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Invisible Humans, Visible Terrorists: U.S. Neo-Orientalism Post 9/11 and Representations of the Muslim World

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INVISIBLE HUMANS, VISIBLE TERRORISTS: U.S. NEO-OREINTALISM POST 9/11 AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MUSLIM WORLD

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Date

INVISIBLE HUMANS, VISIBLE TERRORISTS:
U.S. NEO-ORIENTALISM POST 9/11 AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MUSLIM
WORLD

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

of

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by

Khalid M. Alrasheed

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

of

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West Lafayette, Indiana

For my parents, wife and children

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I cannot imagine my success in completing my Ph.D. degree if not for my parents. I was raised in a family that valued education. My father, who grew up without a father or a mother, was the first in his tribe to obtain a university degree majoring in history in 1974. He was offered a scholarship from Cambridge University, but he did not accept it for personal reasons. He introduced me to the field of Orientalism by asking me to read translated Orientalist writings. My mother taught me how to love and care, and she will not hesitate to smack me on the head if I say the wrong word or make a mistake even in front of my wife and kids. I remember as a young boy that she would not tolerate my tardiness in doing my homework. I could write books about my parents' beauty, courage and love, but they will not come close to their real presence in my life.

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ABSTRACT

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U.S. neo-Orientalism as a new form of Orientalism was ushered in after 9/11. Although it operates within the frames of Said's theory of Orientalism, U.S. neo-Orientalism offers new approaches to and representations of Islam and the Muslim world that have a different point of departure from that of classical Orientalism. U.S. neo-Orientalism rationalizes military intervention and the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, as well as promoting the mission of American democracy. This study discusses the theoretical frame and features of U.S. neo-Orientalism and tackles its representations in institutionalized neo-Orientalist writings and American literary and war novels.

INTRODUCTION

The problem with Islam...is not that it has got the wrong moral theory; it's that it has got the wrong God. If the Muslim thinks that our moral duties are constituted by God's commands, then I agree with him. But Muslims and Christians differ radically over God's nature. Muslims believe that God loves only Muslims. Allah has no love for unbelievers and sinners. Therefore, they can be killed indiscriminately. Moreover, in Islam God's omnipotence trumps everything, even His own nature. He is therefore utterly arbitrary in His dealing with mankind.

— William Lane Craig

I should have paid greater attention to my mentor in graduate school, Samuel Huntington, who once explained that Americans never recognize that, in the developing world, the key is not the kind of government — communist, capitalist, democratic, dictatorial — but the degree of government. That absence of government is what we are watching these days, from Libya to Iraq to Syria.

— Fareed Zakaria

This study focuses on American neo-Orientalism, a new form of Orientalism that emerges after 9/11 with different trajectories than those of classical Orientalism. I argue that while it is a branch of Orientalism, neo-Orientalism offers representation of Islam and the Arab/Muslim world that have changed significantly in keeping with the seismic shifts in the geopolitical and cultural circumstances after 9/11. My title alludes to two recent studies: Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber's *Race and Arab Americans before and after 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* and Judith Butler's *Frames of War*. Jamal and Naber show that Arab-Americans, who tended to be ignored in analyses of

U.S. minorities before 9/11, have gained a new visibility and stigmatization by being made synonymous with terrorists after that event. At the same time, their humanity is rendered invisible through the forms of *Othering* created by contemporary war culture, as outlined by Butler in *Frames of War*. My study will focus on this dual process through which American neo-Orientalist political, cultural and literary discourse represents Arabs and Muslims as hyper-visible as alleged terrorists and absent and invisible as human beings.

My study will show that neo-Orientalism, which is the context for the representations described above, marks significant shifts in the realm of culture pre- and post-9/11. To illustrate the shift briefly, let me take the example of the phrase “Garden of Allah” and how it has fared in the last century. The English novel of Robert Smythe Hichens’ *The Garden of Allah* (1904) narrates the story of a rich English female who escapes boredom in Europe to fall in love with and marry an ex-Catholic priest in the Sahara Desert. Melani McAlister points out that after it failed in England, this novel inspired more than three movies and plays, while “restaurants and hotels [named ‘Garden of Allah’] popped all over” the US (22). One of the most famous of these hotels called Garden of Allah opened in 1926 in California and flourished until it was closed in 1959. In its heyday it was the residence of many American celebrities including future US president Ronald Reagan, Frank Sinatra, Laurence Olivier, Rudolph Valentino, Charlie Chaplin, Aldous Huxley, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sheila Graham. Graham later authored *The Garden of Allah* (1970) telling the stories of those who lived at this place. But if such business with the same name were to open in

anywhere in the US today, I doubt that it would have the same success and popularity.¹

Two examples will help us understand the associations the phrase carries today.

Significantly, in his biography *Reagan: The Life* (2015), the famous historian H.W.

Brands neglects to mention that Reagan frequented the Garden of Allah during his career in Hollywood (Leonard, “Hotel Hedonism”). Also illuminating is the example of the movie *Gangster Squad*, which I watched in 2013, and which names The Garden of Allah as the residence of the mafia leader Mickey Cohen (played by Sean Penn) in Los Angeles in 1950s. But in this contemporary rendition of the 50s, the Garden of Allah no longer carries the exotic and Orientalized associations that Melani McAlister *et al* describe for the term. Instead, the 2013 movie depicts a ruthless killer and his gangster friends operating their criminal activities from this residence. The changing fortunes of the trope of the Garden of Allah in the U.S. embody the shift emerging in the field of Orientalism after 9/11.

While Hichens’ experience of the Orient came mainly through the colonial presence of his country, Britain, until 9/11, American readers and consumers of his “Oriental” novel experienced the Orient second-hand through Hichens. Until 9/11, American Orientalism viewed the Middle East mainly through the European experience. However, after 9/11 the United States begins to have its own colonies in the Middle East. These twenty-first century American colonies in the Muslim world do not attract tourists as did the European colonies, but instead are the destinations primarily of politicians and

¹ Some may argue that Muslims will protest the use of the name of “Allah” in any business and I would agree. Nonetheless, when the name of “Allah” is invoked in the west, it is usually intended to provoke and offend Muslims, as in numerous caricature contests of Islam.

soldiers. Whereas Edward Said discusses in his Introduction to *Orientalism* the French journalist who bemoans the destruction of Lebanon as the destruction of “the Orient of Chateaubriand and Nerval,” most American journalists today cannot find an equivalent nostalgic connection with the destruction of Iraq or Afghanistan (1). Moreover, while European Empires initially concealed their economic and geopolitical motivation behind colonization, claiming to deliver a grand idea of civilizing and modernizing, the United States sees the primary justification of its military presence in the Muslim world as the securing of its own safety and an altruistic delivery of democracy.

This dissertation will argue that the new geopolitical realities briefly sketched above have had a direct impact on cultural representations and discourses of neo-Orientalism in America. I focus on the inception of American neo-Orientalism after 9/11, calling attention to an intertextuality that participates in the making of this discourse in the United States. Individual chapters will focus on neo-Orientalist themes and representations of Islam and the Arab/Muslim world in two realms: political think tanks and the post-9/11 American novel.

I will begin with some reflection on the key term, neo-Orientalism, and its relationship to the Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism. I will then go on to describe the six main aspects of neo-Orientalism that I will explore throughout this dissertation. Said is credited as the founder of the critique of Orientalism after the publication of his famous book with the same title in 1978. Said died two years after 9/11 but not before witnessing the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Urging a humanistic approach to criticism where one uses the “mind historically and rationally for the purpose of reflective understanding and genuine disclosure” without isolation from the world, Said almost prophetically or

unintentionally named the shift in the Orientalist discourse in 2003 in a preface to the twenty fifth edition of *Orientalism* (xxiii). Here Said maintains that “Orthodoxy and dogma rule” after 9/11, adding, however, that “this is not to say that the cultural world has simply regressed on one side to a belligerent neo-Orientalism and on the other to blanket rejectionism” (*Orientalism*, xxviii). Of course Said did not live beyond 2003 to see this trend taking shape with “belligerent” plethora of political and cultural writings and literary and cinematic representations of the Orient. He contends that American Orientalism took full shape after the Second World War with emergence of the United State as a superpower and the decline of European empires (*Orientalism*, 4). I, on the other hand, believe that 9/11 registers the advent of American neo-Orientalism. If the United States emerged as a champion that led the Allies to victory after WW II, it emerged as a victim after 9/11.

As I will show in this study, American neo-Orientalism is the latest phase in American Orientalism. In this phase, what has changed is not Said’s frame of Orientalism, but rather the jigsaw pieces within this frame. Whereas Islam was merely one of the subjects of Orientalism, it is now the main subject of American neo-Orientalism. Before 9/11 Islam was “news” in western media coverage; now in a post 9/11 American society, Islam morphs into a category of “breaking news” not only in the media but in every platform (Said, *Islam* 2). Today in American neo-Orientalist discourse, Islam is discussed as a political movement and the Qur’an as a political manifesto. Moreover, the Arab/Muslim world is portrayed as in need of American democracy to survive this political movement.

My study remains mindful of Said's definition of Orientalism as "the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (*Orientalism* 3). This definition of Orientalism is still valid and applicable to neo-Orientalism because the latter term names a shift within the field of Orientalism rather than a radical separation from it. In this sense, Ali Behdad and Juliet Williams' description of neo-Orientalism as "a mode of representation" is key to understanding neo-Orientalism (284). Yet, this shift is significant in two aspects. First, it is a branch of Orientalism that takes shape historically after 9/11. Second, its formulation propels the designation of 'classical Orientalism' to indicate a historical and representational difference between the two.

I posit that six main features constitute neo-Orientalism, and will now take up each of these in turn. First, whereas classical Orientalism discussed in Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* is basically constituted in the works of individuals, post 9/11 shows pools of so-called experts and think tanks working in American neo-Orientalist institutions (*Orientalism* 23). Arguably, most of classical Orientalists are not conscious of their imperialist bias while neo-Orientalists feel justified in advancing an imperialist and racialist and Orientalist discourse. As Deepa Kumar notes: "Nineteenth-century Orientalist scholars did not necessarily see themselves as agents of empire; they considered themselves, by and large, to be producing disinterested knowledge" (29). In contrast, a number of neo-Orientalist institutions in the United States today openly collaborate over producing and constructing neo-Orientalist discourse, and this discourse

is noticeable given the number of Orientalist institutions in the United States. The “imaginary museums without walls” of classical Orientalism now reside in the websites of American neo-Orientalist institutions with their mission statements that are accessible to anyone with the means to use the Internet (*Orientalism* 166). Simply put, American neo-Orientalists are typically on the payroll of a neo-Orientalist organization to produce knowledge about the Orient. The first chapter of my study will examine the evolution of such knowledge in the work of one such think tank.

Second, the novel now is a genre that advances the rhetoric and representations of American neo-Orientalism. 9/11 and the subsequent American presence in the Muslim world has produced a lot of literature ranging from fiction, personal accounts to war novels written by American soldiers. The novel remains central and indispensable to the imperial project. In *Culture and Imperialism* Said discusses the importance of the novel in the process of creating colonialism: “cultural forms like the novel...I believe were immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences. I do not mean that the novel was important, but that I consider it *the* aesthetic object whose connection to the expanding societies of Britain and France is particularly interesting to study” (xii). Pankaj Mishra believes that American novelists before 9/11 mainly search for “serious themes” in European history like “the Holocaust and the gulag” (Mishra, “The End of Innocence”). 9/11 gave American novelists the “serious theme” they have been looking for. Before 9/11, Muslims/Arabs are usually portrayed in pop fiction, thrillers and desert romances novels. However, after 9/11, the Arab/Muslim character has a significant presence particularly in literary and popular American novels about both the

homeland and the Middle East in the context of war. For that reason, I will focus on these genres in later chapters of this study.

Third, in neo-Orientalism, suspended imagery of sensual, seductive, marvelous Orient and “Orientals” is imperative because the exotic Orient is fading away from American imaginary. Instead of seductive veiled women in Orientalist discourse, menacing veiled women are more popular in new Orientalist movies and novels. In the same vein, Orientalized palaces, deserts and oases are replaced by debris and destruction and death. Today the Orient, which was seen at one point as fantastic and exotic, has grown into a developed, more “real,” menacing and complex place that needs constant study and attention. Muslim and Arab characters are sketched in the American novel post-9/11 as engineers or scientists with terrorist agendas. Nevertheless, I argue that tropes of *Arabian Nights* survive from the suspended imagery and it is still invoked in American political and literary texts.² The main reason is that this text was available for American readership as early as eighteenth century as noted in Susan Nance’s wonderful 2009 book, *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935* (19). The Orient and Islam in the American imaginary are mostly traceable to *Arabian Nights* (Marr 13). I have coined the term the “*Arabian Nights Syndrome*” to characterize that trope whereby neo-Orientalism represents the Middle East as timeless and locked within the frames of *Arabian Nights*. Throughout the study, and especially in my chapters on the genre of the novel, I will call attention to the recurrence of the *Arabian Nights Syndrome*.

² At least three novels out of six I examine in this study invoke this literary text. Christopher Buckley reads it before writing *Florence of Arabia*.

Fourth, neo-Orientalism announces the beginning of ‘proxy Orientalism,’ which, as Behdad, Williams and Bayoumi point out, means that Orientalists are not exclusively westerners. Proxy Orientalism replaces what Said terms as the “exteriority” of Orientalism, which is the moment when western Orientalists speak for the Orient (*Orientalism* 20). The neo-Orientalist institutions, in contrast, do not just rely exclusively on western analysts, but also pick authors from the Middle East and the Muslim world such as Fouad Ajami, Habib Malik, Nibras Kazimi, and Azar Nafisi to validate classical Orientalist perceptions about Islam and different Muslim traditions. Neo-Orientalist institutions’ main criterion to accept such authors is whether they vindicate western colonization and neo-imperialist interests in the Muslim world while blaming Islam and local backward traditions. Slavoj Zizek retells a famous joke as follows: “In a classic line from a Hollywood screwball comedy, the girl asks her boyfriend: ‘Do you want to marry me?’ ‘No!’ ‘Stop dodging the issue! Give me a straight answer!’ In a way, the underlying logic is correct: the only acceptable straight answer for the girl is ‘Yes!’, so anything else, including a straight ‘No!’, counts as evasion” (3). Building on this, I would say that if an Arab or Muslim applies to a neo-Orientalist institution is asked, “Do you believe that Islam is the greatest danger in our world?” and answers “No”, s/he will probably hear “stop dodging the issue” as the neo-Orientalist response. In American neo-Orientalism, the Orient can speak only when it has set out to upbraid itself and praise the west. With proxy Orientalism, neo-Orientalism renders archaic the Orientalist’s earlier traditional voyage into the Orient. Instead, now the so-called “native informants” travels from the Orient to the west, bringing the necessary “oriental” details and experiences to these institutions. The attention such accounts garner is extensive. On the literary level, “a

victim story or an escapee story” of Muslim females will find success in the United States (Alsultany 84). On the political level, Ajami, for example, was instrumental in advocating the Iraq war (Lyons 40). American neo-Orientalists do not consider the *Other* when they write about him/her because in their understanding the *Other* cannot grasp the meaning of existence. Therefore, s/he is not involved in the discussion about her/his future unless s/he agrees completely with the Self. Proxy Orientalism is taken as encapsulating of the debates in the Islamic world but this is misleading. “Real struggles” of Muslims for equality, justice and peace are not the focus of the neo-Orientalist discourse on Islam but rather the so-called Islamic threat is the center of attention (Baker 253). Later chapters will trace the role of new experts and the new trajectories along which “knowledge” of the Orient travels between America and the Middle East.

Fifth, the subject matter of neo-Orientalism is primarily Islam.³ In classical Orientalism, most third world cultures were subjects of interest and they are still but after 9/11, Arab/Muslim traditions become central to the analysis of neo-Orientalism. 9/11, in American neo-Orientalist discourse, bestows on the US the right to vivisect all the subjects of Islam in order to continue its own existence. With this focus, there is shift in constructing the discourse on Islam. In classical Orientalism, Islam is depicted as a false imitation of Christianity, a motif that can be seen even in medieval literature, for instance, *Song of Roland*. In this literary work, Islam has an untruthful trinity that tries to overtake the Christian Trinity. Said discusses this aspect in some detail in *Orientalism* (59-73). It is also in this vein that Dante in his *Inferno* considers Prophet Muhammad as a fraudulent leader, who imitates Christianity. Nonetheless, this association is not maintained in the

³ Chapter One discusses this feature.

neo-Orientalist discourse, which I shall discuss in Chapter One, Three and Four, is not interested in proposing any relationship between Christianity and Islam. Instead, in neo-Orientalist discourse, Islam is portrayed as Arab ideology that is equivalent to Nazism or fascism. Hence the neo-Orientalist term “Islamofascism.”

Sixth, the democracy mission is used as justification of wars. What was an abstract discussion of implementing American democracy in the Middle East becomes a reality after 9/11.⁴ Said emphasizes in the introduction of *Orientalism* that the adjacency of the Orient to Europe makes their relationship different from the “less dense” American relationship with the Orient (*Orientalism* 2). He also indicates that having European colonies in the Orient makes the tradition of Orientalism “special” (*Orientalism* 2). Now with Afghanistan and Iraq, the US has the geographies to formulate its own vision of colonization. Neo-Orientalism is the current renovated model that fits the contemporary imperial vision and in this vision the Middle East and the Muslim world remain “proleptic spaces that defy stability” (Jeffords 68). As Malik maintains: “the erstwhile ‘White’s Man’s Burden’ ...is presently being justified through terms such as democratization, restructuring and development” (Malik 39). The idea of democracy is an American version of the French *la mission civilisatrice* and the English ‘White’s Man Burden’. The representation of so-called democratization as a new White Man’s Burden will be a focus throughout my study.

These are the main features of American neo-Orientalism that I will examine in this dissertation, with the hope that this study can generate further investigation and debate into neo-Orientalism. I admit that I cannot cover all the features of American neo-

⁴ I discuss this feature in Chapter One in political writings and in Chapter Two and Four.

Orientalism for two reasons. First, the neo-Orientalist shift is still in the making historically. Second, this shift cannot be easily comprehended by enumerating its features and I find myself in Said's shoes when he asserts that Orientalism cannot be grasped by making "lists and catalogues" about it (*Culture* xxii). The scope of American neo-Orientalism is broader than in the past, and it includes high and low literature, media and entertainment (movies, television, and video games), new technologies and institutionalized knowledge and 'expertise'. Therefore, I contend that American neo-Orientalism influences not only the American society but also the Arab/Muslim World more heavily than European Orientalism ever did.

I posit also that neo-Orientalism is not monolithic but rather overlapping in nature, and I shall demonstrate throughout this study how neo-Orientalists approach the Middle East in different ways but while looking for the same result i.e. hegemony. Orientalism and by extension neo-Orientalism are part of imperial history. As Said asserts, "the history of imperialism and its culture can now be studied as neither monolithic nor reductively compartmentalized, separate, distinct" (*Culture* xx). I posit that neo-Orientalists did not gather after 9/11 to speak in unison and launch neo-Orientalism. To put it another way, neo-Orientalists do not jump out of bed in the morning ready to tackle a monolithic Orient, but rather they wake up horrified by different nightmares of the Orient. The scenarios differ in these nightmares: hence the different approaches. Given its decentered nature, it is not surprising that neo-Orientalism is not positioned in postcolonial terminology yet because it is not situated within the critique of Orientalism. I aim to achieve this purpose in this study.

Why 9/11?

Having highlighted the six main features of American neo-Orientalism that I will explore in this dissertation, let me take up the reasons the discourse takes on new force after 9/11. The significance of 9/11 in the United States is colossal and the tragedy is seen as the evidence of American innocence and victimhood. Unlike any earlier terrorist attacks, it was broadcast live and “the whole world was watching” (Gray 6). When I use 9/11 in my thesis, I do not refer to the tragedy of that date but to the imperial discourse that used this date as its rationalization. Ronald Grimes criticizes the use of this date as a symbol in defining the American identity (74). I think that 9/11 is now past the point of even symbolism. It has now become a self-evident and self-explanatory short-cut to reference the innocence of the US and the evil of Islam and Muslims, the two being invoked together like the 9 and 11.

Indeed, 9/11 is used as a demarcation that defines terrorism. Any terrorist attack that happens in the west is unequivocally deemed as ‘terrorism’ while similar acts done by western superpowers in the Third World are not recognized consistently as ‘terrorism.’ The United States claimed the right to define ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorists’ and “in this way America suddenly colonized a much bigger issue” (Lampert 4). Intriguingly, memorial coins made from metal salvaged from the ruins of the World Trade Centers are sold on TV. So, owning such a coin is symbolic of owning the moment that defines American identity in the twenty first century. As a result, the United States appears to have metaphorically colonized the epistemological methods of defining terrorism and physically colonized two Arab/Muslim countries.

9/11 terrorist attacks announced a new era in the world. The effects were not only on what was to follow but also on what preceded the event itself. Warning of the dangers of Islam seems legitimate when one focuses only on this tragic date and this focus in turn necessitates a long war on terror (Little 318). After 9/11 the Bush Doctrine signals a perpetual war against any “potential but not necessarily imminent threat to U.S. interests” (McAlister 288). The result of this discourse of fear is a world where the powerful sees its survival as based on the elimination of adversaries. By the same token, 9/11 will remain as a valid evidence for any future speculation about Islam and the Orient.

The Bush doctrine and its subsequent events shape the world we live in today and their consequences are still far-reaching. The United States waged the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. The first is considered as a needed immediate, righteous response to 9/11 while the second is viewed as “preemptive” war and designed to rid the world of Iraq’s weapon of mass destruction and a dictator. The two wars however did not solve the issue of terrorism. On one hand, Taliban and al Qaeda are still present in Afghanistan even after the death of bin Laden. The recent take of Kunduz by Taliban militants on September 29th, 2015 before they were driven out by Afghan soldiers was yet another example of the remaining danger of this terrorist group (Aljazeera, “Afghan Forces”). On the other hand, in Iraq a terrorist group named ISIL is born out the sectarian conflict fomented by the Iraqi government and the American presence and ISIL now has a forceful presence in Iraq and Syria. Despite their apparent conflict, al Qaeda in Syria and ISIL both declared “holy” wars on each other and on the United States in particular and the west in general.

Zizek sees a wasted chance in 9/11 for the United States to connect with the rest of the world and he suggests that “the only way to ensure that it will not happen here

again is to prevent it happening anywhere else” (49). Nevertheless, the United States started two wars in two weak and traumatized countries in Afghanistan and Iraq. The military wars were accompanied by an interpretative and justifying rationale. The American military intervention has American neo-Orientalism at its disposal to construct a discourse of the necessity of war for the purpose of survival. The United States went to these two wars while the world was watching and those who opposed the wars were either silent or helpless.

The American neo-Orientalists view 9/11 as the defining moment of our modern history offering a verdict that incriminates Islam and wipes out centuries of Islamic civilization. Before 9/11, Islam is represented as a troubling threat overseas, while afterwards it is represented as an imminent threat waiting to happen on American soil. This idea in itself is troubling to think of. “Fear-mongering has been a constant factor in American political and religious life ever since September 11, 2001” (Shaban 95). In the west, theories about political Islam as violent, barbarous and bloodthirsty are seen as more valid after 9/11. But it is important to note that although 9/11 is one of the most tragic events in history, there are probably worse crimes done by Muslims in the name of Islam. In addition, western history records similar and more ferocious, catastrophic and heartrending events like the Crusades, the Inquisition, colonial histories, the holocaust, War World I and War World II and the two nuclear bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. With all these tragedies, what makes 9/11 stand out so that we seem to forget similar crimes carried out by imperial powers?

American neo-Orientalism ingrains into the western consciousness that Islam stands between the world and prosperity, freedom, peace, democracy. There is the

urgency to place western culture, religion, and values in opposition to the Muslim world as if the two worlds can be separated easily. American neo-Orientalists claim to be primarily engaged in discussing the political conditions that produce extremism and violence in the Muslim world. In reality, there is no actual political discussion of Muslim world politics. When discussing Muslim terrorists instead of considering their political demands or grievances even if they are unfeasible, neo-Orientalists conclude that religious motives lie behind this violence. Mahmood Mamdani terms such fake political approach as “Culture Talk,” which “assumes that every culture has a tangible essence that defines it, and it explains politics as a consequence of that essence” (17). In other words, in order to understand why there are Muslim terrorists, you need only to read and investigate the Qur’an while other more impactful factors like imperialism and military interventions are left out of the discussion as inconsequential.

Any representation that American neo-Orientalism offers seems acceptable and almost irrefutable. Mentioning 9/11 will suffice to emphasize the danger of Islam. What is more, the tragedy of 9/11 could be used as an evidence of the danger of Islam anachronistically. This should not be surprising since the fear of a second holocaust is invoked with Muslims as the only potential perpetrators although the first holocaust was not a ‘Muslim’ plan. However, the Israeli president Benjamin Netanyahu claimed in the middle of rising violence between his army and Palestinians on October 21, 2015 [he made a similar claim in 2012] that Palestinian mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini gave Hitler the idea to burn the Jews (Rudoren, “Netanyahu Draws Criticism”). Netanyahu’s motive behind this claim is simple; if Israel does not keep building settlements and enforces however violently its presence, a second holocaust is imminent at the hands of those who

originally inspired the first one. I should note that he is criticized heavily by notable members of the United Nations for his claim but his oppressive policies and military aggressions against Palestinian civilians are uninterrupted. Regarding his claim, if al-Husseini really suggested gassing Jews, then who recommended gassing Russian prisoners because Germans gassed them before committing the atrocity at Auschwitz (Mamdani 7)?

The Arab/Muslim world has never seemed more approximate and visible in U.S. culture, while still appearing enigmatic, menacing and *Other*. Arabs and Muslims enter the realm of reality in the American society after 9/11 and yet they are held in the imaginative and created world of American neo-Orientalism. In earlier periods, Arab/Muslims were caricatures in movies and desert romances, but now they are *visible* as part of the daily life of Americans, associated with bad news, or seen every now and then on an FBI or CIA list of wanted people. The neo-Orientalist discourse represents Arabs/Muslims as unwelcome Other nationally and as a threat internationally.

Neo-Orientalism and 9/11 in Criticism and Scholarship

Scholarly discussions of neo-Orientalism have begun to emerge, and while several work with the term, they seem to do so in isolation from each other. In this Introduction, I aim to bring together these various analyses of discourses on neo-Orientalism and then discuss what I see as the salient features of this discourse. Despite its regular invocation, most critics of 'neo-Orientalism' discuss this term in a gingerly fashion without emphasizing its constitutive features that distinguish it from other forms of Orientalism. In *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2013), Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin do not mention neo-Orientalism as a term, let alone define it. I

cannot emphasize the importance of these three authors in the postcolonial field enough, especially given their two other equally important books, *The Empire Writes Back* (2002) and *The Post-Colonial Studies: Reader* (2006). Admittedly, given their significance, the fact that these three authors do not include this term in their work, makes my task of proving its importance and validity a major challenge. Nonetheless, I find it impossible to ignore the existence of a shift in Orientalism, and I believe it is significant enough to merit a “neo”- in front of it as in terms such as neo-colonialism, neo-imperialism and neo-liberalism. This introduction should serve as a threshold toward solidifying this term.

A few months after Said wrote the 2003 preface to *Orientalism*, Dag Tuastad wrote “Neo-Orientalism and the New Barbarism Thesis: Aspects of Symbolic Violence in the Middle East Conflict(s)” (2003). He links the definition of neo-Orientalism with what he refers to as “new barbarism” (a term he borrows from Paul Richards’ *Fighting for the Rain Forest* 1996), which is defined as “presentations of political violence that omit political and economic interests and contexts when describing that violence, and present the violence as resulting from traits embedded in local cultures” (592). What he suggests is that there is an essentializing approach to understanding violence or terrorism in the Muslim world with no attention to colonial and imperial impacts on the region. He also describes Patricia Crone, Daniel Pipes, and John Hall as neo-Orientalists (594-95). Tuastad is probably the first to use this term to indicate a shift, and an emphasis on the incompatibility between the cultures of Islam and the west.

Three years after Tuastad’s paper and five years after 9/11, there were two new discussions that moved forward the conversation about this term. First, Iftikhar H. Malik dedicates a chapter to “Neo-Orientalism and Muslim Bashing: Bernard Lewis on Islam”

in his valuable book *Crescent between Cross and Star; Muslims and the West after 9/11* (2006). He considers 'neo-Orientalism' as the link between classical Orientalists and American neoconservatives and he also refers to neo-Orientalists as "neo-Crusaders" because they endorse wars (125). Although he sees neoconservatives as a leading majority in neo-Orientalism especially during the George W. Bush's administration, Malik includes in his discussion non-neoconservatives like Paul Berman and Gilles Kepel. Malik believes that this discourse considers Islam as "inherently anti-Western ideology" (152). In this sense, he and Tuastad agree that neo-Orientalism essentializes Islam and Muslims.

The second study in 2006 is M. Shahid Alam's *Challenging the New Orientalism* (2006). Alam refers to the era from 1950s to our present time as the New Orientalism era and he believes that New Orientalism does not hold a drastic position on Islam different from classical Orientalism but rather New Orientalism is "mostly a repackaging of the old Orientalism designed to renew a more intrusive dual US-Israeli control over the Middle East" (Alam xiii). His point of "repackaging" of old Orientalism is valid to a certain extent while he does not see a link between this term and 9/11.

In 2009, Mohammad Samiei resumes the discussion of the term in *Neo-Orientalism? A Critical Appraisal of Changing Western Perspectives: Bernard Lewis, John Esposito and Gilles Kepel*. He believes that "Old patterns" of Orientalism "have been reconstituted, redeployed, redistributed in a globalised framework and have shaped a new paradigm which can be called 'neo- Orientalism'" (23). He defines neo-Orientalism as "the crystallisation of a new paradigm of the West and Islam dualism" and he suggests that neo-Orientalism also falls into what Said labels as latent Orientalism

(239; 45). Then Samiei introduces what he names as “the latent dualism,” which is “the underlying belief in the inferiority of Oriental subjects” (45). Samiei’s definition of neo-Orientalism is similar to Alam’s definition of new Orientalism excluding Alam’s historical period.

From 2010 till now, the term seems to gain more recognition. There are two significant contributions to the discussion of this term. First, Moustafa Bayoumi in “The God That Failed: The Neo-Orientalism of Today’s Muslim Commentators” suggests that neo-Orientalism is the melding of “contemporary multiculturalism” with classical Orientalism (80). Bayoumi tackles three Muslim authors Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Irshad Manji, and Reza Aslan who claim “to reveal the true nature of Islam to Western audiences, promising an insider message” while they identify themselves as “Western Muslims” which “in some sense collapses the Orientalist distance between East and West; in other senses it does not, for there would be no need for explainers if there were no wide differences between peoples” (80). Bayoumi’s analysis of neo-Orientalism thus focuses on Orientalism produced by emigrant Muslims or ex-Muslims.

The second 2010 study is Ali Behdad and Juliet Williams’ “Neo-Orientalism.” I shall examine this article in some detail because it sheds more light on the features of neo-Orientalism. Behdad and Williams point to additional features of neo-Orientalism, while also suggesting that the term merits further investigation. They define ‘neo-Orientalism as “a mode of representation that, while indebted to classical Orientalism, engenders new tropes of othering” (284). Regarding the neo-, they state: “we designate this mode of representation as *neo* rather than *new* in order to signal the continuity between contemporary and traditional forms of Orientalism” (284). By this definition,

they seem to suggest that they coined this term.⁵ They indicate that neo-Orientalism signals “a shift” but also “nonetheless entails certain discursive repetitions of and conceptual continuities with its precursor” (284).

Behdad and Williams suggest five “salient features of neo-Orientalism in the United States” (284). First, like Bayoumi, they maintain that neo-Orientalists are not necessarily “Western subjects,” given that “native informants” or “comprador intellectuals” are now major contributors to this new mode of representation (284). The authors tackle two memoirs that fit the neo-Orientalist discourse: Roya Hakakian’s *Journey from the Land of No* (2004) and Azar Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2008). This point is valid and although Said and others use the term “native informant,” I share Behdad and Williams’ dislike for the term “native informant,” because I believe that not every so-called “native informant” is a neo-Orientalist.

Second, Behdad and Williams suggest that neo-Orientalism has an “unapologetic investment in and engagement with the politics of the Middle East” unlike “the philological, cultural and formalistic concerns over ideological ones” in classical Orientalism (285). Here, Behdad and Williams seem to reiterate and reemphasize Said’s observation about American Orientalism’s lack of interest in Arabic literature and language (*Orientalism*, 291).

Third, Behdad and Williams believe that “neo-Orientalism is characterized by an ahistorical form of historicism” (285). “While claiming to be attentive to historical changes in the Middle East,” neo-Orientalism omits the American “neo-imperialist”

⁵ Behdad and Williams open their discussion by citing Said’s new preface to the 25th anniversary of *Orientalism*, where he mentions the term “neo-Orientalism.” But they do not credit him for the term.

presence in the region (Behdad and Williams 285). While this is ostensible in most of American neo-Orientalists' writing, Said highlighted a long time before 9/11 in the context of the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979 that American Orientalist discourse uses a blind rhetoric that operates on two principles: "eliminated" history and "eliminated" reality of the Orient (*Covering Islam* xxvii). "Eliminated" history revokes any cause and effect consequences, and based on it the Orient and Islam are seen as always ageless and immobile outside history and time while "eliminated" reality invokes sustained stereotypical images of the *Other*. To begin with, Islam and the Middle East in most western discourse are already stuck outside history without any ability to develop or adapt to changes even before the advent of neo-Orientalism.

Fourth, Behdad and Williams state that "a journalistic pretense of direct access to truth and the real dominates" neo-Orientalism and deploys "superficial empirical observations about Muslims societies and cultures to make great generalizations about them" (285). This aspect is prominent and it receives a lot of attention from most critics of American neo-Orientalism (Chermak, Bailey and Brown (2003), Jamal and Naber (2008), Alsultany (2012), and Rane, Ewart and Martinkus (2014)). Fifth, Behdad and Williams think that the veil in neo-Orientalism shifts from "a mysterious and inaccessible space for eroticism and lusty sexuality" to "a signifier of oppression" (285).

Behdad and Williams provide excellent discoveries in relation to emergence of neo-Orientalism, which is an "otherwise amorphous phenomenon" (297). They suggest that the critique of neo-Orientalism challenges "the post-Orientalist pretense" in the west and remains "an extension of Orientalist critique" (297-98).

Two years after Behdad and Williams' article, Tariq Amin-Khan in "New Orientalism, Securitization, and the Western Media's Incendiary Racism" (2012) views this discourse as being embedded in Huntington's idea of 'clash of civilization.' Amin Khan focuses on new Orientalism in the U.S. media (1595) and claims that new Orientalism feeds off an "underlying" racist discourse of white supremacy in its perception of Muslims and Arabs (1599). He also thinks that new Orientalism enables wars and "the securitization process" that justifies laws like the Patriot Act against Muslims (1599).

In 2014, two additional inquiries into this term appeared, and they are the closest in time to my study. First, Mubarak Altwaiji, in "Neo-Orientalism and the Neo-Imperialism Thesis" (2014), states that "[n]eo-Orientalism is more tied to the post-9/11 American cultural changes and the retaliation that took place after the attacks. The 9/11 attacks and the so-called 'War on Terror' brought the Middle East and the classic Orientalist discourse with essentialized binaries us/them, and good/bad and the discourse's focus in on the Middle East" (314-17). Like Tuastad, Malik, Behdad and Williams, Altwaiji asserts that political statements comprise the neo-Orientalist discourse. He also claims that the American foreign policy becomes hegemonic in the Middle East after 9/11 (320). Nevertheless, the overwhelming evidence in the writings of Chomsky (2003), Mamdani (2004), McAlister (2005) and Little (2008), to name only a few, suggest that American foreign policies in the Middle East were in question before 9/11 and the Middle East was/is a strategic geography.

The second examination in 2014 is that by Halim Rane, Jacqui Ewart and John Martinkus, *Media Framing of the Muslim World: Conflicts, Crises and Contexts* (2014).

They discuss some elements of this term in the introduction to their book emphasizing that New Orientalism focuses on Islam and its supposed “incompatibility with democracy, human rights and gender equality” (10). In other words, Islam “as the antithesis of Western civilization is the main signifier of new orientalism” (Rane, Ewart and Martinkus 12). This element is a reiteration of Malik’s point mentioned earlier. Rane, Ewart and Martinkus believe that New Orientalism vindicates the violence of the self and condemns the *Other*’s violence as “irrational” terrorism (11).

As examined above, the term “neo-Orientalism” in the early years after 9/11 was discussed once or twice every three years till 2010. Also, the discussions usually are not built on previous examinations despite similar points of departure. The question is: what makes 9/11 a unique date in relation to American neo-Orientalism to the degree that most its critics link this discourse with this date?

The Scope of this Study

As noted earlier, my dissertation will look at discourses of neo-Orientalism in both political think tanks in the United States, and literary and popular American novels. Let me briefly overview my selection of texts in each category. Many critics of neo-Orientalism discuss Bernard Lewis in isolation from other think tank neo-Orientalists. While this is important, I believe it is more useful to see how works such as Lewis’ shape and are shaped by the conceptual world in which they emerge. Therefore, I am interested in seeing how neo-Orientalists develop their ideas in the context of one think tank and in Chapter One, I analyze the writings of The Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on Islamism and the International Order, a division of Hoover Institution. I chose this think tank in particular because it was founded after 9/11, the period on which my study

focuses. Moreover, it is directly shaped by prominent neo-Orientalists like Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami. That said I will not discuss all of the publications of the Group, but focus instead on representative famous contributors like the aforementioned names along with Charles Hill and Russell A. Berman.

The second focus of my study is the American novel post 9/11. After 9/11 most critics of American neo-Orientalism tackle political writings, journalism and movie and TV representations of the Muslim world and while these are very important and influential aspects in promoting and enriching the neo-Orientalist discourse, I believe that the American novel post 9/11 deserves more attention so that we can see how neo-Orientalist discourse percolates in this genre. The American novel post 9/11 is rarely discussed within the critical frames of neo-Orientalist discourse but rather mainly as 9/11 narratives, trauma narratives (Versluys 2009), literature of terror (Martin 2011), or literature after 9/11 (Gray 2011). Also, the resurgent and prolific post-9/11 subgenre of American war novels is not given serious critical consideration as another emerging neo-Orientalist medium of representations. In this study, I discuss six novels and I divide them in three categories. The first category is the fantasy journey into the Orient where American characters try to spread democracy and this is the center theme of Christopher Buckley's *Florence of Arabia* and Scott Anderson's *Moonlight Hotel*. Here, the Self goes out to the Other's space replicate the image of the Self domain. The second category is the presentation of the Other as a visible threat in the domain of the Self trying to impose his presence by terrorism. The main narrators of John Updike's *Terrorist* and Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* are Arab/Muslim characters. The third category is the armed encounter in war zones and this is the subgenre of the American war novel. In this category, I

discuss Marcus Luttrell's *Lone Survivor* and Chris Kyle's *American Sniper*. In analyzing these texts, I rely on Said's concept of "affiliation," which is the "implicit network of peculiarly cultural association between forms, statements, and other aesthetic elaborations on the one hand and, on the other, institutions, agencies, classes, and amorphous social forces" (*The World* 174).

There is a possible gap in my study in regards to the texts I discuss. First, there are other influential neo-Orientalist think tanks that are absent in my discussion of institutionalized neo-Orientalism. I do not claim that the Dwight Working Group on Islamism of the Hoover Institution represents the whole discourse of neo-Orientalism but rather I believe that this working group shows one prominent aspect of this discourse and hope that my discussion here will invite future studies into other such institutions. Regarding the American novel post 9/11, with the exception of Updike's novel, I chose not to focus on the more famous 9/11 novels such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006), Claire Messud's *Emperor's Children* (2006), and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007). I wanted to explore what other novels in the periphery say about the Orient. I considered Updike alone in this group of widely known texts because his main narrator is a Muslim/Arab American. I believe the American novel post 9/11, like the neo-Orientalist discourse, is still in the making and future novels will emerge with Islam and the Muslim world as central themes.

There remains the question of language and translation. Some novelists and writers quote the Qur'an and Hadith (the sayings of Prophet Muhammad), without identifying the source of these quotations. For example, there are several translations of

the Qur'an but few of them are considered accurate or at least objective. While I do not intend to present a theological argument for Islam or against any other religion, I will only address the cases in which the Quran or Hadith is misquoted especially in Chapter Three because Updike and Adams rely heavily on citing the Quran in their narratives.

Chapter Structure

Chapter One focuses on institutionalized neo-Orientalism through a case study of the Dwight and Jane Herbert Working Group on Islamism and International Order, which is a Hoover Institution division founded after 9/11. In the writings of this group, Islam is represented as incompatible with the west for two reasons. On one hand, it refuses to capitulate to or compromise its position in a democratic and secular society. On the other hand, Islam does not reform or overcome its failings and therefore remains unintegrated with the contemporary world, unlike Judeo-Christianity which does undertake reform and is consequently able to thrive in the civilized world. Thus, in the discourses of the Group, Islam's failure to reform and its violent ideology cause its demotion from a religion to a radical ideology like Nazism. Before 9/11, Islam is mainly depicted as a corrupted version of Christianity, but now this association is denied in the writings of the neo-Orientalists of the Hoover Institution. In this chapter, I pay attention to neo-Orientalist features of institutionalized neo-Orientalism, proxy Orientalism in Ajami's example, Islam as a mere political ideology and the democracy mission.

In Chapter Two, I analyze Christopher Buckley's *Florence of Arabia* (2004) and Scott Anderson's *Moonlight Hotel* (2006). These two novels do not depart completely from the European treatment of the Middle East in the sense that they show westerners voyaging into the Orient: Americans undertake a godly mission to change the culture and

religion of two fictional Middle Eastern countries. Buckley's novel is satirical while Anderson's is serious in tone. What unites both novels is their attempt to re-enact T. E. Lawrence's mission in the Middle East. Nonetheless, Buckley's novel downplays the impact of colonialism on the region while Anderson's narrative regards colonialism less favorably but sees it as important process to transform the Middle East. Ultimately, these novels, the Middle East refuses to embrace change on its own or accept western values such as democracy. In this chapter, I draw attention to the neo-Orientalist features of suspended imagery, the democracy mission and the representations of the American novel post 9/11.

In Chapter Three, I examine the representations of Muslims in the American society in two novels: John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) and Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* (2004). Both novels register a departure from the traditional voyage to the Orient in two aspects. First, the main character and narrator is the *Other*. Second, the *Other* has a forceful presence invading the Self's space, and therefore the older orientalist journey to the orient is reversed. The visibility of Muslims in the American society cannot be overstated and it is translated into a noticeable presence in the American novel post 9/11. Both novelists in this chapter claim a sympathetic representation of Muslims but they end up drawing comparisons between Islam and Christianity instead of focusing on individual struggles. On the basis of religion, the authors put Muslim characters at odds with American society. In this chapter, I highlight the neo-Orientalist features of suspended imagery and Islam.

Chapter Four investigates the American war novel written by American soldiers, which is a surging genre post 9/11. I will examine two bestsellers that have been turned

into successful movies, *Lone Survivor* (2007) and *American Sniper* (2014). The soldiers narrate their stories from the Afghanistan and Iraq wars while justifying these two wars and making an argument against the application of the Geneva Conventions. These two wars made the United States catch up with European Empires with respect to having colonies. The two novels provide a window into this close encounter between Americans and Muslims/Arabs, presenting the struggle in these two geographies not only as a struggle between the civilized world and the backward world but also a struggle for supremacy between Christianity and Islam. At the end of this chapter, I examine the movie representations of these novels and highlight how the movies complicate these already problematic texts. In this chapter, I draw attention to the neo-Orientalist features of Islam, suspended imagery, the democracy mission, and the American war novel post 9/11.

CHAPTER 1. ANSWERS BEFORE QUESTIONS IN AMERICAN NEO-
 OREINTALIST THINK TANKS: A CASE STUDY OF THE HOOVER
 INSTITUTION

All knowledge that is about human society, and not about the natural world, is historical knowledge, and therefore rests upon judgment and interpretation. This is not to say that facts or data are nonexistent, but that facts get their importance from what is made of them in interpretation... for interpretations depend very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is, at what historical moment the interpretation takes place.

— Edward W. Said

It is quite common to hear high officials in Washington and elsewhere speak of changing the map of the Middle East, as if ancient societies and myriad peoples can be shaken up like so many peanuts in a jar.

— Edward W. Said

In this chapter, I discuss two features of American neo-Orientalism. First, I offer a close examination of one example of these neo-Orientalist institutions in the example of the Dwight and Jane Herbert Working Group on Islamism and International Order. Their writings show that what was uncoordinated production of knowledge on the Orient has incrementally become the task of so-called “experts” in numerous neo-Orientalist institutions. The second feature is the effort in neo-Orientalist discourse to represent Islam as a mere political ideology that originated from Qur’an and the life of its Prophet Muhammad. This representation denies that political Islam could be a product of western

colonialism and imperialism in the Muslim world. The analyses of this group omit the colonial history from having any negative impacts on the presence of violence and extremism in the Muslim world while attributing violence and hatred to Islam as Islamic core values. From the name of this group, Islam is placed in opposition to the international order.

I focus on the American neo-Orientalist rhetoric in the United States, which became notorious in the context of the Bush Doctrine (Little 318; McAlister 288). In the United States, there are certain institutions and think tanks that are dedicated to research and the study of the Arab/Muslim World in order to continue the Orientalist tradition of obtaining knowledge of its cultural, political and religious developments. By drawing on this work, the US gains the advantage of authoring and maintaining a dominant discourse on the region and its people. Said addressed the significance of these institutions in advancing a “vast apparatus for research on the Middle East” with “the use of sophisticated-appearing social-science techniques” (Said, *Orientalism* 295-96). He points out that “there is still no institute or major academic department in the Arab world whose main purpose is to study America” (Said, *Culture* 294). He seems to suggest that the ideas and publications of these Orientalist institutions do not find any intellectual resistance from the Arab world, as the production of knowledge is one-sided.

The increasing number of these institutions is indicative of mounting interests in the Orient. In “Islamic Studies in U.S. Universities,” Charles Kurzman and Carl W. Ernst point out that: “[t]he first professor of Islamic studies in the United States may have been Duncan Black Macdonald, a professor of Semitic languages at the Hartford Theological Seminary, who was appointed director of the ‘Mohammedan department’ at the Kennedy

School of Missions when the seminary established the school in 1911” (27). In 1927, Princeton debuted “its department of Near Eastern Studies” (Said, *Orientalism* 288).

In the 1960s, Hamilton Gibb of Harvard University and Gustave E. von Grunebaum of the University of California, Los Angeles, founded Orientalist programs at their respective universities. After these two programs, the number of Middle Eastern studies programs grew steadily into the millennium, but there was a significant increase after 9/11 (Kurzman and Ernst 28). I am not arguing that all of these institutions are Orientalist; I do, however, want to show that the process of institutionalizing Orientalism in the US began almost a century ago, and that it has born new fruit post-9/11. Instead of engaging with the *Other* in a direct and transparent debate that aims for understanding and equality, neo-Orientalist institutions mediate between the United States and the Orient claiming to provide rigorously accurate studies. The publications of these institutions are presented as scholarly and objective in discussing the Orient, a scholastic feature which gives these institutions credibility and authority. The Middle East Forum (founded 1990), the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (founded 1985), the American Enterprise Institute (founded 1938), the Middle East Media Research Institute (founded 1998), the RAND Corporation (founded 1948), the Hudson Institute (founded 1961) and the Hoover Institution (founded 1919) are a few prominent Orientalist institutions. In most of the websites of these institutions, topics on Islam and the Middle East are under the labels of ‘national security’, ‘homeland security’, ‘terrorism’, ‘Islamist Watch’, and ‘jihad and terror monitor’. By looking at these labels, it is evident that Islam is posited as a problematic entity.

In this chapter, I will examine the Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on Islamism and International Order, which was founded by the Hoover Institution after 9/11, a division that produced numerous books on Islam and Muslims in order to explain what took place on 9/11. Therefore, this division's publications reflect some of the current trends in American neo-Orientalist rhetoric and approach to the Middle East after 9/11.

The Hoover Institution is an important center at Stanford University. The most salient aspect of its mission statement is that it is dedicated to social, environmental, economic, political and national issues of American society. The institution explicitly declares that it is designed to protect US citizens' rights against the government's possible tyranny and oppression ("Mission/History"). In the words of its founder Herbert Hoover: "[t]he overall mission of this institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man's endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life" ("Mission/History"). However, the Hoover Institution does not adhere to the national interests of its mission in its view of the international community in general and the Middle East in particular. The mission of its division of The Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on Islamism and International Order is as follows:

The Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on Islamism and the International Order seeks to engage in the task of reversing Islamic radicalism through reforming and strengthening the legitimate role of the state across the entire Muslim world. Efforts will draw on the intellectual

resources of an array of scholars and practitioners from within the United States and abroad, to foster the pursuit of modernity, human flourishing, and the rule of law and reason in Islamic lands—developments that are critical to the very order of the international system. (Hill 172)

This mission statement is problematic on many levels. First, whereas the general mission of the Hoover Institution is to protect citizens against governments' aggression and tyranny, this working group on Islamism is in favor of supporting approved governments in the Middle East. The mission statement strives to make the Middle Eastern governments contain their peoples and deprive what the mission labels as "fundamentalists" from any political role. While the authors discussed in this chapter are in favor of democratic governing in the west, the mission does not trust Arabs and Muslims with political decisions. Consequently, the mission of this working group deviates inexplicably from the general mission of Hoover Institution and registers a disparity in treating Americans and foreigners, which is in this case really the Self and Other.

While the Hoover Institution strives to protect the civil rights and liberties of the Self, the Dwight Group is focused on studying the *Other* in order to control it. The mission statement assumes and prejudices that the Middle East and the Islamic world are in need of modernity, and implies that they lack not only human flourishing, but law and reason. Reuel Gerecht states this presumption plainly: "I have been thinking about the collision of modernity and Islam since I lived in Cairo—an exquisite mess of a metropolis—in 1980" (xvii). Interestingly, Gerecht lived in one specific location in the Middle East and he experienced one form of Islam, yet he felt authoritative enough to

predict an inevitable conflict between Islam as a whole and modernity. Islam's or Muslims' supposed rejection of modernity is presented as exhaustive evidence of a medieval, problematic religion and people while ignoring that colonization introduced modernity to the Arab/Muslim world. As Shadia Drury explains:

In the West, modernity has been a long and gradual triumph over the forces of religion, radicalism and irrationality....It has provided the West with the political sobriety, moderation and constitutional governments that paved the way for prosperity and freedom....Modernity did not come to the Muslim world as a liberator; and it did not come gradually. It came suddenly in the form of colonialism and foreign occupation. (39)

Therefore, modernity arrived with hostility and yet Islam is presented as its inexplicable sworn enemy. Many critics contend that political Islam emerged as a response to colonial projects and western hegemony in the Middle East (Mamdani 14; D. Kumar 102).

However, all the Dwight Group authors discussed here think of Islam as political from its inception but they fail to describe the Islamic political agendas. They obliterate the current political tensions between Middle Eastern lands and incessant western imperial projects. For example, in discussing who authorized the 9/11 attacks, they all point to Islam and its Prophet Muhammad instead of discussing Osama bin Laden. The Bush Administration had a viable source that "detailed Osama bin Laden's resolve to strike within the US as a retaliatory response to American missile attacks on Afghanistan and Khartoum in 1998" but it refused to take precautionary measures to foil this terrorist plan (Malik 254). In addition, famous Muslim extremists like bin Laden and Hamas' founder Abdullah Azzam have been arguably created by the CIA, but this is never mentioned

because this would open a Pandora's box of failed and failing American foreign policies in the Muslim world (Mamdani 234).

Similarly authoritative tones and sweeping generalizations permeate the works of the Dwight Group. This group does not offer new perspectives. It does not merely enhance old representations and discourses but instead rewrites them and redirects the field of Orientalism into a more focused field of study: namely, institutionalized neo-Orientalism.

In all of the discussions of the Dwight Group, Islamic scholarship on terrorism and Islamic critiques of democracy are not invoked, and this strongly indicates that Islam and Arabs have to be spoken for and that Islamic takes on such matters are devoid of value and content. *Speaking for the other* is a prominent feature of Orientalism as western Orientalists dub themselves capable of representing the other by the virtue of Eurocentricism and American Exceptionalism. Said sees the exclusion of Arabs and Muslim scholars as a trademark of Orientalists and he asserts: "It should be noted that Orientalist learning itself was premised on the silence of the native, who was to be represented by an Occidental expert speaking ex cathedra on the native's behalf, presenting that unfortunate creature as an undeveloped, deficient, and uncivilized being who couldn't represent himself" ("Impossible Histories"). For the Dwight group, the most cited Arab thinker is Sayyid Qutb, who represents only the extreme form of the Muslim Brotherhood. I discern a shocking neglect in citing Islamic sources or thinkers in discussions that pertain to Islam in the first place, while at the same time the authors examined in this chapter are willing to cite European texts that are five centuries old in order to prove the supposed inferiority of the civilization of Islam and Muslims. The

overall interest is in observing the other but not in the obverse observation where the Self is confronted with hard questions.

This chapter aims to explore shared common themes and ideas of Islam and the Middle East in the works of the Dwight Group and analyze the biases in its study of Islam and the politics of the Middle East. Its publications strive to build the classical Orientalist discourse. While classical Orientalism tries to demonstrate Islam as a false, corrupted copy of Christianity and Muhammad as an impostor⁶, neo-Orientalism redefines Islam as only a political system and an ideology founded by a politician, and one with no resemblance to Christianity. My focus is on how this new discourse is constructed, disseminated and embraced in the Hoover Institution in light of 9/11.

I divide this chapter into seven sections, each focusing on a common issue discussed by either all the authors or most of them. These sections are “Islam and Islamism,” “Nazism, Fascism and Islam/ism,” “Westernization of the Middle East,” “Secularism and Democracy,” “The Acknowledgment or Lack Thereof of Colonization and Imperialism,” “Everlasting Orientalists and the ‘Burning Grounds’ of the Orient,” and “The Ultimate Confusion: Saudi Arabia upon Further Review.”

Members and contributors in this working group include Fouad Ajami, Bernard Lewis, Charles Hill, Reuel Gerecht, Russell A. Berman, Camille Pecastaing, Zeyno Baran, Shelby Steele, Habib Malik and Joshua Teitelbaum. I will discuss five books in this chapter: Lewis’ *The End of Modern History* (2011), Hill’s *Trial of A Thousand Years: World Order and Islamism* (2011), Gerecht’s *The Wave; Man, God and the Ballot Box in the Middle East* (2011), Berman’s *Freedom or Terror: Europe Faces Jihad* (2010), and

⁶ Said discusses this aspect in detail in *Orientalism* (59-73).

Teitelbaum's *Saudi Arabia and the Strategic Landscape* (2010). In addition, this working group has a periodic symposium called 'The Caravan'. Its cover shows a desert with Arabs riding camels with their faces covered; to the far right, the Hoover Tower stands overlooking the whole scene, while Arabs are shown to be oblivious to the existence of this tower as they are heading to the left. The Hoover Institution logo is the iconic Hoover Tower. Talk about a beacon of supervision and scrutiny! The picture suggests that this tower is watching the Middle East and Islam. Indeed, the Caravan is described in its website:

The Caravan is envisaged as a periodic symposium on the contemporary dilemmas of the Greater Middle East. It will be a free and candid exchange of opinions. We shall not lack for topics of debate, for that arc of geography has contentions aplenty. It is our intention to come back with urgent topics that engage us. Caravans are full of life and animated companionship. Hence the name we chose for this endeavor. ("About the Caravan")

The assumption that the Orient will never cease to be a subject of interest is as Orientalist as it gets and the Caravan does not see an end to its mission. One of the foundations of American neo-Orientalism is to keep the Middle East as a perpetual place of exploration, wars, dissent and of course amusement. Symbolically, the Caravan brings news of "dilemmas" and "contentions" from this "arc of geography." European Orientalists travelling to the Middle East in caravans are not around anymore. However, contemporary American neo-Orientalists at the Hoover Institution re-enact this fantasy not only in the journal's name but also in its portrait and description. This journal is

worthy of an independent discussion and though my focus is on neo-Orientalist books rather than the articles published by the Caravan, I mention it here because it shares the same contributors of the Dwight Group.

Some may argue that these books are not academic and therefore do not merit a close analysis. I can answer this concern by highlighting four points. First, most of these authors are academic professors and they are members of academic institutions. Second, prestigious and well-known universities like Stanford University sponsor and publish these works. Third, the influence of these writers on the American academies is far-reaching. For example, Lewis is considered the ultimate authority on neo-Orientalist issues by the Hoover Institution and most of the authors discussed in this chapter. Fourth, most of the Orientalists whom Said *et al* discuss are not exclusively academics; as he notes, Orientalism consists of “a *distribution* of a geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts,” and “it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also a whole series of ‘interests’” (Said, *Orientalism* 12). “Interests” is a key word in Said’s definition because it includes a wide array of western writings that are about the Orient, including even western personal reports or observations that are turned into major sources of “Orientalist sciences” (*Orientalism* 157). Although the texts examined here are presented as objective political analyses of the Middle East, they carry with them their author’s personal voices and wishes concealed as scientific and thorough investigation.

In his “Afterword” to *Orientalism and War*, Patrick Porter laments the failure of the academy in countering Orientalist discourse:

We may never banish the mythologized oriental from our consciousness. Like the fear of death and darkness, it is too powerful to be fully exorcised and will remain a silhouette on our mental horizon. But we can be more conscious of its presence, more alert to its myths, and allow evidence and observation to subvert our preconceptions rather than the other way around. If the aim of critical scholarship is to eliminate myths and primordial fears from the collective mind, then the academy has failed monumentally. (265)

He brilliantly captures the ultimate effect of Orientalism becoming part of the unconscious, but his suggestion of the academy's failure to encounter this "unconscious" fear is an understatement, because the biggest contributor to promoting this essentialized understanding is sometimes produced in the academy itself, and the Hoover Institution of Stanford is just one example. Raymond W. Baker tells his story about studying Islam at Harvard University in the 1960s: "I could never quite manage the hostility to all thing Islamic that animated the work of my mentors at Harvard and of my new friends on the Egyptian left. It took some time and great effort of unlearning before I could get a reasonable grasp on the Islamic Awakening and develop an appreciation of just why Egypt has been so central to it" (252). Baker cites Hamilton A. R. Gibb and Nadav Safran as famous Orientalists who had huge influence on Islamic studies at Harvard University. He also notices a new element in his courses post 9/11: "My courses for the last few years have been flooded with students motivated by a 'know thy enemy' impulse" (Baker 252). This "know thy enemy" motive invariably propels interests on Islam in the Dwight Group. As Kurzman and Ernst note the upsurge of interest in Islam especially after 9/11,

pointing out that “[t]his increased attention to Islamic studies has generated an avalanche of publications intended to give us a crash course in, as the phrase goes, ‘understanding Islam’” (26).

In the writing of the Dwight Group, from the get-go, Islam and Muslims are presented as the enemy and therefore the approach is oriented toward highlighting animosity rather than genuine interest in understanding. As Jonathan Lyons points out, “[t]he formation of this anti-Islam discourse, like the history of madness, is the history of difference imposed from without. Any internal attributes of Islam, its meaning for its adherents, its worldview, its religious dogmas, and so on—that is, Islam qua Islam—are irrelevant and can be safely ignored” (49). This “history of difference” about Islam is geared toward proving its incompatibility with the world and its relentlessness in building an empire that opposes everything the west stands for. Indeed, Ajami states plainly in every foreword to the publications of the Dwight Group the importance of the motive of “know thy enemy.”

I will begin my analysis by discussing Ajami’s forewords to these books as they introduce the authors discussed in this chapter. After that, I will examine the issues and topics that contribute to the agendas of American neo-Orientalist discourse in the writings of this working group. I contend that these authors attempt to build a common, authoritative, well-established discourse on the Middle East and Islam post 9/11 that serves the agendas of domination and continuous imperialism.

Ajami was a co-chair in this working group until his death in 2014 and he wrote the forewords to all the books published by this division. Every foreword has two sections. The first section is repeated in every book like a template while the second

section is tailored for the author of that particular book. I will discuss the “template” section now and the author-introductory section when I introduce the authors.

In the “template” foreword, Ajami praises the efforts of the Dwight Group and writes about the importance of “detailed knowledge” of the Islamic world:

The essential starting point is detailed knowledge of our enemy...Our scholars and experts can report in a detailed, authoritative way, *on Islam* within the Arabian Peninsula, on trends within Egyptian Islam, on the struggle between the Kemalist secular tradition in Turkey and the new Islamists, particularly the fight for the loyalty of European Islam between those who accept the canon, and the discipline, of modernism and those who do not. (Foreword, *The End*, xi-xii) (emphasis added)

The Dwight Group claims a focus on *Islamism*, as a fanatic, political trend in the Middle East, whereas Ajami emphasizes a “detailed knowledge” on *Islam*. This confusion between Islam, as a religion, and Islamism, as fundamentalism, is discernable in the discussions of these authors. This also exposes the inaccuracy that these authors commit causing further confusion while claiming to provide “detailed knowledge” in an “authoritative way.” Ajami also affirms “the working group will be unapologetic about America’s role in the Muslim world” (Foreword, *The End*, xii). This statement negates his other claim that the Hoover Institution is only interested in “the war of ideas with radical Islamism” (Ajami, Foreword, *The End*, x). It seems that Ajami is interested not just in “the war of ideas” but also in actual wars, indicating that he endorses American military interventions in the Middle East. For example, could the US’s “seventeen military operations” carried out in the Middle East between 1980 and 1999 be considered

humanitarian (McAlister 284)? Could the Iraq and Afghanistan wars possibly have any negative repercussions?

Lyons points out that in 2002, “Ajami...boldly predicted, ‘We shall be greeted, I think, in Baghdad and Basra with kites and boom boxes’” (40). Of course, the fierce and extreme insurgency in Iraq proved Ajami and the American neo-Orientalists wrong. Therefore, any claim as to the value of the intellectual approach of this working group to the Middle East must take note of three issues. First, its interests in the Middle East are initiated with the idea that Arabs/Muslims are enemies of America. Second, Ajami’s aforementioned statement shows the Dwight Group’s endorsement of American military interventions in the Middle East. Third, the contributors in this working group offer no criticism to American foreign policies or European colonialism in the Middle East and they do not acknowledge their effects on our world.

American neo-Orientalism promotes military intervention in the Middle East as a necessity for survival. Noam Chomsky argues that the United States covers its international “imperial grand strategy” in the discourse of its national security in the face of terrorism (*Hegemony* 11). He considers the use of “preemptive” intervention as misleading and he believes it should be called “preventive war” (*Hegemony* 12). The reason in Chomsky’s understanding is that “preemptive war might fall within the framework of the international law” (*Hegemony* 12). On the other hand, “preventive war falls within the category of war crimes. If indeed it is an idea ‘whose time has come,’

then the world is in deep trouble”⁷ (*Hegemony* 12). The Iraq war was promoted based on two reasons: (a) Iraq allegedly possessed WMD and (b) Saddam was involved in 9/11 attacks and with al Qaeda (*Imperial Ambitions* 3). Both reasons were proven inaccurate but the invasion of Iraq created a space for al Qaeda and “the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction” (*Hegemony* 240). If the fear of terrorism is that it could happen unannounced against civilians, preventive/preemptive war then is not different from terrorism. Because survival is at stake, neo-Orientalism promotes military interventions as a necessary step to secure US existence and spread God-given democracy.

The liberal or neoconservative of military interventions are driven by imperialist agendas and they share ultimately similar thoughts about the danger of Islam but they differ in their “tactics, strategy and rhetoric” (D. Kumar 123). As Chomsky explains: “the primary principle of foreign policy, rooted in Wilsonian idealism and carried over from Clinton to Bush II, is ‘*the imperative of America’s mission as the vanguard of history, transforming the global order and, in doing so, perpetuating its own dominance,*’ guided by ‘*the imperative of military supremacy, maintained in perpetuity and projected globally*’” (*Hegemony* 43). Through these two administrations, imperialist agendas are maintained through different military interventions. Whether liberals or neoconservatives are in power, they believe in American universal democracy, their military supremacy and in American divine mission to lead the world. Also, many liberals like Madeline Albright, Samuel Berger, Paul Berman, Peter Bienart, President Bill Clinton, Thomas Friedman, Jeffrey Goldberg, George Packer, David Remnick, and Jacob Weisberg

⁷ For this purpose, I shall refer to “preemptive war” in this study as “preventive/preemptive war” bearing in mind Chomsky’s understanding of the grave difference between the two.

supported the Iraq war (Desch 98). While these liberals do not speak for all American liberals, I just want to show how pervasive the neo-Orientalist discourse not only in the conservative right but also the liberal camp as well. As Stephen Walt asserts: “The only important intellectual difference between neoconservatives and liberal interventionists is that the former have disdain for international institutions (which they see as constraints on U.S. power), and the latter see them as a useful way to legitimate American dominance” (“Intervention in Libya”). Walt sums up the difference: “liberal interventionists are just ‘kinder, gentler’ neocons, and neocons are just liberals interventionists on steroids” (“Intervention in Libya”). In neo-Orientalism, military intervention is not considered an aggression against sovereign states but rather an American right either to retaliate against terrorist organizations or protect what is considered its interests. Also, the argument for military intervention is that it has a timetable and therefore there is no colonial project behind it ignoring social, economic, political, and traumatic repercussions of such military aggression.

With that said, let me introduce the writers and their books. Bernard Lewis is a prolific author on Islam and the Middle East and Ajami presents him as a legitimate and peerless authority. In “The Historian’s Vision: The Craft of Bernard,” which is the introduction to *The End of Modern History*, Ajami describes Lewis as “the oracle of this new age of Americans in the lands of the Arab and Islamic worlds” (xvii). Also, Ajami’s praise is fraught with lurid description, such as “intimacy,” “set ablaze,” “bearer of the imperial mantle” and “burning grounds” to portray Lewis’ mystique-laden relationship with the Orient (“Historian’s Vision” xvii). Ajami seems to establish Lewis as a conqueror of the exotic and mysterious Middle East, which refuses to reveal itself to

other seekers of knowledge. Lewis is depicted as an audacious scholar who offers esteemed advice on the Orient. In addition, Ajami admits Lewis' unofficial role in the American policies in the Middle East by citing how President Bush II was seen carrying one of Lewis' articles on the Middle East ("Historian's Vision" xxii). If Lewis is presented as an unproclaimed guide of the imperial role of the US, he is then the official guide to American neo-Orientalism, as I shall demonstrate in this chapter.

In *The End of Modern History in the Middle East*, Lewis demonstrates his belief that modern history in the Middle East was "opened by Napoleon and [British Admiral Horatio] Nelson" in Egypt and "closed by George H.W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev" in Iraq (*End* 2). It is discernable how authoritative Lewis is in announcing the beginning and the end of the modern history era in the Middle East. Notably, western figures are involved in both historical moments. These bold, exaggerated and yet dangerous statements infiltrate not only the discourse adopted by this working group but American Neo-Orientalism as well. To Lewis, France and England ushered modern history and America and Russia ended it. What Lewis willfully denies in this announcement is that France and England began colonization and then America and Russia commenced their colonial and imperial roles after WWII. As far as the end is concerned, this world has not seen the end of imperialism. So, the "modern history" of the Middle East is actually its "colonial history" but Lewis does not recognize it as such. He ignores what Arabs or Muslims think of their experiences and encounters with these powerful, colonial, and imperial nations. Indeed, *The End of Modern History* does not have a bibliography, let alone any Arabic reference. The Dwight Group is not worried about the source of Lewis'

idea of this modern history or it considers Lewis a self-sufficient source of “detailed knowledge.”

Lewis always invokes the history of the Ottoman Empire in order to prove his fear of an Islamic dream of resurrecting another empire. More importantly, he establishes a pivotal point in his analysis of Islam by endorsing the usefulness of generalization:

“While generalizing about Islamic civilization may be difficult and at times in a sense dangerous, it is not impossible and may in some ways be useful” (*Crisis* 3-4).

Generalization in discussing different Muslim nations with different cultures will be disastrous and we witnessed (are witnessing) some of the results of this approach in Iraq. There is a golden rule in Islamic jurisprudence that states: “whichever is built upon invalidity will result in invalidity” (I am sure that there is an equivalent adage in English and probably in every culture). I find this applicable in Lewis’ *The End*. In this book, Lewis resumes a discussion of the Middle East that he started in *What Went Wrong* (2001) and *The Crisis of Islam* (2004). *What Went Wrong* is a curious case because it shows what I mean by “answers before questions” in the title of this chapter. Therefore, I shall discuss *What Went Wrong* and *The Crisis of Islam* as they complement the discussion of *The End of Modern History*. *The End*’s topics are built on the ideas of these two books. More significantly, Lewis’ ideas in these three books influence the authors discussed in this chapter. *What Went Wrong* was written before 9/11 and printed after it. It was used as an explanation of the tragedy of 9/11 as Said expounds:

For obvious reasons...his last book, *What Went Wrong?* which was written before but published after September 11, has been faring well on the bestseller lists. It fills a need felt by many Americans: to have it

confirmed for them why “Islam” attacked them so violently and so wantonly on September 11, and why what is “wrong” with Islam deserves unrelieved opprobrium and revulsion....Remember that Lewis claims to be discussing all of “Islam,” not just the mad militants of Afghanistan or Egypt or Iran. All of Islam. He tries to argue that it all went “wrong,” as if the whole thing—people, languages, cultures—could really be pronounced upon categorically by a godlike creature who seems never to have experienced a single living human Muslim (except for a small handful of Turkish authors), as if history were a simple matter of right as defined by power, or wrong, by not having it. (“Impossible Histories”)

“All of Islam” is put on trial in Lewis’ book, not the individuals who carried out the attacks or the politics and conditions of our world that produced terrorism. Three years after *What Went Wrong*, he writes *The Crisis of Islam* to continue his discussion of Islam, once again ignoring how al Qaeda came to power and why Osama bin Laden claimed responsibility for the attacks. Instead, Islamic fundamentalism is ascribed to Prophet Muhammad and Islamic teachings in general. A personal comparison between Muhammad and Jesus is invoked in order to prove the inelasticity of the former’s religion and the leniency of the latter’s religion. Instead of discussing contemporary infamous Muslim fundamentalists by investigating their thinking, demands and approach to their world, the discussion becomes theological. By doing so, the discussion shifts from Islamism, as a form fundamentalism, to Islam. Thus, fundamentalism and intolerance are purported to lie within the foundation of Islam. Discussing Islam instead of actual realities in the Middle East is a common feature not only in Lewis’ writings but in the

writings of American Neo-Orientalists generally, and it makes them instant experts because they speak from a position of authority. Christina Michelmore captures this short-cut to issues of the Middle East: “As an explanation, Islam eliminates space and time, political complications, ideological incompatibilities. Ageless Islam hates the west” (47).

Ajami describes Lewis as “one of the academic gods” at Princeton University (“Historian’s Vision” xvii-xxv). In contrast to his description of Lewis, instead of using hyperbolic rhetoric to introduce Reuel Gerecht, Ajami likens him to Lawrence of Arabia. The similarity between Gerecht and Lawrence of Arabia stems from the long history of western espionage in the Orient. Gerecht is “[a] former case officer in the Central Intelligence Agency’s Clandestine Service” and “belongs to a long trail of illustrious intelligence officers, ‘spies,’ drawn to duty in distant lands. A line runs from T. E. Lawrence to Reuel Gerecht, Westerners who venture into Arab and Islamic lands and never really quit them” (Foreword, *The Wave*, xiv). After the CIA position, Gerecht pursues a Middle East “expert” career at this group and writing for *The Weekly Standard* and *The New Republic*.

Gerecht’s writings are shaped by other prominent western Orientalists. Ajami highlights the importance of Gerecht’s *The Wave* as it “pays tribute to the late Samuel P. Huntington [Huntington’s book is *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*], doubtless the best and most penetrating political scientist of the five or six decades now behind us” (Foreword, *The Wave*, xv). Ajami also points out that Huntington and Lewis are Gerecht’s “intellectual guides” (Foreword, *The Wave*, xv). Gerecht proudly and boldly embraces this neo-Orientalist discourse spearheaded by

Lewis, and describes his book as “part of my continuing rumination on what Bernard Lewis first called the ‘clash of civilization’” (xviii). He continues the description of his book:

Where I have previously emphasized the Westernization of Arab Muslims, especially devout Muslims, as a necessary and already quite advanced building block for representative government in the Middle East, this book [*The Wave*] goes the other way, emphasizing the historic components that will likely fuel and define the growth of democracy in Arab Lands.

(Gerecht 59)

He believes that Islamic fundamentalist parties will help in the implementation of democracy but he warns against their success in the long run. His political analysis of Arab countries is mostly broad, vague and inaccurate because he provides political examples from Turkey and Iran to substantiate his premise about Arab countries. Unlike Lewis, Gerecht does not invoke the Ottoman Empire to support his main premise on the Middle East. However, he is similar to Lewis *et al* in hiding the fingerprints of western influence in the Middle East whether be it colonization or military interventions. Instead, he believes that the woes of the Middle East are self-inflicted and self-made. To him, the west has nothing to do with these woes and it sincerely wants to rectify the political situation in the region. According to him, the Middle East’s cultural predicaments and political ordeals started hundreds of years before the west’s arrival to the region.

Similarly, Hill’s *Trial of Thousand Years* attempts to provide a diagnosis of lingering dilemmas of the Middle East and the reasons behind the conflicts between this region and what he calls “the international order.” Hill had a political career at the US

government in the 70s and 80s (Hill 171). He was “executive aide to former U.S. secretary of state George P. Shultz (1983-89) and served as special consultant on policy to the secretary-general of the United Nations from 1992-1996” (Hill 171). Ajami introduces Hill as follows: “A historian and a student of strategy at home in the classics and the corridors of power alike, Hill places the Islamists in their proper historical place” (Foreword, *Trial*, xiii). In addition, Ajami endorses the analysis of this book as essential to understanding the Middle East: “In this remarkable book—beguiling in its mastery of history, effortless in its wanderings through time and geography—Charles Hill tackles a subject that has been begging to be written: the war of Islamism against the nation-state system, the refusal of the ideologues of pan-Islam to accept the boundaries and the limitations of the order of states” (Foreword, *Trial*, viii). Ajami seems to suggest that Hill stumbles upon the subject of “the Islamic threat,” which has been either neglected or only recently discovered in Ajami’s guesstimate. In reality, the so-called Islamic threat theme has been driving most Orientalists to write more on the Islamic world and it leads to the ultimate control over the Islamic world and its resources. Nonetheless, the theme of “Islamic threat” in the Orientalists’ discourse is neither new nor ignored, as Said affirms: “for Europe, Islam was a lasting trauma” (*Orientalism* 59). The essence of this trauma is that Islam might replace the west. In 1995, Lewis viewed the possible demise of western culture equivalent to a great loss for all the human existence: “It may be that Western culture will indeed go: the lack of conviction of many of those who should be its defenders and the passionate intensity of its accusers may well join to complete its destruction. But if it does go, the men and women of all continents will thereby be impoverished and endangered” (qtd. in Ajami, “Historian’s Vision,” xxiv). The fear of

the demise of the west is usually invoked with the fear of Islam as if the world has only these two options.

Hill founds his criticism around the idea of the success of the Westphalian system⁸ and the Islamic world's refusal to join this system. He presents the Westphalian system and the Islamic world as warring over controlling the international order. Basically, the world has only two choices to make and they are either the Westphalian option or the Islamic one. He traces historical events and certain ideologies like the Cold War and Nazism and then he concludes by highlighting certain similarities with what he calls "Islamism." Also, he fails to recognize the mistakes of western democracies and the aggressions and violations of the Westphalian system. The title of Hill's book seems to be inspired by Foucault's rejection of "the thousand-year old portrayal of Muslims as fanatics," which Hill cites in his analysis (qtd. in Hill 83). Although Foucault's praise was unfortunately in the context of endorsing the Iranian Revolution when he visited Tehran, I look at his statement as valid in the context of neo-Orientalists' representations of Islam and Muslims. Yet, Hill contributes to the negative portrayal of the region and its people.

Russell A. Berman is a professor at Stanford University specializing "in the study of German literary history and cultural politics" (Berman 208). Unlike other authors in the Dwight Group, Berman does not focus on Islam in the Middle East. Instead, he studies Muslims immigrants in different European countries and he sees in them an

⁸ Based on the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which ended "hostilities" and ushered diplomacy in Hill's estimation (Hill 30). Hill claims that "the modern international state system" is a product of the Westphalia system (Hill 30).

Islamic threat to European western values. He also wrote *Anti-Americanism in Europe: A Cultural Problem* (2004), which was published by the Hoover Institution.

Unlike the previous authors in this chapter, Teitelbaum writes a specific political, cultural and religious analysis of Saudi Arabia in *Saudi Arabia and the Strategic Landscape*. He wrote his first book in 2000 on Saudi Arabia, *Holier than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition*, which is published by the Washington Institution for Near East Policy. Teitelbaum "is a senior fellow at Tel Aviv University's Dayan Center for the Middle Eastern Studies and principal research associate at the Global Research in International Affairs Center, Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya" (Teitelbaum 67). Ajami validates Teitelbaum's analysis of Saudi Arabia as it "provides a shrewd assessment of Saudi-American relationship and a powerful corrective to the traditional view of Saudi foreign policy that emphasizes the Saudi concern with Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (Foreword, *Saudi Arabia* xvi).

After introducing the authors, I shall now turn to discuss their analyses.

Islamism or Islam

All the authors examined in this chapter claim to be analyzing and tackling fundamentalist thoughts and trends in Islam embodied in Islamism. Yet, they fail to adhere to this thesis as their analyses resort to discussing Islam not Islamism as the reason behind fundamentalism in the Arab/Muslim world. Their concerns about the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in the world in general and the Islamic world in particular after the tragic events of 9/11 are legitimate. However, these concerns develop into a neo-Orientalist discourse that dangerously generalizes about Islam and Muslims,

misrepresents realities and approaches the issues of the region with simplistic, patronizing and predetermined perspectives.

Hill believes that American political leaders do not discover the immediate danger of Islam/ism before the 21st century as he asserts: “Not until the opening of the twenty-first century did American leaders begin to comprehend the sources, extent, and objectives of Islam/ism’s rise through the later decades of the twentieth century. In retrospect, 1979 was a turning point” (89). His estimation poses some serious questions. First, when really does Islam/ism start? Second, is Islam/ism a Sunni or a Shiite movement since he marks the “turning point” with the Islamic Revolution in Iran? I wonder if Hill knows that Lewis is among the supporters of the Islamic revolution in Iran as F. William Engdahl states:

Lewis’ scheme, which was unveiled in the May 1979 Bilderberg meeting in Austria, endorsed the radical Muslim Brotherhood movement behind Khomeini, to promote balkanization of the entire Muslim Near East along tribal and religious lines. Lewis argued that the West should encourage autonomous groups such as the Kurds, Armenians, Lebanese Maronites, Ethiopian Copts, Azerbaijani Turks and so forth. The chaos would spread in what he termed an “Arc of Crisis,” which would spill over into the Muslim regions of the Soviet Union. (205)

Engdahl maintains that Lewis’ idea influenced the Carter Administration to support the Islamic Revolution of Iran (204). Of course, Lewis wants these multi-revolutions to take place to end the Soviet’s reach into the Middle East. Hypocritically, how selfish of Lewis to deny the same revolutions against America and capitalist Imperialism as he only

endorses revolutions against any enemy of America. A few years after the Islamic revolution, the U.S. supported the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan and provided nearly 3 billion U.S. dollars and weapons to them during the Carter and Reagan administrations (Little 152). Only in the Clinton Administration, the United States realized that “bin Laden and the Taliban were Frankenstein’s monsters born of the unintended consequences of America’s alignment with anti-Soviet Islamic radicals” (Little 311). Now, the Mujahadeen regime (al Qaeda basically) does not serve U.S. interests and therefore the political discourse has to change. The reason that I go into details about Hill’s idea of 1979 as “turning point” of Islam/ism is to show that America was not blindsided by al Qaeda or the Islamic revolution as it was involved in their making either by logistic or political support. Also, I want to highlight that the intended choice of this date is to rewrite the American involvement in the creation of the “arc of crisis.”

Islam/ism seems more confusing than ever, as it is not defined, for instance, as a solely fundamental Islamic sect that has specific agendas within a specific period in history. Outside the writings of the Dwight Group, this term also is ill-defined as Andrew Shryock argues: “In 2006...a collective of prominent literary types produced a public statement, ‘Together Facing the New Totalitarianism’, in which a force called ‘Islamism’ is likened to ‘fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism’. Islamism is never clearly defined in the document; it is simply portrayed as a dark ideology born out of fear, frustration, and hatred” (“Islam as an Object” 5). Islam/ism seems to encompass any Islamic sect in any period in history that is in dispute with western powers because those, who do not believe in western democracy or values, are labeled as anti-western, and some writers like Gerech conflated believing in Palestinian rights with Islamism and anti-Semitism (97-98).

This confusion between Islam and Islamism is present in almost all of the publications of the Dwight Group and it starts with Ajami's problematic forewords to these books.

In these forewords, Ajami does not make a clear distinction between Islam and Islamism, and this is a harbinger of more perplexing claims in these books. He is proud of western scholars' and experts' ability to provide accurate and scholarly reports "on Islam" and he ignores that the founding reason of this writing task is "Islamism" not "Islam" (Ajami, Foreword, *The End* xi). After this, he proceeds to clarify that Islam, in itself, does not always pose a threat to the west, but has become a threat lately. He uses Lewis as an example to portray the latest dangerous developments within Islam's followers. Ajami admires Lewis' knowledge of "Islam's splendor and its periods of enlightenment," adding that Lewis "had celebrated the 'dignity and meaning' it gave to 'drab impoverished lives.' He would not hesitate, then, to look into—and to name—the darkness and the rage that have overcome so many of its adherent in recent times" ("Historian's Vision" xviii). Ajami's usage of "recent times" is confusing because Lewis has considered Islam a threat since its inception, as he draws comparisons between Muhammad and Jesus to prove fundamental differences between Islam and Christianity, and also compares Muhammad to Constantine as builders of empires (*WWW* 98-101). Accordingly, Islam is viewed as indistinguishable from Islamism. In addition, the Islamic fundamentalism of "recent times" does not escape Lewis' observation.

For Lewis, there are two contemporary ideologies in the Middle East: "liberal democracy and Islamic fundamentalism" (*The End* 10). Each ideology "offers a reasoned diagnosis of the ills of the region and a prescription for its cure" (Lewis, *The End* 10). However, Lewis believes that, unlike liberal democracy, Islamic fundamentalism speaks

a familiar and understandable language to the people. In his estimation, this familiar language originates from elements of Islamic religious terminologies and Muslims understand this language with pellucidity, while liberal democracy does not have a shared knowledge with Muslims. Lewis seems to suggest here that liberal democracy needs an environment without the influence of Islam in order to succeed in the Middle East. According to Lewis, liberal democracy's success might not happen soon since Islam does not accommodate compromise with other religions and ideologies (*The End* 15). He reiterates this idea in *The Crisis of Islam* as he claims that "Muslims...tend to see not a nation subdivided into religious groups but a religion subdivided into nations" (Lewis, *Crisis* xx). Consequently, Lewis believes that Muslims divide the world into two camps; Islam is in one and all other religions and ideologies reside in the other camp. Lewis does not, however, offer a scintilla of evidence to substantiate the claim. In fact, Lewis, himself, would be the first to oppose this claim since he admits in *The Crisis of Islam* that "[t]he expulsion of religious minorities is extremely rare in Islamic history – unlike medieval Christendom" (xxix). If Lewis' claim of unbending Islam is accurate, history would have seen more expulsion of religious minorities from the Islamic world. By singling out the rigidity of Islam, he insinuates that other religions like Christianity and Judaism are more willing to compromise and his ultimate evidence is that secularism is an invention of Christianity.

Lewis' claim about an uncompromising Islam seems to influence other authors in this working group to draw further comparisons between Islam and Christianity in particular. Hill strongly believes that Islam opposes the modern world order and he asserts that "[t]oday's problem of Islamism and world order is that Islam, the first of the

above three world-historical phenomena,⁹ has been a uniate and therefore an unsuccessful and, in part, adversarial participant in the pluralistic and procedural third phenomenon” (27). According to Hill, since Islam, not Islamism, does not concede its position of supremacy and is not willing to share power with any other entity, it presents the first problem that the world needs to confront. In addition, Hill indicates that Islam is in contention with “Europe’s state system” while this European political system is flexible and willing to overrule religious agendas for “pluralistic” purposes (27). Hill here is inspired by Alexis de Tocqueville’s claim that Islam will disintegrate eventually because Islam’s teachings are incompatible with the world and Hill reasserts this claim:

Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* wrote that “Muhammad brought down from heaven and put into the Koran not religious doctrines only, but political maxims, criminal and civil laws, and scientific theories....That alone, among a thousand reasons, is enough to show that Islam will not be able to hold its power long in ages of enlightenment and democracy.” (Hill 136)

Hill believes de Tocqueville “to be saying that Islam is not only substantive, but dogmatically and aggressively so” (137). Here, Hill forgoes his initial idea of the dangers of Islam/ism and extends his concerns to Islam, the religion itself.

Gerecht concurs with Hill in his analysis of the problems that Islam manifests and he maintains the same confusion between Islamism and Islam. After he discusses how Europe decouples God from politics successfully, Gerecht compares Muhammad to Jesus

⁹ According to Hill, these three world-historical phenomena are the rise of Islam, global exploration and Europe’s state system.

trying to highlight the basic difference between their respective religions (75-76). The former is not soft while “by comparison, Jesus is a more intimate, almost feminine figure” (Gerecht 76). Gerecht infers that every religion takes the character of its most important figure. Unlike Jesus, Muhammad is not soft and softness entails tolerance, and therefore tolerance is a Christian product by default. Gerecht implies without stating upfront that Islam’s problem of violence has its solution in Christianity. He preaches Christianity but he conceals his evangelization! What exposes his preaching for Christianity is his statement that “Christ’s love seems natural to *us* still and certainly seemed right to Christians of the Middle Ages” (Gerecht 76; emphasis added). Unlike Jesus, Muslims’ role model in Muhammad does not embody softness or tolerance and so love is unnatural to them. Gerecht seems to imbibe his ideas regarding Muhammad’s intolerance from Lewis’ arguments in *What Went Wrong* and *The Crisis of Islam*. According to Lewis, Moses and Jesus never realized their messages in their lifetimes while Muhammad realized his messages in his lifetime by initiating his own empire (WWW 101). The conclusion to be drawn from this is that Muhammad is more a politician and warrior than his predecessors, and thus less a spiritual leader, because he carried out what he envisioned for his religion and followers, while Moses and Jesus believed in the limitations of their social and religious roles, and therefore their respective religions also understand their specific roles and are adaptable to secularism and democracy.

Facing Islam as a threat seems to solidify the Judeo-Christian relationship, especially after 9/11; but it is important to note that this relationship is relatively new, having emerged only after WW II (Mamdani 244). Gottschalk and Greenberg capture an element that becomes salient in viewing Islam in America after 9/11:

Religiously...American popular wisdom has alienated itself from Islam as it has defined Christianity and Judaism as “Western religious traditions” and Islam as an “Eastern religious traditions.” This is so despite the fact that the first two religions originated in a region less than two hundred miles west of Islam’s historical birthplace, and that the three religions share a mutual heritage of monotheism. (8)

The emphasis of separation of space and time between Judeo-Christianity and Islam isolates the latter from any theological similarities pertaining to Judeo-Christian beliefs. Therefore, Islam arises exclusively as political in the face of the spirituality of Judeo-Christianity.

On another occasion, Lewis describes the difference between Muhammad and Jesus by stating that “Muhammad was, so to speak, his own Constantine,” and he reiterates the Constantine comparison in *The Crisis of Islam* (WWW 98; *Crisis* 6). Now, remember the main defining element that neo-Orientalists identify for Islamists is that they are political (Berman 131). They do not separate religion from politics. Lewis makes a subtle link between Muhammad and contemporary Islamists by comparing him to an emperor and he wants to drive home the idea that Muhammad combines religion with politics while Jesus and Moses understand their roles as mere spiritual leaders. Accordingly, Islam will remain adamant and unbending in the face of the western world that requires a separation of church and state. The link between Muhammad as an emperor and contemporary political Islam takes another shape outside the discussion of the Dwight Group. Many American religious figures transform Lewis’ “Muhammad as

an emperor” into “a terrorist” in the context of 9/11 (Mezvinsky 45-51). The fear of political Islam is a recurring theme in the writings of American neo-Orientalism post 9/11.

Although there is a legitimate concern about the growing number of fundamentalists in the Islamic world, there is a hefty misunderstanding of the source behind this kind of fundamentalism. For instance, Malik tries to enumerate some legitimate grievances that have an impact on violent tendencies against the west: “[t]he Western control on their policies, thanks to the Pentagon, IMF, CIA, DFID, or the World Bank and through a powerful public diplomacy emanating from Washington, London, and Paris have turned freedom into a mere charade for billions across the South” (144). Instead of examining such causes and effects between political resentments and frustrations in the Middle East without condoning violence or wars from either side, these authors blame Islam as the source of these predicaments shunning bigger questions of the west’s political involvement and aggressions in the region. They describe Islam clearly as political but they never cite any of its political demands or aspirations. They only cite Qur’an and Muhammad as the driving force of this political Islam. What is *political* about it then if its sources are religious texts? Even in discussing Islamic fundamentalism, the writers do not demonstrate a decent understanding of different sects within Islam. It is in this vein that Gerecht voices his fear of Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt (Gerecht 8). However, his fear is not limited to fundamentalism in Egypt; it includes any kind of fundamentalism in the Islamic world, as he believes that most Muslim fundamentalists “descended from Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood” (Gerecht 6). This is problematic for two reasons. First, Gerecht does not recognize the differences between Muslim Brotherhood

and the so-called Wahhabism,¹⁰ as these two sects have different approaches to Islam and the world in general. At one point, Gerecht describes the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as “the mothership of Sunni Arab Fundamentalism” (97), but the so-called Wahhabism’s emergence preceded Muslim Brotherhood’s formation by two centuries. It started in 1744 with the agreement between Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud, while the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928. Second, Gerecht uses “Arab Fundamentalists” instead of “Muslim” without explaining if it is the same as Islamic fundamentalism or not, adding an extra layer to the confusion at hand (Gerecht 15). His analysis not only creates this confusion between different Islamic sects and Arabs as a race; it is, in fact, entirely predicated upon this misperception.

Unlike the previous authors, Berman recognizes the difference between Islam and Islamism by providing a clear definition of the latter (131). He clearly defines Islamism as “a politicized religious discourse driven by anti-Western animus” (Berman 131). Interestingly, he disassociates Islam, the religion, from any radical ideologies as he expounds: “Today’s Islamist terrorists, with their disregard for individual lives and liberties and their perverse celebration of redemptive violence, indulge in an extremist culture that inherits more from Nazism and Communism than it does from traditional Muslim faith” (Berman 139).

To define Islamism as a violent, destructive ideology in the Muslim world is still not sufficient, though, because there could be two different Islamic sects that have violent

¹⁰ Officials in the Ottoman Empire named Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab’s movement as “Wahhabism” and the British Empire started using the same term. In his books, he never referred to his mission as such and other scholars within this movement never called themselves “Wahhabis”. Also, in the second century of Hijri calendar, there was a Shi’ite sect founded by Abdulwahhab Rustem in North Africa and it has the same name.

components and oppose each other, like extremist Sunnis vs. extremist Shiites, Muslim Brotherhood vs. Wahhabism or Al Qaeda vs. ISIL. Accordingly, Islamism (even if it is accepted as such) would be sweepingly broad and vague. In addition, there are other Islamic fundamentalist sects which are non-violent and non-political, but by virtue of generalization, recommended by Lewis, these sects will be annexed to other violent ideologues in the Muslim world. Given the purpose of Orientalism is not to be accurate or precise in tackling the phenomenon of terrorism and Muslim extremists, I have to admit that my proposition here to find another suitable term is a desperate move to make a distinction between Islam and extremist sects.

Nazism, Fascism and Islam/ism

In the writings examined here, there is also a serious attempt to link radical ideologies to Islam, and their discourse endeavors to highlight the seriousness of the danger of Islam by alleging that it shares common ground with the agendas of Nazism, communism and fascism. The link they make between Islam and such ideologies serves to dismiss any productive intellectual and civil debate with Islam, as these ideologies' animosity to the west are firmly established. Therefore, any attempt to find ontological answers for Islam's supposed incompatibility with the west is unnecessary because the molds of Nazism and Communism are in place. I already established that this group does not acknowledge a clear distinction Islamism and Islam, which results in great confusion and misperception between these two terms. Therefore, the association between Islamism or Islam and other radical ideologies complicates and doubles this confusion because bundling Islam, Islamism, Nazism and fascism will not clarify "Islamism" as a modern phenomenon while the proclaimed purpose is to understand, not to confuse. The process

of remolding Islam as the enemy started after the fall of the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, discussions in American Orientalist institutions argued that Islam had replaced the Soviet Union as the ultimate threat (D. Kumar 117-28). Nonetheless, Islam as the ultimate threat does not gain full recognition until 9/11. The red of Soviet Union becomes the green of Islam (Baker 252).

Lewis emphasizes the importance of knowing “the enemy,” and he highlights the difference between understanding Nazi Germans and Muslims: “[i]n 1940, we knew who we were, we knew who the enemy was, we knew the dangers and the issues.... It is different today. We don’t know who we are, we don’t know the issues, and we still do not understand the nature of the enemy” (qtd. in Ajami, “Historian’s Vision” xxiii). He claims that “we” lose “our” identity and the identity of the enemy because “we” do not have enough information about “the enemy.” Hence, the need for the Dwight Group; its mission is to dissect the agendas and intentions of the enemy and write the vade mecum of Islam/ism. Besides, he forewarns “us” about ignoring *Islam* as an enemy because “we” might suffer from it like “we” suffered from Nazism. Effectively, this association serves a purpose of underscoring the menace of Islam.

I notice three different links neo-Orientalists posit between Islam/ism to Nazism. First, Islam/ism relies on the philosophical and literary inheritance of these ideologies. Second, Islam/ism shares these radical ideologies’ sentiments of opposing the world and intolerance to others’ differences. Third, Islam/ism forms a hybrid ideology that adopts salient extremist elements of these ideologies.

Islam/ism is conjoined with Nazism based on the assumption that it derives its imagery of the Jews from Nazism. There is a claim that Muslims want to exterminate

Jews in Palestine as Nazism had aimed to in Europe. Some westerners perceive this political struggle between Palestinians and Israelis as a war between Islam and Judaism, which might result in a second holocaust. In fact, Lewis and Hill believe that the Arab/Islamic world imbibes its understanding of Judaism from Nazism. According to Lewis, Nazism serves as an inspirational form of ideology for Muslims in depicting Jews. He proclaims that “[t]he literature available in Arabic about Israel and, more generally, about Jews, Judaism and Jewish history is overwhelmingly anti-Semitic, based largely on leftovers from the hate literature of the Third Reich” (Lewis, *The End* 26-7). I do not deny the existence of stereotypical portrayals of Jews in Arabic literature. Yet, for two reasons, I challenge the view that Nazism is the source for these depictions. First, European literature had its share of heinous, anti-Semitic stereotypes before Nazism, so it is just as a good source for anti-Semitic imagery. Second, Arabic literature has its own negative and positive representations of Jews before the existence of Israel and Nazism. Therefore, Lewis’ claim is absurd to say the least. He is not only worried about these negative representations of Jews, as he criticizes Muslims for trying to conceal or ban any sympathetic representations of Jews while he deliberately presents Arabic literature as an inheritor of Nazi literature to accentuate his fearful concerns (Lewis, *The End* 27).

Second, Islam/ism is attached to Nazism because it allegedly appropriates from Nazism the alienation of others and disobedience of universal rules of the international community. Unlike Lewis, Hill extends his fears beyond the Muslim/Jew conflict, although he uses Nazism to deliver his message. He believes that the similarity between Nazism and Islamism reaches higher levels than a shared hatred for Jews. He thinks that “[b]eyond their common aim of eradicating the Jews, Nazism and Islamism were each

committed to a single all-encompassing ideology virulently hostile to the international system's procedurally based acceptance of multifariousness in thought and practice among its members" (Hill 75). To him, Islam/ism and Nazism share basic values and therefore Islam/ism will not allow the existence of others who oppose its values or traditions even if they are not Jews. Hence, Islam/ism's threat extends to all humanity. However, Hill overlooks the fact that rejecting multiculturalism is not a trait reserved for or championed by Islamists alone. For instance, Berman rejects immigration as it presents dangerous and uncontrolled multiculturalism to European society, which needs to endure modern changes (Berman 30). Is it possible to frame Berman as a Nazi or extremist since he opposes immigration of Arabs/Muslims to Europe? Rejecting multiculturalism is not evidence of either Islam/ism or Nazism. It is definitely a sign of extremism and xenophobia, but it is not enough to label someone or some thoughts as Islamist or Nazi. By the same token, opposing the international order cannot be used to inculcate any political system as either radical or terrorist.

Defying international world order is not limited to radical ideologies. Western powers and the US in particular violate a lot of U.N. resolutions with impunity. If a country from the Third World violates a minor U.N. resolution that harms no other country, it will be hammered by stifling political and economic sanctions that will hinder its development and prosperity for decades under the pretext that this particular country will destroy the whole world. What gives western powers the right to violate the U.N.'s resolutions while non-western countries are not allowed even to question, protest or appeal these resolutions?

The writers that I examine in this chapter give the US in particular the right to violate the U.N.'s resolutions and the right to intervene militarily in other countries without resorting to the U.N. for deliberation or political solution. Gerecht, for example, discusses how the Middle East is in a political mess by not conforming to international order, but he ignores the fact that various countries in the Middle East have their own legitimate objections to the political violations of the Israeli and American governments (99). In addition, Hill justifies American violation of Geneva Conventions in its War on Terror because these laws are put in place for "states in the international state system," while Islamist terrorism is not part of this system (124-5). Mamdani asks a legitimate question that shows why Hill's rationalization of torture fails: "[i]f to live by the rule of law is to belong to a common political community, then does not the selective application of the rule of law confirm a determination to relegate entire sections of humanity as conscripts of a civilization fit for collective punishment?" (257). What is the point of the "international state system" if it cannot stop torture of humans, not only in the US, but also in many western governments like "Israel's Facility 1381 or Britain's Belmarsh Jail and hundreds of their counterparts elsewhere" (Malik 82)? Malik adds that "the forces of pervasive Islamophobia amidst a triumphal moralism surely make a painful subject in human history" (Malik 82).

Moreover, Hill believes in military interventions without an exit strategy (Hill 125-6). Nonetheless, he boldly states that the US always enhances self-determination for others (Hill 65). Surely military intervention violates others' right to self-determination, let alone the question of whether this military intervention is sans "exit strategy." Hurling defiance at the international order is not exclusive to Nazism or Islam/ism for the reason

that superpowers of the world also oppose decisions made by the international community. Hill and other writers ignore completely the violence that takes place with the American presence. Baker points out:

It should not be forgotten that the Afghan war also represented the first time that the United States directly made war on an Islamic country....On the Arab satellite channels over the last several years it has often been had to tell if the latest images of the violence of the occupiers depict Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan or Israelis on the West Bank....My argument is simply that the policies of the United States and Israel have made the violent excesses of Islamist extremists more probable and more sustainable. (255)

Third, this group argues that Islam/ism resuscitates dying radical ideologies like Nazism and fascism by amalgamating their drastic creeds. While Lewis believes Islam/ism inherits Nazism and Hill believes in similarities between Islam/ism and fascism, Berman thinks that Islam/ism adopts the worst elements of Nazism and communism. He believes the agendas of fascism and communism are resurrected “in the guise of Islamism” (Berman 43). Then he elaborates on how Islam/ism revives these radical ideologies:

While [Islamism] invokes ancient texts, it integrates them into structures of ideology and repression borrowed from the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century. It is the new communism in its vision of repressive social utopia, and it is a new fascism in its militarization of life and its

chiliastic desire for death. The designation “Islamofascism” names this derivation and this brutality. (Berman 8)

According to Berman, Islam/ism forges a combination of Nazism and communism and he calls this phenomenon “Islamofascism” by highlighting its reliance on Islamic religious texts to give it religious sanctity and holiness. This term at one point had been given an awareness week as Janice J. Terry explains: “Islamofascism Awareness Week (IFAW) was yet another attempt to vilify Muslims and Arabs. Initiated by David Horowitz of Campus Watch and Students for Academic Freedom, IFAW was a so-called educational campaign about Islam to be held on campuses around the country in the fall of 2007” (154). This term is invoked in the discussion of Islam without full explanatory connections and without resistance.

Clearly, the goal of associating Islam/ism with Nazism or any other radical ideology is formulated and advanced by the discourse of this working group. That association is meant to corroborate the imminent danger of Islam/ism. Nevertheless, this discourse is erroneous and fear-mongering without logical historical connections, plausible perspectives or criticism, and it seems to be driven by the suggestion that Islam/ism is not willing to embrace western values and beliefs. Furthermore, any school of thought or resistance movement to the west is considered a threat, not to the west alone, but to the entire international community. This kind of labeling certainly positions the west as the protector of human existence.

Westernization of the Middle East

The Dwight Group advocates the importance of westernization for a civilized transformation in the Middle East, presenting it as an indispensable step, not only for

political reasons, but also for moral and cultural ones. Westernization is to be implemented successfully via two methods. Embracing western values is a sign of cultured, moderate and plural society and the acceptance of westernization and the western example of democracy is fundamental to civilize the Middle East. In making this case, these writers vary in their tone and approach.

Criteria of right/wrong and acceptable/unacceptable ideas or values are defined and determined in accordance with western understanding of them. Confidently, Gerecht asserts that “[r]ight and wrong in this globalized world is overwhelmingly defined by the West.... News of the decline of the West, and of America in particular, has been greatly exaggerated,” and therefore “Middle Eastern Muslims are largely playing in *our* (emphasis added) field” (122). He seems to imbibe these aforesaid ideas from Lewis as he imputes modernity to westernization. According to Lewis, western powers adjudge and constitute true human values (*WWW* 150). In addition, Lewis believes that the Middle East will achieve success and prosper if it can one day become an image of the west (*WWW* 135).

Lewis ascertains that “[c]ultural change is Westernization; part of modernization, no doubt, but not, according to a widely held view, an essential part of it” (Lewis, *WWW* 135). Then Lewis changes this exposition and states that to westernize is to modernize:

Every dominant culture has imposed its modernity in its prime....Islam was the first to make significant progress toward what it perceived as its universal mission, but modern Western civilization is the first to embrace the whole planet. Today...the dominant civilization is Western, and Western standards therefore define modernity. (*WWW* 150)

There are critical points that I would like to underscore in this quotation. The first is that, in Lewis' view, the influence of the western civilization, unlike antecedent civilizations, encompasses the whole world without exception. Lewis would be correct if he had used "colonize" instead of "embrace." Western civilization colonizes most of the world and exploits its people and wealth. Is this a welcoming embrace? To Lewis, this is a civilizing mission since he renames colonization as inclusion. Lewis' idea of western civilization as the exception in the world is adopted by other American neo-Orientalists. Gerecht believes that Americans and Europeans rise above their past and history (45). While Lewis sees that western civilization incorporating the rest of the world, Gerecht states assertively that western civilization resides above the rest of the world. However, he believes that the dynamic is reversed in the Middle East. Arabs' past and history define and determine every aspect of their present and future. Nonetheless, he founds his analysis on Lewis' and they both do not explain sufficiently, let alone logically, their perspectives.

Second, these writers advance a bold determination that one has to embrace the west in order to join modernity, but Lewis does not articulate how this is correct or why. He undermines his understanding of modernization as automatic westernization because he believes that "the cumulative effect of reform and modernization was, paradoxically, not to increase freedom but to reinforce autocracy" (Lewis, *WWW* 53). In his understanding, modernization in technology and communication helped reinforce "the central power" of autocracy and undermined the limits of traditional powers like religious authority (Lewis, *WWW* 53). If this is the case, modernization, which is de facto westernization, does not affect any ideology. It is merely a tool to implement any school

of thought or any governing system. By the same token, “democracy,” “secularism” and other western concepts might have adversarial effects in the Middle East, as is the case with modernization in Lewis’ example (Lewis, *WWW* 53). After all, insisting that Muslims should implement modernization/westernization may be futile as it might enhance autocracy rather than weaken it.

Since Gerecht does not believe in “the decline of the West,” he is a proponent of westernizing the mind before westernizing Arab cultures or politics, and he is resolute that “the Westernization of the Muslim mind is real” (117). He can embrace only westernized Muslims because they are “Muslim in name but Western in spirit and practice” (Gerecht 79). He indicates that unless Muslims are “westernized,” they cannot grasp the meaning of civilization and tolerance. In other words, he disputes the existence of moderate, non-westernized Muslims in this world! Also, he leaves it unclear what “westernized” exactly means since he does not provide any precise definition. Does it mean “brain-washed,” or “raised and cultivated in accordance with the western values,” or “influenced by western powers”? He argues that, “westernization,” regardless of its possible different meanings, is a pre-condition to democracy’s implementation and its meaning is self-explanatory.

Alongside vehement exhortation and encouragement to the Middle East to embrace and adopt a western political system and western values, the authors show some concern that the west may lose its true identity if it keeps incorporating foreigners without assimilating them into its own culture and tradition. Berman believes that immigration now causes a reverse process where the host culture risks losing its identity and has to adjust to immigrants’ cultures (Berman 30). The writers do not acknowledge

any contributions of diasporas and immigrants to western societies, academies, industries and history.

There is an urgent encouragement from the writers associated with the Hoover Institution for changes to politics and cultures in the Middle East; yet the changes they propose have to be in accordance with western values and beliefs and they have to be under western supervision. These writers see the western example as the best to emulate. Meanwhile, they feel the western example is under siege and threatened by immigrants in the western sphere. In order to avoid this dilemma, these writers propose secularism and democracy in tandem to mitigate the rigidity of Islam/ism.

Secularism and Democracy

Secularism is presented as a prerequisite for implementing democracy in the Middle East while Islam is presented as the barrier between the Middle East and the road to democracy. Iftikhar Malik believes that Islam is usually portrayed “as a sinister and inherently anti-Western ideology” and “[t]hat is why media and academia end up asking routine questions such as: does Islam allow democracy, as if they are simply antithetic. Or, in the same vein, does Islam grant women any rights, as if Islam is merely sexism!” (152). On the other hand, secularism is advanced as a Christian invention. Videlicet, while Christianity embraces secularism, Islam is not capable of this because it does not compromise its beliefs and religious decrees, and this is the source of Islam’s political struggles. Hill believes that Islam’s major political mistake is that “Islamists vehemently reject dualities [of profane and sacred] while the West is foundationally defined by them” (Hill 13). Hill quotes F. Scott Fitzgerald to expound this duality as “the ability to hold two contradictory ideas in the mind at the same time and still function is a test of

civilization” (qtd. in Hill 13). According to Hill, secularism teaches societies how to maintain this duality.

Lewis, by drawing the argument of the co-existence of Christianity and secularism, wants to drive home the idea of the Islamic threat. According to him, Christians recognize the difference between church and state and are therefore restrained from whimsical imperial expansion. On the other hand, Muslims do not recognize this separation and therefore Islamic rule is always a threat since it believes in imperial expansion (Lewis, *WWW* 103).

To Lewis, Islam is the principal ruling method in the Middle East and it remains a menace unless secularism is assimilated into its political system. In his analysis, only secularism will alleviate Islamic imperial ambitions and he thinks “the dethronement of religion [in the Islamic World] as the organizing principle of society was not attempted until much later, and the attempt was due to entirely to European influences...the Western influences became more powerful and more important after the French revolution” (Lewis, *WWW* 112). Two points in this quotation need to be addressed. First, he downplays the idea of French invasion of Egypt while considering it a blessing because it introduces the solution, i.e. secularism, to religious rule in the Middle East. He proclaims that the French invasion of Egypt is “the first shock to Islamic complacency” and “the first impulse to Westernization and reform” (qtd. in Hill 51).

In contrast to Lewis’ aggrandizing of the French invasion of Egypt, Said calls it “a major Orientalist” project along with Napoleon’s “foray into Syria” (Said, *Orientalism* 76). Both of these “Orientalist projects...have had by far the greater consequence for the modern history of Orientalism” (Said, *Orientalism* 76). The reason is that the Napoleonic

invasion is “a truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another,” and Said cites the publication of the *Description de l’Egypte* as a turning point in the field of Orientalism (*Orientalism* 42). Thus, he argues: “[a]fter Napoleon, then, the very language of Orientalism changed radically. Its descriptive realism was upgraded and became not merely a style of representation but a language, indeed a means of *creation*,” and he demonstrates how “the *Description* became the master type of all further efforts to bring the Orient closer to Europe, thereafter to absorb it entirely and—centrally important—to cancel, or at least subdue and reduce, its strangeness and, in the case of Islam, its hostility” (Said, *Orientalism* 87). In reality, the French invasion of Egypt announced a new methodical Orientalism (Gottschalk and Greenberg 26; D. Kumar 26).

Hill’s approach to the French invasion seems ambivalent at first look but it is not. In his attempt to narrate what takes place in the Middle East throughout history, Hill finds himself obliged to talk about the French Revolution and its effects in the Middle East. Hill admires the principles of the “universal mission” of the French Revolution, but he is disappointed when Napoleon contaminates the whole process by embracing Islamic ideologies (52). He cites Hegel’s praise of the French Revolution as “the advent of reason, humanism, and freedom” and Lewis’ extolling of the French invasion of Egypt (Hill 50-1). Then he cites Rousseau as “the originator” of this revolution and Napoleon as “the culminator of the revolution” (Hill 52). Hill continues his praise: “[f]rom Napoleon...came the mastery of new, centralized state directed by a universal genius with a universal mission to create a universal empire. This was a completely new political dispensation, all directed toward universal freedom” (Hill 52). The use of “universal” in Hill’s statement is problematic, but what is intriguing is his reference to subjugation of

Egypt as a mission “to create.” It is worth recalling also that Said argues that the language of Orientalism after the Napoleonic invasion becomes “a means of *creation*,” as I cited in the previous paragraph. According to Hill, the French Revolution could have been successful if Napoleon had not deviated from these “universal” ideas as his “temperament was far more authoritarian than the monarch overthrown by the revolution” (52). Hill does not fail to point out the source of Napoleon’s temperament, as he strongly believes that Napoleon is influenced by Islamic ideology: “[a]s a man of the Enlightenment, Napoleon genuinely admired the Prophet Mohammad. Using Islamic rhetoric, Napoleon would portray himself as a sultan, declare that France was Muslim, and claim, on the behalf of the French revolution, that France had deposed the pope” (50). Hill does not provide any source to support his claim (his book has a bibliography but in the chapters he does not provide where he finds Napoleon’s proclamation of France as “Muslim”), but I will take him at his word in order to point out how his argument does not hold water. Now, Hill does not try to reconcile his perspective on Napoleon’s dream of being a sultan and Lewis’ praise of the influence of the French invasion on the Middle East. I wonder who influences whom?

The second point in Lewis’ quotation of the importance of the French invasion of Egypt is that he fears that Islamic rule results in ambitious imperial expansions because it does not have a secular system. Now, if the French Revolution is the first encounter between Muslims and Secularism, it follows that secularism also has imperial ambitions, as the French Revolution led to colonizing Egypt and other parts of the world (Lewis, *WWW* 104). More importantly, Lewis seems to believe that secularism is to prevent military expansion and religious authority and power in civil societies. In reality,

secularism has not prevented military expansion, since France and the US, which proclaim themselves as secular governments, have colonial projects, and religion is an integral part of their respective societies. I think it is safe to state that if secularism is adopted in the Islamic world, it will not necessarily prevent any government from the Muslim world from undertaking imperial/religious expansions. It however may prevent such expansion being undertaken in the name of Islam or explicit proselytization. Furthermore, if Lewis' belief is that secularism is a Christian idea, then so-called Christian secularism prevents neither Crusades nor colonial projects.

One of the reasons that de Tocqueville and Hill believe that Islam will not last is that its main concept is attached to abstract and metaphysical notions. If this is the case, why then does Hill accept and cite Bush II's statement "that democracy is 'a God-given right'?" (137). Here is Bush II laying out how he plans his foreign policies:

I'm driven with a mission from God. God would tell me, "George, go and fight those terrorists in Afghanistan." And I did, and then God would tell me, "George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq." And I did. And now, again, I feel God's words coming to me, "Go get the Palestinians their state and get the Israelis their security, and get peace in the Middle East." And by God I'm gonna do it. (qtd. in Alwajji 320)

Honestly, I wish he succeeded in solving the Palestinian dilemma but maybe he did not hear the third godly message clearly! Nonetheless, how could Bush II or Hill for that matter prove that God endorses democracy on this earth? Furthermore, Hill quotes Hegel's statement that "It is the way of God with the world that the state exists" (39). I want Hill to demonstrate to us that God's plans involve the state's existence since he

criticizes “the conventional Islamic claim has been that God’s sovereignty and *sharia* would be violated if sovereignty were vested in the people and laws made by the people’s democratically elected representatives” (160). Hill does not trust Muslims’ God to choose their way of governing while he trusts the political plans of Bush II’s and Hegel’s Gods. In his argument, Hill criticizes the convictions of Muslims while presenting similar convictions of his own. In other words, maybe Muslims’ version of democracy is ‘sharia’ rule and they have their own ‘Hegel’ and ‘Bush’ to support their vision.

Promoting democracy as a “God-given right” pervades the discussions of this working group. Gerecht claims that God is supportive of democracy: “both God and man are now behind the democratic promise. Nothing is inevitable, but that is a very hard combination to stop” (137). Nevertheless, he insists that politics in the Middle East have to decouple God and religious influence from political agendas (Gerecht 74). Now, he provides inexplicable and contradictory ideas in the conclusion of his argument that undermines the idea of God-given democracy. According to him, democracy is God’s wish in the Middle East, but he forgets to specify which religion this “God” belongs to. Is it Christians’ or Muslims’ God? More importantly, what makes him so sure that God is behind democracy? After all, Gerecht’s argument fails to decouple God from anything whereas he asks Muslims to do just that.

I have argued that in these writings that the Dwight Group displays secularism as the solution to assuage Islamic austerity because secularism is needed to fertilize the political environment for democracy. At the same time, they argue that Islam/ism does not demonstrate any sign of negotiation (Lewis, *The End* 15). The Middle East is admonished to minimize Islamic rule because it supports metaphysical beliefs while it is

asked to accept secularism as a “God-decreed imperative.” This reasoning is oxymoronic and even F. Scott Fitzgerald might struggle to understand this!

Democracy in these works is exhibited as a solution that should coincide with secularism’s implementation to end the Middle East’s political miseries and tyrannies. Urging the US to promote and supervise democracy in the Middle East is a common theme in the writings of the authors in this chapter. For them, democracy seems to be the only conceivable way for the Middle East to avoid bloodshed and civil wars (Gerecht 60-61). The argument is that this region needs democracy more than any other region in the world. Instead of discussing benefits and advantages of this political system, these authors try to explain the difficulty and challenges of implementing it in the Middle East. Moreover, in discussing democracy, its failures and drawbacks in the west are not highlighted or mentioned, while; the main concern is that Islamic parties might win easily in free elections, a success that would not be welcomed in the west. Democracy is championed in the Middle East unless it yields results that are unwanted and unwelcome.

Democracy is believed to be exportable to the Middle East, but the US has to play a pivotal role in its implementation, and it reserves the right to bring it by war if necessary. Lyons describes how Lewis influenced the Bush II Administration to bring democracy by force:

As George W. Bush’s speechwriter David Frum told the Wall Street Journal, the administration’s response flowed naturally from Lewis’s proscription: “Bernard comes with a very powerful explanation for why 9/11 happened. Once you understand it, the policy presents itself afterward.” That policy, which the same newspaper dubbed as the “Lewis

Doctrine,” called on the United States to intercede forcibly to bring forth what the Muslim Arabs were incapable of achieving on their own: a recognizable—that is, Western-style—democracy. (115)

The “Lewis Doctrine” is another American doctrine that impacts the politics of the Middle East. It asserts that democracy in the Middle East has to meet the standards of the west or it will not be recognized as such. Therefore, Gerecht urges the US “to play midwifing democracy throughout the Middle East” to ensure its success (136). What is more, Hill insists that “[u]nless America stands for and promotes democracy, it cannot be true to its most elemental national character” (134). Gerecht and Hill agree on the importance of America’s authority in leading the efforts to establish democracy and disseminate its values in the Middle East. Meanwhile, they strongly applaud President Bush II for taking the initiative to execute this civilizing mission. President Bush II is viewed as the promoter of democracy in the Middle East, as well as the first western figure to challenge “Islamic exceptionalism,” a term that Gerecht does not explain or define (3). According to Gerecht, President Bush II “might have been an evangelical democracy-loving character out of Alexis de Tocqueville’s *De la Democratie en Amerique*, but the Texan perhaps captured a truth that more worldly men missed. The idea of democracy, once it secretes itself into the body politic, is durable and aggressive” (22). While Gerecht believes President Bush II’s initiative is driven by a forgotten universal “truth,” Hill thinks 9/11 causes President Bush II to see “the necessity to transform the Middle East in the direction of good governance, openly promoted democracy” (134-35). Both agree that democracy’s arrival to the Middle East is needed more than ever and Bush II delivers it. Nonetheless, Hill does not approve of Islamist

parties having political success in democracy, whereas Gerecht is adamant that Islamists will be instrumental in delivering democracy. The perspectives of Hill and Gerecht seem to conflict in the beginning but both authors actually agree on the hazard of political Islamic parties' success in free elections.

Despite the exportability of democracy, the group views the Middle East as the aberration to the normal rules governing democracy. In other words, if this region adopts democracy on its own terms, it will not take the successful shape known in the west. Gerecht opens his book by stating that there is a "democratic recession" in the Islamic lands (1). He believes the reason behind this recession is that "there really is an Arab-Islamic exception to representative government" (Gerecht 1). He elaborates further: "Owing to history, faith, and language, the Arabs have found it maddeningly difficult to import the West's most successful political experiment" (Gerecht 15). By the same token, Hill admits that Bush II's promotion of democracy "brought Islamists to power" and he does not approve that "these armed parties" gain the right to rule because they will hijack democracy and turn it into "oppression" (135). Hill proposes constant American involvement in the execution of democracy to safeguard its success because Arabs and Muslims cannot be trusted to conduct and practice proper democracy. Therefore, he rejects immediately and vocally any possible success for fundamentalist parties in a free election. Hill is a proponent of democracy on the condition that it does not yield success to any religious party while he believes that democracy should be unlimited and unconditional.

Unlike Hill, Gerecht disagrees with the idea that encouraging electoral voting would enable America's enemies in the Muslim World (57). His book's thesis is that

democracy will solve the political ordeal in the Middle East and Islamic fundamentalists will be instrumental in delivering it to the region. Boldly, he proclaims: “[i]n 2004 in *The Islamic Paradox* I made the argument that when democracy arrives in the Arab Middle East, it will arrive via Shiite clerics and Sunni fundamentalists, and not via Westernized liberal Muslims or Westernized dictators following the footsteps of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk” (Gerecht 50). He believes that the only way to eliminate fundamentalist Islamic ideology is through political participation and competition. In other words, he thinks that if fundamentalist Muslims are given the right to participate in the political process, their currently growing number will decrease because democracy will reveal their glaring mistakes and the perils of Islamic fundamentalism. His idea seems brilliant initially. If this is the case, Gerecht should not worry about Islamic fundamentalism growing in the Middle East because his democracy’s prediction is predicated upon its spread. Yet, his willingness to embrace fundamentalist Muslims in democracy is founded on one condition; democracy has to prove the incompatibility of the fundamentalist Islamic parties in the Middle East and it should not enable further success for these parties. Nonetheless, if Muslim fundamentalists keep winning free elections and dominate the political scenes for decades to come, he would not approve of such a democracy as he subscribes only to a democracy that agrees with Western democracies (Gerecht 117). After all, what is the point of championing democracy in the first place and what happens to the combination of man and God?

Gerecht in this regard is not different from those who oppose democracy in the Middle East if it yields political success to political Islamic parties. After all, he and Hill do not accept democracy in the Middle East unless it emulates the west. Both of them do

not want democracy to be a tool for political Islamic parties. Furthermore, what is the point of criticizing the Middle East for not sustaining a democracy in its history? The Middle East might do better without it since it will yield more power to fundamentalists ineluctably. This is why I believe that the perspectives of Hill and Gerecht may seem different initially but in essence they are the same.

In conclusion to this section, it seems hypocritical and unprofessional to support a universal concept or an ethical notion only if it fulfills one's wishes. If democracy is so powerful and enlightening, it will not yield success to fundamentalists or degenerate politicians. Yet, Hill and Gerecht prove that democracy could be fragile, volatile and susceptible. The whole concept of democracy is the acceptance of people's choice in a free vote, but Hill and Gerecht are anxious about this very concept in the Middle East. Gerecht declares: "[w]ith or without us, Muslims in the Middle East are moving in a democratic direction" (123). If democracy will prevail eventually in the Middle East, why is the American supervision, midwifing, concern or interest necessary? If this is really the case, is the Dwight Group necessary? If the solution is in "more Islam," why is it feared so much? (Gerecht 50).

The Acknowledgment or Lack Thereof of Colonization and Imperialism

In the writings of the Dwight Group, colonization's effects are not acknowledged in the discussion of the political conundrums in the Middle East. For example, The Sykes-Picot Agreement that allowed European imperial powers to colonize and divide the Middle East into territories is not mentioned in the discussions of these authors except in Hill's book, and Hill does not consider it an aspect of imperial hegemony (Hill 63-64). In fact, colonization is credited with intellectual and cultural contributions to the

colonized's culture. In addition, the authors I examine in this chapter downplay the constant political and military intervention of western powers in the Middle East. Most deny the negative influence of western colonization and imperialism. They overlook western aggressions and violations over the Middle East's sovereign states. One of the reasons behind this discourse of denial and downplaying of western influence is to rule out its negative involvement in the Middle East's political struggle and instability. Furthermore, colonial resistance and revolutions are identified as terrorist actions. Lewis calls colonial resistance: "Earlier this century,¹¹ anti-imperialist terrorism was, in the main, military and, in a sense strategic" (*End* 126). Berman agrees with Lewis and calls the Algerian independence war in the 1950s "a reminder 'of an older terrorism'" (77). He conspicuously fails to mention France colonized Algeria, instead he reverses the script by incriminating Algerians for fighting for independence against the invaders. Therefore, the discourse endeavors diligently to rewrite the negative history of the European colonization which paved the way to American global dominance.

Lewis strongly refutes that there is any negative impact of imperialism in the Middle East, as he believes that imperialism is beneficial to the region. He appreciates the fact that imperialism only "incorporated" the Arab/Muslim world "in one or the other great European Empires" (Lewis, *WWW* 61). According to Lewis, colonization is just "incorporation" and "inclusion" (*WWW* 150). He obliterates altogether the negative impact of western imperialism by using "incorporated" instead of "colonized." All the

¹¹ He meant the twentieth century because he discussed examples of resistance to the British Empire. This suggests that this article was written before the 2000s while this book was published in 2011. Therefore, the idea of "repackaging" and "recycling" highlighted by the critics of neo-Orientalism is valid and this is what I mean by "answers before questions" in the title of this chapter.

connotations of “incorporate” indicate blending, combining, wholeness and they entail that the colonized enjoyed the same rights and privileges as the colonizer. This sounds like a mutual and prosperous encounter, but it runs contrary to what colonial histories show. Lewis insists that western imperialism is always presented as a “scapegoat” for the failures of the region (*WWW* 153). Steadfastly, he contends that imperialism was merely transient and ineffective: “the Anglo-French interlude was comparatively brief and ended half a century ago” in the Middle East (Lewis, *WWW* 153).

After all these justifications of colonization and denial of its influence, Lewis claims that the west itself participates in the process of ending western colonization in the world. He expounds that successful revolutions “that actually won political independence – were led by Westernized intellectuals who fought the West with its own intellectual weapons” (Lewis, *WWW* 61-62). Yet, he fails to provide one example of these countries that use western intellectual weapons to gain independence. He thus participates in the process of omitting the history of westerners who played significant roles in the processes of decolonization and development. More blatantly, he does not recognize the impact of the Mandelas, the Gandhis, the Nkrumahs and the Mukhtars of the colonized world. He also does not acknowledge that even if every independence is won with western intellectual help, this is not a credit to be given to western imperialism; rather, this is humanity working in solidarity against injustice no matter who carries it out.

In his vehement insistence that there has been no western negative influence in the region in recent times, Lewis admits inadvertently the existence of momentous western influence in the past. He states that “outside powers had interests in the region, both strategic and economic; they could from time to time interfere in the Middle Eastern

affairs or even influence their course. But their role was no longer to be one of domination or decision” (Lewis, *End* 4). His vindication of current western political and economic influence causes him to confess to the existence of “Western Imperialism,” which he indicts Arabs for using as a “scapegoat” (Lewis, *WWW* 153). Lewis’ argument here focuses on supposedly obsolete European colonialism. Also worth addressing is his stance on American imperialism as a current, modern phenomenon.

Lewis refutes the existence of “American Imperialism” arguing that the United States has an “exit strategy” for every place it invades, which nullifies any association with imperialism (*The End* 6). Having this strategy eliminates any suspicion of imperial ambitions or projects. If the “exit strategy” exonerates the United States’ from imperial ambitions, there remains the indubitable dangers of military intervention. In an interesting turn, Lewis himself admits that military intervention is detrimental to countries’ sovereignty. He acknowledges that “the American military push into the region bypassed Iran, and its rulers – or people – were left free to make their own history and to navigate their own course” (Lewis, *End* 41). This is a clear admission that American military intervention strips people of freedom of choice and self-determination. It is another *faux pas* in Lewis’ analysis because earlier he negated the danger of American military intervention.

Interestingly, Lewis alludes to Rudyard Kipling’s notorious “White Man’s Burden” phrase in his attempt to emphasize the United States’ big responsibility in directing the politics of the Middle East. He believes that 9/11 propelled “this new burden in Muslim lands” and “convinced American policy makers that a more ambitious policy was in order” (*The End* 6). However, the existence of this “new burden” preceded 9/11, as the

Carter Doctrine was already in place before this eventful date. President Carter explains this doctrine: “Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force” (qtd. in Teitelbaum 10-11). Yet, Lewis claims that “the United States has clearly demonstrated its lack of imperial ambition, at least in this region” (Lewis, *End* 60). This is misleading as the Carter Doctrine clearly indicates that the US will act and intervene on its own without even taking permission from local rulers, as “[t]he tradition of American Exceptionalism has always allowed America to see itself as God’s country, with special obligation to fight on behalf of the almighty God against the forces of evil” (Drury 39).

The rhetoric of American neo-Orientalist discourse is pessimistic, suspicious and distrustful. What if Arabs/Muslims do not want ‘democracy’? Assuming the sincerity and honesty in the American neo-Orientalists’ demands for it, they would view this refusal as a sign of backwardness and a real threat to the west. But why does a country that is on another continent separated by oceans constitute a threat to America by refusing its brand of democracy?

Refusing “American democracy” is a revolt against American hegemony, especially American foreign policies in the Middle East, and it shows a sign of independence or at least a first step to real independence from imperial projects. In this sense, I echo Fanon’s advice: “So comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions, and societies that draw their inspiration from it. Humanity expects other things from us than this grotesque and generally obscene emulation” (239). In my

understanding, Fanon encourages a different way from European or, in this case, American examples that enhanced colonization and imperialism. Democracy in the United States does not prevent it from exercising its imperial role in the world and hence the obscenity in any future emulation. Indeed, obscenity lies at the heart of a democracy that provides prosperity to its citizens and imperialism to the rest of the world.

Everlasting Orientalists and the “Burning Grounds” of the Orient

The American neo-Orientalists regard the heritage of Orientalism in the Middle East as credible, authoritative and unquestionable. Despite having its new idiosyncratic traits, American neo-Orientalist discourse depends on the archives of classical Orientalist discourse. The value of a European’s comment is indisputable and indispensable to the degree that it is not questioned or doubted irrespective of any gap in time and space between his/her comment and the subject at hand. However, American neo-Orientalist writings everywhere posit the belief that everything that takes place in the Middle East has a different meaning from the rest of the world (Lewis, *Crisis* 21-22). Therefore, one needs to rely on Orientalists’ reports to understand the so-called peculiarity of this region. Said describes the transformation of Orientalist “personal” writing “into professional Orientalism” as follows:

The Orient, in short, would be converted from the personal, sometimes garbled testimony of intrepid voyagers and residents into impersonal definition by a whole array of scientific workers. It would be converted from the consecutive experience of individual research into a sort of imaginary museum without walls, where everything gathered from the huge distances and varieties of Oriental culture became categorically

Oriental. It would be reconverted, restructured from the bundle of fragments brought back piecemeal by explorers, expeditions, commissions, armies, and merchants into lexicographical, bibliographical, departmentalized, and *textualized* Orientalist sense. (*Orientalism* 166)

Indeed, the “imaginary museum” is apt for the use to which American neo-Orientalist discourse puts earlier Orientalist writings. Their opinions of the Orient in their era are good enough to be evidence of the backwardness of the *current* Orient. My objective has been to show briefly the frailty and the dangers of relying on this “imaginary museum.”

Lewis rightfully derides the educational system in the Middle East because some “50-year-old science textbooks” are still taught (*End* 53). However, he makes a similar mistake by relying on Lawrence of Arabia’s “Changing East,” written in 1920, to conceptualize the current Middle East (Lewis, *The End* 57). Ironically, Lawrence of Arabia believed in a changing East as the title of his report indicates, but Lewis does not see the Middle East changing after almost a century of Lawrence’s report. In fact, Lewis does not believe that any fundamental difference has emerged in the Middle East for five centuries. In *What Went Wrong*, Lewis quotes passages written in 1554 and 1560 by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, a European Orientalist, in order to prove the backwardness of Muslims and Arabs. Busbecq narrates how Muslims, unlike the rest of the world, showed resistance to adopting modern inventions like clocks and print (*WWW* 118). How misleading this is for average readers! One or two passages, assuming that they are accurate for the most part and objective, about a particular location and people cannot determine the whole Islamic scene. In our modern times, Arabs/Muslims are active in using new technologies and western inventions, but Lewis fails to commend these actions.

Instead, he highlights how they still fail to embrace the best invention of Christianity: i.e., secularism! He seems to insinuate that if the concept of time is so difficult for Arabs and Muslims to digest, the concept of secularism and democracy will be more difficult and complex to comprehend. Ultimately, he aspires to highlight that the Middle East is fundamentally different from Europe and it will never cope with the rest of the world. Lewis' method and style of discourse is adopted by most of the writers in this study.

Gerecht cites de Tocqueville's analysis of the Muslim world almost two centuries ago as still considered valid. Gerecht asseverates: "What Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in the 1830s still stands as a challenge for any Muslim who believes in the immutability of the Shariah, the Holy Law" (6). Ironically, Gerecht seeks to challenge this "immutability" by citing an old text about the region and insinuating that the region is immutable despite his bold claim that in order to establish democracy "the answer to the Arab Muslim world's manifest problems may, simply put, be more Islam, not less" (50). His claim contradicts his endorsement of de Tocqueville's analysis.

If Orientalists of the past are authoritative and powerful, so are the present ones. Unlike classical Orientalism, American neo-Orientalism is produced in institutions with far-reaching influence on decision makers. I believe that American neo-Orientalists attempt to validate all Orientalists' analyses or representations of the Orient and give them legitimacy. This, in return, gives American neo-Orientalists the same genuineness and authority while in a nuanced examination their analysis manifests misinformation and confusion.

“Saudi Arabia,” The Ultimate Confusion

What causes such confusion about the Middle East in the west? Gerecht acknowledges a level of perplexity among “Americans, who are more confused now than ever before about what to do in the Middle East” (21). I contend that a major source of Americans’ confusion about the Middle East is reports and writings offered by neo-Orientalist institutions. Notwithstanding, the fact that these institutions are driven to offer explanation to the mysteries and ambiguity of Islam/ism, their studies are fraught with contradictory, misleading, generalized perspectives about the Middle East in particular. In this final section of the chapter, I will elaborate on the element of misinformation in the discourse through a specific example to prove this misinforming process is intentional. Saudi Arabia will be used as an example to demonstrate and expose the misinformation of this discourse.

In American neo-Orientalist discourse, Saudi Arabia is portrayed as a strong ally of the US and simultaneously accused of being an ally and supporter of terrorist organizations. Saudi Arabia cannot be both at the same time and I shall demonstrate why. Teitelbaum’s book provides a baffling report about Saudi Arabia and its characterization of Saudi Arabia fluctuates between a murky, menacing state to an indispensable ally.

According to Hill, Saudi Arabia is labeled by “Islamists” as “un-Islamic and apostate simply because it is a state within the international state system” (117). One trait of “Islamists” that Hill states clearly is their unwillingness to “accept or participate in or with the international order” (116). Saudi Arabia participates in international decisions through the U.N. and it abides by international agreements and therefore it is a civilized state within the “international state system,” at least according to Hill’s definition. On the

next page, Hill labels Saudi Arabia as one of the “enablers’ of these enemies of the international order” (118). Then he elaborates how Saudi Arabia enables “these enemies” by stating that “[t]his pattern, set by Saudi Arabia, involved enhanced promulgation of radical instruction, subsidies for non-state terror-using groups, and incessant propagandizing of the population to instill a semi-conspiratorial, one-issue explanation narrative” (Hill 118). Now, what is Saudi Arabia after all? If Saudi Arabia enables “Islamists”, they would not label it as faithless. Also, why would al Qaeda target Saudi Arabia with multiple bombing attacks before and after 9/11? In fact, bin Laden always referred to Saudi Arabia as “the Arabian Peninsula” refusing to acknowledge its monarchy. Hill’s two conflicting perspectives cannot be acceptable by any stretch of the imagination. Saudi Arabia remains enigmatic to readers of the examined works.

Paradoxically, Teitelbaum presents Saudi Arabia as both anti-western and pro-western. He claims that there is a pact between Al Saud, the Saudi Royal family, and Wahhabi religious leaders. The essence of this pact is that Al Saud gives Wahhabis control over education and mosques while Wahhabis turn a blind eye to “un-Islamic” actions (16-17). According to Teitelbaum, after Saudi Arabia realized that extremism permeates many levels of its society, it decided to limit the spread of extremism by sending Wahhabi youths to Afghanistan and exporting “homegrown Islamist extremists” to “the West, where they could preach their doctrine at local mosques, often built with money from the Saudi Royal Family” (17-18). Nevertheless, here is an ellipsis that Teitelbaum ignores. Saudi Arabia sent these Saudi youths to Afghanistan in collaboration with the US, but Teitelbaum omits this fact, thus circumventing bigger questions about American involvement. Consequently, in Hill’s account, Saudi Arabia sends its

homemade brand of extremist Islam overseas in order to make it someone else's problem. It is conspicuous that he establishes the idea of the "anti-Western" Saudi Arabia.

In the next few pages, however Teitelbaum flips the script. He changes his stance on Saudi Arabia and praises it for standing up against Islamic extremism by insisting that "Saudi Arabia has received a lot of credit, and probably deservedly so, for its effort to deprogram Islamic extremists and rehabilitate them. The recidivism rate seems to be low, and the rate of attacks has dropped" (Teitelbaum 25). After this, he makes an unequivocal statement about the unwavering stability of Saudi Arabia: "Let there be no doubt, Saudi Arabia is a stable country. The government has proven itself adept at handling internal challenges" (Teitelbaum 28). Could a country with such stability and strong laws against "Islamic extremists" be labeled as an enigma and inaccessible to researchers and reporters as it is called in this very same book?

In conclusion, my analysis of the works produced by the Dwight and Jane Herbert Working Group shows that American neo-Orientalist discourse on Islam is not objective, consistent, independent of old prejudice, or unbiased views or apolitical. The working group is interested in one perspective that serves, enhances and enables American hegemony. While adopting and respecting old Orientalists' traditions, American neo-Orientalist discourse develops new imagery and representations of Islam and the Middle East in a very organized, methodical and unprecedented manner.

CHAPTER 2. SAVING THE MIDDLE EAST FROM THE MIDDLE EAST: THE
AMERICAN MODEL OF LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

My own ambition is that the Arabs should be our first brown dominion, and not our last
brown colony.

— T. E. Lawrence

The modern Middle East was largely created by the British. It was they who carried the
Allied war effort in the region during World War I and who, at its close, principally
fashioned its peace. It was a peace presaged by the nickname given the region by
covetous British leaders in wartime: ‘The Great Loot.’

— Scott Anderson

I have absolutely no empathy for camels. I didn’t care for being abused in the Middle
East by those horrible, horrible, horrible creatures. They don’t like people. It’s not at all
like the relationship between horses and humans.

— Rachel Weisz

Unlike the previous chapter where I discuss cultural and political writings, I
consider more acclaimed literary representations in this chapter in order to highlight two
American neo-Orientalist features in particular. First, I explore the fact that suspended
imagery of the Orient in the texts I examine is no longer seen as exotic; instead, it is
shown to be dangerous, resistant to progress, and unstable. The veil, which appears as a
motif in these works, is not a signifier of sexuality and alluring Orient. In the literary
texts examined in this chapter, the veil is a tool of oppression and even a facilitator of
violence. Second, these novels show the influence of the kind of institutionalized

American neo-Orientalism that was the focus of the previous chapter. Buckley stated in an interview that he read Lewis, Arabian Nights and Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (Healy, "Veiled Optimism"). I argue that these influences, among other factors, have produced a racist and Orientalized representation of the Orient in his novel.

Buckley's novel presents a dyed-in-the-wool Middle East. Moreover, ignoring the blunders of the US and European powers in this region, Buckley's narrative claims that the Middle East's drawbacks are the main reasons for its failure politically, culturally, and religiously. The novels draw on other aspects of neo-Orientalism. For example, American neo-Orientalists I examined in Chapter One insist on the inadvisability of implementing democracy in the Middle East on the grounds that democracy will yield power to extremist Islamic political parties. Anderson's novel replicates this fear. His novel is influenced mainly by his experience as a journalist in war zones in the Muslim world. His model of the American presence in the Muslim world is based around Christian compassion and redemption. His narrative condemns blatant exploitations of the colonized world but he sees benefits in the colonial rule for the colonized. This corresponds to the neo-Orientalists' claim about the benefits of benevolent military intervention.

Drastic political, economic, cultural and religious reformations and change under American supervision in the Middle East becomes an urgent objective after 9/11 in American neo-Orientalist discourse. This discourse promotes the necessity of change in this particular region in accordance with what is defined vaguely as western values. According to this discourse, the combination of uncultivated culture and extremist beliefs makes political change and religious reformation impossible, and the Middle East will

remain unstable and primitive as it refuses full acceptance of democracy and modernity. I shall explore the components of this discourse in two American novels.

I focus in this chapter on Christopher Buckley's *Florence of Arabia* (2004) and Scott Anderson's *Moonlight Hotel* (2006), attempting to highlight their similar themes and the traces of American neo-Orientalist discourse to be found in each. The two novels do not demonstrate a visible departure from European colonial novels. They exhibit a fantasy voyage into the Orient, a western female in captivity, and an Orient that cannot survive on its own. While most European voyage novels are in European colonies, these two voyage novels are set in independent sovereign states.

The salient themes of both novels are the threat of Islam, the presence of *Arabian Nights syndrome*, mapping and geography, and the urgent need for cultural, political and religious change. Islam is represented as dangerous to the whole world and the two works suggest that the Middle East should stop hosting this fundamentalist religion. In addition to this religious fundamentalism, the Middle East is represented as being haunted by barbaric culture and tradition. In these narratives, the uncivilized culture of the Middle East helps the existence and growth of Islam. Also, the geography and mapping of the Middle East is represented as one of the main causes of political disputes besides the existence of ceaseless tribal feuds over territories. The combination of religious extremism, uncultivated culture and political beliefs makes reformation and change an impossible process, implying that the Middle East will remain unstable. Finally, in a position recalling the identical stance taken by neo-Orientalist think tanks I examined in Chapter One, the two novels do not incriminate European colonization or Western imperialism as one of the main reasons in the current problems of the Middle East. In fact,

the Middle East is represented as the unsolvable enigma of the past and present, and the implication is that it will remain as such as long as Arabs and Islam inhabit it.

However, the novels have different approaches. *Florence of Arabia* depicts a primitive Orient that has to maintain tyranny because the alternative is political Islam. Also, this Orient cannot join the civilized world and it cannot adopt modernity or democracy. Despite different attempts to modernize it, its culture and religion interfere to halt or end modernizing movements. On the other hand, *Moonlight Hotel*'s Orient has hope to develop, but only within the visions of American Exceptionalism and Christian redemption.

Florence of Arabia

Christopher Buckley is the son of the famous American conservative William F. Buckley. Also, he is a political satirist and a novelist. *Thank You for Smoking* (2006) and *No Way to Treat a First Lady* (2002) are two of his well-known novels. He worked as “a White House speechwriter” and “he was awarded the Washington Irving Medal for Literary Excellence” (Buckley 257). *Florence of Arabia* is inspired by the real story of Fern Holland, an American lawyer killed in Iraq fighting for women’s rights (Rubin, “Fern Holland’s War”). Buckley acknowledges Holland as “a real-life Florence of Arabia, assassinated in Iraq, March 9, 2004” (Buckley 255). This novel will be adapted in a film starring Charlize Theron. My criticism of this novel is not directed at the valiant efforts of Holland but rather at Buckley’s fictional account of them.

Florence of Arabia is a novel that narrates a story of an American team that goes to the Middle East to change its uncivilized culture and bring political stability. Florence Farfaletti, who is an American of Italian origins, is the head of this team because of her

familiarity with the Middle East and her Arabic college major. She works at an Orientalist State Department in Washington D.C. writing regular reports to the US government about her meetings with an Arab princess. Now, a mysterious character, who calls himself “Uncle Sam,” convinces her that the U.S. government wants her to go to the Middle East and change its patriarchal society, emancipate Arab women and mitigate Islamic austerity. She assembles her team, which consists of three men, Bobby Thibodeaux, George Dillington Phish and Rick Renard, and goes to Matar to launch a TV station that offers cultural, social, and religious critiques of Arab/Muslim society. This TV station causes social upheavals and political disputes in Wasabia and Matar. Eventually, Wasabia, with the help of France, enables a successful Islamic revolution in Matar led by Maliq bin Haz against his brother Gazzir (Gazzy) bin Haz. Florence is captured and imprisoned, but she is saved by her team from fundamentalist Muslims. Later, Florence realizes that she has been sent to Matar by investors of the Waldorf Group—a financial institution that is owned by former American presidents and ex-governmental officials—to cause political conflicts in order to scare Wasabia into investing more money in Waldorf stocks; the motive of emancipation of women is just used as a means to achieve this and is not the ultimate goal of the mission.

Still, Arab women, inspired by Florence’s heroics, do revolt against their patriarchal society. Colonel Nebkir, with the assistance of Americans, forces Maliq to flee and takes over Matar. Democracy may have failed, but more importantly, Matar is now a safe place and is “once again the Switzerland of the Gulf, oil was flowing” (Buckley 250). Florence returns safely to the United States and she administers an organization titled “Fund for Arab Women” (Buckley 248). Wasabia hires George and

Renard to restore its image in the United States. Florence sums up what transpires at the end of the novel:

This [Woldorf] group...got started with financing from Wasabia. Profits last year of eight hundred million dollars. Divided by twelve makes sixty-six million. You've been very successful, gentlemen. But the success depends on steady financing from your friends in Wasabia....Then the Wasabis start to have internal problems. Terrorism, too much power concentrated in too few people. Forty thousand crown princes. Vast unemployment and half the country under the age of sixteen. And if the kingdom crumbles and becomes an Islamic fundamentalist republic, there goes your financing. So, you want the kingdom to modernize, to reform. Not a bad goal in and of itself....Only they won't reform. They can't, because the power's concentrated and because the royal family struck a deal with a fanatical religious sect hundreds of years ago. The royals got the power, and the fanatics got to keep things the way they were back in the good old Dark Ages. They need to reform, but they can't reform.

(Buckley 252-53)

Florence along with former American presidents senses that having a democracy in the Middle East is impractical. Therefore, the best approach is to disturb oligarchy systems whenever American interests are threatened or religious extremism is a problem. If necessary, any stubborn oligarchy will be replaced by another one as long as it does not oppose American policies in the region. The conclusion of the novel seems to be inspired by the story of "season 2" of the TV series *24*, which debuted in 2002. In this season,

Jack Bauer, the hero, spends half of the episodes tracing “a Middle Eastern cell” and is able to stop a nuclear bombing but he finds out that western oil investors are behind the plot to “benefit from the increase in oil prices” (Alsultany 23). Aside from the nuclear threat, Buckley seems to have the same idea.

The novel’s conclusion poses multiple questions. If modernity and cultural reformation will not materialize in the Middle East, what is the point of this mission in the first place? Why is democracy promoted heavily and enforced in the Middle East with the predetermined knowledge that it will not succeed? What is the goal behind this conclusion of the incapability of Arabs to modernize and reform?

In answering these questions, I will focus on three aspects that complement my discussion of democracy in the first chapter. First, the novel proffers a perspective on the relationship between the Middle East and Britain, France and the United States, with the last being most prominent in my analysis. These three countries represent the powerful and imperial west that colonized or exercised imperial control over most of the Middle East at one point or another. Not only that, they still interfere with the politics of the region. There is a serious attempt in this novel to rewrite the history of the United States as blameless in the contemporary political mess. Second, the debate of change focuses on the incorrigible Middle East due to its geography and religion; I will explain how this is represented and what makes it worthy of discussion. Third, I explore the rhetoric of the American neo-Orientalist discourse in this novel. This discourse is embodied in the idea of change and values of the American team sent to the Middle East. I also investigate this discourse’s ideas of Islamic threat and anti-Semitism in the Middle East and highlight its

failure to register similar western patriarchal practices portrayed in this novel as normal practices.

Relationship between the Middle East and the West

The relationship between the west, the US in particular, and the Middle East is complex, contradictory and unfathomable in Buckley's novel. Uncle Sam, who sends Florence to change the Wasabia and Matar, admits to the enigma of this region and his inability to understand its nature. In this novel, the US relies on oil and financial investments from the Middle East. Meanwhile, it condemns certain cultural practices and dictatorships in this region while supporting these regimes and practices in one way or another. In other words, the United States considers this region as a vital geography of political and economic importance, but it concurrently claims a civilizing mission by introducing democracy and western values as the solution to salvage this region from self-destruction while it neglects to conform to these same democratic measures in maintaining its interests. Moreover, the narrative claims that the events in the Middle East have immediate effects on presidential elections in the United States. Nonetheless, the narrative contradicts all of these efforts by asserting the impossibility of change in the Middle East, and it rebukes political candidates in a presidential primary race for spending valuable time in discussing Middle Eastern matters "instead of detailing their bold visions for America's future" (Buckley 27).

In this narrative, the Middle East seems important and insignificant at the same time. How is this conflict in representations resolved? This oxymoronic statement is normalized by the American neo-Orientalist discourse. The Middle East is represented as capable of being two contradictory things at the same time. In Chapter One, I delineated

how American neo-Orientalists of the Hoover Institution are consistent in presenting two conflicting ideas about the same topic. American neo-Orientalist discourse champions and adopts spreading democracy in the Middle East and yet it is anxious and fearful that political Islamic parties will keep winning in free, democratic elections. In this novel, this issue is evident throughout the narrative as its characters simultaneously advocate and fear the cultural and political change they seek to bring to the region. Buckley's narrative depicts the Middle East as menacing, wild and haphazard, and this representation implicitly urges for western intervention to contain this imminent threat. Nevertheless, western superiority is highlighted and admired. For instance, the novel portrays the immense power of Israel and the west in two ways: by claiming that one Israeli fighter could destroy the entire air fleet of Wasabia while eating breakfast, and stating that there are more western warships in Matar's sea than fish (Buckley 102). If this is the case, why is there an Islamic danger if western powers could wipe out their enemies so easily? This is an example of one of the several contradictions that exist throughout American neo-Orientalist discourse. Such an approach leaves readers more confused about the Middle East than ever, which is likely one of the goals of the American neo-Orientalist discourse. This systematic dissemination of misconceptions is one of the main tools of western dominance of the Middle East.

The novel shows that European monopoly of the region is never absent, but it does not consider this monopoly is malevolent although it is incompetent. It shows that before the American presence in this region, western powers competed in the Middle East to gain political control and subsequently economic and cultural hegemony. This

competition of dominance over the Middle East causes unsettled historic defeats among western powers.

France had never really gotten over its humiliation at the hands of Churchill and his cartographers in 1922. “Revenge is a dish best served cold” may be a Spanish proverb, but as La Rochefoucauld put it, “How pleasant it is to cram cold dead snails down the throat of an Englishman.” Here was France’s chance to even an ancient insult and, with any luck, inflict a little collateral damage on America. (Buckley 61)

In this novel, the narrative shows that France still feels defeated in the Middle East by Britain and the United States. The novel shows that these western nations never ask Arabs or Muslims about their opinions as they gain control over geography, politics and economies; the locals are the least of their concern. Buckley’s novel retells the modern western competition over the Middle East. The narrative criticizes France’s economic interest in the Orient as materialistic and empty. Therefore, France is ridiculed for its interest in oil discounts from Matar, but US elites, who want oil and money from Wasabia, are not mocked like France. The Middle East is not only a battleground for western powers, it is also a creation of France and Britain, whose mess is inherited by the United States. Accordingly, the novel suggests that the United States is not to blame in handling this enigma. In an interview for *The Atlantic* conducted by Benjamin Healy, Buckley states his belief that France and Britain are the culprits in the current ordeals in the Middle East:

In my reading of David Fromkin, it was really the British and the French who brought about the modern Middle East. So when I see the French

adopting a high-minded attitude, it really does fry my fanny, since this is the Middle East they helped to create. And Churchill was a key player. Churchill created these countries. And now we live with them. Then we started screwing things up in our turn. And here we are. The Middle East conflict is now the central fact of our geopolitical lives, and I think we're stuck with it for the very long haul. We had nine years off between the end of the Cold War and 9/11. Think about nine years of peace. Now we're back at war. (Healy, "Veiled Optimism")

First of all, Buckley equates Arabs' and Muslims' identities with current geopolitics in the Middle East, disregarding centuries of Arab/Muslim existence and civilization, and he evinces this point in this quotation and in the novel as well. Second, he calls European colonization of the Middle East "creation," a clear mischaracterization of years of exploitation and criminal activities which concurs with the American neo-Orientalists of Hoover Institution by denying that colonialism has had negative effects on colonized nations. Third, he believes the United States has to be involved constantly in the Middle East, but he does not explain why. He seems to believe that the United States is the rightful inheritor of European powers and therefore it has to take the reins in the Middle East. In fact, there is an overwhelming sense of western entitlement to this geography.

The novel shows that there is confusion in the United States over the situation in Matar after Maliq's revolution. The American reaction to Maliq's revolution is wondering "who lost Matar?" Who owned it in the first place? Note the sense of ownership despite the fact that the narrative mentions that 2/3 of Americans do not know where Matar is (Buckley 162). However, they know that "filthy Wasabis" with the help

of “perfidious frogs” [the French] have taken control over Matar (Buckley 162). The urgency to respond to this seizes the American public: “Americans by a distinct majority responded that their government must do ‘something’ about it, as long as it wouldn’t cost too much and could be done from thirty-five thousand feet. There was little appetite at this point for another Pentagon ‘boots on the ground’ intervention in the region” (Buckley 162). The question is, “what is the point of a military strike?” If Buckley believes that the United States is “stuck with” the Middle East, why should it be an air strike without a substantial presence? In *Moonlight Hotel*, “the American sin” is defined as the departure of the United States’ army too soon after military intervention (Anderson 390). Buckley’s novel in contrast seems to mock military strikes without “boots on the ground” because the author believes that the United States is tied with the Middle East as he states in the *Atlantic* interview. Also, the novel encourages American presence in the Middle East and Florence’s mission is the best example.

The novel suggests that in the Middle East, there are no logical alternatives to this “illogical political entity” (Buckley 40). “Where there are no alternatives, there are no problems” as Charles de Gaulle tells Delame-Noir, an official French representative in Matar and an advisor to Maliq (Buckley 243). This seems to summarize the political situation in the Middle East. The west has no alternatives in handling Arab/Muslim maniacs, as Maliq is once described (Buckley 243). Florence is sent on a phony mission that aims to boost the investments of American elites. She is not really sent to spread democracy or change any wrong cultural practice because there is nothing that could be changed, something she admits at the end of the novel. The Middle East will remain as it is. Bobby convinces Florence not to save anyone, stating that “this is the Middle East!

The cradle of destabilization, mother of all tar babies, the planet's longest-runnin' argument! Don't you understand that since the dawn of time, startin' with the Garden of Eden, *nothing has ever gone right here? And nothing ever will go right here*" (Buckley 113). The last definitive sentence asserts the idea of absence of logical options in this incomprehensible region. The "tar baby" phrase is very offensive to say the least.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'tar-baby' means "the doll smeared with tar, set to catch Brer Rabbit...; hence an object of censure; a sticky problem, or one which is only aggravated by attempts to solve it"; it is also "a derogatory term for a black person" (*OED*). In the *Atlantic* interview, Buckley uses the word "stuck" which recalls the tar-baby imagery. The two connotations are at play in this novel. First, it means that the Middle East is a place to be avoided, as it is a perpetual problem. Also, the origins of its problems are immanent. This is surprising to me because Buckley states in his interview for the *Atlantic* that the Middle East's problems emerge from its "creation" by mainly France and Britain, yet Buckley also seems to believe in innate failings of the Middle East. Certainly colonization and division of the Middle East add another dimension to the current socioeconomic and geopolitical struggles, which Buckley fails to acknowledge in his narrative. In other words, the novel suggests that no matter how sincere and honest the west's attempt to help this region to civilize, the Middle East will regress to its original backward mold.

The second connotation of "tar baby" is related to oil. Since the Middle East is known for producing oil, Buckley manipulates this image to make it refer to Arabs as covered with oil. This is a racist expression as the *OED* definition indicates, and it is what Buckley deploys to envision Arabs as sullied and unclean. Both connotations of the "tar-

baby” are horrendous as the first ignores the crimes of the colonizing project and the second showcases Buckley’s racist language.

According to Buckley, the Middle East will never change from its ahistorical sociopolitical structure and will remain as an enigma; therefore, there is no alternative but to contain and control it, and Orientalists are needed to infiltrate and reinterpret it in order to render it accessible and readable. It is just like what an English traveler does with the Arabic proverb: “*Dung beetles cannot crawl into shut mouths*” (Buckley 209). He translates it as “*You never have to apologize for something you never said*” (Buckley 209). The transformation of this proverb is symbolic of what the Orientalist discourse does with the knowledge of the Orient. Buckley perhaps finds that the unpleasant imagery and vague wisdom of this proverb resemble the geography and culture of the Orient. However, western revision renders the imagery and wisdom pleasant and lucid, so that is what he offers. Western civilization is needed to save the Orient or at least make it understandable. Furthermore, Orientalists are needed to speak for the Orient because it lacks the ability to speak comprehensibly or sustain a civilized vision for itself. Nonetheless, De Gaulle’s wisdom is not the only thing needed to understanding the politics of the Middle East.

Mapping and Change

The novel suggests that the Middle East’s map and geography are haphazard and illogical. In essence, the novel incriminates the British Empire’s mapping of this region and insists that Churchill’s mapping in particular has had immediate effects on the current events. It seems that the United States’ mission in the Middle East is to amend and emend European mistakes in “creating” this region:

Desalination was always a hot topic in Wasabia, owing to its geographical peculiarity. The country was entirely landlocked. Its lack of a single foot of shoreline was grating historical vestige, the result of a moment of bibulous pique on the part of Winston Churchill when he drew up Wasabia's modern borders on a cocktail napkin at his club in London.

(Buckley xi-xii)

While this implicates Churchill, it is also a hint of how powerful the west is. In other words, if the British Empire could draw the map of the Middle East on a napkin, the United States could reshape this napkin map in accordance with an American vision and bring concrete changes without leaving a mess behind.

The novel also implies that there is not a well-documented history of the Middle Eastern countries, hence the napkin map, and that before the colonial era, the Middle East was just a desert that contained hostile tribes fighting over water territories and revenge battles that lasted for hundreds of years. The western presence of the likes of Churchill, Mussolini and de Gaulle gives these countries meaning and presence on the world map even if this "creation" is not ideal. The Middle Eastern countries do not know what it is like to join "the civilized nations" of the world (Buckley 174). Therefore, the napkin drawing of the Middle East indicates this illogical and enigmatic geography will remain tumultuous and precarious while the west has only to "manage reality" in this region (Buckley 19).

The novel uses mainly fictional geographical names to refer to Arab countries while he uses real names to refer to western countries. Giving fictional names to Arab/Muslim countries is a rising trend in American fiction and TV. In the context of TV

shows, Alsultany believes that “[f]ictionalizing the country of the terrorist can give a show more latitude in creating salacious story lines that might be criticized if identified with an actual country” (Alsultany 26). Buckley employs the same tactic although in his interview he explains which countries he refers to by Wasabia and Matar:

So I kept staring at the name “Wahabbi,” and then “Wasabi”—I must have gone to a Japanese restaurant the night before—and then suddenly “Wasabia” came to me. “Matar” is based on Qatar, which is pronounced “Cutter.” I became amused during the war coverage by people like Peter Jennings who would say “Cutter! Cutter!” so I thought “Matar” would be fun. (Healy, “Veiled Optimism”)

Buckley’s humorous explanation aside, these fictional names have two important connotations. First, they symbolize the instability of the Middle East—changing names indicate chaotic and unclear geographies—while also implying that the west, referred to by its actual names, is stable. If the modern map of the Middle East is drawn on a “napkin,” Buckley seems to believe that he can rename its countries. Second, these fictional geographical names could indicate that these two geographies refer to the whole Middle East. There are a lot of countries in the Middle East, but they are all the same according to the narrative.

In this novel, the Middle East is portrayed as unstable, bad place to be in. After the political situation in Matar becomes unstable and violence escalates because of Maliq’s revolution, Florence laments that Matar is “starting to feel more like the Middle East” (Buckley 129). Bobby reassures Florence, telling her not to worry about the ongoing revolution in Matar because it is normal: “We’re gonna be fine. I’ve been

through more Middle East coups than you've had hot breakfasts" (Buckley 153). The Middle East is presented as both fickle in embracing new revolutions and unwilling to espouse western changes. At one point, the Middle East is depicted as static and recalcitrant and then it is described as changing and shifty. Its stasis seems to be associated with religion and culture and its unpredictability is associated with politics. It does not matter what type of government exists in the Middle East; Arab/Muslim culture is still dominant, and this is the source of the problem for the American neo-Orientalist discourse. The meanings of certain western values like liberalism have different trajectories in the Middle East. In this regard, George enlightens readers in a nutshell: "They may be liberal in Matar, but they're still Arabs" (Buckley 110). According to the narrative, the instability of this region is reflected in the absence of lucid meanings of values.

The phrase "Middle East" is not a term used exclusively to refer to this geography. It carries a lot of other meanings in this novel. It is used to explain the enigma of unpredictability, barbarism, violence, extremism and backwardness. The Middle East is "a region that has known nothing but strife and sectarian hatred for thousands of years" (Buckley 88). This negates the whole history of Islam and the history of the whole region. Nonetheless, this phrase is sometimes used to indicate loss of meaning. Rick Renard expresses the strangeness of this region and its refusal to be bound by common sense or international laws like the Geneva Conventions, and the response to him is simply: "It's the Middle East....What can you expect" (Buckley 84). This mess and unpredictability call for a western empowered change.

The type of change that is aimed for in Matar and Wasabia in the discourse of this novel is partly summarized in Florence's televised speech to the world. She exhorts Arab/Muslims to embrace change:

I speak from inside Matar. An iron veil has descended upon the country...Women are being tortured and executed. But their spirit is unbroken. They cry out to the civilized nations of the world. Do not allow the forces of corrupted Islam, which make a mockery of a great religion and of its founder, the prophet Mohammed. They cry out to you: Freedom! Freedom! Freedom! (Buckley 163-64)

Despite her knowledge of Islam, all the reformation measures that she champions do not stem from Islamic teachings or traditions. She is inspired by Edmund Burke, Dante, Lawrence of Arabia, her colonialist grandfather and a CIA assassin, Bobby. Most of them do not have an objective perception of Islam. To the contrary, some of them are offensive towards Islam and Muslims. Not only that, she aspires for Arab women's emancipation while her conceptual models are not female and her American team is devoid of other women. Her motto in face of the evil of the Middle East is Burke's wisdom: "[a]ll that is required for evil to succeed is for good men to do nothing" (Buckley 37). In addition, Florence exploits her friendship with Nazrah, who is one of Prince Bawad's wives, and betrays her trust as Florence writes reports about her meetings with Nazrah to the State Department in the hope that Nazrah may divulge important information about Wasabia. Nazrah is only valuable to United States as a source of inside information of the ruling family of Wasabia, as she is helped neither by Florence nor by the U.S. when she is abused by her husband in the United States and then murdered in Wasabia.

In the Near East Affairs (NEA), Florence submits a proposal titled “FEMALE EMANCIPATION AS A MEANS OF ACHIEVING LONG-TERM POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE NEAR EAST: AN OPERATIONAL PROPOSAL” (Buckley 18). Charles Duckett, her boss, does not like her proposal because it might foment revolution and revolution is not good for business. Florence thinks the role of the NEA is to change the Middle East, but Duckett corrects this perception: “[o]ur job is to manage reality” (Buckley 19). Between “change” and “manage” lies the destiny of the Middle East, but what is really the difference between the perceptions of Florence and Duckett? While Duckett does not believe in change, Florence embraces it in the beginning of the novel; later on, she reaches the conclusion that change in the Middle East is futile. Here, she is the mouthpiece of the author. As he explains in his interview, Buckley hopes that his work could contribute in bringing change to the Middle East and he believes that if Arabs could become less of who they are, it would be a huge leap toward civilization:

There is a serious idea behind this book, which is to empower Arab women. It is by no means certain that they would be less bellicose or less anti-Semitic or less fanatical, but if they were even a slight improvement over their male counterparts, the situation would inevitably get better. And the suffering of those Arab women is heart-wrenching. I came across a quote from a University of Chicago anthropologist, who’s pretty left-wing, but a very bright guy, and he makes the argument that a lot of these women don’t want to be liberated. I say, well, fair enough, but some of them do, and the ones who want to keep the veil and go on living that life would at least have the choice of continuing to do so. But I bet you there

are a lot of women who would throw the bloody things away and start dancing. (Healy, "Veiled Optimism")

Just as the Middle East is caught between "change" and "manage," Arab women are caught between two male westerners deciding for them, and each is certain that his assessment is the right one. Buckley and the anthropologist believe that they could speak for Arab women, as they know what is best for them. What I find amusing is that Buckley's idea of happiness equals unveiling. He only observes abaaya as oppressive and demeaning, which may be true in some cases, but this is not enough to condemn the whole Middle East for it. By the same token, unveiling could be oppressive and humiliating as well.

The narrative is invested in exposing the oppressive elements of Islam in the Middle East. Besides the veil, the narrative tries to show that Islam endorses mutilation of the female body. Muslim females are oppressed by mutilation and physical punishment. Muslim husbands keep their wives docile sexually by clitoridectomy and physically by having them witness constant punishment. Clitoridectomy is, according to Laila, Gazzir's wife: "[o]ne of Islam's prouder achievements" (Buckley 65). Matari men take their women to see public punishments in order to put fear in their hearts. Bobby, disguised as a Matari, informs the Matari policemen that he has three wives and he tells them that he takes his youngest wife to see public punishments first hand to give her a lesson to remember (Buckley 167). The Matari policemen admire his attitude with women and they let him pass the checkpoint without asking for his identification papers (Buckley 167). This suggests that being oppressive of women signals a high social status in Matar. Besides, the novel suggests that in accordance with Islamic teachings, women are

punished for laughing (Buckley 160). Needless to say, there is not a single bit of evidence of this punishment in the Qur'an or Hadith. However, Buckley believes that laughing is the best revenge against Islam (Healy, "Veiled Optimism").

While he advances the narrative of a benighted religion in the Middle East, Buckley fails again to register sexist moments in his own novel despite his claim of championing women's rights. For example, Bobby is fired from the CIA not "for calling in that cruise missile strike on the Indonesian ambassador in Dar" but "for screwing the wife of the U.S. ambassador to Jordan" (Buckley 203). George defends Bobby and incriminates the ambassador's wife: "[s]he was notorious...The woman was insatiable. She'd have sex with the elevator operator if the ride was more than three floors" (Buckley 203). On the one hand, the narrative ridicules Islam for clitoridectomy, which is admittedly practiced by few Muslims to limit women's sexuality, but it does not take place in Saudi Arabia or Qatar, the two main targets of Buckley's criticism. Moreover, the practice does exist in different cultures and existed at one point in the west. As Morayo Atoki indicates: "In the West, female circumcision can be traced to the nineteenth century when it was carried out for psycho-sexual reasons" (229).¹² The narrative attempts to pin this issue on Islam without mentioning the earlier Western connection. On the other hand, the narrative suggests that Bobby cannot be blamed because some women cannot control their sexual desires. Oppressed females as sexual objects is a theme of Buckley's in this novel, but he condemns the sexist practices of Arabs while ignoring the sexist actions of Americans.

¹² See Janet Ussher's *Women's Madness: Misogyny as Mental Illness* (1991).

By the same token, the novel implies that Gazzir's insatiable sexuality is not justifiable while Bobby's actions are, as Bobby is considered the victim of a woman's seduction. Laila says jokingly that her husband's autobiography should be called "The Seven Pillows of Wisdom," gesturing to T.E. Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Islam* (Buckley 93). Here is a possible difference between Gazzir and Bobby. The narrative depicts Gazzir's sexuality not only abnormal and *Oriental* but also in excess of preceding examples: "[w]ithin days, snippets of film taken in the late Gazzir Bin Haz's 'summer' residence at Um-beseir had made their way onto internet and television. Canal Quatre in Paris aired a documentary about the emir's harem that would have made Casanova, the authors of Kama Sutra and, quite possibly, the Marquis de Sade blush" (Buckley 159). Now, the difference between Gazzir and Bobby is demarcated. Gazzir cannot control his sexual desires just like characters in *One Thousand and One Nights* while Bobby can restrain his desires like any rational western man.

Uncle Sam cannot distinguish between Arab women in Matar because of the veil and Florence informs him that "[t]hat's what we're trying to change" (Buckley 87). That is why she is "doing God's work over there" in Uncle Sam's understanding (Buckley 87). What is God's work after all? (I will discuss the idea of "God's work" further later in this chapter.) Is it the emancipation of Arab women? If this is so, Florence is tricked by wealthy investors and former politicians to go to the Middle East with a team that has a "sexist," a womanizer, an Orientalist, and a greedy publicist who works for North Korea and ends up working for Wasabia (Buckley 33). Also, she succumbs to the patriarchal tones and treatments of Bobby and Uncle Sam, which Buckley does not register because

western men are not patriarchal or chauvinists, and she likes “being rescued” by men while she tries to emancipate Arab women from Arab men (Buckley 149).

Buckley uses the veil/abaaya as a symbol for the uncivilized, harsh Islamic rules. According to him, the cultural change in the Middle East must begin with unveiling. The veil is linked to imminent threat in the novel. Florence fears for her life after seeing a dozen veiled women when she meets Laila in a mall (Buckley 148). This meeting takes place before Maliq’s revolution. After the Islamic revolution, Florence likens Matar to caged space, thus implying the return of the veil although it was never absent (Buckley 163). Remember, in the narrative, killing and punishment are not done in a clandestine fashion and Mataris do not need an abaaya to carry out any assassination. This terrible possibility is invoked for western readers only to think of the danger of the abaaya in a western setting. Interestingly, Florence wears one later the novel; she has a gun hidden under her abaaya, but the readers share her fear and anxiety as her life is in danger.

Veil/Abaaya is described in negative terms and contexts unless it is used to save Bobby and Florence from fundamentalist Islamic authorities. Florence uses the abaaya as leverage when she talks to Maliq and she challenges him to find her and Bobby among 2.5 million of veiled Matari women (Buckley 156). De facto, without veil, Florence and Bobby would not survive in Matar when they run as fugitives. Also, Bobby saves Florence from public execution by wearing an abaaya. Despite these instances, the narrative deliberately ignores the power of the veil as a means of control that leads to agency. Simplification of the historical, cultural and religious meanings of the veil is not a new element in neo-Orientalism.

American Neo-Orientalists Meet Classical Orientalists

There are three aspects of American neo-Orientalist discourse of character portrayals, imageries, language, and clothes that pervade *Florence of Arabia*. First, the main characters are portrayed as cognoscenti on the Orient. The main characters in this novel are basically Orientalists at heart. Their interests in the Orient emerge from different contexts and they eventually end up collaborating in a mission to the Middle East. Florence is presented as a humanitarian, and apolitical Orientalist who cares for the well-being of all humanity.

The narrative laments wasting Florence's energy on useless matters as "her knowledge of the Middle East would be" expedient in a handful of Orientalist institutions in Washington D.C. (Buckley 20). Here, Buckley acknowledges the importance of these institutions in creating meanings of the Orient and he basically tips his hat to their dedication as he chooses those places most befitting his heroine. As an undergraduate student at Yale University, Florence chooses Arabic as her major. She is drawn to the exotic Orient from her youth. She "had grown up fascinated by her grandfather's [who serves for Mussolini's army in its colonizing expeditions in Africa and the Middle East] tales of the Middle East" (Buckley 11). Her fascination for the Orient continues when she marries a Wasabi [Hamzir] and has a boy from this marriage. Here, she is like Desdemona who falls in love with Othello after listening to him telling her father about his battles. Like Desdemona, Florence marries Hamzir and they have a boy who never appears in the novel, symbolizing a futile relationship with the Orient. This marriage is doomed, but she is rescued from the laws of Wasabia by the American Embassy in Kaffa, Wasabia. In the American Embassy, she is blamed for not reading a pamphlet, written by

experts in the American Embassy, “titled ‘What American Women Should Understand When They Marry a Wasabi National’” (Buckley 12). This pamphlet essentializes the men of Wasabia and is symbolic of the Orientalist discourse. The novel implies that there is no need to have a direct experience with Wasabis because this report will tell its readers what makes the identity of Wasabis as if they are some strange species observed in the wild from a distance. The assumption is that if Florence had read it before marrying Hamzir, she would not have married him or at least would have been better prepared. Analogously, if you read neo-Orientalist writings, you will understand why the Middle East is always the problem. After her failed marriage, she starts to work for “a Middle Eastern foundation” (Buckley 12). Then she applies for “a Foreign Service” post and is “posted to Chad” (Buckley 12). “After 9/11, it was thought that her skills might be better suited elsewhere at State, so she moved to Near East Affairs” (Buckley 12). This speaks volume to the shift of discourse post 9/11 in American neo-Orientalism. Florence knows the Orient before 9/11, but her knowledge of it becomes urgently valuable after 9/11. Her entire relationship with the Orient, from memories of her grandfather to her education and finally her marriage to an Arab becomes *visible* coinciding with the visibility of Arabs and Muslims after 9/11.

George’s interest in the Orient does not run in the family; instead, his fascination with the Orient is inspired by a famous British Orientalist: George’s “model was Sir Richard Burton, the nineteenth century polymath-explorer who spoke thirty-five languages and dreamed in seventeen. One of the most daring adventurers of all time, Burton was a curious role model for the agoraphobic George” (Buckley 14). George speaks 12 languages and he tries to catch up with Burton. Burton is an inspiration not

only to George but to Bobby as well. Bobby Thibodeaux wears a thobe (a modern national dress in a lot of Arab countries) and uses cosmetics to pass as an Arab, reenacting Burton's use of kohl and Arabic clothing in his journey to Mecca and Medina. Not only that, Buckley thanks Burton in his acknowledgements at the end of the novel (Buckley 255). If Buckley's Florence is the American version of T.E. Lawrence, Bobby is the American version of Burton. In his interview, Buckley explains why he chooses Bobby: "I wanted a Southerner, because they're such good killers" (Healy, "Veiled Optimism"). In the novel, Bobby does not fall short of Buckley's description.

Rick Renard calls himself "Renard of Arabia, helping to liberate nearly a billion veiled women" (Buckley 88). Renard wants "to bring about permanent stability in the Middle East" (Buckley 30). Dubbing himself as "Renard of Arabia" gives him the authoritative tone and power of a single western figure who can bring civilization to millions of people. From the interview, we learn that Buckley likes his sketch of Renard: "It's fun putting him in different situations and seeing how he acts...I think he's a fun American type, the hustling PR guy who would work for anyone as long as there's some money in it. But in the end, he's also got a heart....He's a cheerful scoundrel. There's something very American about that" (Healy, "Veiled Optimism").

Second, *Arabian Nights syndrome* is used as a trope that serves the narrative without the novel laboring to deliver new representations of the Orient. *One Thousand and One Nights* is used as a leitmotif to indicate that the Orient can never escape its past. In fact, the Orient exists forever unchanged in the pages of this literary work. It is always invoked as "a model" for the current Middle East's culture and traditions (Buckley 23). Uncle Sam tells Florence: "I know—given the region we're dealing with, why don't we

use the *One Thousand and One Nights* as a model. I'll be the djinn in the lamp. Ask me three things that only the good old U.S. government could provide" (Buckley 23). Indeed, Buckley states in his interview that this work contains all Arab/Muslims' traditions, cultures and even religion, and this is probably why he reads it before writing this novel. He also reads Bernard Lewis' *What Went Wrong* to understand the Middle East and admits his unfamiliarity with this region and its vast cultures and traditions: "I didn't spend months in the Middle East researching. I've been to the Middle East, but my research has been mostly literary. I re-read the *One Thousand and One Nights*. I read David Fromkin's book *A Peace to End All Peace*, which is still, I think, the book to read if you want to find out how fucked up the Middle East got" (Healy, "Veiled Optimism"). In Chapter One, I have demonstrated the flaws in Lewis' argument in *What Went Wrong*. Here, Buckley is not an average reader, since he is an alumnus of Yale University and a successful, prolific author. Nevertheless, he is not immune to American neo-Orientalist discourse. In fact, he becomes an active promoter of this very discourse.

The novel attributes a timelessness to Middle-Eastern geography and its people. If the last time a woman walked into a meeting of men in Wasabia was when "dinosaurs were still walkin' the earth," when is it expected that the Middle East or at least Saudi Arabia will catch up to our modern times? (Buckley 110-11). Buckley suggests that all one needs to know about the Orient and write with authority about it can be found in a centuries-old work of literature and a small selection of Orientalist texts.

Buckley seizes every chance to use *One Thousand and One Nights* themes in his work. In his acknowledgement, he thanks his friends and editors with "[a] thousand and one thanks" and "a one thousand and two thanks" (Buckley 255). In the novel, Prince

Maliq, who is a car racer, is entertained in France by a “one-act play entitled *The One Thousand and One Laps*...the dashing thirteenth-century Moorish camel racer who saves Islam by beating the evil English crusader, Bertram the Unwashed, to the finish line” (Buckley 62). Another example is when Rick chooses “*Cher Azade*” to be the title of the TV show. He explains: “It means ‘Dear Azade,’ a play on Scheherazade, the chick from the *Arabian Nights* story” (Buckley 64). The show makes fun of women wearing veils. Rick chooses this show’s material from the *Book of Hajoom*, which has “all these bullshit rules” of Wasabia (Buckley 65). This book lists “the religious rules,” and here the mockery is directed at Islam and Arab culture (Buckley 65). The narrative invokes the idea that any problem in any Muslim society comes from a religious text. In the Origin of Difference,” Dietrich Jung explains this trend in Orientalist discourse:

The modern image of Islam has been, until now, dominated by the essentialist assumption according to which Islamic societies rest on a unified and unchangeable codex of religious, juridical, and moral rules, supposedly regulating the life of both the individual Muslim and Islamic community in all its aspects. Presenting the Muslim religion as a holistically closed system, as a social and cultural unity resisting historical change, this essentialist image has trickled down into society at large. Even more important, it has become a building block of globally shared public knowledge about Islam in the Western and Muslim world alike. (16)

The phrase “shared public knowledge” is indeed an apt description of the discourse on Islam and the Middle East. The neo-Orientalist discourse builds this “shared public

knowledge” and it is therefore imperative to discuss Islam and the Middle East outside of this paradigm in order to engage in an intellectual debate.

Third, the Islamic threat is almost always present in the American neo-Orientalist discourse post 9/11 in both political and literary writings, and Buckley’s narrative promotes this idea. The barbarity of Wasabia starts with a religious and tribal pact, which is Buckley’s version of the Saudi religious pact discussed in Chapter One. The novel indicates that Sheik Abdulaabdullah and Mustafa Q’um agreed to join forces almost three centuries ago. Mustafa would agree to the rule of the Hajoom family, and the Hajoom family would adopt *mukfellow*, a rigid and fundamentalist sect of Islam, as the only religion of Wasabia. But even if the reader assumes the utter evil of this religious pact, we still should not be able to justify extending the same judgment to other Islamic societies, as the novel appears to do. In addition, Buckley represents Islam as an unforgiving and intolerant system of beliefs. In the novel, Muslims respond to Reverend Roscoe G. Holybone’s description of Prophet Muhammed as “degenerate” with missile threats and fatwas calling for Holybone’s execution (Buckley 27). Buckley seems to be alluding to violent reactions from some Muslim societies to what they consider offensive representations of Islam. Buckley gives no indication, however, that any other religious group would respond violently to religious insults; he pathologizes only Muslims. A look at scholarship on the well-known Danish cartoons controversy will show that this kind of exclusive pathologizing of Muslims fueled the event. Gottschalk and Greenberg state how the editor of the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* that published offensive caricatures of Muhammad refused previously to publish an offensive caricature of Jesus

“because it would ‘provoke an outcry’ among Christians” (2). Then they ask legitimate, illuminating questions that show similar responses exist in the west:

Why the sudden amnesia about the vicious depictions of Jews in political cartoons from Nazi Germany? Why the rarity of comparison to global Christian outrage regarding the release of the cinematic portrayal of Jesus in Martin Scorsese’s *The Last Temptation of Christ* in 1989 or similar protest against the satiric critique of Christianity in *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* in 1979? Scorsese’s film led not only bomb threats at theaters in the United States but also bans in many nations. In another parallel, at least nine European nations today outlaw the public denial of the Holocaust or the diminishment of its actuality. Instead of placing the controversy among these similar issues, most of the American media immediately depicted the debate as yet another emblem of Muslim difference and Islamic threat. (Gottschalk and Greenberg 145)

Their brilliant study focuses on offensive caricature representations of Islam and Muslims but their take here is applicable to Buckley’s representation. His narrative attempts to show extremism as a permanent aspect of Islam unlike any other religion especially Christianity.

In the novel, this kind of fanaticism earns Wasabia the title “no-fun zone” because its fun activities include “beheading, amputation, flogging, blinding and having your tongue cut out for offenses that in other religions would earn you a lecture from the rabbi, five Hail Marys from a priest and, for Episcopalians, a plastic pink flamingo on your front lawn” (Buckley 43). Moreover, the novel shows there is a discrepancy between

Islam and Judeo-Christianity in handling sins. Therefore, “[a] Google search using the key phrases “Wasabia” and “La Dolce Vita” [“the sweet or good life” in Italian] results in no matches” (Buckley 43). Ironically, *La Dolce Vita* [1960] was a successful Italian comedy movie that won an Oscar award but the Vatican condemned it and it was censored in some European countries for its offensive portrayal of Jesus (French, “Italian Cinema”). Buckley invokes the phrase and the movie to demonstrate the absence of “fun” in Wasabia because Islam controls all of its aspects. Unlike Wasabia, Matar is a tolerant place: “[h]ere, truly, is Islam with a happy face” because its “approach to matters religious stood in contrast with that across the border in Wasabia” (Buckley 43). Later, of course, Maliq’s Islamic revolution makes Matar a copy of Wasabia.

The narrative links Maliq’s Islamic revolution to the Crusade era. Maliq is proud of his family’s history in fighting crusaders, to the extent that in his coronation ceremony he wears “the na’q’al, the lustrously bejeweled ceremonial dagger that, legend had it, had been used by Sheik Alik ‘The Righteous’ Makmeh to castrate five hundred English crusaders. (In deference to Matar’s new ally France, the dagger used to castrate 150 French knights was not on display.)” (Buckley 220). Now, the narrative shows that the barbarity of Wasabia and Matar is not different from Muslims’ alleged barbarity in the Crusades’ era. The constant barbarity of Wasabia is accentuated as the narrative portrays this as unacceptable and unprecedented while speaking with an admiring tone of the number of assassinations that Delame-Noir carries out. This is not the only incident in which the narrative endeavors to mitigate the atrocities of westerners while vehemently condemning and repudiating certain cultural practices of Arabs/Muslims. Delame-Noir tries to persuade Maliq not to become like Wasabis: “If they [Wasabis] want to chop off

the women's heads and make the bastinado, then at least it's happening in Wasabia, where they expect this barbarism, not here in the former Switzerland of the Gulf, eh?" (Buckley 172). Delame-Noir is the evil French spy, and according to Buckley his name gives away his personality: "Dark soul" (Healy, "Veiled Optimism"). Nonetheless, Delame-Noir cannot tolerate the barbarity of Wasabia. If the "Dark soul" advises Maliq against doing any evil, what should the readers make of Maliq and other Arabs/Muslims?

The novel attributes the radicalism of Islam to the prophet of Islam and this calls for a comparison between Prophet Muhammed and Jesus. Bobby describes the difference between Jesus and other religious leaders:

Most of the founders of your major world religions were playboys of some kind before they found God. Then one day they hear his voice, and there's a flash of blindin' light, and the next thing you know, the hallelujah chorus is singin' and they've got a billion followers. When you think of it, Jesus was really the only one who founded a religion without first going through a young-'n'-crazy phase. He can't have had that much fun bein' a carpenter. (Buckley 106)

To invoke my discussion in Chapter One, since Buckley relied on Lewis' *What Went Wrong* to research Islam and the Middle East before writing this novel, I find him here replicating the comparison that Lewis started, and which has influenced other neo-Orientalists since. Comparison between Muhammad and Jesus is not the only theme that Buckley imbibes from Lewis. Buckley also promotes the idea that the Middle East has inherited Nazism's ideology regarding Jews. Note that Buckley shows a ministry in Wasabia specializing in condemning Israel, but the narrative considers the agenda of

Orientalist institutions in Washington harmless and useful toward the Middle East. After Florence and Rick try to tackle the issue of anti-Semitism in the Middle East in one of the episodes, “[t]he Grand Imam of Muk, the highest religious authority in all Wasabia issued a fatwa calling for the assassination—‘the more bloody, the more pleasing in the eyes of God’—of the entire staff of TVMatar” (Buckley 94). Also, “The Wasabi Ministry for the General and Permanent Disapproval of Israel promptly took its case to the United Nations Security Council” (Buckley 95).

The narrative denounces TV shows that are anti-Semitic and it tries to demonstrate to western readers how the Middle East is dedicated to the cause of Anti-Semitism and false representation of Americans. After Maliq’s revolution, TVMatar broadcasts “comedies about greedy Israelis and fat infidel Americans” (Buckley 161). Evidently, Buckley believes that his criticism in this novel will alleviate anti-Semitic practices in the Middle East and it will contribute to the idea of change in this region, while he is offensive to Arab/Muslims and Islam throughout this novel and continues his tirade in the interview about the novel.

In a short biography of Buckley at end of the novel, this novel is described as “his first and probably last Middle East comedy” (Buckley 257). Buckley reiterates this in the *Atlantic* interview: “It’s my first, and probably last, Middle East comedy” (Healy, “Veiled Optimism”). I am glad that this will be his last representation of the Middle East. Since his trajectory is based for the most part on Lewis and *One Thousand and One Nights*, the outcome of his perspective on the Middle East is neo-Orientalist. Buckley believes that although his novel may seem satirical in tone, it still carries a serious message.

Moonlight Hotel: Negotiating Military Intervention

Anderson is an American novelist and “journalist who’s covered conflicts in Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Northern Ireland, Chechnya and Sudan” (Davies, “‘Lawrence’ of Arabia”). He is best known for his first novel *Triage* (1998), which has been translated into eight languages and been made into a movie, and his award winning biography, *Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (2013). He was a war correspondent before he began writing fiction. *Moonlight Hotel* tells a story of a Middle Eastern country torn by civil wars and tribal feuds and two westerners trying to save it from self-destruction. Unlike *Florence of Arabia*, his novel tackles the Middle East with a serious tone; however, it too adheres to the same discourse of American Neo-Orientalism.

In *Moonlight Hotel*, David Richards is an employee for the U.S. Embassy in Laradan, Kutar, which is a fictional name for a Middle Eastern country, and he oversees a geological team dowsing for water in 1983. He is a carefree playboy with a good conscience and honesty. Kutar is a former British colony but it lacks natural resources, wealth and “a democratic lifestyle” (Anderson 61). Anderson describes the Middle Eastern country that he has in mind in this novel: “I actually started this six years ago, and I never wanted to locate the place—it could be anywhere along the North African or Arabian coast” (Kachka, “War Novelist”). The northern tribes of Kutar, who call themselves “KPLA: Kutaran People Liberation Army,” revolt against the royal family of Kutar and demand “unconditional surrender of the royal government” (Anderson 195). The U.S. Colonel Allen B. Munn devises plan after plan to subdue the rebels, but he and Kutar’s army keep failing, resulting in the rebels’ success in controlling most of the

country except the city of Laradan. All foreign diplomats and their families depart Laradan except David, Nigel Mayhew (English), Stewart McBride (an American journalist), Paolo Alfani (an Italian businessman), and a few other Europeans. The remaining westerners stay at Moonlight Hotel, which survives the daily bombings of the rebels and is considered “neutral territory” (Anderson 170). All western powers forgo responsibilities in what is taking place in Kutar including the United States. David tries to negotiate between the rebels and King Rahman II but he fails. The United States lists KPLA as a terrorist organization, preventing Kutar from negotiating a peace agreement with the rebels. Yet, after a complete destruction of most of Kutar, the United States announces that the KPLA is not a terrorist organization and its listing as such is a “clerical error” (Anderson 333). Even then, when the United States discovers that the backwater project has turned into a titanium one and Kutar is once again a strategic region, it asks King Rahman II to leave Kutar, leading to General Hassan Kalima ruling over Kutar in cahoots with the rebels and Colonel Munn. General Kalima now rules Kutar with the support of the United States. David is in a serious relationship with Amira, who is a Kutaran girl from the Chalasani tribe, and he sacrifices telling the truth of what takes place in Kutar in order to save her. They reunite eventually. In the end, Kutarans are delighted that the civil war is over and enjoy a victory parade waving Kutaran and American flags together.

Although the setting is obviously in the Middle East, Anderson is not keen to make its Islamic features visible to the readers. For example, churches’ bells are heard in Laradan but not Athan, the Islamic call for prayer. If Buckley ridicules everything he knows about Islam, Anderson omits the Islamic elements of Kutar. Also, the novel does

not offer a serious characterization of Arabs or Muslims except Amira, perhaps for the reason that she is the lover of David.

On the one hand, Amira does not look like a Kutaran. When she appears for the first time, David thinks that she is either “Spanish,” “Italian,” or “Jewish” (Anderson 35). “Her accent was English-upper class” and she believes that she is Kutaran “at least by heritage, I live in London, but I come back every few years to visit” (Anderson 36). Her father is Sir Hamid Chalasani, “the reigning patriarch of the émigré clan, a tough old man in his eighties who had recently been knighted by the Queen” (Anderson 36). On the other hand, Amira is probably symbolic of the Middle East as a whole as she chooses David over her English boyfriend, corresponding to Kutar’s choice of the United States over Britain. At the end of the novel and after the end of the civil war, Amira refuses to join her tribe:

Taking David’s hand, Amira began to press forward, maneuvering through the crowd toward her great-aunt. But then she stopped. Going no farther, she just stood there, at the edge of the parade, and watched the old lady pass, watched all the others she knew from Chalasan—her cousins, her childhood friends—pass. Then she turned and started out from the crowd, away from the sight. (Anderson 419)

This gesture shows that Amira is willing to separate herself from her tradition and culture. “The old lady [passing]” symbolizes the end of an era or a dying tradition, while the members of the tribe passing symbolizes the end of tribalism. The narrative seems to suggest if the Kutarans would let go of their traditions and their social system, Kutar

would be able to obtain “the democratic lifestyle” that it lacks. Amira is able to free herself after leaving “the sight” of the burden of timeless tradition.

Other Arab characters include King Rahman II, a weak king who loses control over his country and relies on western powers to maintain his kingdom, Arkadi Hafizullah, the greedy Moonlight Hotel manager, General Hassan Kalima, a cold-blooded killer and an opportunist, and Rustam, a callous Harvard graduate who negotiates for KPLA. Even when Laradan is under siege, all the relief and aid comes from western countries, and not a single Arab or Muslim country tries to help this city.

Anderson criticizes the American presence because it is not ideal. He is interested in an American presence that lasts beyond economic or political interests, much like *Heart of Darkness*'s Marlow's redemptive “idea at the back of it” (Conrad 7). He wants a moral and spiritual presence, basically a Christian one. David represents Anderson's idea of what the United States should be about. He is steadfast and he tries to make moral choices in a very difficult place and trying circumstances. He feels responsible for the lives of the residents of Moonlight Hotel. He is also a dedicated son who calls his parents regularly and involves them in making his decisions and a loving brother who still remembers the death of his brother in Vietnam. He defies his country's advice, but he eventually obeys his superiors. He is forgiven for his follies because his intentions are innocent and morally sound.

In my analysis of this work, I dissect its prominent themes while highlighting common aspects that it shares with Buckley's novel. First, the timelessness of Kutar and its people is portrayed as a fact that foreigners should know in order to cope with this region and its people. Second, this novel also indicates that hegemony over Kutar begins

with mapping. The west draws the map of the Middle East and therefore, it creates and controls this region. Third, Anderson attempts to rewrite the agendas of the American presence in the Middle East. He complements Buckley's ideas about the rigidity of Islam and the uncivilized Orient, but with a grave and serious tone. He is subtler in his representations as he focuses on Kutarans' loss of direction and future, implying a loss of true faith, and consequently their need of religious redemption. Stewart McBride, an American Catholic journalist, offers this redemption by giving his life up for the truth. The Middle East needs saviors and the United States has the ability and the morality to provide them as long as men like Stewart and David are present in the Middle East.

Timelessness

The timelessness of the Orient is a discernable theme of American neo-Orientalist discourse. It is indicative of an uncultivated culture and people. Laradan is the main setting of this novel and it is over 2000 years old. It is a multicultural and multi-religious city where Jews, Christians and Muslims live in harmony; yet the city is timeless to the degree that "a medieval merchant suddenly risen from the dead and dropped into present-day Laradan would probably have felt quite at home" (Anderson 15). We learn also that "David had never before lived in a place with this aura of timelessness, and he found it quite appealing" (Anderson 15). And Laradan is not the only timeless location in Kutar. Zulfiqar amazes David because it has not changed "in a thousand years" (Anderson 54). (Zulfiqar is the name of Prophet Muhammad's sword that he gave as a gift to his cousin Ali, whom Dante puts in his *Inferno* with Prophet Muhammad.) The narrative seems to suggest unchanging geography and culture. This timelessness will remain as an attribute to this region despite the west's attempts to modernize and civilize it.

The Moonlight Hotel was built in the 19th century to usher in such civilization. Sir John Hedgwick, the first owner of this hotel, and the King of Kutar attended the ceremony of the grand opening of the Moonlight Hotel. This opening is significant historically and culturally as it announces modernity. The coronation of King Gamil VI “had been tradition; this [opening the hotel] was modernity, this was the heralding of a brighter future for a humble land” (Anderson 142). Here, Sir Hedgwick is an example of a westerner who chooses a spot in the map, just like Marlow in the *Heart of Darkness*, and decides to bring modernity to that nebulous location. The Moonlight Hotel survives decades of wars, civil wars and revolutions, and with them the idea of modernity. The narrative seems to highlight a bigger picture here, which is that the colonial era, whether good or bad, has had positive effects on the rest of the world. Anderson seems to see this as an undeniable fact and he concurs with American neo-Orientalist discourse in minimizing the negative effects of colonization.

The United States sends a team of geologists to make use of the backwater in the mountains and benefit the locals and Kutar’s economy. David tells Amira about the success of the water project in Bejah valley before the breakout of the civil war, as it transforms the people of Bejah from “goatherders for centuries” to “farmers” in two years (Anderson 256). “Now, the houses are bigger, the kids are healthier, they have better clothes, equipment—tractors...” (Anderson 256). Cultivation is a key word here and it connotes cultivation of land and people. This is a successful example of the American presence in Kutar.

Arabs are also as timeless as their land, as they still wear *Arabian Nights*’ clothes and turbans and their king still wears a crown with jewels and sits on a throne (Anderson

16). Colonel Munn is less prudent than the main narrative in his descriptions of Arabs, calling them “some ragtag bunch of desert inbreeds” and “a bunch of gun-toting aborigines” (Anderson 66; 121). After Katar’s independence from British colonization, we learn that Kutarans could not form a true identity for themselves or their country:

As in other former colonies around the world, this was a country that had yet to fully forge its own national identity, that still existed in a kind of thrall of its Western patrons. And who could blame it? Because ultimately what history told Kutarans was that the West, having created the improbable concoction that was their nation, always stood ready to impose a temporary remedy when that mixture blew up. (Anderson 71)

There are multiple points of interest in this quotation concerning its underlying assumptions. First, it begs the question of who writes this history in this case? How valid is it? Is it biased or fair? Second, there is a claim that Arabian tribes have no common identity and European colonizers form this identity for Arabs, which is precisely what Buckley’s novel claims as well. Europe *created* not *colonized* the current Middle East, and before Europe’s arrival to the Orient it was blank and its identity was amorphous. Building the Moonlight Hotel is a living example of a productive presence.

Before the arrival of Britain, the Kingdom of Kutar is just the city of Laradan and its king does not interfere with the rules of clans. Britain extends the kingdom’s rule to northern borders and subdues the tribes, making them submit to the king of Kutar. When Kutar declares independence and Britain leaves, the northern tribes revolt again. We are told that “Great Britain’s custodial duties had been handed off to its ally and successor in the region, the United States,” which crushes rebellious northern tribes to order to bring

peace again to Kutar because it seems that Kutarians cannot maintain self-rule (Anderson 73).

Constant military intervention is necessary to keep peace in this part of the world because “in Kutar, nothing ever happened in a predictable way” (Anderson 355). Such logic is of course also pervasive in the rhetoric of American neo-Orientalist discourse, as examined in the previous chapter. Because Arabs live in a timeless place and lack coherent identity, they cannot grasp the concept of time and future, and therefore they will remain reactionary and adaptive to their environment due to their lack of direction and the will to change.

Amira, being originally Kutarian but educated in the west, understands this concept, but she “was still not used to the idea that deep rumination over one’s life and work was a largely Western phenomenon, that in most of the world, people simply did what was available to them” (Anderson 294-95). Another example is Rustam. He justifies the destruction of Laradan by asking a simple question: “Why did we destroy this city? Because we could. I don’t think there was a lot of thought behind it. I think it just kind of...happened” (Anderson 418). Rustam nonchalantly announces his predilection to destruction and killings. Although he is a Harvard graduate, he is still an Arab and he lacks a sense of the future and the “deep rumination” behind one’s actions which Anderson bestows upon western characters in this novel.

This lack of a sense of direction becomes inconspicuous when the narrative admires the resilience of residents of Laradan in the face of war and destruction:

The residents of Laradan still went to jobs, still organized their days around familiar routines. They visited friends and relatives, they

celebrated birthdays, they still talked and joked and argued and made love. On those occasions when the war's thrall could not be denied—when for instance, someone close to them died—they tended to respond with remarkable poise. Children were buried by dry-eyed parents, parents by stoic children...

But if in observing this an outsider came to a new appreciation of man's essential nobility in the face of suffering—all time-worn clichés about the resiliency of human spirit, and here it was on naked display—they would have misinterpreted the situation. (Anderson 328)

This admiration is followed by a peculiar Orientalist moment. Despite this praise, Laradans “were gradually expiring” (Anderson 328). But why? They showcase their toughness in the face of war and death, but they lack the vision that the civilized, western residents of Moonlight Hotel have. “Naturally that handful of people remaining within the preserve of the Moonlight Hotel were spared the worst of these ravages. This was due not to their comparative safety and comfort, but to their ability to still imagine a future” (Anderson 328). Accordingly, Laradans are resilient because they are blind to their inability to change their circumstances, and this is why they can cope with the atrocities of war but they do not attempt to alter its course. Simply put, they persevere because they can and KPLA destroys because it could. Their primitiveness prevails according to their circumstances. They do not have “the burden” of responsibility that David has (Anderson 200). Fittingly, they keep waiting for the American rescue to come. The novel implies that if they had the ability to see the future, they would not need any help from outsiders.

Even King Rahman II himself cannot make up his mind without asking foreigners for guidance and help.

Laradan is plagued every winter by “*ajira tokharan*, or ‘time of blindness’” (Anderson 325). This “time of blindness” is “considered an ill-omened time in Laradan, a bad-moon period when sane men went mad or animals died for no reason, when the most inexplicable events were liable to take place” (Anderson 325). Arabs have mastered superstition but not logic to understand their time and circumstances. The discourse of impossibility of change in *Florence of Arabia* is deployed here into a loss of vision. Colonel Munn sums up this loss when he asks rhetorically: “You ever wonder why these people can’t just get along?” (Anderson 373). As we will discover, the ability to envision a future is linked to mapping.

Maps, Vision and Hegemony

Mapping is a noteworthy theme in the American neo-Orientalist discourse and this novel offers unique perspective on it. Anderson’s narrative does not view mapping as a suspicious element, but as a western display of precision, vision, calculated thoughts and efforts. Most of all, it is a symbol of hegemony. As Ashcroft states: “the discourse of mapping...is a formal strategy for bringing colonized territory under control by *knowing it in language*” (Ashcroft 51). It is not about an ability to draw the landscape of third world geographies but rather about the authority to assign boundaries to the *Other*. Consequently, redrawing any map of the third world by western hegemonic powers remains possible.

Also, reading the map is a western attribute that leads to dominance. The narrative is obsessed with the theme of mapping and Anderson brings his admiration of T. E.

Lawrence's ability to read maps to this novel. Before T. E. Lawrence went into the heartland of Arabian tribes, he was working on maps in Cairo (Davies, "'Lawrence' of Arabia").

In *Florence of Arabia*, Buckley blames European powers, especially Churchill, for creating a haphazard map of the Middle East without any historical significance, while in this novel mapping is perfected. Churchill's napkin map in *Florence of Arabia* is now "a modern art" map that is examined with appreciation:

An enormous map of Kutar had been tacked to the wall of the British cultural center ballroom, and Colonel Allen B. Munn stared up at its lines and color shading and place-names as if studying a particularly inscrutable work of modern art. From their seats at the nearby conference table, his three counterparts, the military liaisons of Britain, France, and Germany, did likewise. (Anderson 58)

After examining the map, these countries proceed to discuss the fate of Kutar without any representative from the royal government of Kutar, the KPLA or any Kutaran for that matter. According to Nigel Mayhew, Britain and the United States "speak for the diplomatic community at large" (Anderson 94). It seems that the presence of this "modern art" map is sufficient to represent Kutarans. In "Orientalism in the Machine," Josef Teboho Ansoorge describes how US military maps distinguish different cultures in a map: "To make data legible it is projected on to maps, in effect it is built on top of widespread Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and tagged. The abstraction of the map is further layered with a simplified representation of culture in the form of inkblots"

(137). The reduction of cultures into “inkblots” seems dismissive and dangerous because cultures are not as permanent as mountains or oceans.

In addition to this political map, there is a big “master map” for geologists which “was now marked with scores of handwritten notations: Xs and arrows and small circles, each with cryptic series of numbers and letters penciled in alongside” (Anderson 46). Notice that these marks do not take into consideration tribal territories, or the historical significance attributed to the land by the locals. If the narrative laments that Kutar fails to forge an identity after independence because tribes seem to lack a common denominator, this map does not care about the social or cultural significance of Kutar’s tribes. Its marks are interested in finding the sources of the backwater in the mountains. The names of these mountains and valleys are now “cryptic” numbers and Xs jettisoning local names and their historical meanings. Colonel Munn tells David how the US government changes its position on Kutar: “Somebody at the Geological Survey finally thought to give those maps of the northern mountains a closer look, and you know what he found? One hundred percent perfect conditions for titanium” (Anderson 415). The “closer look” at the geography, not at the human condition, changes the whole perspective on Kutar.

Whether the map is haphazard or sophisticated, understanding this region “came down to basic geography” (Anderson 71). By reading the map, one will understand that “[t]he north was the far hinterlands, primitive and backward and cut off from the rest of the nation by the great desert” (Anderson 71). And in both novels addressed in this chapter, Arabs are just warring tribes forged into different countries by the west, and one of the reasons the Middle East cannot join the civilized nations is that it cannot

understand the concept of the modern state. This is in line with what American neo-Orientalists argue, as I discussed in Chapter One.

In the narrative, westerners are given enough space to contemplate, envision a future and decide for others, and yet Arab/Muslims are viewed as incompetent in doing the same even when they are Harvard graduates. Two of the most crucial moments in the novel captured my attention in regards to the search for a discourse that manifests reality, which complements our discussion of understanding the Middle East. The first occurs when David tries to write a letter to the Secretary of State to convince him to make Washington actively involved in Kutar to end the civil war:

He stared at the salutation he had typed, “Dear Mr. Secretary.” How to appeal to this man he had never met? All he knew about the Secretary of State was what he had read in newspapers or heard from others—that he was responsible, that he had a facile mind. What were the words that might touch his heart? Did they exist? If so, were they words that gave some sense of what Laradan had been like that day, those graphic descriptions that had already been penned about a thousand other battlefields in a thousand wars? Or would it best to continue in the same flat tone as his first paragraph, using facts and figures to tell of a city’s ruin, much as he had once reported on crop yields or electric generation?
(Anderson 201)

Anderson brilliantly demonstrates David’s dilemma in attempting to make the Kutaran situation vivid so it could touch hearts in the United States’ administration. This is also one of the instances western characters being bestowed with deep logic and thinking. Yet,

I find it amazing that Anderson does not bother to provide any Arab character with such powerful abilities of contemplation. This passage also offers another intriguing angle. What if the words that give sense to the Middle East's crises do not exist in western thoughts, which is the case because David could not find them? What does this make of Arabs? And what is the use of trying to "recreate" this region? What if true understanding of the region is not in understanding its "basic geography," but in an open, fair discourse that is deliberately distorted in the west?

The second moment is when Nigel is shocked to "discover that every understanding you've come to about a place and its people is in error, that all wisdoms and truths gathered over a lifetime of studying and observing are shown to be false" (Anderson 166). After bragging to David that he knows the whole geography of Kutar and its tribes, he is disappointed that his learning of the Orient at Oxford University is different from what he sees in Kutar. He wished that he were in England to forget all of this. This is interesting for many reasons. At first, I thought that this was a critique of Orientalism as inaccurate at times. Yet, Nigel is regarded as the best diplomat to envision Kutar's future and he "was described as Kutar's most loyal and dedicated Western friend" (Anderson 272). Nigel's knowledge is not false but the narrative makes it clear that Kutar is unfathomable and plagued by a "time of blindness" (Anderson 325). Despite this discovery, Nigel stays in Kutar and tries to form an Anglo-American alliance to solve the crisis because he hates to see "a white man getting knocked about in these parts-sets a bad precedent" (Anderson 268). David does not oppose this idea as they continue their pleasant conversation with a joke. The two heroes of the novel are not interested in seeing "the white man" falling with his "burden." Why is it a burden in the first place? The

narrative does not call for a blatant imperialism, but it does invoke Kipling's phrase between Nigel and David, who both truly care for the well-being of Kutar, to indicate a different kind of "burden"—or at least that is what the narrative suggests.

A Moral, Christian United States in the Middle East

The novel wants an American religious and moral presence in Kutar rather than an imperial or colonial one that merely exploits people and land. Anderson is keen to envision redemption for the Middle East, believing that this may relieve him of what he witnessed in the war zones he covered as a journalist. In a way, he also rescues his consciousness from guilt. Anderson expounds his passion behind writing novels: "I admit this about myself—there's kind of a rescue fantasy at work and, frankly, an exalted sense of self. I mean, the money's not that good" (Kachka, "War Novelist"). I believe that he employs the "rescue fantasy" theme in this novel.

David and Stewart serve in the role of "rescuer" in Kutar. David feels proud that he is "the representative of a moral nation, one that did not walk away from its obligations and friends" (Anderson 159). He tries to base his actions on morality, and on more than one occasion he does not obey his superiors' directives. Moreover, he stays in Kutar because he feels morally obligated after reading a CIA report of imminent genocides. Yet, he fails to stand up for morality in more than one occasion in the novel. David is appalled by General Kalima's cold-blooded execution of prisoners and he confronts him about this. Nonetheless, General Kalima defends his decision by asking David: "When the Americans firebombed Tokyo, they killed ninety thousand civilians in one night, and they got medals for it. Strange, no? ... Well, who are we to judge?" (Anderson 380). David does not comment on this at all. He could have condemned both

actions but he does not. I believe that he seems to justify the United States' action in Toyko as correct because he tries to replicate the same approach in Kutar. To this end, David agrees with General Kalima's idea of buying "the Deathstar," which is a powerful weapon that should kill all of the rebels in the ridge and free Laradan from famine or complete destruction, and he provides General Kalima with the money to buy this lethal weapon. David contemplates his decision:

Let's see: embezzling four million dollars from the American government to smuggle pirated Red Chinese weapons in on a Red Cross ship. Yeah, I'm no lawyer, but I imagine there's some kind of illegality in there. It could go well with my treason charge, though." He grew more serious. "But what about from a standpoint of...I don't know, morality? To know you'd be doing something that means the killing will continue, that you're helping a guy like Kalima to take over." (Anderson 387)

It is true that this bomb will kill a lot of people, but it is for the greater good of Kutar just like the United States' situation with Japan in WW II. The Contessa comforts David: "Smash those hooligans up there to pieces, and then, if it's truly peace you're after, go to their home districts and lay waste, burn them to the root. It's what we used to do in Romania, and it always worked" (Anderson 388). Once again, neither David nor the narrative condemns or even questions such horrendous ideas.

Dimitrios Terezios, the captain of the Red Cross ship, provides Nigel and David with a lesson about moral values and how to treat the *Other*. He draws this lesson from his experience in working in New York City:

It taught me that you try to play nice with these people, you play by their rules, they'll give it to you straight up the ass every time. Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, they're all the same. You gotta stand up to them, tell'em to fuck off every chance you get. It's the only thing they respect...Moral values, in other words. Now I realize you guys've got your balls in a wringer here, but that doesn't mean you've got to give up your moral values. Because that's the only thing standing between us and the law of the jungle. (Anderson 219)

He says all of this in the presence of some Kutarans without any reservation. Despite the captain's exhortation to maintain moral values, Nigel and David fail to disagree with the captain's ideas of the treacherousness of the *Other*. In my estimation, Anderson, like Buckley, fails to register this failure because westerners are not subjected to the same scrutiny that Arabs/Muslims receive in their respective narratives.

There is also a religious morality maintained by churches and Stewart's characterization. In this novel, the religious presence in Laradan is inescapable as it has churches, synagogues and mosques, but the Christian presence seems to be dominant in the novel. Readers register the presence of churches, nuns, Catholicism and baptism. One of David's favorite places in Laradan is "the little Protestant church on Javidan Square" (Anderson 207). The Church of St. Bartholomew flouts bombings, and its bells "began their midnight tolling, almost as if the bells themselves had summoned it, the ridgeline exploded in sound and smoke and a thousand streaks of red-and-orange flame" (Anderson 187). This church defies its surroundings and it keeps on announcing time and prayer times.

Like this church, Stewart, who chooses journalism over a religious rank but remains religious at heart, defies his surroundings, disobeys his government's orders and confronts the dangers of the rebels to go deep behind enemy lines to report from a professional, western perspective. He "covered maybe half a dozen wars in this region" (Anderson 176). Anderson appreciates his profession as a journalist in war zones and his novel *Triage* is about two journalists and the effect of wars on them. Here, Stewart is another small episode about the heroism of war-zone journalists. He is a good Catholic and an honest journalist. He admits that the United States and Europe cause the mess in Kutar and they will not do anything to stop it, and he believes that there is no real help coming to Kutar because the west wrongly considers Kutarians primitives who will never stop being brutal and violent.

David tries to dissuade him from going to the rebels' territory, but he insists on going. He informs David that he believes in God and "He will protect him" because he is doing the right thing (Anderson 315). He is killed by the rebels and his mysterious death corresponds to the death of St. Bartholomew, who is one of Jesus's apostles:

The manner of his [St. Bartholomew's] death, said to have occurred at Albanopolis in Armenia, is equally uncertain; according to some, he was beheaded, according to others, flayed alive and crucified, head downward, by order of Astyages, for having converted his brother, Polymius, King of Armenia. On account of this latter legend, he is often represented in art (e.g. in Michelangelo's Last Judgment) as flayed and holding in his hand his own skin. (Fenlon, "St. Bartholomew")

What remains of Stewart's belongings is his American passport, which is given to David (Anderson 319). This is a good Christian who gives his life up to report the truth. He leaves the safe haven of Moonlight Hotel and he pays the price of good values and beliefs. Although he believes the KPLA are not primitive tribes, he is still killed by them. Before his death, he envisions himself like Jesus giving himself up to the Romans:

Stewart McBride suddenly had occasion to recall a gaudy religious print that had hung in the hallway of his Catholic boyhood home. It was Jesus stepping forth to surrender to the Romans, his hands outstretched, his downcast face a study in sorrow and pity, and even though he had not laid eyes on that painting in fifteen years, at that moment of remembrance, Stewart believed he could recall its every brushstroke, as if every rock and spear and awestruck face on that canvas had been etched onto his still believing heart. (Anderson 317-18)

Stewart goes to the rebels on his own while stretching out his hands for peace, but instead of seeing him, we see his resemblance, St. Bartholomew, in Michelangelo's painting outstretching his hands with his flayed skin. Anderson is careful in preaching Christianity throughout this novel, but this moment of Jesus' remembrance and crucifixion and the mysterious gruesome death of St. Bartholomew demonstrate Anderson's keenness about the presence of Christian redemption and forgiveness. Stewart embodies religious redemption but, as we will see, Anderson suggests that a political redemption also is needed.

Saving the Middle East from the Middle East:

The rhetoric of saving the Middle East dominates the narrative of this novel and the American neo-Orientalist discourse. The question of “what would Washington do?” is repeated at different points throughout the narrative to intrigue the reader, along with statements of the validity of the CIA report that purports Northern tribes would commit genocides in Kutar. David tells the Secretary of State that Kutarians “look to us for their salvation” while the crisis is escalated by Colonel Munn’s plans (Anderson 224). The main reason that David stays in Laradan is the CIA report about a possible genocide, which he thinks he can stop.

There are rumors that the United States would intervene militarily to stop the rebels. The Laradanis believe that, but they are to realize the falsity of these rumors later. “When those [American] fighters failed to appear, the residents returned to their homes, not disheartened but convinced it could only mean the Americans were planning something even more ambitious” (Anderson 227). After so many days of waiting and anticipation, the United States informs David that it will not interfere in the Kutaran political mess except by sending some money as aid to Kutaran refugees. Nigel is still insistent after this letter that “America is the only chance this place has” (Anderson 232). I wonder if by doing so Anderson is admitting that the United States has failed many times in the Middle East while implying that, unlike other empires, it could rectify its mistakes and redeem itself.

The rhetoric of whether the United States should save Kutar develops over three phases. First, there is an urgent need that western powers should cooperate to end the revolution just as Britain and United States had done at one point in Kutar’s history.

Nigel urges David to form “a joint of Anglo-American position” to decide the future of Kutar in the face of this revolution (Anderson 128). Despite the fact that Kutar is “a member of the Commonwealth,” Britain cannot do anything to Kutar without Washington’s approval (Anderson 200). Western involvement is vital to the development and stability of this region. David wonders what the outcome of this war would be: “[w]hat would become of them before this was over? And what of the development projects there: the irrigation schemes he had overseen, the clinics built, the orchards planted? Would they survive or would all be in ruins? And what of Kutar itself? How many generations would it take to heal the wounds of Stalwart Friend?” (Anderson 111). He bewails the west’s absence of active involvement, the cause, he thinks, of the stoppage of Kutar’s growth and development.

Second, Kutarians are asked to decide for themselves but they are then shown as innately incapable of doing so. David tries to convince Kutarians to “stop looking to the Americans” (Anderson 288). He explains: “We’ve maneuvered them into this trap, the trap of hope. If they would just give that up, if they stopped looking to the outside for rescue, they would see things much more realistically. The problem is, I’m not the person who can tell them that” (Anderson 289). David thinks that Nigel is the right person to enlighten Kutarians to choose and decide for themselves, and then he remembers Nigel’s wisdom that “Kutarians are like children, always looking for their father figure for answers” (Anderson 288). An infant nation and a former colony with no sense of direction or a logical identity in a timeless place will be always dependent upon western presence for guidance and hope. Just as Kutarians are not to blame for their vague identity, they are not at fault when their hope of survival hinges on western presence.

Third, the United States is censured for its disassociation from the Kutaran crisis. When David is told by his government that its involvement with the Kutaran situation is over, he feels that “the betrayal is complete” (Anderson 363). At one point, he wanted Kutarans to decide for themselves, but now he feels that only the United States could end this mess and build Kutar again.

David states the gist and the real message of this novel behind the American presence in Kutar:

I guess what I'm trying to say is that we forget about people. We use them and then we abandon them. It's our worst sin. Other empires, they never knew when to leave, but we never know when to stay, we leave all the time. Friends are only friends for as long as they're useful, as long as we've decided they're important, but they're not anymore and we forget all about them. That's the American sin. (Anderson 390)

At first glance, this seems a very harsh, yet true, critique of American foreign politics in the whole world because David cites Vietnam and other places besides Kutar. Upon further scrutiny, the American self-made image of being morally responsible for the whole world rears its ugly head in this quotation. Why is the United States in foreign countries in the first place? And why should it stay longer? Why should the United States be the judge to rule its staying or leaving in foreign places? Should it be trusted? These questions are essential to understand the so-called “American sin.” Anderson labels leaving as a sin, but he fails to label the American military intervention or political exploitation that eventually lead the United States to leave as such. Beyond this political/military mistake, Anderson wants the United States to willingly sacrifice its

interests for the sake of others just like Stewart's and David's sacrifices, bearing in mind their sacrifices are inspired by Christian beliefs.

In the *New York Magazine* interview, Anderson explains what he means by the "American sin":

ANDERSON: "Probably some of the idea came from being in Beirut in 1983, when the Americans had come in as peacekeepers. And then after the barracks bombing, essentially the Americans just said, "Okay, our job is done. We're gone."

KACHKA: "Like 'Mission Accomplished'."

ANDERSON: "Well, Iraq is going to go down as one of the greatest blunders in American history. Where you're going to see parallels to this book is a couple of years up the road—that is, how does America declare victory and bail?" (Kachka, "War Novelist")

Anderson refers to the Lebanese civil war, which lasted from 1975 to 1990. This civil war involved all kinds of political parties and nations. Domestically, Christians, Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims, and Druze were in dispute. Internationally, Israel, France, United States, Syria, Iran, the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the United Nations intervened at one point during this struggle until the civil war ended with the Taif Agreement in 1989 in Saudi Arabia (BBC, "Lebanon Timeline"). Here, Anderson wanted more effective American presence instead of leaving. However, he does not approve of the Iraq War, at least at the time of this interview in 2006. Now, ISIL rules half of Iraq and Iran basically runs the other half. Could this be a result of the "American sin" leaving a vacuum behind, or is it a result of an imperial blunder? The same result we see in Iraq

happened in Lebanon. After the civil war ended, Hezbollah emerged stronger than ever. Now, it is more powerful than the Lebanese government and it supports the Assad regime in Syria. I ask again: could this be attributed to the Americans leaving or coming to Lebanon? Anderson's differentiation between "benevolent" interventions and imperial projects is confusing and dangerous. If the United States considers itself more capable than the UN in carrying out the UN's mission, why is there a UN in the first place? And if the UN cannot protect weak nations from powerful ones, what is the real role of UN?

By the end of the novel, the American presence returns to Kutar driven by economic interests and it forges alliance with General Kalima. The narrative considers the "American sin" of leaving allies struggling for survival, but America does not leave Kutar. Now, Kutar could have "the largest titanium deposit" in the world and it will be "the Switzerland of the region, a vital American ally" (Anderson 415). In this chapter, I have argued that both novels hope to see the American presence result in democratic changes in the Middle East but the stability of this region is achieved only through dictatorship. And invoking the Switzerland imagery about a prosperous Middle East interestingly is not the only similarity between these two texts.

The Lawrence of Arabia Tribute

The stark similarities between these two novels are dwarfed by the tribute to Lawrence of Arabia that these texts offer. The rewriting of Lawrence of Arabia is a theme that dominates both novels. In *Florence of Arabia*, it starts with the title, as Buckley explains: "And then the title "Florence of Arabia" came to me. Unfortunately, I can't lay claim to it. It's from something Noel Coward said to Peter O'Toole about his performance in *Lawrence of Arabia*: If you were any better-looking you'd be Florence of

Arabia” (Healy, “Veiled Optimism”). Also, Florence begins to have dreams of motorcycles at the end of the novel, reminding readers of the way Lawrence dies. Besides, the novel is completed on the day that Lawrence of Arabia dies.

This tribute of “X of Arabia” suggests a re-enactment and resumption of T.E. Lawrence’s mission in the Middle East. Florence is dubbed as “Florence of Arabia” and Renard calls himself “Renard of Arabia.” It seems that any western mission in the Middle East is judged by Lawrence’s mission and actions in the Arab world. Florence and David in *Moonlight Hotel* are ordinary people who are put in an extraordinary situation just like Lawrence, who is an archaeologist at first and then a great spy and soldier and at last the face of the British Empire in the Middle East.

Florence’s actions and motivations are inspired by the history of T.E. Lawrence in the Middle East. She tries to persuade Bobby to save Princess Hamzin from Wasabia and she considers this her “Aqaba,” harkening back to the success of Arabian tribes and T.E. Lawrence in controlling Aqaba during World War II (Buckley 112). Just like T.E. Lawrence, Florence believes that her mission is “a chance to make history. Never mind actually helping eight hundred million Muslim women” (Buckley 36). Moreover, the French opposition to Florence’s efforts and the occasional refusal to follow Uncle Sam’s orders correspond to the French and the British oppositions to some of Lawrence of Arabia’s plans.

Anderson’s admiration of Lawrence of Arabia is manifested in his recent book *Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of Modern Middle East* (2013). I strongly believe that his appreciation of T. E. Lawrence starts in *Moonlight Hotel*. David resembles Lawrence in his humble beginnings, intelligence, independence

of thought and even his follies. In his introduction to *Lawrence in Arabia*, Anderson states:

How did a painfully shy Oxford archaeologist without a single day of military training become the battlefield commander of a foreign revolutionary army, the political master strategist who foretold so many of the Middle Eastern calamities to come? The short answer might seem somewhat anticlimactic: Lawrence was able to become “Lawrence of Arabia” because no one was paying attention. (Anderson, *Lawrence* 3)

Like Lawrence, David, a simple embassy staff member without any military or diplomatic background, finds himself leading the negotiations between his government and the royal government of Kutar, between KPLA and King Rahman II, between General Kalima and China, between the United States and Britain. Yet, he is almost betrayed by everyone and left alone without support. In addition, he decides to use the embassy’s money to buy a bomb to end the revolution corresponding to Lawrence’s involvement with the Arab revolution against the Ottoman Empire. David, like Lawrence, does not always adhere to his government’s orders. Like Lawrence, the two protagonists of the novels leave the Middle East without seeing any fruition to their efforts of democratizing and civilizing the Middle East.

T.E. Lawrence is still significant in military education in the United States. As Derek Gregory suggests:

The title of an influential book on counterinsurgency, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* was taken from Lawrence’s description of ‘making war on rebellion’ in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and I doubt it is a coincidence

that the U.S. Army's cultural war machine, the Human Terrain System was based on 'seven pillars.'...For Lawrence is a powerful symbol of a close encounter with another who remains obdurately Other. (156)

The "close encounter" is the essence of the voyage to the Orient. Gregory also criticizes famous American senior military personnel like General Petraeus for relying on Lawrence to understand Iraq: "[h]is [Lawrence's] talismanic invocation repeats the classical orientalist gesture of rendering 'the Orient' timeless: taking Lawrence as your guide to insurgency in modern Baghdad is like having Mark Twain show you around Las Vegas" (Gregory 156). Gregory's joke seems funny but it is really not. Taking Twain as tourist guide in Las Vegas will involve a lot of fun and I am certainly positive that no one will get hurt in the process, but taking Lawrence as military guide to Iraq or the Middle East will not bode well for Iraqis. In fact, this was really the case in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the ABC interview, Petraeus dubbed Jim Gant as the "Lawrence of Afghanistan" (Sisk, "Lawrence of Afghanistan"). Gant was unconventional in his mission as a counter-insurgency leader in Afghanistan. "In 2010, Gant had command of a combat outpost in southeastern Kunar province near the village of Mangwel. He and his troops admittedly went native, growing beards and shedding body armor to don the shalwar kameez Afghan clothing and pokol caps" (Sisk, "Lawrence of Afghanistan"). In 2012, he was relieved of his duties for his violation of many rules like drinking alcohol, taking pain medications and having an affair with Ann Scott Tyson, a former Washington Post reporter. Tyson wrote their story in *American Spartan: the Promise, the Mission, and the Betrayal of Special Forces Major Jim Gant* (2014). Lieutenant General John Mulholland wrote in "Gant's letter of reprimand" that Gant had "indulged in a self-created fantasy

world” in Afghanistan (Sisk, “Lawrence of Afghanistan”). The “self-created fantasy” is not Gant’s creation but it is rather taught in military schools, championed by leaders of US army, and produced by American neo-Orientalism.

In conclusion, *Florence of Arabia* and *Moonlight Hotel* share a lot of themes and representations. In both novels, the Middle East is the place for revolutions, political disputes, tribal feuds and political and religious corruptions. Those revolutions start against American presence or influence, and yet the United States asserts its authority over the region and appoints military governments in Matar and Kutar. Fictional geographical names are used to refer to the whole Middle East. “Switzerland” is a compliment that fits any Middle Eastern government that embraces western values and conforms to western presence although usually reserved for Lebanon. Both texts rely on *The One Thousand and One Nights* in the narrative. The similarity in characterizations and events is stark as well. David sacrifices telling the truth to save Amira while Florence jeopardizes her mission to save Laila. David and Bobby are both womanizers but they are the heroes that adhere to morality and good values. There is a desalination project in Matar while there is a backwater project in Kutar. *Moonlight Hotel* represents modernity and Florence’s TV Matar represents civilization. Although both texts offer some social and political critique of the United States, they promote the main aspects of American neo-Orientalist discourse and endorse American Exceptionalism in their own ways.

CHAPTER 3. THE VISIBLE TERRORIST: WHAT DOES VISIBILITY OF ARABS
AND MUSLIMS MEAN IN AMERICAN SOCIETY POST 9/11?

The appropriation of history, the historicization of the past, the narrativization of society, all of which give the novel its force, include the accumulation and differentiation of social space, space to be used for social purposes.

— Edward W. Said

While the previous chapter examined neo-Orientalism in the popular American novel after 9/11, this chapter turns to the impact of the discourse in more high-literary fiction in the same period. At the time of this writing, Arabs and Muslims are visible in the American society by virtue of the 9/11 events. This visibility is translated in a plethora of representations of novels, movies and other social outlets, but this translation is in many ways influenced by the American neo-Orientalist discourse. In this chapter, I trace this influence and explore the portrayal of Arabs and Muslims inside American society in the American novel post 9/11. I focus on John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) and Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* (2004), analyzing two pivotal issues: a) the representations of Arabs and Muslims as a non-integral part of the social fabric of American society with an emphasis on their *Otherness*, and b) the ominous portrayal of Islam as divisive in a Judeo-Christian domain. Helen Samhan, Joanna Kadi and Theresa Saliba argue that before 9/11 Arab-Americans suffered from invisibility in the American society: they were marginalized in the public sector and popular culture, and they were not included in

debates over minorities (Naber 1). The post 9/11 visibility of Arabs and Muslims is accompanied with suspicion in the sense that it does not make them part of the social structure of American society but instead isolates them as a visible *Other*. Also, this visibility helps American neo-Orientalists in resurrecting and inventing stereotypes and Islamophobic traditions. In addition, the conflation of race and religion in identifying Arabs and Muslims is dominant and pervasive post 9/11. The sudden visibility causes Arab/Muslim Americans many problems at school, at work, on the streets and basically at every social platform. It also brings an unprecedented and unchecked focus that impinges on individual privacy and basic civil rights for Arab/Muslim Americans and sweeping indictment of a whole race and religion. Although the negative representations of Arabs/Muslims inherited from European Orientalism exist in American movies, mainstream media, pop-fictions and, to a lesser degree, literary novels,¹³ I argue that the Arab/Muslim character becomes an urgently visible and central presence in the American literary novel post 9/11. Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006), Claire Messud's *Emperor's Children* (2006), Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), Jarett Kobek's *Atta* (2011), and Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011) are just a few examples besides the novels discussed in this chapter. The prolific presence of Arabs/Muslims in post 9/11 American literary novels is a new phenomenon, and hence it is necessary and important that this examination be done.

¹³ Read Melani McAlister (2005), Douglas Little (2008), Jack Shaheen (2014), and Evelyn Alsultany (2012).

My analyses in this chapter pick on some of the six aspects of American neo-Orientalism that I examined in my Introduction. Updike's narrative is influenced by the neo-Orientalist feature of essentializing Islam as antiwestern and a divergence from the Judeo-Christian values. Adams' perspective is driven by compassion for her Algerian characters but it has a blind spot. Her novel does not acknowledge the western colonial involvement in Algeria (thus recalling a similar minimizing of the history of imperialism in the discourses addressed in Chapter One and the popular novels addressed in Chapter Two). Updike and Adams portray in their narratives that violence and extremism in the Muslim world are esoteric doctrines of the Qur'an, without acknowledging any parallels to similar elements in Judeo-Christian histories. This move is reminiscent of the contrasts the Dwight Group claimed to identify between the Prophet Muhammad on the one hand and Moses and Jesus on the other.

Certainly, the presence of Muslim or Arab characters in the American literary novel enhances American neo-Orientalist discourse. Before 9/11, American pop-fictional and cinematic portrayals of Muslims and Arabs were not necessarily consistent with the current geopolitical issues of their era; they were mainly focused on primitivism, and attributed general uncouthness to Islam and Arabs. Since 9/11, Arabs and Muslims, in writings and movies, are not mainly primitive and illiterate anymore. Instead, they developed into complex subjects with a religious purpose and a will to die. Updike's Secretary of Homeland Security realizes this when he states that "the enemies of freedom have been studying with the most sophisticated tools of reconnaissance" (Updike 43). In the same novel, Shaikh Rashid, the villainous imam, tells Ahmad: "In today's world, the heroes of Islamic resistance to the Great Satan were former doctors and engineers, adepts

in the use of such machines as computers and airplanes and roadside bombs. Islam, unlike Christianity, has no fear of scientific truth” (Updike 142). Now, Arab/Muslim villain characters are portrayed as smart and educated in American or western Universities. Nonetheless, they intend to destroy western civilization. The hero of *Terrorist*, Jack Levy, wonders: “Those creeps who flew the planes into the World Trade Center had good technical educations. The ringleader had a degree in city planning; he should have redesigned New Prospect” (Updike 27). “The ringleader” here is Mohammed Atta, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks. In *Atta*, Jarret Kobek picks up this theme and explores how Atta’s master’s thesis, presented to a German university, is about redesigning a famous, historical Syrian town, and then he goes on to design the 9/11 attacks. In *Harbor*, Ghazi is an architect but he becomes a radical Muslim after immigrating to the US. Instead of doing good to their new home, these western-educated Muslims and Arabs present a dilemma. I analyzed some aspects of this complexity in Arab/Muslim characters in the previous chapter when discussing *Moonlight Hotel*’s Rustam, a Harvard graduate. Therefore, the increasing numbers of Oriental novels in particular written by Americans, which is a rare element pre 9/11, requires further investigation since it signifies new trends in representing Arabs and Muslims.

The literary novels of post 9/11 are consistent in their themes and representations with the agendas of American neo-Orientalist discourse since it is the source that sustains and enhances the perception of Islam and the Middle East. In contrast, pop fictions are not enough as of right now to disseminate the agendas of the American neo-Orientalists despite a registered shift in their portrayals of Islam and the Middle East. But a pattern is emerging, whereby they take their cues from the more literary portrayals. For example, in

Alex Berenson's thriller *The Secret Soldier* (2011) the protagonist is a Muslim convert, ex-CIA American agent, hired by a Saudi king to subdue some dissents within the Saudi royal family and to fight Muslim extremists who try to topple the Saudi government in favor of a more religious king. The technique of choosing a Muslim protagonist in Berenson's thriller comes much later as it is already in use in the literary novel like the two novels examined in this chapter. Generally speaking, the literary novel usually maintains an enduring legacy of false and yet popular representations of the Orient, which is evident in looking at the depository of European Oriental literary novels like *Heart of Darkness*, *Madame Bovary*, and *A Passage to India*.

The novels discussed in this chapter suggest that the vulnerability of American society emerges from its multicultural aspects and the immigration system. Multiculturalism weakens and threatens a precarious American identity and values as new minorities increase in number and start to be a deciding factor in elections or a vital part of the overall growth of the country. This is because it allows Islam to be part of the American society, but Islam proves itself to be an enemy of the west and irreconcilable with its values and beliefs. Meanwhile, Islam's presence is not hindered as the immigration system allows in new Muslim and Arab comers—with more cultural threats—and provides safe haven for these foreign threats within American society. For instance, in Updike's novel, an Egyptian exchange student marries a liberal ex-Catholic American and their offspring poses a national threat, while in Adams' novel, illegal Arab/Muslim Algerians immigrants are represented as victims of their religion and their homeland's political struggles who come the United States to look for asylum and find a new home, yet some of them end up being recruited by Muslim extremists. The tragedy

of Muslims in both novels is that they cannot escape or change who they are, unlike other immigrants in America, and therefore remain a threat to society. Both novels share the perspective that Muslim fanatics find legitimacy in the language of the Qur'an, which is presented as vindictive, rather than finding it in political grievance or ethical arguments. This is the epitome of the American neo-Orientalism that denies Arabs and Muslims legitimate reasons and justifiable motives for their animosity towards the United States of America. On the other hand, this discourse legitimizes, endorses, apologizes for or cements the American military adventures in the Middle East by ignoring or omitting the negative repercussions that this presence foments. Updike unequivocally announces on *Boston's National Public Radio* interview about *Terrorist*:

America is too big to hide globally speaking. Whether or not the Iraq intervention was a mistake, we cannot really sit on our hands. A necessary part of the burden of being American now is that America must intervene in spots where there is a danger, trouble or what not. It is not very welcome. I mean no. No, we would rather sit here between our oceans and enjoy our Fritos! But cannot do it. (Ashbrook, "Updike's *Terrorist*")

I cannot emphasize enough how Kipling's abominable phrase "White Man's Burden" is still appealing to such logic. Indeed, this "burden" gives Updike purpose to explore Islam and Muslims as a danger at a very late stage in his career as a preeminent American novelist.

Before I turn to my discussion of the novels, I should note that there was an article published in March of 2014 in the *American International Journal for Contemporary Research* titled "Islamophobic Irony in American Fiction" by Riyad

Abdurahman Manqoush, Noraini Md. Yusof and Ruzy Suliza Hashim.¹⁴ The authors of this article “conclude that the two writers make fun of the Muslim fanatics who view the wearer of hijab as a good Muslim” (73). I do not think that Updike and Adams are interested in “making fun” of Muslims since they are explicitly clear about the seriousness of their novels. Manqoush, Yusof and Hashim suggest that the novels present “one-dimensional” Muslims but I tend to disagree, as I shall demonstrate. This chapter, I hope, will take a more challenging approach and tackle in depth the themes of the two novels.

Terrorist Islam

Updike is a well-known American novelist, acclaimed for his *Rabbit* novels. His literary influence on the American novel cannot be denied. He wrote *Terrorist*, his 22nd novel, in 2006 and it became an instant *New York Times* bestseller. The novel narrates the story of Ahmad Mulloy Ashmawy, a radical Muslim teen nicknamed “Madman” by Lebanese-American Charlie Chehab, who is an undercover CIA agent. Ahmad is a high school student and the son of an ex-Catholic Irish-American mother and Omar, a Muslim Egyptian exchange student, “whose ancestors had been baked since the time of the Pharaohs in the muddy rice and flax fields of the overflowing Nile” (Updike 13). As an offspring of this unexpected relationship, Ahmad is raised by his mother since his father leaves them when Ahmad is three years old. He grows up ostracized from his society and he is drawn to his father’s religion. Thus, he embraces Shaikh Rashid, a radical imam, as “a surrogate father,” who convinces him to bomb the Lincoln Tunnel in New York City

¹⁴ My analysis here is not a response to their article. I had begun writing this chapter before I discovered this article.

(Updike 13). The novel focuses on tracking Ahmad's terrorist plan and how his Jewish school counselor, Jack Levy, foils it.

In a 2006 interview, Updike explains that this novel was originally conceived as a story about "a young Christian, an extension of the troubled teenage character in his [Updike's] early story "Pigeon Feathers," who comes to feel betrayed by a clergyman" (McGrath, "Cautious Novelist"). Updike also discusses why he changed the protagonist from a Christian to a Muslim: "I imagined a young seminarian who sees everyone around him as a devil trying to take away his faith....The 21st century does look like that, I think, to a great many people in the Arab world" (McGrath, "Cautious Novelist"). Updike perceives a contemporary century where only Muslims are adamant about their religion; perhaps he cannot see a successful novel written about a young Christian who doubts his religious mentor. Instead, he narrates a story of a Muslim who obeys unconditionally his religious mentor and is at odds with his society. What is more, Ahmad, at the end of the novel, has explosives that are "twice what [Timothy] McVeigh had" (Updike 286). The fact that Updike has chosen to ascribe double the explosives of McVeigh to Ahmad suggests Updike sees double the danger in the so-called Islamic threat than he does in any other religious extremism.

Updike follows the current trend that rewrites a post 9/11 world with a plot that positions Muslims and Islam as a grave danger surpassing any precedent religious fundamentalism. He also emphasizes that his main interest in the narrative is a religious examination of Islam, not a political one (Ashbrook, "Updike's *Terrorist*"). But this so-called religious treatment is de facto neo-Orientalist. Tom Ashbrook asks Updike about the representations of Muslims and Arabs: "Is there a risk of orientalist

[representations]?” (Ashbrook, “Updike’s *Terrorist*”). Updike replies that “clichés contain a certain amount of truth or they wouldn’t have arisen in the first place. You cannot go through life avoiding clichés,” and he felt that he needed to “let loose” his emotions (Ashbrook, “Updike’s *Terrorist*”). His reply here harkens back to Lewis’ statement about the importance of generalizing about Islam, an issue that I discussed in Chapter One. Stereotypes and clichés are usually the source of generalizations that plague almost every society, but when these views are circulated as having “a certain amount of truth,” they become challenging to dispute, let alone when they become intellectually institutionalized or placed in handbooks for foreign policies.

An interesting aspect of this novel is that Updike tries to explore the perspective of a Muslim in a post 9/11 America to offer some understanding about Islam and the ideology of hate and violence that led to the tragedy of 9/11. Most of critical responses to Updike’s novel agree that his narrative is problematic in many ways despite his professed interests in criticizing American society through Ahmad’s narrative, which is to Updike the *Other*’s gaze directed to the Self.

As Anna Hartnell in “Violence and the Faithful” asserts, “Updike’s decision to tackle the perspective of the ‘perpetrator’ is a courageous attempt to pull away from the prevalent cultural tendency to privilege the category of ‘trauma’ in treatments of 9/11 that emerged in its wake and with notable rapidity in the years 2005–2007” (Hartnell 478). However, writing from the *Other*’s perspective does not mean necessarily a departure from the “trauma” narratives of 9/11, especially in Updike’s case. This is for two reasons: first, in this novel Ahmad tries to carry out new terrorist attacks in New York City on the anniversary of 9/11, a traumatic treatment in and of itself; and second, Updike chooses a

tunnel for the planned terroristic attack, something about which he confesses he has a phobia. He is horrified to imagine the “fear of the tunnel being blown up with me in it — the weight of the water crashing in” (McGrath, “Cautious Novelist”). So, Updike is reinforcing his traumatic fears by choosing this particular locale. I believe that Updike’s narrative is not different from other traumatic narratives of 9/11 because it provides a reenactment of it in the same city by the same perpetrators. Nonetheless, Hartnell recognizes how Updike’s narrative is Orientalist at the core:

Only a very generous reading of Updike could credit *Terrorist* with deconstructing the colonial binary; in spite of his apparently genuine attempt to displace reductive readings of Islamist violence, “Islam” does ultimately emerge as other in Updike’s novel, its practitioners sometimes drawn in commonplace Orientalist stereotypes. Moreover, the overwhelmingly religious register of *Terrorist* sharply contrasts the values of Islam with those of what is a recognizably Judeo-Christian culture. (479)

Although Hartnell admires Updike’s choice of Ahmad as the center of his narrative, she suggests that Updike cannot untangle his narrative from an Orientalist approach to Islam, Muslims and Arabs. As she puts it, “what began as an exercise in empathy arguably finds its solution in the repudiation of Islam. And what is outwardly a realist novel possibly interrupts its own seamless claim to reality via the production of familiar Orientalist archetypes” (Hartnell 490).

Like Hartnell, Mita Banerjee in “Whiteness of a Different Color?” believes that Updike’s sympathetic narrative loses its track and she elaborates: “In pretending to provide us with the psychology of a Muslim terrorist, Updike leaves us with mere racial

profiling” (19). She also argues that Updike brings a nostalgic tone for a white America that seems to be fading in the face of an emerging multi-ethnic America, asserting that “*Terrorist* is a novel obsessed with, and not only curious about, skin color; about the cultural meaning that race may in fact hold” (16). Further, she compellingly elucidates:

To get at true whiteness, then, we only need to reverse the terms; Ahmad’s own racializing gaze may in fact become a stand-in for the narrative’s own quest for true whiteness. Ahmad’s racial obsession becomes what might be termed a reverse blueprint for the narrative’s own obsession with true whiteness. What Ahmad despises, the narrative cherishes, and it is this non-suspect whiteness that we, the readers, may cherish with it. The implicit charge here, of course, is that of reverse racism, of Ahmad himself being a racist; and it is this charge underlying Updike’s narrative perspective which brings me back full circle to whiteness studies. For whiteness studies, at its worst, dismisses the power inequalities inherent in the concept of racism and charges the other side with victimizing, with minoritizing, whiteness. (22)

I certainly sense that Ahmad’s perspective cannot be trusted as presenting the genuine character’s thinking at certain points in the novel, as I shall explain later. Banerjee, then, showcases many instances in the novel where “skin color” becomes the focus of the narrative and Ahmad’s racialist perspective allows Updike to see American society through different lenses even as it reaffirms the view of a vulnerable white America (16).

While Hartnell focuses on the narrative as trauma and Banerjee discusses race, Bradley M. Freeman zeroes in on the representation of the Self and *Other* in his article;

“Threatening the ‘Good Order’.” He argues that Updike wants to protect a vulnerable west and America from the unstable East. He believes that “we encounter a monolithic ‘East’ that threatens an overly idealized and territorially insecure America” (Freeman 1). In addition, “Ahmad’s Eastern religion and consequent terrorist activity pose a major threat to New York City throughout the course of the novel. In the end, the white Westerner, Jack Levy, must persuade Ahmad to pass through Western space without the intent of destruction” (Freeman 3). Freeman, like Hartnell and Banerjee, provides a rich analysis of the novel. However, most of the critical analyses of this novel misunderstand the ending. Ahmad remains a threat as he opens and ends the novel with the same condemning statement of his society, except in the end he has a bomb detonator. We do not know for sure what happens after the last sentence and this in many ways demonstrates that the uncertainties that open the narrative are still valid and Updike still does not find a satisfying closure to either his trauma or narrative.

My discussion focuses on three main points in Updike’s representations of Islam as incompatible with American society and the novel’s xenophobic tone towards Arabs and Muslims. First, Updike portrays the vulnerability of the American identity and American society in the face of the growing number of Muslims and Arabs. The second theme is the comparison between Islam and Judeo-Christian values to prove the intolerance of the former. The third theme is the translation of this theological comparison into personal conflict between the hero and the villain, Jack and Ahmad.

My argument here focuses primarily on Updike’s representations of Islam as a problem of the 21st century for the west in general and for the US in particular. He

chooses the *Other's* perspective to narrate their story and condemn themselves in the process of asserting the innocence of the Self. Karim H. Karim exposes this technique:

Violence is used as a way to mark out the domestic Other as a 'home-grown terrorist,' even though violence is carried out by elements of the Self as well. A healthier society would attempt to come to terms with all forms of conflict in its midst. Whereas some violence by its citizens may be inspired by foreign sources, it is vital to acknowledge the inter-relationships that exist between the Self and Other. The myth-based roots of Self and Other hold out the possibility for recognizing the fundamental tendency for them to coalesce in multiple ways. It is by transcending the binary framework that represents the two as completely alien from each other that we can begin to lift the veil that we have placed on violence.

(174)

This is why Updike's narrative is problematic in its portrayal of Ahmad and by extension Islam. Although Updike recognizes some violent elements in the Self, he is "more contented" in understanding and facing them, which is evident in his belief of the so-called American burden (Ashbrook, "Updike's *Terrorist*"). But he cannot cope with the violent tendencies in Ahmad's character as the *Other* (Ashbrook, "Updike's *Terrorist*").

However, there is one incessant question that accompanied my reading of Updike's narrative: "was Updike's novel an ironic or satirical treatment of American social issues?" After a very close reading of his novel, as well as listening to and reading his subsequent interviews, I believe that Updike's explicit statements about the danger of

Islam in the American society reveal his intentions and bias. In fact, what made him write this novel was basically seeing a new challenge in Islam inside his American society.

The novel's main setting is in a town in New Jersey called "New Prospect," which is in reality Paterson, NJ.¹⁵ Updike told the *New York Times* that he toured Paterson before writing this novel and was appalled by the fact that a certain church had been turned into a mosque (McGrath, "Cautious Novelist"). The novel depicts Islam and Arabs as incompatible with Judeo-Christian beliefs and Western cultural values and destructive to the lenient and tolerant values of American society. As I will argue in this chapter, Updike's literary representations of Muslims are also packed with neo-Orientalist and racist terms. He essentializes the makeup of the identity of Arabs and Muslims (used interchangeably in this novel). For instance, the narrative invokes the term "Mohammedans" to refer to Muslims (Updike 131). By extension, "Mohammedism," which is a "polemic name," is used to refer to Islam (Said, *Orientalism* 60). This term is rarely used nowadays and it is archaic even to some diehard Orientalists for two probable reasons. First, it is blatantly offensive because Muslims do not worship Prophet Muhammed as he is a prophet not a god. This is not to say Orientalists are keen to be polite or politically correct, but using this term probably undermines their credibility. Second, it is archaic given the new (equally hostile) terminology that has invented to refer to Islam in general, such as Islamic fundamentalism, Islamofascism, terrorism

¹⁵ I am curious why Updike chose this town in particular. Why, for instance, did not he choose his hometown Reading, PA, which has a mosque, or any mosque near his later town Danvers, MA? What was he trying to avoid? In the Ashbrook interview, he mentioned that Paterson, NJ, had a lot of Arabs. Did Updike choose Paterson, NJ, because there were unfounded reports that Muslims in this city were cheering when the Twin Towers collapsed? I could not find a definite answer for this and I thought it was worthwhile to ask why.

(synonymous with Islam), and Jihadism. “Mohammedism” was useful and common in the Middle Ages, lasting for the next few centuries in European Orientalism; it started to lose its popularity in the twentieth century. Timothy Marr in *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* attests: “Americans did not commonly use the term ‘Islam’ before the twentieth century; rather, they called the religion ‘Mohometanism’ or ‘Mohammedanism,’ itself an orientalist designation that gave undue centrality to the place of the Messenger Muhammad in the faith of Islam” (6). I could argue that Muhammad Ali’s prominent presence in American culture might have mitigated the improper connotations of the term. Indeed, there was a moment in American society when Islam played a role in the civil right movements of 1960s. As Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin point out: “The rise of interest in Islam in the 1960s can be seen as part of that spirit of social and cultural pluralism that marked the decade, as well as being intimately linked to African American self-assertion. Charismatic figures such as Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali gave glamour and a political edge to Islam in the United States, long before it became associated with anti-Americanism and terror” (11). Ali’s refusal to join the military draft to fight in Vietnam resulted in stripping him of his Heavyweight World Champion title, but his memorable and courageous struggle with the United States government was fruitful as the compulsory military draft was rescinded later. Nonetheless, after 9/11 the name became notorious again because of Muhammad Atta. Although Updike gives Ahmad the chance to defend his religion against the use of this term, Updike still insists on the “centrality” of Muhammad since he thinks that Muhammad authored the Qur’an by using the phrase: “Muhammad says in the Qur’an” (Ashbrook, “Updike’s *Terrorist*”). While Muhammad never claimed its authorship and

Muslims do not believe that he is the author. I believe that the narrative here seizes the moment to employ this term in an effort to invoke the idea of a Medieval and rigid Islam.

In this novel, Ahmad is a Muslim youth who aspires to be a soldier of this Medieval Islam inspired by the Qur'an. Updike thinks that Ahmad is "not wildly untypical, of many young Muslims" (Inskeep, "Updike Explores"). It is worth recalling Updike's problematic title, which uses the word "terrorist" as a proper name without any definite or indefinite article. "Terrorist" denotes two possibly meanings. First, it could be a nickname for Ahmad along with Madman because he is the main terrorist in the novel. Second, it might be synonymous with Muslim as Hsu-Ming Teo notes: "In the years following September 11, the terrorist became synonymous with the Muslim/Arab extremist" (296). Both possible meanings are negative and incriminating. The cover of the Ballantine edition is dubious as well. It shows a reflection of a black shadow of a walking figure with the word "Terrorist" crossing the chest of the shadow. The reflection of the head is blurry. The shadow does not have hands or clear visible features, making it elusive and hard to recognize, a fair representation of the novel's perspective on an imminent Islamic threat that is always lurking in the dark.

The Vulnerable and Fragile American Identity

In Updike's novel, American identity is threatened as the number of Arab/Muslim Americans increases either by birth or immigration. While the narrative presents the Islamic presence as a fearful threat, American society is depicted as "tolerant and diverse" (Updike 39). This implies two possible premises. First, Islam does not welcome tolerance and diversity, so it is not welcome in American society because it threatens the core American values of tolerance and diversity. Second, diversity and multiculturalism are

welcome as long as they do not include Islam or Arab culture. These oxymoronic statements are found throughout American neo-Orientalism. Claims of being secular, democratic, diverse in the west are shattered when discussing the inclusion of Arabs and Muslims. Western values are promoted as universal, but all these values are not inclusive of Islam.

Updike believes that there was a time when Arab immigrants came to America for the opportunity of a better life and assimilated into the American environment:

I think the original Arab immigrants came in search of work. They came looking for a better material life, and by and large, achieved it. The very vocabulary of radical Islam didn't exist, I don't believe, with any force, then. But now, the whole notion of this is somehow unholy behavior - the wish to get ahead, the wish to pump your oil, and open a small shop - all that is cast into doubt. And to those who fail or dissent from the system, there exists a vocabulary of resistance. (Inskeep, "Updike Explores")

According to Updike, Arab immigrants become a visible threat after the activation of "radical Islam" in their identity. I should note that Updike assumes that every Arab is a Muslim. Although Updike does not specifically state when this association with "radical Islam" begins, it is fair to say that 9/11 *exposes* this association and therefore *Terrorist* offers a window into this shift in the identity of the new generation of "the original Arab immigrants." Ironically, Updike, along with many American neo-Orientalists, participates in activating the "radical Islam" association with Arabs and Muslims. In this novel, Ahmad symbolizes the new Arab/Muslim in post 9/11 America in this novel. This is one

instance when the narrative attempts to survey the contemporary scene of Arab Americans' community:

...into that section of New Prospect, extending some blocks west of the Islamic Center, where emigrants from the Middle East, Turks and Syrians and Kurds packed into steerage on the glamorous transatlantic liners, settled generations ago, when the silk-dyeing and leather-tanning plants were in full operation. Signs, red on yellow, black on green, advertise in Arabic script and Roman alphabet *Al Madena Grocery, Turkiyen Beauty, Al-Basha, Baitul Wahid Ahmadiyya*. The older men visible on the streets have long since discarded the gallabiya and the fez for the dusty-black Western-style suits, shapeless with daily wear....The younger Arab-Americans, idle and watchful, have adopted the bulky running shoes, droopy oversize jeans, and hooded sweatshirts of black homeys. Ahmad, in his prim white shirt and his black jeans slim as two stovepipes, would not fit in here. To these co-religionists, Islam is less a faith, a filigreed doorway into the supernatural, than a habit, a facet of their condition as an underclass, alien in a nation that persists in thinking of itself as light-skinned, English-speaking, and Christian. To Ahmad these blocks feel like an underworld he is timidly visiting, an outsider among outsiders. (Updike 243-44)

In a place described by Updike as “without any prospect,” the “original Arab immigrants” abandon their traditional clothes for western ones and consider their religion lightly. This is an indication that Arabs and Muslims at one point assimilated into western culture

(clothes). The out-of-business factories show the end of the era of hardworking immigrants from the Middle East that Updike alludes to in the Ashbrook interview. More pertinently, mosques producing radicals replace these factories.

Now, the “young Arab-Americans” are interested in black’s fashion and “idle[ness].” How Updike does not describe the youths of other minorities is indicative that his main focus is “Arab” or otherwise he is confused that Turks and Kurds are Arabs, which I hope is not the case. After these colorful descriptions of clothes and signs, Ahmad, symbolizing a new generation of Arabs that does not associate with the old one and is not interested in fashion of any sort, emerges rigidly in black and white. Then the narrative brings the readers back to the actual location of this place asserting America’s dominant race, language and religion. These few blocks of New Prospect with their Arabic names are made to seem out of place, and inside this outlandishness is a mosque and Ahmad. This scene is multi-layered, and whenever a layer is unpacked, another curious one emerges, creating such things as an “outsider among outsiders.” Ahmad emerges sharply like his cut-and-dry clothes. Because his religion is considered “less a faith,” he sets himself apart from the whole scene, which is a curious observation in itself, but one that is eclipsed by Ahmad’s appearance. The novel seems to emphasize in Ahmad’s description that the new Arab/Muslim Americans tend to refuse to assimilate into the American culture and the narrative considers this outlandish. As Freeman observes: “Eastern homes and mosques are places of phenomenological eccentricity—even when encapsulated in a larger supposedly Western space like New York” (5). Indeed, Jack believes that the mosque is a “hard-to-find place” (Updike 38). Updike sees this eccentricity in immigrant spaces of Arab/Muslim Americans as a valid concern in

present-day American society. In the interview with Steve Inskeep, Updike appears shocked that Ahmad would not find an appeal in some aspects of American popular culture:

INSKEEP: You said that there's always been enough for America to offer to draw people away from their original ethnic identities and ethnic roots. Is that still true for young people today?

Mr. UPDIKE: I don't know an awful lot of young people.

(Soundbite of laughter)

Mr. UPDIKE: I have some grandchildren who are pretty assimilated and willing to be assimilated...

INSKEEP: I mean young immigrants, or children of immigrants, like the young man you write about in the book.

(Soundbite of laughter)

Mr. UPDIKE: I think that although Ahmad is fairly impervious to the charms of hip-hop and TV, I think, by and large, it's very seductive to the young. American culture abroad, does terribly well. It's one of the few American exports that does do well, is our culture. Its particular mixture of impudence and casualness, and frank sex, and glamour - I don't know, it's a language that carries surprisingly well into all kinds of places. And is one of the dangers that the mullahs and the imams of the world feel.

(Inskeep, "Updike Explores")

Updike does not oppose Inskeep's idea on the potency of American culture to assimilate all kind of ethnicities, but he evades answering Inskeep directly. Also, he focuses on sex

as an absent element in upbringing Muslim youths; notably he makes it one of the central themes in Ahmad's story. Aside from all of this, Updike believes in an American culture that is permissible on international stages except in the Middle East, and therefore Ahmad's immunity to exportable American culture presents a challenge to it from within.

The narrative appears to complain of a lost American identity threatened by either meaningless values or radical Islam. Beth, Jack's wife, and her sister Hermione Fogel ruminate over the possibility of an imminent terrorist attack and Hermione concludes: "all it takes is a little bomb, a few guns. An open society is so defenseless" (Updike 132). American society's greatest threat is its openness to foreigners, especially Arab/Muslim Americans, because they are moving in fast and they are refusing to assimilate. Jack also laments this openness as it enables foreigners to claim new grounds in the American society:

America is paved solid with fat and tar, a coast-to-coast tarbaby where we're all stuck. Even our vaunted freedom is nothing much to be proud of, with the Commies out of the running; it just makes it easier for terrorists to move about, renting airplanes and vans and setting up Web sites.

Religious fanatics and computer geeks: the combination seems strange to his old-fashioned sense of the reason-versus-faith divide. (Updike 27)

I should point out the apparent appeal of the word "tar-baby" for both Buckley's and Updike's narratives. This imagery enhances the rhetoric that the United States is not only under siege but infiltrated from within. Certainly, Updike seems to voice Berman's fears in *Freedom or Terror* regarding Europe's precarious situation facing Islamic threat in light of the increased number of Arab and Muslim immigrants, but Updike goes farther in

suggesting that the Islamic threat is already in the United States. Amazingly, Updike and American neo-Orientalists are worried about the vulnerability of the west in the face of the so-called Islamic threat while ignoring *the openness* and vulnerability of the whole Middle East to US invasions and airstrikes with impunity and without any regard or consideration to the stance of the people of those countries, the United Nations, the Arab League or even American public opinion. This openness is welcomed only if it assists the interests and goals of the United States, but not the openness that allows Muslims and Arabs to move into American society easily.

As suggested by his *The New York Times* interview, Updike's touring of Paterson, New Jersey, before writing this novel convinced him of the imminent danger that has crept into American society. Furthermore, he explains the easy process of making a certain mosque "a fact" in American society:

It's interesting how you make a mosque, actually. In parts of New Jersey that I visited, you just take the cross down and put up a crescent. And it's that simple. And a lot of the mosques are fairly modest, but there obviously are enough believers and practitioners to make the erection of mosques a fact in these neighborhoods. (Inskeep, "Updike Explores")

Seeing one church turned into a mosque fascinates him and heightens his concerns. In the novel, a mosque is not a peaceful place for worship, but rather it is the site of evil plotting and destruction, and imams "preach terrible things against America, but some of them go beyond that....in advocating violence against the state" (Updike 134). In addition, in this narrative mosques are patriarchal spaces that reject women's presence. Ahmad proclaims: "Mosque was a domain of men" (Updike 50). Thus, mosques are stripped of their main

purpose as a prayer hall, let alone their other crucial social purposes in any given Islamic community. We do not see social gatherings, festival celebrations, weddings or any cultural event in any mosque. In Updike's terms, what makes the situation more dangerous is that if mosques continue to replace churches, it entails the demise of Christian morality in America. Also, the increasing number of such buildings is to entice more Muslim youths into joining them and then being manipulated into raging revolts against American society.

The novel presents Judeo-Christian sites of resistance to the Islamic threat as diminishing literally and metaphorically. At fault are the American government and educational institutions for their participation in weakening religious values in schools:

The teachers, weak Christians and nonobservant Jews, make a show of teaching virtue and righteous self-restraint but their shifty eyes and hollow voices betray their lack of belief... They are paid to instill virtue and democratic values by the state government down in Trenton, and that Satanic government farther down, in Washington, but the values they believe in are Godless: biology and chemistry and physics. On the facts and formulas of these their false voices firmly rest, ringing out into the classroom. (Updike 3-4)

This is the second paragraph into the novel after Ahmad denounces his society. In the face of resurgent and confident Muslims who believe in the literal meanings of their holy book, the narrative blames lethargic educators and urges a rediscovery of American identity in light of the Judeo-Christian beliefs instead of teaching faithless science.

This paragraph's perspective is intriguing and it sets the tone for the rest of the novel. The voice of the narrative sometimes seems elusive due to the fact that Updike originally wanted the novel to be a first-person narrative (Ashbrook, "Updike's *Terrorist*"). The third-person narrative begins the second paragraph, then Ahmad's point-of-view picks up the narration in the middle of the paragraph, but it ends again with presumably a main narrative's perspective. Ahmad's point-of-view is serious and employs a distinct diction such as "devil" and "infidels." In this paragraph, Ahmad's perspective of the teachers is damning: "They lack true faith; they are not on the Straight Path; they are unclean" (Updike 3). The description of a weak Judeo-Christian society does not seem to be Ahmad's voice because he considers all non-Muslim as "infidels," including his closest Christian friend Joryleen Grant (Updike 4). It follows that Ahmad would not care to provide such a precise adjective of how religious these teachers are because they are infidels either way. Like his code of dressing, Ahmad's point-of-view is black and white. In essence, the opening of the novel laments a lackadaisical educational approach by purposeless teachers and the result is a lost generation of kids. Ahmad is a living example of the current futile status of education. Although he grows up as non-Muslim, he is able to self-convert (Updike describes Ahmad as a "self-converted Muslim") to Islam in the absence of Judeo-Christian values from his mother and his society (Ashbrook, "Updike's *Terrorist*"). The narrative opens with the logic that Ahmad feels at odds with his Christian and Jewish teachers and his society, which all try to deprive him of his religion. Ahmad's disaffected attitude is transmogrified into animosity.

The novel presents the Arabs/Muslims' hatred as driven by an inexplicable desire in their makeup which is nourished by the teachings of their religion and culture. The

Secretary of Homeland Security, Haffenreffer, wonders: “those people out there... why do they hate us?” (Updike 48). Here, Bush II’s rhetoric after 9/11 is manifest and the essence of this animosity is that Arab/Muslims hate American freedom, although the narrative of the novel laments freedom’s decadent state in the United States. The narrative appears to suggest that American decadence is fixable but this kind of hatred is not. For instance, in a gathering to plan the Lincoln Tunnel bombing in the presence of unnamed operatives, “The younger operative, not much older than Ahmad, hears the word ‘America’ and utters a heated long Arabic sentence that Ahmad does not understand” (Updike 248). Ahmad is told that the sentence means “The usual” (Updike 249). The narrative does not reveal the content of this “heated” utterance and it is sufficient to know that it is hateful because there is no need to find reasons for it. In the novel, Muslim youths reject and are dejected by, if I may borrow Updike’s phrase, “the system” (Inskip, “Updike Explores”). This rejection of “the system” is inspired by allegiance to an “outsider” system.

The following exchange between the Secretary of Homeland Security and Hermione, his personal secretary, provides the full context of Haffenreffer’s aforementioned question and calls into question the reason why Islam incites hatred of the United States of America:

Outside, church bells are ringing in sunshine blended of Virginia and Maryland rays. The Secretary [Haffenreffer] muses aloud, “Those people out there... Why do they want these horrible things? Why do they hate us? What’s to hate?”

“They hate the light,” Hermione tells loyally. “Like cockroaches, like bats. *The light shone in the darkness,*” she quotes, knowing the

Pennsylvania piety is a way to his heart, “*and the darkness comprehended it not.*” (Updike 48)

This exchange follows a harmony between the church’s bells and the cosmos. Also, this harmony is tuned with the names of Virginia and Maryland insinuating “Virgin Mary” although one state is named after “the Virgin Queen” (Elizabeth I) and the other after her Catholic older sister, Queen Mary. “What’s to hate” in this harmonious picture! If this picture is not harmonious enough, “Hermione,” a name that invokes harmony, offers a religious answer. She could not find any explanation to comfort Haffenreffer except by resorting to Biblical inspiration. Indeed, Hermione’s sentence ends chapter one, and chapter two opens with Ahmad inside a church with Joryleen. In this church, Ahmad “hates Joryleen for luring him into such a sticky trap” (Updike 51). This suggests that Ahmad is drawn out of his comfort zone of the mosque or “*darkness!*” In turn, Muslims and Islam belong to a dark entity that cannot live in harmony with the American society or have any understanding of the meaning of peaceful life, and this speaks volumes to the dark reflection on Ballantine Books’ cover of the novel.

The narrative of the novel cannot find any other reason for this hatred, ignoring and dismissing decades of sustained imperial exploits and military interventions of the U.S. in the Middle East. Instead, Islam is represented as demanding absolute hatred towards the American society with no logical or viable reasons. The U.S. is the source of the light and Muslims, being the agents of darkness, want to put out this light. This is once again a Manichean moment that pervades Updike’s narrative. Despite the fact that Arab and Muslim Americans call themselves Americans and they are American citizens, Updike still considers them outsiders and foreigners to “this light.”

The other aspect of Hermione's explanation for this hate is the offensive likening of Arabs/Muslims to insects and animals. Ahmad hates to kill insects because he is horrified to see "a broadened corpse, a squashed tangle to tiny parts" (Updike 253). While this shows a sympathetic side in Ahmad, the reality is that Ahmad is determined to kill and "squash" innocent people in the Lincoln Tunnel. Sparing insects' lives serves to show how Ahmad identifies with and values these beings while failing to identify with his fellow human beings. Also, "the sticky trap" suggests that it is set up for insects. Just like these creatures, Muslims operate according to their nature and their nature dictates hatred only. They cannot understand the lights of western values and they will remain foreign to it. Although Ahmad admits to Jack that he was not harassed after 9/11 because of his identity as a Muslim or an Arab, he still hates his society.

While the narrative tries to showcase that Arabs and Muslims are jealous of American freedom, it undercuts this claim by decrying the decadence of the concept of freedom in American society. It seems that one of the reasons of its decadence is the existence of many foreigners who do not share Updike's vision of an American society. The narrative views Arab/Muslim Americans as always loyal to their original homeland's culture and religion, and thus prone to hate America despite being educated and raised in the west. Arab/Muslim Americans are viewed as an extension of their home countries in the Arab/Muslim world. Charlie and other unnamed operatives tell Ahmad the possible outcome of his suicide mission:

"It'll do a ton of damage, minimum. It'll deliver a statement. It'll make headlines all over the world. They'll be dancing in the streets of Damascus and Karachi, because of you, Madman."

The older unidentified man adds, “Cairo, too.” He smiles that engaging smile of square, spaced, tobacco-stained teeth and strikes his chest with his fist and tells Ahmad, “Egyptian.”

“So was my father!” Ahmad exclaims. (Updike 249)

Three Arab and Muslim capitals will be the first to greet destruction in the US because hatred is entrenched in the teachings of Islamic tradition and Arab culture. Furthermore, being adjacent to Arabs and Muslims is a risk. Secretary Haffenreffer tells Hermione to advise her sister to leave New Prospect, which is not a safe town because it is full of Arabs. He says: “She should get out. It’s full of Arabs—Arab-Americans, so-called. The old mills brought them in and then slowly folded. The way things are going, there won’t be a thing America makes” (Updike 260). This statement of the Secretary of Homeland Security shows that he does not include Arabs into his America. The “so-called” is inserted to exclude the Americanness of Arabs and the *Homeland* should be protected against the so-called Arab-Americans. Here is Ahmad, who never travels outside the United States, and yet he associates himself with the Arab world. He is pleased to know that the news of the bombing will reach Cairo and his father will know what his son does. Moreover, he complains to Jack that the US exploits Saudi Arabia’s oil: “Even with the oil, they despised us, cheating the Saudi princes of their people’s birthright” (Updike 295). Jack is flabbergasted by this identification: “That’s some ‘us,’ you’ve worked up, Ahmad” (Updike 295). Ahmad is not the only Muslim who fails to find anything in common with his society. His Egyptian father also fails to understand America and escapes it.

Here, I recall Updike's review of Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* in *The New Yorker*, titled "Satan's Work and Silted Cisterns." In this review, he criticizes Munif for his failure to write a proper western novel despite being educated in the West:

It is unfortunate, given, the epic potential of his topic, that Mr. Munif, a Saudi born in Jordan, appears to be – though he lives in France and received a Ph.D. in oil economics from the University of Belgrade – insufficiently Westernized to produce a narrative that feels much like what we call a novel. His voice is that of a campfire explainer; his characters are rarely fixed in our minds by a face or a manner or a developed motivation; no central figure develops enough reality to attract our sympathetic interest... *Cities of Salt* is concerned, instead, with men in the aggregate. (117)

Updike thinks that Munif is incapable of writing a novel because his westernization is insufficient. In *Terrorist*, written 18 years after this review, Updike shows another educated Arab/Muslim in Omar, Ahmad's father, failing to assimilate in the western, American culture despite the influence of marrying an American woman and having an American son. In essence, he "failed to crack America's riddle and fled" (Updike 163). It seems that for an Arab/Muslim it is an essential trait to reject western values, one inherited from birth like nevus, unaltered and unchanged.

By virtue of this essential trait, the narrative uses "they" to denote and refer to Muslims assuming that readers know who "they" are. Markie, Jack's son, urges his parents to come to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Beth believes that it is a good idea as "they would never bomb the deserts" (Updike 32). Jack concurs: "That's right: *they*, as

you call them, *love the desert*” (Updike 32). This is a high point of Orientalism and a racial jab. In his review of Munif’s novel, Updike describes some Middle Eastern countries as comprising a “dusty remoteness like Kuwait and Bahrain and Saudi Arabia” (117). In this narrative, the Middle East remains a “dusty remoteness.” Since Arabs and Muslims live in deserts, they venerate them and their instinct dictates that they cherish such geography. Symbolically, deserts have no buildings, tunnels or stadiums, as they are empty spaces. Therefore, Arabs are attracted to nothingness and Hermione alludes to this love: “they (fanatic Arabs) invented the zero, as you may not know. They don’t need to invent the computer to wipe us out with it” (Updike 133). The zero here is symbolic of two images. First, it is a symbol of nothingness denoting Arabs’ love of spaces like the desert which the narrative suggests. This seems to allude to the absence of established metropolitan or community in the Arab traditions. Second, the zero is a symbol of the result of 9/11, i.e. Ground Zero, which is now a commemoration site of the 9/11 tragedy. Allen Feldman explains the imagery associated with Ground Zero:

Ground Zero is what WTC as the target of the attack is being called New York: Zero as a spatial construct demarcating an emergency zone, but it is also a temporal periodization; Zero as terminus, as eschaton and Zero as origin point, as arche. Ground Zero is also sheer negativity, a wound of absence, a deletion in the urban landscape, an erasure of up to 3000 lives and of the incomplete stories of their ending; it is a site of disappearance of architecture and persons and is also called the frozen zone as a site of stasis. (110)

The narrative seems to suggest that Arabs make their invention of the zero an actual site in the heart of New York.

The rhetoric of the novel seems to believe in the innate evil of Islam and Muslims as they embrace “a belief system that not many years ago managed the deaths of, among others, hundreds of commuters from northern New Jersey” (Updike 112). The narrative ignores the fact that there were Muslims killed in the tragedy of 9/11. By the way, this is rarely mentioned or acknowledged when discussing 9/11. Are these Muslims not considered victims because they call themselves Muslims like the terrorists? The blame here is not directed to extremist individuals but to Islam and Muslims collectively, and anyone who embraces this “belief system” is implicated as guilty of 9/11 by association. Minoo Moallem states that in light of 9/11, “Islamic fundamentalism has become a generic signifier used constantly single out the Muslim other” (298). I would add to her point that in contemporary US representations, Islam often becomes the religion that endorses any terrorist attack if it is against the west. This conflating rhetoric between Islam and its many subscribers is neither a mere incident nor an honest mistake.

Also, contributing to the *Othering* of Arabs in the American society, the novel appears blind, careless and uninterested in the differences between Arabs and Muslims, let alone the differences among Muslims themselves and different Islamic sects. Beth believes that Americans “can keep ahead of few fanatic Arabs” (Updike 133). Jack also protests: “Society doesn’t let them [kids] be innocent any more. The crazy Arabs are right—hedonism, nihilism, that’s all we offer. Listen to the lyrics of these rock and rap stars” (Updike 205). Despite the repeated and documented emphasis that Arabs are not necessarily Muslims and vice versa, the conflation of both terms still survives till today, a

serious indication that the systematic neo-Orientalist discourse remains successful and potent. Updike is familiar with Islam and Arabs to the degree that he knows that Islam asks its followers to believe in Judeo-Christian prophets, whom he quotes in the novel (Updike 62). Nonetheless, he portrays Islam as the complete opposite of Judeo-Christian values and beliefs.

Islam: Religion or Political Ideology?

The divergence of Islam from Judeo-Christian beliefs is championed by American neo-Orientalism in order to prove that Islam is an ideology of violence and intolerance rather than a religion of values, spirituality and civilization. Part of this evolving process is altering the story of Islam as rigid and unchanging. Shaikh Rashid watches “Islamic channels” where he sees “the great mosque of Mohammed Ali in Saladin Citadel, and solemn panels of bespectacled professors and mullahs discussing the anti-Islamic fury that has perversely possessed the present-day West, and sermons delivered by a turbaned imam seated at a bare table, relayed by a static camera from a studio strictly devoid of images” (Updike 197). The diction used in this quotation resembles symbolically a barren Islam that is “bare,” “static,” “strictly” and “devoid,” and this is evident in the more intellectual of these religious scholars, who debate anti-Islamic views instead of reforming their own religion. Another example of the permanent status of unchanging Islam is when the narrative mythologizes Islam as the Greek myth Hydra. The 9/11 Commission Report describes al-Qaeda as “an omnipotent, unslayable hydra of destruction” (qtd. in Ansorge 139). Updike capitalizes on this imagery in his narrative and he links this myth which has some origins in ancient Mesopotamia and Babylon. Ahmad likens revolutions to “Hydra” because Shaikh Rashid uses this image to describe

Islam in order to demonstrate “the futility of America’s crusade against Islam” (Updike 183). In Updike’s narrative, Hydra symbolizes unstoppable violence of revolution and the strength of Islam in the face of American military prowess.

The dominant Orientalist view of Islam pre 9/11 is that Islam is a corrupted version of Christianity (Said, *Orientalism* 59). However, this view does not serve the hegemonic western discourse any longer because it invokes similarities and association between Islam and Judeo-Christianity. It also might indicate that Islam imbibes the ideology of violence from Christianity. In the novel, Ahmad, himself, denies any possible similarity between Islam and Catholicism. Teresa, his mother, tells him that Roman Catholicism has similar beliefs as Islam, but Ahmad refutes this similarity by highlighting how Islam refuses making pictures of God: “In Islam, that’s called blasphemy, trying to usurp God’s prerogative of creation” (Updike 240). Therefore, the story of Islam post 9/11 morphs into a violent “belief system” like Nazism and it has to be controlled before it yields another catastrophe (Updike 112). In this novel, Updike seems cognizant of this discourse and participates in its promotion.

The ultimate moment of disassociation in the narrative is in chapter two. A black priest narrates the biblical story of Exodus while Ahmad is among the congregation. Exodus is always present in cultural discussions in American society. In her discussion of Leon Uris’ novel *Exodus* (1958) and Otto Preminger’s film *Exodus* (1961), McAlister emphasizes the importance of this story in American culture:

In *Exodus*, the Zionist story of Israel also became an American tale. Israel emerged in both the book and the film as an America-like refuge that had been hard fought and won (morally, politically and militarily) from an

often indifferent world. Certainly both the image of the Jewish pioneer and the trope of the tough Jewish David facing an Arab Goliath were well established in American culture before 1960. (163)

In *Terrorist*, it seems that Jack is David while Ahmad is both the Pharaoh and “Arab Goliath.” Ahmad is a descendent of the bad guys of the Bible, the Pharaohs, who enslaved and oppressed Jews, and the primary reason behind the Exodus; add to this that he is Arab as well. Interestingly, Exodus is mentioned numerous times in the Qur’an, but Updike fails to make even a slight reference to it or at the least narrate it from Ahmad’s perspective, since he attends this sermon. In fact, Moses and Jesus are mentioned in the Qur’an more than Muhammad by a long chalk. Once again, Updike does not bother to mention this. This is vital because it solidifies my argument that there is a serious attempt to distance Islam from Judeo-Christian traditions. What the Qur’an offers about Exodus is not explored, but Updike is keen to bring a parade of vengeful verses that are either out of context or are open to different interpretations.

Ahmad is still part of this tradition of anti-Semitism, but this time he has a religious text in the Qur’an that justifies his hatred. Ahmad’s hatred for Jews extends beyond the novel itself. Updike describes Ahmad’s characteristics to Inskeep of *NPR*: “Chastity is part of his shtick” (Inskeep, “Updike Explores”). Amusingly, Updike chooses the Yiddish word “shtick” and Inskeep protests: “I guess ‘shtick’ is probably not the word he (Ahmad) would have chosen for it” (Inskeep, “Updike Explores”). This is followed by laughter in the audio interview insinuating Ahmad’s hatred for anything Jewish.

The alleged link between Islam and Nazism, which I examined at length in Chapter One, is also at work here. “The unspeakable but considerably successful and still, at least in the Arab world, admired Adolf Hitler” (Updike 23). Updike’s narrative suggests that Adolf Hitler is still venerated today in the Middle East, that this admiration emerges from Islam’s anti-Semitism, and that Muslims and Arabs are alike in cherishing this sentiment. The problem is that the narrative forgets that Arabs are Semites and Hitler abhorred all the Semites. I should point out that in the west Islam is sometimes associated with Nazism because the Ottoman Empire was allied with Germany in WWI, but the rest of the Muslim and Arab countries suffered from both Nazis and the Ottoman Empire tremendously, a fact that is ignored like the always forgotten Muslim victims of 9/11. Also, Secretary Haffenreffer believes that Islam shares the convictions of Communism concerning how to handle its faithful: “The enemy is obsessed with holy sites, and as convinced as the old Communist archenemies had been that capitalism has a headquarters, a head that may be cut off, leaving flocks of faithful to be gratefully herded into an ascetic and dogmatic tyranny” (Updike 47). To highlight the supposed similarities between Islam and radical ideologies is a trend that I explored in my discussion of the American neo-Orientalists of the Hoover Institute, and I find its traces here in Updike. Certainly, this association matriculates to the literary representations of Islam. The disassociation of Islam from other religions serves the narrative’s purpose to alienate Muslims from the American society.

Alienating Ahmad in the church by refusing to acknowledge the Qur’anic narrative of Exodus is accompanied by a very offensive description of African Americans. Ahmad uses the word “*zanj*,” which is “negro” in Arabic, to refer to black people at the

church and I believe this is one of the moments Ahmad is particularly shortchanged by Updike (Updike 51). Ahmad is interested in Joryleen sexually and she is his best friend. He even refuses to have sex with her because she is brought to him as a prostitute. Why would he use this word to refer to her and her people? I strongly believe that Updike uses this word thinking it has the same connotations in Arabic. I am not denying the existence of racism in the Arab World, but Updike projects American racism into Arabic ignorant to the fact that the more racist derivative of “negro” does not exist in Arabic. I personally feel that Updike could not resist using this word in Arabic knowing that he could not use it in English. Sadly, he was not asked about it in the interviews. Banerjee’s brilliant analysis of the racism of this novel does not address this word in particular; she does, however, convincingly argue that there is a “racial obsession” in the novel (22). Another intriguing element in this is that Moses in Islamic tradition is black, and Updike should be aware of this because he mentions the hadith that narrates the encounter between Muhammad and Moses. In this hadith, Prophet Muhammad describes Moses as “a tall person with lank hair as if he belonged to the people of the tribe of Shanu’a” (Al-Bukhari 376).¹⁶

Updike’s attempt to disassociate Islam using Exodus fails in reality, but he does not stop with this. The narrative also tries to disassociate Islamic fundamentalism from prior examples of fundamentalism. Muslims are “like Baptist fundamentalists, only they are worse, because they don’t care if they die” (Updike 131). Updike is adamant about this difference: “So I can only believe that the very nature of Islam calls forth a certain fervor” (Inskip, “Updike Explores”). The novel cites the Qur’an and Islamic teachings

¹⁶ Shanu’a is one of Sudan’s tribes.

to prove that Islam urges fatalism. Ahmad proclaims: “Infidels do not know how to die” and only “true believers” know how to die because “Paradise awaits the righteous” (Updike 174). Then he declares: “My teacher at the mosque says that all unbelievers are our enemies. The Prophet said that eventually all unbelievers must be destroyed” (Updike 68).¹⁷ He believes that he is late for martyrdom: “Already I have lived longer than many martyrs in Iran and Iraq” (Updike 175). I highly doubt that Updike’s “young seminarian” would have had the same fatalistic desires as Ahmad has.

When Islamic fundamentalism is compared other religious extremism, it proves itself more capable of destruction. In the novel’s logic, other religions evolve and reform but Islam does not. Updike’s narrative contemplates the different beliefs in regards to death, life and the hereafter between Islam and Christianity: “Even for a stout churchgoer like the Secretary, a will-of-God fatalism and a heavy bet on the next world have been left behind in the Dark Ages. Those who still hold to the bet have one thing going for them: they are eager to die. *The unbelievers love this fleeting life too well*: that was another verse that kept coming up in the Internet chatter” (Updike 48).¹⁸ Haffenreffer believes that his religion evolves to cope with modern civil societies. If there is a call for fatalism by some Christians, they do not have a religious text that supports this macabre wish.

¹⁷ I could not find a source for this as Prophet Muhammad’s words.

¹⁸ The translation of the meaning of this verse 76:27: “As to these, they love/The Fleeting life,/And put away behind them/A Day (that will be) hard” (Ali 1575). However, there is no mention of “unbelievers” or “too well.” Abdullah Yusuf Ali comments on this verse: “[t]he immediate reference was to the Pagan Quraysh [Prophet Muhammad’s tribe]” (Ali 1575).

The novel's characterization suggests that religious westerners are aware of the limitations of their religion and adjust to the modern world by overlooking the metaphysical aspects of their religion. Jack's grandfather "had shed all religion in the New World, putting his faith in a revolutionized society, a world where the powerful could no longer rule through superstition, where food on the table, decent housing and shelter, replaced the untrustworthy promises of an unseen God" (Updike 23-24). Jack follows his grandfather's model as "Religion meant nothing to him, and as they (Jack and Beth) merged into a married entity it meant less and less to her" (Updike 30). Jack changes his name from Jacob to Jack and he marries a Lutheran. He also tries to prevent circumcising his son.

The marriage institution in this novel is used to advance the mismatch between Muslims and Christians. Omar irresponsibly jilts his wife and abandons his son, and therefore Teresa describes him to Jack as follows: "What a pompous, chauvinistic horse's ass he was, really. But I was young and in love—in love mostly with him being, you know, exotic, third-world, put-upon, and my marrying him showing how liberal and liberated I am" (Updike 86). Teresa suffers from her ex-husband's sudden departure and evidently this makes him unworthy of any positive remembrance. From Jack's point-of-view, Omar is also described as "a raghead, a Mussulman," but what has Omar done to Jack to deserve these offensive descriptions (Updike 163)? Is Jack thinking of his Jewish ancestors of the Exodus because Omar is a descendant of Pharaohs? Here, the shift in characterizing Arabs/Muslims is evident and the suspended imagery, which I discussed in the introduction, is at work. Omar is transformed from "exotic" to "Mussulman." Similarly, Ahmad is never described in with exotic adjectives like his father but he is a

menace rather than *Oriental*. Another aspect of this unsuccessful marriage of Teresa and Omar is that it takes place before the novel starts symbolizing the replacement of “exotic” Omars by “terrorist” Ahmads. This is what I refer to as “suspended imagery” in the Introduction.

Also, Ahmad, although a product of interracial marriage, cannot fulfill his sexual interest with his African American friend, Joryleen. On the other hand, Beth and Jack Levy’s marriage is successful despite some hardship and the infidelity of Jack. Their son Markie still keeps in touch with them and they care for each other. Hartnell sees a symbolic element in this marriage:

Thus, while the union of Jewish Jack Levy and his Protestant wife Beth on the personal level mirrors the political alliances between Israel and America that are referenced throughout the novel, Updike’s recognizably Judeo-Christian culture in fact masks a suppression of the former at the hands of the latter, as invariably that term does. Updike’s America then, though under fire in *Terrorist*, is markedly Christian, as are Updike’s frames of reference for understanding religion of any kind. For this reason his novel ultimately finds Islam wanting and participates in the assumption that “Islamic terrorism is locked in an existentialist battle with the West.”
(490-1)

By looking at marriages symbolically in this novel, Updike suggests that Islam stands as unsustainable in long relationships and it is unable to negotiate its position. Omar leaves once he cannot take responsibility for his family. On the other hand, Jack and Beth’s marriage survives infidelity. Indeed, Jack’s extramarital relationship with Teresa proves

fruitful. While Teresa is brought back to a normal sexual relationship with Jack instead of the “exotic” Omar, Jack tries to subdue Ahmad at the end of the novel by telling him about this illicit relationship.

Updike resorts to “frank sex” to make Ahmad, and by extension Islam, submissive. When Jack tells Ahmad that he has had sex with his mother, Ahmad is not infuriated; rather he appears disarmed. In a moment of metaphorical castration, Jack emerges as the absent father that mollifies Ahmad’s anger and appears to guide him out of the fatalism of Islam. Ahmad is sexually inactive, failing to win Joryleen from Tylenol who employs her as a prostitute. On the other hand, Shaikh Rashid tells Ahmad that spending time reading the Qur’an is better than looking for sexual relationships: “You will spend the night with a friend who will prove more true than any disgusting *sharmoota* [offensive term for a prostitute in colloquial Arabic]. The eternal, inimitable Qur’an” (Updike 267). The narrative seems to suggest that another troubling pattern in Ahmad’s character which is his inability to fulfill his sexual desires with females in this world. Instead, he remembers that “The Book Promises: *And theirs shall be dark-eyed houris, chaste as hidden pearls: a guerdon for their deeds.*¹⁹ Ahmad regards his mother as a mistake that his father made but that he never would” (Updike 170). Islamic teachings seem disconnected from the reality of human desires by decreeing a punishing celibacy for the sake of a metaphysical promise. Ahmad’s sexuality is under scrutiny as his mother and Jack ponder if Ahmad is “queer” (165). In addition, Tylenol describes Ahmad and Arabs as “faggots” and Ahmad does not defend himself against this abusive

¹⁹ The translation of the meaning of this verse 56:22-23: “And (there will be) Companions/With beautiful, big,/And Lustrous eyes—/Like unto Pearls/Well-guarded” (Ali 1410).

term (Updike 98). Ahmad is shown as unable to express sexual desires due to his Islamic beliefs.

Evelyn Alsultany's analysis of an episode of *Law and Order* where sexuality and Islam are the focus of the narrative is relevant here. A white male, Landon, is interested in Islam because "he was symbolically castrated by his girlfriend" and he finds justification for violence in his new religion (Alsultany 119). Alsultany explains:

Law and Order shifts the story line from portraying conversion to Islam as the cause of violence to revealing an individual with a pathological disorder who embraced a pathological ideology to justify his frustration. The root cause of violence is shifted from religion to psychological deviance. In shifting the cause of violence, adolescent white men who have not come to grips with their Oedipal complexes are to blame. Yet, Islam remains central to understanding violence because it is the vehicle through which violence becomes justified. Islam is the enabler. (119)

By the same token, Ahmad converts to Islam and his sexuality remains a mystery to his mother and his society. Jack is keen to understand why Ahmad has violent tendencies and probes his mother about Ahmad's sexual life. Then he finds the mother unsure if Ahmad is heterosexual or homosexual. Either way, Jack guesses that Ahmad has an abnormal sexuality. This information helps Jack later in the novel to reveal to Ahmad his sexual relationship to Ahmad's mother and position himself metaphorically as the father. Ahmad appears helpless in facing the Oedipal complex. In this narrative, Muslims fail either to maintain or have long relationships and they resolve this angry frustration by choosing the love of abstract women.

In the epigraph of the novel, Updike cites from Jonah 4:3-4: “‘And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.’ And the Lord said, ‘Is it right for you to be angry?’” The epigraph thus not only suggests readers are to read about an angry person who is taught by his religion to be angry, but also that Christianity does not condone taking one’s life. Updike dwells on the idea that Islam seeks death and destruction through feeding its believers anger while American society is quite the opposite of this. “American religion of freedom” has “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” (Updike 168). On the other hand, Islam demands its followers “to submit to” their “own place in Islam’s vast structure, visible and invisible” (Updike 77). “Ahmad knows he must have a future, but it seems insubstantial to him, and repels his interest. *The only guidance*, says the third sura, *is the guidance of Allah*” (Updike 18).²⁰ The epigraph serves as a notice and juxtaposition to the Qur’anic verses that Updike cites.

The language of the Qur’an and Terrorism

In Updike’s narrative, the language of the Qur’an is represented as the driving force that fuels and legitimizes Islamic fundamentalism and violence. Readers of this novel are exposed to truncated Qur’anic verses that are out of their proper context. What is more, the novel includes false Qur’anic quotations and some Qur’anic verses that are attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Ahmad is believed to be poisoned by such logic as he goes twice a week to study the Qur’an. The first Qur’anic verses the narrative

²⁰ The translation of the meaning of this verse 3:73: “True guidance/Is the guidance of Allah” (Ali 146). There is no “only.”

introduces are from Al Humazah (the Scandalmonger), and at the end of the novel Ahmad “the fatherless, the brotherless, carries forward God’s inexorable will; Ahmad hastens to deliver Hutama, the Crushing Fire” to New Yorkers (Updike 287). Updike chooses this chapter although it does not address unbelievers in Islam and he skips the first three verses which indicate that this chapter is about “scandalmonger/And backbiters” (Ali 1698). Updike provides a correct translation of “hutama” which means “*that which breaks to pieces*” (Updike 287). Nonetheless, he adds two elements to this words to serve his story: a) he capitalizes “hutama” and he transforms “breaks to pieces” to “Crushing Fire.” Updike tries to invoke the significance of the impact if Ahmad were to detonate the bomb inside the Lincoln Tunnel and by extension the collapse of the Twin Towers.

Another example is when Ahmad tells Jack: “Who says unbelief is innocent? Unbelievers say that. God says in the Qur’an, *Be ruthless to unbelievers. Burn them, crush them, because they have forgotten God*” (Updike 294). The complete verse 48:29 is as follows: “Muhammad is the Messenger/Of Allah; and those who are/With him are strong/ Against Unbeliever, (but)/Compassionate amongst each other” (Ali 1336). There is no mention of “*ruthless*” but Updike still harps on the idea of “Crushing Fire.” It takes a madman to believe in such violence and hence Ahmad’s nickname, “Madman.” Jack tries to dissuade him from believing in such violent rhetoric of the Qur’an by telling him that even though the Torah has the same vindictive language, God’s message is not to kill or torture people. However, as readers, we are spared from any Christian or Jewish fundamentalist characters and from reading actual violent verses from the Torah or the Bible. But, Ahmad, being an Arab and a Muslim, is incapable of being immune to the language of the Qur’an, and here lies the difference between the two of them and their

religions. In fact, there is no other character in the novel who reads a religious text out of religious duty except Ahmad and Shaikh Rashid.

Ironically, the narrative shows time and again Ahmad's struggle to understand the Qur'an in Arabic. Yet Updike attempts to prove the vindictiveness and polemicity of the language of the Qur'an through an English translation. Shaikh Rashid tries to explain to Ahmad the difference between "*mukhamat*" [clear] and "*mutashabihat*" [unclear] verses (Updike 105). However, when studying the Qur'an, "the student feels an abyss is opening within him, a chasm of the problematical and inaccessibly ancient" (Updike 106). It seems to me that this is precisely Updike's perspective. He states plainly in the interview with Charles McGrath for the *The New York Times*: "A lot of the Koran does not speak very eloquently to a Westerner.... Much of it is either legalistic or opaquely poetic. There's a lot of hellfire — descriptions of making unbelievers drink molten metal occur more than once. It's not a fuzzy, lovable book, although in the very next verse there can be something quite generous" (McGrath, "Cautious Novelist"). The "westerner" here is Updike himself, but he gives his voice the power to generalize without any reservation, invoking an Orientalist tradition of speaking from the standpoint of authority with conviction and certainty. He *eloquently* expresses the "problematical and inaccessible" issues that he finds in reading the Qur'an because if it is really Ahmad or any Muslim student who feels this, s/he will not believe in the Qur'an like Updike.

The novel associates violent imagery with Arabic when employed in a religious context. It asserts that Arabic imbues violence into the unconscious of its speakers that permeates to listeners. The imam who attends the graduation ceremony of Ahmad's school "twangs out a twist of Arabic as if sticking a dagger into the silent audience"

(Updike 111). Also, Shaikh Rashid “seeks to soften the Prophet’s words, to make them blend with human reason, but they are not meant to blend: they invade our human softness like a sword....the Prophet’s consciousness in letters of gold, like the burning words of electrons that a computer creates of pixels as we tap the keyboard” (Updike 7). Updike seems to suggest that the effect of the Qur’an works on Arabs more than any other race because they are warriors by nature and the Qur’an appeals to this intrinsic trait. In fact, reading the Qur’an brings immediately the imagery of Arabian warriors: “the Holy Qur’an for its language, a shell of violent shorthand whose content is its syllables, the ecstatic flow of ‘I’s and ‘a’s and guttural catches in the throat, savoring of the cries and the gallantry of mounted robed warriors under the cloudless sky of Arabia Deserta” (Updike 168). Updike reduces the content of the Qur’an to two sounds and war cries, and he finds this image reminding him of Charles Montagu Doughty’s Arabs in *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (first publication in 1888). In this Orientalist book, Doughty narrated his observations of Arabs and Arabian deserts and it became a solid reference about Arabs in European Orientalism. In his introduction to this work, T. E. Lawrence emphasized its importance in understanding Arabs: “[t]he book has no date and can never grow old. It is the first and indispensable work upon the Arabs of the desert”; and if it has not always been referred to, or enough read, that has been because it was excessively rare. Every student of Arabia wants a copy” (17). Here is Updike echoing Lawrence of Arabia’s praise of this book by extracting an Orientalist image from Doughty’s book to represent the sounds of the Qur’an.

Updike seems to allude with this imagery to the story of how Islam is spread by the sword, because the language of the Qur’an or Muhammad does not appeal to “human

reason.” Instead, it effects violence enforced by the sword, which stands in sharp contrast to the harmonious blending of “the church bells” and the universe. This view of a violent Islam in this narrative is not new, as Hartnell explicates: “In the twelfth century, Christian monks in Europe insisted that Islam was a violent religion of the sword and this one-dimensional view of Islam has persisted ever since. To the extent that Ahmad’s personal jihad inevitably evolves to take the shape of public violence in *Terrorist*, Updike himself participates in this long tradition” (488). After learning the Qur’an, Ahmad representing Islam emerges in “white shirt” as a “robed warrior” in the biggest cosmopolitan center of American.

Malevolent or Benevolent Destructive Wishes: Hero vs. Villain

The religious conflict between Islam and Judeo-Christianity is transformed in the ending of the novel into a conflict between student and teacher. Ahmad is the protagonist of the novel, but he is not the *hero*. As Karim suggests: “The hero and the victim are usually identified with the Self, who carries out good violence, and the villain with the Other, who conducts terrorism” (165). From the beginning of the novel, he is represented as the *Other* that is disconnected from his society when he announces that he is threatened by “devils” that try to deny his god, and he concludes the novel with the same proclamation (Updike 3). Furthermore, Ahmad is introduced like T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*: “Ahmad is eighteen. This is early April; again green sneaks seed by seed, into the drab city’s earthy crevices” (Updike 4). Eliot begins the famous poem thus: “April is the cruellest month, breeding/Lilacs out of the dead land, Mixing/Memory and desire, stirring/Dull roots with spring rain” (Eliot, lines 1-4). The similarity between Ahmad’s introduction and the poem is conspicuous. April, spring, dullness, cruelty, dead land are

all manifest in Updike's narrative and Eliot's poem. Ahmad is in his youth like the spring but there is a tinge of cruelty in him that should be observed as he is determined to make a wasteland of this society. He is not interested in the colorful spring because he is invested in his black-and-white perspective. When Updike is asked specifically why he chose black and white for Ahmad, he answers: "Right. Well, it is kind of a clerical outfit he's donned. And I don't know where I got that idea. But yeah, I did see him dressed very severely and chastely" (Inskeep, "Updike Explores"). In contrast to the colors of spring, Ahmad's appearance rejects the time and the locale. I am amazed at the fact that Updike does not recall what inspires him to dress Ahmad in black and white. Could it be from his perception of the Nation of Islam—known for dressing in black and white—the Qur'an or movies? From where does he have this vision specifically and for what purpose? Is this one of the clichés that he believes carries some truth in them about Muslims? Pervasive Orientalist images like the white shirt resembling a religious trope find their ways into his narrative. Unfortunately, although she is not exonerated completely, Banerjee falls victim to this perception as she believes, "For the shirt, as Updike all too bluntly reminds us, is that of the martyr, the white shroud which Ahmad wears, as if prophetically, well before he sets out to commit a suicide attack" (27). In Islam, everybody is buried in white shrouds regardless. But the *I-don't-know-where-I-got-that-idea* shirt and jeans seem to attach Ahmad's inner Islamic beliefs to a unique appearance that contrasts the city, its people and even his mother. He forces her to wear a hijab at his graduation, not wanting her "looking like a whore" (Updike 116).

Ahmad's longing for his absent father makes him find one in Shaikh Rashid.

Ahmad obeys and believes Shaikh Rashid's judgment that "Western culture is Godless"

(Updike 38). Inspired by this, Ahmad abjures his society because of its lack of spirituality and its attachment to what he considers a trivial world. Shaikh Rashid's and Ahmad's criticism of a godless America seems unacceptable and an infringement upon the whole concept of freedom of religion and beliefs, while Jack's similar criticism is considered warranted and reasonable. This is yet another moment where Muslims are not considered eligible to provide any social or religious criticism of the west.

Updike believes that Ahmad could be a likable person if he was only not a Muslim: "apart from Islam, he's a nice boy; a nice boy who believes. And belief entails certain uneasy-making consequences in the real world" (Inskip, "Updike Explores"). In other words, Ahmad is one of the "uneasy-making" results of Islam. Moreover, Updike's narrative recalls Buckley's sentiment about Islam being an "unhappy" religion. While it is true that Ahmad's "religion keeps him away from drugs and vice," it also does not teach him how to smile and teaches him to be a murderer (Updike 8).

Whereas Islam is the reason of Ahmad's evil tendencies, Jack's Judaism is the reason of his goodness. "The Jewish in him—the sensitivity, the burden, a sense of superiority" is always a deciding factor in his personality and he is never "rude" to his wife (Updike 137). He also is portrayed as caring for his society and his wife despite his boredom and infidelity. Although Jack cheats on his wife by sleeping with Ahmad's mother, Beth believes that Jack will not leave her because of "his Jewish sense of responsibility and a sentimental loyalty" (Updike 122). Jack is essentially good and the Bible proves it. Jews "are special, the Bible wasn't wrong about that" (Updike 122). Beth is not criticized for being submissive to the Bible's statements about the Jews while Muslims are ridiculed for a similar submissiveness. In addition, he tries to educate young

kids at his school, and detecting grave danger in Ahmad's upbringing gives him a new purpose in life.

Although Jack has sinister wishes towards his society, he is not described as terrorist or fanatic. After his wife tells him that "the terror-threat level for this area" is elevated, Jack thinks while "looking out the window, this whole neighborhood could do with a good bomb" (Updike 32). His wife shrugs this thought telling him not to joke like that and he agrees. But later in the novel, he reiterates the same murderous wish when he thinks that genocide is the answer to the next generation in America since he bemoans the loss of identity of young Americans:

They [the youth] 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 have drugged your brain back into the Stone Age. It makes you seriously wonder if people deserve to live—if the massacre masterminds in Rwanda and Sudan and Iraq don't have the right idea. (Updike 137)

This is a chilling thought to say the least and his wishes are not different from the logic of Shaikh Rashid or Ahmad. Yet, Jack is exonerated and viewed as the hero who fights to stop Ahmad's suicidal mission.

Another characteristic that separates Jack from Ahmad is Jack's belief in redemption. Jack's ancestors and fellow Jews suffer from American racism. Jack's grandfather "had to endure the taunt of 'Christ-killer'" (Updike 112). However, the American society, being civilized and rational, overcomes its mistakes and Jews are not

regarded as such anymore. Jack tries to convey to Ahmad the fact that if he faces racism in America, it is not because of who he is. Rather, it is a temporary process that will fade away eventually. In other words, Muslims too should not worry about racism in American since it is an initiation step towards assimilation or a natural reaction after 9/11. Andrew Shryock notes that “Racialization...is part of Americanization, and Arabs are expected to participate in this process, just as they are expected to vote, pay taxes, and learn English” (“Moral Analogies” 87). Ahmad should forbear acting against racism as American society will correct its mistake in the future. Alsultany illuminates: “The logic that 9/11 is an exceptional moment of crisis—and therefore demands exceptional measures—becomes crucial in producing a new kind of racism” (50). This is exactly what Jack suggests without stating it verbatim.

In Jack’s case, he overcomes this racism and then serves in the U.S. Army despite facing racism in the army as well. Significantly, joining the U.S. Army is another initiation step to becoming part of American society. Jack tries to dissuade Ahmad from choosing driving trucks as a dangerous career which involves carrying “hazardous materials” and mingling with thug drivers. He tries to convince Ahmad to join the U.S. Army: “If you have no job prospects, think about the Army. It’s not everybody’s sweetheart any more, but it still offers a pretty good deal—teaches you some skills, and helps with an education afterwards. It helped me. If you have any Arabic, they’d love you” (Updike 41). This is in the beginning of the novel, and at the end Jack is shown to be right about the need of Arabic speakers to detect danger in the Arab-American community. Because of the lack of Arab informants, Secretary Haffenreffer’s department is kept in the dark about Ahmad’s plans.

This suggests that Arabs and Muslims are useless in the American society unless they help the U.S. Army in conquering Muslim or Arab countries or inform on their own people. The Secretary Haffernreffer is frustrated not to find any Arab recruits: “I *hate* losing an asset. We got so few in the Muslim community, that’s one of our weaknesses, that’s how they caught us with our pants down. We don’t have enough Arabic speakers, and half of those we do have don’t think like we do” (Updike 259). Being an “asset” is a status earned by virtue of providing an access to this community of “outsiders.”

The narrative downplays the impact of American military actions around the world to the degree that Jack sees that it is best for Ahmad to go to wars as an American soldier rather than drive trucks inside America, because he could be a potential terrorist within but could be not a threat outside the U.S. We should remember that American soldiers have been frequently exposed to hazardous materials, and radioactive substances like depleted uranium, in both American campaigns and the subsequent occupation of Iraq (Nixon 200-1). So, it is safer for a teenager to join the army than to be a trucker! This is an alarming aspect in Updike’s narrative as he considers the American presence in the Middle East benevolent and “necessary.” He believes it cannot invoke hatred or anger from Arabs/Muslims as he suggests: “the fires are burning all over the Middle East. We see the results of Islamic preachment” (Ashbrook, “Updike’s *Terrorist*”). His imagery of fire corresponds with Ajami’s phrase “burning grounds” of the Orient (“Historian’s Vision” xvii). I believe writing *Terrorist* helped Updike to “let loose” his pent-up racist emotions about the Middle East.

The narrative represents Jack’s uneasy feelings toward Arabs and Muslims as justified. He is justified to feel hatred towards Muslims because he fears for Israel’s

existence in the Middle East. He is sometimes angry for the right cause: “When Levy [Jack] thinks of embattled Israel²¹ and of Europe’s pathetically few remaining synagogues needing to be guarded by police day and night, his initial good will toward the imam dissolve” (Updike 112). His hatred is exacerbated by his reaction to an actual event that not based on a religious text, and therefore it is justified, especially in contrast to Ahmad’s justifications of hatred.

Updike claims in the *The New York Times* Interview that he uses Ahmad to voice his own criticism of American society. Nonetheless, he tells Ashbrook of *Boston’s NPR*: “I am more contented or less discontented than Ahmad is” about American society (“Updike’s *Terrorist*”). He portrays Arabs/Muslims as an unnatural element in American society and implies that their presence causes social anxiety and an identity crisis. Updike’s grandchildren are willing to assimilate but Ahmad is not. The mysterious and grim ending of the novel contributes to the theme of the unpredictability of Arabs/Muslims. When readers are relieved to learn that Ahmad changes his mind about bombing the Lincoln Tunnel, he suddenly thinks that “*these devils...have taken away my God*” and the novel ends with this sentence, which is the same concept that opens the novel (Updike 310). We do not know for sure whether Ahmad detonates the bomb or not. This mysterious ending definitely reiterates the narrative’s uncertainty and fears regarding the presence of Arab and Muslim Americans in American society as menacing and unpredictable. The Islamic presence is portrayed as an ultimate threat poised to replace Judeo-Christian values. The novel seems to suggest that an unfathomable Qur’an

²¹ This seems to be a gesture to Nadav Safran’s *Israel, the Embattled Ally* 1978.

and an unprecedented radical “belief system” demanding death and destruction eventually produce deranged believers who are willing to carry out these agendas without remorse or hesitation. By the same token, Adams’ *Harbor* shares Updike’s perspectives on many aspects of the Arab/Muslim presence. Interestingly, Updike seems to hint at Adams’ novel since it was written two years before *Terrorist*. Beth asks her sister about the latest concern for the Secretary of Homeland Security and Hermione tells her sister: “Ports....Hundreds of container ships go in and out of our American ports every day, and nobody knows what’s in a tenth of them” (Updike 131). In *Harbor*, illegal Algerian immigrants come to America via tankers to Boston’s ports.

Un-harborable Arabs

Lorraine Adams²² is “a novelist, critic and Pulitzer prize winning journalist” (“About Lorraine Adams”). *Harbor* is her first novel. Her website tells how she began her career as a novelist:

During her tenure at the [*Washington*] Post, her journalistic skills were often at odds with her literary roots. A turning point came in 2000, when the Post assigned her to an investigative project—an anatomy of a terrorism investigation. She came to know young Algerian refugees under FBI surveillance. Disagreements stemming from the ambiguity of these young men’s lives led to her quitting. Witnessing part of the World Trade Center attacks and learning of a childhood friend’s death there pushed her to write the story of one young Algerian Aziz, whose tale the Post had

²² She is Pennsylvanian (it is a coincidence that I chose two Pennsylvanian novelists in the same chapter) and she earned her BA from Princeton University and her MA in English and American Literature from Columbia University.

declined to publish. She did so not so much out of a desire to write a novel per se, but to recount the lost stories of Algerians she knew without the strictures of journalism and the conventional sentiments of the moment.

(“About Lorraine Adams”)

Adams chose writing fiction over investigative journalism for two reasons. First, she felt some kind of censorship by her boss at the *Washington Post*. Second, the tragic death of her friend in the 9/11 attacks convinced her further to launch her career as novelist.

Although the time frame of her novel is not in a post 9/11 world, her narrative is certainly influenced by it. Adams’ novel is inspired by her investigative journalistic report on the Millennium bomber, Ahmed Ressay, who wanted to bomb “the Los Angeles International Airport on New Year’s Eve 1999” (Johnson, “Bomb Plot from 1999”).

Adams alludes to this story in the novel, the main themes of which are terrorism, human suffering, redemption and trauma.

Harbor narrates the stories of illegal and legal Algerian immigrants in Boston while focusing primarily on Aziz Arkoun’s story from 1993 to 2001. The novel begins with the illegal arrival of Aziz, after two unsuccessful attempts, as a stowaway to Boston after surviving 52 days at sea. It continues with his struggle to adapt to life in the United States. It flashes back to his earlier struggles living in Algeria. Aziz emigrates from Algeria because of religious and political struggles, and he wants to establish a new life and make a new beginning in the United States. However, he finds himself along with his brother Mourad, a legal immigrant who works at an airport in Boston, entangled with some Algerian criminals and Muslim extremists. He and the other Algerians become FBI persons of interest because of their connection to the “prayer boys” and some suspicious

Algerians in Canada, Europe, Afghanistan and the Middle East (Adams 70). There are important characters like Rafik Ghezil, Ghazi “Taffounnout Belghazi,” Kamal Gamal, and Dhakir Yayouai, but they are portrayed less sympathetically. Rafik is a swindler, thief and womanizer. Ghazi is another womanizer, but before the time of this narrative, he was betrayed by his fiancée and then became a radical Muslim. Kamal Gamal is a rapist and thief. Dhakir is also a womanizer, but he is the ultimate radical who tries to lure Algerians into radical Islam. Eventually, Aziz and other Algerians are deported from the United States and thus Boston is saved from any potential threat. Aziz’s tragedy emanates from the fact that he cannot escape his horrific past, culture or religion. Before immigration to America, he unwillingly joins Antar’s men, who are bloodthirsty psychopaths. Aziz cannot leave the mass murderer Antar because he kills the families of those who leave his command. To Antar, Aziz is Mohammed Nazzar and Nazzar’s parents are to be killed if Aziz leaves Antar’s group. So, he decides to stay with Antar but his hands get bloodier every night. “Such thinking, such renouncing of killing Nazzar’s parents, nonetheless left Aziz stuck with Antar and a killer, not of Nazzar’s family but of many other families” (Adams 162). Eventually, Aziz escapes Antar’s group only to find out from Colonel Ramdane Benane of the Algerian army that this group is allowed to kill innocent women and children without any prosecution. In fact, Sellami, who brings Aziz to Benane, is one of Antar’s men and works as a spy for General Zahaf and Colonel Benane, keeping them informed of Antar’s doings. Aziz confronts Colonel Benane: “I am a man of feeling, Colonel Benane....I felt when I killed mothers—in your services. I felt when I killed girls—in your service. And I will no doubt have with me those mothers and those girls when I see my own mother tomorrow morning” (Adams 195). This makes

Colonel Benane cry at Aziz's knee showing remorse and regret. Aziz's biggest tragedy is that he unknowingly witnesses the killing and rape of his fiancée, Soumeya, and this haunts him throughout the narrative.

In a note written for *Penguin Random House*, Adams elaborates how she mainly constructs her story in this novel around Aziz:

So where did my first novel come from? *Harbor* is an act of imagination. I made it up. It's that simple and yet, there are footnotes. I was a journalist, and I reported on a terrorism plot that resulted in a Washington Post Sunday magazine story. My editor at the time, himself an accomplished non-fiction writer, felt the piece should focus on one individual. Including a second would break with a journalistic convention that one "character" is more powerful and comprehensible for the reader than two. It was not in my interest to argue, but I did, forcefully. My editor cut the second man out.

The excised man stayed with me. He became one of the signposts that pointed me away from journalism. At night, after working on reviews, essays and reported articles, I started putting down his story. I intended it to be concealed writing, a pointless project for only my eyes. It was not quite fiction, not quite fact, not quite polemic; it was a cry. (Adams, "About Writing *Harbor*")

She succeeds at what Updike fails to do, achieving what Updike had hoped for. In other words, Updike wanted to create a sympathetic character in Ahmad but failed, while Adams succeeds in sketching Aziz as worthy of love and forgiveness. Also, while Updike

hopes to see Arabs and Muslims forgoing their holy book, and he believes that Ahmad would be likeable if he would abnegate Islam, Adams' Aziz accomplishes this feat. Adams gives Aziz most of the point-of-view of the novel as Adams states: "The book is mainly inside the head of Aziz, he's the main character and he was the character that my magazine editor forced out of the story, so he in the book becomes the character we know the most about. We're inside his head the most....I think that a lot of people wanted me to stay in Aziz's head...." (Dempster, "Interview with L.A."). Indeed, Aziz is a very memorable character.

Adams invokes sympathy for the plight of Algerians, yet she invalidates this by making Islam and the Qur'an two of the main factors in the Algerian civil war and Islamic radicalization. She offers some critique of the French collusion with the Algerian Army to topple an Islamic party that won an election in the 1990s, the outcome of which was a civil war. Although the narrative shows that General Zahaf and Colonel Ramdane Benane of the Algerian army have planted their man Sellami inside a group of murderers affiliated with Groupe Islamique Arme [GIA] to incite them to commit more crimes in order to dehumanize this resistance movement, Islamic fundamentalism within the GIA remains a greater danger than any western presence. Indeed, Sellami does not need more than the Qur'an and the sayings of Muhammad to urge Antar and his killers to continue their killing spree.

Aziz, the protagonist, is still traumatized by his horrific doings and experiences with the Muslim extremists of Antar's group in Algeria, and he flees Algeria looking for a better, more decent life in the United States. Aziz's brother-in-law Galeb, criticizes

Aziz's father for not taking care of his traumatized son: "These Salafists²³ are slaughtering our children, and you, you are nothing but flute players for French tourists. And here, your own son, haunted and broken, has come to you from what was no doubt the most secret, most honorable mission, only to be hounded by these jihadist madmen and harried by his hopelessly naïve family" (Adams 241). What is missing in the narrative is that Aziz's father is not given a chance to explain why he neglects his traumatized son. What if the father is still traumatized by the French colonization of Algeria and does not know how to handle trauma? What if the father grew up tortured by the French encounter? What if the father suffers from Stockholm Syndrome as he still mingles with French tourists?

These are legitimate unanswered questions that Adams' narrative leaves out just as when the American neo-Orientalist discourse omits or downplays the effects of colonialism and imperialism in the Arab world. If American neo-Orientalists admit to the European crimes and exploitations in the region, two subsequent effects will follow. First, American neo-Orientalism will have to stop relying on the archives of European Orientalism, depriving itself of the supposed genesis of Orientalism and hence delegitimizing its source of authority. It follows that the continuity of Orientalist traditions will be disrupted and challenged constantly. Second, if such an admission is made, it will undermine the American neo-Orientalist discourse, which essentializes the

²³ This term is shrouded with controversy in its recent applications. "Salafi Alsaliḥ" refers to the companions of Prophet Muhammad and it means "the pious predecessors". In the religious context, it means understanding Islam through the interpretations of the Prophet's companions. In the twentieth and twenty first century, it is invoked to refer to Muslim militants (like in Algeria in 1990s) or political Islamic parties (like in Egypt), but it is used to refer to the school of orthodox understanding of Islam.

turmoil of the Arab world and attributes violence and barbarism to Islam and Arab cultures. Also, European colonialism and imperialism will be blamed for the existence of Islamic fundamentalism and extremism, and they will be seen as the forms of resistance to western presence which they were in the first place. None of this serve the general premise of American neo-Orientalism. Like *Terrorist*, Adams' narrative suggests that violence and intolerance are fueled by the language of the Qur'an and Islamic teachings. Adams harps on this idea in her representations of Islamic fundamentalism. Critiquing the repercussions of violent European crimes and the European role in creating such violent resistance from the colonized is not acknowledged in American neo-Orientalist discourse in its feigned attempts to understand the violent tendencies of Arabs and Muslims. The main reason behind this ellipsis is that it would delegitimize the credibility of American neo-Orientalist discourse. Such admission about the European role in creating violent entities in the Middle East would entail incriminating the American presence in this region and its role in sustaining the existence of such violent entities by its violent military interventions and imperialist projects.

Adams uses the perspective of Aziz to criticize the political and religious struggle in Algeria. Also, she uses Aziz's voice to critique Islam in general as well as the language of the Qur'an. She portrays Aziz as the perfect example of the illegal immigrant who deserves another chance in the United States, but because of his background, he is not given that. She seems to suggest that if Americans would understand the plight of Arabs and Muslims, Americans would embrace them. The novel demonstrates how most illegal Muslim immigrants are susceptible to Islamic fundamentalism. Aziz tries to disassociate himself from that view, but the FBI does not give him a chance to prove it. Adams seems

to champion providing an asylum for Arabs who escape religious violence in their homeland. The implied message is that the United States should embrace the victims of Islam as good Christians should do. Aziz's initial plan is to seek refuge in a church and begin his new life from there because the tolerance of Christianity appeals to him. Nonetheless, he fails to adhere to this plan and falls into the hands of his fellow Algerians. Although he is not aware of any terroristic plan and he is a victim of his religion and culture, the U.S. immigration system fails to recognize his innocence. The redemptive tone of Scott Anderson and the preaching tone of Updike are combined here in Adams' narrative, but it is discreet and written masterfully in very beautiful language and spellbinding imagery. I credit Adams for two important achievements. First, her heartrending sketch of Aziz makes him worthy of sympathy and empathy aside from her attempt to proselyte him to Christianity. Second, she gives Aziz and Ghazi enough space to express their deep thoughts and perspectives, something absent in Updike's Ahmad and any other novel I examined in this study.

An American and Christian Asylum

In this novel, the United States is presented as the first destination for Arabs and Muslims since they choose it first over other countries. The American dream seems to be one of the reasons because it is very much alive in their minds. Most of Algerian illegal immigrants try to seek asylum in the United States first. "Asylum meant safety, a path to the green card. Asylum...was for those who were persecuted, physically in danger in the home country" (Adams 98). However, "economic reasons were not enough" to grant asylum (Adams 98). The question emerges of why the novel presents the United States as the first destination for Arabs and Muslims when they emigrate from their homeland.

America becomes a new home for these unfortunate Algerians but they are on the run again because of who they are. Adams chooses Boston as the setting for the sake of the American dream. She elaborates:

Boston is the setting for several reasons. I think of Boston as the cradle of liberty, a hallowed place in the idealized American history of the nation's founding. Boston harbor is familiar to every school child as the location of the Boston tea party, a protest against colonial subjugation. These young men jumped into the same harbor out of a desperation for freedom not unlike the motivating spirit of the American experiment. ("About Writing *Harbor*")

She wants to recreate the American story with these Algerians. Aziz grieves that he is forced to leave Boston, but he is never homesick for Algeria (Adams 153). He calls Boston "home" when he writes a letter to Mourad from New York telling him: "I want very much to come home" (Adams 209). To these Algerians, emigration means to survive religious and political persecution. To Ghazi, "America became the place he would come clean, stay clean, make it clean. The place to be apart from the ones who never tried. The place his bothers were too busy working for the government and marrying girls his father picked to even dream they could get near" (Adams 255). Besides, coming to America saves Algerians from backward Arab traditions like arranged marriage.

In the world of the novel, Arab immigrants can make a decent living in the United States and find a peaceful life, unlike their lives in their previous countries. They can rely on hard work and their language outside of a religious context to maintain a steady

income. For example, Arabic could be enjoyable or useful in certain locales. Aziz starts an interesting business by selling cups decorated with beautiful Arabic proverbs in New York City. He seems to thrive on his language and culture in this multicultural city although he could not replicate the same success in Boston. In addition, Mourad is able to buy a car for his father in Algeria and he gives his mother money so she could visit a doctor “for the first time in years” (Adams 79). He also “was considered an enormous asset because of his French, Arabic, and acceptable English” (Adams 77). The narrative uses the word “asset,” suggesting a certain social status achieved by virtue of speaking Arabic which gives the authorities access to this newly visible minority. Raymond W. Baker finds the search for Arabic experts increasing post 9/11: “Now, the call is for terror specialists, fluent in Arabic, to serve national security interests. In my worst moments, I wonder whether my recommendations of students for language study programs now simply increase the crop of Arabic speakers for interrogation and eavesdropping purposes” (253). This interest in Arabic is not to understand the culture or the people or increase venues of communication, but rather to increase surveillance. At the end of *Harbor*, FBI agent April Baron-Evans and other agents complain of the lack of native Arabic speakers just like Secretary Haffenreffer in *Terrorist*. Although undercover agent Charlie Stone speaks Arabic, he is not able to offer any valuable information to the FBI and Aziz suspects that he is a spy because he fails to understand some nuances in Algerian dialects. Mourad would have been more useful in this investigation, but he sides with his brother and quits his job at the airport. Once he decides to choose his brother over his new home, his American dream is done for as he becomes a fugitive like Aziz and Ghazi.

Another American dream success story is a Yemeni storeowner, Tahir Hussain, who loses “his family to some strange scourge of hyper-justice in Yemen” (Adams 153). This Yemeni finds a safe new home in New York City, which is the very city that suffers the same scourge of “hyper-justice” in the form of terrorists on 9/11. The narrative highlights how Muslims escape violence in the Arab World to live peacefully in the United States. While some succeed in escaping their religion and culture like this Yemeni, Aziz fails and he is doomed by his association with suspicious Algerians; hence the tragedy of his story. Adams’ usage of “hyper-justice” to refer to Muslim extremists’ violence is intriguing. Slavoj Zizek wonders: “Can we imagine a greater irony than the fact that the first codename for the US operation against terrorists was ‘Infinite Justice’...?” (56-57). Zizek’s rhetorical question is not directed to Adams, but it seems to fit this context. Adams’ narrative condemns the “hyper-justice” for its horrific effects on innocent people in Algeria and Yemen, but it fails to highlight the victims of “Infinite Justice” and the lack of justice in the targeted geographies. Despite the fact that these Algerians are illegal immigrants, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and the FBI wait for a judge to issue a warrant for them to launch the surveillance on these illegal Algerians (Adams 231). This is an indication of justice being served. Before the arrest of Aziz, Mourad, and Ghazi, FBI agent Mark Blake reads a Daniel Webster saying inscribed on a federal courthouse: “‘Justice is the great interest of man on earth. It is the ligament which holds civilized beings and civilized nations together’” (Adams 283). Here is a crucial difference that separates America from the Middle East.

The novel certainly endorses the existence of the American dream for Arabs, especially upon considering the political situation in the Middle East. Adams’ sympathy

for these Algerians is driven by two reasons. First, Algerians are victims of their religion and culture. Second, good illegal Algerian immigrants are not given a chance to stay in this new home because the FBI and Homeland Security cannot distinguish between “good” or “bad” Muslims. Mahmood Mamdani points out:

After an unguarded reference to pursuing a “crusade,” President Bush moved to distinguish between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims.” From this point of view, “bad Muslims” were clearly responsible for terrorism. At the same time, the president seemed to assure Americans that “good Muslims” were anxious to clear their names and consciences of this horrible crime and would undoubtedly support “us” in a war against “them.” But this could not hide the central message of such discourse: unless proved to be “good,” every Muslim was presumed to be “bad.” All Muslims were now under obligation to prove their credentials by joining in a war against “bad Muslims.” (15)

Adams seems to justify this paranoid behavior of the government’s agency for the greater good and the narrative promotes the usual American neo-Orientalist fear-mongering representations of Muslims and Islam. In attempting to portray the miserable lives of these Arabs and the significant improvements they find in American society, the narrative tries to explore the reasons behind fundamentalism and barbarism in Algeria without considering the conspicuous western monopoly and plunders in the Middle East and their enduring effects. These illegal immigrants are not actually terrorists but they are thieves, rapists, killers or deceivers. Ironically, the narrative takes them from the worst possible accusation of terrorism to what seems to be lesser crimes, and these crimes seem to be

correctable. Here, Adams falls in what Pankaj Mishra refers to as sympathy breaking down as he discusses characterization of terrorists in post 9/11 fictions in America:

If inviting terrorists into the democratic realm of fiction was never less than risky, it is now further complicated by the new awareness of the mayhem they cause in actuality. Their novelist-host has to overcome much fear and revulsion in order to take seriously murderous passions aimed at his own society. Sympathy often breaks down, and hasty research reduces individuals as well as movements to stereotypical motivations. (“The End of Innocence”)

Indeed, Adams’ narrative is anxious about Muslims’ presence in Boston and this presence is established as illegal in the first place. Only Aziz is a “good Muslim” because he renounces his religion and he undergoes a metaphorical conversion to Christianity. He is ushered into American society early in the novel because he suspends his vision of a massacre in Boston:

Sitting by the cash register in the glass box, he willed the massacres into animation across the street, trying to see their Boston version. He imagined a sidewalk exploding, a handbag flying, a baby’s hat plopped on a manhole cover. But these dioramas melted in the radiance before him: the metallic of cars, the kid of a caramel glove, the creamy red of brake lights. The pretty nothing that was America—he wanted to watch that.
(Adams 66)

The “bad” Muslim in him begins the bloody vision but he stops this horrific scene and starts to enjoy the nothingness of mundane life. This is the moment that separates Aziz

from the rest of Algerians. He is willing to break from his past to redeem himself in this new place.

The theme of Christian redemption to save Arabs and Muslims is pervasive in Aziz's story. If Ahmad stands out as different from other young Arabs because of his strong attachment to his religion, Aziz stands apart from other Algerians due to his detachment from Islam. The narrative of *Harbor* would be different if Aziz succeeded in finding a church in the beginning instead of going to Rafik's apartment. When Aziz arrives in Boston, he wanders the streets looking for a church:

He [Aziz] imagined he would find a church. That was what he was looking for—they allowed people inside, come what may, and he would sleep there, maybe under the altar, or maybe he would find a heavy silk robe in a back room and wrap himself in it, and a priest would happen on him. He was imagining the priest, kindly and old, a face that beamed and was mostly a face of love. How he needed such a face. As he was constructing its possibilities in his head, someone said to him: “Brother.” And so did another one, this time emphatically: “Brother.” (Adams 6)

The church provides a sense of comfortable harbor to Aziz. He is ready to give himself up at the altar and he is willing to wear any priestly clothes he finds. Basically, he wants to wear a new religion but he fails. He tries to escape Islamic fundamentalism to no avail. “Brother” is a common term between Muslims, and him being called by this interrupts and disrupts Aziz's envisioned Christian conversion. This is a foreshadowing of the events to follow as he is doomed and haunted by his identity and his religion. He flees Algeria and his past, but his first encounter is a call in Arabic. In addition, the

unnamed Egyptian who offers Aziz a temporary shelter brings him charity clothes from a local mosque to replace the “heavy silk robe” of his imagined church. Aziz still believes that “he should have stuck to his plan about the church” instead of contacting his fellow Algerian, Rafik, who introduces him to other illegal Algerian immigrants in Boston (Adams 17). Any comforting look reminds him of the look of “the imaginary priest,” and his nightmares are full of Muslim terrorists (Adams 10).

Aziz is accompanied by Catholic symbols in this novel. The imagined conversion at the altar is reenacted by the nurse Osana Jean-Batiste as she performs what seems to be some kind of resurrection after seeing Aziz pass out:

It was this kind of trance she had seen as a little girl in Haiti; it was the arms that went first, before the whole of a man just went up off into the air, as easy as Lazarus. Levitating, they called it here. She crossed herself and did what her mother had always told her to do, which was to slide her arms around this patient, this bird of a man, and pull him close to her chest. “Peace, child” she said. “This child is all right. This child is all right.”

(Adams 36)

Two Catholic symbols are attached to Aziz in this quote. First, he is associated with the sick Lazarus of the Bible who died and was resurrected by Jesus. Second, Aziz is referred to as a bird while his sister gives him the nickname “Hmaam,” in Arabic “pigeon” (Adams 31). The dove in Catholicism is the Holy Spirit. Aziz seems to have died in Algeria and been reborn here in America. He stops being a killer, abdicates his religion and wants a fresh start.

Aziz's identification with Christianity starts even before his arrival in Boston. After he escapes from the army and then from Antar's killing squad, and is safe at home again with his family after 33 months of absence, he is described as having "felt like a Tibhirine monk" (Adams 243). This association is potent and fraught with a lot of connotations. First, Aziz envisions himself as a peaceful Catholic monk because he does not feel the peace of his religion anymore. When he is with Antar, he is forced to kill and participate in killing a lot of innocent people including his fiancée. Antar's men kill and read the Qur'an and this makes Aziz reconsider his stance on Islam.

Second, there is a reference to the historical tragedy concerning Seven French Tibhirine Monks who resided in the monastery of Notre Dame de l'Altas in Tibhirine, Algeria. Their decapitated heads were found in Medea in May 1996 and their bodies were never found (Marlow, "Beheaded Monks"). John Kiser narrates their story in *The Monks of Tibhirine: Love, Faith and Terror in Algeria*, published in 2002. It was believed that 20 men of GIA (Groupe Islamique Arme) kidnapped them and asked for ransom but they did not wait for it. However, thirteen years after the tragedy in 2009, General Francois Buchwalter, who was the French Military Attaché in Algiers from 1995 to 1998, told Judge Marc Trévidic in a court hearing that these monks were killed by the Algerian Army by mistake and then their bodies were mutilated to blame it on the GIA (Crumley, "Seven Dead Monks"). After General Buchwalter's testimony, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy was enraged. He promised to release classified documents, demanding: "I want the truth" because this meant French officials in Algeria at the time were involved in covering up who really committed this egregious crime (Marlow, "Beheaded Monks").

Adams published *Harbor* in 2004 before General Buchwalter's testimony in court. Therefore, in Adams' mind the culprits were still the GIA. However, she contributes in promoting American neo-Orientalist discourse by making Aziz and Algeria victims of Islam. Therefore, Aziz and the Tibhirine Monks suffer from the same violent and criminal movement. The allusion to this crime and Aziz's association with the monks is yet another moment that sets Aziz apart from the rest of the Algerians, although in the bigger picture they appear the same.

Muslims/Arabs/Middle Easterners/Asians in "The Human Eye"

Most of the American characters in the novel cannot distinguish between the different nationalities and races of Arabs and Muslims. It seems that the novel ridicules this identity conflation as characteristic of ignorance and disrespect, but the narrative itself participates in confirming this ignorance and seems to be driven by a systematic ideology that directs and interprets the identity of the *Other* for the masses. Adams is not ignorant and I believe that she is aware of the nationality and identity differences between Arabs and Muslims, as are many mainstream media journalists in America. But the novel does not make a concerted effort to educate its readers about these differences. In her representations of racial incidents in the novel, she does not indicate that such conflation is a result of a hegemonic discourse that controls the American mainstream media outlets. She could have insinuated this in her narrative easily, in the same way that she criticizes the censorship of journalism in Algeria. This implies an apologetic tone, an inadvertent mistake or a downplaying of a serious reality that plagues the representations of Muslims and Arabs. It is even significantly disturbing to know that Adams was a journalist before she became a novelist. She is bothered by censorship in Algeria, but she is not concerned

by racist discourse in her own society and in her own profession. I will analyze three moments where the narrative ridicules identity connotations, because readers know their inaccuracy, and then proceeds to almost brazenly confirm this connotation.

The first type of identity connotation results from an ignorant individual who does not care about differences of race or nationality. Mrs. Massaquina, the landlady of Rafik's apartment, threatens Rafik, Kamal and Aziz: "More noise—I call police. Off to Pakistan for good" (Adams 28). To Mrs. Massaquina, "Algeria was Pakistan was India" (Adams 28). Here, the narrative calls out Mrs. Massaquina's racist, ignorant attitude and her stubborn refusal to recognize the difference. She resembles some uneducated Americans who do not know how to speak correct English and lack basic knowledge of the world map. Nonetheless, Mrs. Massaquina's wild assumption is endorsed in a fashion by later events. Ghazi wants to leave either for Chechnya or Afghanistan because he wants to join radical Muslims (Adams 271). Also, Kamal Gamal in the end leaves for Indonesia and subsequently his nationality cannot be determined. He could be Algerian, Iraqi or Saudi because: "The chaos in Kuwait during and after the war was such that identities changed hands like quarters in a Coke machine" (Adams 205-06). Mrs. Massaquina's identity connotation is solidly reinforced, as these Algerians keep illusively appearing in different geographies.

The second type of identity connotation is ambivalent in the beginning. Heather Montrose, Rafik's girlfriend, persuades Linda Ricco to allow Aziz to use her insurance. She helps Aziz to get medical treatment using her insurance by lying to the hospital about his identity as her husband, Xavier Ricco, because Heather does her a lot of favors and gives her money sometimes. Linda cannot tell the difference between the nationalities of

South-East Asia; “The only time Linda’d heard the name Rafik was when a Filipino, who turned out to be Indonesian—or was it Malaysian?—moved into the apartment across hall” (Adams 48). Linda risks being caught for insurance fraud to help a sick human being whom she does not know in the first place despite her greed for some more favors from Heather.

Linda’s nonchalant assumption about Rafik’s nationality is upheld in Dhakir, who owns “an Indonesian and Malaysian import-export business” in Montreal (Adams 174-75). Also, the CIA captures a terrorist in Indonesia. Ghazi comes back to America with a fake passport and a new name, “Manuel Marquez” (Adams 202). Like Mrs. Massaquina’s, Linda’s laughable perspective is asserted as the narrative progresses.

Linda discovers that Heather dates Muslims, whom she identifies as “the ones who make nuns out of their women. Heather with that?” (Adams 48). To Linda, Muslims are identified by a small aspect of their religion. She knows Islam via the veil and she expresses her dismay at this discovery by condemning Muslims for the western denominator of Islam’s oppression, the veil. Linda’s identity conflation seems comical, especially as she has other comic moments in the novel as well. Still, the Islamic veil remains problematic in the narrative as Kamal escapes from the FBI wearing a “traditional Islamic dress” pretending to be a female (Adams 287).

What strikes me in Linda’s example is the narrative’s attempt to justify Linda’s fear towards Aziz despite her humane help. “Linda never met Aziz, so he was more of an idea than a person, and a suspicious one” (Adams 48). Linda’s reasoning later in the novel shows the problems in this kind of thinking. In the end, Linda goes to the police after hospital bills start to accumulate because of Aziz’s treatment and she finds out that

the FBI views these Algerians as an imminent danger. She becomes instrumental to the FBI. While wearing wires for the FBI, she warns Heather that Rafik is a danger and he plans “to blow Boston” (Adams 277). Heather wonders if Linda thinks so because he is a Muslim. Linda replies: “Arab, Muslim—however you slice it, trouble” (Adams 277). After all, she saves Aziz’s life in the beginning, but upon realizing that he is a threat to her society, and then, she helps the FBI capture him and other Algerians, and her initial paranoia of Muslims is validated.

On another level, Linda’s words amaze me every time I read them because they succinctly sum up the concept of Orientalism. Arab/Muslims are mere ideas that are re/constructed, re/shaped, re/invented, re/enforced and manipulated in the American neo-Orientalist discourse and in European Orientalism before that. The representations of Arabs and Muslims are not based on the reality of their conditions or with the consideration of their perspectives and unheard voices, but are rather based on the pervasiveness of biased Orientalists’ ideas. What confirms Linda’s suspicion is that Aziz himself cannot understand Algerians: “Men [Algerians] from these places [Algerian towns] could be anyone or anything. It became too much work to separate the killers from the killed or the relatives of the killers from the relatives of the killed. Stories had to be remembered and details of maimings compared—names, dates, places pieced into a coherence” (Adams 71). Ultimately, “This is Algeria. It is permanently confused on all levels” (Adams 242). This confusion leaves Americans perplexed in their attempts to understand it or its people.

The third moment of identity conflation is necessary to secure American society from potential terrorists. The US government is looking for “an Algerian cell” that “has

ties to operatives in Germany, Pakistan, Great Britain, Yemen, and Afghanistan” called “The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat” (Adams 200-01). After all, Mrs. Massaquina’s and Linda’s conflation of identity seems logical as these Muslims are not limited by any boundaries. Mark and April discuss the data that they gather on this Algerian cell and Mark reaches this conclusion:

This is my third counterterrorism case, I can assure you that these entries are riddled with errors, not to mention the errors that riddle the phone company records regarding the ownership of these phone numbers. When we add to that the problems with transliterating Arabic names to English, the variants are essentially endless. There is no other way except the human eye. And this human eye is not ready to make even a preliminary report. (Adams 233)

Towards the end of the quote, Mark reveals that he does not trust “the human eye” as a reliable source to identify terrorists. Nonetheless, what does this “human eye” mean? Is it really a human or an American eye? Is this a justification for racial profiling because it is the last resort against imminent danger? Mark does not believe in racial profiling based on “the human eye” and therefore he feels certain that Ghazi is not a terrorist. He makes a bet to his fellow FBI agents that if Ghazi is “a religious fanatic, I’ll wear a burka to the office” (Adams 269). Besides the conspicuous link between shame and the burqa, Mark loses the bet, as he does not know that Ghazi is radicalized by Dhakir and determined to join Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. What Mark forgets is that the trained FBI eye is not like any “human eye.” The trained FBI eye could watch “for years” and know “how to watch without bringing attention” (Adams 147).

An FBI agent justifies to Mark the logic behind sweeping arrests of any suspicious figure: “I don’t want to see thousands of innocents dead in Boston streets...I don’t want to know what I know today and did nothing about it. If we wait, if we stand by, we are playing with the lives of every man, woman, and child in Boston” (Adams 266). This very statement seems justification enough for the Patriot Act and any other legislation that entails racial profiling. Waiting for a “suspicious idea” to become a viable, real threat could prove costly. In the storage container, there is no actual bomb, but there are raw materials for it. If a bomb is made out of these materials, it “could blow a crater the size of Boston” (Adams 265). But, the Bush Doctrine of “preemption, that is, the assertion of a U.S. right to strike against foes who pose a potential but not necessarily imminent threat to U.S. interests,” permits authorities to take immediate preventive/preemptive action (McAlister 288). Based on this, any Muslim household in the world could have bomb materials in their homes.

The narrative seems to justify the sweeping indictment of Algerians by implying that they are always prone to becoming terrorists. April knows how close Algerians are to embracing radical ideologies: “Algeria has a problem with these sickos...I know that. They’ve got ties to Al Qaeda. Lots of the Afghan vets were Algerian, went back home, viva Allah. Algeria. I understand Algeria” (Adams 285). Her understanding of Algeria and Islam is her concrete evidence. She implies that Islam’s radicals know no boundaries and they are within American society already. April’s understanding is good enough to indict Algerians. Interestingly, her understanding of Algerians is not based upon her closeness to them but is instead the product of reading U.S. intelligence reports. Additionally, the narrative supports her understanding. Before April’s appearance in the

novel, Aziz witnesses a horrifying scene when the Afghan veteran Ahmed Rahman, one of Antar's men, was "throwing babies against a wall and standing among and on the ones he had flung into pieces" (Adams 159). Accordingly, the U.S. intelligence reports are accurate once again about understanding Algerians.

The Associate U.S. attorney encourages U.S. officials, undercover agents, and Boston policemen to know more about Arabs and Muslims within the U.S. and abroad: "Gentlemen, I think it is important, for these meetings to be a success, that we all read—and I mean *read*—the reports in your packets....For some of you, this is your first exposure to names of a Muslim or Arabic type. It is not easy, I assure you. But familiarizing yourself with these names can be done" (Adams 205). April follows this advice closely and it pays off. She wonders, "What was a Heather doing with Abduls and Mohammeds? There weren't any Abduls or Mohammeds, to be truthful. Wait, was Abdel like Abdul? Abdelaziz, Abdelrafik. Maybe that was just another transliteration of Abdulaziz and Abdulrafik" (Adams 254). She is able to recognize the names by playing with the names to solve their identities. This is symbolic. Playing with the names resembles arresting as many potential terrorists as possible because it will lead eventually to the real danger. It is a justified conflation for the greater good. April can understand Algeria although it "had been permanent unfathomable confusion" to the Algerian Aziz (Adams 249). Algeria here is symbolic of the whole Middle East. To render the Middle East "fathomable," the likes of April and intelligence reports are needed.

To sum up all the incidents of identity conflation, the narrative does not insinuate even remotely that the incriminating stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims circulating in mainstream American journalism and solidified by American neo-Orientalism, political

debates and literary writings are prejudiced or inaccurate. The narrative initially derides the conflation between Arab and Muslim identity, but later it proves that this confusion has some truth in reality. Adams does not delve into ideological factors that perpetuate such stereotypes, in effect ignoring her journalistic instinct. I believe that by humanizing Aziz and sympathizing with his trauma, Adams thinks that her representation of Muslims is a step removed from American neo-Orientalist discourse.

Like *Terrorist*, this novel implies that if Algerians are to face only mild racism in the United States, then they will be fine. Remember that they have escaped certain death or permanent trauma, so they should be able to handle mild racism and some racial profiling which is necessary to ensure the safety and security of the general public. Here is the glimpse the novel offers of what transpires in the daily life of the Algerian society:

Daily the press ministry printed Algerian newspapers that said the massacres—boys mutilated, mothers decapitated, bodies plowed in ditches—were the work of terrorists, the ruthless, fanatic, always increasingly desperate Groupe Islamique Arme. His [Aziz's] father reading those words tried to see what was true and what was not. But how could his father know? He could not be everywhere in Algeria at once...In Boston, uncensored papers from Cairo that Rafik brought home described an Algerian civil war. A fairly elected Islamic government had been overthrown by a corrupt military backed by France. The GIA was armed resistance to tyranny: tyranny that tortured defenseless women for information on their brothers and sons. (Adams 66)

With censored or free journalism, Algerians are killed daily whether pro- or anti-government. Therefore, these immigrants are safer after escaping their country. Not one of the Algerians depicted in the novel is proud of his country. Khaled has three boys, Lahouri, Hamid and Ali, but he feels it is a dilemma to have boys because Algeria produces only killers. Instead, he wants to send his boys away: “What use are men who grow up to be killers? I want sweet songs for Algeria” (Adams 73). Also, the wife of the Egyptian is upset to know that Aziz is from Algeria because it is “a country where people stuck neighbors’ heads on a shovel beside front porches and went to their funerals crying false tears” (Adams 18). It seems that there is no hope for Algeria in the minds of Algerians, not in their country, culture and certainly not in their religion.

Incompatible Islam, Qur’an and Prayer as Performance of Violence

Islam is sometimes an unwelcome presence in the United States, and this expression is deployed in Adams’ novel in the portrayal of mosques and the Qur’an. The domain of mosques in the United States is represented as the site of destructive religious hatred. Rafik tells Aziz to avoid mosques because they “cause problems” (Adams 69). While Updike’s mosques teach radical Islam and violence against the state, Adams’ mosques are frequented by terrorists, murderers and torturers. However, Adams softens this rigid image when Aziz is able to get charity clothes from a Bostonian mosque and borrow a coffee percolator from a mosque in New York (Adams 218). In Adams’ narrative, going to mosques is not necessarily an indictment of committing any act of terror, but they remain as a space where Muslims mingle. This is why FBI agents look for potential terrorists in mosques in this novel. After arresting Lahouri Khaled, undercover FBI agents are shocked to find out that he does not go to the mosque. The agents think

they lose a big thread in finding terrorists. The consistency in portraying mosques or their elements as contentious, outlandish and dangerous sites is alarming. Adams transfers the danger of mosques into the act of prayer itself. In other words, she is not concerned with the growing number of mosques in the US, but focuses instead on Islamic prayer as a performance of violence.

In this novel, Islamic prayer is used as trope that signifies intolerance and violence. Muslims who are keen to pray on time are associated with violence and terrorism. The narrative ridicules how some Muslims complain needlessly about the arrival of tankers coinciding with the Friday prayer. “They [prayer boys] complained, saying the shipping company timed the arrivals for Fridays as an insult. They brought prayer rugs, and bottles of water to wash their feet, and were impatient when Rafik and Aziz seemed ready only to pass the night smoking Marlboros” (Adams 69). They know that they are in a foreign country that does not adhere to Islam and logically work time is neutral and unaware of Islamic practices. In addition, they are illegal immigrants and some of them are fugitives. And yet they demand the civil rights of law-abiding citizens.

On the other hand, Aziz is singled out as different because he is not interested in practicing Islam in America. He “avoided Friday services” and is dismayed when “the prayer boys” force him and Rafik to pray instead of work (Adams 69). Therefore, he defies them by refusing to perform a mandatory ablution before prayer. We learn that “Rafik washed his feet, to mollify to the prayer boys. Aziz worshipped dirty” (Adams 70). Rafik tells Aziz that next Friday they would avoid “the prayer boys” by going to another terminal. The insistence of the “prayer boys” that Aziz and Rafik pray without any

consideration to their personal preference and choice is an indication of Islamic intolerance and stifling ideology.

This is not the only attempt by the narrative to link religious Algerians to violence. Prayer in almost any religion is an act of asking for inspiration and peacefulness, but in the context of this novel Islamic prayer does not invoke such meanings. Some of the unnamed “prayer boys” pray while torturing an old man to death in Algeria: “They watched him die, slowly—while they talked, ate, prayed; yes, they prayed—and made the old man’s sons and daughters and grandchildren witness this at gunpoint” (Adams 70). Note the link and emphasis between prayer and violence. It seems that there is a mutual, ritual significance between prayer and killing. Later on, Antar’s men have a female hostage who is mutilated and killed in a very gruesome fashion. I find myself obliged to quote the whole scene because it is one of the most ghoulish scenes that the novel offers:

Kill her, go ahead.

She wanted nothing but to show herself, so that is her way.

One of them put his thumb on one part of her, then the heel of his palm into her softness below the carriage of her throat....

A prostration is to be performed here.

She died easily, as it turned out. Antar began with his knife to cut back her hair between her legs. She was still breathing, because she jumped. He took the knife in her, cutting left and right, and then up, but still she would jump. So he put his boot on her mouth and, covering her nose, stomped once; pushing the knife again, she jumped, so he stomped

harder; and still, after the knife she jumped, so he played with the knife, feeling the jittering of her.

*Then we took vengeance upon them; so look into how was the end of them who cried lies.*²⁴

Still, she was not still.

Someone had a shovel. He put the blunt of it on her collarbone. Her eyes were wide open and she said, *All merciful, all merciful*. He pushed into the sand. The head came in one part, away from the shoulder. And still she said *all merciful*. They began to push the knife into her stomach and out through her heart.

The jitter stopped. The eyes stopped open. (Adams 121-22)

Prostration is one of the acts in the Islamic prayer and it is written in italics along with a Qur'anic verse and supplication. Death in this scene is ritually performed. Mutilation is carried out gruesomely and repugnantly as an act of prayer. One may argue that the girl cites the Qur'an as well when she says: "All merciful." While "All merciful" seems a pleading to Allah because it is one of His names, the truth is that it is not one of His names in this context because it is not capitalized as a proper name. In another verse quoted in the novel, it is spelled in capitalization and as one word, "All-Merciful" (Adams 235). Therefore, her word is a form of beseeching but it goes unheard. Ironically, the baby-killer Ahmed's last name is Rahman, which means 'merciful'. The connection between prayer and murder is employed to highlight violence as a social practice by

²⁴ The translation of this verse 43:25: "So We extracted retribution/From them: now see/What was the end/Of those who rejected (Truth)" (Ali 1268-69).

Algerian extremists who do not have any regard for this life as they are enchanted by the language of the Qur'an.

Unlike Updike, Adams is very wary in associating the Qur'an with violence. While Updike is didactic in his endeavor to prove what he believes to be a vengeful language of the Qur'an, Adams cites the Qur'an in situations where Algerian terrorists justify their past and present crimes using this text. However, Adams agrees with Updike when she implies that without this text these Islamic terrorists cannot succeed in their endeavors, but as long as the Qur'an is unquestioned in the mind of Muslims, it will continue producing and legitimatizing radicals and terrorists. In the gruesome murder scene, the Qur'an is cited while Antar disfigures the girl: "*Then we took vengeance upon them; so look into how was the end of them who cried lies*" (Adams 121). This verse is not cited by Antar or anyone from his group, but conveyed through the third person point-of-view. This is an attempt to showcase how these killers find justification in such Qur'anic verses. In another instance, Antar and his men read Hadith, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, to validate their killings because they know the people they kill are "the ones the prophet predicted" (Adams 160). Like Updike, Adams wants to show that only Muslims see the world through their holy books, while this trend is actually ubiquitous among religious figures. For example, in 2003, some famous American religious figures and thinkers saw Iraq as the "ancient Babylon" of the Bible (Mezvinsky 45). This is before Adams published her novel and she is smart enough to know that religious people tend to see and interpret the world according to their respective religion's teachings. Yet, she tries to make this a uniquely Islamic phenomenon, especially in her representation of the second major character Ghazi.

Ghazi is Adams' Ahmad, if you allow me to indulge myself, but there is one major difference between the two characters. When *Terrorist* opens, Ahmad is already radical. On the other hand, Ghazi is radicalized as the narrative progresses. Ghazi arrives in Boston running away not from violence like Aziz but from the betrayal of his family. Also, Ghazi "was an architect, educated in Oran, the only one in his family with a degree" (Adams 89). His father works for the Algerian "military intelligence" and his brother is "a high-ranking officer" in Algiers (Adams 89). In a transaction with Djamila Yasin's uncle, his father arranges a traditional marriage for him, then Djamila becomes his fiancée. She tells him that her father is dead and her mother is sick in France. Ghazi gives her money to cover the medical expenses of her invalid mother only to find out later that her mother is neither sick nor in France and her father is alive in Turkey. What is worse, she sleeps with Ghazi's brother, and while his father knows about this and his family does not believe him. Ghazi leaves Algeria on the night of his wedding embarrassing and shaming Djamila to wait "hour by slow hour" for him while he is gone for good (Adams 111). Ghazi becomes an excellent chef after serving as a dishwashing worker at "Del Fuegos, a Mexican Restaurant" (Adams 89). He sends money to his father, but his father refuses the money and considers him "dead" (Adams 90). Ghazi is another success story in pursuing the American dream till he decides to join terrorists in Afghanistan following the advice of Dhakir Yahyouai, a radical Muslim and recruitment specialist for terrorists who preaches about hellfire and fatalism. Ghazi develops a close friendship with Aziz and we learn about their traumas through their conversations. We sympathize with him because of his inability to fall in love due to his fiancée's betrayal. He ruminates on his lack of love: "Black old birds, the usual questions, were arriving. Why couldn't he fall in

love? What was it that cut him off from the nectar of being alive? Once again, he put his hands through the sands of his past and pulled, hoping this time to find something that might explain it. There was nothing” (Adams 228). Ghazi is shown here to have deep thinking and emotion. But our sympathy with him cannot be sustained.

Ghazi’s friendship with Dhakir changes him into a radical Muslim. At first, Ghazi decides to read the Qur’an because Dhakir exhorts him to do so. While he reads, he mocks some verses but eventually becomes a believer in the very verses he used to ridicule. He even makes fun of Dhakir’s claim to jihad (Adams 233). Reading the Qur’an has some effect on him, and “It got to him, he had to admit,” but not without resistance. (Adams 235). Ghazi wonders: “But why does Allah need so much worshipping? He had it all, was it all, knew it all. Never made sense to him as a kid and still didn’t” (Adams 236). Ghazi’s resistance to the language of the Qur’an is weakened by Dhakir’s sermons on the inevitability of death and hellfire and Ghazi starts to find verses that appeal to his circumstances. He starts relishing verses by writing them. Aziz refers to the Qur’an as “this” and Ghazi warns him: “Don’t call it this” (Adams 271). The inevitability of death gives Ghazi a purpose that he has lacked since his family’s betrayal. Also, the promise of virgins gives a new hope of love that he yearns to have since his fiancée’s betrayal. He reads: “*We²⁵ believe in the unseen*” (Adams 236). Believing in the *unseen* gives Ghazi some sense of recognition. He is dead to his father and his family does not care for him. In addition, he is *unseen* in this new society sharing this quality with Aziz. In Aziz’s early days in Boston, he “saw that he was unseen. Days—no, weeks—went by without a

²⁵ There is no “we” in this verse 1:2-3. The full context is as follows: “[t]he is the Book/In it is guidance sure, without doubt/To those who fear Allah/Who believe in the unseen” (Ali 17).

person speaking to him, and longer still, without someone's eyes meeting his own. His place in the order of things was not a place" (Adams 65). Aziz later finds his place in Boston by calling it home while Ghazi finds his place in the world of unseen.

Later, Ghazi struggles with some of the concepts that Dhakir preaches, and he asks Dhakir a hefty question: "Answer this question: Muslims killing Muslims. Explain that" (Adams 248). Dhakir justifies this killing as the doing of enemies of Islam:

They [Americans] are afraid of Islam. They are afraid. That is why they are boiling. Do you know what the Americans are doing now? They are behind everything, everything in the home country...they are the ones behind what happened. In Pakistan, they were not happy about it because it was the military; they were not happy about that. And they were demonstrating their discontent by shouting Why, why, why? And when others were about to rule Algeria, they asked the army to coup....The CIA is everything. You have no idea what they are doing in the world. (Adams 260-61)

Adams chooses the most fanatic Algerian to express the involvement of the United States in the Middle East. Dhakir's claim seems crazy and unacceptable. If Adams had chosen Aziz to express this involvement, his claim would be rational because he is the only reasonable Algerian who challenges his own people and culture. Aziz expresses in a resonating statement the hypocrisy of condemning violence in the Middle East:

The sound of a man dying in Algeria is not even a whisper in the world. Arab man dies in Palestine, it is five orchestras, every instrument playing. Palestine boy huddled under his father, killed by a Jew, everywhere his

picture goes. But where are the pictures of Muslim boys killed by Muslims in Bilda? Where are the photographs of the Muslim *djeddat* killed by Muslim men in Médéa? Who makes this? It is not the Jew. It is not the CIA. It is us. *Us*. (Adams 278)

Here, Aziz rebuts Dhakir's accusatory remarks against the CIA while directing the blame to Muslims themselves. I could make the same argument in regards to the same picture. If an Israeli soldier is killed by some Palestinian militants or a Palestinian suicide bomber blows up a bus in Israel, this will be duly breaking news all over the American mainstream media. At the same time, Israeli tanks and bulldozers would demolish hundreds of Palestinian houses and kill whomever stands in their way like the brave American activist Rachel Corrie (23 years old), who was killed by a bulldozer in Gaza in 2003. In fact, Gaza has been under siege since 2007 and it is rarely mentioned, let alone protested as an injustice. Aziz is absolutely right in blaming some Muslims for their stolid attitude towards Muslim vs. Muslim violence, but his blame is not equally directed to the Algerian secular government supported by France. And is the CIA really innocent? The CIA is notorious in fomenting political upheavals in many sovereign countries around the globe (as discussed by Little, McAlister *et al.*) and it is beyond the scope of this study to trace these incidents. However, I will mention one example that may shed the light on the CIA's notoriety in the global context. James Woolsey, the CIA director from 1993-95, gave a lecture about politics in the Middle East in 2006 which was broadcast via C-Span ("Citizen Investigator's"). In this speech, he stated that the US should encourage revolutions against what he refers to as "rogue states" like Syria, Libya and tyrannies like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. (I am not denying any wrong doings by any

of these countries, but for someone who lives thousands of miles away from these geographies to encourage any kind of revolution, not because he cares for the oppressed, but because these revolutions help his country have more geopolitical control, is appalling and heartless to say the least.) In his estimation, after the U.S. wins Iraq, the turn should be to the aforesaid countries (“Citizen Investigator’s”). A few years later, spontaneous revolutions spread throughout the Middle East with the exception of a few countries. Now, with ISIL controlling parts of Iraq and Syria while Libya and Tunisia are still in shambles, I wonder, I only wonder, what will be the outcome? To omit this aspect of the CIA’s involvement and blame some religious political parties is indicative of a simplified assessment of the geopolitical, social, and religious issues of the Middle East.

Adams’ criticism of Islam and the Qur’an is channeled through Aziz’s perspective, which could give legitimacy to this criticism because it would seem self-critique. Aziz is central in understanding the novelist’s message. He is the only moral Algerian character dragged into immorality, fraud, identity theft and terrorist plots by other Algerians.

Adams explains her energetic stance on Aziz:

I endowed him with what I crave in fiction I read. Aziz is a moral creature with an inner life. He is what Isaiah Berlin calls an untamed human being, “with unextinguished passions and untrammelled imagination.” He is an example of no one thing. He cannot be reduced to an object of derision, satire or scorn. He is conscious, with all of the mysteries and presentiments that brings.

I put Aziz in a novel I would like to read—one that can be read many ways, as Albert Camus put it, “at the same time both obvious and

obscure.” I wanted it fleet—no dragging around in sociology, political analysis, cultural critique or brand names. I wanted it generous—a big fat raft of religious faith, farce, sadistic violence, tenderness, nobility and desperation. I wanted prose that took risks. I wanted to be surprised. (“About Writing *Harbor*”)

If her writing of this novel is not political or religious, why is Aziz accompanied by Christian symbols throughout the narrative? Why are Algerians denied any hope in their country while the American dream is alive in their lives in the U.S.? Her claim to an apolitical approach does not hold water especially in the context of Aziz’s argument against the language of the Qur’an. Through Aziz’s perspective, the narrative tries to demonstrate that the Islamic world is plagued by the rhetoric of the Qur’an, and by extension American society will face the same threat if Muslims are active members in it. While Ghazi and Dhakir believe what the Qur’an teaches, Aziz is the only Muslim who questions and doubts the Qur’an and he, significantly is free from violent tendencies despite being traumatized by violence. In one scene, he walks into Ghazi’s apartment to find him sleeping on the floor with a Qur’an next to him and he notices that Ghazi has marked a specific passage:

*And it is not for a believer to kill a believer, except it by mistake, then (let him set) free a believing neck, and blood-money is to be handed (unimpaired) to his family, unless they donate it.*²⁶

²⁶ The translation of this verse 4:92: “Never should a Believer/Kill a Believer; but/(If it so happens) by mistake,/(Compensation is due);/If one so kills a Believer,/It is ordained that he/Should free a believing slave,/And pay compensation/To the deceased’s family,/Unless they remit it freely” (Ali 214-15).

Aziz felt his chest tighten. A believer doesn't kill a believer except to set free a believing neck. Kill this neck, but not that neck. Donated, blood-moneyed. Aziz could hear Antar on his hammock, reciting his favorite *ayat*:

Whosoever does not believe in Allah and his messenger, then surely we have readied the Blaze. (Adams 270)

Aziz is saddened by the nonchalant language of the Qur'an towards killing. Adams, like Updike, chooses the verses that fit her narrative.²⁷ Even Aziz's interpretation of the verse ignores the imperative that forbids killing in this very verse and overlooks the fact that it could happen by mistake. Based on this understanding, Aziz confronts Ghazi about his beliefs in some ideas of the Qur'an: "So you believe this garden with rivers under it?...You think, 'I go to Afghanistan, I kill kafir and get killed doing it—to the virgins in the garden I fly?'" (Adams 277). Adams here denies any political justification for any Muslim who opposes the west. She makes it clear that these Muslims want to die to unleash their repressed sexual desires in the hereafter.

In addition, Aziz's memories are linked his traumatic experience with Antar. Aziz seems unfamiliar with these verses, but he discovers why Antar believes in violence. Antar's father and sisters are killed by the Algerian Army and Antar decides to avenge them by killing the families of army members relying on the Qur'an and Hadith to justify murder. The narrative seems to suggest that without these religious texts Antar and

²⁷ She ignores mentioning a more famous verse 5:32 in the Qur'an that states "That if anyone slew/A person—unless it be/For murder or for spreading/Mischief in the land—/It would be as if/He slew the whole people:/And if anyone saved a life,/It would be as if he saved/The life of the whole people" (Ali 257).

Dhakhir could not find recruits, and therefore the problematic permissive religious language that gives killers a sense of importance and purpose. Seeing Ghazi being radicalized by the Qur'an makes Aziz remember not Colonel Benane or General Zahaf as evil, but Antar and the Qur'an.

Adams concludes the novel by narrating the arrest of Aziz, Mourad and Ghazi. Interestingly, she alters a reality that faces Muslims, as well as illegal immigrants, when arrested under the suspicion of terrorism in the United States post 9/11:

Ghazi was on suicide watch. So was Lahouri. Kamal was in Jakarta. Dhakhir boarded a plane in Montreal for Amsterdam the day before the Boston arrests, his final destination unknown. Rafik never made it to Italy. His flight went through Frankfurt, and he decided to stay. They released Mourad on bond, and he and Heather ran to Mexico. Eventually, the Khaled brothers were deported after pleading guilty to membership in a terrorist organization. Algeria would not take them. Only Sudan, in the entire world, would have them. Ghazi's case went to trial a year after the arrests...He got thirty-seven years. (Adams 291)

This is the last page of the novel. Aziz is deported after being tried in a civil court. Adams tries hard to save Aziz from his religion and culture, but the absence of an advanced immigration system or policies that can distinguish between the harborable and unharborable Arabs, along with Aziz's failure to convert to Christianity, which cuts short his redemptive journey.

Adams confirms that "suspicious ideas" are afoot concerning terrorist attacks. In addition, there is always an Islamic country that will harbor terrorists, and it is Sudan this

time. In the process, she covers up what the United States actually does with Muslim suspects in reality. She does not mention how Muslims are imprisoned and tortured in Guantanamo Bay and other undisclosed locations. On the other hand, she is keen to narrate fictional incidents of Muslim terrorists who torture and kill while praying and reading the Qur'an in order to capture a glimpse of what she believes to be a reality of the Islamic world. Nonetheless, she is silent about a stark reality in a country that claims to protect human rights and lead the free world. The United States sustains a systematic torture program while claiming to safeguard the Geneva conventions. Adams could have mentioned both realities side by side to show the direction toward which we, as humanity, are heading. Instead, she rewrites a history of torture and unjustified arrests in the U.S. into deportation and fair civil trials. If this is not enough to heighten the danger of Muslim presence, Adams culminates the danger by ending her novel with terrorists kidnapping Swiss tourists in the Sahara. Marr seems to sum up Adams' representation of Islam and Muslim when he states: "Rather than promote a better understanding of the religion of Islam or the interests of Muslims themselves, Americans have long pressed orientalist images of Islam into domestic service as a means to globalize the authority of the cultural power of the United States" (1). Dhakir, who symbolizes Islamic extremism, remains at large just like the Islamic threat.

In conclusion, let me note that the endings of both novels are similar in the sense that there is a serious endeavor to find justice and hope in American society despite its meaningless materialism [in Updike's novel] and nothingness [in Adams' novel]. Jack saves New York from danger and then tells Ahmad that he could be an excellent lawyer because "in the years to come, Arab-Americans are going to need plenty of lawyers"

(Updike 309). In Adams' context, the writing of justice is on the walls of federal buildings and there the Algerians will be served justice.

The novels seem to be serving symbolic justice by representing the mysterious *Other*. Both authors want to criticize their societies by using the *Other's* voice, but instead they overlook some of the urgent issues concerning the *Other*, and they end up voicing their own fears of the *Other*. Updike claims that Ahmad's point of view helps him criticize America, but he does not mention real issues like racism, Islamophobia, torture and the Patriot Act. In Adams' novel, there is an omission of what takes place in reality when Muslims are arrested.

In the world of these two novels, Islam is detached from Judeo-Christian values and beliefs. Islam goes through what I refer to as "a domestication process," but Islam fails because its unyielding principles refuse to evolve like other religions in a secular, multi-cultural western space. Islam's defiance to change is embraced by its followers in their supposed refusal to assimilate. Arabs and Muslims in the context of these novels emerge as alarmingly dangerous.

The two novels are obsessed with the role of the Qur'an as a fundamental aspect of radicalization and terrorism. Their stance on the Qur'an is similar, but the authors use two different approaches. Updike uses it to incriminate Muslims, while Adams makes characters ridicule the Qur'an to prove their innocence. Both novelists employ the verses that help their narrative to prove that this text urges and indoctrinates terrorism. They link it to the Muslims' justification of violence, while ignoring other verses that speak of war and peace, rules of engagement and sanctions against killing innocent or civilian people. Updike's and Adams' approach ignores the hermeneutics and scholarship of Qur'anic

studies and endorses a simplistic understanding of a holy text to over a billion Muslims. There is no middle ground for the Qur'an in these novels, as denouncing it humanizes Aziz, but embracing it demonizes Ahmad and Ghazi. Can we read about a Muslim who reads the Qur'an without being a danger to the world?

CHAPTER 4. CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITHOUT ENCOUNTER: WAR NOVELS AND THE ARAB/MUSLIM WORLD

You had to serve out here in the Middle East to understand fully the feeling of danger, even threat, that was never far away, even in countries generally regarded as friendly to America.

— Marcus Luttrell

This chapter focuses on two novels written American soldiers: Marcus Luttrell's *Lone Survivor* (2007) and Chris Kyle's *American Sniper* (2014). I will analyze the two authors' representations of Arabs, Muslims and Islam, their views of the wars and the process of democracy, and their assessment of cultures and religion in the Islamic world. The subgenre of American war novel saw a substantial increase in publication after 9/11, especially the ones written by American soldiers. Luttrell's and Kyle's novels offer two examples of this subgenre within the critical frame of neo-Orientalism while highlighting the neo-Orientalist features of Islam I discussed in the Introduction, particularly the use of suspended imagery, and the contradictions and complexities of the western mission to spread democracy. The Orient in the novels analyzed in this chapter is not the Orient of majestic deserts and skillful Arab/Muslim enemies. It is rather a place of lawlessness, violence, death and destruction. The democracy mission crumbles in the face of incorrigible people and morphs into a survival mission. In these novels, Arab/Muslims do not abide by any law and they refuse to join the rest of the civilized world. These

representations of the Muslim world agree with the perspective of American neo-Orientalists of the Dwight Group.

In *The American Novel of War: A Critical Analysis and Classification System*, Wallis R. Sanborn describes this subgenre: “the American novel of war is a self-standing subgenre of the greater genre of American literature of war, which includes memoirs, short stories, songs, poems, drama, and the like” (19). He also asserts that the main aspect of this subgenre is “war,” as he states: “were it not for the real wars covered in the fiction, these novels would not exist” (Sanborn 12). The importance of discussing the representations of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars is that the United States launched them as a response to what took place on 9/11. The ramifications of these two wars are still debated and the American presence in these two countries is still ongoing. The proliferation of novels written about the Afghanistan and Iraq wars cannot be ignored, as there are accompanied by a clear willingness and readiness to consume them. A very high percentage of these novels are immediate bestsellers. Eric Blehm’s *The Only Thing Worth Dying For: How Eleven Green Berets Fought for a New Afghanistan* (2010), Rob Maylor and Robert Macklin’s *Sniper Elite: The World of a Top Special Forces and Marksman* (2010), Howard E. Wasdin and Stephen Templin’s *Seal Team Six: Memoirs of an Elite Navy Seal Sniper* (2011), Chuck Pfarrer’s *Seal Target Geronimo* (2011), Brandon Webb and John David Mann’s *The Red Circle: My life in the Navy SEAL Sniper Corps and How I Trained America’s Deadliest Marksmen* (2012), Mark Owen and Kevin Maurer’s *No Easy Day* (2014) and Phil Klay’s *Redeployment* (2014) are just a few examples of novels written about these two wars. There are also collections of short stories written by American soldiers like *Fire and Forget* (2013). Sanborn states that

there are specific themes that determine the features of the novel of war like centrality of the theme of “war,” real “violence,” “rhetoric of war,” death of “peers,” “deployment” and destruction (Sanborn 12-18).

Unlike the novelists I discussed in the previous chapters, the novelists here encounter the *Other* firsthand in a war zone, although this meeting is not ideal because it fuels hostility and perpetuates conflicts. These two wars indicate a momentous shift as the US joins the European club of colonization. Said always emphasizes that the American experiences of the Middle East in particular are not like the European empires’ experiences where there is a physical occupation of land. The novels that I examine here provide a window into this direct encounter between the American soldiers and the Arab/Muslim world.

Luttrell served in Afghanistan and Iraq while Kyle served in Iraq only. Both wrote their stories with some help from professional writers and both novels have been turned into successful movies. Marcus Luttrell, an American SEAL, with the help of Patrick Robinson, wrote his story of improbable survival in a mission in the mountains of Afghanistan. He also wrote *Service: A Navy SEAL at War* (2012) with James D. Hornfischer. Luttrell’s *Lone Survivor*, the focus of this chapter, is written decently with a very suspenseful plot that captivates readers from the beginning to the end. It was a national bestseller and has been turned into a successful movie that was nominated for two Academy awards. Luttrell narrates his journey in becoming a SEAL but he focuses on one mission in Afghanistan that is officially called Operation Red Wing. Luttrell and three other American SEALs are dropped in the Hindu Kush Mountains on the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan to gather some information about a notorious Taliban member.

However, their cover in the mountains is jeopardized as some local goatherds find the SEAL team by accident. Luttrell and his friends debate what to do with these locals and eventually they let them go. Luttrell asserts that these goatherds inform the Taliban members about their location. Then Taliban fighters track and fight the American SEALs. Luttrell alone survives the Taliban onslaught when some help from the Afghani elders of the village Sabray who decide to grant him Lokhay, which “means the population of that village will fight to the last man, honor-bound to protect the individual they have invited in to share their hospitality.... This is strictly nonnegotiable” (Luttrell 327). They protect him from Taliban fighters till the American army extracts him safely, but he takes a while to recover from a stomach virus that he gets from a polluted Pepsi bottle, which is given to him as a canteen by Afghanis. Throughout the novel, Luttrell justifies the US wars and presents an argument against adhering to the Geneva Conventions when fighting Muslims and Arabs. Multiple exaggerations in his story contradict the narrative of the US Navy. For example, he claimed that the number of Afghani fighters were 200 while according to the official story they were “more than 50 anti-coalition militia” (“Operation Red Wings”). In his extensive research, Ed Darack disproves Luttrell’s number in his book *Victory Point* (2009) because Luttrell himself reported after the action that there were 20 to 35 Taliban members (“Misinformation”). Darack laments: “*Lone Survivor* was reviewed for accuracy by Naval Special Warfare public affairs, and approved” (“Misinformation”).

In addition, Luttrell claims in the story that he is tortured by Taliban members, while the official story refutes this:

Traveling seven miles on foot he evaded the enemy for nearly a day. Gratefully, local nationals came to his aid, carrying him to a nearby village where they kept him for three days. The Taliban came to the village several times demanding that Luttrell be turned over to them. The villagers refused. One of the villagers made his way to a Marine outpost with a note from Luttrell, and U.S. forces launched a massive operation that rescued him from enemy territory on July 2. (Operation Red Wings)

These exaggerations spill over in the movie representation. In other words, Luttrell exaggerates in telling his story while the movie exaggerates the already exaggerated story of Luttrell.

In *American Sniper*, Kyle is also a SEAL and he narrates his numerous deployments to Iraq and his triumph as the most prolific sniper in the history of the United States military. Scott McEwan and Jim DeFelice help Kyle in writing his story. The novel does not have a single plot line, but rather it recounts anecdotes and short stories from Kyle's life as a SEAL and his relationship with his wife. Throughout the novel, Kyle boasts about his skills as a professional sniper and relentless Crusader. Like Luttrell, he justifies the Iraq War and opposes the application of the Geneva Conventions. After retiring, Kyle was killed in a shooting range by Eddie Ray Routh, a veteran who allegedly suffered from post-traumatic stress and was sentenced to life in prison.

I will analyze the two authors' representations of Arabs, Muslims and Islam, their views of the wars and the process of democracy, and their assessment of cultures and religion in the Islamic world. Unlike the previous novels, these two novels are based on true stories narrated by those who experienced them. Let me note here that I felt I was

treading on dangerous ground writing about American heroes who fought for their country. Then I made up my mind that this should be all right for three reasons. First of all, I will not treat these authors with disrespect as I shall focus only on their representations of the Islamic world in order to demonstrate how these novels fit within the themes of American neo-Orientalist discourse. Second, in my analysis, I do not judge their real personalities or actions. I am only concerned with their perspectives on Arabs, Muslims and Islam and how they perceive their mission and their role in Afghanistan and Iraq. Third, these two soldiers wrote their stories using a literary form for public consumption and the two texts shall be treated like any other literary text with no exception or special treatment.

The question of respect is especially important given the reception both of these novels and of returning U.S. soldiers. The general perception of soldiers is respectful, although they do not always receive their simple rights as citizens like medical treatment after returning from war. As Sunera Thobani points out: “in the US, these soldiers come back to find inadequate health care and financial support for their families” (71). Still, soldiers are venerated in American society, and they are honored in national monuments, and almost in all sports venues.

Unlike my previous method of discussing novels separately, I find it appropriate to discuss the themes of these two novels conjointly. This chapter includes five sections. The first section discusses the novels’ representation of hatred as an intrinsic characteristic of the Arab/Muslim world. Hatred on the part of Muslims and Arabs is portrayed as unwarranted and fueled by Islamic teachings that drive them to violence. The second section examines the urgency of comparing Christianity to Islam and Jesus to

Prophet Muhammad. I contend that this urgency is driven by two reasons. First, this comparison is meant to single out Islam as an ideology of terror. Second, when Christianity is disassociated from Islam, Christian fanatics cannot be discussed in the same breath as Muslim fanatics, saving Christians from the horror of terrorism's adjectives that are associated with Muslims. The authors proclaim their Christianity as their primary source of morality and superiority, and they compare it with Islam to prove the former's tolerance and the latter's intolerance. While American neo-Orientalist discourse criticizes Islam and Muslims for not recognizing a separation of church and state, these authors believe that they are endowed with the duty to deliver the Arab/Muslim World from its backward culture and Islam. They do not see the wars as driven by political reasons but as religious holy wars. This is a continuation of the trajectory of the Hoover Institution's American neo-Orientalists.

The third section considers the authors' reasons and justifications of the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although one of the main documented purposes of the American presence in Afghanistan and Iraq is to promote and enable democracy, Luttrell and Kyle are not advocates of bringing political change, as they believe that the Muslim *Other* is intrinsically fanatic and primitive. In their understanding, democracy will never materialize in the Arab/Muslim world.

The fourth section inspects how the novels ridicule the uselessness of the Geneva Conventions and Rules of Engagement and exhort the US government to abandon their application. I also examine the authors' recommendations of violent strategies of war in Afghanistan and Iraq. The authors launch a vehement criticism against the Geneva Convention and Rules of Engagement [ROE]. They imply there should not be any rules

when fighting Muslim terrorists because these rules are meant only for the civilized west, and you really cannot distinguish between Muslim civilians—that is, if they really exist—and Muslim militants, insurgents and terrorists.

The fifth section dissects the novels in relation to the movies as they complement the original texts and add a hyperbolic dimension that pushes the representations of the Arab/Muslim world into new territory, and really to the point of no return. Arab and Muslim children are represented as the new terrorists. Do the movies stick to the actual narratives of the written texts? If there is a difference between the texts and the movies, what is its significance and why is it important? Do these two movies promote the American neo-Orientalist discourse and how? These are weighty questions that I shall address at the end of this chapter.

“Ancient Hatred”: The Arab/Muslim World

The rhetoric of the novels ascribes an essentialized hatred to Arabs and Muslims, and while they present the source of this hatred as obscure, the authors make sure to render it accessible. Luttrell and Kyle, as rational subjects, claim to attribute this hatred, because of their first-hand encounter with it, to an Arab/Muslim incapability of love and unwillingness to accept western values whether political, cultural or religious. Also, the rhetoric emphasizes that this hatred thrives especially when directed at Americans. The authors seem to suggest that Arabs and Muslims imbibe hatred from their decadent culture and intolerant Islam. While Luttrell sees hatred as one more reason to fight Arabs and Muslims, Kyle sees it as a result of their savagery. Accordingly, savage hatred is an attribute employed to dehumanize Arabs and Muslims in order to eliminate any

sympathetic feeling toward them, let alone identifying with their political plight or human conditions.

Luttrell focuses on the idea of hatred as the ultimate attribute of the Middle East and the Islamic world. He speaks of an essential hatred that is associated with Arabs and Muslims nourished by their tribal traditions and Islam. Hatred here is of a unique kind, as he seems to suggest that hatred in any civilized society is controllable, while it is endemic in the Arab/Muslim World. For example, Luttrell bluntly states that he hates liberals in his country but his hatred does not drive him to kill any liberal and he even protects them as citizens of his country. On the other hand, he claims that Muslims and Arabs have perfected the art of hatred. He explains: “No one can hate quite like a terrorist. Until you’ve encountered one of these guys, you don’t understand the meaning of the word *hate*” (Luttrell 34). I know that he does not mention ‘Arab’ or ‘Muslim’ in this statement, but the “terrorist” could be any Muslim or Arab because Luttrell does not endorse the Geneva Conventions in battling Taliban, al Qaeda or any Islamic party. What Luttrell focuses on is the potentiality of being a terrorist in his argument for an improved strategy of war. For example, in his description of Baluchistan as a dangerous geography, he emphasizes the existence of “six thousand...potential terrorists” (Luttrell 47). ‘Terrorist’ and ‘potential terrorist’ are loosely used without any substantial evidence or clear-cut definition (later I shall explain in detail that this is problematic as there is no clear demarcation between civilians and combatants). To Luttrell, Iraq has “the fevered cauldrons of loathing” (Luttrell 13). Iraqis are indoctrinated with a hate of Americans so that “even children of three and four are taught to hate us” (Luttrell 16). Luttrell does not

claim that hatred pertains only to Iraqis, either. Before his deployment to Afghanistan, he is in Bahrain and he describes the atmosphere:

The locals didn't love us either. There was a kind of sullen look to them, as if they were sick to death of having the American military around them. In fact, there were districts in Manama known as black flag areas, where tradesmen, shopkeepers, and private citizens hung black flags outside their properties to signify *Americans are not welcome*.

I guess it wasn't quite as vicious as *Juden Verboten* was in Hitler's Germany. But there are undercurrents of hatred all over the Arab world, and we knew there were many sympathizers with the Muslim extremist fanatics of the Taliban and al Qaeda. The black flags worked. We stayed well clear of those places. (Luttrell 11)

I oppose the accuracy of the 'black flag' areas narrative. 'Black flags' are associated with Shiites in the Middle East and now ISIL is known for it. As far as I know, 'black flags' are never used to indicate that Americans are not welcome. Based on this claim, Luttrell associates the so-called phenomenon of 'black flags' with *Juden Verboten*, which is a Nazi sign to indicate that Jews are forbidden from entering a certain store or neighborhood. Here is the theme of associating Muslims with Nazis that is once again consistent with the rhetoric of American neo-Orientalism that I examined in Chapter One. What is interesting is that Luttrell plays the role of a victim in one of the smallest countries in the world from which the United States troops fly to fight all over the Arab/Muslim world, and yet Luttrell feels that he is unwelcomed in some neighborhoods of Bahrain!

The novel points to a xenophobic practice in the Middle East where Arabs announce their “rabid hatred” toward Americans (Luttrell 191). For the sake of the argument, I may believe in the existence of the ‘black flag’ phenomenon, but is it so obvious that the flags mean one thing only, i.e. “Americans are not welcome?” What if Bahrainis put the ‘black flag’ to protest indiscriminate bombings all over the Arab/Muslim World? Luttrell himself says that Bahrainis could be frustrated by the American presence, but he does not elaborate why. This narrow-mindedness of interpreting the *Other*’s actions is pervasive in American neo-Orientalism. Any hatred for American foreign policies is interpreted as hatred of democracy and civilization, and Arabs and Muslims are presented as hating Americans because they are incapable of love. There are ready molds and frames that predetermine understanding Arabs and Muslims. Again, if Luttrell’s explanation of the ‘black flags’ phenomenon is true, it would be so most probably for political reasons. But Luttrell and the American neo-Orientalists do not want to acknowledge these political grievances. I say for political reasons because “American” is not a specific race or religion but a nationality. This nation has dominated the politics of the Middle East for decades. Therefore, the logical argument is that Bahrainis are protesting the politics of America. If they are protesting race or religion, Luttrell would be glad to state that plainly, but he says specifically that the ‘black flags’ are in place to stop Americans from entering those neighborhoods. When political reasons may be the main purpose of these ‘black flags,’ they should not be associated with the Nazi’s *Juden Verboten*. De facto, *Juden Verboten* is analogous to “no colored allowed” because both signs are driven by hatred of a specific religion and/or specific race and directed towards minorities who are discriminated against, oppressed and abused.

Luttrell should know this, as both signs were from the same era and the “no colored allowed” signs were effective in Luttrell’s home state of Texas. Besides racism and pure hatred, the common denominator of these signs is that they were put in place by the aggressors and the hegemonic majority against their fellow countrymen, while Bahrainis are neither in this case. Let me be clear, if the ‘black flags’ are true, I do not endorse them in any way whatsoever, even if they are for political reasons (unless they protest the actions of the United States of America but not Americans themselves) because Bahrainis would be committing the same mistakes that the American neo-Orientalists do, i.e. sweeping indictment of nations. I went into length to address this issue in order to dismantle Luttrell’s analogy and by extension to show that the association of Nazism with Muslims and Arabs is truly a new trend in the American neo-Orientalist discourse.

Even without the existence of ‘black flags,’ Luttrell boasts a skill for understanding the Arab/Muslim gaze of hate, which he calls “the Look”: the “sneering hatred of mine and my country” (Luttrell 339). It is fraught with “undisguised loathing for the infidel” (Luttrell 331). Furthermore, he provides a monstrous depiction of this hatred that suggests it is equivalent to possessing a weapon: it is “a hatred which would have melted a U.S. Army tank” (Luttrell 396). Consequently, “the Look” has two components; anti-Americanism and religious-drive. Luttrell already establishes his authority as a truth teller by claiming that he, as a SEAL, values honesty, and he narrates from a first-hand experience. He states that Afghanistan is “another world” that defies “western eyes” and “the logic of Western ears” (Luttrell 78; 360). Nonetheless, out of his strong convictions, he asks his readers to rely on him in understanding “the Look,” the geography and the people.

Luttrell's main criterion for judging Afghans is how they view the United States. He essentializes the love of the US, as if loving Uncle Sam is universal and inherent in the human psyche and only deranged human beings grow up hating the political policies of this country. In a very charged rhetoric, he describes the region as:

the place where the loathing of Uncle Sam is so ingrained, a brand of evil flourishes that is beyond the understanding of most Westerners. Mostly because it belongs to a different, more barbaric century.... Because right here we're talking Primitive with a big *P*. Adobe huts made out of sun-dried clay bricks with dirt floors and awful smell of urine and mule dung.... Sanitation in the villages is as rudimentary as it gets. (Luttrell 200-01)

He formulates two pivotal points to explain the source of hatred and subsequent violent tendencies in Afghanistan. First, hatred and violence on the part of Afghans belong to an era of abnormality, an era that does not understand the values of the US, which is a stand in for civilization and modernization, and this generates the formidable anti-Americanism in this part of the world. What is more, westerners, being civilized and modern, cannot fathom or grasp this hatred and this violence that are visible in "the Look." He exhorts readers to trust his account: "The facts fit the reality. Those guys are evil, murderous religious fanatics, each one of them with an AK-47 and a bloodlust. You can trust me on that one" (Luttrell 69). I honestly do not know the facts that he refers to, but he seems to suggest the Muslims' predilection to violence and hatred is a fact that fits the reality. This takes me back to his statement of "no one can hate a like a terrorist," as it is a fact he finds somewhere and a reality that materializes upon encounter (Luttrell 34). Luttrell

does not fill his readers in about the source of these facts, but he asks for a blind trust in his narration and perspective. Does this sound familiar? In “Demonizing the Enemy in the War on Terror,” Shadia Drury illuminates:

At the heart of the rhetoric of the ‘War on Terror’ is the biblical conception of evil as completely gratuitous, purposeless, irrational, incomprehensible, and inscrutable. Like Satan, America’s enemies supposedly hate America not because of anything it has done, not because of its policies in the Middle East, not because its multinational corporations get wealthy on the backs of the poor of the world, not because its economy depends on producing and exporting weapons of mass destruction, not because it intends to dominate the globe, not because it launches aggressive wars, and not because it is the biggest exporter of pornography. They hate America because it is good and noble. They hate it because, being evil, they hate everything that is good—they hate freedom, democracy, prosperity, truth, and justice. They will have none of it. Like Satan, the wickedness of America’s enemies is unfathomable. (35)

The authoritative tone that commands and produces knowledge through centuries of hegemonic control without questioning is present in Luttrell’s and other neo-Orientalists’ request of trust. Only he and other military personnel can understand the true nature of the *Other*: “Trouble is, there’s not much happening in those mountains, not many small towns and very few villages. Funny, really. Not much was happening, and yet, in another way, every damn thing in the world was happening: plots, plans, villainy, terrorism, countless scheme to attack the West, especially the United States” (Luttrell 68). Again, he

appoints himself the authority of anything that he sees. This quotation sums up the attitude of American neo-Orientalist discourse toward Arabs and Muslims. In this discourse, although Muslims and Arabs seem normal, they are not actually as they seem. Any one of them is a potential threat, for example the Muslims in Luttrell's mountains and Arabs in Anderson's mountains.

Second, in the "Uncle Sam" quotation, Luttrell makes a direct link between simple life, primitivism and hatred. Because Afghans do not live in modern-day metropolises, they are close to basic nature. Throughout the novel, the narrative emphasizes the distinct odor of Afghans and Afghanistan due to their lack of sanitation. This is demeaning because it suggests Afghans are primitive, closer to animals and their hatred is a byproduct of their nature. He states: "Just nature, the way it's been for thousands of years up there in this land of truly terrible beauty and ravenous hatred" (Luttrell 305).

I need to comment on one more aspect of the "Uncle Sam" quotation: Luttrell's reference to "barbaric century." He distances himself and his country from such a historical period for two reasons. First, the United States, obviously, is the example of civilization in our world. Second, he wants to disassociate his nation's necessary, "benevolent" (If I may borrow McAlister's term "benevolent supremacy") and violent measures from the *Other's* purposeless, evil violence (McAlister 43). Even if the United States commits violence, it is not for violence's sake, but for self-protection.

While Luttrell sees "the Look" of hatred in Muslims, Kyle recognizes the "savage" agents of hatred in Iraqis as he proclaims: "The enemies we were fighting were savage and well-armed" (167). He dehumanizes Iraqis to prevent any sympathy with them and

he refers to them consistently as “savages” and “evil” regardless of their affiliation politically or religiously or whether they are rebels or fanatics. He explains why: “Savage, despicable evil. That’s what we were fighting in Iraq. That’s why a lot of people, myself included, called the enemy ‘savages’. There really was no other way to describe what we encountered there” (Kyle 4). The claim is that their so-called savagery is a sufficient reason to kill them. That said, he is not concerned with providing further explanation of their savagery, unlike Luttrell who exerts some effort to provide an explanation for his perception of Afghans.

Kyle is not an anomaly in the US military. He tells his readers about his friend Marc Lee’s letter about Iraq, which is available at Lee’s website. In the letter, Lee finds only “ignorant and despicable people” in Iraq (Kyle 414). Iraq, as geography, resembles Iraqis, as it “smelled like a sewer—the stench of Iraq was one thing I’d never get used to” (Kyle 3). Here, Kyle, like Luttrell, makes Iraq distinctive for its odor, making a direct link between Iraqis’ savagery and the characteristics of the place. In Iraq, “[a]fter a while, the bizarre came to seem natural” (Kyle 214).

In Kyle’s novel, the only good Arab is the Jordanian interpreter because he wants “to be an American” (Kyle 267). In my estimation, this corresponds with American neo-Orientalists’ endorsement of proxy Orientalists because they participate in advancing the neo-Orientalist discourse. By the same token, Kyle is willing to trust the interpreter with a gun, and the interpreter wants to prove his love for Americans by his willingness to kill for them. Kyle does not feel that Iraqis are humans who have feelings, dreams, and rights to choose their own government instead of having it chosen for them. He does not see

them as any other nation on the face of this earth. His constant reference to their savagery justifies his mission of killing.

In both novels, the authors are not keen to build any personal relationship with the civilian locals. Kyle makes fun of Iraqis who work with him and Luttrell is forced to know a Pashtun village only because he has no choice. He can either accept them as his hosts or face death at the hands of Taliban fighters. The lone survivor is lucky to find this tribe that honors guests and treats them like their own. This is why Luttrell is still alive, and he admits that he is “eternally grateful to the village elder” (Luttrell 341). Yet, in his account, this tribe is not ruled by universal values but rather by archaic and haphazard traditions, which are commended here only because they work in his favor. On the other hand, other tribes are demonized because they do not welcome the American presence, with no acknowledgement that it is their right whether to receive strangers or not. For Kyle, what makes one culture good or bad is how it treats the American presence without any regard to the voices of any given culture.

Luttrell does not go beyond gratitude and he does not change his perspective on Afghani civilians in his argument against the Geneva Conventions. In a rare admission, Luttrell opens up about the possibility that he might be wrong about these simple villagers: “This was a village full of Islamic fanatics who wanted only to see dead Americans. Up here in these lawless mountains, the plan to smash New York’s twin Towers had been born. At least those were my thoughts. But I underestimated the essential human decency of the senior members of this Pashtun tribe” (Luttrell 331). This is the closest he gets to self-criticism, but he does not go farther than this. His relationship with Afghanis in general and with Muhammad Gulab, the tribesman who finds Luttrell

badly wounded and grants him Lokhay, might have had a more meaningful effect in the US. Unfortunately, Gulab jeopardized his life and his family's lives to save Luttrell and then found himself and his family under constant death threats. He sought to receive permanent resident status (a green card) from the US and was denied. He was given a visitor's visa and visited the US twice. The second visit was granted only because Universal Studios needed him to promote the movie (Walker, "Afghan Awaits Help"). Eventually, Gulab and his family were relocated in another unknown country (Walker, "Afghan Awaits Help").

Luttrell and Kyle portray the supposed hatred in the Arab/Muslim world as unfathomable and unwarranted. They halfheartedly attempt to rationalize this hatred the way they rationalize it in their society, but they cannot find plausible reasons. This process of denying the *Other's* rationality in thinking or agency is best explained by Judith Butler in *Frames of War* as follows: "a living figure outside the norms of life not only becomes the problem to be managed by normativity, but seems to be that which normativity is bound to reproduce: it is living, but not a life" (8). Once Arabs and Muslims are denied the status of normal human beings, the imperial project can carry on with impunity. I shall revisit this idea later in the Geneva Conventions' discussion. One of the ways that the novelists try to comprehend this abnormal hatred is through comprehension of religion. After all, the novelists claim that Muslim terrorists kill only for religious reasons.

Christianity and Islam

A predominant theme in the two novels is the conflict between tolerant Christianity and violent Islam, with the former always prevailing. The ideological and

religious comparison between Jesus and Muhammad in Chapter One is transformed in these novels into a real battle. Luttrell and Kyle see themselves as soldiers of Christianity and Afghanis and Iraqis as terrorists of Islam. Unlike the other novelists discussed earlier, for two reasons they do not believe in spreading Christianity or the redemption of Muslims. First, they believe that Muslims are essentially hateful and savage. Second, their motto in fighting Muslims is kill-them-all. If extermination is their approach, there will be no one to convert at the end. This is basically social Darwinism.

Luttrell states that he is a Catholic and that he is proud of his religion. Also, he is proud to call Psalm 23 “the Psalm of the SEALs,” noting that “The navy chaplains made everyone recite the Twenty-third Psalm, just like I was doing. During the open-air services, everyone would stand up and solemnly sing the navy hymn” (Luttrell 305; Luttrell 348). Finding inspiration, guidance or comfort in any given religion should not be an issue. However, when Luttrell compares his religion to Islam to prove the superiority of his religion, it becomes problematic and alarming. He reports:

In Baghdad, we were up against an enemy we often could not see and were obliged to get out there and find. And when we found him, we scarcely knew who he was – al Qaeda or Taliban, Shiite or Sunni, Iraqi or foreign, freedom fighter for Saddam or an insurgent fighting for some kind of a different god from our own, a god who somehow sanctioned murder of innocent civilians, a god who’d effectively booted the Ten Commandments over the touchline and out of play. (14)

For Luttrell, in Iraq, the enemy is no one in particular and everyone at the same time, making every member of Iraqi society his enemy. Luttrell claims that insurgents are all

driven by their belief in Islam and their hate for Christianity. Like his perspective on why Bahrainis hate Americans, he thinks that insurgents fight Americans for religious hatred as they do not have political grievances or patriotism. The irony is that Islam honors the principles of the Ten Commandments with the exception of observing the Sabbath, and that shows how misinformed Luttrell is about Islam and Muslims. By pitting Islam against Christianity, he transforms the struggle between the US and certain political and militant organizations from the Islamic world into a supremacy struggle between Christianity and Islam. In fact, he uses the word “supremacy” to describe this conflict (Luttrell 262).

Throughout the novel, he expresses the belief that there is always a metaphysical force accompanying him due to his strong belief in Christianity. Every time he loses his rifle during the fight, he finds it again and again next to him, “placed there by the Hand of God Himself” (Luttrell 247). What is more, he swears that he hears God saying to him “*Marcus...you’re gonna need this* [the rifle]” (Luttrell 246). He claims literally that God urges him to fight and he claims that his fighting is on God’s behalf against another god:

I reached down to pick it up and listened again for His voice....amid all the chaos and malevolence of this monstrous struggle for supremacy, apparently being conducted on behalf of His Holy Prophet Muhammad...I don’t know that much about Muhammad, but, by all that’s holy, I don’t think my own God wished me to die. If He had been indifferent to my plight, He surely would not have taken such good care of my gun, right? ...My faith will remain forever unshaken. (Luttrell 262)

Basically, Prophet Muhammad wishes death for Luttrell while Jesus wants Luttrell to live! The contrast between Jesus and Prophet Muhammad to prove that Islam is violent is now an actual fight for supremacy being carried out by American soldiers. Luttrell does not identify this conflict as political at the core but rather claims that he is engaged in a conflict between good Christians and bad Muslims, between a “God-fearing” nation and hateful Afghans (Luttrell 413). According to his understanding, Christianity is endangered by the threats of “the seething Islamic states” (Luttrell 25).

To him, the west is the seat of Christianity and east is the place of Islam, but he forgets that Judaism, Christianity and Islam all emerged from the Middle East. He exclaims: “Jesus Christ! I mean, Muhammad! Or Allah! Whoever’s in charge around here” (Luttrell 325). Besides the common mistake of believing that Muslims worship Muhammad, this statement of the struggle for supremacy is emphasized to highlight the fight between good and evil and between Christians and Muslims. Accentuating the supposed existential conflict between Christianity and Islam before he recounts the death of his friends makes Islam an accomplice in the tragic deaths of his friends.

Since his perspective on this struggle is dominated by his belief in mainly the clash of two religions, he claims that Afghans view him not as an American soldier but as a Christian first and foremost. He describes the look of a Taliban fighter: “We got our man. It was my first close-up encounter with a fanatical Taliban fighter. I’ll never forget him. He was only just old enough to have a decent beard, but he had wild, crazy eyes, and he stared at me like I’d just rejected the entire teachings of the Koran” (Luttrell 190). Luttrell cannot comprehend that any Afghani would oppose any American presence

unless he/she is a radical Muslim. After all, he thinks that he is in Afghanistan for divine reasons.

Luttrell claims that he is “headed out to do God’s work on behalf of the U.S. government and our commander in chief, President George W. Bush” (Luttrell 13). “God’s work” is the exact phrase that Buckley employs in *Florence of Arabia* to describe Florence’s mission to the fictional Arab state Matar. This phrase seeks to give validity to the military intervention of the United States, and entails undoing the devil’s works and plans by the soldiers of God. What amazes me is that al Qaeda and Taliban fanatics believe that they are doing their God’s work as well and yet they are condemned for it by the American neo-Orientalists. The disparity of view regarding the action of the Self and the *Other* in the American neo-Orientalist discourse is shocking and indicative of systemic deception and bias that loom large in a society that claims to be free, fair, and secular.

If Luttrell sees a battle over supremacy, Kyle portrays himself as a Crusader in this battle over supremacy. His dedication to Christianity begins with carrying a Bible when he joins the SEAL’s training, but he does not start reading it regularly till he is in Iraq: “Now I opened it and read some of the passages. I skipped around, read a bit, skipped around some more. With all hell breaking loose around me, it felt better to know I was part of something bigger” (Kyle 327-28). I wonder what this “something bigger” is! I cannot imagine that “something bigger” is bringing democracy to Iraq, because he does not believe in its success in the first place. In reading the Bible, he finds an explanation to his world. Invoking the Bible to understand Iraq is a trend that is popularized by many American politicians post 9/11. As Drury expounds:

In coining this term ‘War on Terror’, the Bush administration abandoned political realism in favor of a new holy war where American terror represents the divine wrath against evil....The same biblical rhetoric is used by America’s Islamic enemies. In this way, the dualistic and Manichean aspects of biblical religion are reintroduced into politics. We are confronted with a clash between two enemies who believe that they are custodians of the one and only truth—divine, singular, unassailable, eternal, and unchanging. In a struggle with pure evil, there can be no compromise, no negotiation, and no mutual co-existence. The result is the eclipse of politics understood as plurality, diplomacy, and compromise.

(33)

What is interesting in Kyle’s reading of the Bible is that it is not viewed with scrutiny or suspicion, while terrorist Muslim characters are portrayed as finding legitimacy to their violence in the Qur’an; this is evident in Buckley’s, Updike’s and Adams’ novels as well here. Kyle finds only religion driving Muslims to violence and he wishes that he could shoot Iraqis just because they are carrying the Qur’an with them. In his understanding, he does not need to know Islam to understand what is going on in the Arab/Muslim world. Instead, he feels that he will grasp his world as long as he understands Christianity:

I had never known that much about Islam. Raised as a Christian, obviously I knew there had been religious conflicts for centuries. I knew about the Crusades, and I knew that there had been fighting and atrocities forever.

But I also knew that Christianity had evolved from the Middle Ages. We don't kill people because they're a different religion.

The people we were fighting in Iraq, after Saddam's army fled or was defeated, were fanatics. They hated us because we weren't Muslim. They wanted to kill us, even though we'd just booted out their dictator, because we practiced a different religion than they did.

Isn't religion supposed to teach tolerance? (Kyle 98)

Kyle employs the same logic that Updike, Lewis and other American neo-Orientalists use about evolved Christianity versus a rigid and unchanged Islam. According to Orientalists in general, an understanding of Muslims is available in their religious texts. The first two questions that asked when a Muslim commits any violent act are: When was s/he religiously radicalized and by whom? The 'why' is not investigated, and it comes as secondary if it comes at all. Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Hall elaborate on the omission of 'why': "Members of the public making their way through the September 11 coverage could learn much from what reporters told them about the 'who,' 'what,' 'where,' 'when,' and 'how' of the attackers. The matter of 'why,' however, remained elusive" (qtd. in Alsultany 103). "Obscuring the 'why' is one of multiple ways the media regulates sympathy" (Alsultany 103). On the other hand, Deepa Kumar in *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* points out that "arguably no one turned to the Bible to understand why Timothy McVeigh bombed a federal government in Oklahoma City" (9). One may contend that the McVeigh example is obsolete, since the Oklahoma bombing took place before 9/11 and there may subsequently have been a shift in this perception. I can cite numerous examples that are current, but it is sufficient to mention two cases of terrorism,

one committed by a Muslim American and the other by a white American. The first, Nidal Malid Hasan, a US military psychiatrist, killed thirteen unarmed military soldiers and wounded 32 at a medical center at Fort Hood, Texas, in 2009, and he was later convicted and sentenced to death. *The New York Times* is keen to find out when and by whom he had been radicalized:

For months and even years before the attack, his views of Islam had turned extreme. In December 2008, 10 months before the shooting, he sent the first of 16 messages and e-mails to Anwar al-Awlaki, a radical American-born cleric who encouraged several terrorist plots. He asked Mr. Awlaki whether Muslim American troops who killed other American soldiers in the name of Islam would be considered “fighting jihad and if they did die would you consider them shaheeds,” an Arabic term for martyrs.

(Fernandez, “Fort Hood Shooting”)

There is invariably anxiety to find the moment of radicalization in Muslims, as if it is a button activated when pressed. I do not condone his actions and I believe Hasan is a cruel terrorist who killed his patients and fellow citizens in cold blood. I just want to show how the rhetoric of terrorism shifts when Muslims are discussed.

On the other hand, Robert Bales committed the Kandahar Massacre in Afghanistan. He killed 16 Afghani civilians, 9 of whom were children (some of them were 2 years old) and he was sentenced to life without parole (Healy, “Soldier Sentenced to Life”). Bales’ religious background is not discussed. The word that is used to describe the reason of the Kandahar Massacre is “snap.” A military official tells the *NYT*: “When it all comes out, it will be a combination of stress, alcohol and domestic issues — he just

snapped” (Schmitt and Yardley, “Accused G.I. ‘Snapped’”). I am not arguing that Bales committed this massacre based on religious hatred, but his religious background and the churches he frequents are not discussed in the media. This point cannot be overstated, as it really exposes the discriminatory treatment over similar acts of violence. I do not deny or underestimate religious motivation in some of the crimes committed by some Muslims, but religion is not the only motive, as Kumar explains: “religion is one factor among others that impact the lives of people who live in Muslim-majority societies” (31). Yet religion seems to be the only factor in discussing Muslims’ attitudes towards the west in general.

In Kyle’s version of ideological comparison between these two religions, the Crusade era is resumed and renewed. After acknowledging that the Crusades era was violent and bloody and claiming that Christianity evolved from it, Kyle shows pride in resembling Crusaders: “On the front of my arm, I had a crusader cross inked in. I wanted everyone to know I was a Christian. I had it put in in red, for blood. I hated the damned savages I’d been fighting. I always will” (Kyle 250). Is this the logic of a person who claims in the evolution of his religion, by choosing to associate himself with one of the darkest eras of Christianity? Significantly, President Bush II declares immediately after 9/11: “This crusade, this war on terror, is going to take a while” (qtd. in Lyons 9).

Jonathan Lyons weighs in:

The White House immediately expressed the president’s regret over use of the word *crusade*, acknowledging that it might upset the Muslim world.... Nonetheless, Bush repeated the term five months later when he made it clear that this military campaign, like its medieval forerunners, would

extend beyond a single nation or a single people to represent a civilizational alliance of like-minded forces. Thanking the Canadian military for joining the effort, Bush...said: "They stand with us in this incredibly important crusade to defend freedom, this campaign to do what is right for our children and our grandchildren." (Lyons 9)

Eleven years after Bush II's reference to the Crusades, Kyle still finds "a civilizational alliance" with the Crusades. The Crusaders' history was full of horrendous acts like "incidents of cannibalism in the Syrian town of Marra and the slicing open of Muslim corpses in a frenzied search for hidden gold coins" (Lyons 61). This history also was an inspiration to Nazi Germany as it used Crusaders' names to name its missions, like Operation Barbarossa after Frederick Barbarossa, who was a German king, a medieval Roman emperor and one of the leaders of the third Crusade. In addition, "Crusaders passing through Germany en route to Jerusalem had murdered Jews in cold blood" and "Christians were among the victims" (D. Kumar 53). This is a glimpse of what Kyle wants to be identified with. He fully embraces it by tattooing his body, but why? In my estimation, this association gives Kyle a sense of religious legitimacy. He proclaims even that he has "a guardian angel" and God helps him to aim correctly at his enemies (Kyle 315).

In Kyle's personality, a religious Crusader and a Marvel comic fictional character, the Punisher, are resurrected. Indeed, the story of the Punisher is that he comes back from the dead to avenge his family bypassing the legal system through the use of unconventional means like torture, violence and relentless vengeance. Kyle imbibes

religious inspiration and historical significance from the Crusades and aspires to take justice into his own hands like the Punisher. He narrates:

We called ourselves the Punishers.

For those of you who are not familiar with the character, the Punisher debuted in a Marvel comic book series in the 1970s. He's a real bad-ass who rights wrongs, delivering vigilance justice. A movie by the same name had just come out; the Punisher wore a shirt with stylized white skull....We all thought what the Punisher did was cool: He righted wrongs. He killed bad guys. He made wrongdoers fear him.

That's what we were all about. So we adapted his symbol—a skull....We spray-painted it on every building or wall we could. We wanted people to know, *We're here and we want to fuck with you....*

You see us? We're the people kicking your ass. Fear us. Because we will kill you, motherfucker. (Kyle 263)

The crass diction showcases his belief in self-righteousness and authority, and marking places with the skull displays his domination over the land. This, mildly put, is a fun game for him. Because he claims his superiority as a Crusader and a Punisher, he does not question his actions or second-guess himself. In fact, he proclaims his innocence and clear conscience: “when God confronts me with my sins, I do not believe any of the kills I had during the war will be among them. Everyone I shot was evil. I had good cause on every shot. They all deserved to die” (Kyle 430).

In my analysis of American neo-Orientalism and in both novels, I find consistently conflation of different Islamic sects and Muslims' identities because there is

not a decent understanding of Islam as a religion and Muslims as humans. Understanding the difference between Islam and Muslims is not a difficult feat because that goal has been achieved with other religions. For example, within the novel, there is a distinction between Christianity as a religion and Christians as humans. Nonetheless, Kyle cannot separate between Islam and Muslims. In his narrative, he offers to explain some historical background on Islam in Iraq, but instead provides some demographic background on Iraq:

(Some background on Islam in Iraq: there were two main groups of Muslims in Iraq, Sunnis and Shiites. Before the war, Shiites lived mostly in the south and east, say from Baghdad and to the northwest. The two groups coexisted but generally hate each other. While Shiites were the majority, during Saddam's time they were discriminated against and not allowed to hold important offices. Farther north, the areas are dominated by Kurds, who, though mostly Sunni, have separate traditions and often don't think of themselves as being part of Iraq. Saddam considered them to be an inferior people; during one political suppression, he ordered chemical weapons used and waged a despicable ethnic-cleansing campaign.) (Kyle 151)

To him, these few lines are sufficient to explain Islam in Iraq. What undermines his argument is the different versions of Islam in this particular region. Each version seeks its own independent destiny and state. Each group comes from a different race and embraces its own understanding of Islam. Kyle claims that Saddam's rule caused this rift between Iraqis and that getting rid of him would heal all their differences. At the same time, he

nonchalantly criticizes them for not appreciating the American presence, as if this presence is a divine gift delivered by holy soldiers!

Furthermore, oxymoronic statements and misconceptions are perpetuated within the discourse. By making the major dispute with Muslims religious not political, Luttrell and Kyle forget their initial claims that the American presence is necessary to defend the elected governments of Afghanistan and Iraq. Interestingly, they take the time in their narratives to justify the wars.

Justification of Wars

Luttrell and Kyle justify the Iraqi invasion and U.S. military interventions in the Arab/Muslim world by providing political, moral, economic and religious reasons. They assert that rational reasoning necessitates these wars. After all, Luttrell claims that he possesses “a higher form of consciousness,” adding that only SEALs “can understand the difference between us and the rest” (Luttrell 86). They also imply that this “higher form of consciousness” emanates from American values and Christianity. Their narratives present the superiority of their military as unmatched as “there is no fighting force in the world quite like us” (Luttrell 12). This “higher form of consciousness” appears to be synonymous with Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden.” Both authors painstakingly try to provide extensive evidence that they seem to stumble upon to justify the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, although they wrote their novels several years (three in Luttrell’s case and seven in Kyle’s) after the original grounds for the war had been challenged by the U.S. Media and *The New York Times* announced the false reports that Judith Miller reported about the WMDs (“The Times and Iraq”).

Politically, they found their justification of the Iraq war on the idea that Saddam actually began the process of obtaining weapons of mass destruction [WMD]. Luttrell quotes Donald Rumsfeld: “what do you want to do? Leave him there till he does?” (Luttrell 38). Rumsfeld’s reasoning is presented as substantial and self-sufficient evidence that asserts the essence of The Bush Doctrine. This is not a surprise, since Rumsfeld is one of the authors of this doctrine. As became publicly evident in the U.S., the Bush II Administration did not have substantial evidence of WMDs. Instead, the administration leaked the fake story of aluminum tubes to *The New York Times* and then based the Iraq war on the faked story it fabricated in the first place! After the fact, on May 26th of 2004, *The New York Times*’ editors published a detailed article about the misinformation they received from officials in the Bush II Administration entitled “The Times and Iraq.” However, Luttrell and Kyle express the unequivocal belief that Iraq had WMDs. Luttrell reaffirms: “the question of the missing WMDs was growing more urgent.... In our view, the question of whether Saddam Hussein had biological and chemical weapons was answered. Of course he did. He used them in Halabja” (Luttrell 37). Kyle claims that he has found WMD materials in Iraq: “At another location, we found barrels of chemical material that was intended for use as biochemical. Everyone talks about there being no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but they seem to be referring to completed nuclear bombs” (Kyle 100). Although he seems to allude to biochemical weapons which Saddam used before against his own people, Kyle links this as a potential evidence for the existence of WMD. Besides the baseless claim of the existence of WMDs in Iraq, they reiterate the logic of the Bush Doctrine, so there is no

need to find actual evidence of WMDs as long as there is a viable threat in Saddam himself.

Moreover, in both Luttrell and Kyle, proving the existence of WMDs is one good reason among other urgent ones, such as toppling the Saddam regime, which is presented as a moral accomplishment. Luttrell claims getting rid of Saddam is good for Iraqis and humanity in general since he is a ruthless dictator who kills his own people using chemical weapons. The sad reality is that Iraqi civilians and American soldiers are victims of “depleted uranium munitions” as they “were deployed on a large scale” by the United States in Iraq in 1990 and 2003 (Nixon 217). They are integrated in designing “missiles, bullets and tank armors” (Nixon 218). Rob Nixon notes that “The United Nations Commissions on Human Rights...has classified depleted uranium munitions with nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons as ‘weapons of indiscriminate effect’” (218-9). In addition, the Geneva Conventions has condemned the use of this nuclear and chemical weapon (Nixon 236). In *Slow Violence and The Environmentalism of the Poor*, Nixon provides a brilliant and tragic report of the deadly effects of depleted uranium on American veterans, Iraqi civilians and the environment, and he explains why depleted uranium is used in particular: “The Pentagon loves depleted uranium not just because it’s free, but also because the metal’s density gives it a high penetrative capacity. That means depleted-uranium munitions can be fired from greater distance ensuring improve ‘kill range’ and thereby purportedly helping keep U.S. troops out of harm’s way” (Nixon 230). However, this weapon does not distinguish between American soldiers and Iraqi civilians. It was death incarnate issued by the United States against Iraqis and their own soldiers twice without any reservation or mercy under the pretext of stopping Saddam from using

chemical weapons against Iraqis and fear of WMD! Yet, Luttrell, Kyle and other SEALs like Chuck Pfarrer in *Seal Target Geronimo* still insist on the existence of WMD in Iraq and they ignore their use of depleted uranium munitions.

What is more, Luttrell and Kyle express pride in their lethal arsenal because it separates them from “these tribesman from the Middle Ages” (Luttrell 75). Luttrell’s favorite bomb is “the BLU-82B/C-130, known as Commando Vault in Vietnam and now nicknamed Daisy Cutter” (Luttrell 75). He continues expressing his admiration: “This thing is awesome...its lethal radius is colossal, probably nine hundred feet. Its flash and sound is obvious from literally miles away...[It] is the largest conventional bomb ever built and, of course, leaves no nuclear fallout” (Luttrell 75). Luttrell is keen to emphasize that this bomb is safe for the environment or ‘green,’ so to speak, but he does not acknowledge the use of the not-so-green depleted uranium munitions in Iraq. Kyle also has a favorite weapon: the thermite grenade which he describes “an incendiary device that burns at four thousand degrees Fahrenheit and can go through a quarter-inch of steel in a few seconds” (Kyle 201). Although these two bombs are not nuclear, or at least that is what we are told, they, nonetheless, cause destruction and devastation to humans and the earth, and this destructive side of these two wars has not been properly covered in the U.S. media. The U.S. mainstream media only report the aggressions of the insurgency “and while it is terrible to be blown apart or sliced up by shrapnel, the U.S. public is usually spared the grisly details of what American bombs do to the bodies of Afghan women and children” (Gusterson 94).

In addition, Luttrell and Kyle make no mention of “the deaths of 567,000” Iraqi children not at the hand of Saddam’s regime but at the hands of the United States’

economic sanctions after 1990, which is “a ‘price’ that the US Secretary of State Madeline Albright deemed ‘worth it’” (Ismael and Rippin 9). Justifying the Iraq war based on WMDs and the toppling Saddam is invalid and one of the darkest moments of the American presence in the Middle East, to say the least.

Economically, oil is viewed as vital in the process of supporting the United States’ economy and weakening dictators in the Middle East. Luttrell sees Arabs’ control over the oil market as worthy of attention if another economic disaster in the United States is to be prevented. The oil embargo in the seventies affected Texas, his home state. However, he sees his country as vulnerable in its reliance on Middle Eastern oil: “No one gave much consideration to the world oil market being controlled in the Middle East by Muslims. Everything that happened had its roots in Arabia” (Luttrell 53). This corresponds to Buckley’s narrative, which emphasizes the vitality of Wasabia’s money in the U.S. economy. Kyle, also, claims that the Iraqi war was caused on the fact that Saddam violated U.N. sanctions by “smuggling oil and other items both into and out of his country” and that “The U.S. and other allies were stepping up operations to stop that” (Kyle 59). Therefore, both authors imply that controlling the oil market in Iraq and the Middle East has direct effects on the U.S., and that this is another serious reason to protect the U.S.’s interests. Their reasoning is in line with Dick Cheney’s, who proclaimed the following in 1999 in the London Petroleum Institute: “While many regions of the world offer great oil opportunities, the Middle East, with two thirds of the world’s oil and the lowest cost, is still where the prize ultimately lies” (qtd. in Little 312). Americans, in return, are to deliver democracy as the western prize for the Arab/Muslim world in exchange for oil.

Spreading democracy is central in the Bush II administration's rhetoric about the post 9/11 wars. In line with this, Luttrell claims that the Afghanistan war is a two-fold mission. First, it is incumbent on Americans to change the horrific dominance of Islam over Afghans. He explains: "Ancient Islamic punishments...these religious policies earned universal notoriety as the Taliban strived to restore the Middle Ages in a nation longing to join the twenty-first century. Their policies concerning human rights were outrageous and brought them into direct conflict with the international community" (Luttrell 70). There is no doubt in my mind that Afghanistan is better off without the Taliban and al Qaeda and that these two organizations should be persecuted internationally, but the United States does not believe in persecuting them in the first place. Deepa Kumar elucidates the notion of spreading democracy in the Arab/Muslim world:

The United States has similarly stated at various points that one of its goals in Afghanistan is "nation-building"—and liberals as well as antiwar feminists accepted this logic. In reality, the United States has never had an interest in bringing democracy to the people of the Middle East, or to any other people for that matter. If anything, it has a long and sordid record of wrecking democratic movements and replacing them with dictatorships.

(56)

The idea of 'nation-building' is another manifestation of the logic of "higher form of consciousness," and "God's work," but it is more believable and attainable, and therefore more dangerous, than the aforementioned terms because it is secular and void of moral, religious and imperial superiority. Luttrell exactly presents his argument as if the

American presence is primarily humanitarian and for democracy's sake. There are many Islamic and non-Islamic countries that have questionable judicial systems and violations of human rights and still maintain a strong relationship with the United States both economically and politically. Luttrell and other American neo-Orientalists could not care less about this. It is only when the United States decides that a country with a Muslim majority no longer belongs to the international community that the teachings and laws of Islam become the focus of change and a pretext to indulge in military adventures.

The second goal of the Afghanistan war is replacing a dictatorship and Islamic fanaticism with democracy. Luttrell insists that the U.S.'s role in Afghanistan is not to usurp: "just trying to stop another bloody tribal upheaval and another regime change from the elected to the dictators.... We were here on business.... And restore order to the mountains" (Luttrell 82-83). What does 'order' here mean? Luttrell admits that Pashtuns maintain their existence through a very organized life in harsh conditions that depends on tribal rules, and that they have stayed true to their values through centuries of tumultuous times and foreign occupations. Luttrell is also astonished to know how Pashtuns can conserve peace between the villages in these mountains: "According to the learned Charles Lindhorn, a professor of anthropology at Boston University, homicide rates among the Pashtun tribes are way lower than homicide rates in urban areas of the United States" (Luttrell 80). His mention of this fact undermines his description of the Pashtuns' mountains as "lawless rebel-held territory" (Luttrell 217). I wish that Lindhorn told Luttrell about how Afghanistan was before the Russian and American presences, as "until the 1970s...it was one of the most tolerant Muslim societies, with a long secular tradition: Kabul was known as a city with a vibrant cultural and political life" (Zizek 43). Tribal

rules do not mean ‘lawlessness’, and they can be seen as being successful in ways that modern metropolitans are unable to achieve. Eventually, Luttrell denounces the idea of bringing democracy to the Arab/Muslim world, etiolating his own justification of the Afghanistan War. But why is the success of democracy in doubt?

From the perspectives of Luttrell and Kyle, the strong tribal traditions and the culture of Islam will always keep the Arab/Muslim world from joining the civilized world. Luttrell and Kyle seem to hint at the notion of “Oriental Despotism.” Deepa Kumar illuminates the ideas behind this term:

The notion of “Oriental despotism” was developed...that the hot climate of the East made Orientals supine and submissive and thus unable to resist tyranny. The Orientalists gave this theory academic credibility by stating that despotism was one of the core values of “Islamic civilization.” And modernization theory would make it even more scientific by suggesting that traditional societies were characterized by hierarchical systems of power. Since there theorists argued, change would never come from within, it was the burden of the West to civilize, modernize, and democratize the East. This “white man’s burden” argument has been used, in different forms and guises, by every imperial power since. (55)

Luttrell states previously that the number of deaths in these mountains is lower than urban areas in the US and he knows that this tribe survives all kind of foreign invasions. Nonetheless, his rhetoric seems to suggest that if there is no government, there is no modernity or order, thus judging the world through a western lens. He vociferates: “I mean, how the hell do you impose national government on a place like this?... It’s never

going to happen” (Luttrell 357). He claims that Afghans will never comprehend the idea of one nation because their history is only about “warring tribesmen” (Luttrell 185). He reduces the cultures and traditions of Afghan tribes to mere tribal wars, even though his life is saved by the *lokhay*, a proud Pashtun tradition. His views of the tribal traditions and cultures of the Arab/Muslim world are similar to the views of Buckley, Anderson, Adams and Updike, as he denigrates the *Other*’s values because they are different than his.

In a move recalling Luttrell’s observations about Afghans, Kyle asserts that Iraqis are loyal only to their respective tribes and he reiterates the “Oriental despotism” concept:

Most of the *jundis* wanted to be in the army to get a steady paycheck, but they didn’t want to fight, let alone die, for their country. For their tribe, maybe. The tribe, their extended family—that was where their true loyalty lay. And for most of them, what was going in Ramadi had nothing to do with that.

I realized that a lot of the problem has to do with the screwed-up culture in Iraq. These people had been under a dictatorship for all their lives. Iraq as a country meant nothing to them, or at least nothing good. Most were happy to be rid of Saddam Hussein, very happy to be free people, but they didn’t understand what that really meant—the other things that come with being free....And they were so backward in terms of education and technology that for Americans it often felt like being in the

Stone Age....And giving them the tools they needed to progress is *not* what my job was all about. My job was killing, not teaching. (288-9)

Jundi is a soldier in Arabic while “Junood” is the plural form of it. Here, Kyle adds an ‘s’ to render ‘jundi’ plural. With fear of trivializing the impact of the Iraq war, Arabic is victimized in this context. Similarly, these Iraqis are victimized by being put in a fake army by American forces to fight their own people to sustain the American presence. The plural form of “Jundi” is grammatically incorrect like the American-approved army of Iraqis. Both formations are incorrect and illegitimate. Moreover, Kyle in this quotation replicates Anderson’s representation in *Moonlight Hotel* of an infantile, recidivist *Other* when given his/her freedom. Moreover, he replicates US President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s early observation of Arabs and democracy. Eisenhower states: “If you go and live with these Arabs, you will find that they simply cannot understand our ideas of freedom and dignity....They have lived so long under dictatorships of one form or another, how can we expect them to run successfully a free government?” (qtd. in D. Kumar 57). Kyle adds new wrinkles to Eisenhower’s comment by including the tribal system, Arab culture and Islam as main contributors to the failure of delivering democracy.

Kyle claims that Iraq is naturally incorrigible and “screwed up” (Kyle 225). Despite his confessed compassion for the Iraqis under Saddam’s tyrant regime, Kyle shows supreme indifference to Iraqis under the American control:

I never really believed the Iraqis would turn the country into a truly functioning democracy, but I thought at one point that there was a chance. I don’t know that I believe that now. It’s a pretty corrupt place.

But I didn't risk my life to bring democracy to Iraq. I risked my life for my buddies, to protect my friends and fellow countrymen. I went to war for *my* country, not Iraq. My country sent me out there so that bullshit wouldn't make its way back to our shores.

I never once fought for the Iraqis. I could give a flying fuck about them. (221)

Luttrell and Kyle are frustrated by the failure of delivering democracy, but they comfort themselves by remembering that they are protectors of the real democracy of their country. They feel exasperated because the Geneva Conventions and Rules of Engagement do not allow them to carry out 'killing' as they wish.

Geneva Conventions and Rules of Engagement

The argument against the Geneva Conventions is a pivotal theme in both novels. Luttrell and Kyle debate the uselessness of the application of these laws, as they hamper the good side (the U.S.) while the bad side uses them in its favor. They note that these rules are feasible when civilized nations are at war, but not when the United States fights backward nations. They emphasize that only military members truly understand the dangerous nature of Muslims and Arabs, and they reiterate the importance of encountering the *Other* in order to grasp the limitlessness of their danger and evil.

In "Terror, the Imperial Presidency, and American Heroism," Susan Jeffords discusses "two aspects of the U.S. terror narrative that have dynamic relations to the creation of the space of the Terrorist" (68). First, the narrative asserts "the role of the one who is 'not terrorist' (even if the 'not terrorist' is committing acts that might otherwise be associated with terrorism)" (Jeffords 68). In other words, the narrative accentuates the

innocence of the Self in its pursuit to achieve security while ignoring what that process involves. The second aspect is “the consistent slippage created by the necessary impermanence of the space of the Terrorist requires mechanism to ease the anxieties created both by what comes to be called ‘fear’ and the uncertainties of the Terrorist category” (Jeffords 68).

The mere existence of a nebulous, terrorist *Other* abolishes the existence of idiosyncratic individuals in the *Other*'s space. Thus, the Self sees only the collective hostility of the *Other*. The narrative of the novels advance the following logic to eliminate anxiety and fear: the civilian *Other* cannot be trusted as he/she is a potential terrorist, and therefore all untrusted agents should be moved into the Terrorist category. The argument goes that since this is a tribal society and individual loyalty is attached to the tribe, any individual, after the death of a terrorist relative at the hands of American soldiers, will seek revenge against anything that is American. In other words, the death of a terrorist transforms a civilian *Other* into a terrorist. Similarly, being a relative of a Muslim terrorist makes any given Muslim an accomplice. Luttrell states unreservedly that the main reason for the Afghanistan War is uncontrolled retribution:

They may not have been the precise same guys who planned 9/11. But they were most certainly their descendants, their heirs, their followers. They were part of the same crowd who knocked down the North and South towers in the Big Apple on the infamous Tuesday morning in 2001...This was payback time for the World Trade Center. We were coming after the guys who did it. If not the actual guys, then their blood

brothers the lunatics who still wished us dead and might try it again. Same thing, right? (15)

Luttrell's logic is similar to that of Lawrence Eagleburger, U.S. Secretary of State in the Bush II Administration, when he states urging for response immediately after 9/11:

“There is only one way to begin to deal with people like this, and that is you have to kill some of them even if they are not immediately directly involved in this thing” (qtd. in Alwajji 315).

In reality, the lack of a lucid definition of a terrorist creates more fear and a more unsettled understanding in the Self. Luttrell and Kyle fight the application of the Geneva Conventions because it protects, in their unsettled understanding, so many potential terrorists. They forget that their main purpose of combating terrorists is to protect civilians in the first place. They end up rounding every *Other* they see into a terrorist category; and this is why, sadly, they both endorse and justify the Abu Ghraib torture.

Luttrell discusses the restrictions that the Rules of Engagement impose upon U.S. soldiers and he asserts that these rules jeopardize and endanger the lives of Americans: “How about when a bunch of guys wearing colored towels around their heads and brandishing AK-47s come charging over the horizon straight toward you?” (Luttrell 41). He challenges the effectiveness of ROE because they limit the actions and reactions of U.S. soldiers not in relation to danger in general but in relation to an Islamic threat. He does not provide a neutral example to demonstrate the drawbacks of ROE. Instead, he chooses to color his argument with the phrase “colored towels.” Luttrell knows the word ‘turban’ but he chooses the offensive phrase invoking the other infamous phrase

‘towelhead’ to refer to Arabs and Muslims. He presents his argument against the uselessness of ROE only in the face of the Islamic danger.

Besides making his argument against the Geneva Conventions and the ROE in relation only to Muslim threats, he posits an intriguing angle, which is that every Muslim civilian is a potential threat until proven otherwise—and in his estimation, such proof is rare occurrence:

Our rules of engagement in Afghanistan specified that we could not shoot, kill, or injure unarmed civilians. But what about the unarmed civilian who was a skilled spy for the illegal forces we were trying to remove? What about an entire secret army, diverse, fragmented, and lethal, creeping through the mountains in Afghanistan *pretending* to be civilians? What about those guys? How about the innocent-looking camel drovers making their way through the mountain passes with enough high explosive strapped to the backs of their beasts to blow up Yankee Stadium? (Luttrell 191)

Luttrell complains of the ease of entering and leaving Afghanistan for Afghans in particular, but he does not acknowledge that this ease was created by the British Empire: “the Pashtun area was split by the arbitrary Durand Line to prevent the Pashtuns from threatening British interests in Pakistan (then India)” (Zizek 55). The doings of one empire come back to unsettle future imperial projects. What was thought of as a strategic method to weaken a powerful tribe (of course, the British did not consider it as displacement or separation of relatives and families) is now a threat to the American presence in Afghanistan.

In the same quote above, Luttrell states bluntly that the Geneva Conventions are meant only to apply to the civilized world: “These terrorist/insurgents know the rules as well as they did in Iraq. They’re not their rules. They’re *our* rules, the rules of the Western countries, the civilized side of the world” (Luttrell 192). What is dangerous in this statement is his belief in two bifurcated laws. The first set of laws, including the Geneva Conventions and ROE, is for the civilized world, while the second set of laws, which is basically an open season for killing, is for the rest of the world in general and the Islamic world in particular, since all of his examples are peculiar to the latter world. He asserts: “a war fought under your own ‘civilized’ terms is unwinnable” (Luttrell 359).

When I say ‘open season,’ I am not exaggerating. Luttrell explains clearly: “The truth is, in this kind of terrorist/insurgent warfare, no one can tell who’s a civilian and who’s not. So what’s the point of framing rules that cannot be comprehensively carried out by anyone?” (Luttrell 193). He confesses that the “Terrorist category” is not clear in this war. Luttrell is canny enough to present a possible refutation, but of course he chooses only from his fellow Americans: “*But you can’t prove their intentions!* I hear the liberals squeal. No. Of course not. They were just headed up there for a cup of coffee....The mujahideen has now emerged as the Taliban or al Qaeda. And their intentions against us are just as bloodthirsty as they were against the Russians” (Luttrell 197). Two points need to be addressed in this statement. First, Luttrell omits the United States’ participation in driving Russia out of Afghanistan, glossing over the Reagan Administration’s involvement in creating a chaotic Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban in order to drive the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan. If the British Durand Line comes back to haunt America, the Taliban and al Qaeda are the Durand Line of the U.S.

In other words, while the British unwittingly set up the trap of the Durand Line, the U.S. sets the al Qaeda trap for itself. Second, who has the right to determine intentions? In the novel, Luttrell claims that intentions and civility are beside the point in hostile territories and he does not recognize the *Other's* innocence till it is proven. "By the way, if anyone should dare to utter the words Geneva Convention" to Luttrell while he is writing this, he "might more or less lose control" (Luttrell 421). The reality of Afghanistan was heartrending before the American war. Mamdani shows a glimpse of this reality:

Perhaps no other society paid a higher price for the defeat of the Soviet Union than did Afghanistan. Out of a population of roughly 20 million, 1 million died, another million and half were maimed, another 5 million became refugees, and just about everyone was internally displaced. UN agencies estimate that nearly a million and a half went clinically insane as a consequence of decades of continuous war. Those who survived lived in the most mined country in the world. Afghanistan was a brutalized society even before the American bombing began. (252)

Now, Luttrell wants Afghans to not show any sign of hostility towards foreigners who come with machine guns and heavy artilleries. Taliban and al Qaeda found new supporters in many Afghans using the logic that Americans are the new Russians. The United States, in fact, worked against the Soviet Union's presence in Afghanistan not because it was the right thing to do, but because the Soviet Union was its archenemy. Here, Luttrell identifies with Russians out of all nations because the so-called evil of Afghans is unprecedented and not matched even by the Soviets.

Likewise, Kyle's narrative of the application of ROE in the early stage of the Iraq War shows that there was not a directive to distinguish between civilians and insurgents: "Our ROEs when the war kicked off were pretty simple: *if you see anyone from about sixteen to sixty-five and they're male, shoot 'em. Kill every male you see.* That wasn't the official language, but that was the idea. Now that we were watching Iran, however, we were under strict orders not fire, at least not at Iran" (Kyle 90). The reality was that this was the official language. Zizek weighs in this idea of bombings in the war on terror:

Asked by journalists about the goals of the American bombardment of Afghanistan, Donald Rumsfeld once simply answered: 'Well, to kill as many Taliban soldiers and al-Qaeda members as possible.' This statement is not as self-evident as it may appear: the normal goal of a military operation is to win the war, to compel the enemy to capitulate, and even the mass destruction is ultimately a means to this end....The problem with Rumsfeld's blunt statement, as with other similar phenomena like the uncertain status of the Afghan prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, is that they seem to point directly to Agamben's distinction between the full citizen and *Homo sacer* who, although he or she is alive as a human being, is not part of the political community. (91)

Kyle's rhetoric in 2012 is very similar to Rumsfeld's statement in 2002. What changed in these years is the number of deaths between these two wars.

Basically, American soldiers are told to exterminate any adult Iraqi male in a preventive/preemptive move to eradicate any future resistance. ROE are for Iranians only because these Iranians have a sovereign government that will retaliate for its subjects, but

Iraqis are powerless. In fact, Kyle narrates that Iranians fire at American soldiers frequently with impunity because American soldiers are ordered not to engage with Iranians.

However, the Geneva Conventions and ROE become effective for Iraqis belatedly, and this causes trouble to Kyle. He is investigated once to see if he follows the ROE because he kills an Iraqi man under the suspicion that he carries a rifle. The Iraqi's wife claims that her husband "was on his way to the mosque carrying a Koran" (Kyle 226). The American investigators could not find a rifle next to the dead Iraqi but Kyle claims that one of the Iraqi crowds stole the rifle. Kyle defends himself: "At one point, I told the Army colonel, 'I don't shoot people with Korans—I'd like to, but I don't.' I guess I was a little hot" (Kyle 227). Contrary to his wish, the ROE do not allow him to shoot people carrying a Qur'an. He says that with such ease, as if this is a joke.

Kyle is not as outspoken as Luttrell against the application of the Geneva Conventions and ROE, but his wife, Taya, speaks out against them. She implies, like Luttrell, that the Geneva Conventions are for the western world: "Chris [Kyle] followed the ROEs because he had to. Some of the more broad-spectrum ROEs are fine. The problem with the ROEs covering minutiae is that terrorists really don't give a shit about the Geneva Convention. So picking apart a soldier's every move against a dark, twisted, rule-free enemy is more than ridiculous; it's despicable" (Kyle 179).

Both novels ask for an immediate reconsideration of applying the ROE and the Geneva Conventions because the enemy uses them in its favor against American soldiers. Luttrell and Kyle strongly assert that these rules are the reason behind the U.S.'s failure to win both wars. They propose a merciless and unsparing strategy for their government

to win swiftly and bring democracy. Luttrell propounds: “we could fight in a much more ruthless manner, stop worrying if everyone still loved us. If we did that, we’d probably win in both Afghanistan and Iraq in about a week” (358). By this logic, ruthlessness will bring peace and save a lot of lives, time and effort for the United States.

Similarly, Kyle proposes his solution for Iraq: “You know how Ramadi was won? We went in and killed all the bad people we could find....When we went into Ramadi, we told the terrorists, ‘We’ll cut *your* head off. We will do whatever we have to and eliminate you.’...We killed the bad guys and brought the leaders to the peace table. That is how the world works” (Kyle 362-63). To Kyle, sheer force and violence make the world function. If Kyle is less assertive in his discussion of the ROE, he is certainly confident about his violent strategy of kill-them-all, because “the purpose of war...is to make the other dumb bastard die” (95). Not only that, he wishes that he “had killed more. Not for bragging rights, but because I believe the world is a better place without savages out there taking American lives. Everyone I shot in Iraq was trying to harm Americans or Iraqis loyal to the new government” (Kyle 5). Furthermore, he asserts that killing should not stop till extermination of all enemies is achieved: “You do it again. And again. You do it so the enemy won’t kill you or your countrymen. You do it until there’s no one left for you to kill” (Kyle 7). It is not about self-defense anymore or protection of new democracies. It is an art of killing, as Kyle brags: “When you’re in a profession where your job is to kill people, you start getting creative about doing it” (Kyle 271). In *Islam in the Eyes of the West*, Tareq Ismael and Andrew Rippin expose one of the factors behind the tendency of the desire to exterminate the enemy: “Arab terrorists and villains have become stock characters in popular Hollywood films, and similar representations are

replicated in more modern media, notably video games, where the player is instructed in cultural stereotypes by slaughtering waves of gibberish-shrieking and faceless ‘terrorists’” (6). Kyle discloses that he spends a lot of time playing video games in Iraq. “Command and Conquer” was his “personal favorite” game (Kyle 222). The results however are ghastly and tragic in real life, not in a video game. Drury is absolutely right when she condemns wars: “All wars become wars of extermination, which transforms life into a ghastly quagmire of endless slaughter” (39).

To Kyle, systematic violence is the strategy of a successful war. He quotes his friend saying “violence does solve problems,” and then he concurs: “That seemed a pretty appropriate slogan for snipers, so it became ours” (Kyle 417). In his understanding, the violence he commits is not like the violence of the *Other*. His violence helps Iraqis get rid of a tyrant and brings democracy to Iraq and therefore it is rational and necessary. Karim H. Karim brilliantly explains the differences between ‘state violence’ and ‘non-state violence’ in his article “Self and Other in a Time of Terror: Myth, Media and Muslims”:

Those who carry out violence without authorization from the state are punished by the state’s “bureaucracy of violence (police, army, jail).” However, the modern state tends to downplay its own massive and systemic use of violence as it simultaneously emphasizes its opponents’ use of violence. In this, the state’s propaganda presents itself as the political embodiment of the peaceful Self and its opponents as the of the brutal Other.... The hegemonic structure is depicted as being part of a natural and rational social order of the collective Self for whom violence is an anomaly. Thus, ignoring the blood-soaked American past and present, a

US judge could declare: “Violence in pursuit of any goal is an aberration in American society and simply cannot be tolerated.” Yet, when there emerges a threat to the status quo, the state immediately marshals its own massive means of violence to stem it. (166-67)

Although Karim speaks about violence within the context of the United States, the example is still applicable internationally. In Iraq, the United States controls everything and functions like the temporary government with no clear timetable or clear exit strategy. The Bush II Administration thought Iraqis would unconditionally welcome the U.S. presence, but instead American soldiers found relentless insurgents with different goals and motivations. In order to achieve the initial goal of the war, Kyle asserts ‘violence’ will solve the problem of “the brutal Other.”

This kind of rhetoric against international laws results in more bloody and everlasting wars. When international laws are not respected and carried out by the so-called civilized world, who is going to abide by them? One of the main reasons for international laws and the Geneva Conventions is to limit violence, stop killings, and end wars. When U.N. sanctions are carried out against weaker nations of the third world, such international institutions lose their credibility and neutrality in front of the rest of the world. In this context, I wish to set up a last point about systemic torture and the United States.

The point is that torture was permissible and sanctioned in the Bush II Administration under the pretext of securing the United States against any future attacks. “Armed with memoranda from like-minded legal scholars, [the Administration] went so far as to authorize the torture by U.S. forces of certain ‘high-value’ prisoners as part of its

self-declared war on terrorism” (Lyons 3). The torture practices of the U.S. and its military are introduced through Orientalist discourse. The Abu Ghraib torture was done following the textbook and advice of Raphael Patai. “When Seymour Hersh, the dean of American investigative journalists, interviewed U.S. military officials about torture at Abu Ghraib prison a year later, many confirmed that the army’s use of sexual humiliation as a technique to ‘break’ Iraqi prisoners was based on a careful reading of *The Arab Mind*” (Little 335). Little also confirms that this book “was required reading both for the CPA’s ‘Operation Freedom Seminar’ in Baghdad and for the U.S. Army’s counterinsurgency course at Fort Carson, Colorado” (Little 335). Interestingly, Little cited two websites of U.S. military members as his sources for this, and both links now are dead. But fortunately, or rather unfortunately, Patai’s book was reprinted after 9/11; here is an example of his analysis of Arabs and sexuality:

The same evaluation of the sexual act as the assertion of aggressive male dominance comes through in the Arab view that masturbation is far more shameful than visiting prostitutes. With a prostitute a man performs a masculine act. Whoever masturbates, however, evinces his inability to perform the active sex act, and thus exposes himself to contempt. (144)

Now, this claim could explain why the U.S. reservists forced Iraqi prisoners to wear female underwear and masturbate in front of each other. Patricia Owens in “The Pleasure of Imperialism and the Pink Elephant: Torture, Sex, Orientalism” states: “at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere, acts of torture included rape and other violence appearing to imitate deviant sexual activity assumed to be especially humiliating for ‘Muslims’” (247). After the usage of Patai’s book in torture practices, “the American

Anthropological Association issued a resolution in 2006 that ‘denounced the use of anthropological knowledge in torture’” (Owens 252). Owens asserts that “the government was, indeed, supplementing strategy with anthropology, using cultural intelligence in violent subordination” (252). Anthropology of the Orient is considered as a branch of Orientalism by Said and others. In reality, Orientalism replaces diplomacy, common sense and reason in dealing with the Arab/Muslim world. In a similar move to that of the American Anthropological Association, the American Psychological Association (APA) issued an apology on July 10, 2015 following the release of a disturbing report by attorney David Hoffman, who was hired by APA to do an internal investigation about American psychologists recommending torture acts to the CIA. According to *The New York Times*:

The 542-page report, which examines the involvement of the nation’s psychologists and their largest professional organization, the American Psychological Association, with the harsh interrogation programs of the Bush era, raises repeated questions about the collaboration between psychologists and officials at both the CIA and the Pentagon.

The report, completed this month, concludes that some of the association’s top officials, including its ethics director, sought to curry favor with Pentagon officials by seeking to keep the association’s ethics policies in line with the Defense Department’s interrogation policies, while several prominent outside psychologists took actions that aided the

C.I.A.'s interrogation program and helped protect it from growing dissent inside the agency. (Risen, "Psychologists Shielded U.S. Torture Program")

This report's publication coincides with the writing of these lines, and it is worthy of a future independent discussion as it also shows a collusion between neo-Orientalist institutions like RAND and the CIA. This report is crucial in the effort to revisit this episode of systemic torture in the history of the United States. As Nadine Naber notes, at one point, the Bush II administration denounced the Abu Ghraib torture and blamed irresponsible individuals:

The Abu Ghraib torture case is but one example in which the 'few bad apples' argument served to overshadow state accountability in promoting violence against persons perceived to be Arab or Muslim. In this case, the Bush administration argued that the abuses were isolated acts committed by low-ranking personnel—even though authorities either ordered or implicitly condoned the abuses. (3)

The Hoffman report raises questions about the sincerity of the Bush II administration's apology for Abu Ghraib. Systemic torture existed under the government's supervision, "normalizing the need for torture given the impending threat Arab/Muslim terrorists pose to U.S. national security" (Alsultany 42). It is not a surprise that torture dominates the American culture since 9/11 as the "Human Rights First and the Parents Television Council have documented [that] the representations of torture on U.S. television have increased exponentially since 2000" (Alsultany 43). Jeffords offers the example of the famous show *24*. Michael Jones states: "military professionals from West Point actually flew out to California to meet with producers of *24*, to kindly ask them to tone the torture

scenes down. The reason? Because U.S. soldiers were starting to mimic what they saw on TV” (qtd. in Jeffords 80). But who unleashed these representations in the first place? Zizek exposes the United States’ involvement in the process of representations of terror right after 9/11:

The ultimate twist in this link between Hollywood and the ‘war against terrorism’ occurred when the Pentagon decided to solicit the help of Hollywood: at the beginning of October 2001, the press reported that a group of Hollywood scenarists and directors, specialists in catastrophe movies, had been established at the instigation of the Pentagon, with the aim of imagining possible scenarios for terrorist attacks and how to fight them. And this interaction seemed to be ongoing: at the beginning of November 2001, there was a series of meetings between White House advisers and senior Hollywood executives with the aim of co-ordinating the war effort and establishing how Hollywood could help in the ‘war against terrorism’ by getting the right ideological message across not only to Americans, but also to the Hollywood public around the globe - the ultimate empirical proof that Hollywood does in fact function as an ‘ideological state apparatus’. (16)

However, I have argued that systemic torture was in place not because few individuals decided to do it without the support of their superiors or they were merely influenced by Hollywood movies. It was possible through Orientalist anthropology and psychology that claimed authority and ownership of the Orient. The issued apologies sadly do not seem to be addressed to the victims of this systemic torture but to the American society. Even if

these apologies are directed to the victims, are they enough to compensate the victims?
Are the victims going to live a normal life after all they have been through?

Returning to Luttrell, although his novel is three years removed from the Abu Ghraib incident, he still bluntly supports the opprobrious event:

Was there ever a greater uproar than the one that broke out over Abu Ghraib? In the bigger scheme of things, in the context of all the death and destruction that Muslims extremists have visited upon this world, a bunch of Iraqi prisoners being humiliated does not ring my personal alarm bell. And it would not ring yours either if you ever saw firsthand what these guys are capable of. (Luttrell 193)

He justifies and downplays torture as “humiliation.” On the other hand, he condemns torture if committed by fanatics of al Qaeda and the Taliban: “In the global war on terror, we have rules, and our opponents use them against us. We try to be reasonable; they will stop at nothing. They will stoop to any form of base warfare: torture, beheading, mutilation” (Luttrell 195). I guarantee that the logic of al Qaeda’s and the Taliban’s fanatics about torturing Americans is similar to Luttrell’s, but the difference lies in the fact that those fanatics are not citizens of the leader of the civilized world and they do not have a Psychology Association to justify torture or an anthropological textbook about the mind of Americans.

Despite his careless and callous endorsement of torture at Abu Ghraib, Luttrell realizes the lasting effects of torture. He expresses how torture at the hand of al Qaeda members still haunts him: “But the sudden shock of a door being kicked in about five feet from your head is a nerve-racking experience. And I’m neurotic about it to this day.

Because the sound of the crash on the door is the sound I heard before I was tortured” (Luttrell 367). His denial of the effectiveness of the Geneva Conventions and his endorsement of torture are products of what he is taught and how he has been indoctrinated as soldier. After all, “Indoctrination” is one of the steps in the Navy SEALs’ training (Luttrell 91).

Kyle, on the other hand, does not endorse torture directly. I found in his novel only one instance where he insinuates that torture is fine with him: “It sucked for the person we arrested but I didn’t get all that worked up about it” (Kyle 255). In this sense, he shares Luttrell’s blasé attitude towards torture. Being arrested entails legal prosecution to determine innocence or guilt and the right to legal counsel, not false imprisonment and torture. However, both authors advocate abolishing the Geneva Conventions because, as my discussion has shown, they insist that their enemies are not worthy of living in the first place.

Indeed denying the Geneva Conventions means indiscriminate death to whoever opposes the United States. Luttrell and Kyle are clear about their strategy of a successful war: ruthless and creative death. In their narrative, Arabs and Muslims are demonized and it is implied that the sordid Arab setting resembles their souls. This is not only a denial of basic human rights for Arabs and Muslims but a denial of life and existence altogether as Butler expounds: “it is possible, even actual, to try to allocate death to others and reserve life for oneself, but that is to fail to understand that the life of the one is bound to the life of the other, and that certain obligations emerge from this most basic social condition” (xxx). Until we, as humanity, come to understand this obligation, peace will never materialize in this world. But, how do we grasp this obligation of recognizing

the importance of the *Other's* life? It is clear that popular culture in the U.S. provides few answers. If anything, the American Neo-Orientalist discourse is bolstered by Hollywood.

The Novels and the Movies

The movies based on the novels offer representations of Islam, Muslims and Arabs without exhibiting a balanced view. Instead, the movies promote hyperbolic stories and aggrandized violence emphasizing the evil of Muslims and Arabs. The producers and makers of both movies eliminate any contradiction in the narrative of both novels, presenting compelling representations of hyper-terrorists and imminent threats. Here, I am not referring to cinematic tricks that make stories more intense and memorable. Rather, both movies change pivotal incidents in the novels in ways that seal the arguments against Muslims and Arabs as pure evil and actual 'savages.' In my discussion, I will focus on critical moments in the movies that shape the narrative of the movies. In *Lone Survivor* (Film), I zero in on three incidents: the goatherds' encounter, the Pashtun village and the beginning/end scene. In *American Sniper* (Film), I concentrate on three crucial points: the opening scene, the overall plot of the screenplay and the last scene in Iraq. Amazingly, the two movies show that both Luttrell and Kyle join the SEALs because they see on TV the terrorist attacks and bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa and 9/11. Therefore, they reinforce the idea that the main purpose of these two wars is self-defense.

One may argue that the movies present the perspectives of the directors and screenplay writers, not the authors of the (now) adapted novels, and should be discussed separately. This is a valid point, but it is important to know that Luttrell and Kyle worked with the screenplay writers and producers of their respective movies. Luttrell worked

closely with the producers of the movie and Mark Wahlberg, (who plays Luttrell), and he even appeared in the movie in the background as an American SEAL. Kyle worked with Bradley Cooper before Kyle was killed, and his wife, Taya, continued to help Jason Hall, the screenwriter, to shape the screenplay. Therefore, Luttrell and Kyle were closely involved in the process of making the novels into movies.

The film *Lone Survivor* is directed by Peter Berg and, as noted earlier stars Mark Wahlberg. It starts with showing the severe training of SEALs for more than three minutes, then the screen goes dark for a few seconds, showing a close caption of “Based on a True Story.” After this, the scene shifts to Afghanistan, showing majestic mountains; barely audible in the background is the sound of the Muslim call for prayer. The mountains and the Muslim call for prayer are eclipsed by the emergence of a helicopter from the horizon which becomes the focus of the camera, while its thundering noise drowns out the call for prayer. This helicopter extracts Luttrell from the Pashtun village, Sabray. Luttrell is severely injured and a medical team strives to keep him alive. Opening the scene in Afghanistan with the bloody face of Luttrell is intended to have deep emotional effects on the audience. The ending of the movie is also noteworthy, because it is drastically different from the novel. In the novel, Gulab and his tribe protect Luttrell and he is not harmed until the U.S. army picks him up. However, Luttrell states clearly that he had a bug from a contaminated Pepsi bottle that almost killed him. Such a reality will not attract audiences to the movie. Amplifying violence and manipulating feelings serve the purposes of the makers of this movie better.

When Luttrell and his fellow soldiers find the Afghani goatherds, an old man and his two sons, they do not know what to do with them. Eventually, they let them go.

Luttrell's narrative of this decision is murky and confusing. He initially claims that the U.S. soldiers follow the Geneva Conventions as they let the goatherds go, a decision that results in the death of his three friends: "They were obviously goatherds, farmers from the high country. Or, as it states in the pages of the Geneva Convention, unarmed civilians" (Luttrell 231). Then he claims that Christian morals would not allow killing in cold-blood. He elucidates: "But my trouble is, I have another soul. My Christian soul...kept whispering in the back of my mind, it would be wrong to execute these unarmed men in cold blood.... I guess all four of us were Christians, and if we were thinking like ordinary law-abiding citizens, we would find it very hard to carry out the imperative military decision" (Luttrell 234-35). After this, he recants the decision and calls it "the stupidest, most southern-fried, lame-brained decision I ever made in my life...I'd turned into a fucking liberal, a half-assed, no-logic nitwit, all heart, no brain, and the judgment of a jackrabbit" (Luttrell 236).

Notwithstanding all this, he still considers the decision to be "a military judgment," although he states the military decision was to kill these Afghans on the spot (Luttrell 290). He weighs in:

The strictly military decision would still be to kill them without further discussion, because we could not know their intentions...the military decision was clear: these guys could not leave there alive. I just stood there, looking at their filthy beards, rough skin, gnarled hands, and hard angry faces. These guys did not like us. They showed no aggression, but neither did they offer or want the hand of friendship. (Luttrell 231)

Previously in his argument against the Geneva Conventions, Luttrell has stated that he could tell intentions, but now it turns out that he does not need to know intentions. It is enough for him to know that these people do not want his friendship and their physical appearance does not enlist him on their side. Again, we are in the trap of intentions and appearances. Luttrell does not need evidence to separate militants from civilians and he does not need the Geneva Conventions as they hinder him from exterminating his enemies.

Unlike the novel, the movie unequivocally incriminates the goatherds, portraying them as Taliban associates. It shows the SEALs decide to free them following the letter of the Geneva Conventions, an event that costs the lives of three SEALs (35.55). The Afghani father has a walky-talky indicating that he is an informant and in touch with Taliban members. Then the soldiers have a heated debate on what to do with them. One soldier recommends killing them on the spot but the movie character of Luttrell warns of repercussions when the bodies will be found, claiming that the Taliban will publicize it as a murder and the U.S. media will believe the Taliban narrative. The movie thus shows that American soldiers cannot do their job under the scrutiny of their society, a suggestion that history could easily refute. As Jeffords stated in the passage I quoted earlier, the U.S. media do not offer a comprehensive report on the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars. If the influential mainstream media reported impartially and comprehensively about these two wars, the attitudes of Luttrell, Kyle and their ilk would be discussed publicly as red flags in the same way that the media discusses threats and ruthless attitudes from terrorist organizations. Instead, the media turns to what Butler has described as “a strategy of containment, selectively producing and enforcing what will

count as reality” (xiii). The novel shows that based on fear of the media and their following of the Geneva Conventions the lives of three Afghans cost more than 10 American SEALs. If Luttrell does not do enough to dismantle the validity of the Geneva Conventions in his long fulminating argument in the novel, the movie confirms elaborately without equivocation Luttrell’s narrative of the uselessness of these laws. The movie also omits the novel’s disclosure that the goatherds are actually civilians, and that is not confirmed whether or not they exposed the location of American soldiers. As readers, we are asked to rely on Luttrell’s wild guess that the father and his two boys are the culprits. In the movie, however, one of the boys is angry, hateful, and of course swarthy, and he is shown, after his release, descending the mountain rapidly in order to snitch on the SEALs.

The movie also rewrites the original story about the village, showing a weak and haphazard community that cannot protect its members. The tribe is shown as being susceptible to Taliban influence while it successfully deters Taliban fighters from killing Luttrell. Also, in the movie, Muhammad Gulab seems to be the only trustworthy Afghan, while in the novel, we learn that the elders of the village grant Luttrell *lokhay*. This last change has different ramifications. It means that in the movie version there is only one good man in the village, while the novel states clearly that Luttrell “underestimated the essential human decency of the senior members of this Pashtun tribe” (Luttrell 331).

In the novel, although Luttrell expresses his gratitude, he does not view Muhammad and his tribesman as worthy of serious consideration. To him, they appear to be from a different world and era. Luttrell calls Muhammad Gulab: “my first real friend” noting that “his position in the community was very strong...and I understood he had a

wife and six children and God knows how many cousins and uncles” (Luttrell 351). Yet, Luttrell cannot forgo his position as civilized westerner as he judges these Afghans according to the norms in his own society. These Afghans are more or less caricatures out of a fairytale. Indeed, Luttrell marvels:

Three of the villagers lifted me off the floor and carried me toward the door. I remember seeing their silhouettes on the mud walls, sinister, shadowy figures wearing turbans. Honestly it was like something out of *Arabian Nights*. Big Marcus being hauled away by Ali Baba and forty thieves to meet the fucking genie....And they walked tirelessly, like Bushmen or Bedouins. (Luttrell 342)

Almost invariably, the *Arabian Night Syndrome* (a term I have coined, as indicated in the Introduction) is used in neo-Orientalist texts to strip Arabs and Muslims of serious consideration as real humans, replacing them with fictional characters who exist in the past.

The movie seems to adopt this simplistic perception of Afghans by neglecting to highlight the existence of a real culture in the first place. It could have shown a more realistic and sympathetic view of Afghans had it focused on even the stories that Luttrell tells in the novel during his stay in this village. For example, Luttrell tries to learn some Pashto words like “uba” and “ducari,” whereas the movie shows Luttrell teaching the Pashtuns English words like “knife” and “fuck” (Luttrell 352). Like Updike’s praise of Muslim fanatics’ seriousness in life, in the novel Luttrell praises the Pashtunwali tradition as “a culture that does not worship youth and cheap television celebrity. Those tribesmen treasure, above all things, knowledge, experience, and wisdom” (Luttrell 420).

The movie, in contrast, does not care to introduce *lokhay* to the audience from the beginning, whereas the novel does so early in the narrative. Only a close caption appears on the screen that says:

The Afghan villagers who protected Marcus did so out of duty to their 2,000 year old code of honor, known as Pashtunwali.

Pashtunwali requires a tribe to undertake the responsibility of safeguarding an individual against his enemies and protect him at all costs.

These brave men and women still strive today in the harsh mountains of Afghanistan and their fight against the Taliban continues.

(1.56)

In my estimation, these few lines cannot undo the damage of false representations throughout the movie, at least in relation to the novel. Furthermore, these lines are shown after displaying moving images of the killed American soldiers in this mission.

The second movie adaptation that I will address here is the film *American Sniper*: directed by Clint Eastwood and starring Bradley Cooper. This movie does irreparable damage in representing the themes of the already problematic novel. This movie too is different in its plot structure from the novel. Firstly, the movie begins with a dark screen and a sound of “Allah Akhobar,” a Muslim prayer call, in a similar technique to *Lone Survivor* (Film). Then the Warner Brothers’ logo and other studios’ logos appear in black and white. With the prayer call still in the background, the dark screen starts to fade in gradually to a tank emerging in ramshackle houses and rubble with American soldiers walking gingerly, appearing ready to engage in a fight. The dark screen with the prayer call seems to signify ushering the audience into darkness and ruins. The ears are greeted

with the prayer call and the eyes with a tank and ruins after a passage of darkness. This is the first thing you encounter in the movie about Iraq. From the beginning, the tone is set for a dangerous zone where American soldiers cannot walk safely. This warns the audience that they are not going to watch a pleasant movie. Indeed, while it is an incredible movie in its direction and story, it is very difficult to watch, especially the event that ensues after the tank's appearance.

The American soldiers are to search the ruined houses in this poor neighborhood in Fallujah, Iraq. The movie version of Kyle is seen on top of a building to protect these soldiers in the street. Then he sees a young woman wearing a black abaaya with her son emerge from one of the houses. Kyle becomes suspicious of the woman, rightly so as it turns out she pulls out a grenade out of her abaaya and gives it to her son, who appears to be 5 years old, ordering him to throw it at the tank (3.00 to 3.32). The kid takes the grenade and attempts to throw it. Kyle takes permission from his commanding officer to shoot the kid, and is told that he knows the ROEs and it is his decision. The scene shifts to a flash back into Kyle's childhood and the story of how he became SEAL. After 23 minutes, the scene resumes and Kyle shoots the kid before he throws the grenade (26.35). The mother does not tend to her son but instead she picks the grenade in order to throw it, and Kyle shoots her, interrupting her swinging motion. Kyle saves the day, but he seems shocked because this is the first time he has killed someone. However, what happens in the novel is different. According to the novel, the woman does not have a kid with her; there are two kids nearby, but she does not give the grenade to anyone (Kyle 3). Kyle kills only her before she can throw the grenade (Kyle 3). In the movie, the woman wears the abaaya, whereas the novel and the screenplay do not specify what the woman wears.

In the novel, Kyle says that she takes something “from beneath her clothes” (3). Invoking darkness as an early leitmotif is enthralling because in the first three minutes of the movie danger and destruction come out of darkness twice: the black screen with the prayer call and the woman’s abaaya. These are very blunt religious overtones.

Hall, the screenplay writer, decides to make the scene more horrific by exaggerating the evil and savagery of Iraqis. Remember that in the novel Kyle argues against the uselessness of the Geneva Conventions in this supposedly treacherous land. This movie scene makes a case that every member of the Iraqi society is a potential threat from men to women to kids. Other than this woman, other Iraqi women are informants for the insurgents, and they jeopardize the lives of American soldiers. These scenes harken back to the goatherds in the film *Lone Survivor*. Goatherds, women, and kids are civilians according the Geneva Conventions, but both movies imply that this definition should be revisited when the Arab/Muslim world is in question. The ROEs in the movie are to shoot any “military-age” male, but in the movie women and kids are shown to be as dangerous as adult males (Hall 26). The movie stresses that American soldiers are vulnerable to horrific violence in Iraq and the Geneva Conventions make American soldiers hors de combat in this war.

Secondly, the screenplay works a coherent plot that focuses on two enemy snipers: Kyle and Mustafa. In essence, each sniper represents his culture and religion reiterating Kyle’s vision of a Christian Crusade in the Babylon of Muslims. Kyle is portrayed as having been religious since his early childhood: he started carrying the bible when he was 8 years old (4.36-4.42). The red Crusader cross is shown multiple times throughout the movie and it is associated with Kyle. His struggle throughout the movie is to protect his

country and his colleagues and keep his family together. On the other hand, Mustafa is an Iraqi, ex-Olympic medal winner, who uses his talent to kill American soldiers for no reason. Intriguingly, Mustafa is silent throughout the movie, the novel and the screenplay. As Malreddy Pavan Kumar explains: “by allocating minimum ‘screen time’ to the enemy, the suffering of the self is melodramatized to a maximum effect” (238). We see only Mustafa’s cruelty in assassinating Americans but we never know his reasons. Instead, he is attached to Qur’an and his prayer rug, as Kyle is attached to his rifle and bible. In the end, Kyle kills Mustafa and emerges as superior in every aspect of this battle. The reality is that Mustafa never meets the historical Kyle. It is worth noting that in the novel might have been a made-up character, or one whose exploits were exaggerated by the novel and the screenplay.

In the novel, Kyle mentions Mustafa passingly and he has no significant impact on the plot. Kyle recounts:

While we were on the berm watching the city, we were also watching warily for an Iraqi sniper known as Mustafa. From the reports we heard, Mustafa was an Olympics marksman who was using skills against Americans and Iraqi police and soldiers. Several videos had been made and posted, boasting of his ability.

I never saw him, but other snipers later killed an Iraqi sniper we think was him. (158)

Out of these lines, the Film *American Sniper*’s plot is constructed giving Mustafa a much darker and ominous role. This movie is made and disseminated as based on a true story about an evil Muslim who never appeared as a genuine presence in the original text.

Thirdly, the movie's last scene in Iraq is when Kyle kills Mustafa. This scene is indispensable to understanding the theme of the battle between Islam and Christianity in this movie. The screenplay describes this duel as follows:

CLOSE ON SNIPER

Face obscured, a PRAYER HISSES from his bearded mouth.

CLOSE ON CHRIS

Both eyes open, a PRAYER WHISPERS across his lips.

CHRIS: For Biggles [Kyle's friend].

CLOSE ON SNIPER/CLOSE ON CHRIS

SFX: *Thump-thump....Thump-BAM!* Chris fires first. The shot echoes across eternity. One, two, three seconds later. A red-mist paints the wind.

THE SNIPER tumbles off his platform and out of view. (Hall 103)

In the movie, the scene runs from minute 1.43 to 1.52. Kyle is on top of a building and in another building 2100 yards away from him is Mustafa. Unaware of Kyle, Mustafa assassinates an American soldier then prepares to kill another one. The movie also does not show either Kyle or Mustafa praying but deploys the idea into two scenes, each serving a purpose. First, Mustafa's hissing prayers and Kyle's whispering are translated into multiple close-ups on their faces to emphasize their facial differences. Blonde vs. swarthy, blue eyes vs. black eyes, and blonde hair vs. black hair are binaries in play. Second, after Kyle kills Mustafa and barely escapes with his colleagues from an Iraqi onslaught, the camera focuses on Kyle's rifle lying on the ground with the bible he has been carrying since he was eight. The camera then shifts to Mustafa's dead body lying next to his prayer rug. Showing Kyle's rifle and bible next to each other signifies his

accomplished mission. He does not need the rifle anymore, as he tells his wife right after he kills Mustafa that he is coming home for good. By the same token, he does not need the bible to understand what the screenplay describes as this “biblical” land (Hall 96).

The two movies complicate the representations of Islam, Muslims and Arabs more than the already hyperbolic representations of the novels. They retain the authors’ argument against the Geneva Conventions by demonizing Arabs and Muslims. Only Gulab and some of his marginal tribesman are shown as good: all other Arab or Muslim characters are evil. And even Gulab is portrayed as weak and incapable of enforcing his will in his village. Muslims and Arabs decapitate heads, kill children, and mutilate women and kids. They are hateful, bloodthirsty, suicidal, primitive and dysfunctional. Such representations are still acceptable, enjoyable and readily consumed by American movie audiences, as evident by the box office earnings of both movies and their multiple Oscar Award nominations.

I feel I should lighten the mood by mentioning a funny moment to conclude this section. In the screenplay, Hall marks a direction “Bedouin Music” to be inserted between two scenes in the film *American Sniper* (62). I am a Bedouin myself and it is the first time in my life that I have learned that there is “Bedouin Music.” I hope this description is similar to pop music, rock music, Jazz and country music. Otherwise, it is not funny any longer.

One more point about Clint Eastwood. I grew up admiring his acting and his movies in general. In my view, he still makes brilliant movies such as *Unforgiven*, *Mystic River* and *Million Dollar Baby*. Personally, the film *American Sniper* changed my perception of him. In 2006, he directed two war movies: *Flags of Our Fathers* and

Letters from Iwo Jima. The former tells the story of the Battle of Iwo Jima in 1945 from the perspectives of American soldiers while the latter tells the same story from a Japanese perspective. I think Eastwood could have been capable of directing (along *American Sniper*) another movie titled *Iraqi Sniper* to tell the Iraq war from the perspective of Iraqis, but this did not happen. Evidently, to Eastwood, the American version seems enough to tell the whole story.

In conclusion, the novels present similar overarching themes. Dehumanizing the *Other*, presenting a supremacy fight between Islam and Christianity, justifying the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars and violence against the *Other*, and refuting the logic of the Geneva Conventions are the prominent topics in the novels and the movies. Muslims and Arabs are presented as hateful terrorists and bloodthirsty beings, motivated by religion and culture without any rationality or reason. Their hateful sentiments towards the United States are unjustified because their hate is innate and incorrigible. The authors believe firmly that their violence against these violent terrorists is the only righteous answer. I would argue that such a crude and a brutal approach to the Arab/Muslim world, one lacking in respect for culture and religion, will never achieve its goals even if they are noble ones: it will certainly not do so if the only goals are imperial ones. Terrorism is only assigned to Muslims and Arabs while any living human being in this planet could commit it. Drury offers some wisdom and advice on this question: "Terrorism is the killing of innocent civilians. Whether this is done by Islamic terrorists or by American or Israeli men and women in uniform with B-52 bombers is irrelevant...the United States must take the lead in abandoning the infantilism and moral self-righteousness implicit in the biblical rhetoric of the 'War on Terror'" (40). Recognizing that there is "a life" in the

Other should commence communication and understanding. Isn't it amazing that scientists are trying to discover "life" on distant planets, hoping to initiate contact with aliens, but hegemonic discourses on this planet look to destroy the meaning of it in the *Other's* existence?

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VITA

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Khalid Alrasheed**Education**

- 2009-2016 Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.
 - Doctor of Philosophy (English Literature).
- 2007-2009 University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY.
 - Masters of Arts (English Literature with Honors).
- 2000-2005 Imam University, Riyadh, KSA.
 - Bachelor of Arts (English Literature with Honors).
 - Graduated as the top of my class.

Courses

Modern Critical Theory.
 Emerging Fields: Islam.
 Studies in Shakespeare.
 Studies in the 20th Century U.S. Literature.
 Studies in Dickens.
 Middle English Literature.
 Postcolonial Theory.
 Postcolonial/Postglobal Latin America.
 Contemporary British Fiction.
 Philosophy and Literary Theory.
 World Shakespeare on Film.
 Woolf and Bowen.
 16th Century Literature.
 Victorian Sensations.
 Caribbean Women Writers.
 Teaching World Literature.
 Theory of the Other.

Professional and Personal Development

Preparing Future Faculty.

Professional Background:

- 2014: Teaching Assistant at Purdue University.
 2005-2007: Imam University, Riyadh, KSA.
- Teaching Assistant.
 - Taught English Language skills; Grammar, Listening, Writing, Reading.
 - Worked as a secretary of the English Department.
 - Arranged teaching schedules.
 - Managed the student club at the English Department.
- 2005 King Fahd Hospital
- I worked at the Human Resources for 6 months. I left this job for the Teaching Assistant job.
 - Worked as a recruitment specialist.
 - Cooperated with international labor agencies.
 - Head of the International Recruitment Department.
- 2005-2006 King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialog, Riyadh, The Youth Committee for Dialog: A Volunteer and a Member of the committee.

Voluntary Jobs:

- I participated with Prof. Charles Ross in rewriting *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* in modern English.
- I taught a 400 course for a couple of weeks at the University of Wyoming (An illness prevented Prof. Carolyn Anderson from lecturing)
- I participated in the Saudi National Dialogue in 2004.
- I helped composing and drafting the constitution for Saudi Youth Dialogue Committee.
- Organized an International Conference in 2005 at Imam University.

Awards

- **3 Academic Excellence Awards** from The College of Languages and Translation of Imam University. (Attached copies of the Certificates)
- **Creative Writing Award** from the College of Languages and Translation of Imam University.

- **Participation in Students' Extracurricular Activities Award** from the Deanery of Students' Affairs of Imam University. (Attached copy of the Certificate)
- **Academic Excellence Award** from the Deanery of Students' Affairs of Imam University.
- **The Ideal Student Award** from the Deanery of Students' Affairs.
- **Graduation Award and Congratulation Certificate** from the President of Imam University.

Extracurricular Activities

- Chosen by Imam University to represent it in the Annual Meeting of Arab Gulf Universities in Qatar in 2004.
- Chosen by the Deanery of Students' Affairs of Imam University to work as a translator during an international conference entitled "The Islamic Stance on Terrorism" that was held in Riyadh in 1-3\3\1425H.

Skills

- Speak three Languages (Arabic: Native. English: Fluent. French: survival).
- Solid background on MAC and Microsoft.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Initiative to volunteer.
- Willingness to learn new skills and readiness to embrace new challenges.
- Instant interpretation from English to Arabic and vice versa.

Memberships

- MLA Member.

Research Interests

- Orientalism
- Postcolonialism: Postcolonial theory and novel.
- Postcolonial Eco-criticism

Conferences:

- “What Happened to Oases in the Arabian Deserts?” In Searching for Place; Interpretation of the Environment and Landscape at the University of Wyoming 2014.
- “What does Visibility Mean for Arabs in the US?” At MPCA/ACA 2014.
- “The American Representations of Change in the Middle East.” At MPCA/ACA 2014