostrophies, Australian pole dancer called Doll. She finds herself being mistaken for someone else and falling, abruptly down a black rabbit hole, her identity stolen, her daily life torpedoed, her most fundamental expectations about life blown to smithereens or small pieces.*

Because of a one night stand with an attractive stranger named Tariq, the Doll suddenly finds herself being hunted by the police and described on TV as part of a Bomie-and-Clyde terrorist team. The Doll not only sees her modest hopes of better life- a life in which she had an apartment and an education and a job that people admired- abruptly erased, also realizes that she has been caught up in a gigantic political and media machine that she is helpless to stop. In a short time (three days) her life has been transformed and now she is running for her life.

Mr. Flanagan has turned the story into an armature for a brilliant meditation upon the post-9/11 world, a globalized world in which fear is a valued commodity for terrorists and governments alike, a world in which rumours and misinformation circumnavigate the globe in flash of an eye. Identity has become a commodity and construct in this world: something that can be manufactured, stolen or counterfeited.

Keywords: *manufactured, globe, war, terror.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Terrorism and its Impact

Terrorism has always overwhelmed human beings all round the world. Every time a terrorist attack takes place somewhere, the whole world seems to stop to glance and amazed as well as scares at the disaster. The torturous and dehumanized practice has become a much powerful weapon; even though the only result we seem to perceive after any attack is a massive fear and an overwhelming pain. It's a universal truth that terrorism is a practice with a deep historical root that has been experienced by all societies and cultures. Its origin date back to Antiquity, when a group of people gathered under the name of Zealots of Judea, also known by the Romans as Sicarri or dagger-men, to carry out the murdering of different Roman occupational forces. But terrorism acquires its name during the French Revolution (1789), in reference to the Reign of Terror initiated by the revolutionary government. During the 19th century it was generalized and related to anarchist and national movements. The 20th century experienced this phenomenon associated to state violence under extremist group's leadership. And in the young 21st century, several terrorist attacks have already taken place threatening the entire world.

1.2. Unusual Suspect

Who are terrorists? Can they be identified with a specific religion, ethnicity or political ideology? Terrorists are Middle Eastern and Muslim; they are intensely antidemocratic. According to Flanagan's novel, they are those "dangerous Islamic types" who want to destroy our way of life. *The Unknown Terrorist* is a fast paced, sexually charged crime story that suggests far more complex reality. Gina

Davies or Doll, a ‘dancer of death’ called by Australian newspapers, media, she herself has become the victim of an insidious institutional terrorism. Richard Cody, a struggling journalist trying to regain his position, warned by the boss to bring an exalting illusion blended with fear and nastiness to become a successful reporter. So, Cody selects Doll, to change her into a monster. News paper and Radio join in a story of home grown terrorist cell is shaping up to become the story of the year. The Australian people need to know ‘we are going to get this suicide bomber before she gets Australians’.

1.3. Doll’s Pathetic Story

The avalanche of misfortunes that bears down on Doll after a night of intercourse with a man of Middle Eastern appearance called Tariq. The Doll’s problem is that the security camera has caught the two arm in arm heading for their room. No one recognizes her for four days as she wanders the town trying to keep out of trouble. But the police and press search for her from the little they know about the erotic dancer. She will regret for her dying day which is not far away. But the press and police make horrendous mistakes in getting her or they could fit up the black boy, he’s a Muslim, his uncle was seen at an al- Queda rally in Egypt, but not the girl. Most of *The Unknown Terrorist* novel is made up of abstract ruminations of the poor girl as she struggles to come to grips with life in the few days she has left. The Doll, is also short of humour, good sense and originality. Face to Face with Cody, a pistol in her hand, she still thinks on her feet; Death when it comes, is a sweet relief. Her life changed not with actual act of terror, but by specter of terror itself and with the help of governments and medias, by image of terror, by fears of terror and cold blooded manipulation of terror as a political tool. The Unknown Terrorist succeeds dazzlingly well on a number of levels, not least that of page turning, pot boiling from the moment the Doll begins her terrifying odyssey throughout the underbelly of Sydney, searching desperately for a way out from the ever-tightening dragnet. In addition to bring a nail biting roller coaster thriller and a vicious political satire and this novel is also a profound study of contemporary alienation.

1.4. The Unknown Terrorist Sparks a Pub Ejection

Mr. Chalk, a teacher who was in town for an educational conference, was asked to leave the hotel by security officer even without ordering a drink. The reason for that is his reading a suspicious novel, which made Mr. Chalk, the object of suspicion. Mr. Chalk was absolutely stunned and was distressed. He further wondered whether he is in a place where everyone is in the grip of fear and sees danger everywhere. Flanagan himself told in an interview –if it’s not disturbing, it would be deeply comical.

2. CONCLUSION

2.1. Flaws in the Novel

Though *The Unknown Terrorist*, deals with a significant and timely subject matter, is unhappily an unconvincing and poor effort. The novel can be described as an artistically failed attempt to warn Australians about the real implications of the so-called war on terror. The novel does not work on any artistic level, but rather reads like a poor detective novel with predictable scenes and cardboard characters. Unlike Flanagan’s previous novels which deals with landscapes and inhabitants, the novel goes rarely beyond the clichéd and obvious. The author seems to have taken the line of least resistance at every important juncture. He prefers a fast paced detective genre; reader is treated to long and unnecessary descriptions of Doll strip teasing, gratuitous sex with Tariq which seems arbitrary means of establishing the interconnection of the characters and their situations.

2.2. Works Cited

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