





Geoffroy

cannot understand the outpouring of grief. For her, the attacks on the Twin Towers are nothing compared to Nagasaki, where the Americans “created a desolation and called it peace” which is what they are doing in Afghanistan where Harry is now working with Raza for the CIA. Abdullah is on Raza’s mind and he manages to get news of his old friend, who is working illegally as a taxi-driver in New York but wants to get back to Afghanistan as the FBI is looking for him. He contacts Kim Burton, whom he has never met, and asks for help. Suddenly the Weiss-Burtons and Tanaka-Ashrafs web is torn to shreds. Blood and shadows are everywhere. We began with Nagasaki, our final view of the East is Kandehar. Hiroko’s birds become burkas. Death and flight, which have followed us throughout the novel, conclude it. Will the spider return and provide a safe haven or has the final flash of light proved too powerful?

In this story of death and destruction, love and hope, Kamila Shamsie manages to open up our senses. We see, hear, smell and touch as we move from one city to another, one continent to another but at the end we are left with that most poignant of expressions: “if only.” A truly haunting novel.