THE WORLD OF POST-9/11: NEO-ORIENTALISM, ISLAMOPHOBIA, AND THE CRISES OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Sultan S. Alghofaili

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2018

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Sultan S. Alghofaili

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

_____ _____
Christopher Orchard, D.Phil.
Professor of English, Advisor

_____ _____
David Downing, Ph.D.
Distinguished University Professor

_____ _____
Lingyan Yang, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English

ACCEPTED

_____ _____
Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: The World of Post-9/11: Neo-Orientalism, Islamophobia, and the Crises of Religious Identity

Author: Sultan S. Alghofaili

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Christopher Orchard

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. David Downing
Dr. Lingyan Yang

This dissertation turns to the literary representations of 9/11 in order to highlight how the intensification of Islamophobia after these events affected Muslims living in the West. This will be explored specifically in terms of how Islamophobia created an atmosphere of suspicion that surrounded every angle of a Muslim's religious identity whether that was the faith itself, the practice, or the appearance. This is explored structurally through three key concepts: knowledge about the Quran, praying in the mosque, and appearance whether depicted in terms of growing a beard, or wearing a scarf, all of which are perceived in the West as signs of fundamentalism.

To understand the rejection of Muslims that occurred after 9/11, the first chapter looks at the reasons that prepared the West to accept the negative image of Islam. To that end, the chapter studies how the historical representations of the East paved the way for the West to acculturate that negativity. Thus, the introductory chapter suggests that when 9/11 occurred, the West was already willing to perceive Muslims negatively. The consequent chapters focus on how the event of 9/11 created an intensified atmosphere of Islamophobia that touched every aspect of a Muslim's life. Hence, the second chapter looks at how Islam as a faith was regarded as a driving force for violence. This idea is analyzed through how the Quran is depicted in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Husain Naqvi's *Home Boy*. The third chapter transitions to studying the meanings of praying in mosques in the eyes of the West. This is explored through an examination of John Updike's *Terrorist* and Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*. The

fourth chapter addresses the challenges that are related to the appearance of Muslims as it focuses on how, after 9/11, the West formed a negative view of the scarf and the beard as indicators of fundamentalist inclinations. This is achieved through analyzing Mohsen Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Shaila Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams*. To tie these ideas together, the concluding chapter emphasizes the intractable difficulties faced by Muslims living in the West after 9/11 because of these challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Besides the great help he provided to finish this dissertation, I would like to thank Dr. Christopher Orchard for being a fundamental part of my journey as a graduate student. He has been an inspiring professor since the first class I took with him back in the summer of 2012 where I was just beginning my Master's. This inspiration continued throughout the courses of my Ph.D. studies where I was introduced to his class on the literature of 9/11. It was a class that proved to be an essential step for shaping my future as a literary scholar. Dr. Orchard continued his support throughout the writing of this dissertation, which I would never been able to complete if it was not for his great help. Dr. Orchard, I will always be thankful!

I also thank my committee members: Dr. David Downing and Dr. Lingyan Yang. I thank Dr. Downing for introducing me to the writings of Moustafa Bayoumi which were not only an eye-opener, but were also very helpful for seeing different angles of Islamophobia of which I was not aware. I am also glad that I worked with Dr. Yang who was my mentor in the studies of Orientalism, Arab-American Literature, and the writings of Edward Said, all of which had a huge effect in forming my interests as a scholar of literature.

The support I received to finish my graduate studies was never only academic. Mashael, my beloved wife, your unparalleled love, great understanding, and continued support throughout this long journey have always been the main reasons that allowed me to finally reach the finish line. Mashael, I am greatly in your debt, and I really hope that by completing this dissertation, I will finally have the time to repay you.

I would also like to thank my parents. My father who has always been there for me with his unlimited love, support, and caring. I hope that by completing this Ph.D. degree, I have fulfilled his long wish of seeing me completing my higher education. This dissertation is also

dedicated to my mother who, although is no longer with us, had always been my first teacher who encouraged and motivated me since I was a young boy to always peruse knowledge.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE SPECTRE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

"To demonize and dehumanize a whole culture on the grounds that it is 'enraged' at modernity is to turn Muslims into the objects of a therapeutic, punitive attention"
— Edward Said, *Covering Islam* (35)

"Islamophobia: hatred, hostility, and fear of Islam and Muslims, and the discriminatory practices that result"
— Todd Green, *The Fear of Islam* (9)

"It would be naive to think that the old patterns of human history and destiny which had shaped the West-and-Islam dualism have simply been removed. Far from it: they have been reconstituted, redeployed, redistributed in a globalised framework and have shaped a new paradigm which can be called 'neo-Orientalism'"
— Mohammed Samiei, "Neo-Orientalism? The relationship between the West and Islam in our globalised world" (1148)

I

The dissertation aims to cover how the literature of 9/11 represents the extent of Islamophobia by examining how it affects perceptions of the mosque, the Quran, and the beard or the hijab. These three particular signifiers of Islam are significant because they indicate how Islamophobia has insidiously affected every facet of the religious identity of the Muslim, whether this is the faith, the practice, or even the appearance. Discussing these aspects will present crucial insights into how the tragedy of 9/11 changed the West's view of the Muslim's relationship to religion by interpreting any signs of religious devotion as an indication of fundamentalism. Unfortunately, this understanding, as the dissertation will emphasize, has created a dilemma for Muslims living in the West who are faced with the difficult challenge of either losing a very crucial part of their identity, or face the consequences of adhering to the teachings of their religion.

II

This introductory chapter aims to establish a foundation for discussing the relationship between Islamophobia and the literature of 9/11. To achieve this goal, the chapter will begin with defining Islamophobia, and pointing out its main issues and concerns. This will be followed by analyzing the limitations of Edward Said's Orientalism in terms of explaining the conflict between the West and Islam after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Since the Islamophobically-fuelled relationship between the West and Islam has "been reconstituted, redeployed, redistributed in a globalised framework", "a new paradigm which can be called 'neo-Orientalism" (Samiei 1148) will be offered as a theoretical framework for my studies. After highlighting the need to revise our understanding of Orientalism, the chapter will turn to studying the Western Islamophobic representations of Muslims and Islam prior to 9/11. This will be done in order to not only emphasize that Islamophobia existed long before 9/11, but to also suggest that the long history of misrepresentations have actually prepared the West's complicit willingness to perceive Muslims negatively after 9/11. This will be followed by a look at how critics and scholars have analyzed the role of Islamophobia in shaping the literature of 9/11. The chapter will conclude with providing a brief summary of the arguments of each of the following chapters.

What is Islamophobia?

Since Islamophobia is the key concept around which this dissertation is focused, a thorough understanding of the phenomenon is needed. This cannot be achieved however without having a sense of what Islamophobia really means. To that end, the first definition of Islamophobia appeared in the publication of a British think tank known as the Runnymede Trust. The study that was published in 1997 defined Islamophobia as an unfounded hostility towards Islam that causes fear or dislike of all or most Muslims. The definition focuses on both the

feelings of rejection and the acts of hostility or discrimination that are the result of these feelings. This idea can be seen in Todd Green's recent book, *The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West* (2015) that defines post-9/11 Islamophobia as a "hatred, hostility, and fear of Islam and Muslims, and the discriminatory practices that result" (9).

Based on these two definitions of Islamophobia, the most important issue is identifying the misconceptions that are usually responsible for the spread of Islamophobia in the West. In "Islamophobia in North America: confronting the menace," Amber Haque lists the following misunderstandings to best describe the West's rejection of Islam:

> A monolithic and static religion, unresponsive to new realities; a religion that does not have values in common with other religions; a religion inferior to the West, signified by how it is archaic, barbaric, irrational; a religion of violence and aggression that supports terrorism; and political ideology used for political or military advantage. (3)

Unfortunately, these negative views that surround Islam in the West not only create a fertile environment for the spread of Islamophobia, but they are also responsible for the increase in acts of discriminations against Muslim minorities across the West.

Therefore, in challenging Islamophobia, the goal becomes not to only restore a proper image of Islam, but more importantly to raise awareness regarding the struggles of a certain minority that has become trapped in a larger ideological conflict between the West and Islam. This means that focusing on the issue of Western Islamophobia should not just become an effort to promote religious tolerance, but also to address the rights of a certain minority. Yet, when it comes to the task of condemning the racist nature of Islamophobia in the West, the task, unfortunately, becomes an illusive one since the Islamophobic discourse usually hides itself behind Western values such as the freedom of expression.

The issue that usually surrounds Islamophobia resides in the confusion over whether it is really just a fear and a dislike of Islam as a religion, or if it is more a fear and a dislike of Muslims as people. When Islamophobia appears to be a prejudice towards Muslims, it has the ability to disguise itself under Western values such as the freedom of speech that grant the right to criticize other faiths. As David Tyrer points out, "an important feature of the attempts to deny Islamophobia's racist nature is that they enable the far right to present themselves as defenders of democratic values such as free speech, through the argument that they are not targeting minority populations but simply criticising religion" (26). As such, it might be argued that the negative image of Islam in the West is enabling some Islamophobic voices, as we will see in the following chapters, to pass their prejudice against Muslim minorities off as a simple criticism of Islam that is not intended to inflame Islamophobia.

Conversely, in *Trouble in Paradise,* Slavoj Zizek believes that the fear of being seen as an Islamophobe drives some voices in the West to refrain from criticizing some practices done by Muslims which are clearly extremist. He writes, "Any critique of Islam is denounced as an expression of Western Islamophobia" (187). To support this argument, Zizek uses the example of the controversy of Salman Rushdie in which some voices in the West denounced him for "unnecessarily provoking Muslims and being (partially, at least) responsible for the fatwa condemning him to death" (187). According to Zizek, "The result of such stances is what one should expect in such cases: the more the Western liberal Leftists probe into their guilt, the more they are accused by Muslim fundamentalists of being hypocrites who try to conceal their hatred of Islam" (187). Although Zizek's argument focuses on the hesitance to criticize Islamic extremism, it still provides us with an idea of how the fear of being labeled as an Islamophobe

might drive some voices in the West to refrain from not only criticizing Islam, but also the actions of some Muslims.

In fact, it might be suggested that the existence of this hesitation to criticize Islamic extremism implies that Islamophobia, in some instances at least, actually helps to hinder the criticism of Islam and Muslims. At the same time however, the presence of this fear of being labeled an Islamophobe proves that Islamophobia has become so pervasive that it is affecting every Western criticism of Islam whether that is in encouraging it or refraining it. Hence, it might be argued that post-9/11 Islamophobia has overly influenced today's orientalist discourse of Muslims where the issue of "*terrorism* [has] become the most available term for labeling this group of people" (Altwaiji 314).

The Limitations of Said's Classical Orientalism in Relation to Islamophobia

In studying the relationship between the West and the Muslim world, critics and scholars usually turn to the studies of Orientalism because of the field's success in analyzing the tensions between the Arab/Muslim world and the West. The field usually relies on considering the issue of colonialism as the original source of the conflict. This idea can be viewed in Edward Said's description of the basic rationale for the studies of Orientalism. Said writes:

> The argument, when reduced to its simplest form, was clear, it was precise, it was easy to grasp. There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power. (*Orientalism* 36)

Therefore, it might be argued that Orientalism sees the Western desire of colonizing the East as the ultimate issue behind the original conflict between the East and the West.

In fact, in *Orientalism* (1978), Said's highly acclaimed book and perhaps the keystone work in the studies of Orientalism, the Arab-American critic suggests that through literature and art, the West was able to draw an imaginary negative image of the East. This false image of the Oriental World, according to Said's *Orientalism*, worked as a justification for colonizing the East. To Said, the distorted image of the Oriental involved creating a hierarchical structure that was based on racial grounds that emphasized the supremacy of the West. While the Oriental was crude, uncivilized, patriarchal, and violent among other characteristics, the Western was its complete opposite. Said, nonetheless, believed that because of geographical proximity and religious rivalry, the European relationship with the Middle East and Islam provided the clearest example of Western clashes with the East. As Said writes, "I tried to indicate the scope of thought and action covered by the word Orientalism, using as privileged types the British and French experiences of and with the Near Orient, Islam, and the Arabs. In those experiences I discerned an intimate, perhaps even the most intimate, and rich relationship between Occident and Orient" (201). As a result of that, and perhaps due to the author's Arab origins, Said's primary emphasis in the studies of Orientalism seems to be focused more on the Western misrepresentations of the Middle East and Islam.

Still, as stated above, in analyzing this relationship between the West and the Middle East or Islam, Orientalism, as a theory, looks at the issue of colonialism as the foundation for interpreting any conflict, regardless of the idea of whether that conflict happened before or after the era of colonialism. To illustrate further, in explaining any struggle found before colonialism such as the European role in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Orientalism argues for a process that uncovers the early signs of Western intentions of colonizing the East. This idea can be seen in *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire* (1984) where Bruce Fulton

analyzes the specific ambitions and goals of the French as they were anticipating the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Fulton argues that "in Syria (including Lebanon and Palestine) there was a marked concentration of French interests . . . Hence, French policy-makers were inclined to think of Syria as an area of exceptional political significance, where France might one day have territorial claims and where, therefore, it was essential to maintain the primacy of French influence" (138). On the other hand, however, when it comes to tensions in the era of post-colonialism, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, Orientalism believes that their original causes could be traced back to the years of colonialism. For example, Jamil Hilal analyzes the British role, as the colonizers of Palestine, in the creation of the State of Israel, stating that "Britain, as the dominant world power at the time, issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which committed itself to the establishment of a 'Jewish homeland' in Palestine, regardless of the fact that Palestine had its own indigenous people that, like other peoples, possessed the right to self-determination" (152). As a result of its success in using colonialism to explain the historical Middle Eastern-Western conflicts, Orientalism became the haven for many scholars and critics interested in studying the Western representations of the Middle East or Islam.

However, with turn of the 21st century and the tremendous change that 9/11 brought to the relationship between the West and the Arab, or Muslim world, a series of crucial questions arises. First, can the ideas of this classical Orientalism, which clearly rely on colonialism, still explain today's violence between the West and Middle East, or Islam? Second, do the fears of a Western direct occupation in the form of colonialism still exist? And finally, are the characteristics that shape the Western representations of the Arab or the Muslim character still the same? To answer these questions, I believe that it is crucial to reconsider the basic ideas of

Orientalism, especially, in terms of revising our understanding of colonialism as a factor in motivating today's conflict.

It might be argued that before 9/11, Orientalism was successful in interpreting the clashes between the West and the Arab/Muslim world due to the fact that although religion was a crucial factor in the conflict, it was never the driving force behind it. Race, politics, and economics were stronger dynamics in feeding these clashes. However, it might also be argued that as a huge event that reshaped the whole relationship between the West and the Middle East, the tragedy of 9/11 re-ordered the roles of these factors and instituted religion as its main impetus. This simply means that a slight modification in our understanding of Orientalism is required for a better interpretation of a different relationship between the West and Arab/Muslim world.

Therefore, what is now known as neo-Orientalism becomes a more relevant approach for interpreting the current conflicts between the West and Islam. This new approach has emerged in recent years out of the necessity for a new, or perhaps an updated, way of understanding how the West is seeing the Middle East and Islam after the events of 9/11. To be more precise, neo-Orientalism is concerned mainly with the issues of terrorism and religious fundamentalism as the new characteristics of the Muslim or the Arab in the eyes of the West. In this respect, Mubarak Altwaiji writes:

> Neo-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 its binary division of "us" and "them" into focus once more. Therefore, representations of Arab Muslims become more prevalent in post-9/11 politics, and *terrorism* becomes the most available term for labeling this group of people. (314)

Similar to Altwaiji, Ali Behdad and Juliet Williams define neo-Orientalism as being "a mode of representation which, while indebted to classical Orientalism, engenders new tropes of othering" (282). These new tropes of othering are no longer concerned with viewing the Arab/Muslim character as being uncivilized, unethical, or even patriarchal, but rather with viewing him/her as being an extremist, a fundamentalist, or even a terrorist.

It is important to emphasize, however, that neo-Orientalism does not stray too far away from Said's original theory; it simply builds on it. This means that neo-Orientalism follows Said's basic philosophy where he describes Orientalism as being a way "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). The only difference is that neo-Orientalism tries to emphasize that the West's method of dealing with the Orient has taken a different shape after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. As Mohammed Samiei argues, "It would be naive to think that the old patterns of human history and destiny which had shaped the West-and-Islam dualism have simply been removed. Far from it: they have been reconstituted, redeployed, redistributed in a globalised framework and have shaped a new paradigm which can be called 'neo-Orientalism'" (1148). Based on these considerations, it seems that neo-Orientalism, with its emphasis on the current issues of the world, becomes a clearer and a more realistic lens for interpreting the events of 9/11 based on contemporary concerns. This suggestion becomes even more important when one takes into consideration the fact that the literature of 9/11, which the dissertation is focused on, is a product of its time that requires a theoretical approach that is closer to its topics and concerns.

Still, in order to analyze the literary texts that this dissertation is introducing, I will use both Orientalism and neo-Orientalism as theoretical approaches to build my arguments. The desire to use the two similar approaches stems from the need to highlight the shift that happened in the Western representations of Muslims as a result of 9/11. Hence, on the one hand, the ideas of the classical Orientalism will be very helpful in understanding the role that the Western historical image of Islam played in preparing the West to see the Muslim World in a negative way once the events of 9/11 happened. However, because 9/11 require a rereading of the relationship between the West and Arab/Muslim world, neo-Orientalism will be necessary for examining the new concerns that emerged in the literature of 9/11 as a result of the terrorist attacks.

Therefore, in the following few pages, I will focus on providing a brief historical analysis of the Western literary representations of Islam prior to 9/11. The analysis will be carried out in order to emphasize the idea that when 9/11 happened, the West was already prepared to perceive Islam negatively due to a long history of distorted representations. This will also allow the dissertation to highlight the transition in the Orientalist discourse post 9/11.

Islamophobia Prior to 9/11

Even though the world seemed to recognize the negativity towards Islam during the 1980s through coining a specific term to describe it, it seems that as an attitude, Islamophobia has always been there. The only difference from today's phenomenon lies in the extent of its severity. To illustrate more, if we revisit the above definitions of Islamophobia by the Runnymede Trust and Todd Green, we notice that the phenomenon essentially consists of two notions: a fear and a dislike of Islam or Muslims. Tracing back to some of the Western historical representations of Muslims, I will argue that depending on the shape of the relationship between

the West and Islam, the presence of these two notions could easily be noticed in many works that date back to at least the sixteenth century. To be more precise, it seems that the phenomenon began due to a fear of Muslims before migrating to feelings of dislike in later centuries, and eventually, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, to being driven by a combination of both notions. To clarify this argument, the following selective analysis will look at the Western representations of the Arab and the Muslim character as an expression of how the West understood each particular era.

Perhaps one of the earliest Western literary depictions of Islam that reveal the notion of fear is Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine The Great*. This English Renaissance play which was performed and published during the end of the sixteenth century was inspired by the story of Timur the Lame who was an Eastern/Muslim tyrant and conqueror that lived in the fourteenth century. The fact that Marlowe recalled the story of this specific fourteenth-century Muslim figure in the late sixteenth century reveals how the West saw Islam during those centuries. As a matter of fact, when we consider the time of the publication and the performance of the play, we notice that it was the period when the Muslim Ottoman Empire was a great power that began to extend to the West by controlling major parts of Eastern Europe. The West may have distorted the image of Muslims then because of the fact that the Islamic World was considered a fearful civilization during the 15th and the 16th centuries.

In this regard, Geoffrey Woodward writes, "Christopher Marlowe's observation in *Tamburlaine* held true for most of the sixteenth century. The Ottoman army was the largest in Europe, its navy ruled the shipping lanes of the eastern Mediterranean, and its capital Istanbul was five times the size of Paris… Indeed between 1520 and 1565 its momentum seemed unstoppable" (1). Because of that strong presence, it appears that Marlowe created the character

of Tamburlaine in order to draw the Western attention to the threat that the Ottoman Empire might pose, and the need to witness a model, even if it was a Muslim, that could stop the Turks' advancement. This idea can be seen in Fahd Al-Olaqi's argument where he writes that "the distress of Europeans under the Turkish Empire is undertaken in the context of the role of Tamburlaine to reprimand the Turks" (183). Thereby, as Al-Olaqi points out that "in creating Tamburlaine, Marlowe was striving to come up with a textual figure who, instead of coming across as a character built around the prevailing mood of European distress viz-a-viz the Turkish threat, would strike the audience as a paragon of a robust Western force of resistance against the Turks" (183).

Tamburlaine The Great's plot circles around the idea of an Eastern barbaric conquest. In this regard, the play represents Tamburlaine, the main Muslim character, as a ruthless tyrant and a bloodthirsty conqueror. Nevertheless, although the play is loosely based on the real life of Timur, who was indeed a merciless conqueror and an awful tyrant, Marlow appeared to be overemphasizing Timur's evilness. This seems to be done by the English playwright in order to present the Muslim character in an inhuman condition that could perhaps terrify the English audience into considering the threat that Muslims could impose on the West. For example, in the play's climax, Tamburlaine kills his son because he is disappointed by that fact that his own blood is not brave enough and does not share his father's ruthless ambitions. Yet, such an event never historically happened. Thus, it might be argued that in terms of its connection to Islamophobia, Marlowe's play proves that the phenomenon existed during the 16th century through the presence of the notion of a fear of Muslims as conquerors who may threaten Western civilization.

However, with the hegemonic rise of European civilization, the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries brought different depictions of the Muslim character. In these depictions, the image of the Muslim was transformed from a threat to the exotic other. These representations came through the works of the early Orientalists who traveled to the Middle East and brought back exotic stories from the so-called uncivilized world. In *Orientalism*, Said comments on this rise of the Western's interests in depicting the Oriental: "popular Orientalism during the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth attained a vogue of considerable intensity" (118). This intensity, nonetheless, reversed the image of the feared Muslim that a play like *Timberline the Great* drew, in so far as the Middle East is no longer depicted as the power capable of invading or threatening other nations, but rather it is now seen as the inferior. This particular understanding of the Muslim world can be exemplified in Lord Byron's epic poem "The Giaour" (1813) that depicts the Western character as a Christian hero who fights the oppressive and the misogynist Oriental. The poem follows the story of the Giaour who is a nameless Christian knight on his quest to save his Turkish mistress, Leila, from the cruelty of her husband Hassan. Leila fell in love with the Giaour and decided to rebel against Eastern patriarchy in order to be with her Western lover. Yet, in another barbaric and inhuman act by the Oriental, similar to Tamburlaine's killing of his son, Hassan murders his wife mercilessly by throwing her into a river. In return, the Western savior, the Giaour, battles Hassan in order to revenge the death of his mistress. Hence, in terms of the two notions of Islamophobia, it becomes clear that "The Giaour" suggests that the notion of fear was clearly beginning to be transformed into a notion of dislike that was driven by the belief of the inferiority of the Islamic/Eastern culture.

However, as the era of colonialism began, Islamophobia, previously characterized by producing notions of either fear and dislike, began to fade away. This can be seen in how the

literature that was produced during the era of colonialism started to depict the Muslim character not only as weak and passive, but also as irrelevant. This representation can be seen in E. M Forster's novel *A Passage to India* (1924) that provides a germane example of how the West saw the colonized Muslim. In Forster's novel, Dr. Aziz, the main Muslim character, is depicted as a weak character who seems to feel inferior whenever he is around the English. For example, while a highly educated individual and a doctor, Dr. Aziz appears to accept the idea of being downgraded to the status of a tourist guide, even a servant to some extent, for the newly arrived English visitors to India. Hence, in the eyes of the West as the colonizers of the East, the colonized Aziz cannot be feared because he does not represent a fearful civilization such as the one that Marlowe's Tamburlaine represent, nor he can be disliked because he also does not represent a rival civilization such as the one that Lord Byron's Hassan represent.

Nonetheless, after colonialism, it seems that there was a tendency by the Western media, films in particular, to represent Muslims negatively. According to Shahid Abdullah, this tendency was driven by "different issues, such as huge Muslim migration to Western countries, Israel-Palestine conflict, independence of several African countries after the Second World War, overlapping between religious and political interest, and so on might have been responsible for this increased negative portrayal of the Muslim community" (53). As a result of the media's negative portrayal of Muslims, Western Islamophobia, through the notions of dislike and fear, began to gradually reappear. This appears to be happening, to be more precise, because of the media's awful depiction of the Muslim character as a sworn enemy of the West who is always motivated by his faith to commit acts of violence against Westerners. In this regard, Edward Said points out:

> For most Americans (the same is generally true for Europeans) the branch of the cultural apparatus that has been [and will be] delivering Islam to them for the most part includes the television and radio networks, the daily newspapers, and the mass-circulation news magazines; films play a role, of course, if only because to the extent that a visual sense of history and distant lands informs our own, it often comes by way of the cinema. Together, this powerful concentration of mass media can be said to constitute a communal core of interpretations providing a certain picture of Islam and, of course, reflecting powerful interests in the society served by the media. (*Covering Islam* 43)

To extend Said's argument, during the few decades leading to 9/11, Hollywood assisted in establishing a fertile environment for the spread of Islamophobia through creating a negative image of Islam that represented it as a religion of backwardness, violence and terror. This distorted representation of Islam has always been acheived through the Arab character who seems to be the model, according to Hollywood's producers and directors, for demonstrating the irrationality of Islam. In fact, it appears that in Hollywood's films, the negative depiction of the Arab/Muslim prior to 9/11 usually revolves around the idea of a foreign terrorist who poses a threat to the Western world and its values. This idea can be seen clearly in numerous films such as *Black Sunday* (1977), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Invasion U.S.A.* (1985), *Iron Eagle* (1986), *Terror in Beverly Hills* (1989), *Under Siege* (1992), *True Lies* (1994), *Executive Decision* (1996), *The Siege* (1998), among others. In fact, according to Jack Shaheen, "From 1896 until today, filmmakers have collectively indicted Arabs as Public Enemy #1—brutal, heartless, uncivilized religious fanatics and money-mad cultural 'others' bent on terrorizing civilized Westerners, especially Christians and Jews" ("Hollywood's Misrepresentation of Arabs" 212).

In *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2003), Shaheen provides a complete study that details how Hollywood presented a negative image of the Muslim/Arab character. To Shaheen, this was achieved through eliminating all the vast differences among Arabs themselves. This means that in Hollywood's films, all the 23 Arab nations with all their different cultures, habits, and even religions are represented as one character. This distorted Arab character, according to Shaheen, became the sole character that represents Islam and Muslims around the world. In this respect, Shaheen asks his readers the following set of questions that clearly suggest that Hollywood's films have actually engraved an awful image of the Arab/Muslim into the minds of the Western public:

> Would you want to share your country, much less your street, with any of Hollywood's Arabs? Would you want your kids playing with him and his family, your teenagers dating them? Would you enjoy sharing your neighborhood with fabulously wealthy and vile oil sheikhs with an eye for Western blondes and arms deals and intent on world domination, or with crazed terrorists, airplane hijackers, or camel-riding Bedouins? (*Reel Bad Arabs* 173)

Indeed these questions summarize how Hollywood not only presented the West with a very distorted image of the Arab/Muslim character, but how it also pushed the Western public to internalize, through repetition, the media's biased version of Muslims. As Shaheen argues, these repeated images worked as a teaching tool for the Western public to internalize a sort of negativity towards Arabs and Muslims. He writes, "For more than a century Hollywood, too, has used repetition as a teaching tool, tutoring movie audiences by repeating over and over, in film after film, insidious images of the Arab people" (*Reel Bad Arabs* 172). Unfortunately, however, as Todd Green points out that "when the media frames or depicts Muslims as prone to violence,

terrorism, and oppressive behavior, audiences take these depictions as 'truth' and act (or react) accordingly" (133). These arguments by Shaheen and Green clearly indicate that Hollywood's films, and perhaps the media in general, helped to pave the way for the spread of Islamophobia in the world of post-9/11. As such, it might be useful to briefly look at Edward Zwick's film *The Siege* (1998) in order to provide an example of how Hollywood had prepared the West to link Islam with terrorism long before the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

The Siege focuses on a group of Islamic fundamentalists who are threatening to make a series of terrorist attacks in New York in order to free their religious leader, Sheikh Ahmed bin Talal. Agent Anthony Hubbard and his Arab-American partner Frank Haddad are responsible for tracking down this group. As the initial efforts of the two FBI agents seem to be failing, the terrorists kill hundreds of innocents through destroying a theater and a governmental building. These acts push the American government to employ martial law, and as a result, the army occupies Brooklyn in an attempt to find the remaining terrorists. As part of that plan, the army decides to detain all the Arab young men in a stadium. This drastic step, however, inspires demonstrations that condemn the decision as an act of racial profiling that targets Arabs.

Although *The Siege* tries to present a balanced image of Muslims through implying the presence of some genuinely felt political reasons behind the terrorists' actions, especially the American role in the Middle East, the film still, unfortunately, promotes the idea that Islam is an ideological force that feeds hostility towards the other. Besides representing Muslims as ruthless terrorists, Zwick's film hints that the dangers of Islam and Muslims extend beyond that. For example, at one point of the film, agent Anthony Hubbard, declares that Muslims are "attacking our way of life." This brief, but powerful line indicates that Muslims, presumably because of their faith, do not believe in the peaceful coexistence with the other.

As a matter of fact, *The Siege* not only demonizes Muslims as a people, but it also attempts to present Islam as a religion characterized by violence and terrorism. This suggestion can be seen in how the film, as Shahid Abdullah points out, links "different Islamic practices, such as reciting prayers from the Holy Quran, the ritual of washing the body before prayer, the call to prayer, and supplication" with terrorism (55). This is because, according to Abdullah, "Every time someone performs the Muslim ablution, the ritual of washing different parts of body before five times prayer every day, that image is used as the signal of violence" (55). Hence the film suggests to its audience that violence and aggression are integral parts of the nature of Islam. *The Siege* is clearly suggesting that even though there might be political reasons behind the Western-Muslim conflict, Islam still encourages Muslims to turn only to violence as a way to respond.

Overall, it might be argued that a brief look at the West's historical representations of Islam and Muslims clearly suggests that Islamophobia has existed long before 9/11. However, when considering the few decades that preceded 9/11, it becomes clear that Hollywood's films had taken the lion's share in distorting the image of Islam in the eyes of the Western public. When studying the Western Islamophobic representations before 9/11, one can notice that the severity of these negative depictions is less intensified in literature[1] when compared to Hollywood's films. As such, in comparing Hollywood's producers and directors to literary writers, the latter group seems more cautious in promoting Islamophobia. However, after the events of 9/11, this cautiousness began to disappear and, as a result, the 21st century witnesses a

[1] In the course of researching the negative representations of Muslims prior to 9/11, I only came across two literary works that depict the Muslim character as a terrorist. These works are *Mao II* (1991) by Don DeLillo and *Martyr's Crossing* by Amy Wilentz (2001).

[2] The Ground Zero Mosque refers to a proposed project to build an Islamic Center in Lower Manhattan. Yet, due to its location being close to the site of the terrorist attacks of 2001, the

rise in the Western literary representations that unfortunately, as this dissertation will argue in later chapters, endorse Islamophobia.

Using Islamophobia as an Approach to the Literature of 9/11

In organizing the literature of 9/11 that depicts Muslims, the field can be divided into three categories. First, there are works that are mainly concerned with the psychological and the social effects of the terrorist attacks on the West. *In the Shadow of no Towers* by Art Spiegelman, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran, and *Saturday* by Ian McEwan are examples of this approach that does not pay attention to the topics of ideology, race, or faith when it transforms the tragedy into fiction. In doing so, these authors distance themselves from representing the Other, and consequently from the whole issue of connecting Islam with terrorism. The second approach, however, is more confrontational in its depiction of 9/11. Martin Amis' *The Second Plane*, John Updike's *Terrorist*, and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* are examples of such an approach that represents Muslim characters as terrorists for the purpose of exposing their prejudicial ideology. However, because these works only present the Muslim character through the character of the terrorist, they, unfortunately, blur the lines between the ideology of the terrorists and Islam. As a reaction to these negative representations, a third approach appeared for the purposes of showing an alternative image of the Muslim character. In these works, the Muslim character is presented as a victim of a world that castigates them on religious grounds. This can be seen in the works of authors with Eastern roots such as Leila Halaby, Mohsin Hamid, Monica Ali, and others.

Naturally, the two opposing philosophies of representing the Muslim character in the literature of 9/11 has inspired critics and scholars to raise questions concerning the ethics of depicting the tragedy of 2001. To be more precise, the debate has opened a significant space for

conversations regarding the binary relationship of West and East that touch on racial, religious and cultural issues. Unfortunately however, scholars and critics have not provided a study that is fully dedicated to analyze closely the way that the literature of 9/11 is reacting to the issue of Western Islamophobia. As a scholar with a Middle Eastern and a Muslim background, it appears to me that this topic is of vital importance because it allows for a different analysis of the connection between religion and 9/11. This importance stems from the suggestion that studying Islamophobia will allow for a shift that sees one's religion as an entity that was affected by 9/11 rather than seeing it only as its sole cause. I believe that this is what differentiates my approach from what has been written on the literature of 9/11. For in addressing the idea of terrorism and its consequences, critics have not been focusing on how the world of post-9/11 redrew the image of Islam, especially in terms of how this change has had measurable consequences on the identity and the lives of moderate Muslims living in the West.

Western and Eastern critics have only touched briefly on the effects of Islamophobia in shaping the Western representation of Islam and Muslims in the literature of 9/11. For instance, in *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel,* Kristiaan Versluys discusses the moral issue of depicting Muslims as terrorists. To that end, the book criticizes novels that only include the Muslim as an evil terrorist who seeks destruction such as Updike's *Terrorist*. Versluys sees Updike's text as a revanchist rhetoric that misrepresents the Other because it does not show an alternative image of Muslims. However, in my analysis of the text, I will argue that Updike's text should not only be read as a revanchist rhetoric, but also as Islamophobic rhetoric. This idea will be addressed through analyzing the author's biased representation of the Muslims' places of worship. My argument is that Updike's negative representation, unfortunately, captures the

West's Islamophobic understanding of the roles of mosques in the aftermath of 9/11 as the havens of terrorists.

Similar to Versluys, Aron Derosa also criticizes the Western negative portrayals of Muslims in the literature of 9/11. In "Alterity and the Radical Other in Post-9/11 Fiction: DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Walter's *The Zero*," Derosa criticizes Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man* for failing to highlight the differences between being a Muslim and being a fundamentalist. In this respect, Derosa argues that literary writers such as DeLillo "fail to distinguish between the fundamentalist other and otherness in general, a conflation that has led to problematic equivalencies in post-9/11 discourse" (158). In my dissertation, I will extend Derosa's argument to suggest that DeLillo's novel could in fact be read as an Islamophobic text. This is due to the suggestion that what Derosa sees as a failure in distinguishing the fundamental from the moderate Muslims stems from a general Islamophobic environment that sees Islam only through the perspective of the terrorist. As a result, the Muslim character in DeLillo's *Falling Man* becomes the natural outcome of the Western Islamophobic understanding of the Muslim in the world of post-9/11.

In *9/11 and the Literature of Terror*, Martin Randall argues that literary writers with hybrid backgrounds are usually more successful in depicting Islam or the character of the Other because Western literary writers are usually too concerned with seeing the Other only through the character of the terrorist. Randall writes, "… many American and British writers have largely failed to re-imagine the mind-set of the 'other' in relation to 9/11. Updike's Ahmad, DeLillo's Hammad and Amis' Atta each suffer from the familiar preoccupations of the respective authors overshadowing any insights into the terrorist mindset" (143). Consequently, Randall sees Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a better representation of depicting the idea of the

Other. Yet, in my analysis of Hamid's text, I will argue that Hamid's success stems from his detachment from the limitations of Islamophobia. In other words, I will suggest that because Updike and DeLillo were perhaps confined within the limited boundaries of the Islamophobic imagination, their Muslim characters became nothing more than a repeated version of the stereotypical image of the post-9/11 Muslim.

In contrast, I argue that Eastern critics and scholars were closer to answering questions related to the issue of Islamophobia in general even though their criticism and analysis of the literature of 9/11 does not focus directly at highlighting its aspects. This suggestion can be seen in Pankaj Mishra's highly acclaimed article, "The End of Innocence." For Mishra, the false representations of Islam by the Western literary authors are caused by the difficulty of creating the character of the terrorist. He argues, "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" (1). My dissertation will build on Mishra's argument to suggest that the presence of the terrorists' characters in DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Updike's *Terrorist* becomes, unfortunately, justifications for these novelists to misrepresent Islam. In doing so, these authors, I will argue, follow the general atmosphere of Islamophobia that sees the presence of the concept of the Muslim terrorist as an excuse to represent Islam and Muslims negatively.

Unlike Mishra, other Eastern critics and scholars focus on how Islam is presented in the works of writers with an Eastern background. For instance, in her article "The Face of the Enemy: Arab-American Writing Post- 9/11," Maha El Said believes that Eastern and Muslim authors face a difficulty because they are attempting to redefine the image of Islam according to

the standards of the West. El Said argues that Arab-American authors "…become trapped in an attempt to redefine their identity, and reconstruct a hybridity that seems impossible in a world that is divided into 'we' and 'them'" (201). My dissertation will extend this approach by Eastern critics such as El Said to argue that in their efforts to redefine Islam, Arab-American authors have, in fact, helped to reinforce the Islamophobic argument of linking Islam with terror. This will be done through emphasizing the idea that the negativity towards mosques, for instance, is so severe that it even exists in the works of authors with Eastern background. This argument can be seen in how Leila Halaby's *Once in A Promised Land* presents its main character as a "good" Muslim because he does not attend mosques.

Another Eastern critic who focused on the representation of Islam in the works of Eastern writers is Shakir Mustafa. In "Defending the Faith: Islam In Post 9/11 Anglophone Fiction," Mustafa argues that the positivity of the image of Islam in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* stems from a need by Eastern writers to defend Islam. He writes, "In the aftermath of 9/11, however, Muslim writers in the West have been presenting characters who find in the Qur'an a source of positive power and find in their faith a refuge from an environment that has suddenly become less hospitable" (282). Yet, I will argue that the presence of this defensive approach in the works of Muslim writers should not be read outside the context of the strong relationship between Islamophobia and Western literature. To illustrate more, this romanticized image of Islam in works such as Monica Ali's *Brick Lane,* Shaila Abdullah'*s Saffron Dreams*, and H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* proves only that these works are merely a reaction to an Islamophobic literary environment.

Overall, what has been written on the literature of 9/11 has minimized the roles and the effects of Islamophobia and how it has shaped the West's view of Islam. Hence, I believe that

my dissertation falls in the intersection between what critics such as Mishra is suggesting regarding the distortion of the image of Islam, and what Versluys, Gray, and Randall are suggesting in terms of the ethics of representing the Other.

Chapter Structure

This introductory chapter has attempted to not only introduce the concept of Islamophobia, but to also present an overall understanding of this phenomenon that has relied on using the Western historical representations of Muslims and Islam to argue that Islamophobia, as an attitude at least, has always been present in the Western psyche. Nevertheless, while this historical analysis was carried out in order to emphasize the idea that Islamophobia had only intensified as a result of the events of 9/11, each of the following chapters will be focusing on one specific angle of that intensified phase of Islamophobia.

As such, the second chapter will focus on how the West perceived the Quran after 9/11, especially in terms of understanding the Muslim's holy Book as being the ideological force that pushed Muslims into becoming terrorists. This suggestion will be carried out through an examination of how the literature of 9/11 reacted to this Islamophobic assumption. To that end, H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*, and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* will be the chapter's primary texts. The analysis of the two texts will explore the differences between Eastern and Western perspectives on the issue. On the one hand, DeLillo's novel suggests to its reader that the answer to the mystery of 9/11 can be found in the Quran. This can be seen in how the novel's Western characters are reading the Muslims' holy Book in order to understand why the 9/11-terrorists committed their awful crime. On the other hand, Naqvi's novel hints to the irony of the suggestion that it became almost a crime for a Muslim to own the Quran. By emphasizing the two depictions of the Muslims' holy Book, the chapter aims at emphasizing the suggestion that

through its perception of the Quran, Islamophobia views Islam as an ideological threat to the West.

The third chapter will study the tendency by the West to see mosques as the dangerous places that turn ordinary Muslims into extremists. The issue will be studied through looking closely at how Eastern and Western literary authors depicted the relationship between their characters and mosques, especially, in terms of what defines "the good," and "the bad" Muslim in the world of post-9/11. The primary works of this chapter are *Terrorist* by John Updike, and *Once in a Promised Land* by Leila Halaby. The analysis of the two texts will focus on the idea that it might be understandable for Updike's text, as a Western Islamophobic representation, to suggest that mosques are the labs that create terrorists. However, when Halaby's text attempts to suggest that "good" Muslims are the ones who stay away from mosques, the image of these places of worship becomes deeply upsetting for Muslim readers. Out of that unusual agreement between Eastern and Western writers, the chapter will raise the concern that the phenomenon of Islamophobia is so severe that it has penetrated Eastern self-representation. This suggestion will allow the chapter to argue that the post-9/11 Islamophobia exerts such a strong form of social and psychological pressure that it forces the East to define itself according to Western stereotypical standards.

While the second and the third chapters are focusing on studying Islamophobia through aspects that are related to the religion itself, the fourth chapter will look at the direct effects of Islamophobia on the individual him/herself. Hence, the fourth chapter will emphasize how the post-9/11 Islamophobia drew negative connotations to the appearance of the Muslim, whether that was the beard for the Muslim man or the headscarf for the Muslim woman. The analysis will be carried out in order to emphasize the role of the post-9/11 Islamophobia in forcing our minds

to form a false system that differentiates the moderate Muslim from the extremist. This will allow the chapter to ask whether Islamophobia pushes Muslims living in the West to strip themselves of their religious identity in order to be socially accepted in the West. To answer this question, the chapter will study *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsen Hamid and *Saffron Dreams* by Shaila Abdullah. An examination of the two novels will show that after 9/11, growing a beard, or wearing the scarf was seen less as an indication of one's religious devotion, than a sign of the person's inclination to fundamentalism.

The concluding chapter will be focusing on emphasizing the idea that that after 9/11, Western Islamophobia became so severe that it attached itself to all aspects of the religious identity of Muslims living in the West. By doing so, the chapter will examine how Islamophobia placed the Muslim in a continuous struggle to either embrace or reject his/her religious identity. This will allow the final chapter to conclude by emphasizing that the purpose of writing the dissertation is to raise awareness over the dangers of Islamophobia in blurring the lines between the Muslim's moderate attachment to his/her religion, and the whole issue of today's Islamic fundamentalism.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ISLAMOPHOBIC IMAGE OF THE QURAN IN THE LITERATURE OF 9/11

"There is a religious foundation for violence deeply embedded within the very worldview of Islam … Such violence in fact goes to the very roots of Islam as found in the Quran…"
— Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam* (329)

"They [the terrorists] read the sword verses of the Koran. They were strong-willed, determined to become one mind. Shed everything but the men you are with. Become each other's running blood"
— Don DeLillo, *Falling Man* (83)

"Grizzly: Then why do Moslems use it [the Quran] to justify terrorism?
Chuck: It's all a matter of interpretation"
— H. M. Naqvi, *Home Boy* (147)

This chapter aims to achieve two fundamental goals. First, to examine how the West's suspicious understanding of the Quran is an important aspect of the phenomenon of post-9/11 Islamophobia. This involves a close examination of the West's belief that the Muslims' holy Book is the original source for the spreading of the terrorists' destructive ideology. The second goal will explore how Western and Eastern literary writers reacted to this negative understanding of the Quran, and reveal the extent to which these authors were actually embracing or challenging this Islamophobic perception.

To achieve these goals, the chapter will begin with a brief introduction that reveals the negative effects of 9/11 on the image of the Quran in the United States. This will be followed by an analysis of Terry Jones' controversy of the Quran-burning as an actual incident that exemplifies the presence of the Islamophobic perception of the Muslims' holy Book. This background will contextualize the depictions of the Quran in the literature of 9/11. To that end, while Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* will be analyzed as a text that embraces the post-9/11 image of the Quran in the West, H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* will be addressed as a text that not only challenges the Islamophobic understanding of the holy Book, but also reveals its consequences.

The Effects of 9/11 on the Image of the Quran

In order to understand the effects of 9/11 on the image of the Quran in America, we need to understand how Americans viewed the Muslims' holy Book prior to the terrorist attacks in order to answer the question of whether 9/11 uniquely created negativity towards the Quran, or whether it did nothing but intensify and confirm an already negative perception. To answer this inquiry, this brief introduction will suggest that although negative readings of the Quran indeed existed long before 9/11, they remained the opinion of only a few. Prior to 9/11, America's interest in the Quran was limited to two small groups of people: those who were interacting, or seeking to interact, with Muslims, and those who were specialized in Orientalist studies.

To form a better understanding of the first group's perception of the Quran, we may look at how early Americans interacted with the Quran. This is because as Ted Widmer points out, "to a remarkable degree, the Koran is not alien to American history — but inside it" (2). Indeed this long history can be traced back to the days of the Founding Fathers where John Adams and Thomas Jefferson appeared to show interest in the Quran for the purposes of understanding Muslims. In this regard, Denise Spellberg argues in *Thomas Jefferson's Quran: Islam and the Founders* that the fact the Jefferson owned a Quran suggests that the early leaders of America wanted Muslims to be part of the new nation. Spellberg writes:

> At a time when most Americans were uninformed, misinformed, or simply afraid of Islam, Thomas Jefferson imagined Muslims as future citizens of his new nation. His engagement with the faith began with the purchase of a Quran eleven years before he wrote the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson's Quran survives still in the Library of Congress, serving as a symbol of his and early America's complex relationship with Islam and its adherents. That relationship remains of signal importance to this day. (1)

Similar to Spellberg's argument, Keith Ellison, the first American Muslim ever to be elected to Congress and who actually used Jefferson's original copy of the Quran for his ceremonial oath, states that the fact Jefferson owned a Quran shows "that from the very beginning of our country, we had people who were visionary, who were religiously tolerant, who believed that knowledge and wisdom could be gleaned from any number of sources, including the Quran" (qtd. in Moore 91).

Still, Jefferson's seemingly positive attitude towards the Muslims' holy Scripture does not necessarily reflect an overall positive perception of the Quran by the early Americans. For example, the first Muslim Americans, who were mostly slaves brought from Northern and Western Africa, were sometimes prevented from reading the Quran by their masters. This idea is stated in Omar Ibn Said's slave narrative (1831) where he writes, "I love to read the book, the Great Quran. General Jim Owen [Ibn Said's master] and his wife used to read the Bible, they used to read the Bible to me a lot . . . According to my ability, open my heart to the Bible, to the path of righteousness" (73). Analyzing Ibn Said's words, Basima Shaheen argues, "Clearly, although Ibn Said has opened his heart to the Bible, it is only 'according to his ability' to do so, a suggestive phrase that subtly implies he cannot fully convert to Christianity" (195). However, this negative attitude towards the Quran by Ibn Said's masters seems to be driven by a belief that the slave's holy Book is a false book that represents a false religion. This means that Ibn Said's masters, General Jim Owen and his wife, were not attacking the Quran per se, but their rejection of the Book is part of guiding their slave, against his will, to what they perceive is the right path.

Yet, when considering the works of some contemporary American Orientalists, it becomes clear that other American rejections of Islam were in fact based on criticisms of the Quran itself. For example, the works of Daniel Pipes and Samuel Huntington suggest that even

before 9/11, the Quran was viewed by some Americans as not only a violent book, but also as a text that was hostile towards Western civilization. To illustrate further, in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), Huntington criticizes the Quran as a promoter of violence. He writes, "the Koran and other statements of Muslim beliefs contain few prohibitions on violence, and a concept of nonviolence is absent from Muslim doctrine and practice" (263). Pipes, on the other hand, argues in *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power* (1983) that any positive representation of the Quran stems from the deceptive efforts of Muslim reformists. This is because these reformists, according to Pipes, engage in a selective quoting of their holy Book in order to present the West with a positive image of the Quran. He writes, "[Muslim] reformists use the Quran in new ways, quarrying it for passages that supports their views, and ignoring or suppressing whatever does not accord. Once a source of learning and inspiration, the Quran in their hands becomes a collection of disjoined quotes" (371). The presence of such criticism by the American Orientalists reveals that a few prominent voices in America did view the Quran negatively prior to the events of 9/11. Still, this negativity, even when it existed, did not seem to be affecting the larger public's perception of the Quran.

Unfortunately, however, the events of 9/11 led many Americans to interrogate the role of the Quran as the ideological force the drives Muslims into committing acts of violence. Such concerns can be seen in numerous voices that are convinced that the Quran is the original source responsible for the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. This pessimistic understanding of the ancient book can be seen in many works that claim to provide an insider analysis of the role of the Quran in the events of 9/11. For example, in their full study on the relationship between Islam and violence, Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb argue that "there is a religious foundation for violence deeply embedded within the very worldview of Islam" (329). The source of

violence, according to Geisler and Saleeb, is found in the Muslims' sacred Scripture that they claim, "goes to the very roots of Islam as found in the Quran and the actions and teachings of the prophet of Islam himself" (328). Perhaps, it is these Islamophobic understandings of the Quran that pushed some voices in America to view the Muslims' holy Book as a threat to national security.

In fact, during the heated Islamophobic climate that followed the terrorist attacks of 9/11, reading, owning, or even being familiar with the Quran by Muslims became a suspicious act. This is simply because after 9/11, some voices in America started to view the Quran as the terrorists' manifesto. This idea can be seen in Ali S. Asani's argument that "Post-9/11, America has witnessed an alarming rise of Islamophobia-expressions of hatred for Muslims, for Islam and everything Islamic. Islam has been equated with Nazism. The Quran has been compared to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, with the suggestion that reading it in the current context is an act of treason" (49). Although shocking, Asani's suggestion is crucial because it enables us to have an idea about the extent of the negativity produced towards the Quran in the aftermath of 9/11.

I would argue however that the reason for the rapid spread of the Islamophobic understanding of the Quran is not the actual terrorist attacks of 9/11, but the propaganda that the terrorists used to legitimize their awful crimes. This is because after 9/11, terrorists used the Quran in order to present themselves as the holy worriers who were fulfilling God's well in fighting the non-believers. This devious claim was achieved through relying on certain verses of the holy Book that when used outside of their historical context, depicts its ancient scripture as supportive of the terrorists' actions. By doing so, these terrorists, unfortunately, were not only successful in spreading their extreme readings of the Quran, but more importantly, they were also successful in presenting their violent interpretations as the true and only understanding of

the holy Book. For example, under a section entitled, "Bin Ladin's Appeal in the Islamic World," *The 9/11 Commission Report* poses the following question: "How did Bin Laden – with his call for the indiscriminate killing of Americans – win thousands of followers and some degree of approval from millions more?" (48). The Report suggests that Bin Laden's successful influence stems from the use of the Quran to support his ideology:

> The history, culture, and body of beliefs from which Bin Ladin has shaped and spread his message are largely unknown to many Americans. Seizing on symbols of Islam's past greatness, he promises to restore pride to people who consider themselves the victims of successive forging masters. He uses cultural and religious allusions to the Holy Quran and some of its interpreters. (48)

By the continues usage of these allusions to the Quran in his speeches, Bin Laden, as the inspirational leader of the 9/11's terrorists, made the Quran a crucial part of the 9/11 narrative.

Unfortunately, Muslims living in America were, and perhaps still are, experiencing the strongest effect of the post-9/11 Islamophobic understanding of the Quran. The reason for this argument stems from the belief that these minorities became trapped between two extreme points of view that seem to be pushing towards the same conclusion. On the one hand, these Muslims are struggling with coming to terms with the terrorists' ideology that is constantly misusing and misinterpreting the Quran in order to justify the crimes against the non-Muslims. At the same time, these minorities are also suffering from a Western reaction that focuses only on the extremists' interpretations of the Muslims' sacred scripture in order to draw biased conclusions as a whole about Islam as a religion, or Muslims as people.

As a matter of fact, it appears that by considering only the Islamophobic and the Islamists' understandings of the Quran, the West pushed its Muslim minorities to live under a

continuous struggle to maintain, without fear, the same relationship with the Quran as the rest of Muslims around the globe. To be more precise, this struggle can be seen in these minorities' inability to read, talk about, or even own their holy Book without being afraid of being viewed as fundamentalists. In this respect, the *Report on Hate Crimes and Discrimination Against Arab Americans* reports a number of incidents where Muslims were harassed because of their attachment to the Quran during the few months that followed 9/11. In one of these incidents, for example, police in Florida stopped and searched an Arab student, yet, "when they discovered Koran tapes in this student's car, they immediately brought him to the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service]" (34). The Report also refers to an incident where "an American Muslim of Iranian ancestry was harassed and fired by his boss … [who] told coworkers that Islam promotes terrorism and that the Koran encourages Muslims to kill non-believers" (102). In fact, even Muslim prisoners suffered from similar discriminations. For example, Jeffrey Thomas points out, "investigators at the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division determined that authorities at the Sullivan County Jail in Tennessee were illegally denying Muslim prisoners access to the Koran" (78). The presence of such incidents, I believe, exemplifies the most negative aspect of the post-9/11 Islamophobic image of the Quran.

Overall, it might be argued that after 9/11, the fear of the Quran became one of the most vivid characteristics of the post-9/11 Islamophobia. Still, to have a sense of the extent of the Western Islamophobic understanding of the Quran, it seems to me that it is crucial to focus on the controversy that surrounded one pastor's calls to burn copies of the Quran. Thus, the following few pages will concentrate on looking closely at this controversy in order to build the chapter's literary argument on an actual event that demonstrates the post-9/11 negative image of the Muslims' sacred scripture.

The Controversy of the Quran's Burning

In 2010, Terry Jones, a pastor of a small church in Florida, became the center of the world's attention. Jones' sudden and rapid popularity was caused by his shocking plan to burn copies of the Quran on the 11th of September 2010, on the ninth anniversary of the events of 9/11. The Pastor also wanted to name the 11th of every September the "International Burn a Koran Day." The reason for the bold decision was based on Jones' belief that the Quran was directly responsible for spreading hate and violence across the world. This negative attitude towards the Muslims' holy Book can be seen in Kourosh Ziabari's interview with Jones where he justifies his provocative plans by stating that "the Quran and the teachings of the Quran are responsible for millions and millions of deaths throughout the 1400 year history of Islam" (1).

In fact, Jones attacks on the Quran did not stop there. He also held a mock trial of the holy Book and published the event on *YouTube* as part of promoting his plans. The mock trial found the Quran guilty, and consequently, Jones sentenced the ancient Book to be burned. The Pastor argued that the significance of the act of burning lies in its ability to be "a very effective way as far as being able to draw attention, let's say attention to the event, and perhaps even attention to the Quran" (Ziabari 1). Unfortunately, however, these provocative and irresponsible actions by Jones sparkled violent outrages in parts of the Muslim world.

Although Jones announced the cancelation of his plans a day before the proposed date in exchange for the relocation of the Ground Zero Mosque,[2] a claim that the Imam of the mosque denied, I believe that the damage of the whole controversy was already done. This is simply

[2] The Ground Zero Mosque refers to a proposed project to build an Islamic Center in Lower Manhattan. Yet, due to its location being close to the site of the terrorist attacks of 2001, the project encountered fierce opposition. The whole controversy will be studied extensively in the third chapter due to its significance as an indicator of the Islamophobic understanding of mosques.

because Muslims would obviously perceive the burning of their most sacred Book[3] as an offensive act. Hence, all sorts of reactions were expected from Muslims around the world. Yet, it seems that one particular reaction was not only expected, but also wished for by the Pastor. By succeeding in provoking a violent response from the Muslim world, I believe that Jones was hoping to bring a proof of his claims. This unfortunate idea can be sensed from the Pastor's comments on the violent reaction that happened in Afghanistan.[4] In this regard, Pastor Jones states, "what happened last time and what could happen this time is not our responsibility. All we did was burn a book. It posed no threat to anyone else, yet riots broke out several thousand miles away – which just proves how extreme Islam is" ("Pentagon Urges Controversial Florida Pastor to Stop Qur'an Burning Plans" 1). This is perhaps what drives Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin to argue, "seen from the other 'side,' of course, the gesture of Koran burning acts as damning evidence of the godlessness and anti-Muslim attitude prevalent in the West and leads to the kind of frenzied, violent response that 'proves' such societies' irrationality to Western onlookers" (212).

However, for Muslims living in the West, especially those who are living in the United States, the significance of the whole controversy extends beyond being just an offensive act on a religious level. To these minorities, the Quran-burning incident can be seen as a reminder of how some voices in the West view their presence. This argument stems from the idea that the act of burning the Quran can become a symbolic gesture that extends beyond the Quran itself. In this sense, it might be argued that the burning of the Quran expresses a deeper level of religious

[3] To Muslims, the importance of the Quran stems from its original creator. As such, the Book is seen to be the most sacred text due to the belief that it is a revelation from God. God's revelations, according to Muslims, were passed verbally during several occasions to Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel.

[4] In reaction to the burning of the Quran, Afghanistan suffered from a series of violent riots that resulted in the death of over 30 people.

intolerance. Thereby, to Muslims in the United States, the act of burning their holy Book can transform into a message which tells them that Islam, and consequently Muslims as well, have no place in America.

Furthermore, the controversy of the Quran's burning posed a challenge to the values that the United States stands for. The reason is that while America cherishes its citizens right of freedom of religion, burning the Quran was clearly going to be a disrespectful act toward a religion that is practiced by many Americans. As a result, the Pastor's provocative plans raised concerns among the United States' highest levels of governmental officials. For example, President Barak Obama's message to the Pastor states, "if he [Jones] is listening, I just hope he understands that what he's proposing to do is completely contrary to our values as Americans" (qtd. in Jackson 1). Hence, it might be argued that the controversy of the Quran-burning created a great dilemma for the United States since although the Pastor's plans were clearly provocative and likely to offend many Muslims, they still cannot be legally stopped. As President Obama points out, "it is frustrating. Now, on the other hand, we are a government of laws. And so, we have to abide by those laws. And my understanding is that he can be cited for public burning. But that's the extent of the laws that we have available to us" (qtd. in Jackson 2).

Consequently, it seems that Jones' controversy opened a space for voices demanding the presence of laws that can prevent attacks on religions. These demands, according to Aaron Leibowitz, were driven by a desire to prevent anyone from misusing the right of freedom of speech as an excuse for offending other religions. Leibowitz writes:

> The controversy prompted discussions about the line between free speech and respect for religion, and the extent to which Western democracies' policies on speech should accommodate other cultures. Prior to the Jones Koran burning in 2011, that discussion

> was primarily situated in Europe. After Jones' stunt, however, Americans felt the modem-day implications of their free speech philosophy more directly. Out of that controversy, legal scholars began to question whether our free speech doctrine … should still be applied with equal force today given the likely global consequences of doing so. (33)

To extend this argument over the consequences of allowing freedom of speech to be a justification for offending religions, I also believe that a provocative act such as Jones' can have domestic consequences as well. This can be seen specifically in terms of inflaming the post-9/11 Islamophobic atmosphere, encouraging new prejudices against Muslims, or even providing excuses for terrorists to attack the United States.

Still, that does not mean that there were no efforts to stop Jones. For example, these efforts were seen in Dearborn's reaction to the Pastor's plans of holding a protest in front of American's largest mosque. Fearing any violent response from the large Muslim community of the town, Dearborn's officials used a series of laws and penalties to prevent the Pastor from going forward with a protest that was going to involve burning copies of the Quran. In this regard, Andrew Shryock writes:

> After legal maneuvering by Dearborn's mayor, Jack O'Reilly, and the Wayne County Prosecutor, Kym Worthy, Pastor Jones was denied permission to hold a rally near the mosque … Dearborn District Judge Larry Somers ordered Jones to pay a US$45,000 "peace bond" for the right to hold his protest. When Jones refused to do so, he was found guilty of "breach of the peace," was fined US$1, which he again refused to pay, was jailed, and to complete the package, he was forbidden to go near the Islamic Center for a period of three years. (152)

Although these series of charges give us an idea about Dearborn's efforts to stop Jones, they, at the same time, also provide us with a sense about the Pastor's determination. This determination, however, makes Jones' goals behind the whole controversy clearer. This is because by choosing a city that is home to the largest Muslim community in the United States, it becomes evident that, besides gaining national attention, the Pastor was in fact using the controversy to provoke America's Muslim community into producing a collective act that could distort its image in the eyes of the American public. This, I believe, was Jones' only opportunity to convince America that violence is a characteristic that is not only attached to foreign terrorists, but to all Muslims including those who are living in America.

Hence, aside from being provocative, controversial, or even challenging to the American values, what really signifies the controversy of the Quran-burning is not only the fact that it proves that fears of the Muslims' holy Book exist in the West, but also the presence of the belief that Islam, being represented by the Quran, is responsible for 9/11. This unfortunate suggestion can be seen in Jones' words as he declares, "we decided to have that event in September of 2010 also as a type of protest against the radical element of Islam, in response to the 9/11 attacks" (qtd. in Kourosh Ziabari 1). The danger of the Pastor's message stems from the idea that it communicates to the world that Islam is the enemy of the West, or America to be more precise, and not the few terrorists who committed their crimes in the name of religion.

As a literary scholar, I believe that it is very important to analyze how literature responded to such fears, especially in terms of analyzing if the post-9/11 literature challenged the Islamophobic understandings of the Muslims' holy Book, or if it in fact fell in the trap of embracing them.

The Representations of the Quran in the Literature of 9/11

Perhaps due to its sensitive nature, the majority of the literature of 9/11 did not include the Quran in its depiction of the terrorist attacks. However, several works have discussed the Quran in relation to the whole tragedy of 9/11. In these works, the Quran is usually either the entity that symbolizes the Muslims' struggle with the backlash of 9/11, or the instrument that justifies the West's negative attitude towards Islam in the aftermath of 9/11. These contradicted representations are best seen in how literary authors, depending on their racial or religious backgrounds, have created very different roles for the Quran in relation to its role with the events of 9/11.

In some of the works that were produced by Western authors, traces of the post-9/11 Islamophobic understandings of the Muslims holy Book can be clearly viewed. For example, in both, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist*, the novels' extremist characters use the Quran to justify their crimes or hatred against the West. As a result, the image of the Muslims' sacred scripture in these works is distorted through either representing it as the original source of religious extremism, or the terrorists' favorite book. On the other hand, authors with Muslim/Eastern origins react to that model of representation in either refuting the violent image, or emphasize the suggestion that the Quran is a source of peace rather than violence. For instance, in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, the main character finds in the Quran the needed comfort and power to help her overcome some personal challenges. This can be seen in the narrator's words as he tells the reader, "she [the novel's protagonist] began to recite in her head from the Holy Qur'an one of the suras she had learned in school. She did not know what the words meant but the rhythm of them soothed her" (9). In this regard, Shakir Mustafa argues, "in the aftermath of 9/11, Muslim writers in the West have been presenting characters who find in the Quran a

source of positive power and find in their faith a refuge from an environment that has suddenly become less hospitable" (282). Other works, however, focused on highlighting the effects of the post-9/11 Islamophobic image of the Quran. This approach can be seen in numerous works such as H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* and Yussef El Guindi's play *Back of the Throat* where authorities question the extent of the Muslim characters' knowledge about the Quran.[5]

Both depictions are equally essential to get a sense of how the literature of 9/11 depicted the negative image that surrounded the Quran as a result of the terrorist attacks. The works of Eastern writers are revealing in terms of how they give us an idea about the effects of the Islamophobic understandings of the Quran. At the same time, the works that are written by Western authors are equally important for giving us insights into how 9/11, along with the propaganda of the terrorists, created a very suspicious atmosphere that pushed the West to, unfortunately, view the Quran as a holy Book that is attached to terrorism rather than to Islam or Muslims in general.

Therefore, the following few pages of this chapter will discuss Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* respectively. The significance of the two works stems from the idea that while DeLillo's text, unfortunately, provides us with an example of the Western Islamophobic depiction of the Quran, Naqvi's novel announces itself as an Eastern/Muslim reaction that rejects such depictions.

[5] In *Back of the Throat*, Yussef El Guindi depicts the Islamophobic understanding of the Quran through the character of the FBI agent who searches Khalid's apartment for clues indicating his inclination towards extremism. Upon finding the Quran in Khalid's place, the FBI agent says, "Huh. So this is it" (28). Then he quickly asks Khalid to summarize the message of the Quran. Thus, by capturing the agent's surprise and enquiry, El Guindi clearly indicates to his reader that the FBI agent came to Khalid's apartment with an already perceived negativity towards the Quran.

The Premise of DeLillo's *Falling Man*: the Quran is the Holy Book of the Terrorists

In this section of the chapter, I will look closely at Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* in order to shed some light to how some Western authors embraced the post-9/11 Islamophobic understanding of the Quran. The analysis of *Falling Man* will focus on the idea that when it comes to the representation of the Quran, DeLillo presents the Muslims' holy Book from two different perspectives: those of the victims and those of the terrorists. However, I will argue that both representations are emphasizing a strong link between the Quran and the tragic events of 9/11.

Published in 2007, *Falling Man* aims to capture not only the actual shock of the terrorist attacks, but also the immediate psychological consequences of the whole tragedy of 9/11. To achieve this goal, the novel depicts both the terrorists and their victims. In depicting the experience of the latter, DeLillo takes the tragedy into the domestic sphere in order to provide insights into the struggles of the victims of the attacks specifically, and the people of New York in general. Hence, we follow the story of Keith who is a survivor of the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in his attempt to recover psychologically from the trauma caused by the events. Along with the story of Keith, however, DeLillo also attempts to capture the perspective of the terrorists. As such, in a couple of short and scattered chapters, DeLillo introduces his reader to the story of Hammad who is one of the main hijackers.

The novel begins on the morning of the 11th of September 2001, with a scene that describes the smoke and the chaos that is caused by the fall of the Twin Towers. In this scene, the reader meets the main character, Keith, as he struggles to understand the confusion that surrounds him. Eventually, Keith escapes the building and finds himself at the apartment of his estranged wife, Lianne. From that point on, the plot of *Falling Man* begins to be shaped as a

story of a family that is trying to cope with the tragedy. The reader learns that the unfortunate events apparently bring Keith and his wife Lianne closer as the couple tries to rescue their marriage.

In a couple of separated sections of the novel, the plot shifts to Hammad where the reader is given glimpses that describe the perspective of the terrorists. In these brief sections of *Falling Man*, the reader learns about Hammad's past as a soldier in the Iraqi army during the war with Iran. After the war, Hammad went to Afghanistan where he joined a jihadist group. From that point on, the journey of Hammad's radicalization begins as he starts seeing America as the enemy that should be destroyed. Ultimately, the reader understands that these feelings of hatred have led Hammad to join a flight school in the United States as part of the 9/11 plot.

The novel, however, ends at the same moment where everything began. The only difference this time is that we are given a different description of the scene of the falling towers. In this rewritten version of the scene, the reader meets Hammad as he is about to crash into Keith's building:

> A bottle fell off the counter in the galley, on the other side of the aisle, and he [Hammad] watched it roll this way and that, a water bottle, empty, making an arc one way and rolling back the other, and he watched it spin more quickly and then skitter across the floor an instant before the aircraft hit the tower, heat, then fuel, then fire, and a blast wave passed through the structure that sent Keith Neudecker out of his chair and into a wall. (DeLillo 239)

As such, the novel concludes with emphasizing the idea that the East has finally met the West in a searing act of violence as the planes crash into the World Trade Center. Besides highlighting the specific period of time that DeLillo is attempting to capture in his novel, *Falling Man's*

conclusion is also suggesting that the crash of the Twin Towers symbolizes an ideological clash between Islam and the West.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the depiction of the Quran in DeLillo's text, one has to consider two interrelated aspects that play active roles in forming *Falling Man's* negative representation of the Muslims' sacred scripture. These two factors are concerned with, first, the novel's emphasis on the presence of two separated worlds, and second, the idea that the novel depicts the immediate reaction to 9/11. Highlighting how these two factors are shaping *Falling Man's* representation of the Quran is crucial because it provides the needed context for understanding the reasons for DeLillo's negative depiction of the Muslims' holy Book. As such, before analyzing *Falling Man's* actual representation of the Quran, I will briefly look closely at these factors.

First, the novel emphasizes through its structure, and its plot as well, the presence of two separate worlds. Consequently, I believe that DeLillo creates an atmosphere for the reader where the unfortunate events can only be understood as a clash between two worlds that find it impossible to coexist. As Kristiaan Versluys writes, "by opposing the enervation of his American characters to the evil intent of the Islamic terrorists, DeLillo indicates that September 11 can only be understood geopolitically as the clash of two opposing frames of reference, two world vision on a collision course" (44). In fact, Versluys' argument could also be extended to suggest that *Falling Man*, through its structure, is emphasizing the dichotomies of us vs. them, or West vs. Islam. Thereby, it might be argued that by doing so, the novel, unfortunately, creates a fertile environment to form Islamophobic interpretations based on the presence of these two contradictory worlds.

Second, since the novel begins and ends with the image of the planes crashing into the World Trade Centers, DeLillo is concerned mainly with the initial, emotional reactions to the tragedy of 9/11. As a result, it becomes logical that terrorists will represent Islam, and victims will represent the West. Unfortunately, however, this allows DeLillo to include exclusionary sentiments from both sides. As an illustration, a depiction of one of the actual hijackers allows for the articulation of the viewpoints of Muslim extremists. For example, at one stage of the novel, Hammad states, "there are no others. The others existd only to the degree that they fill the role we have designed for them. This is their function as others. Those who will die have no claim to their lives outside the useful fact of their dying" (DeLillo 176). At the same time, DeLillo includes Western characters who are viewed sympathetically. This sense of victimization, however, is not necessarily positive as it allows these Western characters to dehumanize the Other. This idea can be seen in the character of Lianne, Keith's wife, who as result of 9/11, begins to see Muslims, whether terrorists or not, as the same people. For example, in her description of her neighbor who she believed was a Muslim, she says "they're the ones who think alike, talk alike, eat the same food at the same time" (DeLillo 68). As a result of this single-minded view, Lianne engages in a verbal and a physical confrontation with the neighbor, Elena, because of the constant sound of Arabic music coming out of Elena's apartment. In this confrontation, Lianne is agitated because she believes that playing Arabic music during these times is an insensitive act. She tells Elena: "anybody would take it personally. Under these circumstances. There are circumstances. You acknowledge this, don't you?" (119). However, Elena does not share Lianne's view because she simply believes that "there are no circumstances. It's music. It gives me peace" (119). Elena's response proves to be very provocative as Lianne decides to "twist her open hand in Elena's face, under the left eye, and

push her [Elena] back into the entrance way" (120). This violent encounter clearly indicates that victimization forms a sense of group identity that is pushing Lianne to dehumanize whomever she believes to be the Other.

Although it seems that depicting such sentiments is driven by the author's desire to capture a certain period of time that was filled with hate and fear, I still believe that including these sentiments enables the spread of Islamophobia. This is because it is within this tense and divided atmosphere that DeLillo's *Falling Man* introduces the Quran. This means that in the novel, the Muslims' holy Book will be presented not only in a passionate and an emotional way, but from two opposing perspectives. As such, it might be argued that in *Falling Man*, the Quran becomes the victim of two extreme points of view that attempt to use it as a symbol of their differentiation and enmity.

To be more precise, in DeLillo's novel, the terrorists are reading the Quran because it provides them with the needed ideological push to carry on with their crimes. The victims, however, are reading the Muslims' holy Book because it provides them with answers and explanations that can help them to comprehend the terrorists' crimes. This means that in the *Falling Man*, the Quran becomes a harmful instrument in the hands of both sides. The terrorists use it to justify their crimes, and the victims use it to justify their fears, or their hatred, of Islam. Both depictions, however, are dangerous because they communicate to the reader that the Muslims' holy Book has a strong connection to the tragic events of 9/11. As such, I believe that it crucial to analyze closely how DeLillo is introducing the Quran in relation to both the terrorists as well as the victims.

In DeLillo's novel, because the Muslim character is depicted through Hammad who represents the idea of the ultimate enemy, any Islamic belief or practice attached to this character

inevitably will be associated with violence or terrorism. This means that when depicting the usual Islamic practices such as praying, fasting, or reading the Quran within the context of depicting the life of this terrorist, these practices begin to be correlated with terrorism rather than with Islam or with Muslims. Thereby, it might be argued that in *Falling Man*, the character of Hammad becomes the lens through which the reader learns about Islam. In "Collapsing Identities: The Representation and Imagination of the Terrorist in *Falling Man*," Sacha Pohlman argues that "DeLillo's depiction of Hammad fails because he is less a character than a narrative device that is so obviously introduced for the single purpose of committing a terrorist act" (60). To me, however, I believe that through what Pohlman calls a narrative device, DeLillo was in fact successful in providing three suggestions about the Quran: first, that the holy Book is the source of ideological power for the terrorists; second, that it is the entity that provides legitimacy for their crimes; and third that it is also the guideline book that has practical effects.

In *Falling Man*, the Quran is depicted as the source of the ideological power that unites Hammad and the other terrorists and keeps them motivated to commit the acts of violence against the non-Muslims. This suggestion can be seen in the narrator's description of the atmosphere that surrounded the terrorists' secretive meetings. DeLillo writes, "they [the terrorists] read the sword verses of the Koran. They were strong-willed, determined to become one mind. Shed everything but the men you are with. Become each other's running blood" (83). Here it becomes clear that the novel is highlighting the suggestion that the Muslims' sacred scripture has some sort of psychological power on the terrorists. This is due to the idea that the quote simply indicates to the reader that the holy Book is providing an atmosphere of unity that is directing the terrorists' evil intentions towards one enemy.

Furthermore, the above quote also suggests to *Falling Man's* reader that the terrorists are obviously incorporating the Quran in their plots in order to provide legitimacy for their actions. In this sense, the ancient scripture not only becomes the original source of terrorism, but the religious umbrella that covers the terrorists' awful crimes. DeLillo thus draws an equal comparison between the threat of the terrorists, and the dangers of the Muslims' holy Book. This means that a Western reader of *Falling Man* might easily believe that without the guidance of the Quran, Hammad and the other terrorists would not be able to generate an impenetrable atmosphere of ideological unity that can provide excuses and justifications for their actions. In addition, a cause-and-effect relationship starts to appear where the Quran causes a strong willingness to commit acts of violence. *Falling Man* is perhaps suggesting that the Quran's negative effect on the terrorists extends beyond manipulating the mind, and also includes controlling the body as well.

Based on these considerations, it might be argued that the image of the Quran in DeLillo's novel becomes attached to the idea of a text that is capable of brainwashing the minds of the terrorists, providing legitimacy to their crimes, and transforming their devious desires into actions. As a result, the Quran, as the ultimate symbolism that represents Islam, not only becomes connected with the issue of extremism, but more importantly with the events of 9/11. Unfortunately, however, this negative representation of the Quran is not limited to DeLillo's depiction of the Muslims' sacred scripture in relation to the terrorists: it also extends to the depiction of the Quran in relation to the victims as well.

As I stated previously, *Falling Man* suggests the difficulty of the coexistence between the novel's two worlds. The Quran, however, seems the only exception with its ability to cross from the terrorists' world into the victims'. Still, this suggestion does not mean that the reader will get

a more sympathetic depiction of the holy Book. As a matter of fact, representing the Quran in relation to the victims only confirms the negative image previously associated with the terrorists. This is because instead of viewing it as only a religious book that had been misused by the terrorists, victims/Westerners in DeLillo's novel seem to be reading the Quran as a book that came with the sole purpose of threatening the West's existence. This suggestion is best seen through Lianne's experience with reading the Quran.

What signifies Lianne's character is her passionate and emotional attitude towards the whole tragedy of 9/11. This happens not only because her husband, Keith, is an actual victim of the attacks, but also because the media is playing a major role in shaping Lianne's views towards the whole experience of 9/11. As Lewis S. Gleich argues, "[w]atching events unfold from the safety of her living room, Lianne processes analog images of terror and the media's exploitation of them before she can experience genuine emotion in response to what she is seeing" (163). Unfortunately, it is through this passionate character that the reader of DeLillo's text is introduced to the Western experience with the Muslims' sacred scripture.

As Lianne is passionate and hungry for answers about 9/11, the novel suggests that after 9/11, Westerns became interested in the Quran in order to understand the reasons that pushed the terrorists to attack the United States. In this sense, the Quran is viewed as a pivotal book that is capable of providing explanations of the terrorists' crimes. This idea can be seen in the narrator's comments about the interest Lianne and some of her friends express in reading the Quran. In describing this tendency, the narrator tells us:

> People were reading the Koran. She [Lianne] knew of three people doing this. She'd talked to two and knew of another. They'd bought English-language editions of the Koran and were trying earnestly to learn something, find something that might help them

> think more deeply into the question of Islam. She didn't know whether they were persisting in the effort. She could imagine herself doing this, the determined action that floats into empty gesture. But maybe they were persisting. They were serious people perhaps. She knew two of them but not well. One, a doctor, recited the first line of the Koran in his office. This Book is not to be doubted. (231)

Here, it becomes clear that the novel is simply associating the Quran with the events of 9/11 by suggesting that the path to overcome the ordeal starts with searching for answers in the Quran.

In commenting on the reasons that drove Lianne to read the Quran, Linda Kauffman argues that it is part of absorbing the tragedy of 9/11. Kauffman writes, "She [Lianne] tries to read the Koran . . . She does not simply want information; she wants to assimilate the catastrophe that has befallen her, her family, city, and the nation" (World Trauma Center 655). Based on Kauffman's suggestion, it might be argued that Lianne is convinced that reading the Quran will help her to overcome the shock because of the belief that the Book can provide an overall understanding of 9/11. This suggestion is supported by what occurred following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centers. In *Answering Islam*, Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb state that after 9/11, the Quran became a very popular book in the United States:

> Today the tide has turned. Sales of the Qur'an are soaring. Not because Muslims are becoming more devout nor because converts to Islam increased dramatically as a result of the terrorists aerial bombing of the New York Trade Center. Rather, it is because non-Muslims suddenly realize that the religion of Islam, as embraced by millions of radical Muslims, has become a real threat, not only to Christianity but to freedom of religion in general and to our very way of life as Americans. (7)

Thereby, it might be argued that Lianne's reaction to the Muslims' holy Book does not only mirror the actual reaction to 9/11, but it also reveals the presence of an Orientalist reading of the Quran in which Westerners, such as Lianne, are reading it because of the belief that it poses a threat to the existence of the West itself.

Overall, it might be argued that *Falling Man's* representations of the Quran, whether in relation to the terrorists or the victims, are obviously negative. Still, realizing these negative representations does not bring us closer to understanding the reasons why they are harmful to the image of the Quran. Thereby, it seems to me that the important question becomes the following: How can *Falling Man's* negative representations of the Quran be viewed or described as Islamophobic?

To provide an Islamophobic depiction of the Quran, its image has to be distorted through representing it as a book that has a strong relationship with terrorism. This can only be done through selective references that can convey the essential message that the ancient scripture promotes violence and religious intolerance. Hence, in the following pages, I will analyze *Falling Man's* representations of the Quran in an attempt to argue that DeLillo's depiction of the Muslims' holy Book can in fact be described as Islamophobic. To achieve this goal, I will revisit DeLillo's representations of the Quran in an attempt to highlight the traces of Islamophobia.

According to Todd Green, one of the main features of the Islamophobic discourse is the spread of the belief that Islam is a religion of violence and aggression. In this regard, Green states that in any Islamophobic discourse, "Islam … is identified as hostile, violent, and aggressive. Islam is a religion bent on conquest, and, for this reason, there is an inevitable 'clash of civilizations' between Islam and the West" (15). One of the ways, I believe, to deliver such an argument is to carefully select verses of the Quran that, when used out of their original context,

can persuade the reader that Islam, through its holy Book, encourages violence and aggression against non-Muslims. In the context of *Falling Man*, this approach can be seen in how DeLillo describes the terrorists' relationship with the Quran.

Therefore, once the narrator tells the reader that "they [the terrorists] read the sword verses of the Koran" (83), it will be difficult to be convinced that the Quran's core message is one of peace. Instead the reader associates the Muslims' sacred scripture with a particular image that is usually associated with violence. The reason is that within this context, the image of the sword can correlate to nothing but hostility and death. As such, it might be argued that even though DeLillo does not quote the actual verses in the novel, he was still able to deliver a misrepresentation of the Quran through telling the reader that Hammad and the other terrorists are reading verses that are known to Muslims as the sword verses. To illustrate further, in Islamic scholarship, the sword verses are the verses that extremists twist and use out of their original context in order to legitimatize their violence against the non-Muslims, "when the sacred months are over, slay the polytheists wherever you find them" (the holy Quran 9:5). To the majority of Muslim scholars, however, these verses should not be read outside of their historical context, especially since later verses known as the peace verses came encouraging Muslims to seek peace with the non-Muslims, "If they incline toward peace, incline you toward it, and trust in God: verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing" (the holy Quran, 8:61). In this regard, Sohail Hashmi points out that "some jurists held the opinion that the sword verses must be read in context with the peace verses, and that the ruler was therefore entitled to suspend jihad whenever he deemed it appropriate" (Hashmi 206). Yet, readers of *Falling Man* are not even given hints to these details. In fact, their understanding of the verses does not extend beyond the fearful image

of the sword that clearly serves its purpose of presenting the Muslims' holy Book as a book that encourages violence.

Based on these considerations, it might be argued that the name is more important to DeLillo than what the actual verses are saying. This is due to the idea that the importance of the whole scene lies in the image of the sword as a figurative ploy that takes advantage of the atmosphere that surrounded 9/11 in order to renew the old Orientalist discourse of Islam. This idea can be supported by Onder Bakircioglu's comment that, "when it was established that Osama Bin Laden and his organization AI Qaeda were behind the 11 September attacks in the US, the age-old images of Islam, the fanatical, backward and stagnant religion threatening Western civilization, were revitalized within the Orientalist discourse" (414).

As such, I believe that DeLillo's depiction of the Quran should be read as part of the long history of Orientalist discourse in which the image of the sword has always been part of the Orientalist depictions of Islam. As Bassam Tibi argues, during the centuries of the Middle Ages and the Ottoman Empire, "the sword became the symbolic image of Islam in the West" (176). Indeed, this Orientalist link between Islam and the sword can even be traced back to the writings of early Orientalists such as Sir William Muir. In *The Life of Mahomet* (1861), Muir points out that "the sword of Mohammed and the Koran are the most stubborn enemies of civilization, liberty, and truth which the world has yet known" (qtd. in Deeb 164). This idea can also be seen in the writings of contemporary Orientalists such as Samuel Huntington who believes that "Islam has from the start been a religion of the sword and that it glorifies military virtues" (263). Thereby, it might be possible to argue that through its focus on the image of the sword, *Falling Man* is reviving the classical Orientalist discourse on the Quran.

The second example where it might be argued that *Falling Man* is presenting an Islamophobic depiction of the Quran can be seen in DeLillo's description of how Westerns perceived the Muslims' holy Book in the aftermath of 9/11. This is because in describing the atmosphere that surrounded the Westerns' interest in the Quran, the narrator tells us that among many readers, one was a doctor who "recited the first line of the Koran in his office. *This Book is not to be doubted*" (231). When looking closely at this line, it can be viewed as a clear example of Islamophobia. Yet, in order to perceive it as such, one has to consider three different aspects: the quoted verse itself, the context that it presented in, and the narrator's description of the verse.

Regarding the verse itself, DeLillo chose an interesting line of the Quran to quote. Although short, the verse "*This Book is not to be doubted*" can communicate two very different meanings. One of these meanings, according to Muslim scholars, is more circulated than the other because of the belief that it is the most obvious one. Yet, the verse's multiplicity of meaning is lost because the novel is hinting to the presence of only the less circulated meaning. To illustrate further, the majority of Muslim scholars believe that the verse is simply emphasizing the idea that the Quran is the word of God, and not man. Accordingly, when it comes to the word 'doubt' in the verse, Islamic scholars believe that verse is telling us that there must be no doubt in the heart of the Muslim over the origins of the Quran. However, a few scholars have extended this interpretation by arguing that since the Quran is the word of God, the word can have a different meaning. In this interpretation of the verse, these scholars believe that Muslims should not doubt or question the contents of the Quran. The multiplicity and complexity of the verse is best seen in Sayed Abul A'ala Mawdudi's interpretation of the verse. Mawdudi writes:

> One obvious meaning of this verse is that this Book, the Qur'an, is undoubtedly from God. Another possible meaning is that nothing contained in it can be subject to doubt. Books which deal with supernatural questions, with matters that lie beyond the range of sense perception, are invariably based on conjecture and their authors, despite their brave show of competence, are therefore not immune from a degree of scepticism regarding their statements. This Book, which is based wholly on Truth, a Book which is the work of none other than the All-Knowing God Himself is distinguishable from all other books. Hence, there is no room for doubt about its contents despite the hesitation some people might express either through ignorance or folly. (qtd. in Pohlmann 63)

Still, although the first interpretation, as Mawdudi argues, is the obvious interpretation of the verse, I still believe that the novel presents this specific verse within a context that pushes its reader to see only the second interpretation. This is due to the idea that the less circulated meaning of the verse serves the overall Islamophobic understanding of the Quran that *Falling Man* is promoting. To explain more, in the context of the terrorists, if the terrorist starts to question the validity of his actions, as Hammad did, the verse becomes the support that he needs to dismiss these doubts. In the context of the Western perspective however, if the victims reacted to 9/11 by seeing the Muslims' sacred scripture as a book that drives Muslims into becoming violent, the verse, in this specific context, becomes a confirmation not only to Lianne, but also to the Western reader. This is because upon knowing that the Quran prohibits Muslims to doubt its teachings, Lianne, as well as the Western reader, would perceive the Quran, and not the terrorists, as the evil that was responsible for 9/11. Yet as Pohlmann points out, Lianne's "reflections on doubt are caused by a misrepresentation of the Qur'an that exemplifies a more general cursory treatment of Islam" (62). Therefore, it might be argued that the verse becomes a

sword with two edges depending on the context that the novel is providing about the Quran. And since *Falling Man's* context revolves around associating the Muslims' holy Book with terrorism, it seems that the verse is carefully chosen in order to serve as the proof of that Western and Islamophobic suggestion.

Furthermore, concerning the narrator's comment when he states that the verse is the first line of the Quran, it appears to me that this extra information has been emphasized in order to give more weight to the meaning that DeLillo wants to convey. Surprisingly however, as almost any Muslim knows, the verse is not actually the first line of the Quran. As such, I believe that this inaccurate knowledge has been added to not only stress what the novel is suggesting about the forbidding of doubting the Quran, but to also imply that it is in fact the first rule of the ancient scripture.

In this sense, this false knowledge will only intensify the already negative image that the novel is drawing. This is simply because a Western reader of *Falling Man* can easily become convinced that the first, and consequently the most important, message of the Quran is to follow blindly without any room for questioning or searching for alternative understandings. This suggestion makes the terrorists in *Falling Man* become the victims of the first rule of the Quran. Hence, it might be argued that from a Muslim perspective, this understanding is deeply upsetting because it shifts the blame from the terrorists to the Quran itself.

To conclude my analysis of *Falling Man*, it appears that although such negative representations of the Quran might seem Islamophobic, I still believe that they fit within the text's general perspective towards the tragedy of 9/11. This is simply due to the idea that as a text, *Falling Man* circles around capturing the initial experience of living in the post-9/11 world. Hence, presenting an Islamophobic depiction of the Quran becomes perhaps a necessity to

capture the emotional feelings towards Islam as an ideology that is believed to be responsible for the attacks. As Katrina Harack points out, "the nature of DeLillo's cultural commentary has shifted: his ethical project here is to highlight the reality of the event, its traumatic reverberations, and its individual and cultural implications" (316). Yet, it appears that in the midst of this desire to depict the emotional or the traumatic reaction to 9/11, DeLillo found himself also driven by the general attitude towards Islam. In this regard, John Carlos Rowe believes that "[DeLillo] has his doubts about the use of children in the Iran-Iraq War, the promise of salvation to all martyrs in the jihad against the West, the prohibition against sex for the terrorists . . . Critical of most of these lessons, he nonetheless accepts the basic premises: that the West is making war on Islam" (129). Perhaps, it was this basic acceptance that pushed DeLillo to present a work where some depictions of the Quran can be described, to some extent at least, as Islamophobic.

The Premise of Naqvi's *Home Boy*: The Quran is the Holy Book of all Muslims

H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009) follows the story of three young Pakistanis living in New York as they experience the backlash of the terrorist attacks. Before 9/11, AC, Jimbo, and Chuck seem to be perfectly integrated into an American lifestyle as they clearly perceive themselves as part of the multicultural community of New York. Hence, Naqvi represents his three protagonists as deeply immersed in the idea of the American dream, and in the belief that America can be the perfect home to everyone regardless of their racial, cultural, or even religious background. This suggestion can be seen in the words of Chuck as he defines the difference between living in Britain and the United States. The young Pakistani is convinced that you may "spend ten years in Britain and not feel British, but after spending ten months in New York, you were a New Yorker, an original settler . . . Sure, they said institutionalized racism was only a few

generations old and latitudinally deep, but in New York you felt you were no different from anybody else; you were your own man; you were free" (Naqvi 19-20).

However, the three Pakistanis experience the consequences of being young and brown Muslims in the immediate days that followed the terrorist attacks. This can be seen in the incident where AC, Jimbo, and Chuck are stopped by a police officer on suspicions that appear to be related to their appearances. In describing this experience, Chuck, the narrator, tells the reader, "I had no idea what triggered [the police's] concern … but at the time the following thought hit me: We're a bunch of brown men in a car, the night of heightened security in the city. We looked appropriately unshaven, unkempt, possibly unwholesome. I could have been paranoid, but it was the first time I had felt this way: uneasy, guilty, criminal" (Naqvi 97). This suggests that as a result of 9/11, Muslims started to believe that their identity was attracting the negative attention of the authorities. Unfortunately, this particular encounter with the police is not the last one as a later arrest ends up with a short period of imprisonment where interrogations reveal that the main concern of the authorities was the religious background of the three Pakistanis.

The horrifying experience of his short imprisonment pushes Chuck to realize that he had suddenly become the Other whose existence is not welcomed in America anymore. This idea can be seen in Chuck's description of his feelings as he rides the subway after returning from prison:

> On the subway ride from prison, I looked away when people looked at me. An ancient Chinese couple in matching embroidered Mao suits watched me unflinchingly and, it would seem, unforgivingly . . . I was conscious of the way I looked, behaved, the way I anxiously scratched my nose, my ear. When they announced "Please report any

> suspicious activity or behavior" over the speakers, I closed my eyes like a child attempting to render himself invisible. (Naqvi 154)

Here, it becomes clear that 9/11 changed other people's perceptions of Chuck and, in turn, affected Chuck's attitude towards America. He realizes that he has suddenly become an intruder into a land that is not his. This is vastly different from Chuck's previous views of New York where he fantasizes that he could be regarded as an original settler. Clearly, the experience of prison symbolizes the drastic shift for Muslims during and after 9/11.

Eventually, the novel ends with Chuck's unforced, but perhaps provoked, decision to leave the United States. This desire to escape from America can be seen in Chuck's emotional phone call to his mother,

> What do you want me to tell you, Ma? That life's changed? The city's changed? That there's sadness around every corner? There are cops everywhere? You know, there was a time when a police presence was reassuring, like at a parade or late at night, on the street, in the subway, but now I'm afraid of them. I'm afraid all the time. I feel like a marked man. I feel like an animal. It's no way to live. Maybe it's just a phase, maybe it'll pass, and things will return to normal, or maybe, I don't know, history will keep repeating itself. (Naqvi 262)

In "'Zone of Exception': The Question of Constituency in H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*," David Waterman argues that Chuck's decision to leave the United States symbolizes a moment of realization. Waterman writes,

> Although he's lived in the US for quite some time, Chuck possesses almost nothing, realizing in starkly material terms what he'd already come to understand in terms of cultural identity and constituency; that he is in fact not an original settler, but only a

> squatter, and has been from the beginning – the "event" has merely acted as a catalyst. (165)

Hence, according to Waterman, 9/11 did not create new modes of discrimination against Muslims; it simply created the circumstances to force Chuck to see clearly the reality of his true status in America long before 9/11.

However, I believe that what destroyed Chuck's hopes of continuing to embrace America as his home is not 9/11 per se, but the fact that he experienced the resulting Islamophobia in its ugliest form. This argument stems from the belief that Chuck's experience with the backlash of 9/11 truly captures what Muslims fear about post-9/11 Islamophobia. Therefore, in the following few pages, I will provide a close reading of the arrest and the interrogation scenes. The goal of the close reading is to highlight Naqvi's success in depicting the struggles of Muslims with the consequences of the excessive religious stereotyping/profiling during the difficult times that followed 9/11.

The long and shocking scenes that describe Chuck's interrogations indicate that *Home Boy* can be read as a text that challenges Islamophobia. However, it seems to me that in order to have a full understanding of the whole context that surrounded these interrogations, we need to pay attention to the circumstances that led to Chuck's arrest since the arresting scene prepares *Home Boy's* reader to understand the irony of Islamophobia during the immediate days that followed 9/11.

To that end, Naqvi begins the arrest scene with excerpts from President George W. Bush's speech to Muslims in America, and around the world. In this historical speech, which Naqvi quotes verbatim, President Bush states the following:

> I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends. It is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them. (122)

Ironically, agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrest the three young Muslims as they are listening to and watching the President's speech. By emphasizing this irony, Naqvi reveals to his reader that in the midst of the heated Islamophobic climate, Bush's reassurances to Muslims became nothing but fake slogans.

This irony is instructive as it reveals the atrocity of the backlash of 9/11 depicted in the detailed scenes that describe the horrifying interrogations that Chuck experience as a result of being a Muslim in the immediate days that followed 9/11. These interrogation scenes become Naqvi's chance for creating a dialectical discussion that can provide the reader with the opportunity to form a full understanding of the misconceptions of Islamophobia.

However, because of the focus of this chapter, I will limit my analysis of the interrogation scenes to Naqvi's way of discussing the Western Islamophobic understanding of the Quran. In fact, this will also allow me to draw a connection between the two literary texts that this chapter is studying. As such, I will present Naqvi's representation of the Quran as a reaction to DeLillo's depiction. This means that in covering Naqvi's portrayal of the Quran, I will focus on two aspects: first, the issue of representing the Muslims' holy Book as a book that is associated with the terrorists, and second, the Quran's overall image as a violent book.

To that end, right from the beginning of the first interrogation, it becomes clear that Chuck's knowledge of the Quran starts to play a role in determining whether he is perceived as a possible terrorist. This can viewed vividly in the interrogator's primary questions to Chuck:

Grizzly: You a terrorist?

Chuck: No, Sir.

Grizzly: You a Moslem?

Chuck: Yes, Sir.

Grizzly: So you read the Ko-Ran?

Chuck: Yes, I've read it. (Naqvi 143)

Here, it becomes clear that the interrogator's questions are suggesting that during the immediate days that followed 9/11, Western authorities believed that there is a logical relationship between the Muslim's attachment to the Quran, and his/her inclination to terrorism. Quickly, Chuck exposes the delimiting racism of the interrogator's line of questioning: "as a Muslim, [the interrogator] figured, I would have special insight into the phenomenon – knowledge of the relevant fatwa or some verse in the Koran – just like a black man, any black man, should be privy to black-on-black violence" (Naqvi 146). Through pushing his reader to be aware of the irrationality in the interrogator's questions, Naqvi exposes the absurdity of Islamophobia, especially, the Islamophobic belief that once a Muslim reads the Quran, he/she is expected to be a terrorist, or at least understands how the terrorist mind works. Hence the interrogator attempts to force an illogical hypothesis that measures the Muslims' inclinations to terrorism on the basis of their knowledge of their own holy Book. In this regard, David Waterman argues that "the interrogator never considers the possibility that perhaps he's asking the wrong questions, especially of someone who is not part of the dominant constituency or in-group, not privy to the

nuances of the aforementioned social schemas and their resulting associations and conclusions" (162). Although I agree with Waterman that the interrogator is obviously asking the wrong questions, I still believe that Naqvi is consciously using this approach in order to emphasize the suggestion that the basic idea of Islamophobia is to assume that all Muslims are in fact the in-group.

Based on these considerations, it might be argued that the novel attempts to challenge the assumptions that 9/11 created, especially, the Islamophobic belief that the Quran is a book specifically connected to the terrorists and to the act of terrorism. Naqvi achieves this goal through widening the circle that the post-9/11 Islamophobia drew regarding the Muslims who are familiar with the Quran. This simply means that unlike *Falling Man*, *Home Boy* is attempting to transform the Islamophobic image of the Muslims' holy Book from a book that is associated with terrorists into a book that is also associated with ordinary Muslims.

As such, in discussing the Islamophobic understanding of the Quran, Naqvi does not limit his analysis to the issue of associating the Quran with the terrorists. He also attempts to discuss the post-9/11 Islamophobic general image of the Quran. This is done through arguing that the terrorists' interpretation of the Quran is the reason for its negative image in the West. This argument can be clarified further by quoting from another part of the interrogation:

Grizzly: Okay, okay, why don't you just stick to the Islamic religion?

Chuck: Okay.

Grizzly: I want to know does the Koran sanction terrorism?

Chuck: I've read it. I'm no terrorist.

Grizzly: Then why do Moslems use it to justify terrorism?

Chuck: It's all a matter of interpretation, isn't it? I mean take the Bible. It's interpreted by, like, Unitarians and Mormones, Lutherans, Pentecostals –

Grizzly: Okay –

Chuck: Eric Rudolph, Mother Teresa, Jerry Falwell, the Lord's Liberation Army –

Grizzly: I said *Okay*! Look. All I want to know is why the hell did they have to blow up the Twin Towers?

Chuck: Your guess, sir, is a good as mine. (147)

Here, it seems that Naqvi is transforming the questioning of Chuck from an FBI interrogation into a cross-cultural, or an interfaith dialogue. This allows Naqvi to introduce a Muslim moderate voice that can answer the Western Islamophobic concerns that are usually associated with the Quran's image. To that end, *Home Boy* is simply suggesting that to ordinary Muslims who are familiar with the Quran, such as Chuck, the terrorists' decision to destroy the Twin Towers cannot be comprehended, and that holy scripture cannot possibly be held accountable for their actions. As a result of that suggestion, the Islamophobic belief that the Quran is justifying the terrorists' actions is challenged. This idea can be seen in Grizzly's repeated answers of "OK" which indicate a Western admission of the irrationality of attempting to find simple and direct answers that could connect the Quran, or the teachings of the Quran, with the tragic events of 9/11.

In terms of countering Islamophobia, the focus on the idea of interpretation as the main issue behind the negative image of the Quran becomes a more convincing argument. To illustrate further, if the conversation between Chuck and the interrogator ended with Chuck's answer of: "I've read it. I'm no terrorist," then Naqvi's argument would be based on the absence of any violent passages in the Quran. However, the interrogator's question of: "Then why do Moslems

use it to justify terrorism?" opens a space for Naqvi to address the central issue of an Islamophobic misunderstanding of the Quran. This is because Chuck's insightful reply of: "It's all a matter of interpretation, isn't it?" takes the responsibility of today's Islamic fundamentalism away from the holy Book, and places it on the terrorists themselves. Hence, when comparing Naqvi's representation of the Quran to DeLillo's, it becomes clear that *Home Boy* is attempting to draw a significantly different image of the Muslims' sacred scripture.

As a literary text, *Home Boy* then can be regarded as a response to novels such as *Falling Man*. While both texts are obviously discussing the Quran, each one of them is attempting to use this discussion for a different purpose. *Falling Man* is embracing or supporting Islamophobia through suggesting the presence of a strong connection between terrorism and the Quran, whereas *Home Boy* is clearly trying to challenge this Western analogy. As a matter of fact, as an Eastern and a Muslim novelist, I believe that Naqvi is using his novel to not only challenge the Islamophobic understanding of the Quran, and consequently, restore its image, but also to counterattack the new forms of the Western representations of Islam. This argument raises a crucial question that simply asks the following: Can *Home Boy* be regarded as an attempt to resist the neo-Orientalist discourse?

Because of their focus on the Quran, it might be argued that what signifies DeLillo's *Falling Man* and the controversy of the Quran's burning is the idea that they are not repeating the old Orientalist discourse. This argument stems from the belief that after 9/11, the West changed its interpretation of Eastern/Muslim violence. In the eyes of the Occident, the Orient's violence was no longer attached to any political, national, or even economical triggers, but rather tied to a deeper root that, as DeLillo's novel and the controversy of the Quran's burning are suggesting, lies in the Orient's religion of Islam. In "Neo-Orientalism and the new barbarism

thesis: aspects of symbolic violence in the Middle East conflict(s)", Dag Tuastad points out that "the basic ideological assumptions of … neo-Orientalism, are consistent with the tenets of new barbarism, where violence is seen as deeply rooted in local culture, which means that political and economic situations and structures are irrelevant" (595). Tuastad's idea of the connection between violence and the Orient's local culture can be sensed in DeLillo's *Falling Man* where Islam is presented as a destructive power not only to the West, but also to the Islamic world itself. This idea can be seen in the character of Hammad where Islam remains the common denominator for his violent past and present. As a soldier he engaged in a Muslim civil war between Shias and Sunnis, and as a terrorist he reoriented this religious violence towards the West. The novel indicates that Islam remains the ideological force that keeps feeding Hammad's violence. Consequently, the reader gets the sense, as Tuastad suggests, that violence is indeed deeply rooted in the Orient's religion and has local origins.

Therefore, I believe that in order to react to this shift in the Western understanding of the Orient, Eastern self-representation needs to stop relying on criticizing the old stereotypes. This means that contemporary Eastern literary authors must engage with challenging the new mode of Orientalist thought. Hence, attacking the Orientalist discourse for representing the Orient/Muslim as the misogynist or the uncivilized can no longer help to affect or change the current nature of the Orientalist representations of the East because 9/11 has lessened the importance of these tired stereotypes.

This idea is conveyed in Birte Heidemann's article "'We are the glue keeping civilization together': Post-Orientalism and counter-Orientalism in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*." There she argues that Chuck's experience of living in the pre and the post-9/11 America is a testimony to the drastic shift in Orientalist stereotyping. Heidemann writes,

> While it is true that Naqvi's protagonists were neither blind nor unsusceptible to Orientalist stereotyping before 9/11, it certainly did not prevent them from forging cross-ethnic alliances, or the sort of insular cosmopolitanism they claimed as their own. Like an "informed" naivety, their Metrostani identity can be read as a gesture towards a calculated acceptance of Orientalism, an Orientalism that did not threaten their communal self-preservation. Post-(9/11) Orientalism, however, ushered an entirely ruptured corpus of sensibilities in its arbitrary, incendiary and even life-threatening ideological forms that cannot lend themselves to any logical explanation. It is for this reason alone that Chuck wonders why his forefathers like Mulk Raj Anand and M.A. Jinnah could feel like "an original settler" in New York City just after spending a month there, and why he, after spending years, is bound to feel like an unwanted "squatter." (298)

Based on Heidemann analysis of the post-9/11 Orientalism in relation to Chuck's experience with 9/11, I believe that any attempt to present an Eastern literary text designed to counter today's Orientalism has to address the issue of Islamophobia, especially, the Western belief that there is a strong relationship between Islam and terrorism. Redrawing the image of the East without engaging in a dialogue that gets to the heart of today's tension between East and West will only result in repeating of the old discussions.

As such, I believe that *Home Boy* not only reveals a genuine understanding of the post-9/11 Orientalism, but also a genuine knowledge of its resulting Islamophobia. In other words, Naqvi's novel is simply suggesting that Islamophobia is not replacing Orientalism, but rather becoming its latest focus. Naqvi understood that associating violence or terrorism with the Orient/Muslim has not only helped define the new Oriental discourse, but it also became its

most, if not only, prevalent feature. Thereby, it might be argued that in order to give this shift in the Orientalist discourse a heavier weight, the novel is highlighting the issue of being viewed as a terrorist while downplaying the old Orientalist stereotypes.

To explain further, in *Home Boy*, the reader meets Eastern characters that do not fit the usual standards of what defines the Orient. To that end, Chuck, A.C., and Jumbo are clearly characters that cannot be associated with the classical Oriental discourse. This can be seen in their Western sounding names, the fact that they use English to speak with each other, and even their Western lifestyle, all of which do not correspond to how the West usually view the Orient. At the same time, however, the novel indicates that as a result of 9/11, Chuck, A.C., and Jumbo are still viewed as the Other. In return, this communicate to the reader that Islam, even though the three Pakistanis are not even practicing it, is what defines these Orient characters in the world of post-9/11. This clearly suggests that the events of 9/11 have simply reshaped the way in which Orientalism is othering the Orient through focusing on religion instead of culture or ethnicity.

The importance of this suggestion lies in its ability to establish the perfect environment for countering the neo-Orientalist discourse. By ignoring the old traits of Orientalism and highlighting the new, the novel allows its reader to concentrate only on the most suppressive issue. As a result, the reader can now realize that the new stigma that Orientalists associate with the Muslim character is their violence. Out of that suggestion comes the following question: Why does the novel use the Quran as part of countering this neo-Orientalist discourse?

On the face of it, it might be argued that the novel is discussing the Quran because of the fact that the holy Book is a signification of the whole faith of Islam. Hence, by restoring the image of the Muslims' sacred scripture, the novel is actually seeking to restore the image of

Islam in the West. This means that the Quran becomes just an example that Naqvi uses in order to support his argument.

However, I believe that in the world of post-9/11, the Quran by itself have become a strong part of the neo-Orientalist discourse that aims at linking Islam, or Muslims as individuals, with terrorism. In such an argument, the Quran is used as the evidence that proves the presence of a link between Islam as a faith with violence. This usually happens, as this chapter argues, through either selecting certain verses and presenting them outside of their historical context, or depicting the terrorists as the devoted followers of the Quran's teachings. As such, it might be argued that by engaging in a genuine discussion of the misconceptions that surrounds the Quran, Naqvi is not only attempting to restore the image of Islam per se, but also engaging in resisting a dominant feature of the neo-Orientalist discourse.

To explain further, if we revisit Naqvi's interrogation scene, we might be able to view the interrogator's character as the mirror that reflects how the neo-Orientalist discourse depicts the Quran. Besides the fact that it is usually eager to link the terrorists' actions with the Quran, what really distinguishes this neo-Orientalist discourse is the fact that it is not only inaccurate and lacking adequate knowledge about the Quran, but it also engages in hasty, reductive conclusions. I believe that while these features are reflected in the interrogator's character, they are also present in DeLillo's novel. For example, in *Falling Man*, DeLillo mistakenly refers to the doubt verse as the first line of the Quran. Although this clearly reflects a lack of knowledge of the Quran, it is still accompanied by conclusions that suggest that the Muslims' holy Book conveys an evil nature. Through the character of the interrogator, Naqvi captures these neo-Orientalist discursive tendencies. To that end, during the interrogation scene, it becomes evident that the interrogator is not familiar with the suspect's holy Book. This can be seen in the interrogator's

unusual pronunciation of the Quran as he asks Chuck, "so you read the Ko-Ran?" Yet, similar to DeLillo, he is also convinced that the Book, which he seems to know nothing about, is what pushed the terrorists to attack the United States.

Finally, the significance of *Home Boy* extends beyond being just a literary work that depicts 9/11 from the Muslim perspective. In representing the Muslim experience with 9/11, Naqvi also engages in countering Islamophobia through redrawing the image of the Muslims' sacred scripture, especially in terms of challenging the Islamophobic belief that states that the Quran is the book of the terrorists. This allows Naqvi to resist a dominant feature of the neo-Orientalist discourse that takes advantage of the negative image of the Quran to argue that violence is deeply rooted in the Orient's culture.

Conclusion

After 9/11, the Quran's image in the West transformed from being a holy Book that symbolizes the religion of Islam into a book that represents the ideology of the terrorists. This Islamophobic understanding of the Quran, however, should not be understood as being the outcome of the actual terrorist attacks of 9/11. What really destroyed the image of the Quran was the terrorists' propaganda that presented the Book as a text that legitimated their crimes. This propaganda was also accompanied by a Western prejudice that decided to understand the Muslims' holy Book through the interpretations of these terrorists. Unfortunately, the combination of these two factors provided a fertile environment for the spread of various Islamophobic understandings of the Quran.

As a literary scholar, I believe that the literature of 9/11 can provide us with insights to this Islamophobic treatment of the holy Book. Hence, although the majority of the literature that was produced by Western authors attempted to distance itself from this sensitive topic, some

works, unfortunately, have fallen in the trap of embracing this Islamophobic understanding. This negative depiction of the Quran can be seen in DeLillo's *Falling Man* where the reader might easily reach the conclusion that the Book's message is a message of violence. The essence of DeLillo's representation of the Muslims' sacred scripture represents it as an ideological power that unites the terrorists and pushes them into committing their crimes.

Other examples of the literature of 9/11 were active in countering these Islamophobic ideas about the Quran. This approach is best seen in the works of authors with an Eastern/Muslim background. To that end, as this chapter attempted to argue, Naqvi's novel *Home Boy* can be regarded as a successful work in terms of engaging in a genuine discussion that challenges the Islamophobic image of the Quran. This allows Naqvi to counter not only the Islamophobic concerns about the Muslims' holy Book, but also the neo-Orientalist discourse that uses the Quran as a tool in order to draw a negative image of the Orient.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ISLAMOPHOBIC IMAGE OF THE MOSQUE IN THE LITERATURE OF 9/11

"What better way to mark your territory than to plant a giant mosque on the still-barren land of the World Trade Center . . . How Disgusting"
—Pamela Geller, "Monster Mosque Pushes Ahead in Shadow of World Trade Center" (1)

"The mosque took him in as a child of eleven; it let him be born again"
—John Updike, *Terrorist* (99)

"How often do you pray in a mosque?" "I have not prayed in a mosque since I was a young man"
—Laila Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land* (231)

In this chapter, I will begin with a brief historical introduction that reveals how the state of mosques in the United States changed as a result of the tragic events of 9/11. This will be followed by analyzing the controversy of the Ground Zero mosque as a symbolic moment that exemplifies the West's Islamophobic understanding of Muslims' places of worship. Following this analysis, the chapter will analyze closely the representation of mosques in John Updike' *Terrorist* and Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*. In doing so, I hope to achieve my goal of arguing that some of the literature of 9/11 endorses rather than challenges the Islamophobic understanding of mosques.

To the majority of Muslims who practice Islam on a daily basis, mosques are seen as a crucial part of their daily lives. The significance of these places of worship stems from the idea that Muslims are encouraged by their Islamic belief to visit mosques five times a day in order to perform prayers among a group. In this sense, the mosque as a physical place becomes part of fulfilling a fundamental Islamic practice that is believed to be a religious obligation to all Muslims. Thereby, it might be argued that, in short, the individuals' essential religious relationship to these places is characterized in a known and recognized act of worship.

However, in communities where Muslims are a minority, the individuals' attachment to mosques becomes even stronger. Besides the original religious role of these places of worship,

mosques in foreign lands start to play some social roles too. In "Mosque-Based Emotional Support Among Young Muslim Americans," Ann Nguyen and Robert Tyler reveal that mosques in the United States provide services for their Muslim communities that do not possess any religious nature. Nguyen and Tyler state that "[u]nlike mosques in Muslim countries, where their purpose is mainly for worship, mosques in the United States serve additional functions as places for social gatherings, community and political involvement, community resources (i.e., legal, financial, social, cultural), social services, and education" (538).

Nguyen and Tyler's idea can also be linked to Shariq Siddiqui's study on the charitable role of mosques. According to Siddiqui, a large percentage of mosques in America are active in providing humanitarian support for their communities. As such, the idea of the social services that mosques in foreign lands provide extends beyond the emotional support, to also include financial help for the needy and the less fortunate. In this regard, Siddiqui writes,

> Mosques are also important parts of philanthropy among American Muslims. Eighty-four percent of mosques were reported in 2001 to give cash assistance to families or individuals; 74 percent provided counseling services; 60 percent had prison or jail programs; 55 percent had a food pantry or soup kitchen or collected food for the poor; 53 percent had a thrift store or collected clothes for the poor; 28 percent had a tutoring or literacy program; 18 percent had an antidrug or anticrime program; 16 percent had a day care or preschool program; and 12 percent had a substance abuse program. (208)

On the basis of these considerations, it might be argued then that mosques in foreign lands become not just the physical places that provide room for performing prayers in a group, but also the cultural centers that provide a sense of support and belonging for their local Muslim communities.

Furthermore, the existence of mosques among these minorities becomes crucial for the process of social assimilation and integration with the non-Muslim community. As social centers, mosques usually help to create a positive atmosphere that bridges the gap between Muslims and the local community in which they exist. To that end, mosques in America, and elsewhere in the West, usually hold social events aimed at promoting interfaith awareness, and cross-cultural understanding. As Amaney Jamal points out, after the tragic events of 9/11, "mosques are increasingly becoming sites where Muslims attempt to bridge the gaps between Americans and Muslim Americans that stereotypes have created. Open houses and interfaith dialogues have been initiated at various mosques across the country as Muslims try to reach out to members of other religious denominations" (60). However, when considering 9/11 as an event that reshaped the relationship between the United Sates and Islam, one has to understand the differences between the state of mosques in America before and after the terrorist attacks of New York.

A Brief Comparison of the State of Mosques Before and After 9/11

Recognizing their importance, the United States, through its government's highest levels, welcomed and encouraged the spread of mosques. In this regard, Nahid Kabir writes about the Muslim presence in America in the twentieth century: "As the Muslim community grew, the Federation of Islamic Associations of the United States and Canada was founded in 1953. American authorities gradually recognized the Muslim presence. In 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower inaugurated the Washington mosque by cutting its ribbon" (13). Consequently, mosques began to spread across America in almost every city with a sizeable Muslim community. For example, according to the Pew Research Center for Religion and Public Life, by the end of 2011, the number of mosques in the United States was over 2100 mosques (1). This

large number suggests that the United States' laws have always granted Muslims the right to practice their faith in mosques. This, however, does not necessarily mean that mosques enjoyed a positive relationship with the American public in the decades that preceded 9/11.

To illustrate further, after the Oklahoma bombings of 1995, where the media was too hastily to accuse Middle Eastern Muslims of responsibility for the bombings, a number of mosques across the United States were attacked. In fact, in "Racializing Islam Before and After 9/11: From Melting Pot to Islamophobia," Hilal Elver points out that the bombings of Oklahoma City initiated a number of attacks against mosques that ranged from vandalism to bombing. In this regard, Elver writes, "as the mainstream media agitated anti-Muslim sentiment, Muslim communities became subject to hate crimes and violent attacks on mosques, including the bombing and burning of mosques in several states, such as Texas, Indiana, and California" (136). These attacks clearly indicate that mosques have always been the stage, even before 9/11, for expressing one's prejudice against Muslims.

Furthermore, Yvonne Haddad suggests that the attacks against mosques that followed the Oklahoma City bombings were even more organized that just being random reactions by some revengeful fanatics. This idea is conveyed in *Muslims on the Americanization Path?* (2000), where Haddad argues that "In addition to the vengeful acts of some isolated Americans inflamed by media reports about Islam, Muslims fear the more organized hostile activates of certain groups" (25). The reason for the fear, according to Haddad, was due to the fact that prior to the bombings of Oklahoma City, some extremist groups such as the Jewish Defense League (JDL) had actually threatened to destroy mosques a decade earlier. Haddad writes, "the JDL threatened several American mosques and other Islamic targets in 1985, and is suspected of having bombed the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) offices" (25). Haddad's insights into

the atmosphere that followed the Oklahoma City bombings are crucial because they make it clear to us that organized prejudice against mosques existed long before 9/11. Therefore, it seems that some voices in America have always, even prior to 9/11, viewed mosques as alien objects that represents a foreign religion. Consequently, their status as welcomed institutions remained subject to the absence of any tension between Muslims and the United States. This argument could be supported by the controversy of the Oklahoma City bombings where rumors inspired by the media were more than enough to encourage attacks against mosques. This also proves the presence of a few extremist voices in America who were looking, long before the unfortunate events of New York, for excuses to demonstrate their prejudice against Muslims through attacking mosques.

Unfortunately, however, after 9/11, America witnessed a rapid rise in the number of voices that believed that these places of worship had a strong relationship with terrorism. To be more precise, these beliefs were driven by concerns that mosques took advantage of America's laws of religious freedom, and also laws of freedom of speech, to spread radicalization within the United States. Hence, it might possible to describe the current situation of mosques in America along the lines of Nadia Marsouki's description where she points out that after 9/11, "mosques [were] represented as the Trojan horses of radical Islamic groups in American suburbs" (71). As a result of this pessimistic understanding of the Muslims' places of worship, the years that followed 9/11 saw a tendency among the American public to resist the spread of mosques. That can be seen in numerous incidents that witnessed fierce opposition towards building mosques in, for example, the city of Temecula Valley in California, the city of Murfreesboro in Tennessee, and also in Pompano Beach in Florida. Commenting on the rising number of these incidents, Marsouki writes, "mosque controversies in the United States are an indication of how much the

visibility of Islam disturbs and upsets an increasing number of people" (71). Therefore, one might possibly argue that after 9/11, the image of mosques suffered greatly because of their symbolism as the structural entities that represented Islam.

Still, the claims and the suspicions over the role of mosques in America in spreading radicalism in the West are not totally baseless accusations. In fact, because mosques grant imams the opportunity to hold sermons, a few incidents have happened where some imams have misused this trust by advocating for extremism. For instance, as Charles Kurzman, David Schanzer, and Ebrahim Moosa state, "One imam who came through in early 2001 and spoke of revolutionary jihad at the main Yemeni mosque was immediately banned from the premises" (477). Although this particular incident that happened in what is known as New York's Yemini Mosque supports the idea that Muslim communities in the United States reject radical ideas, the incident still points out to a substantial issue. To be more precise, the issue arises from the space that mosques give to each imam to have some sort of an ideological influence on people. This could allow imams, according to some Western fears, to inject poisonous ideas. Yet, as Kurzman, Schanzer, and Moosa emphasize, this particular issue over the radicalism of imams tends to get exaggerated not only by the Western media, but also by some politicians. To support this claim, they cite statements by Congressman Peter King of New York where he stated in a radio interview that over 80 percent of the mosques in United States are controlled by radical imams (481). King's exaggerated number, according to Kurzman, Schanzer, and Moosa, reveals the irrationality of the voices that are too hasty to blame the Muslim leadership for the issue of extremism without providing any facts (483).

Hence, it might be argued that 9/11 not only distorted the image of mosques per se, but also the image of their imams since they are the people who run these institutions. After 9/11, the

West began to suspiciously view imams as the persons responsible for spreading extremism in the West. As a result, imams in some Western countries were evaluated according to their efforts to preach against fundamentalism. In his article This, "Good Imam, Bad Imam: Civic Religion and National Integration in Britain post-9/11," Jonathan Birt states, "If prior to 9/11, the emphasis in official discourse about the role of imams has been upon civic renewal, post-9/11, it has focused instead on the drive to counteract extremism" (687). In fact, some Western governments even helped to train mosques' imams to play an active role in fighting religious extremism and fundamentalist ideologies. In this respect, Peter O'Brien points out, "France and Spain each have produced guidebooks for how imams are to be trained to foster democracy and discourage extremism" (213). This suggests that imams have been constantly put to the test to prove to the West that they do not embrace any fundamentalist and extremist ideologies.

To Muslims living in the West, then, the challenge becomes their ability to restore the image of mosques. Unfortunately, the shock of the terrorist attacks, along with the terrorists' constant propaganda, has only served to inflame an atmosphere of Islamophobia that has pushed some in the United States, and the West in general, to perceive mosques as the dangerous places that create fundamentalists. For example, according to Todd Green, this rising sense of Islamophobia drove authorities in the West to monitor mosques and imams' sermons in order to prevent any radical activities. Green points out two examples of these unusual security measures by Western authorities. While in Germany "mosques were searched, and the identities of those attending Friday prayers were checked" as a result of the 2005 London bombings, in New York, the police "infiltrated mosques and recorded what attendees and imams said" as part of a surveillance program that was only disbanded in 2014 (Green 275-278). What these unusual security measures reveal is that the West became partly convinced that Muslims' places of

worship could in fact pose a threat. Thus, it might be argued that after 9/11, the West began to worry that beyond providing room for prayers, mosques had threatening roles that extended beyond innocent cultural and social interaction.

To the end, the controversy that surrounded what is known as the Ground Zero Mosque, also referred to as Park 51 Islamic Center, provides the clearest example of the fears of mosques and their imams. This is because the rejection that the mosque received became a symbolic example of the West's Islamophobic understanding of the Muslim's places of worship. Therefore, in the following few pages of this chapter, I will look closely at this controversy through highlighting views that represent both sides, whether they were for or against the proposed mosque. The significance of analyzing the controversy of the Ground Zero Mosque is to establish important background knowledge for measuring the extent to which contemporary literature reflects, embraces, or challenges the image of mosques in the world of post-9/11.

The Controversy of the Ground Zero Mosque

In 2009, the New York Times reported that plans to build a massive Islamic community center in Lower Manhattan were ongoing. The original plan by the developers for the Cordoba Islamic Center, the proposed name of the project, was to build a massive13-story building that was not to be similar to traditional mosques. To that end, besides providing a large space for prayers, the Cordoba Islamic Center was also going to have other social facilities such as a theater, an Islamic art gallery, a sport court, and a memorial to the victims of the World Trade Centers. Hence, it might be argued that the purpose of the mosque was not only to provide an Islamic center for the Muslim community of New York, but also to encourage religious tolerance and provide that unfortunate part of the city with a different perspective of Islam, following on so closely from the negativity surrounding the Muslim identity of the attackers. As Jade Batstone

states in his insightful article "From Rubble to Respect at the Ground Zero Mosque," Park 51 offered "the opportunity to emerge from the rubble of fear and prejudice and rebuild a city and a nation on the solid foundation of mutual understanding" (148).

For that reason, the project found approbation from the highest levels of the government. Endorsements came from both President Barack Obama and New York mayor, Michael Bloomberg who publicly expressed their support of the project. For example, during the White House annual Iftar dinner,[6] President Obama stated, "Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as anyone else in this country. And that includes the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in Lower Manhattan, in accordance with local laws and ordinances" (qtd. in Tumulty 1). Hence, the project was supported because it not only encouraged religious tolerance, but also because the presence of a mosque near Ground Zero was a testimony to American values that granted religious freedom to everyone.

However, due to the sensitivity of the location of the proposed Islamic center, voices opposing the creation of the project began to appear. To the adversaries, the presence of a massive mosque two blocks away from the ruins of the World Trade Centers was an insensitive decision to the memory of the victims of 9/11 and their families. In this regard, Sarah Palin who was the 2008 Republican vice-presidential nominee, asked moderate Muslims to oppose the building of the Islamic Center because she believed that it was a provocation to those who were affected by the events of 9/11 (Kabir 21). Similar to Palin's views, the US Senator John Cornyn condemned the project, declaring, "I do think it's unwise . . . to build a mosque at the site where 3,000 Americans lost their lives as a result of a terrorist attack" (qtd. in Kabir 21). As a result, it became clear that what started as an effort to bridge the gap between Islam and the United States

[6] The White House Annual Iftar Dinner is an annual event that is held by the U.S. President and the First Lady in order to celebrate the beginning of the Muslim month of Ramadan.

became the center of a national controversy that renewed the 9/11 debate over the position of Islam in America.

Still, although politicians engaged heavily in that debate, they were not the most prominent faces of the controversy. In fact, it appears that the media found in the voices of unfamiliar figures a more interesting story. As such, the Internet blogger, Pamela Geller, and the project's proposed imam, Feisal Abdul Rauf did not just become the face of the controversy, but also the recognized representatives of the parties with irreconcilably different opinions on the mosque's construction.

Although Geller describes herself as a human right activist prior to the controversy, her activism was only limited to a few Internet blogs that were not very popular. However, the controversy of the Ground Zero Mosque, gained her blog, and consequently Geller too, a national popularity due to the blog's vehement opposition to the construction of the Cordoba Mosque. In this regard, her famous blog's entry that was entitled, "Monster Mosque Pushes Ahead in Shadow of World Trade Center Islamic Death and Destruction," gained huge popularity among those who opposed the project. In this passionate blog, Geller writes, "what better way to mark your territory than to plant a giant mosque on the still-barren land of the World Trade Center . . . How Disgusting" (qtd. in Lean 42). In fact, in his full study of the phenomenon of Islamophobia in the world of post-9/11, Todd Green, comments on the role of Geller in the whole story of the Ground Zero Mosque, arguing that "Geller is one of the main reasons the center, also known as the Park51 Islamic Center, became the focus of so much controversy" (210).

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, on the other hand, perhaps due to his assigned position as the Imam for the Cordoba Project, became the face that represented the demands to build the

mosque. Besides being the Project's imam, the significance of Abdul Rauf's position in the whole controversy stems from his well-known advocacy efforts for enhancing Muslim–West relations. Chris Earle describes the imam as "an author, activist, and spiritual leader…who identifies himself as a moderate Muslim, [and who] unequivocally spoke out against terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11, including his 2005 book, *What's Right With Islam is What's Right With America*" (123). Unfortunately, however, during this heated Islamophobic controversy, Imam Abdul Rauf's position transformed from the voice of tolerance, or at least the main endorser of the project, to the voice of the enemy. Hence, on a personal level, Imam Abdul Rauf won the lion's share of criticism from the adversaries like Geller.

In *The Islamophobia Industry*, Nathan Lean analyzes the possible reasons that may have pushed Geller to include Imam Abdul Rauf in some of her harsh criticism of the project. Lean writes,

> In order to heighten a sense of fear among her followers and show them that the threat she warned of was real, Geller needed to provide her base with a clear target. A foreign name, a Middle Eastern accent, and piercing dark eyes resembling those of Ayatollah Khomeini made Feisal Abdul Rauf the perfect match. In a matter of days, the man whose vision for a peaceful dialogue between faith groups was cast as the conspiring mastermind of a community center that was allegedly a secret headquarters for terrorism. (47)

Nevertheless, the significance of Abdul Rauf and Geller's dualism stems from the suggestion that it reveals the irony of Islamophobia. For while Geller's harsh attacks towards the project were clearly messages of rejection that reveal a tremendous amount of religious intolerance, her harsh views and attacks were simply received, at least by the media, as an

opposition. At the same time, Imam Abdul Rauf's efforts for the creation of the Islamic Center of Lower Manhattan, although were driven by a desire to show New York city the true side of Islam, ironically became identified as an insensitive gesture. Hence, it might be argued here that the way the two points of view were twisted and perceived, intentionally I believe, outside of their true meaning suggests that Islamophobia can indeed become just a cover for a deeper level of organized religious prejudice.

This prejudice is indicated in the fact that the issue of the sensitivity of the location of the mosque as the main reason for opposing the project appears to be just an excuse for the majority of the adversaries. This idea can be seen in Brian Schaffner's full study, "Support at Any Distance? The Role of Location and Prejudice in Public Opposition to the Ground Zero Mosque." Concerned with the reactions that surrounded the Ground Zero Mosque, the study reveals that the location of the Islamic Center was not the actual motive behind those who rejected the building of the mosque. As Schaffner argues, "If that proximity was crucial in reducing support for the Cordoba House Project, then a similar project located farther from the World Trade Center site should be less likely to activate feelings of group threat and, therefore, win more support from the majority group" (754). In this respect, Schaffner comments that the findings of his study "suggest that proximity to the World Trade Center did not cause most Americans to oppose the mosque's construction, but gave those Americans a socially acceptable excuse to express their general intolerance for the project" (759). In other words, Schaffner's study shows that people who opposed the creation of the Ground Zero Mosque were more likely to oppose the building of mosques elsewhere. Therefore, it might be argued that the importance of Schaffner's finings do not only stem from their ability to reveal the attitude towards the Ground Zero Mosque per se, but more towards mosques in the United States in general.

Furthermore, the issue of insensitivity in relation to the whole controversy that surrounded the Ground Zero Mosque can be viewed from a different angle. This suggestion becomes clear when we read the controversy from the perspective of the Muslims who are part of the community of New York. In this sense, when the decision to build the mosque was perceived as an insensitive act towards the victims of 9/11, the demand to stop that project becomes also an equal act of insensitivity towards the Muslims of New York given that these voices that wanted to prevent the erection of mosque were depriving a certain group from the right to practice religion. It also becomes a shocking reminder to Muslims of how the United States perceived them. In "Between Acceptance and Rejection: Muslim Americans and the Legacies of September 11," Moustafa Bayoumi describes his emotions as a Muslim after witnessing a demonstration that was held to support the project, and another one that was held for the opposite reason. To Bayoumi, the differences in size, organization, and media coverage make the demonstration that came to oppose the mosque a reminder of the difficulty of being a Muslim in post-9/11 America. In this regard, he states, "[t]he enormous difference between the two demonstrations pointedly illustrates how Muslim American life has precariously swung, and continues to swing, between poles of acceptance and rejection since 9/11" (15). Bayoumi continues, "the zeal of their [the opponents'] passions against Muslims illustrated how much being a Muslim in America today is to embody, quite literally, some of America's most contested political and cultural debates. I came home depressed" (16).

Therefore, the importance of the whole controversy that surrounded the Ground Zero Mosque lies in its ability to communicate two crucial and interrelated messages. Firstly, the controversy proves that there are voices in the West, regardless of their weight, who believe that mosques as places of worship are connected to extremism. Secondly, and more importantly

perhaps, the controversy also shows that as a result of that belief, Muslims living in the West are the group who are really affected by the consequences of this perception of mosques. These ideas indicate the importance of isolating the tragedy 9/11, and terrorism in general, from the image of mosques in the West.

In terms of literature, can literary authors depict matters of public controversies while at the same time distancing themselves from the effects of Islamophobia? This is important to consider when other textual venues such as the documentary *Undercover Mosque* (2007), sought to inflame Islamophobia through broadcasting an edited version of the original videos (Sutcliffe 51). Thus, the following pages of this chapter will concentrate on studying closely whether the literature of 9/11 was successful in challenging the Islamophobic beliefs about mosques, or if it in fact fell in the trap of producing fictional works that are simply inspired by the beliefs of Islamophobia. In other words, were literary authors able to use fiction to reveal a prevailing cultural misconception of mosques?

Mosques in the Literature of 9/11

As a literary scholar, I believe that the majority of the literature that addresses the tragedy of 9/11 tries to avoid linking mosques to terrorism. This approach can be seen in Richard Flanagan's *The Unknown Terrorist*, Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge*. This extends, of course, to the writings of authors with Eastern backgrounds such as Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, H. M Naqvi's *Home Boy*, and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. However, other works have linked mosques, whether directly or indirectly, to terrorism. In these works, mosques are represented as havens for terrorists. This can be seen in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Martin Amis' *The Second Plane*, and John Updike's *Terrorist*. Unfortunately, it seems that these authors believed that they had to depict mosques negatively because they were

trying to depict the perspective of the terrorist. This argument is troubling because it reveals the fact that Islamophobia has been successful in spreading the belief that mosques belong to the terrorists, not to the moderate Muslims.

Therefore, I believe that there is a need to take a closer look at some of these negative representations of mosques in order to reveal the irrationality of the Islamophobic depiction of mosques. To achieve this goal, the following pages will study the representation of mosques in *Terrorist* by John Updike and *Once in a Promised Land* by Leila Halaby. The analysis of the two texts will focus on the idea that it might be understandable for Updike's text to suggest that mosques are the labs that create terrorist because of the fact that *Terrorist* is a product of a Western imagination that might have been affected by Islamophobia. However, when Halaby's text attempts to suggest that "good" Muslims are the ones who stay away from mosques, the image of these places of worship inevitably turns negative and thus becomes deeply upsetting for Muslim readers. Hence, given this perhaps surprising consensus between Eastern and Western writers, the chapter will raise the concern that the phenomenon of Islamophobia is so comprehensive that it has penetrated Eastern self-representation.

John Updike's *Terrorist*: Mosques Radicalize Young Muslim Americans

Similar to DeLillo's *Falling Man*, John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) introduces its only Muslim character through the concept of terrorism. The only difference, however, is that unlike DeLillo's Hammad, Updike's terrorist, Ahmad, is not a fully developed character when it comes to embracing a jihadist or a fundamentalist ideology. This allows Updike to move away from the exact event of 9/11, and turn the focus towards the factors that shape the terrorist. In this regard, John-Paul Colgan argues that "In *Terrorist*,-Updike's use of the novel form, as well as his creation of a protagonist who has himself lived through the events of 9/11, allows him to escape

the confines of 9/11 as historical event and to examine the issue of terrorist motivation in greater depth" (126). Thereby, in Updike's text, the reader gets the opportunity to witness closely how ideological manipulation is capable of transforming an innocent Arab-American teenager into becoming a terrorist who is eager to destroy the lives of countless innocents in the false belief of fulfilling a holy mission.

In this respect, Catherine Morley believes that Updike's imagination is crucial in terms of bringing a genuine depiction of the character of the terrorist. As a result of that creativity, according to Morley, the reader is given an unorthodox and a more complex depiction of the character of the terrorist. Morley writes,

> One might argue that by outlining affinities with Ahmad and comparing his fervour with that of other religious faiths, Updike, in fact, avoids the clichés and stereotypes of ranting mad suicide-bombers that abound in the American media. By empathizing with Ahmad, by offering a sympathetic portrayal of faith, doubt and confusion, the keenly Protestant Updike offers his readership a more complex terrorist, and a much less reductive picture than that which the critics decry. (255)

However, in my analysis of *Terrorist*, I will argue that Updike's representation of Ahmad does not avoid the clichés and the stereotypes that surround a Western understanding of the terrorists. In fact, the novel relies heavily on these clichés and stereotypes to create a fictional character that can fulfill the Islamophobic understanding of the factors that create the terrorist, especially, the repetitive theory that the mosque is the primary source of radicalism.

In this sense, Updike's terrorist becomes the result of a reductive picture created by post-9/11 Islamophobia. Hence, while Morley believes that Ahmad as a terrorist might not fit the stereotypical portrayal of the character of the terrorist, I strongly believe that the factors that

shape this terrorist seem to be very stereotypical. In depicting this journey of radicalization, Updike unfortunately distorts the image of mosques in the United States because he endorses the post-911 Islamophobic understanding of these places of worship. As such, it might be argued that while Muslims in America hope to represent their mosques as the cultural centers that promote religious tolerance, Updike choses to represent them as simply the labs that create terrorists.

Terrorist follows the story of Ahmad Mullaway in his transformation from a moderate Muslim into an extremist. As the son of an immigrant Egyptian father and an Irish-American mother, Ahmad grows up having two conflicting identities. On the one hand, his skin, his facial features, and his name are constant reminders that he is an Arab who has a Muslim background. On the other hand, the disappearance of his Egyptian father during Ahmad's early childhood pushes the novel's protagonist to grow up seeing life as an American and considering America as his only home. However, the rejection and the discrimination that Arabs and Muslims face after 9/11 drives Ahmad to eagerly reconnect to his roots as an act of solidarity with his fellow Muslims. As a result, Ahmad's mother, in an attempt not to deprive him of his Arabic and Muslim heritages, allows him to go to the local mosque to practice Islam and to learn the Arabic language. Unfortunately, it is here that the mosque's Yemini imam, Sheikh Rashid, introduces Ahmad to an Islamic fundamentalist ideology that radicalizes the young Arab-American's attitude towards America. Consequently, in the eyes of the radicalized Ahmad, America becomes the sworn enemy of both, his religion as a Muslim, and his race as an Arab.

From this point on, the novel's plot shifts to focus on the psychological struggle that Ahmad experiences as a result of agreeing to commit an act of terror. On the one hand, the guidance of Jack Levy, his schoolmaster, becomes a force that appears to pull him away from

going forward with the suicidal mission. On the other hand, the continued manipulation by the mosque's imam keeps the Arab-American teenager ideologically motivated throughout the whole novel. The climax of this psychological struggle can be seen in the novel's final scene as Updike presents Ahmad driving a truck loaded with explosives in an attempt to destroy the Lincoln Tunnel while Levy is in the passenger seat. Fortunately, the novel ends with a last-minute change of heart, caused by Levy's inspiring words, that prevents Ahmad from committing a horrendous act of terror.

Because my analysis of *Terrorist* focuses on Updike's representation of mosques, I feel that it is important to emphasize that any negativity that is attached to the image of the imam will consequently affect the image of the mosque as well. The imam, regardless of whether he is an extremist or not, is the recognized figure who represents the institution of mosques. Therefore, in order to analyze Updike's depiction of mosques as the places that radicalize moderate Muslims, the following pages will look closely at Updike's representation of both, the mosque and the imam.

The issue of Updike's representation of the imam arises from Sheikh Rashid's position as the mosque's imam, who is also brainwashing Ahmad's mind at the same time. The combination of the two roles is dangerous in terms of spreading the post-9/11 Islamophobic perception of mosques as the schools that teach extremism, and which graduate terrorists. Sheikh Rashid's two missions may push the Western reader to believe that spreading religious radicalism is an organized job for mosques. As a result, this reader might become convinced that mosques in the West have a secret mission that it is carried out by their imams. Unfortunately, this leads to the conclusion that mosques and their imams are the sources of Islamic radicalism.

Therefore, it might be argued that through its negative representation of the imam, the fantasies of Islamophobia are fulfilled. In *Terrorist*, we read that *all* imams "preach terrible things against America, but some of them go beyond that . . . in advocating violence against the state" (Updike 134). While this exaggeration contradicts what Birt has argued, that imams in the West are focusing on counteracting extremism, it unfortunately fits perfectly with Islamophobic voices such as Congressman Peter King who ironically seems less pessimistic than Updike when he declared, as mentioned above, that radical imams are controlling 80 percent of the mosques in United States. This means that Updike's fictional imam reflects the prevailing negative understanding of imams of the kind broadcast by King. At the same time, it also indicates that Updike is using fiction to support an Islamophobic representation of imams.

Updike's negative representation of the mosque's imam realistically reflects some of the Western concerns towards mosques. This suggestion can be seen in Anna Hartnell's analysis of Updike's comments on the character of Sheikh Rashid. Hartnell states that "when asked if his portrayal of Ahmad's imam didn't seem rather Orientalist, Updike unconvincingly defends himself by saying that 'clichés contain a certain amount of truth or they wouldn't have arisen in the first place' and claims his right as a writer to 'let loose' his feelings" (490).[7] This suggests that Updike is simply using subjectivity to justify his Islamophobic representation of the imam's character. In this sense, he is using an aesthetic guise to justify prejudice.

The fact that Updike finds it normal that his representation of the mosque's imam only reflects clichés reveals an interesting aspect of Islamophobia. It simply suggests that Islamophobia seems to be capable of creating an unusual atmosphere where the most absurd

[7] Updike's original comments were stated in an interview with Tom Ashbrook for the Boston's NPR News Station.

accusations can become somehow acceptable. Updike's public embrace of the Islamophobic representation of imams is supported by Pamela Geller's concerns over Imam Abdul Rauf's intentions for the use of Ground Zero Mosque as a secret headquarters for terrorism. As Neale argues, "In a matter of days, the man [Imam Abdul Rauf] whose vision for a peaceful dialogue between faith groups was cast as the conspiring mastermind of a community center that was allegedly a secret headquarters for terrorism" (47). Hence, it might be argued that in any given context where Islamophobia is prevailing, the most negative conclusions about Islam are taken as truth.

In light of that, a reader of *Terrorist* might easily become convinced that mosques' imams in the West are more concerned with plots than worship. This idea can be seen where Ahmad accepts the suicidal mission and appears to have no other reason to continue visiting the mosque. Sheik Rashid then firmly orders Ahmad to stay away from the mosque because its purpose as a place to discuss terror has concluded: "You and I will not speak of this [the plot] again. Nor will you visit here [the mosque] again" (Updike 238). This suggests that imams in the West are simply recruiting agents who are not really interested in any acts of worship. As a result, as an Islamophobic text, *Terrorist* is clearly transforming the image of the imam from a peaceful man of God to one committed to terror.

This suggestion is emphasized by drawing a comparison between imams and other religious figures who represent different faiths. For instance, in Ahmad's graduation ceremony, the high school invites a Catholic priest, a Presbyterian minister, a Jewish rabbi, and an unnamed Muslim imam who does not seem to be Sheikh Rashid. The purpose of the invitation is to represent the students' different religious backgrounds. Interestingly, however, all the religious figures show signs of peacefulness and love except the imam. This apparent hostility of the imam

can be seen in how Levy describes the man, "Levy studies the imam – a slight, impeccable man embodying a belief system that not many years ago managed the deaths of, among others, hundreds of commuters from northern New Jersey" (Updike 112). This description of the imam drives Katharina Dodou to argue, "Jack [Levy] finds that he objects to the imam, but not the Catholic priest or rabbi. This, it seems, is partly the result of associating the imam with terrorism" (188). To me, however, I believe that by singling out the unnamed imam, the novel emphasizes the suggestion that when compared to other religious figures, imams are socially outcast, and their presence is unwelcomed due to their inability to coexist and accept other faiths. Consequently, the novel's main imam, Sheikh Rashid, becomes an archetype of the wicked imam.

Furthermore, in looking closely at the relationship between Ahmad and Sheikh Rashid, one can notice that the novel seeks to emphasize the dangers of brainwashing. To that end, Ahmad's numerous meeting and conversations with Sheikh Rashid reveal how a peaceful and innocent individual can be transformed into becoming a potential terrorist. Before the psychological pressure asserted by the Imam, Ahmad was obviously a moderate Muslim. He believed that "'Jihad doesn't have to mean war,' Ahmad offers, his voice shyly cracking. 'It means striving, along the path of God. It can mean inner struggle.'" (Updike 149). Yet after a period of ideological manipulation by the Imam, the reader starts seeing how a terrorist is born. Updike writes, "'There is a way,' his master cautiously begins, 'in which a mighty blow can be delivered against His enemies … It would involve a *shaid* whose love of God is unqualified, and who impatiently thirsts for the glory of Paradise. Are you such one, Ahmad?'" (234). Unfortunately, the innocent man who used to believe that Jihad does not mean war is now ready to accept this suicidal mission. As such, through this emphasis on the role of the ideological

manipulation, the novel highlights the suggestion that the real danger of terrorism lies in the ideology, rather than the individual. In this sense, the imam, and not Ahmad, becomes the true terrorist to which the novel's title refers.

The novelist's method of delivering this crucial message seems to be suffering greatly from misconceptions that were obviously inspired by Islamophobia. Although Updike shows great knowledge about Islam as a faith through referencing the Quran, he seems to be only focusing on the type of information that can support the negative stereotypes, and the spread of Islamophobia. This suggestion can be seen in Pankaj Mishra's article, "The End of Innocence." For Mishra, *Terrorist's* false representation of Islam stems from a biased research that gathers its information from unreliable resources. He argues, "in his novel *Terrorist*, Updike appears as keen as [Martin] Amis to optimise his research. Indeed, he seems to have visited the same websites of Koranic pseudo-scholarship" (1).[8] The perfect example that supports Mishra's argument lies in the idea of how Updike's fictional representation of mosques is focused heavily on providing a rational for the post-9/11 Islamophobic understanding of these places of worship. Therefore, it might be argued that by falling in the trap of stereotypes, *Terrorist's* message shifts from being an exposure of the nature of extremism to become, unfortunately, a mere promotion of Islamophobia.

To understand how *Terrorist* promotes Islamophobia through its representation of mosques, one has to consider the way Updike imagines the perfect environment that is capable of radicalizing his main character. *Terrorist* indicates that the mosque, along with its imam, is an important factor in creating Ahmad the terrorist. This suggestion is dangerous because it feeds

[8] It seems that by "websites of Koranic pseudo-scholarship," Mishra might actually be referring to websites such as https://www.thereligionofpeace.com where a large section of the website is dedicated to link the teachings of the Quran with terrorism through suggesting that the Holy Book is requiring Muslims to commit violent crimes against the innocents.

Islamophobia by pushing the reader to view mosques as an essential, perhaps even the most essential, physical manifestation of the process of radicalization.

Furthermore, Updike's novel suggests that Ahmad's inclination to extremism is caused by the fact that the mosque became the only link he has to his religion and his racial background. This argument is inferred from how the novel indicates that Ahmad's attachment to the mosque exceeds his attachment to the local Muslim community of New Jersey. For example, in describing Ahmad's relationship with the Arab/Muslim section of New Jersey, the narrator says, "For four or so blocks to the west, the so-called Arab section, begun with the Turks and Syrians who worked as tanners and dyers in the old mills, stretches along this part of Main Street, but Ahmad never ventures there; his exploration of his Islamic identity ends at the mosque" (99). By providing these options that may helped Ahmad to find an alternative way to reconnect to his religious identity, these lines seem to be indicating that the confused teenager almost became a terrorist because he chose to only search for his Islamic identify in the mosque. In other words, the novel suggests that Ahmad is just the victim of searching for his identity in the wrong place. Thus, while efforts are done in order to make mosques in the West the face of their local Muslim communities, Updike attempts to suggest that they are in fact the ugly side of these communities.

The above quote also suggests that Ahmad's strong attachment to the mosque is the reason that pushes him to be distanced from the rest of the Muslim community of New Jersey. In this sense, Updike indicates that mosques not only have a poor relationship with their communities, but they also have a negative social effect that makes their visitors isolated from the rest of their moderate community. However, as this chapter tried to emphasize, mosques in the United States, even after 9/11, have a strong social role that involves increasing the social interaction within the community of the congregants, as well as the local Muslim community at

large. Thus, contrary to what Updike is suggesting, mosques are usually an active part of their local Muslim communities. In fact, according to Ihsan Bagby, Paul Perl, and Bryan Froehle, "Many American mosques partially function as a community center for the local Muslim population… mosques frequently hold activities that are either religious, social, or both religious and social in nature and are often a prominent gathering space for their local Muslim American communities" (538). Hence, it might be reasonable to argue that while studies show that mosques in the West are the bridges that are actively connecting Muslims with their religious community, Updike represents them as the barriers that prevent their visitors from being part of that religious community.

Furthermore, the novel also indicates that Ahmad identification as a terrorist is the outcome of the mosque's upbringing. This can be interpreted from the narrator's description of the nature of Ahmad's relationship with the mosque: "The mosque took him in as a child of eleven; it let him be born again" (Updike 99). It is true that the narrator is taking Ahmad's perspective in describing the teenager's relationship with the mosque. However, from the perspective of the reader, the mosque is obviously kidnapping and brainwashing the young Arab-American. In other words, what Ahmad sees as an opportunity for a new life, the reader sees as a death trap. Therefore, in attempting to understand the reasons that may have pushed Ahmad to become a terrorist, the reader will only see the mosque as the sole factor in destroying Ahmad's life. As a result, other factors such as the social alienation that the teenager is experiencing, along with the disappearance of his Egyptian father, become less important.

Nevertheless, as someone who reads *Terrorist* from an Eastern and a Muslim perspective, I find Updike's choice to make mosques in the West a source of Islamic fundamentalism hard to accept. This argument stems from the belief that it is irrational to link the most important Islamic

symbol to terrorism. This link, in fact, will only make the post-9/11 experience even more difficult for Muslims. Since 9/11, Muslims have been looking at these mosques as the last haven that can restore the image of Islam that 9/11 destroyed. As Amaney Jamal points out, after the tragic events of 9/11, "mosques are increasingly becoming sites where Muslims attempt to bridge the gaps between Americans and Muslim Americans that stereotypes have created" (60). Yet, the presence of biased representations of mosques, such as the one found in *Terrorist*, may only serve to demolish such hopes. Hence, I strongly believe that if Updike's novel was indeed an attempt to expose the process of radicalism to the Western reader, it should have at least created a more positive role for mosques.

That being said, it is important to point out that not everyone seems to be criticizing Updike's portrayal of mosques. For instance, in his interesting review of *Terrorist*, Dilshad D. Ali believes that the novel "cuts to the heart of American fears of homegrown terrorists. What is being preached in American mosques? What hidden agendas do some imams have? What draws some American Muslim kids toward extremism? Are some American mosques just franchises for Middle East terrorist cells? These questions have frightening answers in *Terrorist*" (1). It appears that for Ali, Updike's depiction of mosques is an eye-opener for the American reader. This is because, according to Ali, this portrayal of mosques can bring the audience closer to understanding the possible dangers of these places of worship. In this sense, it seems that Ali is implying that mosques in America are enjoying an unworthy privilege of being viewed innocently as harmless establishments by the American public.

However, what Ali seems to fail to recognize is the fact that mosques are, and were, already suffering from sentiments similar to his series of passionate questions. The impact of these sentiments can be seen in numerous incidents that are similar to the controversy over the

Ground Zero Mosque. For instance, according to their report "Controversies Over Mosques and Islamic Centers Across the U.S.," the Pew Research Center for Religion and Public Life states that between 2000 and 2010, "53 proposed mosques and Islamic centers have encountered community resistance in recent years" (1). The report also indicates that the motive behind the majority of these incidents of rejections is driven by fears about Islam and terrorism. Hence, *Terrorist* does indeed "cut to the heart of American fears of homegrown terrorists," yet, what Ali seems to be overlooking is the idea that those fears are well-established ideas embodied in post-9/11 Islamophobia.

In order to conclude my analysis of Updike's novel, I believe that it is crucial to emphasize the role of Islamophobia in confining Updike's imagination. In *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11*, Richard Gray's criticizes Updike's representation of the Muslim's experience with 9/11. To be more precise, Gray believes that *Terrorist* provides only shallow insights into the experience of the Muslim living in post-9/11 America. To that end, Gray argues, "Ahmad remains an outsider, not merely to those around him but also to the reader. We never get further than this: Ahmad's resistance to a world he never made and his consequent, confused search for a way of hitting back at that world" (34). I believe that the reason behind the reader's inability to connect with Ahmad's character stems from the obscurity of Updike's representation of the Muslim character. As such, the Western reader who is not Islamophobic, such as Gray may still struggle to understand the simplicity of transforming a moderate Muslim into a terrorist because Updike's Muslim mirrors how Islamophobia imagines the way Muslims view the West, especially since the novel suggests that with the right amount of brainwashing, any Muslim can become a terrorist. Consequently, it becomes logical to see Gray reach the

conclusion that "quite simply, this brave attempt to imagine the other never really fits together as a meaningful story" (34).

Finally, although the controversy of the Ground Zero Mosque and Updike's *Terrorist* give us a sense of the weight of the post-9/11 Islamophobic understanding of mosques, the two examples do not provide us with a complete picture of the issue. This is because regardless of the depth of their analysis, the two examples cannot bring us closer to understand the effects of the images of mosques on Muslims' experiences. Therefore, I believe that there is a need to include examples that can bring insights to how Muslims reacted to the post-9/11 image of mosques. To that end, the following pages will concentrate on Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* in order to have a sense of the effects of Islamophobia on the Muslims' attachment to these places of worship. However, the significance of Halaby's work not only stems from the fact that the novel is an example of the Muslim's perspective, but also because the novel reveals the strength of the issue of Islamophobia through its shocking presence in the psyche of authors with Eastern backgrounds.

Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*

In *Once in a Promised Land* (2007), the Arab-American novelist Laila Halaby attempts to capture the challenging experience that some Arab-Americans faced during the few months the followed the tragic events of 9/11. In order to achieve this goal, the novel focuses on the domestic life of an Arab-American couple whose hopes of finding a better future away from their homeland, Jordan, is destroyed by the events of 9/11. The tragic events of 2001 cast a shadow over the financial and the professional success that the couple had began to achieve in the United States, especially, in terms of creating an atmosphere of suspicion that identifies them as a threat. In this sense, the novel simply asks the following: Can Arab-Americans survive the

aftermath of 9/11? In answering this question, Halaby's text offers great insights into the effects of Islamophobia on the lives of Muslims who were living in the United States during the tragedy of 9/11.

The novel's plot follows the story of Salwa and Jassim from the moment they met in Jordan, to the moment when they realize that the United States cannot be their home. In America, Salwa was a banker and a successful real estate agent, while Jassim worked as a hydrologist for a water company in Tucson, Arizona. This success that the couple was achieving in their careers prior to 9/11 was reflected in how they perceive America. Salwa and Jassim are deeply immersed in the idea of the American dream. They enjoy the privileges of living an upper-middle class life. Halaby is suggesting that the wealth America was offering to Jassim and Salwa became the strong force that kept the Arab couple deeply attached to the idea of living in America.

Unfortunately, after the events of 9/11, the lives of the Arab-American couple changed dramatically for the worst. Subsequently, in the eyes of Jassim and Salwa, America transformed from being the land that welcomed them generously with numerous opportunities to being the land that was constantly rejecting them. This can be seen in numerous incidents where not only signs of racial discriminations began to appear within the local community, but also with concerns raised by the FBI over Jassim's threat to the safety of the city. The combination of the two problems appear to be too overwhelming for Jassim and Salwa, and eventually, the couple's hopes of embracing America as their new home is destroyed.

Because of the sensitivity of his job in having a direct access to the city's water supplies, the FBI began to investigate Jassim, concerned over the possibility of contaminating the water source. The fact that Jassim was an Arab and a Muslim was enough to raise concerns among the

FBI during the times of uncertainty that followed 9/11. This can be seen in the discussion that happens between Jassim and his colleague, Marcus about the FBI's surprising visit to their work place. In this exchange between the two coworkers, Marcus told Jassim, "The FBI came to our office today. They asked about you, about what you do here, about your behavior. They asked me if you talk about your religion or any political issues." Eager to know what Marcus told the FBI, Jassim asked, "What did you say?," and Marcus replied, "I told them that I have worked with you for some twelve years, that I have known you for almost fifteen, and that you are reliable and as apolitical and unreligious a person as I know" (Halaby 224). In light of this interesting exchange between Marcus and Jassim, it becomes clear that Halaby is suggesting that after 9/11, any signs of a Muslim affiliation with religion may raise the concern of the authorities. Thus, it becomes logical to see her main character relying on the fact that he had never been a religious man in order to defend himself and prove that he was beyond any suspicions.

This idea of interpreting any religious commitment as a sign of a fundamentalist inclination becomes clearer when we look at Halaby's representation of mosques. Surprisingly, in this Arab-American novel, the image of mosques is not actually very different from the negative image found in Updike's *Terrorist*. This is because similar to *Terrorist*, *Once in a Promised Land* also hints to the relationship between mosques and terrorism. The only difference is that while *Terrorist* represents mosques as the undoubted source of extremism, the Arab-American novelist brings a more hesitant confirmation of Updike's approach. As such, contrary to Updike's extremist protagonist who spends most of his time at the mosque, Halaby's main character, Jassim, is represented as the innocent who has never stepped foot in a mosque.

In this Arab-American novel, the indirect link between mosques and terrorism can be seen clearly in Jassim's first encounter with the FBI where it becomes clear how the author leaves a space for the reader to form negative interpretations about mosques. To that end, I believe that the beginning of the interrogation scene is very crucial and worth quoting in full:

> "What was your reaction to the events of September 11?" [asks the FBI agent]
>
> For this question he [Jassim] was prepared. "I was shocked, saddened, unsettled. Probably much the same as most people in this country. It was so unexpected."
>
> "Would your reaction have been different if it had been expected?" asked Agent Fletcher.
>
> "My reaction was what it was. One cannot predict how one will react."
>
> "How often do you pray in a mosque?"
>
> "I have not prayed in a mosque since I was a young man."
>
> "And why is that?"
>
> Jassim thought for a moment. *Because I don't believe in God*, he wanted to say, but he felt this was not the forum for such a comment. (231-232)

When analyzing closely Jassim's ironic proof of innocence, it becomes evident that there are two possible interpretations that may explain Halaby's goal behind introducing a Muslim character who is relying on the fact that he does not attend mosques as a proof of his innocence. However, while one is positive and suggests that the author is in fact criticizing Islamophobia, the other is negative and implies embracing the ideas of Islamophobia. In other words, it might be argued that each interpretation carries out a completely different and opposite meaning.

First, on the face of it, it seems that Halaby is using her novel to highlight the irrationality of Western Islamophobia when it comes to linking the idea of praying in mosques as a sign of extremism. In this sense, the way her character defends himself becomes Halaby's way of

shedding some light on how Islamophobia might drives Muslims to unwillingly, or even willingly, abandon their religious identity. Thus, what pushes Halaby's character to abandon his religion is the desire to escape any racial profiling, or even any negative stereotypes associated with Islam after 9/11. However, such a suggestion might seem exaggerated and does not reflect what studies show about the experience of the majority of Muslims who, after 9/11, tended to reaffirm their religious identity. For example, in her study on the effects of 9/11 on the Muslims' attachment to their religious identity, Baljit Nagra states that Muslims "reacted to discrimination after 9/11 by asserting their Muslim identity, becoming more knowledgeable about Islam, building closer ties with the Muslim community…" (427). Although exaggerated, I still believe that Halaby's suggestion is capable of drawing the reader's attention to the challenges that may face Muslims in the Islamophobic world of post-9/11. Thus, in this optimistic interpretation of Jassim's ironic proof of innocence, the role of using a Muslim character that is abandoning his faith becomes attached to Halaby's desire to raise awareness over the possible effects of Islamophobia on the religious identity of Muslims living in the West.

Having said that, this interesting exchange indicates that it is perfectly understandable to see governmental authorities such as the FBI assume that there are links between mosques and fundamentalism, especially, during the difficult times that followed 9/11. However, what is difficult to understand is the idea that Halaby, as an Eastern writer, not only presents her protagonist as a Muslim who does not only attend mosques, but also relies on that fact as a sign of her main character's goodness. In fact, by doing so, the Arab-American novelist reconfirms the Western Islamophobic understanding of mosques. Therefore, when analyzing Jassim's reaction as just one angle of a larger image that Halaby wants to draw in creating her fictional Muslim characters, a second interpretation becomes equally, if not more, convincing. To that

end, in looking at the novel as a whole, one can notice that Halaby is attentive and careful in creating her Arab-Muslim characters as consciously eager to abandon any markers of their religious and racial identities. To clarify more, while Jassim and Salwa appear to not be practicing Islam, they are also seems to be distancing themselves from the local Arab and Muslim community. This suggests that the characters, and perhaps the author too, are convinced that any clinging to either one of the identities will inevitably indicate inclinations to fundamentalism. With that in mind, another closer look at the same interrogation scene will reveal that although the author is of an Arab heritage, she is, unfortunately, embracing the Western Islamophobic view towards mosques.

To illustrate more, when Jassim says, "I have not prayed in a mosque since I was a young man," it becomes clear that he understands what conclusions the FBI agent is trying to reach. At the same time, Jassim's reply also suggests that the author is aware of the Western Islamophobic understanding of the relationship between mosques and extremism. Surprisingly, however, through Jassim's response, the Arab-American author draws an indirect confirmation over the suspicions that surround mosques. This is due to the suggestion that Halaby seems to be convinced that if Jassim was a regular visitor of mosques, he may not be that innocent in the eyes of the reader, and consequently, the fictional character will not be able to draw any sympathy from the reader.

Moreover, in the quoted scene, Halaby establishes the interrogation as not just an exchange between Jassim and the FBI agents, but also as an indirect conversation between Jassim and the reader. This happens in the lines that express Jassim's thoughts to himself as the FBI is questioning him. In other words, during the scene of questioning, Jassim's statements are addressed to the FBI agents, but his thoughts are obviously addressed to the reader.

Unfortunately, however, instead of using Jassim's thoughts as an opportunity to reveal the irrationality of the agent's question, and consequently attempt to eliminate or challenge the stereotypical image of mosques, Halaby choose to add extra information that can only confirm the fears and the suspicions of the Islamophobic mind.

Hence, there are the following internal musings of the main character: "Jassim thought for a moment. *Because I don't believe in God*, he wanted to say, but he felt this was not the forum for such a comment" (Halaby 232). Jassim's thoughts are obviously driven by a desire to bring further evidence of his innocence. That is to dispel any fears or suspicions the FBI agents, or the reader, may have. Hence, Jassim reveals that his detachment from mosques is not a matter of a lack of religious commitment, but of a deeper level of religious detachment. Yet, it appears to me that the line adds nothing except to reconfirm Islamophobia through furthering the link between Islam and terrorism. Jassim's thoughts only emphasize the suggestion that embracing Islam, no matter how much the level of commitment is, may push the individual into committing acts of terrorism.

Therefore, from a Muslim and an Arab perspective, this scene, along with the overall representation of the Arab/Muslim couple, are deeply shocking. This is because it appears that after 9/11, the Arab or the Muslim has to have all markers of his religious and racial identities stripped away in order to be presented in a positive way. Thereby, not just for the FBI, or the Western reader, but also for Halaby, Jassim cannot share the same ideology as the terrorists. This is simply because the good and the innocent Muslim/Arab is always detached from his racial and religious identities.

Ironically, however, it is this detachment from the religious and the racial identities that appears to be the reason that made the experience of 9/11 unbearable for the Jordanian couple.

Jassim and Salwa become detached from the rest of their racial and religious community. After 9/11, the couple became emotionally isolated from both the Western and the Muslim communities. As a result, Jassim and Salwa were vulnerable to the backlash of 9/11, and consequently, America became a lonely place for this Arab-American couple. This idea can be supported by Barbara J. Hampton's insightful analysis of Halaby's novel. Hampton argues the lack of social support rather than 9/11 is what devastated Jassim and Salwa, and destroyed their hopes of embracing the United States as their new home. Hampton writes:

> Salwa and Jassim are destroyed because they are disconnected from each other and from a larger community that might have given them a strong enough identity to survive the vicissitudes that come to everyone and the attacks that are directed at them as Arab Americans. They seem to know themselves only as "Consumers," not as Jordanian-Americans or certainly not as Muslims. Jassim had discarded his faith years ago, substituting for it a faith in Balance. When his life was pushed off kilter, Balance could not save him; not knowing the God whom they had left behind in Jordan, he and Salwa could not even throw themselves on his mercy. (251)

I strongly believe that Jassim's lack of relationship with mosques can be seen as an example that clarifies and supports Hampton's argument.

Considering Hampton's argument that what destroyed Jassim was the lack of social support, ironically studies show that mosques were the places that were known for providing the needed social support for Muslims during the difficult times that followed 9/11. In this regard, Yvonne Haddad argues, "In post-9/11 context of mutual fear and apprehension, the mosque became the shelter, providing a safe space where one could find companionship even with people one would generally dismiss as boring or engaged in vapid discussions" (263-264).

Hence, while *Once in a Promised Land* hints at the idea that Jassim's alienation from the mosque should have been turned into an advantage for creating a successful experience with the post-9/11 America, the actual experiences of Muslims, as Haddad points out, suggest otherwise.

This negative representation of the Muslims' places of worship stems from the idea that Halaby depicts the Muslim experience based on the Western Islamophobic understanding of mosques. Therefore, it might be argued that *Once in a Promised Land* offers an unrealistic version of the Muslim or the Arab's experience with the Islamophobic world of post-9/11. As Richard Gray argues, "*Once in a Promised Land*, as its title implies, plays with the conventions of fairy tale" (116). To me, however, I believe that this fairy tale of representing the Muslim experience in a perfect accordance with Western Islamophobic standards leaves Laila Halaby between two extremes.

The fact that Halaby seems to accept the belief that there is a connection between mosques in the West and terrorism requires us to analyze the reasons that led an author with an Eastern background to embrace the stereotypes that surround mosques. To that end, Halaby as an Arab-American author might in fact be a victim of a Western mainstream culture that has shaped her views toward mosques, especially given the fact that she grew up in Arizona, was educated in a number of American universities, and currently works as an Outreach Counselor for the University of Arizona's College of Public Health. Hence, her representation of the Muslims' places of worship may actually have been a reflection of the post-9/11 atmosphere in which the author existed. On the other hand, the fact that the Arab-American author presented a negative portrayal of mosques that is accompanied by criticism of the Eastern culture makes Halaby fit the descriptions of the neo-Orientalist. As such, the goal of the following few pages will focus on

studying closely the negative effects of Western Islamophobia on the self-representation of the Muslim or the Arab in the world of post-9/11.

In her article "The Face of the Enemy: Arab-American Writing Post- 9/11," Maha El Said believes that after 9/11, Arab-American authors were facing a predicament because they were attempting to redefine the image of Islam or the Arab world according to the standards of the West. El Said argues that Arab-American authors "who are a mélange of Arab and American, become trapped in an attempt to redefine their identity, and reconstruct a hybridity that seems impossible in a world that is divided into 'we' and 'them'" (201). As such, Halaby's misrepresentation of mosques stems from a desire to present an Eastern portrayal of the Muslim experience with 9/11that embraces, or at least does not challenge, the Western Islamophobic belief of the connection between mosques and extremism. Hence, it might be argued that the price for what El Said describes as an attempt to reconstruct a hybridity between East and West is a compromise that reveals a level of self-degradation.

Therefore, as an Arab-American author who is familiar with the challenges that faces her Arab-American community as a minority, Halaby's way of accepting the idea that mosques are the places that promote extremism can only be understood along the lines of W. E. B. Du Bois' concept of double-consciousness. Although Du Bois' theory is originally concerned with the African-American sense of lost identity, I still believe that the concept can also be extended to other minorities within the American society because minorities across the United States share the same basic concern of being viewed according to a set of negative stereotypes. Unfortunately, these stereotypes may affect how these minorities perceive themselves. As a result of that, a sense of self-deprecation may arise by some individuals within these racial minorities because of their desire to swim with the tide.

To illustrate further, according to Du Bois, because African-Americans have always suffered from a long history of misrepresentations, their sense of collective identity as an African and also as an American has been affected greatly by the combination of the two. Negative views become internalized in the psyche of the African-Americans, and consequently, they become conscious about the presence of the two identities. As a result, African-Americans may begin to view themselves according to the image that the world is drawing about them. Du Bois writes,

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (11)

In the same way, Muslims and Arabs have also suffered from a long history of being viewed as inferior. In *Not Quite American? The Shaping of Arab and Muslim Identity in the United States*, Yvonne Haddad states that "surveys of the media have documented the demonization of Arabs, Islam, and Muslims as the monolithic 'outsiders,' the essential 'other,' whose beliefs and costumes are characterized as inferior, barbaric, sexist, and irrational – values worthy of repeated condemnation and eradication" (15).[9] It was perhaps these forces that are responsible for creating

[9] Haddad's statements are based on Edward Said's *Covering Islam* and Karim H. Karim's *Islamic Peril: Media and Global Violence*.

a similar sense of double-consciousness that pushed Halaby to unintentionally embrace how the West view Muslims and Arabs.

This means that any negativity found in *Once in a Promised Land* towards the Muslim/Arab world becomes the normal outcome of a long history of misrepresentations that only intensified after 9/11. Thereby, when Halaby presented her main character, Jassim, as a "good" Arab, or a "good" Muslim because he did not attend mosques, her opinions may unconsciously be shaped by, or at least affected by, some of the post-9/11 Western pessimistic views towards mosques.

Still, *Once in a Promised Land* appears to be aiming to push the reader to sympathize with the struggles of the Muslim/Arab couple while highlighting the suggestion that this couple is eager to strip away its religious and racial identities. This suggests that Halaby believes that the reader, especially the Western one, might find it difficult to sympathize with Salwa and Jassim if they were embracing their Muslim and Arab identities. Based on that, it might be possible to argue that the author is, unfortunately, promoting the idea that embracing these two identities can be seen by her audience as a reasonable reason for eliminating any sympathy towards the experience of the Arab/Muslim couple. The presence of such an interpretation of the text requires us to raise another possibility that may explain the reasons that pushed Halaby to present a negative image of mosques.

The years that followed 9/11 witnessed the emergence of the phenomenon of promoting Islamophobia through the works of authors who are Western Muslims. Although these authors claim a Muslim/Eastern background, their works attempted to provide the Western audience with writings that highlighted the connection between Islam and terrorism. For instance, the books of Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Irshad Manji are all highly acclaimed works that gained attention due to the

atmosphere that surrounded Islam and the Arab world after 9/11. Yet, to critics such as Moustafa Bayoumi, these authors, with the exception of claiming a Muslim or an Eastern identity, are not very different from the early Orientalists when it comes to presenting biased depictions of the Muslim/Arab world. According to Bayoumi, Orientalism has never gone out of style, and that the only difference of the new phase of Orientalism lies in the presence of the writings of authors who promise "an insider message of telling it to you like it is! (Hint: Everything Muslims do is motivated by Islam)" (80). That is to say that these writers use the advantage of their racial or religious background in order to provide depictions that would gain acceptance due to the claim of offering insightful representations of the Muslim or the Arab.

To clarify this issue more, it might be useful to quote Ali Behdad and Juliet Williams' analysis of the emergence of the new kind of Orientalist. In "On Neo-Orientalism, Today," Behdad and Williams argue,

> Whereas classical Orientalists were commonly male European savants, philologists, established writers and artists, neo-Orientalists tend to be ordinary Middle Eastern subjects whose self-proclaimed authenticity sanctions and authorizes their discourses. Contemporary neo-Orientalists are not, however, merely "native informants" or "comprador intellectuals" … but rather Middle Eastern women and men who use their native subjectivity and new-found agency in the West to render otherwise biased accounts of the region seemly more authoritative and objective. (285)

Therefore, while considering these concerns, the question becomes as follows: Can we read Halaby's novel as the work of a neo-Orientalist?

Being a neo-Orientalist demands embracing openly views and sentiments that either criticize Islam as a faith, or attempt to connect it with violence and terrorism. For instance, Hirsi

Ali's works *The Caged Virgin* (2204) and *Infidel: My Life* (2006) suggest that Islam does not just promote the oppression of women, but also encourages violence against non-Muslims. However, *Once in a Promised Land* leaves such conclusions open for the imagination of the reader. This can be seen in Halaby's vague view of the role of the Muslims' places of worship as an institution that is responsible for radicalizing Muslims. In regards to the Islamophobic suggestion that praying in mosques is an indication of extremism, Halaby does not bother to refute such claims, nor does she openly embrace them. In this sense, the role of including sentiments that can be best described as Islamophobic are associated with Halaby's strong desire to present a work that can gain popularity in the West.

Overall, however, when it comes to classifying *Once in a Promised Land* as the work of a neo-Orientalist, or as a work that was affected by double-consciousness, I strongly believe that the novel falls somewhere between the two extremes. To explain more, traces of Du Bois' concept double-consciousness can be sensed clearly in the conflation between introducing a work that aims to present the difficulties that faced Arabs/Muslims after 9/11 while simultaneously giving a negative image of mosques. However, because the work's overall goal is clearly directed at raising awareness of the struggles of Muslims with 9/11, we might be able to argue that the general atmosphere that surrounded mosques in the post-9/11 America may have influenced the Arab-American author who describes her own imagination as the result of coming from two distinct cultures.[10] Having said that, Halaby's text contains some elements that can be best described as not only Islamophobic, but also as Orientalist. This is not only apparent in Halaby's negative representation of mosques, but also in the creation of characters that seem to be eager to be detached from their Muslim identity. To me, however, the presence of the two

[10] The description of Halaby's imagination is derived from the author's personal website, http://lailahalaby.net.

notions, whether it was double-consciousness or neo-Orientalism, makes Halaby's text an unrealistic representation of the Muslim/Arab experience with 9/11.

Conclusion

Mosques in the United States are a crucial part of the lives of Muslims. As such, the United States has always welcomed, even after 9/11, their presence. Still, due to the tragic events of 9/11, some voices have raised concerns and fears about the roles of mosques in spreading radicalization. As a result, the image of the Muslims' place of worship has been greatly affected. This can be seen clearly in the famous controversy known as the Ground Zero Mosque.

As a literary scholar, I believe that literature, unfortunately, provides instances that embrace such Islamophobic understandings. To the end, *Terrorist* by John Updike, and *Once in a Promised Land* by Laila Halaby are examples that reveal to what extent these Islamophobic concerns about mosques have reached the writings of Western and Eastern authors. Hence, the image of mosques in the Arab-American novel, surprisingly, parallels the image found in Updike's *Terrorist*. This is because similar to *Terrorist*, *Once in a Promised Land* also indicates that there is a relationship between mosques and terrorism. The only difference is that while *Terrorist* is confident in its representation of mosques as the source of extremism, the Arab-American novel brings a hesitant confirmation of Updike's depiction. As such, while Updike's Muslim character is the terrorist who spends most of his time at the mosque, Halaby's Muslim character is the innocent who stays away from mosques.

Finally, as this chapter tried to emphasize, the real threat of the Islamophobic image of mosques lies in its consequences on the religious identity of Muslims living in the United States, especially in terms of creating a sense where the simple act of visiting mosques becomes surrounded with fears. Hence, I believe that after 9/11, and due to the rising Islamophobic

atmosphere, mosques become fearful places not just in the eyes of the Islamophobes, but also in the eyes of Muslims who became convinced that praying in a mosque could raise concerns.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ISLAMOPHOBIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE MUSLIM'S APPEARANCE

"The bearded Muslim fanatic, the oppressed, veiled woman, the duplicitous terrorist who lives among 'us' the better to bring about our destruction: all these stereotypes have emerged with renewed force since 9/11"
— Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, *Framing Muslims* (2)

"I had not shaved my two-week-old beard. It was, perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity"
— Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (130)

"[The hijab] shouted, 'look at me; I follow the same religion as the one who harmed you.' I would have liked to add, 'please don't rush to condemn me,' but a veil is only supposed to convey so much. Lately it had transcended into another role: the wearer was associated with supporting the acts of the attackers"
— Shaila Abdullah, *Saffron Dreams* (106)

While previous chapters have studied Islamophobia through focusing on its effects on Islam as a religion, this chapter will look at the phenomenon's direct consequences on Muslims as individuals. Although the discussion of the Quran and the mosque has provided us with insights into crucial aspects of Islamophobia, it still does not bring us closer to have a sense of how the phenomenon can directly touch the lives of Muslims. As such, this chapter will move away from discussing Islamophobia as a Western fear or rejection of Islam as a faith, in order to emphasize that it can be a system of social discrimination against individual Muslims living in the West. This goal will be achieved through analyzing the post-9/11 Islamophobic understanding of the outer appearance of Muslims, whether that was the long beard for Muslim men, or the hijab for Muslim women. Yet, before studying extensively the Islamophobic perception of these two Islamic markers, it is important to emphasize the general reasons that make studying the hijab and the beard matter.

First, as Ruzy Hashim and Noraini Yusof point out, "Muslims living in the west, especially those who overtly exercise their religious sensibilities, be that in the form of the hijab

for women or beard for men, bear the brunt of xenophobia exhibited by the mainstream society" (109). Muslims who tend to conceal their Muslim identity through shaving their beards or removing the hijabs are, to some extent at least, less likely to experience Islamophobia. Second, studying the two Islamic signifiers will help to emphasize the suggestion that 9/11, and the heated Islamophobic atmosphere that followed it, helped to revive and intensify an already negative perception toward the bearded Muslim man and the hijabed/veiled Muslim woman. This suggestion can seen in the words of Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin who argue that "the bearded Muslim fanatic, the oppressed, veiled woman, the duplicitous terrorist who lives among 'us' the better to bring about our destruction: all these stereotypes have emerged with renewed force since 9/11" (2). Third, studying the Islamophobic understanding of the hijab and the beard can bring insights into the differences between the experience of the Muslim man and the experience of the Muslim woman. As this chapter will conclude, Muslim women are at a higher risk of being affected by Islamophobia. According to Barbara Perry, Muslim "women and girls appear to be extremely vulnerable to violence motivated by their status as Muslims, but especially as Muslim women" (74). Based on these three considerations, it becomes clear that studying the hijab and the beard can widen our understanding of the current nature of Islamophobia as a system of social discrimination that feeds on the post-9/11 distorted image of Islam.

To achieve my goal, this chapter will focus on *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by the Pakistani novelist Mohsin Hamid and *Saffron Dreams* by the American-Pakistani novelist Shaila Abdullah. By looking closely at the two novels, I hope to achieve my goal of emphasizing the idea that during the intense Islamophobic atmosphere that followed the terrorist attacks of 9/11, some Muslim immigrants were faced with two options: either embracing their religious identity,

and consequently, losing any hopes of considering the United States as home, or giving up this challenged identity in order to continue living in America.

The Islamophobic Interpretation of the Muslim Man's Appearance

When it comes to its religious significance, the Muslim man's gesture of growing a long beard is simply an act that indicates a desire to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad.[11] In this sense, as a religious practice, growing a long beard does not necessarily suggest an embracement of a certain extremist or violent ideology. As such, within a Muslim context, the gesture of wearing a long beard is simply perceived as a visible symbol that indicates a higher level of religious commitment.

However, in the West, the interpretation of this particular facial appearance of the Muslim man has a long history of negativity that extends beyond the events of 9/11. In fact, in an article that was published in 1997, Abouali Farmanfarmaian argues that the Western fear of the Muslim beard could be traced back to 1979 and the Iranian hostage crises where fifty-two Americans were held captives in the American embassy in Tehran. Farmanfarmaian believes that after this crisis, "the U.S. State Department, the president, the entire country felt impotent, and the fear of the beard was forever burned into American hearts" (54). Accordingly, Farmanfarmaian's article "Fear the Beard," states that after the Iranian revolution, which happened during the same time of the hostage crisis and the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini[12] as the leader of Iran, "the turban and the beard became symbols of anti-American power" (54). Based on Farmanfarmaian's argument, it becomes evident that the Western negative perception of the

[11] Although the Quran does not demand Muslim men to grow either long or short beards, the Prophet Mohammed is believed to have a long one. This fact is what drives many Muslims to wear long beards as a way to follow the example of the Prophet.
[12] Ayatollah Khomeini was the leader of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and was also the first spiritual leader of the Islamic State of Iran.

Muslim beard extends beyond 9/11, and that the tragic events renewed the old stereotypes that were already attached to that facial appearance.

Nevertheless, although the stereotypes of violence and aggression were attached to the Muslim beard long before 9/11, the West still perceived them as a foreign political threat. This means that prior to 9/11, the West in general, and the United States in particular, were not alarmed by ordinary bearded Muslim men, but rather with those who held a position of political power such as the Khomeini in Iran or the leaders of Taliban's government in Afghanistan. In this regard, Akbar Ahmad argues in *Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalization* (2007) that the United States' political relationship with the leaders of the Muslim world helped a lot in affirming the association between the image of the Muslim beard and the idea of the enemy. Ahmad writes:

> Broadly, U.S. policies toward the Muslim world are based on the assumption that Muslim leaders can be divided into two camps: the "moderate Muslims" and the "radical Islamists." The former are believed to want close ties with the West and make large defense purchases from it or agreements of mutual interest; the latter are the bearded clerics in black robes who make radical anti-American statements, take American hostages, and are inherently evil. (226)

As such, it might be argued that the Western rejection of bearded Muslim men was confined to the idea of a political battle against those foreign governments that embraced an extremist ideology. In other words, although there was a Western Islamophobic understanding of the Muslim beard long before 9/11, it remained, however, within that limited political discourse.

In fact, even with the spread of the idea that these extremist governments were America's enemy, Muslims with beards living in United States did not seem to experience any clear signs

of social discriminations by the American public. This is simply because during that time, bearded Muslim men as individuals were not known to impose any direct threats to the United States. As such, it might be argued that socially, the Muslim beard prior to the tragic events of 9/11 remained understood as a religious practice. The sight of the Muslim beard seemed to be mainly perceived by the American public in the same way as a Sikh beard, an Amish beard, or a Jewish beard– a sign that indicated a higher level of religious commitment but which did not necessary suggest an endorsement of any fundamentalist or violent beliefs.

This, nonetheless, does not necessarily mean that the experience of bearded Muslim men in America was totally positive prior to the events of 9/11. The Oklahoma City bombings of 1995 clearly suggests that a few voices in America were anticipating the arrival of this bearded Muslim enemy. In "Framing Muslim-Americans Before and After 9/11," Brigitte Nacos and Oscar Torres-Reyna state that after the media claimed that the FBI were searching for two Arab men with beards, bearded Muslim men across the United States became victims of numerous assaults. Nacos and Torres-Reyna write, "when … news organizations were quick to identify Middle Easterners as suspects and reported that the FBI was specifically looking for two men with dark hair and beards. Within hours, Arab and Muslim Americans became the targets of physical and verbal assaults" (133). Hence, it might be argued that the experience of bearded Muslims was mainly positive prior to 9/11 only because of the absence of any incidents that might inspire acts of discriminations such as the instance of the Oklahoma City bombings.

However, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, where bearded Muslims were implicated in terroristic acts, many voices in America appeared to be convinced that the Muslim beard was a clear indication of the embracement of an extremist ideology. This idea is best clarified through Peter Ferry's argument that "the beard returned to the American consciousness when hegemonic

white American masculinity once again defined itself in terms of opposition: them and us, Westerners and Muslims, the beardless and the bearded. The beard was truly fixed as a symbol of the evil Other" (5). According to Ferry, the reason for this understanding stems from the idea that "Bin Laden's beard was burned into the American psyche" (6). Thus, although the terrorists who attacked the United States on 9/11 were either beardless or wearing shorts ones, the image of Osama Bin Laden's face with his long beard became the symbolic image that represented America's ultimate enemy.

The significance of the beard as a sign of extremism does not only lie in the basic idea of whether the Muslim is bearded or beardless. In fact, it seems that the shape, the length, and the condition of the beard all play a role in determining the extent of the individual's threat. This is because a Muslim with a long and an untrimmed beard became in the eyes of the Islamophobes after 9/11 the ultimate sign of radicalism and terrorism. In this regard, Karen Culcasi and Mahmut Gokmen write, "from the Ayatollah Khomeini's long flowing beard to Osama bin Laden's similarly iconic facial feature, beards have been emphasized in the media as a defining symbol of the dangerous other, and even more specifically as a symbol of Islamic extremism" (88). These long flowing beards of the likes of Khomeini and Bin Laden seems to be pushing some Westerners to believe that the longer the beard, the greater the threat.

The origins of this Islamophobic understanding, however, seems to stem from an Islamic belief in which while"some [Muslims] believe that the beard should be left untrimmed in the style of [the Prophet] Muhammad…many do not accept this assertion; thus differing styles of beards abound, ranging from full beards covering the entire jaw and cheeks to neatly trimmed goatees covering only the chin area" (Esposito 101). Out of that religious belief comes the gesture of wearing a long and an untrimmed beard by terrorists such as Bin Laden or extremist

leaders such as the Khomeini as a devious attempt to convince Muslims around the world that they are true followers of the Prophet. Unfortunately, as a result of this deceptive message, many in the West became convinced that the Muslim with a long and an untrimmed beard has reached the final stage of radicalism, and consequently, he is perhaps expected to be an extremist or even a terrorist.

As a matter of fact, it appears that since 9/11, the media has contributed significantly to spreading the stereotypical image of the terrorist as a Middle Eastern man with a long beard. For example, in "Is the Media Biased Against Muslims?," Nahid Kabir points out that after interviewing a number of Muslims in Britain, she decided to study the media's coverage of terrorism. According to Kabir, the participants whom she interviewed were convinced that the "media provides an extreme view. Everyone who has a beard has a bomb under their beards" (118). To test this claim, Kabir decided to revisit the coverage of eight British newspapers during events of alleged terrorist attacks in order to determine if the media linked the image of the beard with terrorism. Kabir concludes, "the media does not make news. It delivers news as it takes place… But, with every news story about alleged terrorists, their photographs were also published and most of them had a visibly Muslim appearance because of their beards" (130). This means that to gain the public's attention, the media used the images of the alleged bearded terrorists as a marketing technique that helped to inflame not only Islamophobia, but also prejudice and discriminations against bearded Muslim men.

As a result of this demonization of the Muslim beard, not only Muslims with beards, but also those who were presumed to be of that faith suffered great discrimination in the United States. In the eyes of some Americans, a Middle Eastern looking man with a long beard was a synecdoche of Bin Laden. For example, during the immediate days that followed 9/11, a Sikh-

American was shot dead in Arizona because he was mistaken as an Arab Muslim. The killer's confusion was driven by the fact that the victim, Balbir Sodhi, was brown, had a long beard, and was wearing a turban. Unfortunately, these were the exact elements that formed, and perhaps still form, the Islamophobic image of the terrorist.

This American rejection of the Muslim beard as a result of 9/11 was not only limited to social contexts but reached formal settings as well. In fact, according to Jeffery Thomas, in some governmental institutions, "Muslim men have also been denied freedom to dress or groom in accordance with their religion" (78). For instance, according to Thomas, a federal court in Texas ruled that some prison officials were found guilty "when they denied Muslim inmate Willie Lee Garner permission to maintain a quarter-inch beard, even though the Texas prison system allows several thousand prisoners with skin conditions[13] to wear such beards" (78). These unfortunate incidents, and countless others, provide a clear indication that after 9/11, some voices in the United States, and in the West in general, began to associate the Muslim beard with the ideas of religious extremism, fundamentalism, and terrorism.

In reaction to these Islamophobic understandings of the beard, some Muslim men in America, and elsewhere in the West, began to grow beards as an act of resistance that signified an embracement of and a pride in an identity that was being heavily challenged. However, this gesture was usually perceived, as we will explore further in Mohsin Hamid's text, as a provocative and an insensitive act that reminded a traumatized America of the tragedy of 9/11. For instance, In *Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Racism through the Lived Experiences of Muslim Youth*, a young Muslim with a long beard described his experience as follows: "I was in McDonalds once and this old lady came up to me, and back then I had the *big*

[13] Thomas refers here to certain medical conditions where some men are medically advised to not shave their beards in order to avoid increasing skin irritations.

beard, and she came up to me and she said you should shave that beard, it reminds us of what happened at 9/11" (qtd. in Bakali 103). In order to understand the old lady's argument, I believe that it would be useful to turn to Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* that can offer insights into how Muslim men's beards, used by them as a gesture of resisting Islamophobia, and a confirmation of their identity, can still be perceived by some Americans as an insensitive act.

The Representation of the Beard in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Published in 2007, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by the Pakistani novelist Mohsin Hamid depicts how an Islamophobic perception of the Muslim beard can affect the lives of ordinary Muslims living in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11. By doing so, Hamid's novel brings its reader closer to understanding how Islamophobia is not only targeting the faith itself, but also the individual who demonstrates through his appearance any signs of religious commitment. To achieve this goal, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* depicts the tragedy of 9/11 from the perspective of a young Pakistani immigrant who experiences the consequences of being a bearded Muslim during the heated few months that followed the unfortunate attacks of September 11.

Hamid's novel opens in the city of Lahore, Pakistan where the reader meets the main character and the sole narrator of the novel, Changez, sitting in a café with the company of an unnamed American who remains silent throughout the whole novel, although Changez does verbally react to what his companion has gestured or said to convey dialogue. As they wait to be served, Changez decides to share his story of living in America during the events of 9/11. Changez tells the American that before 9/11, he was an aspiring student who graduated from Princeton University, and as a result, worked as a financial analyst in a consultant company

known as Underwood Samson. Unfortunately, during this short period of success in his career, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 occur that cause a series of unfortunate events to happen to the young Pakistani immigrant.

In order to focus on the effects of the Islamophobic understanding of the Muslim's appearance, the analysis of Hamid's novel will concentrate on the role of the beard in creating a challenging experience for Changez. Specifically, the discussion will emphasize the differences between Changez's personal and cultural understanding of his beard, and America's post-9/11 view of the bearded Muslim. By doing so, I hope to achieve my goal of arguing that, as a Muslim immigrant, Changez's insistence on embracing his Islamic identity, through growing a thick beard, forced him not only to be socially alienated, but also pushed him to leave the United States, thereby giving up any hopes of a better future.

From the very first line of the novel, it becomes clear that the Islamophobic idea of associating the beard with religious extremism, or even terrorism, is an important issue that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is aiming to address. When Changez meets with the unnamed American for the first time, he tells him: "Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America" (1). According to Keren Shlezinger, "by imploring the American not to be 'frightened' of his beard, Changez highlights the way in which a simple hairstyle, popular and uncontroversial in Pakistan, has become a symbol of terrorism, anti-Americanism and Islamic fundamentalism due to common portrayals of 'the bearded terrorist' in the American media" (15). Shlezinger's argument over Changez's desire to highlight the Western understanding of the beard becomes more convincing when we take into consideration that Changez's droll sarcasm concerning the American's irrational fear of the beard does not stop at that specific incident. As a matter of fact, in a later

passage, Changez notices that the American was becoming too concerned by the sudden presence of another bearded man: "Are you watching that man, the one with the beard far longer than mine?" (Hamid 22). Later on, Changez tells the American that the same bearded man "continues from time to time to attract [his] wary gaze" (Hamid 26). These passages clearly suggest that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is criticizing the way in which Islamophobia is forcing some Americans to be perhaps obsessed with the idea of defining the Other based on stereotypical and irrational standards such as the belief that when the beard is longer, the threat of terror becomes stronger. Hence, it might be argued that in the above passages, Changez is not only speaking to an unknown American wandering in the streets of Lahore, but he is also addressing the Western reader.

Understanding that his own beard is what is raising the American's concern, and perhaps the Western reader's as well, Changez clarifies that it was only a recent addition to his appearance. As he tells the American, "Perhaps you misconstrue the significance of my beard, which, I should in any case make clear, I had not yet kept when I arrived in New York" (62). By making it clear that his protagonist did not use to be a bearded Muslim when he first came to the United States, Hamid invites the reader to pay attention to the experience that his main character went through as a consequence of deciding to grow the beard that was part of a certain personal transformation that happened as a result of 9/11. This transformation however, as the reader of the novel will eventually understand, has nothing to do with embracing any extremist ideology.

As a matter of fact, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* suggests that Changez's insistence to embrace his Muslim identity through the transformation from a beardless into a bearded Muslim because of 9/11 was related less to any religious motivations than a clearer understanding of how his social environment was changing for the worse. This newly charged tense atmosphere can be

seen in numerous examples such as the incident where he was called a "F*** Arab" (117) by a stranger. Eventually, this sense of social rejection persuaded the young Pakistani immigrant that the United States was beginning to consider him as an outsider.

As a reaction to that social rejection, Changez travels to Pakistan for a two-week vacation. There he starts to freely allow his repressed Pakistani/Muslim identity to emerge through growing a thick beard (128). This, however, raises the question of why the atmosphere in Pakistan encourages Changez to grow the beard.

To answer this question, it appears that during the heated days that followed 9/11, Changez saw Pakistan as a safe haven that could grant his Muslim/Pakistani identity the opportunity to surface without any fears. In this sense, to a Muslim immigrant living in the United States during the tragic events, a home country became the only place where growing a beard could still be perceived as simply a signifier only of one's religious commitment and thereby harmless. Accordingly, once he reached Pakistan, Changez needed perhaps to reassure himself, through growing the thick beard, that there was nothing strange about being a Pakistani Muslim.

At the same time, the gesture of growing his beard in Pakistan also reveals that Changez, as a young Muslim immigrant experiencing the backlash of 9/11, was in a desperate need for a familiar community that signified emotional longing. Although Changez's choice to not shave his beard was clearly inspired by a desire to embrace his lost Muslim/Pakistani identity, the novel also suggests that the decision was also driven by a wish to imitate the outer looks of his brother and father. By mimicking the appearance of the male figures in his family, Changez was clearly attempting to present himself as an integral part of a certain community, and of a particular gendered representation of the Pakistani man. As Iftikhar Malik points out in *Culture*

and Customs of Pakistan, "beards and moustaches are considered to be the traditional symbols on manliness" (123). Based on that cultural significance, it might be argued that by growing his facial hair, Changez was trying to reaffirm a masculinity that was being heavily challenged by the atmosphere that followed 9/11. This idea can be seen in Thomas Bjerre's argument that growing the beard "is one way of asserting his [Changez's] masculinity in the face of the massive racial profiling he is facing" (261). Hence, according to Bjerre, "the beard serves as a way for Changez to empower his masculinity, which has been effectively neutered in the wake of 9/11" (261). Bjerre's argument could be linked to Cara Cilano's idea where she points out that "Changez's decision to grow his facial hair serves as a gendered response to the humiliation he suffers for being 'a man of [his] complexion' in the US" (212). Both Bjerre and Cilano suggest that Changez used his inherited cultural understanding of the beard as a way to boost his shaky masculine confidence during the backlash of 9/11.

Based on these considerations, it might be argued that the reasons behind Changez's desire to grow a thick beard have no connections with any religious purposes. This means that Changez obviously did not grow the beard because he embraced an extremist ideology, or even because his religious devotion became stronger. It is simply a gesture that has an emotional, a familial, and a cultural significance. Yet, in post-9/11 America, Muslim beards were unfortunately perceived only as indications of religious extremism. Hamid depicts this idea by suggesting that the United States was the force that was going to interrupt, or perhaps prohibit, the continuation of the bonds that he had formed during the short period of the two weeks he spent in Pakistan before returning to the United States. This can be seen in the words of Changez's mother as she instructs him: "Do not forget to shave before you go" (128).

However, instead of shaving his beard upon returning to the United States in order to avoid possible discrimination, Changez believed that it would provide him with a greater opportunity to show off his pride in his Pakistani/Muslim identity. As he says, "Despite my mother's request, and my knowledge of the difficulties it could well present me at immigration, I had not shaved my two-week-old beard. It was, perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind" (130). This means that in America, Changez is obviously "wearing the beard as a badge of pride in his Pakistani culture, insisting on its legitimacy and thereby getting closer to the core of identity he previously felt missing (Bjerre 261). Wearing this badge of pride, however, raises the following questions: How can the Islamophobic perception of the Muslim beard affect the life of the bearded, but not religious Changez once he gets back to United States? In other words, will he begin to experience a deeper level of Islamophobia? The following few pages will attempt to answer these questions by emphasizing the consequences of challenging the post-9/11 Islamophobic understanding of the Muslim appearance.

The novel suggests that Changez's new look aggravated the social rejection that he was experiencing. Upon returning to American as a bearded Muslim, it becomes clear that the beard crystallized an atmosphere of social rejection that was based on suspicions and fears over Changez as an individual. Changez describes this transformation by stating:

> It is remarkable, given its physical insignificance – it is only a hairstyle, after all – the impact a beard worn by a man of my complexion has on your fellow countrymen. More than once, traveling on the subway – where I had always had the feeling of seamlessly blending in – I was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers. (130)

Shahid Abdullah reads this escalation in social rejection as driven by the idea that Changez's beard increased his otherness by placing him in the category of a possible terrorist. She writes, "The propagated images and discourse on terrorism and the attacks of 9/11 thus already have their impact on people, influencing them in such a way that they perceive foreign-looking people with suspicion and presumption of possible terrorist ideas" (57). This means that for a man of Changez's racial and religious background, beards suddenly lost their cultural and even stylish significances and became only indications of Islamic fundamentalism.

As a matter of fact, the social discrimination that the beard appeared to be causing was not limited to settings where strangers surrounded the Pakistani immigrant. It also extended to contexts where Changez was considered to be a familiar face. This idea can be seen in the sudden change in the attitude of Changez's coworkers. Changez describes this unexpected change:

> At Underwood Samson I seemed to become overnight a subject of whispers and stares. Wainwright [Changez's coworker] tried to offer me some friendly advice. "look, man," he said, "I don't know what's up with the beard, but I don't think it's making you Mister Popular around here." "They are common where I come from," I told him. (130)

Although this brief conversation makes it clear that Changez's coworkers were suspicious of his beard, it still, at the same time indicates that Changez wanted to challenge Islamophobia through affirming the cultural significance of his beard. In this regard, Cara Cilano argues, "Changez's answer introduces an alternative normativity. If a bearded man does not necessarily signify a fundamentalist or terrorist in Pakistan, then such a figure must then signify a kind of masculinity that is not the mirror image of the hypermasculinist pose struck by US anti-terror rhetoric" (212). Cilano's argument is crucial because it emphasizes why it was important for *The Reluctant*

Fundamentalist's reader to view Changez's beard within the context of a Pakistani identity. By introducing both contexts, Hamid was able to highlight the suggestion that even though Changez's coworkers were familiar with him, they still failed to see the beard's cultural significance from his perspective. This suggests that 9/11 created a very persuasive atmosphere for many Americans where Islamophobic assumptions were not only perceived as facts, but were also determining how these Americans were going to view those Muslims whom they already knew.

Hence, it might be argued that although Changez was clearly aware of "the difficulties [the beard] could well present [him] at immigration" (130), it seems that he never thought that these difficulties were going to be present everywhere. The beard not only intensified the social discrimination that the young Muslim immigrant was experiencing, but was also one of the reasons that eventually cost him his job at Underwood Samson:

> How deep was the suspicion I had engendered in my colleagues over these past few – bearded and resentful – weeks; only Wainwright came over to shake my hand and say farewell; the others, if they bothered to look at me at all, did so with evident unease and, in some cases, a fear which would not have been inappropriate had I been convicted of plotting to kill them rather than of abandoning my post in mid-assignment. (160)

This tense atmosphere of rejection pushed the young immigrant to finally reevaluate his position in America. As such, Changez become convinced that America could no longer be his home. This realization indicated the role that Changez's beard was playing in America, transforming it from a symbol of cultural and religious pride into a perceived intentional gesture of provocation:

> I would like to claim that my final days in New York passed in a state of enlightened calm; nothing could be further from the truth. I was an incoherent and emotional

> madman, flying off into rages and sinking into depressions … sometimes I would find myself walking the streets, flaunting my beard as a provocation, craving conflict with anyone foolhardy enough to antagonize me. (167)

In "The Beard, Masculinity, and Otherness in the Contemporary American Novel," Peter Ferry argues that Changez's "decision to wear the beard is not a consciously aggressive decision; it is not intended as a confirmation of difference. Rather it is Changez's reaction against the racialization and demasculinization that has characterized the experience of 'a man of [his] complexion' in post-9/11 America" (14). Ferry's argument seems to be suggesting that by flaunting his beard in front of strangers, Changez was not trying to be hostile, but was perhaps attempting to use the exact source of discrimination as a way of protesting.

To conclude my analysis of Hamid's text, it is important to highlight that although *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* gives us a clear understanding of the Western fear of the bearded Muslims, it also, at the same time, provides us with an idea about the fear that the bearded Muslims experienced as a result of embracing that particular religious look. To clarify more, it might be useful to consider Monica Chiu's argument where she writes:

> Readers' impressions are fashioned by the ways Middle Eastern hypervisibility has been shaped by the media, especially by popular culture. American readers are held captive by this novel that seemingly confirms their notions of male, bearded subjects from the Middle East who become dangerous in their disenchantment with America. After 9/11, the beard on what we call Middle Eastern–looking men in America became a symbol that evoked fear. This fear is not felt solely by Americans who face potential terrorism by terrorists (bearded or not), but also among innocent (non-terrorist) Middle Eastern

bearded men themselves, whose hypervisibility invites American racism and violence against them. (133)

In order to have a better understanding of Chiu's argument, it might be useful to look at how Hamid depicted Changez's last days in America. By emphasizing that his main character had become an "emotional madman" who was "sinking into depressions," Hamid was trying to emphasize the psychological effects of embracing the Muslim identity during the backlash of 9/11. Changez's "hypervisibility" was causing some psychological effects that were driving him to the verge of a mental breakdown. Hence, when Changez states, "sometimes I would find myself walking the streets, flaunting my beard as a provocation, craving conflict with anyone foolhardy enough to antagonize me," it becomes clear that his unstable psychological state was pushing him to use his "hypervisibility" as the way of defying the source of his depression.

Finally, it seems that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is suggesting that insisting on embracing an Islamic identity during the heated Islamophobic atmosphere that followed 9/11 can result in a challenging social environment that can force some Muslim immigrants to lose any desire of viewing the United States as their home. This can be seen in the experience of Changez where his facial hair became a barrier the prevented the possibility of any social coexistence between post-9/11 America and the bearded Muslim immigrant.

Although Hamid depiction of Changez's experience with Islamophobia is insightful, it remains a one-dimensional perspective as it only focuses on the experience of Muslim men. This raises the important issue of how Muslim/Eastern literary writers depicted the struggle of the Muslim woman. Before looking closely at the experience of the Muslim woman with post-9/11 Islamophobia through studying Shaila Abdullah's novel *Saffron Dreams*, I believe that it is important to provide a context that can offer a brief background knowledge regarding the West's

general attitude towards the appearance of the Muslim woman. Therefore, in the following few pages, I will provide a brief historical analysis that can add some insights to the differences between the West's pre and post-9/11 understandings of the Muslim woman's appearance. The importance of that analysis lies in its ability to provide a foundation for arguing that the challenges that *Saffron Dreams* is depicting are only one example of the escalation of the negativity that 9/11 associated with the image of the Muslim woman.

The Islamophobic Interpretation of the Appearance of Muslim Women

The Islamic dress codes for women indicate a significant difference between the two concepts of the veil and the headscarf. One the one hand, the veil, or the niqab or the burqa,[14] as Muslims identify it, is the piece of clothing that some Muslim women use in order to cover their faces whenever in public places. On the other hand, the headscarf, known also as the hijab, refers to the scarf that Muslim women wear to cover their hair while leaving their faces uncovered. In regards to their religious significance, wearing the headscarf and the veil is usually done as part of the adherence to the Islamic teachings that require women to be covered.[15] This, however, does not necessarily mean that choosing not to wear either is considered not religious, as according to some Islamic scholars, the teachings of Islam do not require the Muslim woman to cover her face nor her hair.

Based on these considerations, it might be possible to argue that within a Muslim context, the headscarf and the veil are both simply perceived as signs of modesty and virtue. In the West, however, the significance of these pieces of clothing has always been largely misunderstood. In

[14] While both refer to the practice of face covering, there is a slight difference between the concept of the burqa and the niqab. While the first refers to the veil that covers the whole face, the latter refers to the piece of clothes that covers the face below the eyes.
[15] In some parts of the Muslim world, women might actually cover their faces not for religious purposes but rather for cultural purposes.

the West, the hijab and the veil have a long history of negative associations that range from signs of patriarchal oppression to indications of religious extremism in the world of post-9/11. As such, the goal of the following few pages is to provide a background context that can reveal how 9/11 was an unfortunate event that escalated an already long history of a Western rejection of these material signs of Islam.

Prior to 9/11, the Western interpretation of the image of the headscarved or the veiled woman revolved around the idea of Oriental oppression. As a matter of fact, this view was even part of a colonial justification for bringing civilization to the East. Colonizing the Oriental World was also presented as a Western attempt to liberate the Muslim woman from her misogynist culture. To illustrate further, drawing on Edward Said's analysis in *Orientalism*, Yvonne Haddad points out in *Muslim Women in America: The Challenge of Islamic Identity Today* that the "Western perspectives on Muslim women historically have been based on portrayals ranging from sexualized women with bared breasts but cloaked faces, or wearing scanty harem pajamas and diaphanous scarves, to silent images of oppressed victims of male brutality" (22). These portrayals of the Muslim woman, according to Emily Crosby, served to add legitimacy to colonialism by implying that the Western intervention was a necessary act. Crosby writes, "Describing women of the Orient in such 'uncivilized' terms perhaps served to reinforce the legitimacy of French imperialism; in effect, intervention by those deemed civilized became a 'necessary' form of anthropological discovery. In other words, France not only becomes the beneficiary of colonialist enterprise, but the West becomes the hero" (49). Based on these suggestions, it becomes clear that Western colonialism contributed significantly to the spread of the long-standing belief that the clothing of the Muslim women represents the idea of female oppression.

Unfortunately, these negative Western representations of the Muslim woman have penetrated the discourse of some contemporary depictions. During the few decades that preceded 9/11, Hollywood revived the old Orientalist understandings associated with the Muslim woman. In fact, in a large number of Hollywood's films, the Muslim woman is either represented as submissive and passive in movies such as the *Father of the Bride* (1991), or as a sexual object in movies such as *Harem* (1985). These negative representations of the Muslim woman led the Arab-American critic, Jack Shaheen, to point out that Hollywood has a long history of distorting the image of the Muslim woman. In *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People,* Shaheen writes that for more than a century Hollywood's films have "humiliated, demonized, and eroticized" the Muslim woman (73).

Although these original stereotypes have not completely disappeared from the Western imagination, a new understanding of the image of the Muslim woman gradually became equally prominent in the world of post-9/11. Besides the issue of patriarchal oppression, the tragic events of 9/11 added the stigmas of terrorism and religious fundamentalism to these Islamic items of clothing. This combination between the old and the new associations of this clothing is best seen in the political propaganda that surrounded the War on Terror. The image of the veiled woman became the symbolic image that described both the Oriental misogynist culture and the issue of Islamic fundamentalism. In this regard, Ali Behdad and Juliet Williams write:

> The neo-Orientalist discourse is marked by a re-deployment of the trope of the veil as a signifier of oppression. Whereas in classical Orientalism, the veil functioned as a metonymy for the harem, portrayed as a mysterious and inaccessible space of eroticism and lusty sexuality, in neo-Orientalist discourse the veil has been re-fashioned once again into a symbol of Muslim women's oppression and lack of civil rights and liberties. (1)

Perhaps the best example that can clarify Behdad and Williams' argument over how this neo-Orientalist approach is shifting its interpretation of the veil as a sign of oppression and extremism is the former First Lady Laura Bush's attack on the Taliban government in Afghanistan.[16] Justifying the military intervention, Bush declared on November 17, 2001, almost a month after the beginning of the war on Taliban, that "the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women" (qtd. in Steans 53). Although it is true that the Afghani women did indeed suffer greatly under the atrocity of Taliban's government, the use of the veil as the image that combines extremism with oppression is shocking. As Jill Steans argues, the "focusing on the burqa only as an index of the oppression of Muslim women without listening to what Afghan women had to say about the meaning of the veil in the construction of religious and cultural identity served to silence Afghan women" (53). Nevertheless, although the First Lady's statement makes it clear that after 9/11 the West began to associate the image of veil with the idea of extremism, her words, at least, present the veiled Muslim women as a victim of that extremism.

Unfortunately, however, when considering other Western attitudes toward the appearance of the Muslim woman, it becomes clear that some Western governments viewed the veiled Muslim woman not as a victim, but rather as a potential terrorist. This idea can be seen in the various European legal legislative acts that passed laws banning Muslim women from wearing the veil in certain places. According to these post-9/11 laws, which are active in the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria, Muslim women are not allowed to cover their faces in public places that might pose a security threat such as airports or train stations. In this regard, the Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, justified the unusual law by emphasizing that the Muslim veil is banned

[16] During the years of the Taliban's government women in Afghanistan were forced to wear the veil. This extreme law also extended to men who were banned from shaving their beards.

only "in specific situations where it is essential for people to be seen" (qtd. in Foster 2). However, these unusual laws that passed the partial bans, along with their justifications, clearly indicate that some Western governments were beginning to view the veiled Muslim woman as a possible terrorist.

On a social level, the negative Western reaction can be sensed through the countless incidents of harassment that targeted Muslim women during the aftermath of 9/11. Although the United States has never followed the steps of Europe in initiating similar laws, which did nothing but encourage more attacks against Muslim women, it was still, however, the home for many instances of harassment, especially during the months that followed the terrorist attacks.[17] For example, according to the *Report on Hate Crimes and Discrimination Against Arab Americans: The Post September 11 Backlash*, there were over a 100 incidents of reported cases of harassment between September 11, 2001 and October 11, 2002. The majority of these attacks targeted women as in the one incident that took place in Los Angeles where "an unknown assailant ripped the hijab off the head of a Muslim woman, threatened her and pointed a gun to her face." (71). The report also suggests that these incidents were not only verbal, but physical as well. For example, describing another incident, the report states that a "Muslim woman dressed in traditional clothing was attacked while grocery shopping. Another woman began beating her while yelling, 'America is only for white people.' The victim was taken to the emergency room" (73). In fact, according to the report, some of these violent incidents against Muslim women were even life threatening as in the incident where "a pregnant Yemeni woman wearing a hijab

[17] In citing laws that indicate the presence of a relationship between the image of the Muslim woman and the idea of terrorism will eventually encourage more racist practices against Muslim women. For example, according to Emily Crosby, "the contemporary attacks in France demonstrate a unique scenario of sexist Islamophobia, since women are the primary targets due to a veil ban that is said to promote gender equality" (51).

and a long dress was beaten by a group of teenagers. She was hospitalized and remained in guarded condition until she delivered her baby" (67). The rising number of these attacks even required President George W. Bush to reassure the Muslim women in the United States that they were protected. Addressing the Muslim community from the Washington Islamic Center, the former President emphasized, "Women who cover their heads should not fear leaving their homes. That's not the America I know. That should not and that will not stand in America" (qtd. in Leila Ahmed 200).

As a result of these Islamophobic incidents, Muslim women appeared to react in two different ways. To some, wearing the headscarf became more than just a religious gesture as it showed pride in their Islamic identity. In the "The Post-9/11 'Hijab' as Icon," Haddad writes, "Faced with a growing American public acceptance of the diatribe against Islam and Muslims, some young American-born Muslim women appear to have appropriated a century old view of the hijab as a symbol of solidarity and resistance to efforts to eradicate the religion of Islam" (254). This means that during the tense times that followed 9/11, some Muslim women have used the hijab as a gesture of resistance to discrimination, and a way to affirm that the terrorists do not represent the rest of Muslims. However, Haddad continues to point out that "some Muslim women who had been wearing a hijab prior to 9/11 removed it as a precaution, as many were counseled to do, in order to avoid harassment or worse" (263). Based on Haddad's suggestion, it might be argued that to the other group of Muslim women, the challenge of Islamophobia became immense. Consequently, this group found itself forced, out of fear, to abandon their hijabs. Therefore, in the following few pages, I will focus on the experience of this specific group that was negatively affected by Islamophobia by looking closely at Shaila Abdullah's novel *Saffron Dreams*.

The Representation of the Hijab in Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams*

Published in 2010, *Saffron Dreams* attempts to present the experience of the Muslim woman wearing the hijab during the heated months that followed 9/11. To achieve this goal, the novel's non-linear plot is told from the perspective of Arissa, a Pakistani immigrant, who recounts how the Islamophobic atmosphere that followed the terrorist attacks forced her to stop wearing her headscarf. In this regard, Nazzish Yarkhan points out in her review of *Saffron Dreams* that Abdullah's novel "relates the basic human desire to be accepted in society, no matter what your background, ethnicity, or race" (36). Yet, when fulfilling this desire comes at the price of hiding, out of fear, one's cultural and religious identity, it becomes difficult to interpret Arissa's decision to stop wearing the hijab as simply a desire to be socially accepted in America. Therefore, in studying *Saffron Dreams*, I will argue that Arissa's decision to stop wearing the hijab is not really driven by a desire to gain social acceptance, but rather out of fear of attracting violent harassment. To support this argument, I will look closely at how Arissa only decided to remove the hijab after she was violently attacked by a group of young men. In doing so, I hope to achieve my goal of highlighting how Islamophobia created immense challenges that has led to some Muslim women abandoning their Islamic markers in order to avoid any attacks, regardless of whether they were verbal or physical.

Abdullah's novel follows the story of the Pakistani immigrant, Arissa Illahi, who recently moved to the United States after marrying a Pakistan-American named Faizan. Arissa's husband works at the World Trade Center, which makes him unfortunately, one of the victims who lost their lives during the terrorist attacks of September 11. The events, nevertheless, seem to shock the widow's life not only because she lost her husband in the attacks, but also because the tragedy turned Arissa's world upside down. After 9/11, Arissa found herself faced with a

personal tragedy in a hostile environment where she was viewed not as a victim of the terrorist attacks but rather as an accomplice. As a result, Arissa, who was pregnant at the time of her husband's death, begins to experience many challenges as a Muslim wanting to embrace her religious identity during the backlash of 9/11. At the heart of these struggles is the incident where Arissa becomes the victim of a violent assault that threatens her life and the life of her unborn child. After that intimidating experience, Arissa becomes convinced that in order to continue living in the United States, she must stop wearing the hijab. In this regard, the novel concludes with suggesting that Arissa made the right decision because removing the headscarf has enabled her to finally become socially accepted.

Based on these brief glimpses from the novel, it becomes clear that in *Saffron Dreams*, the hijab is a central theme that is constantly affecting Arissa's experience with living in post-9/11 America. Right from the beginning of the novel, Abdullah suggests to her reader that to some Muslim women, the idea of the hijab might not necessarily be fixed to something worn around the head. This can be seen in the opening pages of the novel where Arissa declares, "I did not feel a sense of betrayal as I walked away from pier, letting the wind dance with may hair for the first time… It is a matter of perspective – to an onlooker I had removed my veil, but from where I stood, I had merely shifted it from my head to my heart" (3).[18] It might be argued that by beginning the novel with her character's personal understanding of the concept of the hijab, Abdullah was able to establish a foundation for her reader, whether a Muslim or a Western, to perceive Arissa's relationship with the hijab in a slightly different way than the usual religious one.

[18] Although, as stated earlier, there is a huge difference between the veil and the hijab, it seems that Abdullah is using the two terms in her novel interchangeably to describe the headscarf.

As a matter of fact, in terms of the significance of the hijab in the novel, Abdullah is clearly suggesting that beyond the religious meaning, there are also cultural and personal complications that are attached to it. Therefore, the following few pages will look closely at these complications in order to provide an overall context that can help us to understand that the main character's decision to stop wearing the headscarf extends beyond just an abandonment of her religious identity.

Arissa's relationship with the hijab is viewed as more of a cultural tradition than a religious practice. Although Arissa is from a Pakistani family that is not religiously devout, she only begins to wear the hijab for the first time once she moves to the United States. The decision is driven by her husband's wish to follow his family tradition. This can be seen in Arissa's words as she states that the women in her husband's family "had worn the veil, although none of them seemed particularly devout. It's just something that was done, no question asked, no explanation needed" (58). This means that similar to what Hamid was implying about Changez's beard, Abdullah is suggesting that for her Muslim character, and perhaps for many Muslim women as well, the hijab is sometimes viewed as a cultural tradition rather than a religious adherence. In this respect, Nabila Ahmed argues that in the context of *Saffron Dreams*, Abdullah is making it clear that "taking or losing the hijab is seen as a matter of historical and traditional constraint; she [Arissa] is abandoning a tradition, not a religion" (256).

Arissa's complicated traditional relationship with the hijab indicates that there is also a personal significance that is attached to her headscarf. After the death of her husband Faizan in the terrorist attacks, wearing the hijab becomes Arissa's way of remembering her deceased husband. As such, if she decides to take it off, a sense of guilt arises, indicating a disregard of her dead husband's wish:

> Was the decision easy for me to take? Of course not. It was my dead husband's wish that I was negating, but it was time to let go of that desire and nurture others. But how do you let a tradition go or justify it to people? Some choices are never yours; your life's events choose them for you, and you merely obey, whether you agree or not. (106)

Here, it becomes clear that although Arissa was trying to continue respecting the wish of her dead husband, the post-9/11 Islamophobic perception of the hijab made preserving that wish seems an impossible task. Accordingly, when she declares that "some choices are never yours; your life's events choose them for you," the reader understands that the post-9/11 Islamophobia became an overwhelming ideology that pressures Arissa into abandoning her husband's wishes.

When considering these aspects of the hijab, it becomes clear that Arissa's relationship with this Islamic marker is not actually religious, but rather a traditional and personal one. However, the novel suggests that post 9/11, America regards the hijab only as a reminder that its wearer follows the same religion as the terrorists. Arissa testifies to this sentiment by stating that her hijab "shouted, 'look at me; I follow the same religion as the one who harmed you.' I would have liked to add, 'please don't rush to condemn me,' but a veil is only supposed to convey so much. Lately it had transcended into another role: the wearer was associated with supporting the acts of the attackers" (106). This Islamophobic association between the woman who wears the hijab and the terrorists formed a severe prejudice against these women, which turns into physical violence. In the novel's climax, the reader witnesses Arissa violently attacked by a group of young men who, as they claim, wanted to revenge 9/11. It is crucial to look closely at this violent incident because of its position as a defining moment that forced Arissa to abandon all the religious, the cultural, and even the personal significances that were associated with her hijab.

In this violent incident, Arissa finds herself, as she leaves the subway station, suddenly surrounded by four angry teenagers who are attracted by the sight of her hijab, and want to take revenge on the people responsible for 9/11. This can be seen in one of the assaulters' words as he declares, "'the veil that you wear,' he [the assaulter] continued, pulling out his knife and aiming the point at my hijab. 'It's all façade. You try to look pure, but you are evil inside. You are the nonbelievers, not us'" (62). This quote indicates that in the eyes of these assaulters, 9/11 simply created two groups: Muslims and Americans. Accordingly, the enemy of America is not the few terrorists who committed the crime, but Muslims in general. This Islamophobic understanding makes Arissa, as a Muslim woman wearing her hijab, appear to the assaulters, and many other Islamophobes, as a proud member of the enemy. Thus, it might be argued that during the backlash of 9/11, the hijab became the recognized symbol of shame that marked the Muslim woman and left her a vulnerable target of revenge. This idea can be supported by Haddad's argument that "in an America traumatized by 9/11, many Americans began to identify the hijab as the standard of the enemy. No more a marker of piety and obedience to God, it came to be seen as an affront and the flaunting of an identity associated with those who have declared war on the United States" (55). Thus, by emphasizing the fact that the assaulter's knife was aimed at Arissa's hijab, Abdullah successfully used fiction to make it clear to her reader that indeed after 9/11, "many Americans began to identify the hijab as the standard of the enemy" who had declared war on United States.

The assault scene also suggests that although Muslim women are usually not perceived as actual terrorists, they could, however, be still viewed as a crucial part of the ideological threat. This means that a Muslim mother wearing the hijab, which is presumed to be a sign of extremism, might be attacked because of the belief that she would only raise extremists. In the

novel, however, Abdullah seems to be taking this suggestion even further. This can be seen in Abdullah's description of the scene as she writes, "When the young men realize that she is pregnant, Jimmy, who holds the knife to her throat, ―seemed to ponder his options for a split second before the sound of footsteps coming down the subway stairs caught him off-guard" (63). Highlighting that the assaulter was pondering his options indicates that during the heated Islamophobic atmosphere that followed 9/11, Muslim women are viewed as the breeders of terrorists. Consequently, as a pregnant Muslim wearing the hijab, the assaulters saw Arissa as a threat on the basis that she was carrying their future enemy. Hence, in this shocking scene, it might be argued that Abdullah was using fiction to emphasize the idea that although Muslim women might not be viewed as actual terrorists, they could still, however, suffer from Islamophobia because of the belief they are the mothers of terrorists who "try to look pure" (62).

Furthermore, the above quote also suggests that some Islamophobes might perceive Muslim women, as the assaulters saw Arissa, as hiding their evilness behind the façade of appearing pure and virtuous. In this sense, it might be argued that during the backlash of 9/11, the hijab became a source of bitterness as Muslim women suddenly found themselves the victims by wearing the exact pieces of clothing that they perhaps originally worn for the purpose of protection. This means that while some Muslim women wear hijabs to avoid any harassments, it seems that after 9/11, hijabs in the West became the exact objects that actually draw and attract, perhaps not the sexual, but definitely the verbal and the physical assaults all in the name of revenge.

Moreover, through emphasizing the idea that Arissa watched her "torn black hijab" thrown next to her, the above quote also suggests that the hijab not only attracted the assault, but was actually the target of the attack. This suggests that in the context of *Saffron Dreams*, which

clearly depicts the most heated period of Islamophobia in America, the hijab became a highly offensive item that some Islamophobes regarded as provoking immediate intervention. This means that to the angry assaulters, ripping off this piece of clothing around Arissa's head not only enacts revenge, but is also perceived as a necessary act to get rid of a provocative symbol.

Although the assault does not cause any fatal injuries to Arissa, nor in the lost of her unborn baby, it still, unfortunately, results in the birth of a child who struggles from many health issues such as "heart defect, urinary tract malformations, kidney abnormalities, [and] cleft lip" (Abdullah 67). Through emphasizing the high price that Arissa had to pay as a result of clinging to her headscarf, Abdullah suggests that the post-9/11 negative understanding of the hijab left some Muslim women forced, out of fear, to conceal their Islamic markers. Arissa found herself forced to abandon the hijab not only to avoid endangering her life, or the life of her child, but also to continue any hopes of embracing the United States as her home. Hence, Arissa's experience with wearing the hijab suggests that during the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, some immigrant Muslim women were faced with two choices: either losing a crucial part of their religious/cultural identify, or giving up any hopes of embracing the United States as home. This idea can be seen in Arissa's justification for deciding to remove the hijab as she states, "Losing Faizan, the attack at the subway station, the ultrasound afterward – they all were collectively responsible for that decision . . . My decision to let go of an integral part of my life would only offer one less chance of being singled out" (105).

Arissa's decision to remove her hijab conforms to the actual experience of some Muslim women in the aftermath of 9/11. Haddad points out that "some Muslim women who had been wearing a hijab prior to 9/11 removed it as a precaution, as many were counseled to do, in order to avoid harassment or worse" (263).

Experiential Differences of the Muslim Woman and the Muslim Man

The significance of reading Changez's experience alongside that of Arissa's rests on the suggestion that the experiences of the two immigrants provide us with a sense of the price of insisting on embracing a visible Islamic marker during the backlash of 9/11. By insisting on wearing a beard, Changez not only became socially outcast, but he also lost his job. Accordingly, he was not able to continue living in the United States. At the same time, by stopping wearing the hijab, and consequently hiding her Islamic identity, Arissa was not only able to avoid the Islamophobic harassments and challenges, but she was also able embrace the United States as home.

When looking closely at the experience of these two immigrants, a second significance becomes equally, if not even more, important. This crucial significance stems from the idea that Arissa's experience, and consequently the experience of Muslim women in general, is far more difficult than the experience of Changez, and other Muslim men. In order to understand why the Muslim women are facing a tougher challenge from Islamophobia, we have to understand the religious differences between the beard and the hijab. This is due to the fact that to the majority of Muslims, wearing a beard is simply an act of *sunnah*[19] which simply means that it is optional. At the same time, however, the majority of Muslims also believe that wearing a hijab is an obligatory act. By shaving their beards and consequently hiding their religious identity, Muslim men do not see themselves as sinners. Unfortunately, nonetheless, by removing their headscarves, some Muslim women might become convinced that they are committing a sin. That fundamental difference in understanding between beards and headscarves usually leaves Muslim

[19] In Islam, *Sunnah* refers to the acts or worships that Muslims do in order to follow the example of the Prophet. However, while these deeds are encouraged, choosing not to perform them is not believed to be a sin.

women more vulnerable to harassment in the West as their Islamic marker is more difficult to hide.

In "Gendered Islamophobia: hate crime against Muslim women," Barbara Perry argues that when it comes to hate crimes against minorities, women are usually in a lesser danger when compared to men. However, as Perry states, this appears to be not the case when studying the Muslim community of the United States:

> Generally, women are not particularly vulnerable to hate crime. Just as the majority of perpetrators are male, so too are the majority of victims. However, this is not the case within the Muslim community. There, women and girls appear to be extremely vulnerable to violence motivated by their status as Muslims, but especially as Muslim women. In part, this is due to the fact that those who are covered, in particular, are readily identifiable. (74)

To support Perry's argument, it might be important to consider Wahiba Abu-Ras' and Zulema Suarez's study which examines the differences between the level of discrimination experienced by Muslim men and women after the events of 9/11. Commenting on the study's findings, Abu-Ras and Suarez write, "Examining the overall experiences of hate crimes by gender, there appears to be a significant relationship between gender and hate crimes, with more women reporting hate crimes" (54). In fact, according to these results, while 86% of the women who participated in the study reported experiencing harassment, only 55% of the participated men reported experiencing similar incidents (54). These numbers prove that indeed, as Perry pointed out, that when it comes to the Muslim community, women do truly experience a higher level of discrimination not just because of their status as Muslims, but more importantly, because of the fact that they are Muslim women.

In order to have a better understanding of Perry's argument, and Abu-Ras' and Suarez's study's findings, it might be also useful to look at the recollections of Muslims who experienced discrimination after 9/11. In an article entitled "Muslims here in America are just like any other citizen," David Beard interviews a Syrian-American family who describes their struggles as a Muslim family living through the backlash of 9/11. Interestingly, one of the male members of the Syrian family emphasizes that his experience as a Muslim man was far easier than the experience of his mother and sisters: "As a guy, I don't get it as bad . . . If I shave my beard, some people don't even know I'm Arab" (1). However, he continues, "But my mother and my sisters get it a lot worse because they wear the headscarf . . . The hijab is that visible marker that people know" (1). Hence, to get a sense for what his mother and the rest of the Muslim women are experiencing, the Syrian immigrant decided to wear a *kufi*[20] for a day. Upon wearing the kufi, the Syrian immigrant noticed strange glares and glances, and was subject to verbal attacks demanding him to go back home. The awful experience of wearing a visible marker associated with Muslims made the Syrian immigrant, according to Beard, wonder how much strength it takes for his mother and Muslim women around the United States to leave their houses everyday while wearing their hijabs.

Based on these considerations, it becomes clear why it is very essential to read the experience of Muslim men with Islamophobia alongside reading about the experience of Muslim women. Islamophobia does not affect all Muslims equally. As such, it might be argued that Muslim women living in the West are the true minority that is constantly exposed to Islamophobia.

[20] A *kufi* is the brimless cap that some Muslim men usually wear.

Conclusion

The Muslim beard has a long history of negative associations that seems to be inspired by a political enmity between some Western governments and the few leaders in the Muslim world who have showed hostility towards the West. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, however, this politicalization of the Muslim beard appeared to be transferred wholesale to the Western public. As a result, Islamophobes regarded the bearded Muslim living in the West as the representation of Bin Laden who after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 symbolized the idea of the ultimate enemy. Using fiction to depict this Islamophobic idea, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* takes its reader closer to understanding the nature of the social challenges that might face a bearded Muslim in the world of post-9/11. In this respect, the novel suggests that when a Muslim male immigrant tries to emphasize his religious identity by insisting on wearing a beard, he might find it difficult to continue embracing the United States as home.

Hijabs and veils on the other hand, have even a longer history of negativity in Western representation. This negativity extends to the era of colonialism where the image of the veiled woman became part of the Western justification for colonizing the Muslim world. However, after 9/11, the image of the veiled woman not only became a representation of a patriarchal culture, but the indicator of an extremist ideology. As a result of that Islamophobic understanding, Muslim women around the West became the targets of countless hate crimes because of their endorsement of what was an apparent religious marker. In this regard, Shaila Abdullah's novel *Saffron Dreams* brings its reader closer to not only experience the challenges that face Muslim women, but also the sacrifices that these women are sometimes forced to make in order continue embracing the United States as their home.

Finally, in studying the effects of Islamophobia on the lives of Muslims living in the West during the aftermath of 9/11, this chapter has argued that Muslim women are usually more vulnerable to the backlash of 9/11 because they might find it more difficult to conceal their religious markers because of the belief that Islam requires women to cover their heads.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: ISLAMOPHOBIA AS A CHALLENGE TO THE MUSLIMS' RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

"According to some, the best Muslim is one that visibly ceases to be one…"
— Gema Martín-Muñoz, "Unconscious Islamophobia" (23)

"Religion was an element of my personal identity but not an essential part of my life; it was not the overriding ideology… Yet the events of 9/11 and the subsequent levels of hostility have made me question my own notions of identity and belonging . . . I have come to take my Muslim faith more seriously"
— Amir Saeed, "9/11 and the Increase in Racism and Islamophobia" (210)

I

Besides summarizing the connection between the dissertation's previous chapters, this concluding chapter aims to highlight the idea that today's Islamophobia has become a system of othering that relies on misconceptions for the purpose of distinguishing the "good" Muslim from the "bad." To achieve this goal, the chapter will study Slavoj Žižek's concepts of the absolute Other and the imponderable Other by applying them to the novels in this dissertation. By doing so, the chapter will conclude by underlining the idea that the majority of the literature of 9/11 is, unfortunately, reemphasizing Islamophobia through spreading the belief that while that the "bad" Muslim is the one who is strongly attached to his religious identity, the "good" Muslim is his complete opposite.

In order to have a sense of how Islamophobia is affecting almost every aspect of the religious identity of Muslims living in the West, it was important for this dissertation to establish a thorough understanding of how Islamophobia is targeting every facet of the Islamic identity. This means that Muslims living in the West fearfully embrace their Muslim identity. As such, in an attempt to highlight the magnitude of this challenge, it was crucial for this dissertation to construct its chapters around emphasizing the idea that after the terrorist attacks of 9/11,

Islamophobia became so severe that it surrounded almost every aspect of the Muslim's religious identity whether that was faith, its practice, or even appearance.

To explain further, as the second chapter of this dissertation attempted to present, Islamophobia looks suspiciously on the Muslim's knowledge of his holy book, viewing the Quran as a textbook that teaches Muslims hate and intolerance. This suspicion also applies to the practice of faith: the third chapter tried to emphasize that Islamophobia perceives mosques as schools that graduate extremists and terrorists. In fact, Islamophobia has spread its interests to include appearance as a signifier of a perfidious faith. Hence the fourth chapter of this dissertation discussed how the Muslim man's beard and the Muslim woman's headscarf have become signs that might indicate the individual's embracement of an extremist ideology.

This overall negative and suspicious attitude towards the Muslim's faith, practice, and appearance suggests that adherents of a post-9/11 Islamophobia philosophy believes that Islam is a wicked ideological force that drives its followers into becoming violent individuals. However, as Slavoj Žižek points out, that concerning the relationship between Islam and violence, an overall look at the Islamic history can "clearly demonstrate that we are dealing not with a feature inscribed into Islam 'as such,' but with the outcome of modern sociopolitical conditions" (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 41). The role of these modern sociopolitical conditions in feeding today's conflict, as Žižek suggests, has largely been overlooked, and as a result, since the events of 9/11, the image of Islam in the West has always been mainly negative.

This negative image of Islam in post-9/11 politics is pushing the more tolerant voices in the West, according to Žižek, to view "today's tolerant liberal multiculturalism as an experience of the Other deprived of its Otherness" (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 11). This suggests that when it comes to the Muslims living in the West after the events of 9/11, their status as

welcomed Others appeared to be conditioned by ensuring that they removed any signs of religious commitment. Hence, to borrow Žižek's terms, this simply means that as a result of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, many voices in the West wanted perhaps to see the Muslim, or the Other, as being deprived of his/her otherness i.e., Islam.

Based on these considerations, Islamophobia aims to create a system, based on misconceptions, which can distinguish the "good" Muslim from the "bad." In this system, according to Gema Martín-Muñoz, any signs of Islamic devotion or commitment could easily be interpreted negatively as indications of religious extremism. Accordingly, the Muslim living in the West needs to be visibly and noticeably detached from his faith in order to be considered a "good" Muslim in the eyes of the Islamophobes. In "Unconscious Islamophobia," Martín-Muñoz writes:

> It is impossible to reconstruct an apparently "ideal" situation since some sectors of society expect the Muslim identity of these citizens to dissipate and even gradually disappear during their process of European integration. According to some, the best Muslim is one that visibly ceases to be one, hence the tendency to distinguish between "good Muslims" and "bad Muslims." The former would be Westernized Muslims who declare themselves to be secular and often, without having scientific qualifications, confirm our demonized stereotypes of Islam and its alleged "diseases." Westernized Muslims are often heralded as the only possible ambassadors of their society and culture . . . If the rest do not prove that they are "good" Muslims, they are considered "bad" Muslims. (23)

Martín-Muñoz's argument suggests that after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Muslims needed to always present themselves in accordance with how the West misunderstands Islam in order to not run the risk of being viewed as "bad" Muslims.

To have a better understanding of Martín-Muñoz's idea of the "good" Muslim and the "bad" Muslim, it is crucial to consider Žižek's two levels of otherness. According to Žižek, an Other in the West consists of either being an "imponderable Other" or an "absolute Other." While the first, as Žižek writes, "deserves our unconditional respect" (Vi*olence 4*1), the latter does not as it resembles the worst side of the Other. In the example of Muslims living in the West, this idea could be applied to how while a moderate Muslim is usually welcomed in the West, an extremist will always not be. In arguing how otherness in the West is only conditionally accepted, Žižek writes, "today's liberal tolerance towards others, the respect of otherness and openness towards it, is counterpointed by an obsessive fear of harassment. In short, the Other is just fine, but only insofar as his presence is not intrusive, insofar as this Other is not really other" (Vi*olence* 41). This means that while a moderate Muslim might be socially accepted in the West, an extremist will not, even if he does not pose a threat. Unfortunately, however, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Islamophobia played a major role in blurring the lines between the two examples of Muslims. Consequently, the moderate Muslim who reveals any signs of religious commitment might be viewed less as an "imponderable Other," but rather as an "absolute Other."

To clarify Žižek's two levels of otherness, it might be useful to consider Ayşem Seval's analysis. Based on Žižek's argument, Seval believes that there is a "thin line between 'the figure of the Neighbor as the imponderable Other' and the category of the 'absolute Other'" (106). This slight difference as Seval explains lies in the idea that according to the Slovenian philosopher, the absolute Other, the terrorist such as DeLillo's Hammad and Updike's Ahmad, represents the

true danger that the West should fear and reject. Nevertheless, due to today's Islamophobic misconceptions such as the belief that thick beards indicate an inclination to extremism as in the experience of Hamid's Changez, the "imponderable Other" such as Changez runs the risk of being viewed as an "absolute Other." Seval writes:

> The first [the imponderable Other] could be tactfully respected, but the second [the absolute Other] is totally foreign. It is therefore less than human and could be excluded from universal human brotherhood and compassion. The absolute Other could then be harassed, tortured, and killed. The Neighbour as the imponderable Other, at any time, runs the risk of being perceived as the absolute Other. (106)

Seval's analysis of Žižek's argument is crucial not only because it clarifies how the violent attacks against Muslims are seen by the perpetrators as justified actions, but also because it provides a sense of the ease with which the "imponderable Other" can be viewed as an "absolute Other." Thus, it might be argued that the most pressing issue of the post-9/11 Islamophobia perspective, as this dissertation tried to highlight, is that it considers the signs of religious commitment as the signifiers that distinguish what Martín-Muñoz refer to as the "bad" Muslim from the "good" Muslim.

In fact, when revisiting the literary works that this dissertation has studied in previous chapters, it becomes clear that Martín-Muñoz's analysis of what makes the "bad" Muslim an "absolute Other" is in fact an accurate one. For example, DeLillo's Hammad and Updike's Ahmad are both religiously devoted, and accordingly, are presented by DeLillo and Updike as examples of the "bad" Muslims who fit Žižek's description of the "absolute Other." In the same way, the "good" Muslims in the works of Muslim/Eastern writers are clearly not religious. For instance, Halaby's Jassim, Naqvi's Chuck, Hamid's Changez, and Abdullah's Arissa are all

presented, in Žižek's terms, as Others without their otherness. Ironically, this vast contrast between the Eastern and the Western depictions of the Muslim character suggests that these authors have all agreed that while the "bad" Muslim or the "absolute Other" is obviously the one who is practicing Islam, the "good" Muslim is his opposite.

To illustrate further, in the works produced by Western novelists that this dissertation has studied, the terrorist's character is a Muslim who clearly has a strong relationship with his faith. For example, in *Terrorist*, Updike depicts his terrorist character, Ahmad, as someone devoted to Islam. This can be seen in how Ahmad tries enthusiastically to memorize the Quran by heart. Similar to Updike's terrorist, DeLillo's terrorist, Hammad, also seems to be equally devoted. This devotion can be seen in the narrator's description of the importance for Hammad to maintain a long beard and perform prayers in a mosque as being the acts that could unite him with the other terrorists:

> The beard would look better if he [Hammad] trimmed it. But there were rules now and he was determined to follow them. His life had structure. Things were clearly defined. He was becoming one of them [the other terrorists] now, learning to look like them and think like them. This was inseparable from jihad. He prayed with them to be with them. They were becoming total brothers. (DeLillo 83)

Hammad and Ahmad are both examples of how some Western literary authors are helping to spread Islamophobia through emphasizing the belief that religious commitment is an attitude limited to the "bad" Muslims.

On the other hand, the "good" and the innocent Muslims in the works of many Muslim/Eastern authors are the ones who are not practicing Islam. This can be seen in Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* where, for instance, Jassim declares at one point that he has

"not prayed in a mosque since [he] was a young man" (Halaby 231). The same also applies to Shaila Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams* as Arissa states that when it comes to her household, "no one prayed there except Azad Baba" (Abdullah 12). This approach also extends to Naqvi's Chuck who when asked by a detective if he prays five times a day, replied by declaring that he only prays several times a year (Naqvi 143). These examples suggest that Halaby, Abdullah, and Naqvi wanted perhaps to remove Jassim, Arissa, and Chuck from being perceived by their Western readers as having some of the qualities of the "bad" Muslims. This was simply done through the creation of characters that, ironically, are declaring their innocence through emphasizing that they do not practice Islam.

In depicting 9/11, it appears that the majority of the Eastern/Muslim literary authors seem to be convinced that the Islamophobic atmosphere which followed the terrorist attacks had little or no effect on the religious identity of those who were experiencing the backlash of 9/11. However, it seems that fiction, at least in the few examples that this dissertation has focused on does not accurately reflect Islamophobia's true effect on the religious identity of Muslims living in the West during the heated anti-Muslim times that followed the terrorist attacks of 9/11.[21]

As a matter of fact, according to studies such as the one done by Foner and Alba, when faced with discrimination, members of religious minorities tend to actually strengthen their attachment to their religious identity.[22] In this regard, Foner and Alba write, "religion can act as a

[21] An example of an Eastern depiction that attempts to bring a positive portrayal of the practicing Muslim through the creation of a character that is attached to its religious identity is *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) by Mohja Kahf. Although Kahf's plot takes place prior to the events of 9/11, it is important, however, to notice that the novel was still published during a heated Islamophobic climate.

[22] It is crucial to point out here that even though it is true that Updike's *Terrorist* hints to the idea that discrimination against Muslims pushed Ahmad to be more interested in knowing his father's faith, the suggestion that this interest drove him to be an extremist reemphasize the notion that "bad" Muslims are the ones who are attached to their religious identity.

mediator by helping minorities to cope with acculturative stress and social isolation, thereby easing their adaption to the society. Consequently, members of religious minority groups may strengthen their religious identity in order to cope with stigma-related experiences" (qtd. in Jonas R. Kunst). Foner and Alba's findings are supported by the recounts of Amir Saeed. In "9/11 and the Increase in Racism and Islamophobia," Saeed describes his experience with the backlash of 9/11 as a non-practicing Muslim. Saeed says that when he started facing the discrimination that resulted from 9/11, he began to strengthen his Islamic identity. In this respect, Saeed states that before the events of 9/11, "religion was an element of my personal identity but not an essential part of my life; it was not the overriding ideology" (209). He continues, however, "the events of 9/11 and the subsequent levels of hostility have made me question my own notions of identity and belonging . . . I have come to take my Muslim faith more seriously" (210). While the results of Foner's and Alba's study, and the recounts of Saeed might apply to Mohsin Hamid's main character who insisted on growing his beard after experiencing discrimination, they still, unfortunately, do not apply to the characters in the fiction of Eastern novelists such as Naqvi, Abdullah, and Halaby.

Therefore, it is crucial to highlight that in terms of a Muslim's sense of religious identity, Islamophobia is indeed a tremendous challenge that seems to be touching all facets of the Muslims' religious identity whether this is the faith, the practice, or even the appearance. However, it is equally important to note that contrary to what the literature of 9/11 usually suggests, experiencing Islamophobia may actually push Muslims to strengthen, and not weaken, their attachment to their Islamic identity. This strengthening happens even though that these Muslims are fully aware that by doing so they are likely to be perceived as "bad" Muslims by the Islamophobes.

II

Final Note on the Importance of Studying Islamophobia Today

Even though we are no longer living amidst the immediate backlash of 9/11, I still believe that studying Western Islamophobia, as a phenomenon that came back stronger as a result of 9/11, is still relevant. This is not only because Islamophobia still exists today, but more importantly because its terrible consequences simply do not only affect the few unfortunate individuals who experience them directly, but also the countless others who feel threatened with the occurrence of every Islamophobic violent incident. In *Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American Experience After 9/11*, Louis A. Cainkar points out that "the climate of harassment was something an Arab Muslim understood from direct experience and from having knowledge of the experiences of others" (158). Canikar states that the result of such a climate of fear is that "many Arab Muslims altered their own behaviors after they learned about incidents that had happened to like others" (158). According to Caniker, whenever "a small minority of Arab and Muslim Americans were attacked physically in the United States, most Arab and Muslim Americans felt a heightened sense of danger and vulnerability each time they learned of such an attack" (158). Unfortunately however, as Caniker believes, when studying Islamophobia, researchers tend to overlook the impact of these Islamophobic violent incidents on the rest of Muslims. In this regard, Caniker writes, "these are the phenomena missed by hate crimes statistics: the anxiety and behavioral change such crimes produce among countless others who experience collateral damage" (158). Therefore, as a study focused on the effects of the post-9/11 Islamophobia, it is important for this dissertation to conclude by emphasizing the idea that Islamophobia today is affecting almost all Muslims living in the West whether they have ever experienced it firsthand or not.

Works Cited

Abdullah, Shahid. "Muslims in Pre- and Post-9/11 Contexts." *International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2015, pp. 52–59. *DOAJ*, doi:10.7575/aiac.ijclts.v.3n.3p.52.

Abdullah, Shaila. *Saffron Dreams: A Novel*. Modern History Press, 2010.

Abu-Ras, Wahiba, and Zulema E. Suarez. "Muslim Men and Women's Perception of Discrimination, Hate Crimes, and PTSD Symptoms Post 9/11." *Traumatology*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2009, pp. 48–63. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1177/1534765609342281.

Ahmed, Akbar S. *Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalization*. Brookings Institution Press, 2007.

Ahmed, Leila. *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America*. Yale University Press, 2011.

Ahmed, Nabila. "Crumbling Under the Disciplinary Gaze: Power Relations and the Illusion of Freedom in Shaila Abdullah's Saffron Dreams and Laila Halaby's Once in a Promised Land, a Foucauldian Reading." *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 8, 2015, pp. 247–261. *ProQuest*, http://bit.ly/2yKFwCG.

Al-Olaqi, Fahd. "Marlowe's Tamburlaine (1587) and Islamic Theology." *Trames: A Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2012, pp. 177–201. *ProQuest*, doi:10.3176/tr.2012.2.05.

Ali, Monica. *Brick Lane: A Novel*. New York: Scribner, 2003.

Altwaiji, Mubarak. "Neo-Orientalism and the Neo-Imperialism Thesis: Post-9/11 US and Arab World Relationship." *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2014, pp. 313–323. *ProQuest*, doi.org/10.13169/arabstudquar.36.4.0313.

Asani, Ali. "'So That You May Know One Another': A Muslim American Reflects on Pluralism and Islam." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 588, no. 1, 2003, pp. 40–51. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1177/0002716203588001004.

Ashbrook, Tom. "John Updik's *Terrorist*." *Boston's NPR News Station*, 13 June 2006. wbur.org/onpoint/2006/06/13/john-updikes-terrorist. Accessed 12 July 2015.

Bagby, Ihsan, Paul Perl, and Bryan Froehle. "The Mosque in America: A National Portrait. Report from the Mosque Study Project 2000." *Washington, DC: Council on American-Islamic Relations*, 2001. icnl.com/files/Masjid_Study_Project_2000_Report.pdf.

Bakali, Naved. *Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Racism Through the Lived Experiences of Muslim Youth*. Sense Publishers, 2016.

Bakircioglu, Onder. "A Socio-Legal Analysis of the Concept of Jihad." *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 2, 2010, pp. 413–440. *ProQuest*, doi:10.1017/S0020589310000060.

Batstone, Jade. "From Rubble to Respect at the 'Ground Zero Mosque'." *Peace Review*, vol. 24, no. 2, Apr. 2012, pp. 147–155. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/10402659.2012.677323.

Bayoumi, Moustafa. "Between Acceptance and Rejection: Muslim Americans and the Legacies of September 11." *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2011, pp. 15–19. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1093/oahmag/oar017.

---. "The God That Failed: The Neo-Orientalism of Today's Muslim Commentators." *Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend*, edited by Andrew Shryock, Indiana University Press, 2010, pp.79–93.

Beard, David. "'Muslims Here in America are Just Like any Other Citizen'." *Dominion Post*, 19 Sept. 2016. Accessed 20 July 2017.

Behdad, Ali, and Juliet Williams. "Neo-orientalism." *Globalizing American Studies*, edited by Brian T Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, University of Chicago Press, 2010, pp. 282–99.

Birt, Jonathan. "Good Imam, Bad Imam: Civic Religion and National Integration in Britain Post-9/11." *The Muslim World*, vol. 96, no. 4, 2006, pp. 687-705. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1111/j.1478-1913.2006.00153.x.

Bjerre, Thomas. "Post 9/11 Literary Masculinities in Kalfus, DeLillo, and Hamid." *Orbis Litterarum*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2012, pp. 241–266. *Wiley Online Library*, doi:10.1111/j.1600-0730.2012.01051.x.

Byron, George. *The Complete Poetical Works of Lord Byron*. Houghton Mifflin, 1905.

Cainkar, Louise A. *Homeland Insecurity: the Arab American and Muslim American Experience after 9/11*. Russell Sage Foundation, 2011.

Chiu, Monica. *Scrutinized!: Surveillance in Asian North American Literature*. University of Hawaii Press, 2014.

Cilano, Cara. "Manipulative Fiction: Democratic Futures in Pakistan." *From Solidarity to Schisms: 9/11 and After in Fiction and Films from Outside the US.,* edited by Cara Cilano, Rodopi, 2009, pp. 201-218.

Colgan, John-Paul. "'This Godless Democracy': Terrorism, Multiculturalism, and American Self-Criticism in John Updike." *American Multiculturalism after 9/11: Transatlantic Perspectives*, edited by Derek Rubin and Jaap Verheul, Amsterdam University Press, 2009, pp. 119-132.

Conway, Gordon. *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All; Report of the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia*. Runnymede Trust, 1997.

Crosby, Emily. “Faux feminism: France's veil ban as Orientalism.” *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2014, pp. 46–60. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol15/iss2/4.

Deeb, Gehan. “Inventing a Myth: The Medieval Islamic Civilization through Western Perspectives.” *International Journal of Language and Literature*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2014, pp.139-177, doi:10.15640/ijll.v2n4a9.

DeLillo, Don. *Falling Man: A Novel*. Scribner, 2008.

Derosa, Aaron. “Alterity and the Radical Other in Post-9/11 Fiction: DeLillo’s Falling Man and Walter's The Zero.” *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, vol. 69, no. 3, 2013, pp. 157–183. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/arq.2013.0017.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. Dodd, Mead & Company, 1961.

Earle, Chris. “Good Muslims, Bad Muslims, and the Nation: The ‘Ground Zero Mosque’ and the Problem with Tolerance.” *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, June 2015, pp. 121–138. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/14791420.2015.1008529.

El Said, Maha. “The Face of the Enemy: Arab-American Writing Post-9/11.” *Studies in the Humanities*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2003, pp. 200–216.

Elver, Hilal. “Racializing Islam Before and After 9/11: from melting pot to Islamophobia.” *Transnational Law & Contemporary Problems*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2012, pp. 119–174.

Farmanfarmaian, Abouali. “Fear of the Beard.” *Transition*, vol. 67, no. 3, 1995, pp. 48–69. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/2935256.

Ferry, Peter. "The Beard, Masculinity, and Otherness in the Contemporary American Novel." *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2017, pp. 163–182. *Literature Online (LION)*, doi:10.1017/ S0021875815002704.

Forster, E. M. *A Passage to India*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Fulton, Bruce. "France and the End of the Ottoman Empire." *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Marian Kent, Routledge. 1984, pp. 137-164.

Geisler, Norman L., and Abdul Saleeb. *Answering Islam: the crescent in light of the cross*. Baker books, 2002.

Gleich, Lewis S. "Ethics in the Wake of the Image: the Post-9/11 Fiction of DeLillo, Auster, and Foer." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2014, pp. 161–176. *Project MUSE,* doi:10.2979/jmodelite.37.3.161.

Gray, Richard. *After the Fall: American Literature since 9/11*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Green, Todd H. *The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West*. Fortress Press, 2015.

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, and John L. Esposito. *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*. Oxford University Press, 2001.

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, Jane I. Smith, and Kathleen M. Moore. *Muslim Women in America: The Challenge of Islamic Identity Today*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck. "The Post-9/11 Hijab as Icon." *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 68, no. 3, 2007, pp. 253–267. *Biography In Context*, doi:10.1093/socrel/68.3.253.

---. *Not Quite American?: The Shaping of Arab and Muslim Identity in the United States*. Baylor University Press, 2004.

Halaby, Laila. *Once in a Promised Land*. Beacon Press, 2007.

Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Harcourt, 2008.

Hampton, Barbara J. "Free to Be Muslim-Americans: Community, Gender, and Identity in Once in a Promised Land, the Taqwacores, and the Girl in the Tangerine Scarf." *Christian Scholar's Review*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2011, pp. 245–266.

Haque, Amber. "Islamophobia in North America: Confronting the Menace." *Confronting Islamophobia in Educational Practice*, edited by Barry Van Driel, Trentham, 2004, pp. 1–18.

Harack, Katrina. "Embedded and Embodied Memories: Body, Space, and Time in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and *Falling Man*." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 54, no. 2, 2013, pp. 303–336. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/cli.2013.0016.

Hartnell, Anna. "Violence and the Faithful in Post-9/11 America: Updike's Terrorist, Islam, and the Specter of Exceptionalism." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* vol. 57, no. 3, 2011, pp. 477–502. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/mfs.2011.0066.

Hashmi, Sohail. "Interpreting the Islamic Ethics of War and Peace." *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict*, edited by Sohail Hashmi, Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 194–216.

Heidemann, Birte. "'We are the Glue Keeping Civilization Together': Post-Orientalism and Counter-Orientalism in HM Naqvi's Home Boy." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 48, no. 3, 2012, pp. 289–298. *Taylor & Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/17449855.2012.678713.

Hilal, Jamil. "The Palestinian National Question: Settler-Colonialism and the International Power Regime." *Reclaiming the Nation: The Return of the National Question in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, edited by Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros, Pluto Press, 2011, pp. 151–171.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon and Schuster, 1996.

Ibn Said, Omar, and Ala A. Alryyes. *A Muslim American slave: the life of Omar Ibn Said*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2011.

Jamal, Amaney. "Mosques, Collective Identity, and Gender Differences among Arab American Muslims." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2005, pp. 53–78. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1215/15525864-2005-1004.

Kabir, Nahid Afrose. *Young American Muslims: Dynamics of Identity*. Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

---. *Young British Muslims: Identity, Culture, Politics and the Media*. Edinburgh University Press, 2010.

Kahf, Mohja. *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*. Publicaffairs, 2007.

Kauffman, Linda. "World Trauma Center." *American Literary History*, vol. 21 no. 3, 2009, pp. 647–659. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1093/alh/ajp015.

Kunst, Jonas. "Coping with Islamophobia: The Effects of Religious Stigma on Muslim Minorities' Identity Formation." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2012, pp. 518–532. *Science Direct*, doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.12.014.

Kurzman, Charles, David Schanzer, and Ebrahim Moosa. "Muslim American Terrorism Since 9/11: Why so Rare?." *The Muslim World*, vol. 101, no. 3, 2011, pp. 464–483. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1111/j.1478-1913.2011.01388.x.

Lean, Nathan. *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims*. Pluto Press, 2012.

Leibowitz, G. Aaron. "Terry Jones and Global Free Speech in the Internet Age." *Cardozo Arts & Entertainment Law Journal*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2013, pp. 509–538. *EBSCOhost*, cardozoaelj.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Leibowitz.pdf.

Malik, Iftikhar H. *Culture and Customs of Pakistan*. Greenwood Press, 2008.

Marlowe, Christopher. *Tamburlaine the Great: in Two Parts*. Routledge, 2013.

Martin-Munoz, Gema. "Unconscious Islamophobia." *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2010, pp. 21–28.

Marzouki, Nadia. *Islam: An American Religion*. Columbia University Press, 2017.

Mishra, Pankaj. "The End of Innocence." *The Guardian*, 18 May 2007, theguardian.com/books/2007/may/19/fiction.martinamis. Accessed 15 Apr. 2016.

Moore, Kathleen. *The Unfamiliar Abode: Islamic law in the United States and Britain*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Morey, Peter and Anna Yaqin. *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9111.* Harvard University Press, 2011.

Morley, Catherine. "Writing in the Wake of 9/11." *American Thought and Culture in the 21st Century*, edited by Martin Halliwell. Edinburgh University Press, 2008, pp. 245–258.

Muasher, Marwan. *Second Arab Awakening: and the Battle for Pluralism*. Yale University Press, 2015.

Mustafa, Shakir. "Defending the Faith: Islam in Post 9/11 Anglophone Fiction." *Religion and Literature*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2009, pp. 281–288. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/25676913.

Nacos, Brigitte L., and Oscar Torres-Reyna. "Framing Muslim-Americans before and after 9/11." *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public,* edited by Pippa Norris and Montague Kern, Routledge, 2003. pp. 133–158.

Nagra, Baljit. "'Our Faith Was Also Hijacked by Those People': Reclaiming Muslim Identity in Canada in a Post-9/11 Era." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2011, pp. 425–441. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/1369183X.2011.526781.

Naqvi, H M. *Home Boy*. Penguin Books, 2011.

Nguyen, Ann, and Robert Tyler. "Mosque-Based Emotional Support Among Young Muslim Americans." *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 55, no. 4, 2013, pp. 535–555. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/43186222.

O'Brien, Peter. *The Muslim Question in Europe: Political Controversies and Public Philosophies*. Temple University Press, 2016.

Perry, Barbara. "Gendered Islamophobia: Hate Crime against Muslim Women." *Social Identities*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2014, pp. 74–89. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/13504630.2013.864467.

Pipes, Daniel. *In the Path of God: Islam and political power*. Routledge, 2017.

Pöhlmann, Sascha. "Collapsing Identities: The Representation and Imagination of the Terrorist in Falling Man." *Terrorism, Media, and the Ethics of Fiction: Transatlantic Perspectives on Don DeLillo*, edited by Philipp Schweighauser and Peter Schneck, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010, pp. 51–64.

Raihanah, M. M., Ruzy Suliza Hashim, and Noraini Md Yusof. "Islamophobia And Muslim Minorities In Post 9/11 Women's Fiction." *e-Bangi: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,* vol. 10, no. 1, 2015, pp. 108–116. *ProQuest*, ejournal.ukm.my/ebangi/article/view/11000.

Randall, Martin. *9/11 and the Literature of Terror*. Edinburgh University Press, 2011.

Rowe, John Carlos. "Global Horizons in Falling Man." *Don DeLillo: Mao II, Underworld, Falling Man*, edited by Stacy Olster, Continuum International Publishing, 2011, pp. 121–134.

Saeed, Amir. "9/11 And the Increase in Racism and Islamophobia." *Radical History Review*, vol. 2011, no. 111, 2011, pp. 210–215. *Duke University Press*, doi: 10.1215/01636545-1268821.

Said, Edward. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. Vintage Books, 1977.

---. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 2004.

Samiei, Mohammad. "Neo-Orientalism? The Relationship between the West and Islam in Our Globalised World." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 7, 2010, pp. 1145–1160. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/01436597.2010.518749.

Schaffner, Brian F. "Support at Any Distance? The Role of Location and Prejudice in Public Opposition to the 'Ground Zero Mosque.'" *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2013, pp. 753–759. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/43284761.

Seval, Ayşem. "(Un)tolerated Neighbour: Encounters with the Tolerated Other in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *The Submission*." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 48 no. 2, 2017, pp. 101-125. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/ari.2017.0016.

Shaheen, Basima Kamel. "Literary Form and Islamic Identity in The Life of Omar Ibn Said." *Journeys of the Slave Narrative in the Early Americas*, edited by Nicole N. Aljoe and Ian Finseth, University of Virginia Press, 2014, pp. 187–208.

Shaheen, Jack. "Hollywood's Misrepresentation of Arabs." *Sociology: Introductory Readings*, edited by Anthony Giddens and Philip Sutton, Polity, 2010. pp. 211–216.

---. *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. Olive Branch Press, 2014.

Shlezinger, Keren. *Mohsin Hamid's the Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Insight Publications, 2010.

Shryock, Andrew. "Attack of the Islamophobes." *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance*. edited by Carl W. Ernst, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. pp. 145–174.

Siddiqui, Shariq A. "Myth vs. Reality: Muslim American Philanthropy since 9/11." *Religion in Philanthropic Organizations: Family, Friend, Foe?*, edited by Thomas J. Davis, Indiana University Press, 2013, pp. 203–214.

Spellberg, Denise A. *Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an: Islam and the Founders*. Vintage, 2013.

Steans, Jill. *Gender and International Relations: Issues, Debates and Future Directions*. Polity, 2013.

Stephanopoulos, G. (Interviewer) & Obama, B. (Interviewee). (2010). "President Obama to Pastor Jones: 'Stunt' Endangers Troops." *ABC News*, archive.li/TklD1. Accessed 31 May 2018.

Sutcliffe, Kevin. "Not Guilty — but Who's to Know?" *British Journalism Review*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2008, pp. 48–56. *SAGE Journals*, doi:10.1177/0956474808090195.

The 9/11 Commission Report: Final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States. W.W. Norton & Company, 2004.

Thomas, Jeffrey L. *Scapegoating Islam: Intolerance, Security, and the American Muslim: Intolerance, Security, and the American Muslim*. Praeger, 2015.

Tibi, Bassam. "War and Peace in Islam." *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict*, edited by Sohail H. Hashmi, Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 175–193.

Tuastad, Dag. "Neo-Orientalism and the New Barbarism Thesis: Aspects of Symbolic Violence in the Middle East Conflict(S)." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 4, Aug. 2003, pp. 591–599. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/0143659032000105768.

Tyrer, David. *The Politics of Islamophobia: Race, Power and Fantasy*. Pluto Press, 2013.

Updike, John. *Terrorist*. Random House, 2006.

Versluys, Kristiaan. *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel*. Columbia University Press, 2009.

Widmer, Ted. "The True History of the Koran in America." *The Boston Globe*, 12 September. 2010, http://goo.gl/ChVM3c. Accessed 4 November 2017.

Woodward, Geoffrey. "The Ottomans in Europe." *History Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2001, pp. 1–4.

ZÌizÌek, Slavoj. *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. Profile Books, 2009.

---. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!: Five Essays on September 11 and Related* Dates. Verso, 2013.

---. *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism*. Melville House, 2015.

Zwick, Edward, Lawrence Wright, Menno Meyjes, and Roger Deakins. *The Siege*. Frederiksberg: Fox-Paramount Home Entertainment, 2013.