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THE MUSLIM AND THE JEW: A STUDY OF JOHN UPDIKE'S *TERRORIST*

Doha Al-Sayed ✉; Faculty of Al-Asun, Ain Shams University, Cairo

Abstract: The perception of Muslims and Islam has changed after the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11th 2001. Muslims have been projected as essential and natural-born terrorists. Thus, authors have taken this projection and reflected it into their works. John Updike, in his novel *Terrorist*, has done the same. He has portrayed two characters, a Muslim and a Jew. The contrast between the two characters reinforces the Islamophobic concerns of Western audience, in general, and American audience, in particular. Through lexical choices, narration technique, motifs and symbolism, Updike manages to further cast away the Muslim character from his society. Therefore, this research paper examines the Islamophobic, Orientalist aspects represented in Updike's *Terrorist*, through the comparison made between the Egyptian-American, Muslim Ahmad, and the American, Jewish Levy.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Fear of Islam, Terrorism, Otherness, Stereotyping.

✉ doha.alsayed.mohamed@alsun.asu.edu.eg

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INTRODUCTION

The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center attack in America on September 11th 2001 has changed the way Americans view Muslims and Islam. Prior to the attacks on the Trade Center, and before 2001, "...survey data on American opinions regarding Islam revealed a fairly even split between positive and negative impressions of Islam..." (Ernst 2013). However, after September 11th that balance has shifted as negative perceptions have become more widespread. Survey data focusing on the association between Islam and violence have found that before 2001, "...only 25% of Americans believed that Islam encourages violence, while 51% disagreed with that position; as of 2011, 40% say that Islam encourages violence..." (Ernst 2013). This shift and change of opinions is directly associated with the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11th 2001, and the bombings of London tube train on July 7th, 2005 (Allen 2012).

This shift of opinion to see Islam and Muslims as essential terrorists and "Natural-born terrorists" (Salehnia 2012) has resulted in a term that was coined in the 1990s: Islamophobia. The term has been widely discussed in order to reach a clear definition. However, the term, since its coinage, has not had one specific definition. Nonetheless, some scholars such as Christopher Allen, Carl W. Ernst, Irene Zempi and Neil Chakraborti have attempted to define the term. Thus, Christopher Allen, in his book *Islamophobia*, defines Islamophobia as "... the demonization of human beings for no other reason than their Muslim faith" (Allen 2012). Later on, in the book, he has also defined it as "the shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam- and, therefore to fear or dislike all or most Muslims" (qtd. in Allen 2012). Carl W. Ernst has also attempted to define the term as "the forms and implications of ...

anti-Islamic prejudice..." (Ernst 2013). While Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg treat the term as a largely unwarranted social anxiety about Islam and Muslims, they focus on the element of fear of Islam rather than other stereotypes. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri considers it to be a prejudice against Islam that is particularly associated with violence in media representations (Ernst 2013). Irene Zempi and Neil Chakraborti in their book *Islamophobia Victimisation, and the Veil*, mentioned that "...contemporary Islamophobia is a reflection of a historical anti-Muslim, anti-Islamic phenomenon which was constructed in colonial times but which has increased significantly in recent times, creating a deeper resentment and fear of Islam and Muslims than existed before." (Zempi and Chakraborti 2014). These various definitions have some common grounds for the term. It can be understood that Islamophobia is hatred of, prejudice against, and fear of Islam and Muslims in the West, especially the countries that have been attacked by terrorists, like the US, the UK, and most of the European Union (EU) countries. The consecutive attacks on the West in the 2000s have changed the worldview of Islam as a religion and Muslims as peoples. Muslims were stereotyped into being essential terrorists, primitive, and "backward" (Ernst 2013) people. Edward Curtis highlights the element of racism in Islamophobia, which he links to state repression of political dissent (Ernst 2013). Muslims are grouped into one category which is that of being Jihadists. The West sees them this way disregarding their individual differences, their difference in opinion, and their social-economic and psychological backgrounds. The West fails also to understand the nature of Islam. They only see the side that mass media projects- that of terrorism and Jihad.

Western people fail to see the good side of Islam and Muslims because media and authorities want their citizens to always have something to fear. They used the Soviet Union, Russia, the same way before its dissociation. After its dissociation, political figures of the West could not find another scapegoat other than Islam and Muslims, especially with the rise of Taliban and the Iranian Revolution, with Khomeni- and his radical views- in power

The term "West" is not used here to stereotype; however, it is used for purposes of defining the two spectrums of the scale. The West has divided the world into two unequal parts: the "East" and the "West". The East is less privileged than the West. It is also more primitive, exotic, and backward (Said 2006). The "...Orient has helped to define "Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, [and] experience Thus, it is crucial to understand that the West has had the intention to .(Said 2006) demonize the Orient, Islam and/ or Muslims in order to define themselves, to define their values and what they stand for. Thus, in dealing with Islamophobia, one must also deal with other lapping concepts, such as: Orientalism, Otherness, Stereotyping, White Man's burden, and Racism. These concepts overlap when dealing with Islamophobia because Islam is a religion that was founded in the East, its followers are from the Orient; they are not from the "West" and they do not have the same appearance of those White Men. Thus, Muslims often face stereotyping, and racism in Western communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Christopher Allen, based on the Runnymede model, has summarized the West's problems with Islam. He explains that the West sees Islam as a "monolithic and static rather than diverse and

dynamic" (Allen 2012) religion. Hence, since it is viewed as a static" religion, it is easy to hate, and attack. They also see it as the "Other or separate" rather than similar and interdependent" (Allen 2012). Therefore, it is with ease that this ,religion is hated, and ridiculed because people tend to hate the things they do not know "or hate what they think is different from them. Islam is seen as "inferior not different ,and is seen as "an enemy not as a partner" (Allen 2012). Therefore, as patriots ,(Allen 2012) .Westerners believe that it is their duty to attack and hate the "enemy" (Allen 2012) Moreover, Muslims are seen as "manipulative not as sincere" (Allen 2012). Allen also goes on to say that "racial discrimination against Muslims is defended rather than challenged" (Allen 2012). Furthermore, "anti-Muslim discourse is seen as natural not problematic" (Allen 2012). Hence, hatred towards Islam and Muslims is seen as a patriotic duty. It is even sometimes encouraged to hate Muslims and attack them as a part of a citizen's duty to show that he/ she loves his/ her country. These problems help stereotyping Muslims and disregard their individuality. These ideas are easily disseminated by media. Media representation of Muslims, Islam, and Arabs is one of the main reasons for the spread of Islamophobia (Yenigun 2004), especially in American .media

At times, media representation of certain issues depends on the political agenda of the authorities. Media disseminates messages about Islam and Muslims as they try to garner specific reactions..." (Allen 2012) from their audience. These awaited reactions..." are normally formulated so as to serve the political agenda of the country's controlling authority. Moreover, after the September 11th attack on America, media representation .of Muslims, and Islam in general, has become subject to manipulation and twist Movies, news articles, political campaigns, and books have shown the Muslim as a terrorist, and nothing but a terrorist. These media

usually represent the bearded guy with a bomb trying to kill innocent people as a Muslim, shouting "Allahuakbar" at the moment of killing those innocent, good Americans. Thus, Western people have gained this imbedded idea that Islam encourages terrorism, and at times it has become equivalent to terrorism. The consecutive attacks on the Western society has resulted in leading the masses into believing that Islam and Muslims are "backward, primitive, and exotic" (Said 2006).

The September 11th attack is the West's way of showing that Muslims hate everything that is civilized

.Media figures have established and reinforced these Islamophobic, Orientalist ideas The symbolic value of 9/ 11 became a powerful tool to prove historical conflicts and" differences, arouse psychological fears and anxieties, and justify the use of force against an enemy who had brought that day on the United States" (Shahbaz and Ahmad 2016). This enemy" (Shahbaz and Ahmad 2016) is Muslims. Samuel Huntington's theory of "clash of" civilization" depicted Islam as West's enemy number one in conflicts around the world The West sees and reduces Muslims into nothing but their .(Shahbaz and Ahmad 2016) enemy; the enemy they should battle and put an end to. Hence, the West has divided the world into two dissimilar and unbridgeable parts. Therefore, American media have taken the mission of showing Islam as a "monolithic, static" (Allen 2012) religion. Even though, American media are no longer monolithic in what they present, they provide a .monolithic view of Muslims

It is somehow clear in movies the way Muslims are depicted. Audiences find ,this primitively-clothed, bearded, tough guy who is at first sight known to be Muslim and later on audiences discover that he is the villain. This stereotype has been present in American media since 9/11 and it has not changed. Some producers and scenarists try to show their objectivity and show both the

good and bad Muslim; the bad Muslim is always either killed, or imprisoned in the end by the patriotic cop who manages to save the day by the help of the good Muslim. In novels too, there seems to be a character that is not open minded and is always thinking in archaic terms and concepts. Authors usually write this kind of Muslim character as a person who abuses his wife in the name .of his religion, writing verses from Quran supposedly supporting domestic violence Other authors write the character of the terrorist thinking of Quran verses to criticize the society he lives in. These views change the masses' conception of Islam. Ordinary people who have access to this literature get a manipulated, distorted image of Islam and .its followers

Edward Said, in his book Orientalism, has defined the term- Orientalism- in three different ways. However, this paper is mainly concerned with the first and second definitions only. Said illustrates that: "[any]one who teaches, writes about, or researches ,the Orient- and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist historian, or philologist- either in its specific or its general aspects, is Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism." (Said 2006). The second definition of the term is that Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological" .distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident' " (Said 2006) Thus, it could be argued that when a person deals with a text that divides the East and the West, then he/ she is dealing with the concept of Orientalism. This separation and ."distinction made between the East and the West reinforces the concept of "Otherness

Otherness is also defined as "the result of a discursive process by which a 'dominant in-group ('US,' the self) constructs one or many dominated out-group ('Them Other) by stigmatizing a difference- real or imagined- resented as

a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination" (Staszak 2). Thus, people who are different from others are usually thought of as the Other. They might be subject to discrimination. Thus, in America, Muslims, and as a result of not sharing the same religion or concepts of Americans, are usually subject to discrimination based on their ,religion. Hence, this discrimination and Otherness resulted in Islamophobia. Therefore Islamophobia is both the result and cause of Otherness, Discrimination, and Orientalism. These concepts overlap, as it is fairly difficult to determine the cause and .the result. These ideologies are there, and Muslims usually suffer because of them

,Media representation of Muslims and Islam depends mainly on imbedded Orientalist views. It also shows the Islamophobic discourse media project. It projects how Muslims are outcasted, and thought of as the peculiar, "exotic" (Said 2006), terrorist Other". Novels have been a medium that tackles Islam and Muslims. Thus, Don" DeLillo's novel *Falling Man*, Lorraine Adam's *Harbor*, Robert Ferrigno's *Prayer's for the Assassin*, Ken Kalfus's *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, Robert Baer's *Blow the House Down*, and John Updike's *Terrorist* are all novels showing Muslim people as terrorists and outcasts. These novels, especially John Updike's *Terrorist*, portray the Muslim character as primitive, uncivilized monsters who are made this way because of .their religion

These novels deliver this message through narration, motifs, images, figures of speech, intertextuality, and other literary devices. The authors' goal is to show how Muslims are essentially bad people because of their faith. Authors show this bad example of Muslims so as to establish their patriotism and love of their country. Those writers, raised in the Western atmosphere of hatred towards Muslims, cannot get rid of the imbedded ideas that

they were raised to believe in. They were raised to the idea that Islam is a violent religion that encourages its followers to be violent and commit violent acts. This research paper examines the Islamophobic, Orientalist aspects represented in -John Updike's *Terrorist*, through the comparison made between the Egyptian .American, Muslim Ahmad, and the American, Jewish, Zionist Levy.

The novel tackles the life of Ahmad Ashmawy- Mulloy, who is a young Muslim Egyptian-American boy, and his life at school, and the life of his "guidance counselor" (Updike 2006), Mr. Jack Levy, who is a Jew, and the interaction that happens between the two of them. The novel is about the contrast between Muslims, Christians .and Jews; however, it focuses more on the distinction between Muslims and Jews Updike equally divides the line of the story between Ahmad, the Muslim, and Levy, the Jew. Readers find Ahmad's character very radical in views, and opinions. He attempts to cope with his society with verses from Qu'ran that happen to further cast him away from the very society he is trying to fit into. While, on the other hand, Jack Levy is an -American citizen who does not understand or know this kind of outcasting. He is a well established "guidance counselor" (Updike 2006) who guides people to the right path. Their characters- Ahmad's and Levy's- are totally different and they stand on the two different opposites of the spectrum. Ahmad wants to destroy "New Prospect"- the State he lives in-, while Levy wants to save it and save its citizens from this destruction, as saving .those citizens is saving the future of America

For American readers, this novel only reinforces the imbedded Islamophobic ideas that they were raised to believe in. The title of the novel, *Terrorist*, is a way of reinforcing these implanted ideas of Muslims as terrorists. When the subject of the novel is a Muslim, teenage boy and his relationship with his community, then it is somehow

clear that Updike stereotypes Muslims as terrorists. He does not even give readers a chance to judge for themselves. It is all laid out in the title, *Terrorist*. For Muslim, Arab or Oriental readers, this novel is considered racist, stereotypical, and Islamophobic because it draws Muslims as barbaric people, who follow a barbaric religion that has violence as its core. That would also be humiliating for those readers as Updike neglects the psychological problems that Ahmad has, and neglects the psychological effect of the way his colleagues have been treating him. Updike draws the two Muslim characters, Ahmad and Sheikh Rashid, as fanatics, and violent people because of their religion, disregarding other factors that helped forming their characters.

Ahmad is a Muslim teenager looking for forming his own identity. In a world full of "Kafir men" (Updike 2006), Ahmad cannot cope with such a world. His hyphenated "identity is the main reason for his own hesitation. With his colleagues, he is an "Arab At the mosque, he is a misguided American who needs guidance to the (Updike 2006) divine, right path. His hyphenated identity, Egyptian-American, is the main cause of his exclusion from the American society. At school, he is bullied by Tylenol, and at the mosque, he does not feel at ease with his Sheikh; he "...often returns disturbed from one of their sessions" (Updike 2006). Hence, Ahmad is outcast even at the very place he used to love. Ahmad's origin makes all the difference in his life; it shapes and shifts his course. He is looking for forming an identity that is different from that of his American friends, and at the same time, he does not want to impersonate the character Sheikh Rashid is imposing on him.

Ahmad Ashmawy-Mulloy is so proud of his Egyptian origin that he would go by Ahmad Ashmawy when he gets older. This act shows that, even though he has never visited Egypt needless to say he has never been out of the U.S., he is not at ease with his

surroundings. However, readers feel "...as though [he] was created in a vacuum of cult; Islamic references, quarantined from American society" (Bell 58). He wants to belong however, he does not feel welcomed from the only place he knows, his homeland, he feels that he is "trespassing" (Updike 2006). The mention of "trespassing" (Updike 2006) has occurred several times in the novel signifying the inner struggle Ahmad is going through. He does not belong anywhere and he certainly does not feel welcome in his natural habitat.

Ahmad's lexical choices show that he is a fundamentalist Muslim. He refers to non-Muslims as "Kafir men" (Updike 2006), and "infidels" (Updike 2006). These are recurrent motifs that are repeated more than once in the novel; when referring to the Church he said "this Kafir Church" (Updike 2006), and when Ahmad talks "about anything that is imbedded in the American culture, he refers to it as "kafir way He also refers to non-Muslims as "infidels" (Updike 2006). Updike draws (Updike 2006) Ahmad's character as a fanatic, fundamentalist Muslim who criticizes his country using verses from Qu'ran, and using fundamentalist words. As if John Updike wants to say that Islam only criticizes and does not provide solutions.

Ahmad's encounter with Sheikh Rashid has transformed him into an extremist. However, his own mother, and his school friends have not felt that, but his Jewish guidance counselor" (Updike 56), Levy, after only one encounter with Ahmad has felt "that something is wrong, and was suspicious enough to go and follow his intuition. In doing so, Updike glorifies the character of the Jewish person, Levy, making him seem like the good American patriot who is willing to cross all lines just to save the future of someone, or to save them from going deep into the dark side. Ahmad is confused. His religion is, according to Updike's view, telling him to do things that are against his nature. Islam is, for Ahmad, against so many values he was

raised to believe in. It is, as if, Islam counters one's nature. It is as if following God is against human nature, or against Ahmad's nature; "But how can the boy not cherish his ripened manhood, his "lengthened limbs, the upright, dense, and wavy crown of his hair, his flawless dun skin The author wants to say that Ahmad is a good American; however, his .(Updike 2006) religion is making him a bad person. Updike represents the words of Prophet "Mohammed as "sword" (Updike 2006) that is meant to "invade [people's] human softness He wants to set Islam and human nature on two opposite sides, describing .(Updike 2006) the human nature as "human softness" (Updike 2006) and Islam is the "sword" (Updike 2006) .that will disrupt this nature. This shows an Islamophobic aspect in the novel

Updike tries to set Islam and Muslims as the Other; he tries to picture them as primitive, barbaric, peculiar, and "exotic" (Said 2006). Thus, it was crucial for him to contrast Islam to everything that is known and loved by the American people. Updike tries to show American readers the difference between Islam, and Christianity. Even though, there is no mention of the Jewish religious practices, it is fairly clear that Jacob Levy- or Jack, like all his friends call him- still preserves his pure, true nature. He did .not lose it to Islam, like Ahmad did

Ahmad is represented as a fanatic who has Qu'ranic verses running in his head as the background of any situation he encounters. A lot of different Qu'ranic verses are ,mentioned in the novel, which signifies that Updike has studied Qu'ran well; however he did not study its context. He studied the form and content without the context, which is a very important element in Islam. In order for a person to understand the true .meaning of any verse, he/ she has to study the context and then the form and content However, Updike, and thus Sheikh Rashid, are treating each verse with its superficial meaning. Studying Islam without its context is one of the main

reasons for the outbreak .of Islamophobia

The author also associates the normal, everyday things done by Americans to the forbidden things in Islam to provoke hatred and make readers compulsively Islamophobic. Americans would fear getting away from the things they are so much ,used to. Muslims and Americans, in Terrorist, are set apart, and their differences- real or imagined- are highlighted and emphasized. Rob Sullivan, in his study "Terrorizing Islam: Building American Identity in the 9/11 Novel", mentions that "one of the most ,frequent uses of the Muslim character in [this] novel is to be something that Americans at least theoretically, not. Muslims are intolerant and narrow-minded, seek a return to the past, and embrace simplicity and find happiness in God. Americans, in contrast, love freedom of thought, look to the future, ..." (Sullivan, 13). Therefore, a true American would repulse Islam and Muslims because they oppose what he/she believes in, and strives for. The contrast drawn between Islam and the West explains the irrational fear of Islam, as it, supposedly, stands against everything civilized. It is drawn to essentially .oppose civilization

Even though this novel is mainly written to emphasize and highlight the differences between Muslims and Americans, it also attacks some aspects of the American society. Ahmad's voice is "naïve" (Updike 2006); thus, it gives Updike the chance to criticize a lot of aspects in the Muslim and the American society alike Henceforth, the novel is narrated in third person; Updike did not want characters to express their own perspectives; he did not want a character to have the upper hand in narration. Furthermore, the third person narration technique gives the author the ability to mention, and/or neglect whatever he/she sees fit. In Terrorist, the third person narration technique is used to reinforce Ahmad's alienation, and separation from his society. It gives the

narration an omniscient perspective into each of the characters .represented

.Ahmad always wears a white shirt, a "repulsively" white shirt (Updike 2006) This "white shirt" (Updike 2006) refers to a number of things. For example, white clothes are associated with Muslims, for they like to wear white as a symbol of purity and cleanliness. Thus, it could be referred to as Ahmad's purity and cleanliness, and that he is not as corrupted as other characters in the novel, and he is neutral in the gang war that runs at school (Sullivan 2014). White also stands for surrender which means that Ahmad has surrendered himself to a greater power than himself. Updike, here, could have meant Sheikh Rashid's power, or Islam's greater power. This color refers also to weakness, as it gets affected by anything, and at the same time, it does not affect anything, i.e. Ahmad is affected by his Sheikh, and later on Levy sways his opinion and makes him go into a totally different direction. Ahmad does not also affect his society. Wearing white all the .time signifies that Ahmad's voice is not counted; it is trivial and unimportant

Ahmad stands for a number of meanings. He is a teenager, thus, he is inexperienced, young, and certainly not wise at all. He is also, and based on his mother's description, still "naïve" (Updike 2006). This description, compared to Levy's age and wisdom, refers to the modernity, and immaturity of Islam, and that it is a new religion that needs to be polished and edited, or refined. When readers realize the significance of .Ahmad and what he stands for, they get to understand his connotative significance Islam, in this case, is a "naïve" (Updike 2006) religion that is not as wise or tolerant as .Christianity or Judaism, the more wiser and older religions

Islam is presented as a religion that is intolerant to differences, unlike Christianity that welcomes and encourages differences, whether individual or collective differences.

Islam, when compared to Christianity in Terrorist, is a religion that makes its followers stand alone, not in a group; it outcasts its followers from the societies they live in. When Ahmad went to the "kafir church" (Updike 2006), there was an obvious comparison made between Islam and Christianity. For example, the writer has mentioned some names of common Prophets between Islam and Christianity, like ,Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob... Moses and Jesus..." (Updike 2006). Thus" readers understand the similarities that exist between both religions. However, and despite these similarities, Islam is more violent than Christianity, according to the way Islam is projected. There has also been a comparison made between the church's clerk and the mosque's imam. Ahmad, as a result of his exclusion from society, refers to the priest as the "Christian imam" (Updike 2006). This shows that Ahmad is so much consumed in the Islamic culture, and that this culture excludes people from their .societies. Furthermore, referring to the Priest as a "Christian imam" is unrealistic Though Ahmad is drawn to be consumed entirely by his religion, he lives in a primarily Christian country. Therefore, it is unrealistic that he refers to the Priest at church as a .Christian imam"; this establishes Updike's bias against Islam and Muslims" Ahmad, at first, is presented as a victimized teenager who suffers from discrimination, and hatred based on his religion. Thus, he decides to conform to these stereotypical images. He grows up in a society that hates him for no other reason than .his religion (Allen 2012). Thus, Ahmad grows up focusing on "earnestness" (Updike 2006) Earnest behavior has become a motif that is repeated throughout the novel. Ahmad has this desire to take things seriously, and that is intrinsic to his character. Hence, he notices when others do not strive for the lofty ends he focuses on. Terrorism is also another motif in the novel. Charlie talks about how unjust life is for the non-white American men, and

that sometimes they are denied the rights of other Americans. He goes on to talk about the inhumane practices in Guantanamo Bay prison and that these actions could lead those people to drastic reactions (Updike 2006). Updike projects, here the two points of view; the point of view of the American people who think that Guantanamo Bay prison is to protect them from potential and current terrorists, while on the other hand, Muslims see it as a violent, unnecessary prison that violates human rights. Thus, Updike might seem neutral in projecting Islam. However, Muslim readers see that more than half of the novel is dedicated to showing Islam in a very negative, partial way. For Muslim readers, it feels like they are reading about a different religion not Islam. (Shahbaz and Ahmad 2016)

There is an allegory in the name of the city Updike chose for the actions of Terrorist. New Prospect is an imaginary city which Updike uses for the events to take place. New Prospect signifies that there is hope; there is a new verge, new scenery. The name of the city means that there might be a chance for the misguided Muslims. New Prospect might stand for the future America Updike wants to see. He wants to see a new America with no Muslims, and honest Jews who love their countries and are willing to defend them. The name of the city, itself, is an example of the Islamophobic, Orientalist nature of the text- Terrorist

Ahmad is the protagonist, in Terrorist. However, readers get introduced to a new character that changes the perspective readers have. That is the character of Jacob Levy, or as most people call him- Jack. He is a Jewish, spiritual person. He goes through a time period of indecisiveness, but he overcomes this period by finding a purpose for his life. He manages to find that purpose, and it turns to be guiding the barbaric, exotic misguided Muslim. Levy is presented as a man who was confused but managed to get back on the

right track to defend his country and save millions of innocent Americans. Levy's character is always in contrast to Ahmad's. They are- as pointed out before- on the two opposites of the scale. They are living in totally different worlds. However, they have some similarities in between. Levy is wise, and he is a mature person. He also stands for the antiquity of Judaism, unlike Ahmad and the modernity of Islam. Levy stands also for both the American society and the Jewish people

that he is alluding to the condemnation of the Jews. They were condemned to guide people to the right path- like Levy's job as a guidance counselor-; however, people are also condemned to divert from that path. In a sense, Updike wants to point out that Judaism is the origin of all religions and that Christianity is somehow close to it, closer than Islam. is to Judaism

Levy is married to Elizabeth, Beth Levy. He has a boring, dull life with her; He does not love her, or maybe he stopped loving her. His son does not live with them he lives in a different state. Thus, it is fairly easy to identify Levy's desire to play the role of a father in someone's life. Therefore, he takes special interest in Ahmad's case. Updike, all through the novel, glorifies Levy's character making it seem like it is sent from God, for a divine mission. Levy's mission can easily be guessed from the choice of his job, "guidance counselor" (Updike 2006). Muslim readers sense the importance of his character, in contrast to the triviality of Ahmad's character. At the beginning of the novel, readers encounter Ahmad's character, and he remains the protagonist of the novel, till the moment Levy manages to change Ahmad's stance and convinces him of people's lives. At that particular moment, Ahmad is introduced as the antagonist by Levy; and then Levy becomes the protagonist (Salehnia 2012). This shifting perspective of the novel strengthens the prejudices held against

Islam and Muslims Levy is Updike's mouthpiece. When he meets with Ahmad, he says that he has a "mental block with the other name" (Updike 2006), that other name is Ashmawy. Levy rejects Ahmad's identity, and refuses to accept him the way he introduces himself. This could be interpreted in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Slehnia 485); Levy is a Jew and Ahmad is half Egyptian and Muslim. Levy is a true American who does not welcome Muslims in his life; however, this time- in Ahmad's case- his duty as a true American forces him to interfere so as to save other innocent Americans. Moreover, Ahmad's last name, Ashmawy, is very culture specific to Egyptians. This name Ashmawy, is the name given to executioners in Egypt. Hence, once more, Updike creates a psychological barrier between readers and Ahmad. Ahmad's father, as well, is written to be this reckless person, who got married and had a baby with his wife, but ;then could not shoulder the responsibility that comes with marriage and babies therefore, he disappeared and just never checked on Ahmad, his son. Hence, Ahmad lacked a father figure in his life, and Levy lacked a son figure in his life. Therefore, both .of them needed each other

Levy, as a father, wants to play that role vitally in someone's life. Therefore, he shoulders the responsibility of showing Ahmad the right path for his future. He made it his responsibility to guide others as a true Jew should do. Levy is not very religious, but the fact that he still considers himself a Jew, means that it is part and parcel of his character, otherwise, it would be useless to define oneself with something that is not important for him/her. So, when a person introduces himself/herself, this person usually says what he/she thinks is the most relevant and the most important thing about their identity. Thus, even if Levy is not a very religious person, he still thinks in religious .binaries and divisions

While Updike portrays the Christian religious practices and Muslim religious practices, there is no mention of the Jewish religious process of praying or any mention of the Jewish religious practices. Thus, he establishes the idea the Levy is not interested ,in religious practices, but his nature as a Jew forces him to be the person he is. Levy even though he is not concerned with religion, is considered to be a good Jew. While, on the other hand, Ahmad says that he is a "good Muslim" (Updike 2006), American readers would understand that these are the instructions of Islam. That leads to the reinforcement of the fear of Islam. American audience gets the idea that Islam is a violent religion that kills one's true, peaceful nature and replaces it with another devilish character that strives for killing innocent, non-Muslims- because Sheikh Rashid always .supports his claims with verses from Qu'ran

,The portrayal of Levy's character in the novel makes readers appreciate him and even defend him, which results in the "demonization" (Allen 2012) of the Muslim character in order to glorify and praise other non-Muslim characters, such as Joryleen's and Levy's characters. Updike portrays Ahmad's character in a way that casts him away from the American society, making him look like an outsider or the Other that is easy to hate and attack. Thus, readers see that Ahmad has developed a phobia of the American society that's equal to Islamophobia (Aly 31). Thus, Ahmad feels he needs to fight and battle this phobia, and his only weapon is the use of bombs which he was introduced to by Charlie Chehab, the third Muslim character in the novel.

Updike, in *Terrorist*, mentions the events of 9/11 directly, compelling even the neutral readers to hate Muslims. Furthermore, he feels that he is entitled to promote these ideas as a part of freedom; the freedom that Muslims are against and dislike. He also mentions 9/11 in order to say that mercy, freedom, and democracy are all concepts .that are

not suitable for such barbaric, violent peoples. i.e. Muslims

Levy is represented as a superior character who has the upper hand in everything. He had authority at school, and at Ahmad's house with his Mom, and even when Ahmad decides to take revenge from the people who have been subjecting him to racism. He has been facing Islamophobia on daily basis, especially after the events of -His mother admits that to Mr. Levy saying that they were getting "hate calls. Anti .9/11 Muslim." (Updike 2006). These circumstances helped forming Ahmad's character, and changing him into a fundamentalist, terrorist person, not his religion that made him this way

Both characters, Levy and Ahmad, are represented differently and in contrast of each other. Ahmad is represented as the "Other" that should be feared and not be befriended. He is the representative of the fundamentalist Muslim, the terrorist Muslim. All Muslim characters that were represented in the novel are terrorists, and hate the American society. They are represented in a way that provokes hatred towards and disgust of. Levy is represented as the patriot American person, who is willing to risk his life in order to save millions of innocent people. Their religious differences stand for the animosity of the West towards Islam and Muslims. It also stands for the Islamophobic nature of discourse in Western media

Islamophobia has been there in the American society, and in the Western culture ever since the rise of Taliban and the Iranian Revolution. However, it was highlighted and focused on after September 11th attacks on the United States. Americans had felt that they were safe from these fundamentalist, terrorist groups. Thus, with these attacks on them, they felt the need to demolish those who attacked them. Hence, Islamophobia Orientalist discourse and discrimination were directed at all Muslims. They were persecuted because of their religion (Allen 2012).

CONCLUSION

John Updike's *Terrorist* is an example of the way Muslims are seen and dealt with in the American society. Those who happen to be Muslims are always persecuted, dealt with as if they were inferior, and are always looked at as the reason for all wrongs in society. They were and are still seen as the reason for America's deterioration. As Curtis - observes, in the post 9/11 era, the focus of American anxiety has shifted from African American Muslims to brown foreigners (Ernst 2013), as in the case of Ahmad who is brown. Regular procedures continue to include the suppression of non-white US citizens and the rewardingly of the Muslim groups who remain apolitical and uncritical. However, when a Muslim tries and mingles with or gets into politics, he/she is always deemed terrorist and is thought of as a person who wants to destruct the American society, with its values and traditions

Islamophobia defines Islam as unacceptable in the modern state, and Muslims as incapable of being true citizens. Hence, seeing them as Americans who love their country is very difficult since they are stereotyped into being natural born terrorists. Anti-Muslim and Islamophobic sentiments in the Western world have (Allen 2012) gained increased attention following the September 11th, 2001 attacks. Thus, people from different domains felt the need to write about Muslims to express their point of view. Therefore, John Updike felt the need to express his stance from the Muslim community, expressing his hatred towards and his prejudice against them.

Terrorist is a novel that carries on the stigmatized views of the American people towards Muslims. It provides some Qu'ranic verses and some sayings (Hadith) by Prophet Mohamed, and misinterprets them, to show that Muslims and Islam are fundamentalists and that they are violent. The Muslim characters in the novel as pointed out

before, are all extremists. Furthermore, readers find that Ahmad was introduced to fundamentalism in the mosque by his "imam" (Updike 2006), Sheikh Rashid. He was hesitant to take that move; however, with pressure from Sheikh Rashid and Charlie Chehab, Ahmad was convinced to go through that terrorist path. He was convinced, too, because Sheikh Rashid keeps supporting his claims with verses from Quran, and uses Prophets Hadith so as to convince Ahmad to take his truck and bomb it to kill "kafir" (Updike 2006), "infidale" (2006) people of the Western, American society

According to most Western societies, especially the American society, Islam is finite and cannot be changed (Yenigun 2004). As a result, Muslims are considered enemies of modernity; they are also considered to be against "liberalism" (Ziadan 2009) and are often reproached for not being able to separate politics from culture (Said 2006). In his book, *Orientalism*, Said illustrates that Westerners find that Muslims are enraged at modernity; Islam never made the difference between church and state like they did (Said 2006). Hence, Updike has projected this view in his novel, *Terrorist*

Terrorist puts the Muslim and the Jew in contrast with each other. On the one hand, readers find one Jewish character representing the true Jew, and the true patriot American citizen who is willing to risk everything just to defend his country; on the other hand, there are three Muslim characters that are presented as extremists and are presented as citizens who hate the prosperity provided by America. Updike's representation of three different Muslims as all fanatics and extremists strongly suggests Updike's prejudice against Muslims. In the portrayal of three characters who do not differ much from each other, Updike neglects these characters' individuality and complies to the Islamophobic discourse that diminishes Muslims into

seamless peoples who are exactly alike without individual differences

Therefore, the comparison made between Ahmad, the Muslim, and Levy, the Jew, is in favor of Levy because he is presented as the peace-loving character, who wants peace, love and prosperity to prevail, while on the other hand, Ahmad wants to destroy the peaceful flow of life. The finale of the novel is open-ended, which leaves readers with a sort of anxiety from Ahmad, as they cannot anticipate his next move; he says: "These devils... have taken away my God" (Updike 2006). It is fairly difficult to pinpoint who those "devils" (2006) are; is Ahmad talking about Sheikh Rashid, and Charlie, or is he talking about Levy and the other Americans? Therefore, Updike leaves the American readers with this open ending as to elevate their sense of anxiety and hatred towards Muslims. Yet, he leaves Muslim readers in a state that makes them think that he was partial, and not prejudiced in his judgment. Eventually, this novel presupposes and imbeds negative views about Muslims as terrorists, while at the same time, it projects Jews as the ones with the solution that would save people. The contrast Updike made between the Jew and the Muslim is, in fact, imbedded in Islam. As in Islam, Jews are the enemy; however, Christianity is looked at as a friend. Therefore, Updike's choice of Levy was not done haphazardly; it served a purpose.

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