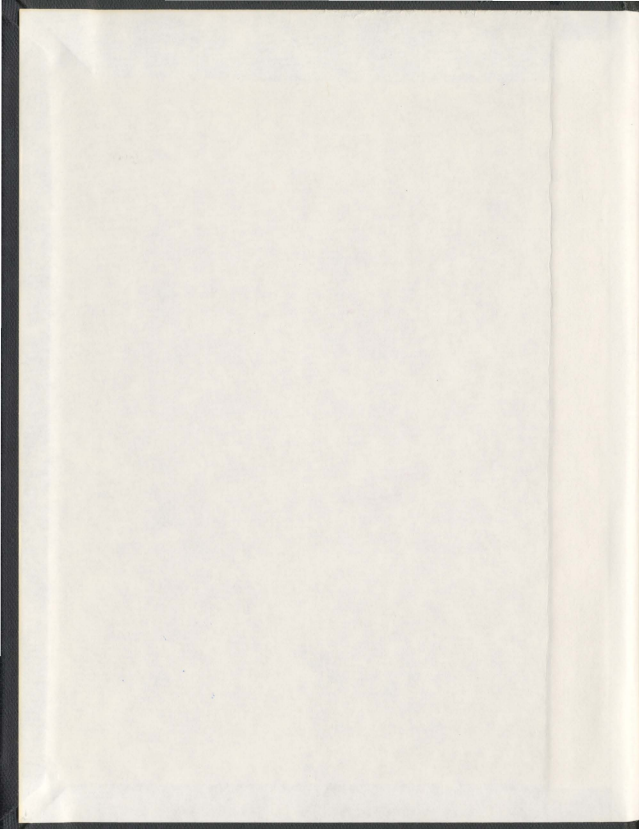


REPRESENTING VIOLENCE:  
Jihad, THEORY, FICTION

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Representing Violence: *Jihad*, Theory, Fiction

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## Abstract

The discourse surrounding the “war on terror” is dense with possible quilting points in need of analysis. While the theorization of the “war on terror” has been continuing for a decade now, both “suicide bombings” and attacks on Muslim populations have increased dramatically. Thus, while theorizing about the *jihad* and popularizing the figure of the *jihadist* has become commonplace, hundreds of thousands of people across the world are still suffering from the effects of real conflict. It can be argued that this condition demonstrates a deep dislocation between First World theory and reality, and that as this dislocation grows the gap of interlocution grows wider. This thesis attempts to highlight this disjuncture and offers suggestions as to how genuine contrapuntal discourse might begin in radical criticism.

In this thesis I will argue that the temptation to theorize *jihad*, and especially to appropriate the figure of the *jihadist*, offers a fertile area from which to launch a discussion about the limits of current theory, particularly regarding the role of Muslim interlocutors in interpretation, the limits of secularism as the founding doctrine of postcolonial theory, and the often opaque debates focused on Islam’s challenge to modernity. The *jihadist* has been employed by First World theorists as a tool to engage in self reflection on the state of the democratic project in Western countries, while Muslim interlocutors have become central to making visible the specter of the *jihadist*, playing the role of “good” Muslims in translating the motifs of the “bad” Muslims. Simultaneously, the “bad” Muslims have developed their own forms and discourses to represent themselves, without the mediation of interlocutors. This leads to a vastly

heterogeneous discourse which both affirms and rejects dominant ideologies, producing a multi-dimensional “Muslim” response. This thesis discusses what these heterogeneous discourses offer to theory.

The introduction establishes the methodological approach of the thesis: its contrapuntal and cross disciplinary approach towards a “democratic criticism.” Chapter One argues that while drawing on predominantly Muslim countries as the source material for his theory, Said avoided Islam’s radical critique of humanism, further isolating Islam from the growing field of postcolonial studies. Chapter Two focuses on the various forms of Orientalisms, from the neoconservatives and the left, that have arisen post 9/11 and the role of Muslims, either advertently or inadvertently, in supporting these Orientalisms as the cultural logic for the militarization of Muslim countries. It studies the works of popular, but diverse, Muslim writers such as Irshad Manji Azar Nafisi, Khalid Hosseini, and Yasmina Khadra. Chapter Three further explores how the concept of *jihad* migrates or “travels” in theory to fit both the discourses of reform and revolution. This chapter compares the works of liberal reformists such as John Esposito, Oliver Roy and Imam Feisal Abdu Rauf as well as those of well-known radical thinkers, such as Slavoj Žižek and Terry Eagleton, to Islamic reformers, such as Ziaddiun Sardar, Anouar Majid, and Tariq Ramadan. Chapter Four explicitly examines the intentionality of *jihad* by employing a contrapuntal approach that includes fiction and critical analysis to compare fictional representations of the *jihadist* to biographical reconstructions of famous *jihadists* as interpreted by various sociologists and historians. John Updike’s *Terrorist*; Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, Slimane Benaïssa’s *The Last Night of Damned*

*Soul*, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* are discussed. Chapter Five examines the intentionality of the *jihadist* from his own perspective, through the direct interventions by infamous *jihadists*, such as Osama bin Laden, Adam Gadhan, Mohammed Siddique Khan, and Shehzad Tanweer, raising questions about the dialogic relationship between the *jihadist*, his audience, and the media. Arguing that the *jihadist* maintains both a performative and political stance by establishing a relationship between the *jihadist* and a community of responsible victims, these articulations are compared to those of noted interpreters such as Henry Giroux and Faisal Devji. The concluding chapter theorizes what *jihad* can contribute to contemporary theory, particularly to postcolonial studies, and positions the concept of *jihad* itself within the postcolonial tradition. The thesis concludes that by reclaiming the roots of contemporary *jihad* theory as a part of a postcolonial tradition, *jihad* can make a valuable contribution to the future of theory, which includes Islamic discourse in a serious debate on postcolonialism, particularly in the context of the ongoing 2010-2011 Arab revolutions.

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Over the years the support of my family and friends has been critical to the completion of this thesis. I would like to thank my sons Ibrahim and Is7aq for tolerating my many discussions and fascination with “suicide” videos. I also wish to thank my friends and colleagues for enduring my digressions, in particular: Majdoleen Till, Mourad Jellasi , Husain Muneer, Phaedra Al Majid, Farooq Burney, Abdel Khader Benbourek, and Abdulrahman Azzam. Special appreciation goes to my supervisor Noreen Golfman for her valuable direction and persistence, and my friend Moza Nasser for her undaunting support and sharp intellect. To my father, John, who taught me how to watch the news backwards and my mother, Bernadette, who forced me to get up over my body. A very special thanks goes to my youngest son Ya3qoub (Jacob), who though he did not live to call me Dr. Mommy as he had planned, is largely responsible for the will it took to finish this thesis in fulfillment of my promise to him.

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## Introduction

### *Homo Islamicus: Beyond “Good” and “Bad”*

The events that occurred on September 11, 2001, commonly referred to as 9/11, magnified, accelerated and popularized the engagement of theory with Islam. Since the 1978 publication of Edward Said’s seminal *Orientalism*, the issue of the misrepresentation of the Arab world and Islam has tenuously entered the domain of theory. Said had argued that the Occident had created the imaginary Orient through a series of stereotypical images or binary constructions that reaffirmed the Occidental self. These constructions, Said noted, were the cultural accompaniments to colonialism and imperialism. Certainly, the events following 9/11 reinvigorated this discussion as well as extended an analysis on the usefulness of theory and its secular bias, the limits of democracy, and the metaphysical challenge of Islam. It can be argued that until the rupturous event of 9/11 there had been a minimal engagement of popular culture and theory with Islamic concepts, outside Orientalist and area studies, and that 9/11 popularized a field that, thus far, had remained largely insular, academic and textual. Since then, with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in play, and dramatic and spectacular attacks on previously unreachable targets in London and Madrid, human rights catastrophes of Guantanamo Bay and Abu Gharib, the ongoing siege of Gaza, and the “Arab Spring”, media and culture industries have cashed in on the conflict, producing a need for viable cultural translators and commentators. This flurry of activity has

spectacularized the differences between the “world of Islam” and the West,<sup>1</sup> and issues such as freedom of expression, women’s rights, political reform, and radicalism have made terms such as *apostate*, *hijab*, *ijtihad* and *jihad* part of the popular, global lexicon.<sup>2</sup> The “war of ideas”<sup>3</sup> has become the subject of everyone’s conversation and the products produced from the battles rapidly consumable.

Simplified categories have been invented to describe the multiplicity of perspectives within diverse Muslim cultures and within the West itself. Islam, particularly, has been compressed into a monolith when convenient and become synonymous with “fundamentalism.” As Edward Said wrote in his 1997 Introduction to the revised Vintage edition of *Covering Islam*, published originally in 1981:

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<sup>1</sup> The terms Islam and the West have become hopelessly inflammatory. In this study they are used, not to agree with the geographical references to which these words usually refer, but as imaginary ideological constructs. Much of this thesis will emphasize the instability of the sign of Islam and particularly *jihad*.

<sup>2</sup> All explications of Islamic terminology used in this thesis are taken from John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (Oxford: OUP, 2003).

*Apostasy*: “Renunciation of one’s religion....The schools vary on the question of whether or not an apostate may be allowed, encouraged, or disallowed to repent, as well as on the apostate’s property after death or banishment, but they agree that the marriage of an apostate is void” (22).

*Hijab*: “Traditional Muslim women’s head, face, or bodily covering, of numerous varieties across time and space, often referred to as the “veil.” *Hijab* is a symbol of modesty, privacy and morality” (112).

*Ijtihad*: “Islamic legal term meaning “independent reasoning,” as opposed to *taqlid* (imitation). One of four sources of Sunni law. Utilized where the Quran and *Sunnah* (the first two sources) are silent. It requires a thorough knowledge of theology, revealed texts and legal theory (*usul al-fiqh*); a sophisticated capacity for legal reasoning; and a thorough knowledge of Arabic” (134).

*Jihad*: “From the Arabic root meaning “to strive,” “to exert,” “to fight”; exact meaning depends on context. May express struggle against one’s evil inclinations, an exertion to convert unbelievers, or a struggle for the moral betterment of the Islamic community. Today often used without any religious connotation, with a meaning more or less equivalent to the English word *crusade*” (160).

<sup>3</sup> The war of ideas has become a commonplace to describe the propaganda war between the United States government and Islamic radicals, and frequently appears in policy studies such as various RAND imprints and works by the Washington-based Strategic Studies Institute. Examples of how this terminology is used to describe the binary between *jihad* and democracy can be found in David Kamien, *The McGraw-Hill Homeland Security Handbook* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006) and Walid Phares, *The War of Ideas: Jihadism Against Democracy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

It is simply false to try to trace all this (referring to terrorism) back to something called Islam, no matter how vociferously polemical Orientalists—mainly active in the United States, Britain and Israel—insisted that Islam regulates societies from top to bottom, that *dar al-Islam* is a single coherent entity, that church and state are really one in Islam, and so forth.” (xvi)

This tendency to see Islam as a unitary entity is reversed, however, when the occasion calls for it. After 9/11, for example, President Bush made reference to “good” and “bad” Muslims — the “bad” ones being responsible for the 9/11 attacks and the “good” ones being anxious to disassociate themselves from the “bad” ones, clear their names and support America (Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* 15). Throughout periods of high alert, Islam and Muslims are routinely denigrated and stereotyped as enemies of freedom and civilization, victimized as potential holders of threatening ideologies, and even tortured to satiate the public need for perceived security. Other times, philosophers and politicians fragment Islam into convenient differentiations between various “types” of Muslims: the progressives, moderates, fundamentalists, neo-fundamentalists, and *jihadists*. In fact, those antagonistic to Islam and those sympathetic to it often end up making the same arguments. It has become commonplace to theorize that Islam and the West hold different epistemological frameworks; this assertion comes from the right and the left alike, with neoconservatives such as Samuel Huntington, leftists such as Slavoj Žižek, and Osama bin Laden all singing in the same choir. The politics of representing Islam and Muslims is highly unstable and as Douglas Kellner notes, “media spectacles

are subject to dialectical reversal as positive images give way to negative ones” (*Media Spectacles and the Crisis of Democracy* 78).

*Jihad* has become a central terminology in this “war on terror.” Theorists and lay people alike discuss the nature of *jihad*, until recently an obscure concept about which only theologians would converse outside Islamic cultures. In fact, an entire public discourse on *jihad* has developed, and *jihad* itself has been shaped and redefined into various configurations: as a radical revolutionary energy, an agent for peaceful social change, an inner struggle for peace and reconciliation, or a barbarian destructive instinct that opposes civilization and culture.

To be fair, even among theologians, *jihad* has held ambiguous meanings, not only in contemporary times, but throughout history. Volumes have been written in Islamic scholarship about the doctrine of *jihad*, and only some of these discussions can be explored here.<sup>4</sup> Asma Afsaruddin has noted that throughout the first three centuries of Islam, *jihad* developed a multiplicity of meanings largely related to struggling in the path of God, which could mean embarking on the pursuit of knowledge, an inner battle for spiritualism, and a military struggle in defense of Islam. Sohail Hashmi has traced that from the eighth to the fourteenth centuries of Islam, considered the classical period, legal jurists ordained *jihad* as a divine struggle in a world divided into *dar al Islam*, a Muslim state led by a just ruler, and *dar al harb*, the land of war, where Islam did not prevail. During this period, many scholars

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<sup>4</sup> An excellent overview of the various interpretations of the concept of *jihad* is offered in John L. Esposito and Brian P. Glenn, *Understanding Jihad: Deconstructing Jihadism* (Georgetown: Prince Walled bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, 2007). Another useful overview source is Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (Mouton: The Hague 1979). John L. Esposito, *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford: OUP, 1999) also provides excellent, in-depth analysis of the various interpretations of *jihad*.

aimed at bringing Islamic civilization to *dar al harb*, under strict conditions, thus developing a code as to how these activities were to take place. This led to the development of a further discourse of *jihad* not only as a defensive struggle against intruders but as a means of spreading Islam to non-Muslim areas. The teachings of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, developed in the middle of the eighteenth century on the Arabian peninsula in direct response to the colonization of Arabia by the Ottomans, have expanded the boundaries of political Islam by positioning *jihad* as a fight against colonialism.<sup>5</sup> Modern concepts of *jihad* largely developed from these historical differentiations, as evidenced in the work of Sayyid Qutb which grew out of the postcolonial Egypt of Gamal Abdel Nasser.<sup>6</sup> Scholars of Islam had traditionally distinguished between two types of *jihad* - *al-jihad-al-akbar* (the greater *jihad*) and *al-jihad al asghar* (the lesser *jihad*). The greater *jihad* was considered to be the inward struggle of the self against weakness. The lesser *jihad* was directed outward toward self defense, preservation, and justice. However, as Mohammed Fadel notes, Qutb, largely seen as the intellectual forefather to radical Islam, differentiated three types of *jihad al asghar*: defensive *jihad* to ward off persecution to Muslims, *jihad* to assure freedom to preach Islam without persecution, and armed *jihad* as a means of achieving universal justice. Further development of the differentiations of the lesser *jihad* and the codes for its

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<sup>5</sup> Numerous sources attempt either to construct or deconstruct the connection between Wahabism and Al Qaeda, as well as the American involvement in the founding of al Qaeda. For example consider Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Atwan Abdel Bari, *The Secret History of al Qaeda* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); Peter Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al Qaeda's Leader* (New York: Free Press, 2006); John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: OUP, 2002); Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'ālim fi al-Tariq or Milestones*. (Cairo: Kazi Publications, 1964). Web. 12 Mar. 2011. <<http://majalla.org/books/2005/qutb-milestone.pdf>>.

engagement are relatively modern. African scholar Mahmood Mamdani accentuates this reality: “After the first centuries of the creation of the Islamic states, there were only four widespread uses of jihad as a mobilizing slogan- until the Afghan jihad of the 1980s” (*Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* 51).

It is the lesser *jihad* that is most sharply debated today. John Esposito in “Jihad: Holy or Unholy War?” summarizes some of the key Islamist positions in this debate. He observes that notable religious leaders, such as Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, the founder of Hamas, and Akram Sabri, the Mufti of Jerusalem, have allowed *jihad* only as self defense in occupied Muslim predominant countries, including the killing of civilians in these militarized zones. However, Sheikh al Sheikh, former Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, has condemned all suicide bombings as un-Islamic. Sheikh Muhammad Sayad Tantawi, Grand Imam of al-Azhar Mosque and Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar University, has drawn a distinction between acts of self-sacrifice and self-defense and strongly disallowed the killing of noncombatants. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri, on the other hand, have argued that *jihad* can include attacks upon military and nonmilitary targets inside Muslim countries that are physically occupied by foreign powers, attacks on military installations in Muslim countries that are not formally occupied, as well as attacks within the occupying countries themselves.

To further complicate the discourse *jihad* is packaged as “good” and “bad. The greater *jihad*, which is inner and spiritual in nature, is considered benevolent, while the lesser *jihad*, which can take various forms of struggle for social justice, is branded as much more malevolent. It is this struggle for social justice which is largely the object of

public scrutiny. “Good” Muslims accentuate the inner spiritual journey and work within existing institutions to achieve social justice nonviolently. They, therefore, present *jihad* as compatible to Western neo-liberalism. The category of “bad” Muslims can include all those who focus on the social element of *jihad*, whether it involves radically confronting injustice through active social and political organization or through violent struggle. This group of “bad” Muslims is diverse, and as Olivier Roy and John Esposito argue, wrongfully groups political Islamists, who aim to institute Islamic political systems, with *jihadists*, who attempt to disrupt global order through suicide attacks.<sup>7</sup> In all cases, both the “good” and “bad” Muslims appropriate the code of *jihad* and translate it to a largely uninformed audience. Further, as this thesis will demonstrate, even non-Muslim theorists, with a limited knowledge of *jihad*, have adapted *jihad* as a potential revolutionary force that can disrupt neo-liberalism and offer hope for a radical global democracy.

Muslim interlocutors have become central to making visible the specter of the *jihadist*, and as such are an important focus of this study. The stubborn curiosity to understand the actions of the *jihadists* propelled those already engaged in ongoing discussions about Islam and its epistemology prior to 9/11 into the media spotlight. At the same time, “authentic” Muslims, usually Western Muslims with origins in predominantly

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<sup>7</sup> For example see a variety of works by these two authors: John L. Esposito, *Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: OUP, 1999); John L. Esposito, and John Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (New York: OUP, 2001); John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: OUP, 2002) and Olivier Roy, *The Chaos of Politics in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hearst and Company, 2002).

Muslim countries, or Western converts to Islam, were solicited as native informants.<sup>8</sup> For the most part, their audiences lie in the West, not in predominantly Muslim countries, and their messages are articulated in European languages, primarily English and French. These intellectuals are tasked with the difficult mission of explaining the *jihadist*, making him just familiar enough to understand, but exotic enough to fascinate, while keeping a distance from the analysis, ensuring that they in no way express admiration for him. In short, they play the role of “good” Muslims explaining the motifs of the “bad” Muslims. Simultaneously, the “bad” Muslims have developed their own forms and discourses to represent themselves, without the mediation of the native informants. This leads to a vastly heterogeneous discourse which both affirms and rejects dominant ideologies, producing a multidimensional “Muslim” response.

The “good” Muslims have gained incredible value by having knowledge of both the cultural capital of Islam, especially the *jihadist*, and the discourse of First World media and academia. It is useful here to recall Pierre Bourdieu’s description of cultural capital in *The Field of Cultural Production*. He argued that capital refers to objects, artistic imagery, texts and music that have meaning and interest for those who possess the code; religious capital, for example, is specific to the religious field and is associated with specialists who guard the corpus of knowledge (91). Orthodoxy and heresy, terms openly borrowed from the religious field, are deployed by Bourdieu to describe the struggle for

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<sup>8</sup> The terminology of native informant has been popularized in postcolonial studies by Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1998). Spivak claimed her purpose in that book was to problematize the figure of the native informant in contemporary theory. Though the aim here is much less ambitious, the role of the native informant in representing revolutionary politics, as embodied in *jihad*, is a major subject of this study.

power within any field. It is the contention of this study that Islam can be viewed as a field within which there is immense competition for both symbolic power and religious capital. Field specialists, theologians, and other cultural interpreters define the field and the code of membership. Describing the codes of the field of Islam, which have ruptured into popular culture, particularly the code of *jihad*, has been the role of a new-found group of Muslim writers and intellectuals who are in competition with their increasingly articulate radical counterparts, the *jihadists*. This often problematizes the concept of Muslimness itself, with the “good” Muslims claiming orthodoxy to an Islam which has been “highjacked” by heretical jihadists. The *jihadists*, on the other hand, dismiss the “good” Muslims as heretical pawns that want to reform Islam to compatible with the goals of neo-liberal globalization.

It can be argued that in First World academic institutions and cultures the value of Muslimness is high if one is considered a “good” Muslim, but diminishes significantly if the interlocutor takes an unpopular position on the right to *jihad*, in which case she is quickly herded into the group of “bad” Muslims. The instability of this binary of “good” and “bad” Muslims has been demonstrated by Mamdani in his discussion on how the Taliban and Al Qaeda were constructed and how the perception of ally and enemy shifted rapidly in global politics. Muslim interlocutors are acutely aware of this binary and the indiscriminate way they can be allocated to the latter group. Therefore, their interventions often remain ambiguous, with an obsessive autobiographical drive to prove both their authenticity as Muslims and their credentials as Western theorists. The moderate interlocutor positions herself as both familiar and exotic, in order to establish a

dual credibility in the West and in predominantly Muslim communities. While she maintains credibility in the West, and is perceived as a representative of Muslims, she is often unknown in predominantly Muslim countries. She also has to take particular care in situating her political allegiances since “good” Muslim has come to mean “moderate” and neo-liberal and “bad” Muslim has come to mean “radical” or *jihadist*. Consider by notable example the persecution of Swiss scholar Tariq Ramadan whose case became a human rights issue when he was denied a visa by the United States government to take up a post at the University of Notre Dame. Ramadan was accused of supporting fundamentalism because he recognized the legitimacy of *jihad* as the right to fight oppression and social injustice. The international debate regarding Ramadan’s case became so heated that Ramadan wrote *What I Believe*, a book outlining his beliefs clearly, in order to avoid charges of doublespeak; that is, presenting one face to the West and another to Islamic audiences. Documenting his work before 9/11, Ramadan notes that because he has overtly positioned himself as a Muslim, he has come under suspicion, even though he is espousing the same ideas and conducting the same work he did previously as a teacher with no obvious religion (*What I Believe* 210).

The *jihadists*, on the other hand, with their spectacular acts of violence, do not worry about ambiguity and clearly speak their messages to specific audiences. However, these messages are continually mediated by others and even stripped of intentionality in the process of being re-presented. In predominantly Muslim countries, their messages resonate and seem direct and obvious, even if they are often rejected, while for Western theorists they remain the rantings of madmen speaking in an idiom that cannot be

translated. Firmly located in the group of “bad” Muslims, the *jihadi* raises serious queries regarding how he has been represented, playfully engaging in bantering and even comedy to deconstruct his image as a manic medievalist, isolated from Western doctrine.

In his compelling work *Globalized Islam*, the French scholar Olivier Roy points out that today’s *jihadists* have a lot in common with the left-wing extremists of the 1930s and 1960s, and are the sort of utopian rebels modern societies have long produced. He argues that ideologically, Islamic neo-fundamentalism occupies the same militant space that was once occupied by Marxism, but the *jihadists* identify themselves, not with the language of the left, but with the language of faith and religion. Roy argues that rather than deferring to custom, the modern forms of *jihad* have no justification in orthodox Islam and, in fact, many of the *jihadists* are rebels, going against local authority figures, rejecting their parents’ bourgeois striving and moderate versions of Islam. They have also demonstrated, particularly with the 2005 start-up of As Sahab, the al Qaeda media production company, that they are eager and able to represent themselves. As-Sahab provides English translations for Al-Qaeda’s broadcasts and also presents bilingual or English productions, including those featuring Adam Gadahn, the American convert, whose interventions are often prefaced by Zawahiri’s Arabic comments (*Devji Terrorist in Search of Humanity* 111). Such developments problematize one of the central questions upon which postcolonial criticism has been centered—can the subaltern speak?

In her seminal essay,<sup>9</sup> Gayatri Spivak raised two points that are directly relevant to this discussion. Spivak critiqued the efforts of the subaltern studies group, a project led by Ranajit Guha that had reappropriated Gramsci's term "subaltern" (the economically dispossessed) in order to locate and re-establish a "voice" of collective agency in postcolonial India. Although Spivak acknowledged the violence done upon Indian subalterns, she suggested that any attempt from the outside to ameliorate their condition by granting them collective speech invariably would encounter both a logocentric assumption of cultural solidarity among a heterogeneous people and a dependence upon Western intellectuals to "speak for" the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves. As Spivak argued, by speaking out and reclaiming a collective cultural identity, subalterns would re-inscribe their subordinate position in society. The second point of interest in Spivak's article is the discussion on the suicide of a young Bengali woman that indicated a failed attempt at self-representation. Because her attempt at speaking outside normal patriarchal channels, through suicide, was not understood or supported, Spivak concluded that the subaltern cannot speak. Spivak's point about the burning widow is not that the subaltern does not cry out in various ways, but that she is incapable of dialogue because she has been excluded from the political economy. She posited the subaltern as a silent, unrepresentable excess outside the labor relations, circulating instead in a discursive circuit in which "the figure of the woman disappears," according to Spivak, "into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization," and thus concluded

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<sup>9</sup> Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and Interpretation*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988) 271-316.

“there is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak” (307); “the subaltern cannot speak” (308).

To begin with the first consideration, by means of simple extension, any attempt to posit a Muslim discourse on the issues of *jihad* and its challenge to late capitalist configurations would be counterproductive, since the discourse would ultimately become a group of intellectuals speaking on behalf of a disembodied and disgruntled Muslim mass, which itself is heterogeneous and global. It would also run the risk either of inadvertently supporting or including the voices of the *jihadists* themselves, the radical discourses of the Islamists, or of completely leaving them out because their literature itself is deemed dangerous.<sup>10</sup> As Akeel Bilgrami has warned, moderate Muslims must resist the absolutist tendencies of radical Muslim discourses which, though a product of a certain history of subjugation and condescension, have not been able to move outside the complexes of colonial victimization; yet, he also noted the limits of activities of reformers, mostly First World intellectuals, who are dislocated from Islamic texts in generating the discourse of resistance. The seemingly irresolvable truth is that the discourse of First World Muslim interlocutors is not validated in predominantly Muslim countries and the discourse of Islamist thinkers is not heard in First World institutions. Therefore, the conditions for hearing do not exist. Thus, Muslim intellectuals have to resist the absolutist collectivity of subalternity, resist fundamentalist discourse and yet refuse to be silent. Further, the *jihadist* has to formulate his discourse inside First World secular frameworks in order to be decipherable. At the same time, the ability of “good”

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<sup>10</sup>The possession of *jihadist* literature is in itself considered a subversive act that governments in both the United States and the United Kingdom have instituted as criminal.

Muslims to articulate a new discourse is severely limited by the lack of familiarity with their own texts which serve as the core of this point of articulation. The ability of the “bad” Muslims to articulate a new discourse is also severely limited by their insistence on Islamic terminologies and the elaboration of historical particularities that are not understandable or taken seriously by the secular biased West. Therefore, both the “good” Muslim and the “bad” Muslim are in a double bind.

The “good” Muslim cannot appear as if she is actively supporting the radical discourse of violence of the *jihadists*, so she must maintain a certain disengagement from them, or else risk becoming the target of Campus Watch.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, she must assert her Muslimness as a real value, which requires a familiarity with radical theology and theory. Balancing her need to maintain credibility in a First World intellectual discourse and her need to claim credibility in a separate discourse that directly and violently challenges her position, she vacillates as mediator, becoming neither one nor the other, and representing nothing. The “bad” Muslim is doomed to play out violent acts of transgression as her only way of being heard. Refusing the secular debate of neo-liberalism, her words are the ravings of a madwoman. Only her death and the death of her victims leave an echo of a message that remains indecipherable. The subaltern, Spivak’s victim of suttee who becomes representative of oppressed peoples, clearly cannot speak and so her suicide is her only act of rebellion, which ends in the silencing herself. The case of the *jihadist* is different. As this study argues, the *jihadists* are engaging in the

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<sup>11</sup> Campus Watch is an organization led by Daniel Pipes which encourages students to report professors who demonstrated questionable views. It monitors and reports supposed radical discourse on the Middle East on American campuses. See <<http://www.campus-watch.org/>>

very discourse they are committing violence upon: directly addressing their victims, while refusing to be victimized. They use spectacular media performances to display their death, and they violently reassert that through their death, and the death of others, they are inscribing a message, which they hope will convince the community of victims to join them in their revolutionary, if perhaps, anarchic, project. Unlike Spivak's subaltern, the *jihadists* are in fact speaking, and are aware of the difficulty of having their message heard. It would appear that the *jihadist*, at least, is not a Spivakian subaltern. But if the *jihadist* is speaking, is there anyone listening or, better yet, why can he not be heard? It can be argued that just about everyone is trying to explain and speak for the *jihadist*, despite the ability of the *jihadist* to speak for himself. The question that has dominated cultural studies "Can the Subaltern Speak?" displaces the more pressing questions: What are the historical, material, and ideological conditions required for hearing?

In fact the theorization of *jihad* and the appropriation of the figure of the *jihadist*, offers a fertile area from which to launch a discussion about the limits of current theory, particularly regarding the role of interlocutors in interpretation and the limits of secularism as the founding doctrine of postcolonial theory. The discourse surrounding the "war on terror" is dense with possible quilting points which can be analyzed further. As Marc Redfield in *The Rhetoric of Terror* notes,

There is a strange density to the September 11 tragedy and the discourse of "war on terror" that emerged in its wake. So many over determined and overheated areas of modern Western culture jostle like tectonic plates at the intersection: the

power of simulacra, media imagery, aesthetic spectacle; the return of religion piggybacking on an increasingly global if persistently uneven distribution of quasi-sovereign power, the proliferation of ambiguous war zones, and the emergence of the charged, abjected figure of the “terrorist” in the U.S. dominated late twentieth century world order. (2)

This “abjected figure of the terrorist” which has emerged to “haunt” neoliberal Western society, to use a Derridean term originally employed to discuss the specter of communism, feeds on an intense fear for one’s personal and is generated from a “fundamental dependency on anonymous others” (Butler, *Precarious Lives* 46). A hunger to know those anonymous others, to theorize their intentions and perhaps even to humanize them and make them visible makes the value of Muslim interlocutors even more critical.

Arguably one of the most useful contributions to naming and describing the figure of the terrorist has been generated by Giorgio Agamben, with his discussion of the concept of the *Homo Sacer*, which has provoked considerable response in critical circles. Agamben argues that under the spectacle of terrorism a new kind of authoritarianism is created; citizens willingly give up hard earned civil liberties in order to be protected from the *Homo Sacer*—the sovereign-less terrorist, who is seen as less than human, a holder of “bare life,” who can be killed without consequence. In *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism: Global Uncertainty and the Challenge of the New Media*, Henry Giroux agrees with Agamben that the fear of the *Homo Sacer* has resulted in the privatization of institutions for the public good and that as a result the functions of the state have shifted.

leading to a withdrawal into private space in Western society. He also adds to Agamben's formulation, noting that the *ihadists* situate the body as both an object of torture (beheading videos) and site of resistance (suicide bombers) (55). While they are the object of indiscriminate killing, they are also the perpetrators. Kellner elaborates that the process of dehumanization, necessary to sustain the threat of the *Homo Sacer*, occurs on both sides of the war on terror:

The terrorist crimes of September 11<sup>th</sup> appeared to be part of this *Jihad*, and show the horrific consequences of totally dehumanizing an "enemy" as so evil that even innocent members of the group in question deserve to be exterminated. (*Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy* 33)

Even though bin Laden may have been dehumanized for the West, and even though he dehumanized the West in turn, Kellner astutely observes that "bin Laden has become a "revolutionary myth," looked upon with awe by millions throughout the world (39).

Slavoj Žižek also makes a controversial contribution to this debate about the *Homo Sacer* by accusing theorists, such as Giroux, Kellner, and Butler, of emptying Agamben of his radicalness in order to appropriate the figure of the *Homo Sacer* for the goals of a more inclusionary radical democracy. Like Kellner and Giroux, Žižek notes that though the *Homo Sacer* is the man over whom all men are sovereign and can be killed without consequence, he can also declare a war that is spectral in nature—therefore, making him an "enemy outlaw" or the "double of American style sovereignty" (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 65). He adds, however, that it is essential to supplement the concept of the stateless *Homo Sacer* with the knowledge that he is also

the recipient of humanitarian aid, since the dehumanized *Homo Sacer* is both the object of the West's torture and pity. To make this point Žižek draws attention to the fact that both bombs and food baskets were being dropped on Afghanistan at the same time, making the *Homo Sacer* at once a "privileged object of humanitarian biopolitics" (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 91) and a terrorist. Therefore, Žižek argues,

There is no place in Agamben for the "democratic" project 'renegotiating' the limit which separates full citizens from *Homo Sacer* by gradually allowing their voice to be heard; his point is rather that in today's 'post-politics' the very democratic public space is a mask concealing the fact that, ultimately, we are all *Homo Sacer*. (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 100)

As this rather brief review indicates, the figure of the *jihadi* as *Homo Sacer* has been employed by First World theorists as a tool to engage in self reflection on the state of the democratic project in Western countries. All theorists mentioned steer away from noting the religious nature of the *jihadists'* intentions and refer to him as "terrorist" rather than *jihadist*, robbing him of the particularity of his position and refusing to name him by the name he assigns to himself. Second, they do not ground the *jihadists'* stance as a response to the particularities of his own oppression (with the exception of Žižek), and all present him as a reactionary figure without a clear political agenda. There is virtually no discussion what *jihad* might contribute to the envisioning of future global democratic projects, except as a means to reflect to the West its own inconsistencies and injustices.

It is useful here to recall Maxime Rodinson's much earlier postulation of the term *Homo Islamicus* which specifies the Islamic nature of *Homo Sacer* much more transparently than contemporary theorizations:

The Oriental may always have been characterized as a savage enemy, but during the Middle Ages, he was at least considered on the same level as his European counterpart. And, to the men of the Enlightenment, the ideologues of the French Revolution, the Oriental was, for all his foreignness in appearance and dress, above all a man like anyone else. In the nineteenth century, however, he became something quite separate, sealed off in his own specificity, yet worthy of a kind of grudging admiration. This is the notion of the *Homo Islamicus*, a notion widely accepted even today. (60)

In fact, the theory of *Homo Sacer*, as a means of engaging with the *jihadist*, empties *jihad* of its own rich theoretical position, thereby employing an old Orientalist turn of using the Orient to serve as a mirror of the Occident. If the *Homo Sacer* is an object of both fear and pity, the *Homo Islamicus* is often the object of both violent oversimplification and a "grudging admiration" for nostalgic utopian project. The figure of *Homo Islamicus* allows for a more equal dialogue with a full recognition of the *jihadist* as not merely an image in the Western mirror to allow reflection on the failed democratic project, but as a figure with his own rich tradition of resistance and diverse oppositional discourses. As Mufi argues when discussing the lack of contrapuntality in cultural studies

...it can be granted that "they" have literatures and other modes of cultural expression that are worthy of consideration, but only "we" have theory, the

inclination to think in abstract and conceptual terms about language, culture and the world and about the conditions of possibility of such knowledge itself. (123)

Therefore throughout this study the term *Homo Islamicus* is used to refer to the sign of the *jihadi* and the category of “bad” Muslim “sealed off in his own specificity”.

It is impossible to deny the startling fact that while the figure of the *jihadi* is being theorized, the reality of suicide bombing and anti-Muslim policies is also growing.<sup>12</sup> While the theorization of the “war on terror” has been continuing for over a decade now, and despite hopes that the “Arab Spring” may decrease the significance of the *jihadi*, both “suicide bombings” and attacks on Muslim populations have increased dramatically. For example, despite all the inter-religious dialogues and the self reflection of European theorists, Muslims represent a disproportionate percentage of prisoners throughout Europe, providing conditions for even further radicalization. Hundreds of thousands of people across the world are still suffering from the effects of real conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan. It can be argued that this condition demonstrates a deep dislocation between First World theory and reality, and that as this dislocation grows the gap of

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<sup>12</sup> “Suicide bombers” conducted 658 attacks around the world in 2008, including 542 in U.S. occupied Afghanistan and Iraq—more than double the number in any of the past 25 years. Of 1,840 incidents in the past 25 years, more than 86 percent have occurred since 2001, and the highest annual numbers have occurred since 2004. (See Robin Wright, “Since 2001, A Dramatic Increase in Suicide Bombing,” *Washington Post*, 18 April 2008. Web. 15 October 2009. < <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/17/AR2008041703595.html>>). Meanwhile, the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that between 40,000 and 50,000 more Iraqis are being displaced every week and the United Nations mission in Afghanistan recorded about 1,500 civilian deaths in the first six months of 2009, a 24 percent increase over the previous year and a record in the eight-year-old war. (See Bill Van Auken, “The US War and Occupation in Iraq- the Murder of a Society,” *The World Socialist Website*, Web. 12 October 2008. < <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/may2007/iraq-m19.shtml>>). In Europe, well over half the total of those arrested on terrorism charges in 2007 were Muslims. Muslims make up only about 12 percent of France’s population — but account for from 60 to 70 percent of all inmates in the country’s prisons. ( See *Nesmax.com*, 28 April 2008. Web. 10 November 2009. < <http://newsmax.com/InsideCover/French-Prisons-muslims/2008/04/29/id/323551>>).

interlocution grows wider. This thesis will attempt to explore how we can set conditions for listening to diverse Muslim voices, including the *Homo Islamicus*, through a call for “democratic criticism”.

In his widely influential works *Culture and Imperialism* and *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said made an impassioned plea for a contrapuntal approach to reading the world and understanding the “worldliness” of texts. Claiming that “we cannot deal with the literature of the peripheries without also attending to the literature of the metropolitan centers,” Said also argued for reading across disciplines, connecting texts and societies, while not perceiving texts as mere reflections of historical events (*Culture and Imperialism* 318). Instead, Said offered a global and comparative approach to understanding texts, placing texts of diverse forms and cultures into a common field, and, in other words, appreciating the genealogy of texts. This approach requires a capacity to read various texts alongside each other, outside their traditional disciplinary fields, in order to contextualize their “worldliness”:

But this global, contrapuntal analysis should be modeled not (as earlier notions of comparative literature were) on a symphony but rather on an atonal ensemble; we must take into account all sorts of spatial or geographical and rhetorical practices – inflections, limits, constraints, intrusions, inclusions, prohibitions—all of them tending to elucidate a complex and uneven topography. (*Culture and Imperialism* 318)

Therefore, any study of the figure of the *jihadist* in theory and literature must necessarily defy the boundaries of traditional disciplinary or national literature studies. First,

globalization and terrorism studies, which cross the boundaries of humanities, literature and film, much the way that cultural studies have done, all engage with study of the *jihadist* and therefore necessitates a cross disciplinary response. Second, the *jihadist* is a global figure, not tied to any country or particular geographical sphere, and as such any study of the *jihadist* defies the approach of traditional area studies, either in literature or theory. Third, since the figure of the *jihadist* has deeply permeated popular culture and literature, as well as political, postcolonial and radical theory, an attempt to differentiate between “high” and “low” culture or adhere to the limit of genre studies would not allow for a thorough analysis of how cultural hegemony reproduces academic theorization in popular cultural configurations of the *jihadist*. Finally, this thesis encourages a dialogic relationship between the works of Muslim and non-Muslim writers in order to explore fully the positionality of Muslim interlocutors in the debate on the figure of the *jihadist*. In elaborating on Said’s concept of contrapuntality, Aamir Mufti calls for a “comparativism yet to come” (115), an “opening up and crossing over” (114) of texts from different cultures and time periods as a way to elaborate the complexity of concepts—in short, a deconstruction of cultural autonomy. He lucidly argues,

We come to understand that societies on either side of the imperial divide now live deeply imbricated lives that cannot be understood without reference to each other. It begins to encode a comparativism as of yet to come, a global comparativism that is a determinate and concrete response to the hierarchical systems that have dominated cultural life since the colonial era. (115)

Following Said's ambitious example, my thesis situates texts of cultural theory, sociology, philosophy, and fiction alongside each other, along with films, videos, and political treatises and speeches. It also places works from the peripheries, from diverse Muslim writers, in dialogue with each other and with those of noted First World theorists. As such this thesis crosses disciplines, genres, and "high" and "low" culture to offer a contrapuntal reading of the figure of the *jihadist*.

This thesis argues that a reassessment of the secular bias in theory is required to hear the voices of the Muslims speaking in indigenous vocabularies of faith. Sven Lütticken, in "Monotheism and the New Image Wars," asks can religion function as a critique. Can it be anything other than criticism of other religions (52)? Certainly, the marked theological turn in theory, as evident in the works of Terry Eagleton and Slavoj Žižek, demonstrates a resuscitation of religious concepts in opposition to purely secular interpretation. The works of Muslim leftists such as Tariq Ramadan, Anouar Majid and Ziaddiun Sardar also attempt to insert Islamic concepts into the formulation of future theory. The various voices of the Arab Spring and the articulations of Islamist parties that have long been silenced will no doubt offer new vigor to the debate. For certain, any discussion on post- secular criticism necessarily begins with the seminal work of Edward Said. Chapter One argues that though Said is considered as one of the major forerunners of postcolonial theory, and although he based his work on a case study of the Arab world, he largely left Islam out of his formulation of colonial and postcolonial representation. More to the point, Said's secular humanism and the decisive role he allotted to the secular intellectual have greatly affected the reception of works in the West by Muslim writers

and established a kind of secular humanist criteria for evaluating their contributions. Thus, while the center was displaced and populated with traditions from other cultures and traditions, such as Africa and the Indian subcontinent, Islam remained outside the new paradigm.

If Said's work left Islam out, as I show, then the recent debates on globalization have reinserted Islam as a metaphorical site of resistance to globalization. Chapter Two specifically focuses on the various forms of Orientalisms, from the neoconservatives and the left, that have arisen post-9/11 and the role of Muslims, either advertently or inadvertently, in supporting these Orientalisms as the cultural logic for the militarization of Muslim countries. There has also been a concerted effort to reconstruct the binaries of Islam and the West, using the events of 9/11 as evidence of this ancient, antagonistic relationship, most notably in the works of Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, as well as a neo Orientalist tendency to celebrate the excess of violence in Islam as a transformative revolutionary energy by writers such as Jean Baudrillard and Slavoj Žižek. In the debate as to whether Islam and the West are compatible or not, Muslim interlocutors demonstrate a fervent need to synthesize, condense and decipher Islam for a panicked and befuddled audience. Explanations of *jihad* by popular, but diverse, Muslim cultural critics, such as Irshad Manji, and writers of fiction, such as Azar Nafisi, Khalid Hosseini, and Yasmina Khadra, are discussed and compared, particularly illuminating how their works justify the increased militarization of Muslim lands.

The similarity between neo-Orientalist and liberal and various theories from the new left is startling and, thus, Chapter Three further explores how the concept of *jihad*

migrates or “travels” in theory to fit both the discourses of reform and revolution. Chapter Three compares the works of liberal reformists such as John Esposito, Oliver Roy and Imam Feisal Abdu Rauf as well as those of well-known radical thinkers, such as Slavoj Žižek and Terry Eagleton, to Islamic reformers, such as Ziaddiun Sardar, Anouar Majid, and Tariq Ramadan. The travelling of the theory of *jihad* to *ijtihad* marks a continuum as to how one is measured as a “good” or “bad” Muslim in this hypersensitive political debate. Further, this chapter argues that the debate about *jihad* is deeply related to issues of statehood, citizenship and postcoloniality, as well as to the resurgence of a theological turn in contemporary theory that asserts the role of the nonsecular in transforming global capitalism.

Chapters Four and Five extend the arguments of the second and third chapters by explicitly examining the intentionality of *jihad* as represented in contemporary *jihadist* studies and acclaimed and widely read fiction by Muslim writers. Employing a contrapuntal approach that includes fiction and critical analysis by Muslim and non-Muslim writers, the chapter explores various attempts to construct and deconstruct an intentionality for the *jihadist*, ranging from religious to secular motives. I compare fictional representations of the *jihadist* to biographical reconstructions of famous *jihadists* as interpreted by various sociologists and historians. The fictional intentions of successful and failed *jihadists* are explored in novels as diverse as John Updike’s *Terrorist*, Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, Slimane Benaïssa’s *The Last Night of Damned Soul*, Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Orhan Pamuk’s *Snow*. The chapter concludes that while there are marked differences between portrayals by Muslim and non

Muslim writers, numerous intentions, that reproduce popular knowledge of *jihadists* prevalent in sociological and psychological analysis, is reproduced in the popular terrorist novel.

Chapter Five examines the intentionality of the *jihadist* from her own perspective, comparing these articulations to interpretations of noted intellectuals such as Henry Giroux and Faisal Devji. I argue that the *jihadist* maintains both a performative and political stance by establishing a relationship between the *jihadist* and a community of responsible victims, and I question the various postmodernist interpretations that the *jihad* is a “new” kind of terrorism, mainly performative and not political. This chapter examines the direct interventions by infamous *jihadists*, such as Osama bin Laden, Adam Gadhan, Mohammed Siddique Khan, and Shehzad Tanweer, raising questions about the dialogic relationship between the *jihadist* and his audience and the media.

The concluding chapter attempts to theorize how discussions about *jihad* can contribute to contemporary theory, particularly to postcolonial studies, and it positions the concept of *jihad* itself within the postcolonial tradition. It reasserts *jihad* into this tradition by accentuating how *jihad* presents a challenge to the secular bias of contemporary criticism and how discussion of “good” and “bad” Muslims undermines some of the underlying assumptions upon which postcolonial theory is based, especially regarding the subaltern and mediation. It also highlights that *jihad* raises direct questions as to the role of violence in radical theory as an instrument for socio-political transformation, concluding that by reclaiming the roots of contemporary *jihad* theory as a part of a postcolonial tradition, *jihad* can make a valuable contribution to the future of

theory, which includes Islamic discourse in a serious debate on postcolonialism and radical change.

The multiplicity of voices from Muslim cultural critics and writers of fiction that populate the pages of this study require some qualification. What exactly do we mean by Muslim writers? In this study, Muslim fiction does not refer to religious fiction. Instead, I use the term Muslim to mean practicing Muslims, or those born into Islam by birth, or those who have converted to it by choice, and it covers a wide range of allegiance to Islam as a faith, from practicing Muslims to atheist Muslims. To this extent, I adopt the criteria which Amin Malak outlines in *Muslim Narratives and the Discourses of English*:

Accordingly for the flexible purpose of our discussion here, the term Muslim narratives suggests the world produced by the person who believes firmly in the faith of Islam; and/or via an inclusivist extension, by the person who voluntarily and knowingly refers to herself, for whatever motives, as a “Muslim” when given a selection of identitarian choices; and/or yet another generous extension by the person who is rooted formatively and emotionally in the culture and civilization of Islam. (7)

Similarly, the term *jihad* is not discussed as a theological concept, but as a cultural configuration that is being circulated in an endless semiotic circuitry in the “war on terror”. On occasion *jihad* is referred to as a “quilting point” in reference to Lacan’s concept of “point de capiton”, an illusionary stable signifier that holds together numerous unstable signifiers (Bowie 74). Lacan’s buttons, drawn from the imagery of upholstery

buttons that hold fabric together, are unstable signifiers ( buttons can fall off), but at the same time they present the illusion of stability ( they hold fabric together and prevent it from moving about). Likewise *jihad*, as I have previously discussed in this introduction, has had a historically unstable meaning, while at the same time, it has become anchored to signifying violence in the discourse on the “war on terror”. In this thesis *jihad* is viewed as a quilting point from which one may query how a radical reimagining of the future might look in a postcolonial world. Further, the emphasis in this thesis is on *al jihad al asghar* ( the lesser jihad), rather than *al jihad al akbar* (the greater jihad), because it is with its contentious claim of the right of violent resistance to oppression that *al jihad al asghar* challenges radical theory, particularly postcolonial theory, to examine its anti-imperialist roots. I argue that considering *jihad* as a cultural configuration invites exploration as to how the “war on terror” has raised issues of urgent importance to intellectuals- particularly issues on representation and interpretation and the role of violence in socio-political transformation.

Because the subject of this dissertation is largely representation and the role of diverse Muslims in representing the varied manifestations of *jihad*, it is only fair that I position my own subjectivity in this debate. Though my name does not indicate it, I can fit myself into Malak’s categorization of Muslim as one “who is rooted emotionally in the culture and civilization of Islam” and consider myself part of a community that sees new value in what faith-based belief systems, can offer a radical critique of global capitalism. At the same time, I am filiatively and affiliatively bound to my Irish Catholic upbringing in an exiled island community off the coast of Canada which arguably, created its own

tenuous identity on an imaginary Irishness. No doubt, the views I express in this thesis are strongly affected by all of these identities, perhaps even more so than the intellectuals to whom this work refers.

## Chapter One

### Leaving Islam Out: The Legacy of Edward Said's Secular Cosmopolitanism

The seminal work of Edward Said had a dramatic effect on the evolution of postcolonial theory and the field of Orientalism. Though a sustained critique of Orientalism, from the cultural and political economy point of view, was already well underway, particularly as evidenced in the works of Brian Turner, Anouar Abdel Malek, and A.L. Tibawi, it was Said's 1978 *Orientalism* that reinvented the debate and made it a subject of public discourse. Zachary Lockman rightly notes that *Orientalism* significantly influenced the future of Orientalist and area studies, particularly Middle Eastern Studies, resulting in an entire generation of new Orientalists who deconstructed colonial discourse on the Orient and produced numerous case studies validating Said's thesis.<sup>1</sup> He also contends that *Orientalism* gave birth to the field of postcolonial studies, particularly by shifting the pre-Saidian emphasis on political economy to the issue of representation (210). In a posthumous tribute to Said, the giants of postcolonial theory, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, both write about the effect of Said on the field of postcolonialism and on their own development.<sup>2</sup> Though Said often demonstrated impatience with the

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include Carol A. Breckenbridge, and Peter van der Veer, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), which applies Said's theory to South Asian societies; Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient* (London: Pandora, 1988); Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996) and Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: UP), 1998. Kabbani, Lewis and Yegenoglu all offer feminist contributions to the debate.

<sup>2</sup> Homi Bhabha, "Adagio," *Edward Said: Continuing the Conversation*, ed. Homi Bhabha and W.J.T. Mitchell. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 7-16. Gayatri Spivak, "Thinking About

obtuse language of postcolonial theory, his work on representation, particularly the role of the intellectual in taking oppositional stances, became a foundation for theorization on the postcolonial subject and the complexities faced by Third World intellectuals in representing peripheral communities. In fact, *Orientalism* articulated questions that had an impact far beyond the study of the Orient itself and even far beyond literary and postcolonial studies. Said's questions, even more so than those of his contemporaries and predecessors, raised epistemological concerns about the issue of essence and, hence, about the entire humanist tradition, the nature of representation and anthropological research, and the institutional functions of the intellectual and theory. His stubborn probing into the relationship between imperialism and culture has had a profound impact on current studies on the relationship between spectacle and politics as demonstrated in the works of Giroux and Kellner. His insistence on the relationship between academic institutions, hegemony, and intellectual integrity has inspired theorizations on the usefulness of theory by Eagleton and Butler.

Said always insisted that theory could not be separated from practice, as was evidenced in his own involvement with the Palestinian cause about which he wrote and was actively involved. The Palestinian issue for Said was foundational as a case study in formulating his theories of power as well as developing his theories on the role of the intellectual and the insistence on a secular criticism. As Ilan Pappé notes,

Once you read Said's writing specifically on Palestine, you realize that his theoretical deconstruction of power bases of knowledge and exposure of the more

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Edward Said: Pages from a Memoir." *Edward Said: Continuing the Conversation*, ed. Homi Bhabha and W.J.T Mitchell. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 156-162.

sinister interests behind Western knowledge production on the Orient would have lacked impetus and zeal had they not been motivated by his struggle for the Palestinian cause. (84)

Certainly, Said's legacy is colossal. Especially since 9/11, when the relationship between Islam and the West was radically inserted into the historical moment, the general public and intellectuals alike have been struggling to understand the emergence of "radical" Islam, the challenge of *jihad*, the nature of Muslimness in a global world, and the mediating role of Muslim intellectuals. The questions Said articulated over a quarter of a century ago have been given a new urgency. Who are *they* and who are *us*? What defines *them* and *us*? What do *they* want? How can *they* be understood? Who has the authority to interpret *them*? Who is the mediator between the *jihadists* and *us*? Is mediation possible? Or, simply put, why do *they* hate *us*?<sup>3</sup> In fact, a massive new culture industry has emerged to answer these questions: from the neo-Orientalists, such as Bernard Lewis and Thomas Freidman, to the terrorist and globalization studies of Samuel Huntington, to the postmodernist interpretations of Jean Baudrillard, and the leftist speculations of Slavoj Žižek. While area specialists, like John Esposito, have gained celebrity status, other scholars (or even those not so scholarly), with roots in Islam, have been catapulted into stardom. Numerous Muslim "intellectuals" of various ideologies have come forward to explain Islam to bewildered audiences. The question as to who speaks for Islam has

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<sup>3</sup> Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies take up this question articulated often by President Bush, various politicians and commentators in their book *Why Do People Hate America* (Cambridge, UK: Icon Books, 2002).

become so pressing, that conferences are arranged internationally and annually to consider this very question.<sup>4</sup>

Arguably, the public debate around Islam and Islamism has seen the reassertion of old Orientalist doctrines that had been displaced by the disputes following Said's *Orientalism*. However, it would be foolhardy to assume that Said's work, and the offspring of the schools of thought that were engendered from it, are having little impact on public and academic discourse, which has, instead, reverted to old Orientalist models to describe the current crisis. For example, the discussions about "reforming" Islam presume a secular religious binary which is not only present, but forms the central metaphor of all of Said's work, up to the latest works before his death. The perceived battle between progressive secularism and backward Islam, the debate on the role of "good" and "bad" Muslims, and the role of Muslim reformers, is rooted in Said's work on the role of the secular intellectual. The disdain for Islamic political radicalism and *jihad* is evident in many of Said's interviews and overtly political texts. The positing of a multicultural solution to the issue of Muslimness, especially in Europe, is also foreshadowed in Said's work on the cosmopolitan intellectual and the role of exiles in a global world. In this chapter, I argue that the very shape of the current debate exists because of the framework already staged for this newly formed discourse, a displaced Orientalism that became rooted in postcolonialism, contained within the work of Said

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<sup>4</sup> The government of Malaysia has organized two conferences on *Who Speaks for Islam, Who Speaks for the West* since 2002; the United Nations organized a High Level Group with the support of the governments of Spain and Turkey, produced reports and established a special secretariat in the Secretary General's office to explore the issue, offered programming and hosted dialogues; the governments of Canada and Britain have working groups to advise on Muslim relations; and numerous Middle Eastern states have hosted conferences and inter faith dialogues which address these very issues.

himself. By a close reading of several of Said's works, this chapter argues that the legacy of Said's secular humanism and cosmopolitanism formed the framework for both how Islam is studied in a post-Orientalist world and the development of postcolonial theory's engagement, or lack of engagement, with Islam—particularly where Islam offers a radical critique to power—*jihad*. Said is the entry point through which we can clarify how the limits of his complex, and often ambiguous, secular humanism have restrained radical critique from truly engaging with Islam.

Said's often contradictory engagement with the humanist tradition has been the subject of much discussion and debate, particularly on *Orientalism*. Aijaz Ahmad's most useful observation is that Said places representation over all forms of human activities and never really answers why representation must interiorize the Other. Is it the result of imperialism? Ahmad asks if this representation of Orientalism is representation in the postmodernist sense, having no connection with the real Orient, or is it willful misrepresentation produced in the West in the pursuit of power (*In Theory* 292). He notes that a theory of intentionality was not developed in Said's work because from a discursive point of view representation is regulated by the power of discourse, and so representation does not correspond to an external truth, subjectivity, or a purpose, but only to the regularity of discourse itself. Likewise, John M. MacKenzie questions Said's binaries of East and West as he extrapolates the issue of intentionality. Using examples from arts, architecture, design, music and theatre, MacKenzie concludes that Said was incorrect to posit the West as a closed world immune to the influence of the Other, and, in fact, it is virtually impossible to differentiate between what is Self and Other, since

both are locked in a process of mutual modification. He adds that this process of heterogeneity and instability is highly related to market forces:

Ever since oriental carpets, ceramics and fabrics had begun to arrive in Europe (and indeed earlier in other parts of Asia) the need of the market had produced their inevitable modifications. The interaction of European taste, demand, market forces and commodity production had operated through a process of natural selection to create an appropriate east. Producer and consumer were wholly complicit in this process. (328)

He also notes that the Eastern arts are often embraced by artists, designers, and musicians who are unsympathetic to dominant political ideologies and that a fascination with Orientalism is as likely to be oppositional as consensual in relation to the established power structure. James Clifford has written about Said's ambiguous relationship with Foucault and the humanist tradition, applying discourse analysis and inserting authorial signatures when useful. To Clifford, this practice destabilized Said's methodological approach.

These three critical points have been briefly mentioned to argue that the issue of methodology and intentionality become critical when understanding the thrust of Said's arguments and, indeed, the legacy he left for area studies and postcolonialism. The argument here is that secular humanist methodology and a vague, often lacking, theory of intentionality had a significant impact on the representation of Islam and *Homo Islamicus* in Said's works and in subsequent inclusions/exclusions in postcolonialist and globalization studies.

In this regard, we can position Said as both a “founder of discursivity” and an “enunciative modality” in a Foucauldian sense. Foucault was interested in the role of the author in reproducing discourse and used the term “enunciative modality” to represent the various subject positions one can occupy when speaking (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 54-55). Said, though he offered a sustained critique of humanism, was also an avid supporter of the bases of the secular humanist tradition, and so he occupied various subject positions. His final work, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, attempted to clarify his multiple positions as an “enunciative modality” whose critique is from inside humanist discourse. Foucault’s notion of the “founders of discursivity” recognized that authors are both produced by and produce knowledge, speaking within the archives of their times, but also reshaping these archives to produce new possibilities for discourse. Foucault drew heavily on the examples of Marx and Freud (*The Foucault Reader* 116). Said was produced within the humanist tradition and in turn produced knowledge which led to the growth of the field of postcolonialism, which critiques humanism.

However, it is important to note that as a founder of discourse Said cannot be held responsible for the direction which postcolonial discourse took. As W.T.J. Mitchell notes, Said was “endlessly chastising his would- be followers and younger colleagues for being slaves of fashion and for writing barbarous, jargon-ridden prose (5). Mitchell elaborates,

For me, the characteristic gesture of both his cultural and political writing (which despite his claim to lead “two lives,” always seemed to me all of a piece) was the turn from the straight, predictable path, the reversal of field, the interrupted itinerary. So that, having by many accounts founded the entire field of what is

called postcolonial studies, he immediately set about to critique it, to question its emergent complacencies and received ideas. (3)

As Spivak succinctly puts it, "I think he often thought I was a fool, to be so persuaded by theory" ("Pages from a Memoir" 161). It can be argued that postcolonial studies migrated from its home outside centers of power in resistance to colonialism to a new home inside centers of power, separated from indigenous traditions of activism, such as, but not limited to, Islam. This can be illuminated more clearly when one considers how two of Said's central ideas, secular criticism and the role of the secular critic in radical critique, form the very foundation of the contemporary debate about the Islamic contribution to radicalism, the nature of its representation, and the position of the Muslim intellectual in the contemporary socio-political market place.

To begin, it is revealing to note the theorists that Said left out of his contrapuntal discourse. When he wrote *Orientalism*, Said simply did not recognize the rich body of work already underway by various Arab and Muslim writers. A.L. Tibawi, S.H. Alatas, Anouar Abdel Malek, and Abdallah Laroui had all made valuable contributions to the assault on Orientalism. What appears unusual is that Said made either no or merely passing reference to this tradition in *Orientalism*. This curious fact opens the door to an inquiry as to why Said did not engage himself with the already existing anticolonialist critique which broadly fell into two camps: either leftist or Marxist criticism from a political economy point of view, or Islamic scholarship. It appears Said felt equally

uncomfortable in both camps.<sup>5</sup> The issue as to the intentionality of Orientalism for the Marxist camp was quite clear—ideological “covering” of reality to sustain the aims of capitalism. For faith-based Islamic scholarship, the intentions of the Orientalists were to discredit the “real” Islam and replace it with a deformed version of Christianity, secularized and reformed. Said could accept neither. He remained unsure about the existence of a “real” Orient or a “real” Islam, and concerned himself with how the Orient and Islam were represented. This is especially evident if we look at the intersections of Said’s work with that of two of his Arab contemporaries whom he ignored: Abdel Malek’s “Orientalism in Crisis” and Tibawi’s *“English-Speaking Orientalists.”*

Anouar Abdel Malek, an Egyptian who studied Sociology at the Sorbonne and taught at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, situated his work in the leftist tradition of Third World resistance literature. He argued that after the Second World War, the resurgences of African, Asian and Latin American national liberation movements made a new understanding of the Orient necessary. The intention of Orientalism for Abdel Malek was clear; in fact, there was a transparent relationship of missionaries, university dons and military men “whose only objective was to garner intelligence in the area to be occupied, to penetrate the consciousness of the people in order to better assure its enslavement to European powers” (49). Unlike Abdel Malek, Said was much more conscious about drawing a direct line of intentionality; for him,

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<sup>5</sup> For fuller discussion on Said’s lack of engagement with Marxism refer to Harry Harootunian, “Conjectural Traces: Said’s Inventory,” *Edward Said: Continuing the Conversation*, ed. Homi Bhabha and W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005) 68-79; and Timothy Brennan, “Resolution,” *Edward Said: Continuing the Conversation*, ed. Homi Bhabha and W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005) 43-55.

Orientalism remained “a created body of theory and practice, in which, for many generations, there has been considerable material investment” or an “accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into western consciousness” (*Orientalism* 96). For Said, Orientalism operated as cultural hegemony, not as a capitalist or imperialist plot to control the Orient. However, Said and Abdel Malek agreed on the nature of Orientalism itself as a humanist failure. Abdel Malek noted that the Oriental was an object of study stamped with a “constitutive otherness, of an essentialist character,” as opposed to the dynamic and progressive European, humanist man of action (50). In other words, the rational, progressive, democratic West was constituted on the existence of an essential Other, the irrational, regressive totalitarian East. This point, of course, would form the basis of Said’s theory that the West was constituted on the Othering of the Orient and that the Orient only existed as a construct of the West. Abdel Malek also spent considerable time describing the methods of the Orientalists, particularly the dehistoricization and the exoticization of the Orient. He claimed that in order to sustain the discourse of essence, the history of the Orient had to be erased and rewritten. Instead, the Orient was positioned as static and fixed, and so study and research focused on the past as the preferred period, especially in cultural aspects of language and religion as “detached from social evolution” (51). As a result, everything that happened in the present reappeared as an emergence of a static history, unable to adapt to the dynamics of modern life: “that which re-emerged appeared as a prolongation of the past, grandiose but extinct. From historicizing, history became exotic” (52). Said noted this same point in *Orientalism*, as

well as in *Covering Islam* and *The Question of Palestine*, which he considered all part of the same trilogy.

The second intellectual of interest to this argument is A.L. Tibawi, a fellow Palestinian, who in a series of three articles from 1964-1980 engaged in a debate with English-speaking Orientalists whom, he claimed, essentialized, Otherized and dehistoricized the Orient. As a Muslim, Tibawi's target was Islamic Orientalism. His work focused on the relationship between Orientalism and missionary activity, noting that the hope of the early Orientalists was that "Islam might be transformed through Westernization or modernization or reformation" ("English Speaking Orientalists" 26). He noted specifically that two techniques were deployed to discredit Islam. First, its doctrines, specifically the Quran, were held up as not unauthentic, actually a refashioning of Hebrew documents and pre-Islamic literature; second, the authenticity of the Prophet Mohammed was questioned by assigning to him profit-oriented rather than spiritual-centered goals. Tibawi, in fact, asserted that the failure of Orientalists was an inability to understand the role Islam plays in the lives of Muslims. He spoke harshly of token Muslims who are used by Orientalists to validate their views of the Orient and Islam in particular:

Encounters between different cultures did and do produce alienated individuals, denationalized and deculturalized, who try to live in both worlds at the same time but are at peace in neither: some of the persons named do not write in Arabic, others avoid speaking it, and some are neutral or silent on Arab or Islamic questions. ("On the Orientalists Again" 60)

For Tibawi, the Muslim exiled from his culture is no Saidian “specular intellectual,” the exile on the margins of society, interpreting both, but is a conflicted and pathetic individual, robbed of his heritage and stripped of his identity, engaged in a discourse that the Orientalists want to hear or else remaining silent. Far from Said’s utopian border intellectual, Tibawi posited and predicted the rise of the figure of Ibn Warraq, the unknown apostate, interpreting Islam for the world, intent and insistent on its reform, perhaps on its destruction.

Various critics have noted Said’s conspicuous decision to ignore Tibawi’s work. MacFie, for example, noted that

Said did not recognize the work of Tibawi because Tibawi, a Palestinian Arab, succeeds in breaking the Orientalist rules identified by Said that since the Orient is incapable of representing itself it must be represented. Far from being intimidated by the West, in his two critiques of English-speaking Orientalists Tibawi, writing from an Islamic point of view, succeeds in mounting a devastating critique of English-speaking Orientalism, identifying in considerable detail what he believes to be its major faults. (99-100)

Or could it be that Tibawi represented an Islamic point of view with which Said did not wish to engage, a point of view mocked by his contemporaries who considered the assertion of Islamic belief as contradictory to a critical stance on Orientalism? These biases can be seen in the responses of Said’s contemporaries to Arab and Muslim critiques of Orientalism. For example, in his literature review, Donald Little argued he would ignore the vast body of work written in “Islamic languages” as the more important

work is directed at a foreign audience and that Arabs writing in Western languages “have embraced Western methodology and a Western approach to the Arabs and Islam which is virtually indistinguishable from that of non Arabs” (134). Even MacFie, in an otherwise balanced account of the assault on Orientalism, commenting on the argument between Little and Tibawi, noted that Tibawi’s work “betrays strength of feeling out of place perhaps in an academic debate” and concluded that “the argument illustrates all too clearly the difficulties inherent in any attempt made to bridge the gap between a Muslim and a Christian/secular view of knowledge, religion and the world” (108). It is clear that assertion of Islamic beliefs was considered by reviewers, and perhaps by Said himself, as contradictory to a judicious debate on Orientalism.

To be fair, Said did rectify his dismissal of Arab sources in his later works, most notably in *Culture and Imperialism*. However, Said’s response to the Arab criticism and translation of *Orientalism* in the “Afterword” appended from the 1994 edition onwards is telling, indeed. He commended the translation into Arabic and was particularly satisfied with the translation of words such as “discourse, simulacrum, paradigm or code” into the “classical rhetoric of the Arab tradition,” noting that the translator attempted to place Said’s books “inside one fully formed tradition, as if it were addressing another from a perspective of cultural adequacy and equality” (338). Yet, he noted that despite this, the book was experienced as “an affirmation of warring and hopelessly antithetical identities” (338). He explained that he had intended his book to launch a study of Otherness, as had happened in Europe, the United States, Australia, India, Ireland, Latin

America and Africa. The Arab world, however, appeared to be the exception in responding to Said's challenge in *Orientalism*:

That does not seem to be the case in the Arab world, where, partly because my work is correctly perceived as Eurocentric in its texts, and partly because ... the battle for cultural survival is too engrossing, books like mine are interpreted less usefully, productively speaking, and more as defensive gestures either for or against the "West." (339)

And so, according to Said, the Arab rejection of his book was not because of the text itself, his lack of a theory on intentionality and his avid secularism, but because "decades of loss, frustration and the absence of democracy have affected intellectual and cultural life in the Arab region"(339). And for Said these culturally backward intellectuals were best exemplified in the Islamic intellectuals, such as Tibawi. While defending himself against the accusation that he was a defender of Islam, Said clarified again that he was not interested in a "real" Islam or "real" Orient: "I have no interest or let alone capacity for showing what the true Orient or Islam actually are" (331).

The above discussion about Said's engagement with Arab sources and his avoidance of similar Islamic debates on the same issues serve as a useful point of departure upon which to illuminate Said's secularism and humanism, including his lack of clarity on intentionality, throughout his work. Tibawi noted that

The first essential prerequisite for any successful change (or reform) is therefore native initiative, independent of foreign control or suggestion. The second

prerequisite is that all change must be acceptable to learned orthodox authority.

("English Speaking Orientalists" 73)

Said would definitely disagree with the second condition; in fact, he would assert that an intellectual must remain oppositional and defiant to authority, in other words maintain a "secular" stance. For Said, the kind of critical distance necessary to be a critic and intellectual could only be obtained if one could maintain a distance from religion and ideology, which he considered inherently doctrinal.

Perhaps the most thorough look at Said's relationship with religion and ideology is William D. Hart's *Edward Said and the Religious Effect of Culture*. Commenting upon the strong secular/religious thematic in Said's work, Hart notes that Said was not indifferent to religion, nor did Said not want to engage with religion, but he was in fact antagonistic to it. For Said, an antagonism to religious criticism was necessary to being a genuine intellectual who spoke truth to power; in fact, it was essential to "resist the quasi religious authority" of culture, the "authority of being comfortably at home among one's people, supported by known powers and acceptable values, protected against the outside world." (*The World, Text and the Critic* 15-16).

Hart critiques Said's views concisely:

Said is not a religious thinker. But this does not mean that he is indifferent. On the contrary, religion is something that he can neither tolerate easily nor leave alone. Religion is an issue for him unlike those who are indifferent, whom we mistakenly call secular. Secularism in this respect is a particular kind of relationship with religion. It is skeptical, wary, or hostile interest. Secular

thinkers are preoccupied with boundary-drawing and boundary-maintenance, with where secularism ends and religion begins. (10-11)

Hart continues to assert that for Said secular criticism is, in this sense, the “Other” of religious criticism: “without the counterpoint of religious criticism, it has no point” (12). In order to illuminate this, he examines two of Said’s central concepts first developed in *The World, The Text, and The Critic*: filiation/ affiliation and worldliness. Filiation is the natural or cultural relations (family), and affiliation contains those relations which compensate for filiation failures, such as professional associations. For Said, an intellectual must resist the systems of culture to which he is bound filiatively and the systems he acquired affiliatively and only then can he avoid “religious criticism” in order to speak truth to power. According to Said, religious criticism blocks the road to inquiry and is irrational, organized, collective, vague, esoteric and secret. On the other hand, the secular intellectual is skeptical of cultural filiation and systems affiliation. Hart notes that for Said nationalism and religion deter secular criticism and so does any kind of sense of belonging to a professional cult. In short, Said believed that religiosity had returned under a secular guise and that criticism itself had become religious; hence, his criticism of criticism, particularly nationalist discourse and deconstructionism. Second, Hart notes that Said’s concept of worldliness was developed in counterpoint to what he perceived as the other-worldliness of religion. In religious discourse, worldliness is a profane preoccupation with the here and now while other-worldliness deals with the more noble goals of the imagined future. Hart notes that Said appropriated and reversed these terms. Worldliness became a desired goal and other-worldliness became obscure. Hart makes

the astute observation that particularly in *Orientalism*, Said reproduced the Orientalists' distinctions between East and West as applied to secular/religious: "Said rejects the Orientalists' distinction between Western rationality and Eastern mysticism only to readmit and valorize this distinction under the rubrics of secularism and religion" (86). It is, in fact, ironic that secularism displaced Orientalism in Said's terminology-as Hart notes, "religion and secularism are East and West in Said's imaginative geography" (86).

Said's secular/ religious distinctions have been noted by a number of other critics, besides Hart, though not all agree that this new binary recreated a kind of displaced Orientalism.<sup>6</sup> Peter van der Veer points out that the

distinction between secular and religious is a product of the Enlightenment that was used in *Orientalism* to draw a sharp opposition between unnatural religious behavior of the oriental and the rational secularism which enabled the Westerner to rule the Oriental." (qtd in Robbins 74)

Others in the subaltern studies group connected secularism to postcolonial nation-building, with Guha linking the argument of Western Orientalism to the secular indigenous elites and Chakrabarty claiming secularism as an act of appropriation, particularly in India (Robbins 75). On the other hand, Bruce Robbins argues that Said used the term secular criticism not to oppose religion but to oppose nationalism, and the actual subject of critique was nationalism itself, evidenced in Said's anti-American stance

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<sup>6</sup> Two very useful essays outline some of the arguments of a number of theorists referred here: Bruce Robbins, "Secularism, Elitism, Progress and Other Transgressions," *Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History*, ed. Ansell Pearson, Keith, Benita Parry and Judith Squires. (London: Lawrence, & Wishart, 1997) 67-87; Gauri Viswanathan, "Secular Criticism and the Politics of Religious Dissent," *Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History*, ed. Ansell Pearson, Keith, Benita Parry and Judith Squires (London: Lawrence, & Wishart, 1997) 151-172.

as an American intellectual during the Gulf War and his critical stance as a Palestinian on the Palestinian issue (74). W.J.T Mitchell insightfully points out the secular limit in Said's work can be directly traced to Vico's assertion that we cannot know things that we have not made ("Secular Divination" 102) This disallowed Said from engaging with any kind of sacred knowledge or recognizing "that sphere of the uncontrollable and inexplicable that, at the same time, has an immense power over human thought and action" (104). Mitchell directly links this view of the sacred to Said's "blind spot" and his sense of self-admitted "panic" when engaging with the domain of the visual arts and the Imaginary (104-105). Viswanathan, on the other hand, argues that Said's secularism has been interpreted too narrowly and that it is intended to demonstrate the competing affiliations faced by the intellectual:

So that while Said seems to be polarizing terms like secular/religious, critics/cleric, human history/scared time, worldly/mystical/ his insistence that culture is a site for hegemonizing tendencies, open to co-optation by the state for its own purposes ... places dissent in a much more complex adversarial relation, not only to religious orthodoxy but also to state hegemony. ("Secularism, Criticism and the Politics of Religious Dissent" 153)

In a later article, Viswanathan argues against Hart's observations of Said's hostility to religion and asserts that if one considers religion to include orthodox and heterodox elements, Said was sympathetic to heterodox elements of Islam ("Said, Religion and Secular Criticism" 164). However, Viswanathan does not provide a close reading of Said's texts to prove this point.

Whether or not one accuses Said of using inappropriate Enlightenment terminology as van der Veer does, reinvents the meanings of secularism and nationalism to extrapolate Said's binaries (Robbins or Viswanathan), highlights secularism as a blind spot (Mitchell), or focuses on Said's theoretical inconsistencies (Hart), two points are clear. First, for Said, religious criticism was a metaphor, that is, any system which binds an individual to it and compromises his critical distance. Above all, Said argued for a critical distance for the intellectual in line with Vico's "rational civil theology" (Mitchell, "Secular Divination" 107). Religious affiliations, which may include actual religion, but are not limited to it, do not allow such distance, according to Said. Second, even if Said intended the term religious criticism as an all-encompassing one, including, but not limited to religion, he surely was aware of the effect of his usage of "secular" terminology, particularly when describing Muslim societies. Yet, he insistently employed these terms throughout his work—that is, until his last book, in which secular criticism was replaced with the term "democratic criticism." To demonstrate the development of Said's ideas over the years as the field of postcoloniality grew under his tutelage, it is fruitful to trace his engagements with Islam and the role of the secular intellectual throughout some of his major works. I will explore whether Said's democratic criticism can contain criticism which draws on religious and sacred sources, or whether democratic criticism is merely a new designation for secular criticism, in an historical moment of increased sensitivity to the matter. Can humanistic democratic criticism really accept diverse multicultural critiques, even if they arise from within religious traditions?

Viswanathan would argue, yes, especially if it is heterodox, since it is orthodoxy and dogma which Said critiqued, not sacred knowledge itself ("Said, Religion and Secular Criticism" 164-166). However, particularly in the field of Islam, the labels of orthodoxy and heterodoxy are highly unstable, with the neoconservatives considering the *jihadists* orthodox and Muslim authorities considering them heterodox. And it is revealing to divine how Said felt about the resurgence of Islamic orthodoxy/ heterodoxy (depending on one's interpretation) as exemplified in the *jihadist*. Viswanathan has argued, with reference to Said's interview with Tariq Ali, that Said showed some understanding of Islamic militancy by referring to his remark that they are "creatures of the moment [for] whom Islam is an opportunity to protest the current stalemate, the current mediocrity and bankruptcy of the ruling party" (qtd in Viswanathan, "Said, Religion and Secularism Criticism" 164). A more nuanced reading is required in order to assess whether Said placed any faith in Islamic resistance, or Islamic intellectuals, to affect social change.

In *Covering Islam*, his most explicit book on Islam, Said positioned himself as an intellectual, not affiliated with the left or the right, speaking truth to power about Islam:

Yet there is a consensus on Islam as a kind of scapegoat for everything we do not happen to like about the world's new political social and economic patterns. For the right, Islam represents a kind of barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the center, a kind of distasteful exoticism. In all causes, however, there is agreement that even though little is known about the Islamic world there is not much to be approved there." (v)

Said took great pains to emphasize that “far from being a defense of Islam—a project as unlikely as it is futile for my purposes—the book describes the uses of Islam for the West and for many Islamic societies” (vi). As in *Orientalism*, Said made it clear that “real” Islam was not his subject: the representations of Islam were. Ironically, Said never investigated how Muslims themselves represent Islam. In a telling criticism of Judith Miller’s work, Said noted, “She seems never to have heard of Mohammed Arkoun, or Mohammed El Jabri, or George Tarabishi, or Adonis, or Hasan Hanafi, or Hisham Djal” (*Covering Islam* xxxix). Though he seemed to have heard of such intellectuals, Said did not deem their representations of their own society that important since he did not elaborate upon their arguments, except to show that they exist.

Though the first volume was published in 1981, *Covering Islam* was reprinted in 1997 and Said had some time to reconsider how he had left Muslims out of the representation of their own society in his theorizing. Of course, there have been numerous attempts made by Muslims all over the world to explain Islam, describe it, make its philosophy understandable, some of the scholars being acculturated Americans or Europeans like Said.<sup>7</sup> However, Said remained silent on all these contributions. On the other hand, his response to Islamic revivalism was startling. Said took no interest in examining the possibility that political Islam might serve as an effective opposition to imperialism, nor did he provide a nuanced historical reading of the development of various types of political Islamism. His criticism was direct: “it [political Islam] has plainly caught the West off balance, especially when Islamic religious fervor and political

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<sup>7</sup> Muslim intellectuals writing on these issues during this time period, in English, include writers like Tariq Ramadan, Mahmood Mamdani, and Ziauddin Sardar, all discussed in this thesis.

objective join to create violent results" (*Covering Islam* xix). He continued by portraying a dreary history of political Islam: in Algeria, "thousands of intellectuals, journalists, artists and writers have been killed"; in Sudan, he referred to Hassan al Turabi as "a brilliantly malevolent individual, a Svengali and Savonarola clothed in Islamic robes"; in Egypt he wrote of the Muslim brotherhood and the Jamât Islamiya, as "one more violent and more uncompromising than the other"; in Palestine Hamas and Islamic Jihad "have metamorphosed into the most feared and journalistically covered examples of Islamic extremism" (xiii). All in all, Said's list of Islamists was not a very promising group of activists who could affect real social change. Absent from his lists were notable and articulate leaders such as Hassan Al Banna of the Muslim Brotherhood, Rashid Ghanoushi of Al Nahda, and Khalid Masha'el of Hamas, all respected intellectuals in their own rights. In fact, for Said there could not be a religious intellectual, and so no hope for resistance arising from religion itself.

This is especially evident in the attitude and the language Said used to refer to Hamas. Consider his first written reference to Hamas in 1993:

In 1992 when I was there, I briefly met a few of the student leaders who represent Hamas: I was impressed by their sense of political commitment but not at all by their ideas. I found them quite moderate when it came to accepting the truths of modern science, for instance...their leaders neither especially visible nor impressive, their writings rehashes of old nationalist tracts, now couched in an "Islamic" idiom. (*The Politics of Dispossession* 403)

It is clear Said had little faith in Hamas' intellectuals, and his comment, "I found them quite moderate when it came to accepting the truths of modern science," revealed his surprise that young Islamic activists could somehow accept contemporary scientific realities. As Hamas gained in momentum throughout the 1990s, Said warned,

I know that the organization is one of the only ones expressing resistance.... Yet for any secular intellectual to make a devil's pact with a religious movement is, I think, to substitute convenience for principle." (*Peace and Its Discontents* 111)

Later, he would call their resistance "violent and primitive.... You know, what Hobsbawm calls precapital, trying to get back to communal forms, to regulate personal conduct with simpler and simpler reductive ideas" (*Power, Politics, and Culture* 416). In yet another interview, also printed in *Power Politics and Culture*, Said responded to the question of whether or not it bothered him that his work was often cited by Islamists:

Certainly, and I have frequently expressed my concern on this subject. I find my opinions misinterpreted, especially where they include substantial critiques of Islamic movements. First, I am secular; second, I don't trust religious movements and third I disagree with these movements' methods, means, analyses and values. (437)

Clearly, even though Said defended Islam from imperialist and nationalist attacks, it was difficult for him to see any progressive alternatives in Islamic resistance movements. As Majid notes, there is a "dismissal of religiously inspired discourses as serious alternatives to capitalist relations" (*Unveiling Traditions* 24). Further, it seems impossible that a religious intellectual could ever obtain the necessary stance to be included in Said's elite

group of cosmopolitan secular critics. Notable is that Said never positioned his work in the rich tradition of Arab debate about secularism and political Islam: Muslim scholars, such as Ahmad Lutfi Al Sayyid, Muhammad Kurd Ali, Ali Abd al Raziq and Taha Hussein, all made valuable contributions to this complex debate and Said did not even give them a passing reference. Said never once highlighted the contemporary debate which connects nationalism and secularism, nor did he explore the connection between failed nationalism and pan Islamism. In all of his discussions on Foucault and for all his use of Foucault's terminologies he never once mentioned Foucault's own Orientalism. Instead, he dedicated pages upon pages in his work to the exilic secular humanism of his heroes: Vico, Adorno and Auerbach.

Various critics have noted the two very diverse hero/intellectuals Said chose in constructing his "secular critic"—Antonio Gramsci and Julien Benda. Saree Makdisi notes,

From Gramsci, Said accepts the notions that intellectuals compose a large and variegated social body, connected to classes, movements and traditions and fulfilling all kinds of social roles, including the production and reproduction of official ideologies and worldviews. But at the same time he finds deeply compelling Benda's much more restricted notion of the intellectual as a member of a small, embattled, morally driven group speaking out against prevailing opinions regardless of the consequence to themselves. (54)

Said defined the role of the intellectual in both the Gramsci-style collective actor and also the lonely stance of the heterodox cleric like Benda: "The proper role of the intellectual,

then, according to Said, is to maintain intellectual and political integrity, and to speak out, like one of Benda's lonely clerics, against all odds, and despite all costs to himself" (Makdisi 57).

In *Representations of the Intellectual*, the Reitch lectures of 1993 - 1994, Said wrote directly of his intellectual heroes, and outlined how the figure of the intellectual has been represented by various thinkers. In the introduction to this series of lectures, Said clearly connected intellectual vocation to the secular tradition which to him "is a spirit in opposition rather than in accommodation" (xvii). It is evident for Said that secular was a metaphor for independence and freedom rather than merely acquiescence to secularism itself, and that the secular critic had to stand apart from his society and apply a single standard of humanity to all. None of the heroes in his pages espoused a particularly "religious" point of view. In fact, in "Holding Nations and Traditions at Bay," he argued that just as Arab intellectuals must reject nationalism, they must also reject Islamic dogma. He postulated the type of Arab-Islamic intellectual that might be considered eligible for entry into his flock of secular critics in the embodiment of Adonis, the Syrian poet and intellectual, who is involved in "the revival of *ijtihad*, personal interpretation, and not sheep like abdication to politically ambitious *ulema* or charismatic demagogues" (40).

For Said, then, the exemplary Muslim intellectual was Adonis, who referred to himself in a 2008 *New York Times* interview as "a pagan prophet," self-admittedly seen as a "renegade and anti-Muslim" ("Interview by Adam Shatz"). Certainly, Adonis qualifies as one of Viswanathan's heterodox subjects. In "Intellectual Exiles:

Expatriates and Marginals,” also in the Reith Lectures, Said once again turned to the example of another Muslim intellectual to demonstrate the adversarial stance. Referring to V.S. Naipul as a starting point, another interesting choice since his book *Among the Believers* was hailed as a shallow and derogatory account of Muslim societies even in Salman Rushdie’s estimation in *Imaginary Homelands*, Said posited the state of metaphoric exile, where one remains attached to but stands outside one’s own bounds. Later, in “Speaking Truth to Power,” Said posited Rushdie himself as a prototype of his secular intellectual:

In the secular world—our world, the historical and social worlds made by human effort—the intellectual has only secular means to work with; revelation and inspiration, while perfectly feasible as modes for understanding in private life, are disasters and even barbaric when put to use by theoretically minded men and women. Indeed I would go so far as saying that the intellectual must be involved in a lifelong dispute with all the guardians of scared vision or text, whose depredations are legion and whose heavy hand brooks no disagreement and certainly no diversity.... This is why the defense of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* has been so absolutely central an issue.” (88 -89)

And so, Rushdie joined Vico, Gramsci, Auerbach, and Adonis on Said’s list as admirable secular intellectuals.

Said’s support for Rushdie as a metaphoric exile, the ultimate example of a secular intellectual, demonstrated an unwillingness to discuss the Rushdie affair in the

context of the worldliness of the event surrounding his exile.<sup>8</sup> Said's defense of Rushdie remained squarely based on the freedom-of-speech argument, one used frequently since to discredit Islam and prove its barbarity.<sup>9</sup> By asserting a universal, cosmopolitan existence for the metaphoric exile, Said had become dangerously disconnected from the worldliness of the debate. In a rather disappointing gesture, Said did not use the incident to reflect on the rhetoric of freedom of speech as an example of the type of hypocritical double standards of which he often wrote; nor did he use the moment to reflect upon the positioning of the Muslim intellectual in today's world, particularly focusing on the relationship between Islam and Empire and globalization. In his final words on the value of the intellectual, in the last chapter in *Democratic Criticism and Humanism*, Said noted that in the post-9/11 world there has been more and more of a need for and a reaching out to intellectuals, both in the American and Muslim worlds: "the special symbolic role of the writer as an intellectual testifying to a country's or region's experience, thereby giving that experience a public identity forever inscribed in the global discursive agenda," and again he cited Salman Rushdie as a living example of speaking truth to power (127).

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<sup>8</sup> Various excellent discussions of the Rushdie affair and the assertion of the secularist master narrative can be found in Ahmed Akbar, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*, (London: Routledge, 1992); Anouar Majid, *Unveiling Traditions: Postcolonial Islam in a Polycentric World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Graham Huggan, *The Post Colonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1989); and Amin Malak, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Recent examples include the Danish cartoon crisis in 2005 and the Sudanese teddy bear incident in 2007, all decontextualized to position the freedom of expression debate as the antithesis to Islamic totalitarianism.

The example of Said's stubborn allegiance to Rushdie, in face of a complex political and historical moment, surely highlights the limits of Said's theory. First, Said remained a secularist but he never tried to explain the many meanings of secularism, certainly not the ongoing interplay of the concepts from the earliest of Islamic traditions until now. For Said, the object of radical criticism was religious criticism, which contains religion and nationalism and other professional allegiances, but definitely always contains religion in its multitude of manifestations. Said's inability to give up the secular religious dichotomy which formed the basis of his own imaginative limits disallowed him from engaging with rich Islamic traditions in anything more than a cursory mention. This is particularly evident when we compare Said's opportunistic deployment of Muslim thinkers in his last book, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, to its intellectual predecessor *The World, The Text, and The Critic*, published over twenty years earlier.

To be fair, however, Said's terminology did become more nuanced in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*; clearly, the post-9/11 world changed Said's terminology but not his central position, that of defending Islam from a secular point of view, but not engaging deeply in the contribution it could make to scholarship. Indeed, there are occasions when Said makes a considered effort to inject Islamic discourse into his theory, as he did in *The World, The Text, and The Critic*, but these efforts remain mere window dressing, a kind of intellectual tourism, to prove a point about the necessity of a decentered humanism. For example, in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, to explain his concept of worldliness, Said used the example of the linguistic interpretative theory of a

group of Andalusian linguists called the Zahirites (36-39). In fact, he drastically simplified a group of obscure medieval Arabic linguists to make the point that the meaning of the text is not in the text itself, but a product of a time, an author, and a reader:

I have very quickly summarized an enormously complex theory for which I cannot claim any particular influence in Western European literature since the Renaissance and perhaps not even in Arabic literature since the Middle Ages. But what strikes us forcibly about the whole theory is that it represented a considerably articulated thesis for dealing with a text as a significant form, in which- –and I put this as carefully as I can—worldliness, circumstantialities, the text's status as an event having sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency, are considered as being incorporated in the text, an infrangible part of its capacity for conveying and producing meaning.” (39)

Revealingly, Said's recourse to Ibn Hazm, an Andalusian jurist, theologian and philosopher, and the Zahirites, was followed later in the same book by assigning the metaphor of religious “to all totalizing theories: ...what is more to the point is a dramatic increase in the number of appeals to the extra human, the vague abstraction, the divine, the esoteric and secret” (291). Certainly, scholarship such as Ibn Hazm's appealed to the Divine, and yet Said, a few hundred pages before, praised it as a “considerably articulated thesis.” Still a few pages later, he lamented that “religion has returned in other ways, most explicitly in the works of formerly militant secularists for whom it now seems that the historical social world of real men and women is in need of religious assuagement”

(291). Thus, while at the beginning of *The World, The Text, and The Critic*, he credited Islamic scholarship with a contribution to interpretation, by the end he was exasperated at the impossibility of religious criticism and its lack of contribution to critique.

A similar contradiction emerges in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, though here Said distanced himself from his earlier terminology of secular and religious criticism. Instead, he began by clarifying his humanism by commenting upon what Clifford had interpreted as a methodological weakness or inconsistency in *Orientalism*, that of combining Foucaultian and humanist analysis. In *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said defended his position as a purposeful extension of humanism:

Although I was one of the first critics to engage with and discuss French theory in the American university, Clifford correctly saw that I somehow remained unaffected by that theory's ideological antihumanism, mainly because I think I did not (and I still do not) see in humanism only the kind of totalizing and essentializing trends that Clifford identified. (10)

Said clarified that his work was always intended as a critique, but not abandonment, of humanism and defined cogently what humanism meant for him: "the core of humanism is the secular notion that the historical world is made by men and women, not God, and that it can be understood rationally" (11). By making this connection, Said reinserted secularism into his definition of humanism; in fact, they were inseparable. Throughout *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said reasserted that "humanism is the achievement of form by human will and agency" (15), and that the humanities concern "secular history" (15). However, rather than set secular and religious criticism as binaries, Said

examined the tendency within humanism to align itself to ideologies such as Orientalism and nationalism. Rather than refer to these trends as religious, as he had in his earlier work, he placed these oppositions within a transformed humanist tradition: “a varied and complex world with many contradictory, antinomian and antithetical currents running within it” (45), which instead of collapsing under the strain of postmodernism was being transformed by critiques which are “non European, genderized, decolonized and decentered” (47). This view posited hope for a democratic criticism as a replacement for secular criticism, since Eurocentric or nationalistic humanism, of the kind Said previously had equated with religious criticism, could not be sustained in the postcolonial world where new spaces for democratic dissent had opened up.

The question remains, however, as to whether this democratic criticism can contain religious criticism, of all sorts, considering that the binary between orthodoxy and heresy is so unstable, as we have noted. Unfortunately, Said did not explore this issue in depth in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. For example, when writing about philology in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said turned to the Islamic tradition and introduced his readers to the Islamic interpretive system of interdependent readings, *isnad*, personal effort and creativity (68). In fact, he asserted that the Islamic tradition has much to offer interpretation, but it is “so little known amongst Eurocentric scholars all too busy extolling some supposedly exclusive humanistic Western ideal” (68). He had made this same argument over twenty years before, by referring to the Zaharite interpretive community in *The World, The Text, and The Critic*. And like its progenitor,

*Humanism and Democratic Criticism* praised Islamic scholarship and then quickly condemned “religious enthusiasm” as a dogma entirely separate from this scholarship:

Religious enthusiasm is perhaps the most dangerous of threats to the humanistic enterprise, since it is patently anti-secular and antidemocratic in nature, and in its monotheistic forms as a kind of politics about as intolerably inhumane and downright unarguable as can be. Invidious commentary about the world of Islam after 9/11 has made it popular wisdom that Islam is by nature a violent, intolerant religion, much given to raving fundamentalism and suicidal terrorism. There has been no end of experts and evangelists repeating the same rubbish, aided and abetted by discredited Orientalists like Bernard Lewis. It is a sign of the intellectual and humanistic poverty of the times that such patent propaganda (in the literal sense of the word) has gained such currency and, even more disastrously, that it is carried on without the slightest reference to Christian, Jewish and Hindu fundamentalism, which, as extremist political ideologies, have been at least as bloody and disastrous as Islam. All these enthusiasms belong essentially to the same world, feed off one another, emulate and war against one another schizophrenically, and—most seriously—are as ahistorical and as intolerant as one another.” (51)

This passage has been quoted at some length to clarify Said’s late position on religion and particularly Islam, which often seems contradictory. There remains a dichotomy in Said’s work, perhaps an elitist one, between the productive contribution of Islamic scholarship to democratic criticism as opposed to the destructive effect of “enthusiasm”

or radical political thought and action, which is inspired by Islamic doctrine. This dichotomy is what Viswanathan, I believe, correctly, has identified as Said's reinvention of secularism by including heterodoxy in his secular criticism as opposed to dogma. The difficulty, however, lies in the fact that heterodoxy and orthodoxy are deeply unstable categories, changing positions fluidly according to the rhetoric of the war on terror. The orthodox today can be the heterodox of tomorrow, or perhaps even better put, what is considered as an Islamic orthodoxy in the West can be considered as heterodoxy in Muslim countries, and vice-versa. It may be more useful to consider Said's ambiguity as a reticence to stake a claim on the role of violence in affecting change, especially violence rooted in religious belief.

This is especially evident in Said's reworking of Fanon's theory of violence in "Travelling Theory Reconsidered" in *Representations of the Intellectual*. As Mohammed Tamdgidi notes,

Fanon in particular has come to be known for his more explicit advocacy of revolutionary *physical* violence in reaction to global racism and colonialism particularly in the Algerian and African contexts. Said, more ambivalent on the use of physical violence in the context of the Palestinian nationalist struggles amidst the Arab/Israeli conflict, seems to have been inspired in part by a more intimate (not cruder and caricatured) reading of Fanon's discourse on revolutionary violence in historical context, while dedicating his life to waging more of an intellectual struggle against the underlying ideological, especially

Orientalist, structures of knowledge fueling the West's global violence of colonialism and racism. (115)

For Fanon, violence played a critical role in the reconstruction of self and nation, but it accompanied an epistemological revolution which pitted the colonizer directly against the colonized. Said reread Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* to show how Fanon considered resorting to violence, while being aware that violence itself would not be sufficient for total liberation. Said argued that the essential point of *The Wretched of the Earth*, rather, is to note how anticolonial struggle must necessarily take upon a broader, and more radical, global human emancipatory dimension in order to succeed.

It is no accident that Said considered Fanon an intellectual hero, even if he was not as enthusiastic about the role of violence in revolution. As a forefather of postcolonial theory, Fanon shared a great deal in common with Said. Bhabha notes that the similarities between the two thinkers are striking:

Committing himself to the "undocumented turbulence" of the wretched of the earth of our times, Said echoes Franz Fanon's descriptions of the "occult instability" of the decolonizing consciousness in the mid-twentieth century wars of independence. Both Fanon and Said died of leukemia, almost half a century apart, in hospital beds on the East Coast of the United States, only a few hundred miles from each other. Both of them produced last books beckoning the world towards an aspirational "new" humanism. Fanon, however, wrote (or so he thought) with his foot on the threshold of a Third World of nations, on the verge of "starting over a new history of man." Said could be persuaded of no such

humanist haven. The “unsettled energy” of the times, or what he describes elsewhere as “the implacable energy of time and displacement,” provides him with a double vision of history in which tragedy and transition, incarceration and emancipation seem to be part of the same unraveling thread of events. (“Adagio” 14)

Interestingly, Fanon, like Said, resurrected as one of the founders of postcolonial theory, had a similar relationship to Islam and Islamic thinkers. The indigenous culture in Algeria was seminal in Fanon’s work on revolutionary violence. As Fouzi Slisli notes, “There is an elephant in *The Wretched of the Earth*. It is Islam and its anticolonial tradition in Algeria” (n.pag). Slisli argues that while Fanon continuously cited and exalted this tradition, he defined it as an indigenous culture, not a Muslim one; in other words, Fanon explained Algerian acts of resistance and applauded the culture of Algerian peasants, but he did not name this resistance for what it was—the tradition of Islamic resistance to colonialism. Slisli examines the work of the Sufi brotherhoods and the Association of Muslim Scholars, as well as Algerian responses to Fanon, and argues that because Fanon was writing to a primarily atheistic and Western audience, he reshaped any references to Islam to refer to tradition and culture, rather than to Islam itself, and used Marxist terminology of spontaneity and organization as a substitute for a distinctly Islamic anticolonial tradition that, by the time Fanon was writing, had been in existence for over a century. Though a secular revolutionary, Slisli notes, Fanon edited the FLN’s paper *El-Moudjahid*, thereby basically championing a revolution that was articulated as *jihad*. In a letter to Ali Shariati, the intellectual behind the Iranian revolution and translator of both

Che Guevara and Fanon, Fanon expressed concerns that religion could become an obstacle to Third World unification but also encouraged Shariati to exploit the resources of Islam for the creation of a new egalitarian society: “breathe this spirit into the body of the Muslim Orient” (qtd in Slisli).

It can be argued that the absence of Islam from Fanon’s work has allowed him to occupy a seminal position in postcolonial studies, with works that were written in and about Arab Muslim experiences, without ever putting Islam at the center of the postcolonial experience. Ironically, the same can be said for Said, another of postcolonial theory’s founding fathers, whose ideas, which became the foundation of modern postcolonial theory, were formulated out of his engagement with Muslim cultures, particularly the predominantly Muslim Palestine. It is indeed a great irony that these two fathers of postcolonial criticism, whose work was nurtured in Muslim environments, never fully addressed the challenges of Islam.

Is Islam an invisible “trace” in postcolonial theory? Since the major forbearers of postcolonialism theorized from examples of Muslim cultures, it can be argued that Islam has been at the formation of postcolonialism. How then can it reclaim its place in theory? What is the role of the intellectual in leading and reflecting on this radical change? All of these questions spring from Said’s valuable contributions, but first we must discard his insistence on not fully engaging with “religious” criticism.

Anouar Majid has noted that Islam has not been involved in the debate on the subaltern namely because this debate is based on the secular premises of scholarship that have increased “the remoteness of Islam,” and as such has imposed limitations on

theories of inclusion and prolonged the belief that global harmonies remain elusive not because of capitalist relations but because of culture conflicts (*Unveiling Traditions* 3). He argues that the fact "that postcolonial theory has been particularly inattentive to the question of Islam in the global economy, exposes its failure to incorporate different regimes of truth into a genuinely multicultural global vision" (19). Unless theory accepts indigenous discourse, including religious discourse, and thoroughly interrogates it, a genuine dialogue with Islamic concepts will remain futile, and terminologies such as *jihad*, for example, will continuously be reappropriated and recirculated to serve the needs of First World theoretical formulations. In order for a genuine engagement to occur, critics need to deconstruct the secular underpinnings of postcolonialism and undertake a full metaphysical engagement with Islamic concepts.

In *Precarious Lives* Judith Butler argues that criticism has been made more imperative, not obsolete, by the 9/11 attacks and that a quest for understanding, rooted in ethics, in a response to the grief and the empathy one feels at the violence inflicted on fellow humans, is urgent. As Butler warns in her preface, the "foreclosure of critique empties the public domain of debate of democratic contestation itself, so that debate becomes the exchange of views of the like-minded, and criticism, which ought to be central to any democracy, becomes a fugitive and suspect activity" (xx). Terry Eagleton has also joined the debate, placing the future of theory in a definitive theological turn, particularly with the publication of *Unholy Terror* and *Reason, Faith and Revolution*. Perhaps the most vocal and controversial interventions have been by Slavoj Žižek, who has set his sight on claiming the spirit of Islam for an impending communist revolution.

Interestingly, these various interventions by three contemporary stars of cultural theory have involved a forefronting of their credentials for engaging in the post-9/11 debate, with Butler using her Jewishness to mark how charges of anti-Semitism foreclose criticism; Žižek asserting his knowledge as a Slovenian neighbor of Muslim Bosnians; and Eagleton as a Roman Catholic, reclaiming common elements of liberation theology and *jihad*. For all, however, as I will argue in this thesis, the engagement with the concept of *jihad* is spectral; none ever engages in an intellectual analysis on the theory of *jihad* itself or the role of Muslim societies in generating postcolonial theory.

If theory is not dead, as Butler, Eagleton and Žižek argue, where can it go and what contributions can Muslim theorists make toward its rebirth? In other words, what can *jihad* offer theory? With the advent of the term *jihad* in contemporary discourse, various theorists and fiction writers of both non-Muslim and Muslim backgrounds are converging to discuss *jihad* and the *jihadist* and its meaning for both liberal humanism and radical critique. The role of Muslim intellectuals will be critical in this new contrapuntal discourse. The following chapters will explore the implications of these discussions.

To this end, the chapters which follow attempt to extend Said's critique by analyzing secularism as the cultural capital of globalization, and connecting the debate of *jihad*, through literature, popular culture and the spectacle of terror, to materialist and military agendas. The following chapters question Said's legacy of secularism and intellectual leadership in mobilizing social change and explore how *jihad* seriously challenges both these notions. Finally, the chapters attempt to demonstrate the usefulness

of contrapuntal readings as a method of encouraging much needed engagement between Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers. To this end, I hope that the major contribution of this thesis is an encouragement of the kind of democratic criticism Said began to envision in his last book.

## Chapter Two

### Putting Islam In: Globalization, Orientalisms and the Value of Muslimness

The major criticism of Said's secularism and cosmopolitanism brought forward in the last chapter was related to his inability to engage fully with the substance of Islamic theory or with Muslim intellectuals in postulating the role of the dislocated intellectual in the postcolonial world. This position did not allow him to explore Islam as a complex site of complicity and resistance to the cultural hegemony which he so often attacked. I have also argued that his cosmopolitanism did not permit a thorough discussion of the variety of responses of Muslim intellectuals to globalization, and that Said's discourse and deletions set the ground for the growth of postcolonial discourse on Islam, and *jihad*, in particular, post-9/11.

After 9/11 it became impossible to leave Islam out of theory. It can be argued that the globalization debate imploded with 9/11, and that Islam has occupied centre stage in this discourse. It became increasingly clear that globalization was not proceeding as smoothly as predicted by neo-conservatives such as Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History*. Various theorists, on the right and the left, arose either to condemn or to praise Islam as the arch-enemy of capitalist globalization. This has resulted in an obstinate effort to insert Islam into cultural analysis, either by reactivating the old Orientalist absolutes to justify militarization of predominantly Muslim countries, or by presenting Islam as the last hope against globalization; reforming Islam and Western democracies to meet neo-liberal capitalist goals; or by configuring Islam as a site on which to seriously challenge

current postulations of democracy and multiculturalism. This has resulted in multiple meanings being assigned to *jihad* in neo-liberal and leftist radical reform projects.

Some qualification is needed at this point to differentiate the strains of Orientalism to which this chapter refers, and hence the use of the term *Orientalisms*. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said had noted that cultural imperialism went hand in hand with colonization and that in the case of the Middle East, Orientalism was the cultural companion to imperialist designs on the region, assured by a growing militarization. Likewise, in various notable essays after 9/11,<sup>1</sup> Said continued the argument in light of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the flourish of rhetoric that was produced from the war on terror. In many of his post-9/11 articles, Said attempted to place reasoned arguments into the debate about the violent nature of Islam, arguing that historical situations and politics of the day have to be considered in interpreting the tragic events.<sup>2</sup> He also spoke out more fervently as an American about the dangerous rebirth of evangelism and nationalism.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, perhaps the most interesting of Said's late articles is "Dreams and Delusions," published in *Al-Ahram*, his last article before his death. In this charged piece, Said lamented the bigotry and Orientalization that is sweeping American society, summarizing the derogatory view of Arabs spouted by Francis Fukuyama, Thomas Friedman, and Fouad Ajami as too ridiculous to be taken seriously. He then examined the

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, "Islam and the West are Inadequate Banners," *The Observer*, 16 September 2001: 27; Edward Said, "The Appalling Consequences of the Iraq War are now Clear," *Counterpunch*, 22 April 2003. Web. 29 September 2006 < <http://www.counterpunch.org/said04222003.html> >.

Edward Said, "Give Us Back our Democracy," *Counterpunch*, 1 April 2003. Web. 22 October 2006 <http://www.counterpunch.org/said04212003.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the best example of this is Said's response to Huntington in "Clash of Definitions" in *Reflections on Exile* (London: Granta, 2001) 569-590.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Said, "Thoughts About America," *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* 575 (28 Feb. - 6 March 2002): n.pag. Web. 10 Aug. 2005 < <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/575/op2.htm> >.

terminology that was hypocritically being employed to justify the Iraq war, such as democracy, liberalism and secularism and spoke directly to Arab and Western intellectuals whom he believed had a common aim:

As Arabs, I would submit, and as Americans we have too long allowed a few much-trumpeted slogans about "us" and "our" way to do the work of discussion, argument and exchange. One of the major failures of most Arab and Western intellectuals today is that they have accepted without debate or rigorous scrutiny terms like secularism and democracy, as if everyone knew what these words mean. ("Dreams and Delusions" n.pag)

In that same article, he made an emotive appeal for the intellectual and citizen alike:

I urge everyone to join in and not leave the field of values, definitions, and cultures uncontested. They are certainly not the property of a few Washington officials, any more than they are the responsibility of a few Middle Eastern rulers. There is a common field of human undertaking being created and recreated, and no amount of imperial bluster can ever conceal or negate that fact. (n.pag)

Said continued to emphasize the importance of culture as a site for the current militarization of the world, particularly the war in Iraq, and placed hope in intellectuals and citizens to see through the rhetoric. However, his argument was limited on two fronts. First, Said never cogently extrapolated a theory of globalization beyond his notion of cosmopolitanism, where marginal thought and intellectuals decenter the centers of power. It remained unclear whether globalization is an unstoppable, homogenizing force or a dialectical process through which the global is transformed as it interacts with local particularities. Second, as a

result of this lack of clarity on the nature of globalization itself, Said never fully theorized the role of Third World intellectuals, as argued in the previous chapter. In the case of predominantly Muslim countries, intellectuals were either absent from any kind of counter-response to global imperialism, or complicit with it as native informants. In the specific case under discussion here of Orientalism as the cultural justification of the militarization of the Middle East post-9/11, Said's theorization did not allow for the complex and diverse discourse which has arisen from Muslim interlocutors.

Clarke has convincingly argued in *Oriental Enlightenment: the Encounter between Asian and Western Thought*, that Orientalism has had various oppositional strains, sometimes collaborating with power and often times going against it:

Orientalism, cannot simply be identified with the ruling imperialist ideology, for in the Western context it represents a counter-movement, a subversive entelechy, albeit not a unified or consciously organized one, which in various ways has often tended to subvert rather than confirm the discursive structures of imperial power.

(9)

In fact, post-Said, Orientalism has become a derogatory term, delineating anti-Arab and Islamophobic sentiments hidden under the objective rationale of scholarship. Here, like Clarke, I argue for a more nuanced reading of Orientalisms when discussing the post-9/11 world because accusations on all sides can immediately shut down dialogue. Surely, American critics of U.S. military policy in the Middle East have suffered from condemnations of being branded anti-America or anti-Semitic and this has constrained the debate post-9/11 regarding responsibility for the continuing violence. Likewise,

writers who try to explain *jihad*, Muslim and non-Muslim, are often mocked for their lack of theological knowledge and accused of being patronizing to Muslims. For my purposes here, Orientalism is not intended as a judgmental term to demarcate anti-Islamic thinkers, racists or Islamophobes. It is used to demonstrate how inclusion and exclusion of Islam is used to serve different, and often opposing, political objectives.

A wide and diverse range of social theorists have argued that today's world is organized by accelerating globalization and increased militarization.<sup>4</sup> Douglas Kellner has persuasively theorized globalization as a highly complex, contradictory, and thus ambiguous set of institutions and social relations, as well as involving flows of goods, services, ideas, technologies, cultural forms, and people, resulting often in what Arjun Appadurai calls "relations of disjuncture."<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt that within these "relations of disjuncture," Islam has occupied a particular place for at least the last decade. 9/11 and its aftermath has revealed that globalization both divides the world and unifies it; it produces dominant cultural hegemony and counter discourses that contradict it. As Kellner notes,

The experience of September 11 points to the objective ambiguity of globalization, that positive and negative sides are interconnected, that the institutions of the open society unlock the possibilities of destruction and violence, as well as democracy,

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<sup>4</sup> For a thorough and thoughtful overview of globalization theory see Douglas Kellner, "Theorizing September 11: Social Theory, History, and Globalization," Web. 12 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/>>.

Douglas Kellner, "Globalization, Terrorism, and Democracy: 9/11 and its Aftermath," Web. 12 Sept 2010 <[http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/GLOBOTY2003.htm#\\_edn1](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/GLOBOTY2003.htm#_edn1)>.

Douglas Kellner, "Dialectics of Globalization: From Theory to practice," Web. 19 October 2010. <[http://gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/2007\\_Kellner\\_DialecticsGlobaltoPrac07](http://gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/2007_Kellner_DialecticsGlobaltoPrac07)>

Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992).

Bryan Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Kellner, "Theorizing September 11: Social Theory, History, and Globalization," Web. 12 October 2010 <<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/>>.

free trade, and cultural and social exchange. ... Some see terrorism as an expression of "the dark side of globalization," while I would conceive it as part of the objective ambiguity of globalization that simultaneously creates friends and enemies, wealth and poverty, and growing divisions between the "haves" and "have-nots. ("Dialectics of Globalization" n.pag)

In short, the events of 9/11 and their aftermath highlight some of the contradictions of globalization and its dialectical functions, both as a homogenizing force of sameness and uniformity, and a source of heterogeneity, difference, and hybridity. They also reveal globalization as a contradictory mixture of democratizing and anti-democratizing tendencies, which allow more and more voices to be heard, while simultaneously escalating attempts to curb civil liberties. Grasping that globalization embodies these contradictory tendencies at once, that it can be both a force of homogenization and heterogeneity is crucial to understanding the current manifestations of Orientalisms as both the cultural logic in militarizing the Middle East, and cultural antithesis to the progression of global capitalism, as well as to the duplicitous role of Muslim interlocutors.

Both the neo conservatives and the left have positioned Islam as the antithesis to globalization with the assumption that the "Islamic world view" is violently challenging the current path of secular humanism. On all sides of the debate, contemporary Muslim cultural theorists have rallied and have gained a new stature, raising questions of the role of native informants in interpreting the relation under consideration. This importance is largely connected to their perceived ability to interpret the code of *jihad*, seen as the driving force behind Islam's confrontation with modernity and globalization.

The diverse politics of Orientalisms relate largely to the militarization of the Muslim world and the curbing of civil liberties in the West: a neo-conservative Orientalism directly supports the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Patriot Act, and leftist Orientalism opposes these wars and the attack on civil liberties. Ironically, though politically opposites, both manipulate the figure of the *Homo Islamicus* to support their political agendas. In *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of US Culture*, Amy Kaplan demonstrates the link between domestic and foreign affairs in imperial projects and discusses the role of the metropolitan postcolonial intellectuals in discrediting their native culture of resistance and winning the hearts and minds of domestic American voters. It can be argued that the works discussed in this chapter, advertently or inadvertently, serve this agenda. Particularly in the current debate about “bad” and “good” Muslims, Muslims strategically position themselves in a discourse that presents *jihad*, in particular, as the antithesis to modernity and in doing so both the “good” and “bad” Muslims declare their orthodoxy. Muslim “reformers” often refer to “reclaiming” an Islam that has been “hijacked” by the *jihadists*, asserting their recourse to an authentic and orthodox Islam. The *jihadists* also make a similar claim about returning to an authentic Islam, outside the corruption of Western and Middle Eastern rulers. While both make a claim to orthodoxy, each side considers the other heterodox. In this hotly contested field, the orthodox and heterodox change places radically, depending on one’s view of one’s role. Whatever the status of one’s self determination, the decoding of terminology and the positioning of oneself as an authentic interpreter of the *jihad* is what gives the moderate Muslim reformer cultural value.

The first point of entry into this cultural fascination with *jihad* might be marked by examining the surge of literature which focuses on the justification provided to a Western audience for the militarization of predominantly Muslim societies. The old Orientalist arguments, which Said deconstructed so well, have been upgraded to take into account technology and the transfer of Muslim populations into the West. The line runs roughly like this: Muslims are jealous of the freedom and technological advantages of the West. Their society has been in decline after their scientific advances of medieval Europe. Instead, they try to use the West's technology against itself. Whether airplanes, viruses, or chemicals, Muslims have appropriated science for the purposes of terrorism. Consider for example Thomas Friedman's assertion that

...terrorists can hijack Boeing planes, but in the spiritless monolithic societies they want to build, they could never produce them. The terrorists can exploit the U.S.-made Internet but in their suffocated world of one God, one truth, one way, one leader, they could never invent it. (46)

According to this narrative, not only have Muslims appropriated the technology of the West for this battle, they have also appropriated its citizenship and territory, with European Muslims particularly presenting a grave challenge to democratic processes. Of course, this is a rather simplified version of the narrative, but it does highlight two central points around which the globalization debate circulates. First, the history of Muslims is presented as on a direct course of confrontation with the West, requiring an erasure of the influence of Muslim

influences on the development of modern thought in Europe.<sup>6</sup> This requires that the role of Muslims in European history be actively erased and repositions the contemporary Muslim in a parasitic position- feeding off Western ingenuity, and plotting to destroy it. This argument weaves through the work of diverse sources: Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis, and Muslim “reformers,” such as Irshad Manji. Second, the debate about Muslims and their roles as citizens in Western societies has placed Muslim thinkers under a microscope, challenged to prove their Americanness or Europeaness over their Muslimness. This debate is, of course, part of a much larger discussion around identity, statehood, citizenry and globalization.

The major perpetrators of the argument that Muslim history has been on a collision course with the West and that Islam is basically incompatible with Western progression have been Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis. It should not be overlooked that while Huntington popularized the Islam versus the West debate, his major source book was the work of Said’s nemesis, Bernard Lewis. In Lewis’ 1990 *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, he warns of a resurgence of Muslim rage rooted in fourteen centuries of conflict with the Christian tradition and the humiliation of modernization which bypassed the Arabs. He concludes that the rise of anti-American ideas is a mixture of Marxism and Muslim rage— the inability for Muslims to accept domination. Soon after 9/11, Lewis endorsed the U.S. overthrow of the Saddam regime and set out his later version of Islamic history in *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern*

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<sup>6</sup> See particularly Anouar Majid, *Freedom and Orthodoxy: Islam and Difference in the Post Andalusian Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

*Response.* As Lockman notes, though the book was written before 9/11, it offers a distressed American audience and policy makers explanations and rationale for their response (250). Here, Lewis virtually ignores the impact of colonialism and the complexities of Muslim responses to it, and claims that Muslims have failed to respond to modernity, remaining religiously inclined to authoritarianism. The postscript he attaches to the book after 9/11 describes the attacks as “the latest phase in the struggle that has been going on for more than 14 centuries” (*What Went Wrong* 164), and argues for policies in the “cause of freedom” that will “triumph” as they did “over the Nazis and the Communists” (165). In another book, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, written after 9/11, Lewis rehashes his arguments about the failure of Islam to modernize and insists on the necessity and rightness of American foreign policy, articulating that it is American’s role to lead the Arabs to democracy.

Lewis’ companion, Samuel Huntington, lays out his vision for the post communist world order in his widely quoted *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Huntington maintains primarily that conflicts would not be ideological or economic but cultural, and he identifies various major civilizations: the West; Slavic Orthodox (Russia and Eastern Europe); Islam; Confucian; Japan; Hindu; Latin America; and “possibly African civilizations,” arguing that it is precisely where the civilizations meet where conflict would occur. He also predicts an emergence of Confucian-Islamic civilizations against the West and advises the West to increase its military superiority, possibly including Latin American civilizations within its quest for superiority.

The combined work of Lewis and Huntington has been in the forefront of the American foreign policy agenda in the Middle East over the past decade. It is the view that is supported by mainstream media. For example, the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman's *Longitudes and Attitudes* extends these arguments and further divides the Islamic world into medievalists and modernists. Aside from writing fictional "kick ass" letters from Bush to bin Laden, Friedman follows up on Huntington's recommendation to exploit the interior differences and conflict among Confucian and Islamic States. To do so, he advises strengthening moderate and secular Muslims in the war against the radicals, raising direct questions about the role of Muslim intellectuals in today's debate.

The left presents very different arguments, but surprisingly betray some very similar assumptions about *jihad*. In *The New Orientalists*, Ian Almond critiques some of the major postmodern thinkers, particularly those who have offered a critique of modernity and capitalism in French culture and often make recourse to Islam as a way of "obtaining some kind of critical distance from one's own society" (2). Tracing the Islamic references in the works of Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva, Baudrillard, Žižek and others, Almond notes that many of these writers employ the Islamic Orient to relocate Western modernity and critique it; they want to re-evaluate modernity's tenets but also evoke an Islamic/Arab Other in doing so (2). In this way, postmodernity inherits, in a more subtle manner, the Orientalist/imperialist tropes that had been so prevalent in modernity (4). On Nietzsche, for example, whom Almond posits as the progenitor of Žižek, he notes that "Islam forever hovers in the background of Nietzsche's

writing, both published and unpublished.... Nietzsche's interest in Christianity's combative Other appears to increase as the years pass by (8). Foucault, Almond argues, after conducting a review of references to Foucault's time in Tunisia and to over half a dozen articles on Iran, employs Islam to critique the Eurocentric view, in the process positing Islam as the Other and reaffirming this Otherness (22-23). The idea of the Iranian revolution allowed Foucault to focus on the madness of Islam: as an energy that resists the control and containment of the West and reverses history. This allows Almond to conclude that "the Islamic Orient Foucault finds in Iran is the same Islam we find in *The Antichrist* and the *Genealogy of Morals*" (41).

In an interesting extension, Almond connects the works of Jean Baudrillard and Slavoj Žižek as part of the Nietzsche/Foucault tradition. For example, Baudrillard's admiration of Saddam Husain is based on seeing in him the transparency of power of an Oriental despot, and like Nietzsche and Foucault he connects the Oriental to a "more authentic premodern understanding of power" (161). For Baudrillard, Arabs have no problem with "being playthings in the order of something larger than themselves"; they can accept the role of object and Baudrillard admires the object status, an understanding of our place in the world of things, which is superior to the Occidental view (162). Almond argues that in this sense *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* is the "postmodern Orientalist text par excellence" (163) in which Baudrillard produces a discourse about the Iraqis but never includes them in his discussion (164). He cogently points out Baudrillard erases the reality of the Arab perspective and experience and adds that it is difficult to imagine what would happen if Baudrillard had written a book called *9/11 Did*

*Not Take Place* (165). Although Almond's critiques are justifiable and well-argued, he does not elaborate carefully enough the difference between the Orientalism of Baudrillard from that of Lewis, Huntington, and Friedman. While the Orientalism of such neo-conservatives is used to justify the war on terror and particularly the attack on Iraq, Baudrillard's perspective was oppositional to dominant political discourse; for example, he occupied an adversarial position on the Iraq War. While he did not really engage with *jihād* itself as a specifically Muslim response and used Islam symbolically in his discourse, Baudrillard did show sympathy with Muslim victims. It is necessary to emphasize the double track of Baudrillard's engagement with Islam and we can briefly extrapolate this by noting his comments on *jihād* in the *Spirit of Terrorism* along with his thoughts on the Abu Ghraib scandal.

Clearly in *Spirit of Terrorism*, as Almond argues, Islam is merely a metaphor for the implosion of globalization's excess, a metaphor of "anti- power," a substitute for communism, a "ghostly enemy...infiltrating itself... from all the interstices of power" (Baudrillard *Spirit of Terrorism* 15). Later, in *The Intelligence of Evil*, Baudrillard repeats more of the same:

Terrorism operates at a higher level of radicalism: it is not a subject of history; it is an elusive enemy. And if the classes struggle generated historical events, terrorism generates another type of event. Global power (which is no longer quite the same as capital) finds itself in direct confrontation with itself. It is now left to deal not with the specter of communism, but with its own specter. (128)

After 9/11, Baudrillard was forced into a position where he had to defend himself from accusations that such reflections constituted anti-Americanism or the legitimization of terrorism. He claims,

I do not praise murderous attacks—that would be idiotic. Terrorism is not a contemporary form of revolution against oppression and capitalism. No ideology, no struggle for an objective, not even Islamic fundamentalism, can explain it. ...I have glorified nothing, accused nobody, and justified nothing. One should not confuse the messenger with his message. I have endeavoured to analyze the process through which the unbounded expansion of globalization creates the conditions for its own destruction. (“This is the Fourth World War” n.pag)

Therefore, Baudrillard did not place hope in *jihad* to radically transform the trend of globalization, but merely saw it as a disruptive force contained in globalization, an excess, very similar to what Kellner has argued in regards to the nature of globalization itself. It can be argued that Baudrillard can be accused of too flippantly employing *jihad* to make a point, but his position was not a case of Oriental enchantment or romanticism. The point is that he used *jihad* as a self reflective mechanism to theorize about the nature of globalization, not about the nature of *jihad* itself. This, when coupled with his article on the images of Abu Ghraib, gives us a clearer idea of Baudrillard’s stance. In “The Violence of the Global,” Baudrillard argues that the Abu Ghraib images were a parody of violence and the Iraq war itself in which the “reality show” of the “the liberation of Iraq” became an “Ubesque and infantile” farcical spectacle of the impotency of American power. He notes the racist and colonial degradation, evident in the images, for which the

entire West is responsible: "it is the whole of the West that is present in the sadistic smiles of the American soldiers, just as it is whole of the West that is behind the building of the Israeli wall." ("The Violence of the Global" n.pag)

Žižek's case is slightly more contentious. For Almond, Žižek's post-9/11 work is a continuation of Baudrillard's argument. He argues that for Žižek, Islam has a fanatical revolutionary energy and also serves a transitional function toward an unactualized socialism (179). His Iraq, as shown in *Iraq: the Borrowed Kettle*, which Žižek admits is not a book about Iraq, is reminiscent of Baudrillard's *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. In fact, Iraq is used to elaborate his Lacanian theories and Žižek repositions and relocates the war as the first war between the USA and Europe (Almond 180-181). Žižek's call for Eurocentricism is not an apology for imperialistic arrogance, but a desire for social justice and a frustration with the way capital has used identity politics to distract and manipulate that desire; at the same time, it pushes Iraq to the margins of his book (Almond 182-183).

Besides the marginalization of the socio-political reality of Iraq, Almond contends Žižek celebrates what he perceives as the violence of Islam, which he describes in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* as primarily an explosion of lethal *jouissance* (185). In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* Žižek hopes that Islam can be articulated into a socialist project because of its irreducible characteristics that are the exact features that make it the Other: its anti modernity, its sense of collectivity and its resort to radical violence. Islam lies in an intermediary stage as something to be used, Almond concludes

that Žižek's Muslims are not real Muslims but "beings for others—other countries, other causes, other projects" and his Islam has a kind of "dehumanized functionality" (192).

Certainly, it is true that Žižek's positioning of *jihad* as an instrument to be used as a way out of the paralysis of postmodernism and post politics is evident in many of his works. For Žižek, the *jihadist* is a challenge to the Nietzschean deadened last man who is consumed by the post political society:

Is not this antagonism the one between what Nietzsche called passive and active nihilism? We in the West are the Nietzschean last men, immersed in stupid daily pleasures, while the Muslim radicals are ready to risk everything, engaged in the struggle even up to their own self-destruction. (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 40)

Thus, for Žižek, the *jihadist*, in his excessiveness, may serve as a hope to start from a "completely alternate position which changes the very coordinates of discourse" (40). He provocatively romanticizes:

What if we are really alive only if we commit ourselves with an excessive intensity to that which puts us beyond mere life? What is when we focus on mere survival, even if it is qualified as having a good time, what we ultimately lose is life itself? What if the Palestinian suicide bomber on the point of blowing him—or herself (and others) up is, in an empathic sense, more alive than an American soldier engaged in a war in front of a computer screen? (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 88)

This romanticism is the core of what bothers Almond in regard to Žižek's approach to Islam and specifically *jihād*. However, it often appears as a dramatic flourish in Žižek's work and is counteracted with a harsh critique of Muslim societies, which we will examine in more detail in the following chapter. The important point is that Žižek is disappointed in the Western response to the excess of the *jihād*ist, which he sees reflected in two ways: a reassertion of conservative dialogue about the Other and a restriction on the expression of dissidence by accommodating it to liberal multiculturalism in naïve gestures of superficial inclusion. These gestures, such as the debate over the Danish cartoon crisis, are "patronizing," Žižek argues.

What, however, about submitting Islam—together with all religions—to a respectful, but for that reason no less ruthless, critical analysis? This and only this, is the way to show true respect for Muslims; to treat them as serious adults responsible for their beliefs. (*Violence* 139)

It is this "ruthless, critical analysis," along with his occasionally provocative bad taste,<sup>7</sup> that opens Žižek for charges of racism and Orientalism. However, a close reading demonstrates that Muslims basically remain on the fringes of Žižek's formulations, but so does the entire Third World. Žižek's call for Eurocentricism posits Europe as a site of resistance to American hegemony, and, for Žižek, the real catastrophe of 9/11 was that of Europe, since America's hegemony was strengthened and Europe lost power:

It is a unified Europe, not Third World resistance to American imperialism, that is the only feasible counterpoint to the USA and China as two global super powers.

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<sup>7</sup> For example Žižek makes the absurd arguments that Muslims do not use toilet paper because of the "sacred status of writing" in *Violence* (New York: Picador, 2008) 106.

The Left should unashamedly appropriate the slogan of a unified Europe as a counterweight to Americanized globalism. (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 145)

It may be more accurate to accuse Žižek of Eurocentricism than of Orientalism.

At times, however, Žižek's understanding of *jihad*, runs dangerously close to that the Lewis/ Huntington/ Friedman school. In *Violence*, Žižek argues that the "fundamentalists," whether Christian or Muslim, are not strong enough believers because if they were they would not be threatened by the "sinful life of non-believers" (85). He then presents a completely culturalist argument to explain the anger of Muslims at the Danish cartoon crisis:

How fragile the belief of a Muslim must be, if he feels threatened by a stupid caricature in a low-circulation Danish newspaper. The fundamentalist Islamic terror is not grounded in the terrorists' conviction of their superiority and in their desire to safeguard their cultural-religious identity from the onslaught of global consumerist civilization. The problem with fundamentalists is not that we consider them inferior to us, but rather that they themselves secretly consider themselves inferior. This is why our condescending, politically correct assurances that we feel no superiority towards them only make them more furious and feeds their resentment. The problem is not cultural difference (their effort to preserve their identity) but the opposite fact that the fundamentalists are already like us, that secretly they have internalized our standards and measure themselves by them. (*Violence* 86)

Žižek does not attempt to place the cartoon crisis in the socio-political circumstances from which it was generated: the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, a recent Israeli attack on Lebanon, the ongoing siege of Gaza, the continuing persecution of Muslims in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, and a rapidly rising right in Europe. Instead, he uses a culture argument of envy and inferiority to posit the *Homo Islamicus* as a pathetic figure in a liberal multicultural Europe.

This discussion of the diversity of the debate around *jihad* and Orientalisms has been extended to make a simple point: genuine diversity does exist in the discussions by non-Muslim writers, from the right neo-liberals to postmodernists and leftists. Both sides attempt to “put Islam in” the discourse on globalization, and while Islam is a cultural incompatibility for the conservatives, it provides a hopeful subtext to critique European society for the leftists. Ironically, however, all arguments tend to end up on the same *cul de sac*. Whether it is the argument of the neo conservatives or of the leftists, whether the *Homo Islamicus* is dehumanized or humanized, all point to the incompatibility of Islam with the West, the presence of a mysterious irreducible essence that predicates a violent rupture of Islam with globalization.

And it is exactly at this threat of rupture where moderate Muslims are called in to interpret, and it is in this location that Muslim thinkers have gained value, as voices of authenticity for political agendas. More often than not, Muslim reformers in the West advocate for a secularization or reform of Islam to make it more compatible with Western humanism, while Muslim communities in predominantly Muslim countries growingly support Islamist political parties. It can also be argued that the role of the metropolitan

Western Muslim and particularly the White convert to Islam is to help “save” Islam from the radicals and to foster a new European and American Islam that can rescue Islam from the clutches of the spectral Arab and Eastern Muslim. This is demonstrated by the titles of numerous texts written by Western converts, as, for example, Michael Wolfe’s *Taking Back Islam: American Muslims Reclaim their Faith* ((2002), or Joseph Lombard’s *Islam, Fundamentalism and the Betrayal of Tradition*(2004) , both of which highlight this convert- savior status. The White convert is accompanied on this perilous journey by the naturalized European or American Muslim, who may have been born into Islam, but is significantly acculturated to act as a cultural insider of both cultures. These “good” Muslims are diverse and their discourse both support and refute, simultaneously, many of the Orientalisms discussed above.

In *The Social Life of Things*, Appandurai defines postcoloniality as a system of postcolonial writers working within the neocolonial context of commodity culture, and noted that the writer herself is only one of the agents of legitimation; others include reviewers, publishers and communities. In this way, the cultural industries both produce and appropriate writers to fit into various subject positions in the field. In *The Postcolonial Exotic*, Graham Huggan suggests that the encoding of the exotic has been essential in assigning value to postcoloniality.

Exoticism may be understood conventionally as an aestheticizing process through which the cultural other is translated and relayed back to the familiar. Yet ... it is effectively repoliticized, redeployed both to unsettle metropolitan expectations of

cultural otherness and to effect a grounded critique of differential relations of power. (x)

In short, the exotic manufactures Otherness by either rendering the familiar strange or by making the strange familiar in the dialectical process of exoticization (Othering) and appropriation. It is a “semiotic circuit that oscillates between the opposite poles of strangeness and familiarity” (13). Functioning as a symbolic system, the exotic assigns the familiar to unfamiliar things and often politics is concealed under this dialectical process. The Other is perceived as foreign or demonized when there is a need to subjugate him, or as friendly and neighborly when the subjugation will be less violent. Therefore, it is not so much the intentionality of the author which is the focus of interpretation, but the function of the author as a commodity in the process of exoticization. As previously noted, Amy Kaplan has argued that these cultural commodities are important in gaining domestic support for American foreign policies.

“Good” Muslims use various techniques to familiarize themselves to their audiences as valuable interlocutors as they decode *jihad*, as evidenced in the growth of Muslim autobiographical or semiautobiographical fiction and cultural criticism. Not only is their knowledge valuable and strategic but it is also exotic. The Muslim intellectual speaking to the West, satelliting around the discourse of globalization, positions herself at once as exotic and familiar, laying claim to an authentic Muslim connection as well as demonstrating familiarity with Western ideas and norms. In doing so, she demonstrates a diverse range of Orientalisms. These postcolonial Muslims are not merely callous participants in global capital, as Arif Dirlik would accuse them of being, profiting in the

essentialization of marginal people to whom they marginally belong. Neither are they merely “comprador intelligentsia,” “a relatively small, ‘Western’-style, ‘Western’-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery” (Appiah 62). They are involved in an endless semiotic circuitry, the means by which culture is produced and assigned value as exemplified in the contemporary shift of Islam from the periphery to the metropolis, marketed for a First World audience as a cultural companion to sustaining the militarization required for the war on terror. Here I will extend this argument by referring to selected works by Irshad Manji, Azar Nafisi, Khaled Hosseini and Yasmina Khadra.

Irshad Manji is a Canadian author/journalist, and currently director of the Moral Courage Project at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. Manji's book, *The Trouble with Islam Today*, has been published in more than thirty languages and she has narrated a PBS documentary, *Faith Without Fear*, which was nominated for a 2008 Emmy Award. Manji takes great pains to position herself inside her faith and speaks from a subject position of a concerned and dedicated Muslim, leading a brave reform for her faith. Her website, for example,<sup>8</sup> opens with a flash of Irshad in reflection (though not Islamic dress), praying, with the caption “I am a faithful Muslim.” This is followed by images of men being hanged, women being stoned and buried alive, and raging masses of Muslim demonstrators, with the caption, “I speak out against violence and human rights abuses in the name of God.” Following the various scenes of violence and remarks about courage, a photo of Manji, as a child in Islamic

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<sup>8</sup> See <<http://www.irshadmanji.com/>>

dress, appears with the caption “I am Irshad.” In this way, as in all her work, Manji credits herself as an insider, bravely positioning herself against the “bad” Muslims to redeem and reclaim her religion. She is also frank about who her audience is directly on her website. First, to all Muslims in the West, who obviously still have the hope of being “good” Muslims, she poses the question, “will we remain spiritually infantile, caving in to the cultural pressures to clam up and conform?” Second, to non-Muslims she asks, “Will you succumb to the intimidation of being called fascists?” In this way, Manji positions herself to a Western audience, placing the firm hope that reform can come from Western Muslims who refuse to be as infantile as the violent *jihadists*, all of Oriental personage, whom she flashes across the screen.

Manji also positions herself as an anti intellectual outside the academic mainstream and attempts to appeal, in style and content, to a mass popular audience. Resonating with Bernard Lewis’ *What Went Wrong* and *The Crisis of Islam*, her work, *The Trouble with Islam Today*, offers “expert” opinion in all areas of Islamic exegeses: Muslim Diasporas in the West, Islamic Law, the treatment of women, fundamentalism and terrorism, the relationship between Islam and democracy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and much more. Manji explains for an ostensibly befuddled audience that the problems with Islam are related to its patriarchal, homophobic and violent outlook on life, based on her own experience as a lesbian Muslim under the control of a domineering Muslim father. The cover of the book, with the title taped across Manji’s mouth, her eyes looking sadly upward, accentuates her stance as one who refuses to be quiet, despite the risk.

Tarek El Ariss makes a valuable insight when he notes that in *The Trouble with Islam Today* Manji takes an anti-intellectual position in order to popularize her argument and make herself familiar to her audience. He refers to the introduction to the book by Dr Khaled Mohammed, who teaches Islam at an American university, and praises Manji for not writing for an academic or intellectual audience but for speaking to the people in their voice. It can be noted that throughout the book Manji uses a conversational tone, cracking jokes, often irreverent ones, reminiscent of Žižek's bad taste, for her audience. She constantly reasserts her right to comment on Islamic reform: "It might appear ridiculous that someone who is not a theologian, a politician, or a diplomat... has thechutzpah to comment on what can be done to reform Islam" (138).

It has been argued<sup>9</sup> that Manji's interpretations are rather superficial and leave out access to key texts which she criticizes. For example, her feminist interpretations leave out the achievements of major Muslim women figures, as well as Islamic contexts for property and marriage laws. Her historical analysis largely bypasses the depth of the Muslim history of Spain, including the post-crusade Diaspora when Muslims and Jews cooperated in fleeing Christian oppression. In fact, Manji tries to wipe Muslims clear out of European history, paving a clean path between contemporary thought from the ancient Greeks to postmodernism. Further, the only attention she pays to the contemporary politics of the Middle East is in one chapter in which she emphasizes how Israelis treated her better on her trip to Israel than the Palestinians did. Another of her attacks focuses on contemporary Muslim immigrants, especially European Muslims, whom she accuses of

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<sup>9</sup> Various websites have been set up by Muslims to refute Manji's claims. One of the most interesting and humorous is < [http://www.examinethetruth.com/manjism/lrshad\\_Manji\\_propaganda.htm](http://www.examinethetruth.com/manjism/lrshad_Manji_propaganda.htm)>.

being ungrateful for the freedom given to them by their host countries. Here she places herself as a member of the First World, not of an immigrant community, and claims that “in order to defend our diversity, we need to be less tolerant” (199), advocating for the necessity of the Patriot Act. Though Žižek would not argue for the Patriot Act, his assertion of the “paradox of the superego” in *Violence* is remarkably similar: “the more you obey what the Other demands of you, the guiltier you are. It is as if the more you tolerate Islam, the stronger its pressure on you will be” (113.)

Perhaps Manji’s major achievement lies in the movement from *jihad* to *ijtihad*, two very closely related terms in Islamic theology. As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, in the contemporary repertoire *jihad* refers to violent revolutionary action *and* an inner spiritual search. *Ijtihad*, on the other hand, which has become a favorite code of Muslim reformers, describes the process of critical thinking and questioning that is inherent in Islamic theology. Manji’s *ijtihad*, however, is not merely Muslim self reflection upon the failure of Islam in developing Muslim societies. Manji positions herself as the leader of *Operation Ijtihad*, and when she lays out her plan for *Operation Ijtihad* and reform of Islam, she explicitly points to post-war Iraq as a starting point in the Middle Eastern region, directly connecting her agenda to the political one (185). As El-Ariss notes, there is no wonder that her work has received such recognition from Friedman who connects her work on *Operation Ijtihad* to *Operation Iraqi Freedom* as a process of reform and democratization (93).

Manji’s move from *jihad* to *ijtihad* is significantly more than a linguistic maneuver, for in order to advocate for *ijtihad*, Manji first attempts to deconstruct *jihad*

for a Western audience. For her, *jihad* remains dehistoricized and associated with the authoritarian nature of Islam. She rejects the argument made by other Muslims post-9/11 that Islam was “hijacked,” and claims that attention must be paid to the “nasty side of the Quran and how it informs terrorism” (42). To do this, she takes two approaches: first she quotes inconsistencies in the Quran (without annotation, and so it is difficult for the reader to check against a noted translation), and she points to the use of violence in the Quran. She dismisses the qualifications that scholars have attached to these verses, claiming, “I’ve read the scholarship that explains these verses ‘in their context’ and I think there’s a fancy dance of evasion going on” (43). However, she does not give the reader the privilege of this “scholarship,” since she does not document it. By highlighting apparently contradictory positions in the Quran on *jihad*, she concludes that “compassion and contempt exist side by side” in the Quran (45). She asks, “what if the Koran is not perfect? What if it is not a completely God authored book? What if it is riddled by human biases?” (45). Therefore, the deconstruction of *jihad* for Manji necessitates a call for *ijtihad*, at the core of which is a questioning of the Quran itself, a revised copy of which she provides on her website, entitled *Reformist Quran*. The strategy used to question authenticity is even more rudimentary than that of the early Orientalists, as Tibawi noted, and discussed in Chapter One.

The second strategy Manji uses to deconstruct *jihad* is to hone in on the figure of the *jihadist*, particularly Mohammed Atta, the 9/11 bomber, attributing his motives to “unfettered access to a dozen virgins in heaven” (45) and the “perpetual license to ejaculate in exchange for a willingness to detonate” (46). She asks, “what if Mohammed

Atta had been raised on soul-searching questions instead of simple certitudes” (47) about the perfectibility of the Quran? However, then she contradicts herself, since Atta *was* indeed raised in a secular environment. Manji can only despair that despite his secular upbringing, his engineering degree, and his German post-graduate education he was “incapable of questioning Islam’s autocratic interpreters” (161). Thus, by using the example of Atta, Manji attempts to show the tragic results of trusting a faulty text. Manji never attempts to contextualize the socioeconomic and historical root causes of Islamic political activism, including *jihad*.

This deletion is further exhorting in her PBS documentary *Faith Without Fear*, as she travels through various Muslim communities to rediscover Islam. One of the most telling conversations is with Nasser Ahmad Al Bahr, supposedly a previous bodyguard to Osama bin Laden. The voice-over tells us that *jihadists* claim Mohammed as their role model, stating “Ahmed sees the present as a dark age racked by the same struggles as 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia,” again placing *jihad* in the context of a dark Muslim past, rather than in an historical present. This past looms over the entire documentary, and, in fact, is a more valid explanation for the violent present than any other elucidation; Manji notes that “what happened in the past is key to understanding why there is so much violence and silence in the present.” For Manji, *jihad* remains dehistoricized, much in the way it is for Huntington and Lewis, a blind enacting of the Quran’s inconsistent provocation to violence and the promise of sensual pleasure. Her discussion of *jihad* remains locked in an Orientalist framework of an unchangeable and fanatic violence sanctioned in a faulty

text in need of reform. As a supporter of the Iraq war, Manji serves to put a Muslim stamp of approval on the militarization of the land of *Homo Islamicus*.

In the recent war on terror, Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq have become particular targets: Afghanistan because it housed Al Qaeda, Iran because, as a member of the Axis of Evil and alleged possessor of nuclear weaponry, it can at any time unleash its legion of *ihadists* on the West, and Iraq for a similar reason, to depose despot Saddam Hussain and bring "democracy," or perhaps Manji's *ijihad*, to the region. It has become common knowledge, however, that the desire to control the vast oil reserves of Iraq and gain access to the reserves of the Caspian Sea is a major economic incentive to "democratizing" the region. And, surely, the war on terror has been good for the American economy. In 2009 the U.S. signed arms deals worth \$22.6 billion and on September 14, 2010 the Obama administration announced a weapons sale to Saudi Arabia for \$60 billion, reportedly the biggest arms sales in U.S. history with the indirect effect on 77,000 jobs in 44 states (Brauchli n.pag). But not only has the American government gained, there are numerous new opportunities for private contractors (Gregory n.pag).<sup>10</sup> Enormous amounts of money have been paid out to private contractors for security, estimated by the Congressional Research Service to make up 54% of the Department of Defense's workforce in Iraq and Afghanistan (Schwartz n.pag). An estimated \$100 billion has been paid out for contractors in Iraq (Risen n.pag), who

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<sup>10</sup> Gregory documents, for example, that Cubic Applications Inc., a contractor for support services for rehearsal exercises, had a contract valued at \$375 million, which expired in 2007 and was renewed for the next ten years for \$468 million. Similarly, the ICT was awarded a \$45 million US Army contract in 1999, which was renewed in 2004 for another five years for \$100 million, to produce videogames for training.

allegedly are major culprits in torture and murder, now a matter of public record with the October 2010 Al Jazeera exposure of over 390,000 classified US documents, leaked to whistleblower website WikiLeaks.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, contractors in Afghanistan, where the number of contractors is significantly higher than military personnel (Cole n.pag) have come under attack for similar cases of indiscriminate killing of civilians, and though the exact amount paid to these contractors has not been released, up to \$15 billion was paid to only two firms, to build and support U.S. military bases throughout Afghanistan (Gregory n.pag). These examples could be multiplied many times over, and the connections within the military–industry media–entertainment complex have become more intricate, as has the relationship between the military and private contractors and the alarming numbers of civilian casualties and human rights abuses. Two points in particular are clear: this is no *Operation Ijtihad*, or Huntingtonian process of bringing democratization to the *Homo Islamicus*. Instead, it is a process of commodification and dehumanization, consistent with the brand of Orientalism that has underwritten the war on terror since its inception. A cursory look at a few of the popular novels canonized by Muslim writers from or about Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq will clearly demonstrate how the authority of an authentic Muslim voice has been complicit, willingly or not, in the process of Empire building. Of particular interest are Azar Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, Khalid Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*, and Yasmina Khadra’s *The Attack* and *The Sirens of Baghdad*.

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<sup>11</sup> See for complete coverage of the WikiLeaks see the *Secret Iraq Files* on <http://english.aljazeera.net/>

Azar Nafisi is a visiting Professor and the director of the SAIS Dialogue Project at the Foreign Policy Institute of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC. She is best known as the author of the bestseller *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, which has been translated into 32 languages, was on the *New York Times* Best seller list for 117 weeks and won the 2004 Nonfiction Book of the Year Award from Booksense, the Frederic W. Ness Book Award, the 2004 Latifeh Yarsheter Book Award, an achievement award from the American Immigration Law Foundation, and the 2006 Persian Golden Lioness Award for literature.<sup>12</sup> *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is an autobiographical account of Nafisi's experience as a teacher of literature in Iran where she constructs a secret reading group so that she and her students can discuss the classics of literature. The memoir unfolds around her students, the texts they read, and the discussions she holds with them about classics by Jane Austen, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, and especially Nabokov, about their own lives, and about the political atmosphere in Tehran. Endorsed on the cover by Margaret Atwood as a "literary raft on Iran's fundamentalist sea," Nafisi's work has achieved international acclaim. The book has come under harsh scrutiny by postcolonial anti-Orientalists such as Hamad Dabashi, a friend of Edward Said, who argues that the book received immediate validation for "symbolizing the opposition of Western democratic humanism to the theocratic Islamic alternative" ("Native Informers and the Making of the New American Empire" n.pag). Commenting on the close relationship of Nafisi to neo-conservatives such as Paul Wolfowitz and Bernard Lewis, and their

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<sup>12</sup> Yale Office of Public Affairs and Communications, Web. 09 Sept.2009  
<http://opa.yale.edu/news/article.aspx?id=2309>.

validation of her work, he accuses her of being a “comprador intellectual.” In a more tempered argument, perhaps, Fatemeh Keshavarz makes similar criticisms in her work, *Jasmines and Stars: Reading More than Lolita in Tehran*, in which she questions why numerous memoirs written over the last decade alone by Iranian women political activists, who have suffered and survived heroically under both the Pahlavis and the Islamic Republic, are virtually unheard of, but Nafisi’s memoir became a bestseller.<sup>13</sup> She also notes that the historical background for the reasons of the revolution are obliterated in *Reading Lolita*, and that Iran is presented as a patriarchal, oppressive state crying out for liberation. Though the novel’s literary merits are questionable ( its narrative is detached and its characters paper thin), it is interesting to note that it is Nafisi’s role as a native informant which has mostly come under attack. Of particular relevance is the fact that Nafisi serves as a Trustee for Freedom House, a highly controversial U.S. nongovernmental organization that advocates for American-style democracy abroad while receiving a large portion of its funding from the United States government. Its Chair is the ex Director of the CIA, James Woolsey, and both Samuel Huntington and Paul Wolfowitz have served as Board members. In *Manufacturing Consent*, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky pinpoint Freedom House as a propaganda machine for American foreign policy:

Freedom House fulfils its function as a flak machine, attempting to bully the media into a still more thoroughgoing conformity with the propaganda

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<sup>13</sup> She argues that Western audiences have not heard of people like Vida Hajebi Tabrizi, Fariha Marzban, Nasrin Parvaz, or Ashraf Dehghan- all political activists who struggled and resisted both the Pahlavi tyranny and the Islamic Republic that succeeded it.

requirements of state policy by methods that are a travesty of honest journalism (let alone scholarship) – all, of course, in the interest of “freedom.” (227-228)

It is this allegiance that is relevant to our discussion here. As a Muslim interlocutor, Nafisi provides a narrative that mainstream American society is ready to hear: how democracy must be brought to Iran to liberate the citizens from the grip of medieval theocracy. With America’s ongoing Cold War with Iran over its nuclear programs, and the lingering threat of possible military action, *Reading Lolita*, puts a stamp of approval on such intervention, just as Manji’s *The Trouble with Islam Today* did for the Iraq invasion. It is not as if the American government requires this approval from Muslim interlocutors, of course, but it does aid the neoconservative agenda of militarization of the Middle East if Muslim writers, authentic voices, familiar enough as Americans and Canadians, assist in their propaganda to support the argument that Muslims need to be liberated.

Furthering this argument, it is interesting to compare briefly Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita to The Bathhouse*, published in the same year, by an American Iranian contemporary, Franoosh Moshiri, who teaches literature and creative writing at the University of Houston. *The Bathhouse* is a chilling account of a teenage girl’s imprisonment and torture at a detention facility located at what had been a public bath. The setting is presumably post-revolutionary Iran, though specific historical and contextual details are scarce, and even the city is not named. In contrast to *Reading Lolita*, *The Bathhouse* does not elucidate much about the particular history of the Iranian revolution, but is an in-depth personal and literary probe into abuse and torture. Moshiri,

however, has been articulate in her interviews and essays about what she sees as religious “fundamentalism”; at the same time, she condemns the Bush administration for its colonizing of the Middle East.<sup>14</sup> She also notes the difficulty she has faced with publishing her work, commenting that the market is interested in memoirs, not fiction.

However, it can be argued that fiction sells well if it is “on message” as, for example, Khalid Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*, the first novel published in English by an Afghani, which sold over eight million copies, has been translated into more than forty languages and has been made into a major motion picture. Hosseini’s novel is certainly more nuanced than Nafisi’s and tells the story of enduring friendship in war-torn Afghanistan, as well as highlights the ethnic tensions between the Hazara and Pashtun. The main character, Amir, an American Afghani, like Hosseini, leaves Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion and returns during the Taliban regime to rescue his childhood friend Hassan’s son, Sohrab. The novel’s great hero, Amir’s father, Baba, is secular and loves America, while his nemesis is the pedophilic Taliban executioner, Assef. Amir is a developed character, familiarized to his audience as an American but also an Afghani, and so are Baba and Hassan, since a great deal of the plot of the novel is tied up in the daily activities of the two friends and the inhabiting of these partly fictional characters.

The Western response to Hosseini’s book has been quite positive, with critics hailing it as a postcolonial masterpiece written for a broad Western audience, a humanization of Afghanis about which Americans knew little.<sup>15</sup> In a 2007 interview

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<sup>14</sup> See a series of interviews at <http://www.famooshmashiri.net/>.

<sup>15</sup> Amardeep Singh, “Republics of the Imagination,” *Minnesota Review* 69 (Spring 2007). Web. 23 Oct. 2010. <<http://theminnesotareview.org/journal/ns68/singh.shtml>>.

with *Salon*, Hosseini concedes that though the events of 9/11 and its aftermath helped to get the book published, his novel humanizes the plight of the Afghani people, promoting sympathy for them in the American public. However, it can be argued that it humanizes *some* of the Afghani people, while demonizing others, particularly the Islamic Afghans who are all presented as violent and lawless *Homo Islamicus*. The reception of the novel in Afghanistan was certainly not as warm as in America. When the book was turned into a film and used Afghani child actors, the rape scene of the young Hassan, an Hazara, by Pashtuns stirred up enormous anger, so much so that the film director, refusing to cut the rape scene as per Afghani demand, removed the three young actors and their guardians from Afghanistan to the United Arab Emirates before releasing the film.<sup>16</sup> It can hardly be considered accidental that the controversial rapist is Pashtun, the major ethnic contingent in the Taliban, against whom the American government and NATO are fighting a war.

In fact, Hosseini's follow up novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, also slated to be made into a film, paints a dark picture of polygamist fundamentalists, while also telling an endearing tale of friendship and courage between women. As with *The Kite Runner*, *Splendid Suns* weaves together dramas of personal struggle and regional politics, and perhaps that is exactly where it achieves success. Again, Hosseini has been applauded for humanizing Afghanistan for Western audiences and, with *Splendid Suns*, for bringing to the fore the graphic abuses women have suffered in Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup> It appears that

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<sup>16</sup> Erika Milvy, "The Kite Runner Controversy," *Salon* 9 Dec. 2007. Web. 03 June 2009.  
<<http://www.salon.com/entertainment/movies/feature/2007/12/09/hosseini/>>

<sup>17</sup> For sample reviews see [http://www.reviewsofbooks.com/kite\\_runner/](http://www.reviewsofbooks.com/kite_runner/).

Hosseini has found a successful recipe, familiarizing the “good” Afghani, the victims of the violent Taliban, the *Homo Islamicus*, particularly women and children, who await redemption from their pedophilic and fundamentalist men. In *The Kite Runner* in particular, Amir, who can be read allegorically as America, flees Afghanistan with the Soviet invasion (just as the Americans deserted the Mujahedeen after using them for years of battle with the Soviets) and then returns to save Sorab from the Taliban (just as the Americans have returned to save Afghanistan).

In short, endearing tales that humanize the Afghanis and Iranians in Hosseini and Nafisi’s works succeed because they also demonize perceived potential enemies to globalization and “democratization.” This is not to say that both Hosseini and Nafisi are pawns in the neoconservative military machine, though a stronger case could be made for Nafisi as a native informant than Hosseini, who does not fit as easily in the neo-conservative think-tank clique. Instead, Hosseini has positioned himself as a humanitarian working as a Good Will Envoy for the United Nations High Commission of Refugees and starting his own humanitarian foundation for Afghanis.<sup>18</sup> It is interesting here to recall Žižek’s criticism of humanitarianism as discussed in the Introduction of this thesis. For Žižek, humanitarian aid is the cover with which the oppression of the *Homo Sacer* is disguised, and in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* he insists that humanitarian organizations play a similar role to military institutions in robbing the *Homo Sacer* of his sovereignty and humanity. The fact is, regardless of the politics or the intentions of Hosseini and Nafisi, both novels provide a convincing supportive argument for the

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<sup>18</sup> see <http://www.khaledhosseini.com/hosseini-bio.html>.

American need to save both Iran and Afghanistan from its oppressors. These books received mass popularity because of their perceived insight into a brutal and oppressive world, a world with which we are at war. The writers themselves, through memoirs and fiction, are perceived as offering an authentic insight into the troubled worlds of Afghani and Iranian *jihadists*. Both Hosseini and Nafisi are familiar Americans, and yet they remain exotic, belonging to places which they are asking *us* to save. Simply put, as Empires are being built, intellectuals and writers are taken into the fold, intentionally or unintentionally, and their work is selected and packaged to suit a dominant ideology. The novels mentioned above are not completely one sided, as I have argued, nor do their writers necessarily deserve to be accused of being native informants. However, the publishing industry knows a story that will sell when it sees one and has its finger on the pulse of America's neurosis and fears. And these books, with their varying degrees of Orientalisms, are packaged to sell. From the images on their covers (the shy Muslim girls reading an unseen book on *Reading Lolita*, the boy hiding from an impending shadow on the *Kite Runner*, the windblown women in burkas of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*), to the endorsements, from the literary and politically established, the books are given value as an insider and victim's look at Islamic radicalism. In short, the production and reception of the books, as well as the content, contribute to the justification of the ongoing war on terror.

Perhaps one of the most prolific fictional chroniclers of this war on terror who deals directly with *jihad* by painting portraits of fictional *jihadists* is Mohammed Moulessehoul, an ex-officer in the Algerian army, who adopted a woman's pseudonym

(his wife's name), Yasmina Khadra, to avoid military censorship. His most recent books all focus on violence in currently politically volatile places: *Wolf Dreams* (1993) in Algeria, *The Swallows of Kabul* (2002) in Afghanistan, *The Attack* (2005) in Israel, and the *The Sirens of Baghdad* (2006) in Iraq. Despite the publication of many successful novels, Moulessehoul only revealed his true identity after leaving the army and going into exile and seclusion in France. The unveiling was a shock to France's literary establishment:

The woman who had written several well-received novels in French and who had as a result been clasped to the Gallic literary bosom as a writer, who would, finally, give an insight into what Arab women were really thinking, turned out to be a man called Mohammed Moulessehoul. And not just a man, but an Algerian army officer with three decades of military experience behind him. And not just an army officer, but one who had led a struggle against armed Islamist radicals and who, as a result, faced opprobrium in the French media for being tainted with the blood of civilians killed in brutal oppression by the North African state.

(Jeffries n.pag)

The revelation of Moulessehoul's real identity deconstructed his literary personage as an "authentic" voice of an oppressed Muslim woman, such as Azar Nafisi, commenting on the patriarchal oppression and religious totalitarianism in her homeland. The unveiling also questioned the very notion of "authenticity" itself. Moulessehoul is not a suave, familiar interlocutor, a U.N. special envoy, humanitarian and American-Afghan medical

doctor like Hosseini, but a writer-soldier who had fought a brutal war against the Islamists in Algeria. Moulessehoul was attacked in the French press, his credibility seriously threatened, and in *Le Monde* and on French television he defended Algeria's army against charges that it, too, massacred civilians, asserting in 2002 in the *Guardian*: "I can only say what I have seen. In eight years I never witnessed anything close to a massacre by the army Yasmina Khadra ("I thought only soldiers like fighting" n.pag). As a result of his self defence of his military actions, Moulessehoul claims his funding was withdrawn by the International Parliament of Writers (IPW), which had offered his family support for two years while he established himself outside Algeria. The IPW, set up in 1993, in the wake of the Rushdie *fatwa*, has provided physical safety and financial support of writers Salman Rushdie, Wole Soyinka, and Vaclav Havel.<sup>19</sup>

Is Moulessehoul a "good" or "bad" Muslim? When he was merely Yasmina Khadra and not Moussehoul, he was a "good" Muslim. However, now that his military background is transparent, the falsely constructed objectivity of the cosmopolitan Muslim interlocutor has been called into public scrutiny. Perhaps, it is the transparency of Moussehoul's anti-Islamism which is so troublesome to France's literary establishment and this is what is also fuelling his popularity with the English translations of his books. In 2004, *Newsweek* acclaimed *The Swallows of Kabul* as a "masterpiece of misery"<sup>20</sup> and on the back cover of the Vintage translation the Nobel Laureate JM Coetzee wrote,

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<sup>19</sup>Margaret Drabble, "Why Authors Need a Refuge," *The Guardian*, 8 Dec 2001. Web. 10 June 2009 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/dec/08/politics>>.

<sup>20</sup> Adam Piore, "The Death of Humanity: A bleak portrait of life under the murderous Taliban: *The Swallows of Kabul*," *Newsweek International*. Web. 29 Mar. 2004. 25 July 2009. <<http://www.newsweek.com/2004/03/28/the-death-of-humanity.html>>.

"Yasmina Khadra's Kabul is hell on earth, a place of hunger, tedium and stifling fear."<sup>21</sup>

*The Swallows of Kabul* was shortlisted for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2006. Who else better than an Algerian army officer to explain the brutality of *jihadists* to an already convinced and prepared English speaking audience? Unprotected by the neo conservative support of authorities such as Lewis and Friedman, unlike Manji and Nafisi, Moussehoul has to struggle harder to prove his impossible position of objective distancing. This is exactly what makes his fiction so duplicitous when it comes to describing the intentionality of the *jihadist*.

Citing the influence on his work of Camus, Nietzsche, and Dostoyevsky, placing himself in a Western intellectual tradition, Khadra (Mossehouli still uses Kharda as his literary name) also positions himself as a viable Muslim interlocutor for various sites of conflict. In a 2005 interview for *The Guardian*, for example, he speaks of his right to interpret Afghanistan, a place where he has never been:

I have never been to Afghanistan but I met a lot of journalists who worked there who told me that they read the book and said, 'I see these incidents all the time, but I never noted them ... All my literature takes place in that space—it deals with that which has not been attended to. I wanted to bring a new look from a Muslim on the tragedy of Afghanistan. And to bring to it a western perspective at the same time .I have written a western tragedy, but also a book that is filled with

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<sup>21</sup> Stuart Jeffries, "I'm a He." *The Guardian*, 22 June 2005. Web.25 July 2009  
< <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/jun/22/france.world>>

eastern storytelling. When there are two perspectives there's a better chance of understanding. ("I'm a He" n.pag)

He then points to the photo of a woman in a burka on the front of his novel, *The Swallows of Kabul*, and comments, "This could be the Saharan village where I was born."

Therefore, Algeria or Afghanistan, Iraq or Palestine, all are being ravaged by the same monster—the *jihadi* and radical Islam. It is to his novels on Iraq and Palestine, places to which Khadra has never been, that we will now turn our attention.

In *The Sirens of Baghdad*, Khadra stresses the location of *jihadi* as an effect of political and personal humiliations by chronicling the transformation of a young apolitical Iraqi through some rather awkward narrative strategies: the first person thoughts of the *jihadi* himself, and political conversations between various representative, one-dimensional mouth pieces. The novel moves from Beirut, Kafr Karim (an imaginary Iraqi village), Baghdad and back to Beirut again. Khadra utilizes the nameless narrator's impressions of these places place to describe the psyche of his *jihadi*. The narrator's disappointment in Beirut, his judgment of its falseness and schizophrenia, opens the novel:

I'd imagined a different Beirut, Arab and proud of it. I was wrong. It's just an indeterminate city, closer to its fantasies than to its history, a fickle sham as disappointing as a joke. Maybe its obstinate efforts to resemble the cities of its enemies have caused its patron saints to disown it, and that's why it's exposed to the traumas of war and the dangers of every tomorrow. (1)

In fact, for the narrator, Beirut, representative of the contemporary Arab world, is guilty of its own schizophrenia, the cause of its own disasters, its own inability to be either Arab or Western: its “gutless illogical pride, for the way it falls between two stools, sometimes Arab, sometimes Western, depending on the payoffs involved” (2). Thus, from the opening pages, Khadra’s narrative manipulates some of the very Orientalisms we have discussed in the work of Friedman, and Manji-his *jihadi* is consumed with a blind and egocentric Arabism, and a belief in the incompatibility of the existence of cultures.

In contrast, life in Kafr Karim, a traditional Iraqi village, is presented quite differently. Until the Americans violently descend on the village, it is a quiet town, untouched by the ravages of war in Iraq. The characters are loyal sisters and young men who gather to engage in political discussions, playing dominoes and watching television. This is a typical small town story, in which the mores of Arab tradition are respected: codes such as respect for the elderly, generosity, and social order are kept firmly intact. Discussions focus on timely issues, such as the mixed Iraqi feelings on Saddam Husain, and the rise of Islamist politics in the country. The conversations between the young men in the village highlight the debate about the relationship between religion and politics and these discussions focus on the complicity of the Arab region in its own political turmoil. This complicity is considered to be a fatal turning away from tradition toward modernity: “If the Americans are here, it’s our fault. By losing our faith, we’ve also lost our bearings and our sense of honor” (37).

It is the code of honor, the mysterious codes of the noble *Homo Islamicus*, that becomes the main impetus for the narrator’s violent choices. The narrator, like all tragic

heroes or anti heroes, goes through a process of rapid transformation. In the early parts of the novel, he vomits at the sight of any violence. The loss of the innocence of Kafr Karim and the narrator is symbolized through the murder of the innocent Sulyaman, described as the town's "purest creature, its mascot and its pentacle" (62). After Sulyaman is mistakenly killed by panicked American troops, the process of the narrator's politicization begins:

I was indeed angry, I held a bitter grudge against the coalition forces, but I couldn't see myself indiscriminately attacking everyone and everything in sight. War wasn't my line. I wasn't born to commit violence. I considered myself a thousand times more likely to suffer it than to practice it one day. (99)

When the narrator witnesses the heavy-handed symbolic humiliation of his father, this anger spirals out of control. American troops invade his house and the narrator's father is humiliated in front of him. The sight of his beaten father, pushed to the ground so that his genitals are revealed to his family drives the young narrator over the edge:

The blow was struck and the die was cast. My father fell over backward; his miserable undershirt flapped up over his face, revealing his belly, which was concave wrinkled and grey ash belly of a dead fish... And I saw while my family's honor lay stricken on the floor, I saw what it was forbidden to see, what a worthy respectable son, an authentic Bedouin, must never see: that flaccid, hideous, degrading thing, that forbidden, unspoken-of, sacrilegious object, my father's penis, rolling to one side as his testicles flopped up over his ass. That sight was the edge of the abyss, and beyond it, there was nothingness but the

infinite void, an indeterminate fall, nothingness. Suddenly, all of our tribal myths, all the world's legends, all the stars in the sky lost their gleam... a Westerner can't understand, can't suspect the dimensions of the disaster. For me to see my father's sex was to reduce my entire existence, my values and my scruples, my pride and my singularity, to a coarse, pornographic flash. (102)

This excerpt is particularly rife with various Orientalisms on the masculinity and vengeance of the *Homo Islamicus*. The father is symbolic of Iraq which has been emasculated through the American presence. The Bedouin code of ethics serves as the driving force for the narrator, not the injustice of the American occupation. This code of ethics is not understandable to a Westerner, as the narrator states; it is a mysterious, apparently irrational intention. Seeing his father's penis, not the American invasion itself, drives the irrational Bedouin into a murderous quest for revenge: "I was condemned to wash away this insult in blood" (102). And of the course, the easiest way to do this is to find a mechanism, Islam, which by its nature accommodates violence, through which he can reclaim his identity and honor: "I wanted something greater than my misery, vaster than my shame" (108).

This symbolic desecration of the body of the father and the forced desertion of home and identity, leads the narrator to partake in ideologies of which he is never quite convinced. From Beirut to a village in Iraq to Baghdad, Khadra creates every occasion to contextualize contemporary Arab politics as a reason for radicalization. When the narrator returns to Baghdad, the novel shifts to a Kafkaesque landscape of the *jihad*—where people are unjustly kidnapped, robbed and killed, and no one is as he appears—

very similar to the lawless Algeria of *Wolf Dreams* and the Afghanistan of *The Swallows of Kabul*. The *Siren's* narrator is strangely homeless in the landscape of his own country: he roams the streets until he is taken in by a homosexual friend from Kafr Karim, in whose murder he later partakes as a homophobic *jihadist*. He moves from one bare room to another, waiting for the event for which he has prepared himself. In this picaresque tale full of destruction and villainy, all young men share a sense of having been dishonored: "Various motivations activated these men, but they all shared a single, blindingly obvious objective"(158), namely to reclaim their honor. As the narrator shares stories of dishonor with these men, he begins to feel as a member of a victimized but powerful group.

The role of waiting and ritual is an important part of this bonding experience. The narrator spends his life waiting for his big event in virtual solitude, near starvation. As he slowly becomes an accomplice to various acts of violence, the sensitive young man retreats and is replaced by another character: "I didn't feel anything in particular" (194). He no longer requires reasons for his actions: "I felt as though I'd lost the threads of my own story" (199). History is erased and Baghdad becomes as nondescript as Beirut: "I didn't love this city [Baghdad]. For me it represented nothing. Meant nothing"(213). The nameless, homeless narrator is, in fact, an exile in his own country: "Baghdad had turned away everything, even in its prayers. And as for me, I no longer recognized myself in mine" (233). Disassociated from nation, and ironically from religion, the only solace the narrator longs for is death. This intoxication with death is a way to make up for the humiliation of the symbolic father, and as a way for the narrator to redeem himself.

The period before the bombing is one of preparation for death, in which the narrator is disassociated from his own body: he isolates himself in his hotel, which he compares to a tomb, and allows himself to be injected with a virus which he will spread to others on a flight to London, his body becoming his tomb. Like Manji's account of Atta, the narrator loses his sense of self in a codified world of rituals and violence, until he is an empty shadow of his current self, ready to use his already deserted body as a weapon.

The decision of the narrator not to commit the act of terror at the end of the story is mysterious and unconvincing, even sentimental. In fact, the ending is implausible, a clear signal that the purpose of the novel is not character development or even plot, but a tool through which to fictionalize the making of a *jihadist* as an irrational Bedouin *Homo Islamicus*. The closing pages of the novel see the narrator sitting in the airport watching people board the plane and then walk away to face his punishment, death. *Siren's* narrator is passive about his destiny and when asked why he did not perform the final act he says, "I have no idea" (304). Ironically, it is at the point of his disassociation from his treacherous act that memory reappears and he vividly recalls his childhood, his nostalgic village, and the people he saw at the airport, particularly the couple kissing each other: "They deserved to live a thousand years. I have no right to challenge their kisses, scuttle their dreams, and dash their hopes" (306). The narrator's last words as he awaits his assassination are "I don't hold anything against anybody anymore" (307). At that moment, he finally sees the lights of Beirut, which before he "was never able to perceive through the anger of men" (307).

A few points are worth noting here. First, the narrator rejects violence when he remembers himself as an individual, directly asserting old Orientalist narratives of the collective nature of Islam and the loss of identity and self required to be Muslim. His humanity is returned through the simple act of seeing a Western couple kissing in the airport, which allows the deranged and dehumanized Bedouin to learn humanity, at the last moment, from the sensitive and humane West. Perhaps most significant is his assertion that no one is to blame for the devastation of Beirut and Baghdad, absolving the West, as exemplified by the old lady, the kissing couple and the mother in the airport, of its responsibility for its part in the destruction of these Arab capitals. In fact, the would-be victims on the flight to London, all described curiously as Western, are the human forces which jolt the dehumanized *Homo Islamicus* back to his senses and rescue his sense of humanity. Though reminiscent of Hosseini's very similar message in *The Kite Runner*, there is no chance of redemption in *The Sirens of Baghdad*, since the body of the *jihadist* has already been contaminated and therefore must be destroyed by his own friend. Perhaps, we could also read this allegorically as we read Amir's rescue of Sorab allegorically. The *jihadist* (representative of Saddam Husain) cannot be redeemed, and his only redemption is by being killed by his friend (America, considering America was once Husain's greatest ally). Thus, redemption occurs only for Amir, the moderate Western Muslim, not for the already dehumanized *jihadist*.

That the narrator cannot fulfil his act of violence leaves open some questions worth exploring. Even though the novel displays various negative Orientalist stereotypes, it does subvert this framework on occasion by attempting to describe some

sense of intention for the narrator/would-be *jihadist*. And this intentionality is not focused on religion, but on a culture of humiliation and corrupt politics. It can be argued that despite its Orientalisms, *The Sirens of Baghdad* attempts to contextualize the *jihad* outside of a purely Islamic context and succeeds, to a limited extent, to humanize the character of the *jihadist*, in his transformation from sensitive young man to numb and violent *jihadist* back to a sensitive and self-sacrificial young man. Part of the appeal of Khadra's novel is related to the first person access to the *jihadist*, since the story is told from his perspective, as a chronicler of our times. However, the narrator remains nameless and largely undeveloped as a memorable fictional character, his anonymity intended to be representative of *any jihadist*.

Khadra had already told a similar tale of the *jihadist* in *The Attack*, published in 2005 in French, immediately following the London bombing, and translated into English by 2007. This time the landscape is Israel and the war-torn occupied Palestinian territories where Khadra tries, though not very successfully, to illuminate the nature of the relationship between the *jihadist* and the victim, and to explain some of the causes of the Palestinian resistance. The main character in *The Attack* is a Palestinian living in Israel, working in an Israeli hospital, Dr Amin Jaafari. Amin is a nonpracticing Muslim, thirsty for success and material growth, who wants to live a life outside conflict and who sees himself as apolitical, as a healer, a surgeon. When his wife Sihem is identified as a suicide bomber, his constructed identity unravels and he begins a journey back through the wasteland of the Palestinian territories, trying to grasp the intentionality of his *jihadist* wife. The fact that Khadra makes his *jihadist* a woman is significant since there has been

a great deal of discussion on the rising number of female *jihadists*, particularly in Palestine.

The thriller allows Khadra to educate on the reality of Palestinian life in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territories while simultaneously commenting upon the culture of martyrdom which is prevalent in the Orientalist discourse on Palestine. Throughout this novel, the *jihadist*'s act remains undecipherable to the victim. In her suicide note to her husband, the *jihadist* asks,

What use is happiness when it is not shared, Amin, my love? My joys faded away every time yours didn't follow. You wanted children. I wanted to deserve them.

No child is completely safe if it has no country. Don't hate me. Sihem. (69)

Sihem, the *jihadist*, urges her husband to be a seeker and to see beyond his own existence and perceived, false happiness. This self-sacrificial challenge is repeated repetitively when Amin meets Sihem's *jihadist* friends:

Which truth? Hers or yours? The truth of a woman who realized where her duty lay or the truth of a man who believes you need only turn your back on your tragedy to wash your hands of it. (159)

Interestingly, *The Attack* begins and ends with a fragmented account of an attack. While reading the novel, the reader assumes that the attack described in the opening is referring to the attack perpetrated by Sihem, perhaps as recounted through her own eyes, the only instance of her perspective throughout the novel. However, by the end of the novel, when the same description of the attack closes the narrative, the reader is now aware that the narrator of the scene is actually Amin, who has become a victim of another

attack that he himself has failed to prevent, perpetrated this time by his own niece. In this way, Khadra seems to suggest that not only does the *jihadist* lurk within, in those closest to us, as chillingly learned from the London bombings, but that there is no discernment among the victims of the *jihadist*: even those who attempt to understand and prevent them can fall prey to their violence. However, like *The Sirens of Baghdad*, *The Attack* has mixed messages. It employs numerous Orientalisms, with the *Homo Islamicus* Palestinian activists loyal to nothing, not even each other, except the nationalist cause and the destruction of Israel. At the same time, it presents a subversive subtext by inserting intentionality outside the typical Orientalisms which blame *jihad* on the inherent violence of Islam. Khadra's *jihadist* clearly forsakes her personal desires for the higher desire to fight the oppression of the Israeli State; hers is a nationalist, not religious, struggle. Though his landscape is Palestine, and he does on occasion use mouthpieces to articulate the Palestinian resistance, his real landscape is the spectral space where the *jihadist* could be your next door neighbor, or even your wife. The close relationship between the victim and *jihadist*, the uncertainty of perspective in the opening and closing scenes, the questioning of whose perception of reality is correct, all can be read as an assertion that both the *jihadist* and the victim are inseparable in the cycle of violence.

It is evident from the works examined in this chapter that the Orientalisms of both Muslim and non-Muslim writers through cultural criticism, journalism and fiction on *jihad* and globalization are complex and multilayered. There is no doubt, however, with the claiming of authentic Muslim voices, the militarization of zones like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine is continually justified. The Muslim writers present

themselves and their characters as both exotic and familiar, exotic enough to have access to the intentionality of the *jihadist* and familiar enough to recognize the immorality of these intentions, and appeal to Western audiences. In all cases, redemption lies in both reform and militarization. The *jihadists* must be conquered at all cost since they offer no hope for dialogue or redemption, and their mentality is based on primitive codes of honour, a sense of victimhood and deprivation, and even an irrational rage, that can never be addressed.

Therefore, fiction and cultural criticism by Muslim reformers articulating the intentionality of the *jihadist* must be read in the context of the militarization of Muslim societies in the war on terror. The articulation of the necessity of military intervention may be direct or subtle, or even ambiguous, ranging from Manji's support of the Iraq war, to Nafisi's plea for a re-imagined Iran, to Hosseini's positing of a Taliban oppressed Afghanistan in need of Western redemption, to Khadra's despair at a lawless war-torn Iraq and Palestine. In all cases, there is little hope in indigenous characters to manage their own changes and progression. They are trapped in cycles of endless, irrational violence. Even when violence is explained in terms of sociopolitical conflicts, as in Khadra's novels, , there is no hope that *Homo Islamicus* can find his own way out of this cycle. It can be argued that the works discussed in this chapter, advertently or inadvertently, serve the agenda as described by Kaplan in *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, by providing support to American foreign policy in winning the hearts and minds of domestic American voters, assuring them that American imperialist projects in Iraq and Afghanistan, in particular, and its policies toward Iran and Palestine,

are noble and necessary. An extension of this argument is that the Muslim reformers forewarn us we are all possible victims of the *jihadist* and, therefore, insecure even in our own metropolitan centers of power, where we desperately need to be protected. The next chapter will examine the formulation of the specter of this *jihadist* who lurks within *our* societies.

### Chapter Three

#### Travelling Theory: From *Jihad* to *Ijtihad*, Theorizing Intentionality

In his 1982 essay “Traveling Theory,” in the *World, The Text, and the Critic*, Said presented his concept of “travelling theory,” simply put, what happens to a theory or idea when it “travels” from place to place, from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another. Said argued that since theories originally develop in specific locations in response to definite historical and social circumstances, they may lose their originally “insurgent” spirit, the power and rebelliousness that they first contained (126). In other words, with the passing from one location to another, theory runs the threat of becoming tamed, domesticated from an insurrectionary idea into just another analytical tool or a new academic orthodoxy. In 1994, in “Travelling Theory Reconsidered” in *Reflections on Exile*, Said revised this argument by proposing that ideas and theories can also be reinvigorated and made to speak to whole new political situations when they travel from one location to another. A major example to support this hypothesis was how Frantz Fanon revolutionized Lukács's concept of reification to apply it to Algeria.

Closely reading Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Said showed how Fanon employed Lukács's subject-object dialectic to speak of the process of decolonialization and the inheritance of colonial traditions:

Lukács's dialectic is grounded in *The Wretched of the Earth*, actualized, given a kind of harsh presence nowhere to be found in his agonized rethinking of the classical philosophical antinomies. (“Travelling Theory,” *Reflections* 446)

According to Said, Fanon adapted Lukács' subject/object to the relationship between the colonizer/colonized, recognizing that violence is but one component in the decolonization process that does not necessarily resolve these antinomies. Said noted: "No one needs to be reminded that Fanon's recommended antidote for the cruelties of colonialism is violence" (447), yet, he also asked:

Does Fanon, like Lukács, suggest that the subject-object dialectic can be consummated, transcended, synthesized, and that violence in and of itself is that fulfillment, the dialectical tension resolved by violent upheaval into peace and harmony? (447)

Said's response to the question he posed was clearly no, and he read Fanon as saying that liberation did not only consist of the violence of nationalism, for nationalism will necessarily be followed by more oppression and violence:

Thereafter Fanon is at pains to show that the tensions between colonizer and colonized will not end, since in effect the new nation will produce a new set of policemen, bureaucrats, merchants to replace the departed Europeans. (450)

Said understood Fanon to be saying that neither violence, nor nationalism and its consciousness, are sufficient emancipatory goals and that, rather, the essential point of *The Wretched of the Earth* was to note how anticolonial struggle must necessarily take on a broader, and more radical, global human emancipatory dimension in order to succeed. And this is a revolution of consciousness, "an entirely new consciousness—that of liberation—is struggling to be born" (450). Said also noted that Fanon's ideas were ahead of the Algerian struggle from which they were generated: "Fanon's radicalism, I

think, is and has been since his death too strenuous for the new postcolonial states, Algeria included” (450).

Said’s description of Fanon’s travelling theory is particularly relevant to our discussion here as it demonstrates *how jihad* has travelled, to become an invisible trace in theory. The intentionality of the *jihadist* has become the focus of theory and numerous works of fiction, as the following chapters will explore. Three points that Said has made are of particular relevance to this chapter. First, that when theory travels it is often emptied of its revolutionary urges. This will be exemplified by demonstrating how *jihad* has sometimes been displaced by *ijtihad* in the works of Western Muslim theorists, who often prefer to use the less heavily connotated term *ijtihad* for their radical reform projects to maintain credibility as “good” Muslims and viable interlocutors. Second, Said noted that when theory travels it can also have the opposite effect, that is, of being radicalized, as was the case of Fanon’s reworking of Lukács. This will be exemplified in Chapter Five by demonstrating how the new postcolonial *jihad* has been rethought in an arguably heretical context by the *jihadists* themselves, transcending its particularity as a theologically specific concept to a universalizing ethic that contains both the particular and the universal. Third, Said maintained that the consciousness for which Fanon was advocating, which involved an outer physical struggle—violence against the colonizers, and an inner consciousness raising—rethinking and reclaiming of indigenous forms of knowledge and governance, was far ahead of the revolutionary impulses of nationalist struggles and is global in nature. This issue will be taken up in the conclusion of this

thesis in relation to a rejuvenation of *jihad* theory as an emancipatory component of postcolonial theory.

At this point, it is important to clarify the basic difference between the concepts of *jihad* and *ijtihad*. As noted in the introduction, *jihad* has been an unstable sign which has two stable elements: the outer struggle against oppression-*al-jihad al asghar* (the lesser *jihad*) and the inner struggle against psychological and spiritual elements that oppress the self and others of *jihad*—*al-jihad-al-akbar* (or sometimes referred to *al-jihad-al-nas*, the greater *jihad*). In this sense, it is easy to see how the elements of *jihad* are present in Fanon's dialectical concept of liberation.<sup>1</sup> *Jihad al asghar* was evident in the struggle against colonialism, violence itself, and *jihad-al-jihad-al-akbar* the struggle against the psychological colonization it left behind. This *jihad - al-akbar* was not achieved in Fanon's Algeria, and, can be argued still has not been achieved.

*Ijtihad*, on the other hand, is a technical term of Islamic law that describes the process of making a legal decision through independent interpretation of the legal sources, the Quran and the *Sunnah* (traditions of the Prophet Mohammed). However, in Islamic jurisprudence *ijtihad* is not considered as merely freethinking, but requires concise knowledge of Islamic exegesis, including Quran and *Sunnah*, even if the solution to the problem wishing to be solved does not lie there. It is interesting to note the origin of the word *ijtihad* has been argued to share the same lexical root of the word *jihad*, and in fact can be directly related to *jihad al akbar*, the inner or greater *jihad*. As Muhammad Jannati notes,

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<sup>1</sup> This argument will be pursued further in the conclusion by examining the relationship between Fanon and Ali Shariati and the formation of the postcolonial concept of *jihad*.

Ibn Abi Dhar'ah, quoting al-Mawardi, states that the literal meaning of *ijtihad* is to undertake effort and endeavor in accomplishing something that requires strain and difficulty, and to this is related *jihad al-nafs* (the struggle against the carnal self) which involves labor and toil for winning the desired objective and goal.

(n.pag)

We may ask that since *jihad* and *ijtihad* are so closely related, why is it that contemporary Western Muslim thinkers theorize so much about *ijtihad*, or even the greater *jihad*, and so little about the lesser *jihad*?

The answer lies in the dangerous climate for dissent in the post-9/11 academy. In order to have their works published and to maintain or be granted tenure, one of the first steps a Muslim thinker has to take is to disassociate himself from the lesser *jihad*. This closing of criticism has been commented upon widely by Henry Giroux in *The Terror of Neo-Liberalism*. Giroux relates this closing of critical thought to “proto-fascist” tendencies in the U.S. that should not be confused with, but are in some ways related to, historical forms of fascism. “Fascism,” we should understand, and as Giroux elucidates, should not be consigned to “an ideological apparatus frozen in a particular historical period,” but should be seen as “a theoretical and political signpost for understanding how democracy can be subverted” (18). In other words, democracy, and therefore the space for terminologies that compete with the dominant discourse, withers not only when dissent is suppressed and police state tactics are employed, but also when people lack the means, ideological and material (as well as the time and space resources), to collectively exercise their rights in meaningful and effective ways to make vital popular forms of

democracy possible (20). It can be argued that Muslim thinkers in the West are particularly sensitive to these conditions as they constantly have to prove their adherence to perceived American or European values to maintain intellectual credibility and even their sources of livelihood. Giroux also argues that the construction and proliferation of a culture of fear, exacerbated by the war on terrorism where “all citizens and noncitizens are viewed as potential terrorists,” creates an anti-intellectualizing atmosphere grounded in simplified moral absolutes around “good and evil” and accompanied by notions of “patriotic correctness” (22-24). Giroux contends that public space, including the spaces of public education, is increasingly militarized through its “logic of fear, surveillance, and control” (41). One need only extend Giroux’s argument to the examples of Campus Watch and the lists of America’s most dangerous intellectuals.<sup>2</sup>

Campus Watch is a Philadelphia-based pro-Israeli organization which began a website to monitor U.S. college campuses for academic pro-Palestinian bias and happenings. It publishes dossiers on professors, as well as some examples of their writings, that they consider anti-American. Campus Watch also encourages students to report on professors and assist in publically highlighting anti-American biases. David Horowitz’s *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America* is representative of this type of political harassment. Mark Levine, one of the academics on Horowitz’s list, writes of serious repercussions such labeling can have on academics’ lives, though not specifically his, since he is protected by tenure:

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<sup>2</sup> See < <http://www.campus-watch.org> >.

But let's say I was an untenured professor; or, even worse, an untenured Arab professor, or, more dangerous still, an untenured Palestinian Arab professor who isn't too thrilled with the Israeli occupation or US foreign policy in the Muslim world. And let's say that a few students, at the encouragement of people like Horowitz, started taping my classes, editing my lectures, and doing a "documentary" that took comments out of context and made me look like a raving bin-Ladenite, or at least vaguely anti-Semitic.

Well, then, I wouldn't be so happy. And let's say these tapes, or rumours of what I might have said (or more likely, not said) in class started circulating, sending the organized Jewish community into a tizzy and calling for my head on a platter, or at least the denial of my tenure. This may sound like unfounded fears, until you talk to my colleague Joseph Masad, a professor at Columbia, who's suffered through much of this treatment. Or you can get your administration pissed off at you when wealthy donors threaten never to give your university money because you invited the "wrong" people to speak on campus. (n.pag)

In such a battle for good, evil, and tenure, it can be argued, it is wiser to stick to theorization on *ijtihad*, which, in itself, is not without risk, than theorize about the universal applicability of *jihad*. It may even be necessary to assign *jihad* as the misunderstood rhetoric of "bad" Muslims in order to sustain one's position as a "good" Muslim.

In the previous chapter, I argued that cultural criticism and fiction by Muslim writers, particularly as related to the figure of the *jihadist*, must be read in the context of the value of such work in reinforcing or questioning imperialist designs in predominantly Muslim countries, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. I also suggested that Muslimness has particular value when it comes to explaining and offering advice on the *jihadist* among *us*. Likewise, in this chapter, the migration of Muslim reformers from *jihad* to *ijtihad* needs to be understood within the context of the institutionalization of neo-liberalism and the culture of fear that accompanies the war on terror in Europe and America. As Giroux has argued, “neo-liberalism is more than an economic theory,” it is also a “corporate public pedagogy...an all encompassing cultural horizon for producing market identities, values and practices” which operates by grossly constraining the available “range of identities, ideologies and subject positions” (*The Terror of Neo-Liberalism* 113). Muslim reformers, though diverse in their viewpoints, are particularly considered relevant when they operate within the accepted range of these subject positions. One of the most valuable positions is to offer self-help advice to American and European structures of power and ordinary citizens alike on how they can protect themselves from the *jihadist* whose spectral presence lurks within their own societies. Muslim mediators consistently demonstrate a desire to place themselves in a Western intellectual tradition, responding directly to popular theories on the intentionality of the Western *jihadist*. They assert their familiarity as Westerners, aligning unequivocally against “bad” Muslims, while claiming their credibility as interpreters, offering inside information, attempting to assert an indigenous Muslim vocabulary into an often already

closed discourse, with limited acceptance and comprehension of this vocabulary. In short, the task is enormous and risky for the Western Muslim theorist who attempts to address the intentionality of the *jihadist*.

The approach in the previous chapter was contrapuntal to the extent that it compared the ideas of Muslim and non-Muslim specialists to situate the diversity of Muslim responses from “moderate” Muslim intellectuals speaking within a circumscribed tradition. The previous chapter focused on the *jihadist* with whom we are at war—the *jihadists* of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. This chapter will focus on the challenge of *jihadists* in Western societies, using a similar methodology as in the previous chapter, contrapuntal: across disciplines in the humanities and demonstrating the intersections of the ideas of Muslim and non-Muslim writers. I will argue that the debate on globalization is essential in understanding the popularization of the figure of the *jihadist*, allowing the *jihadist* to transcend the Islamic field, to a certain extent, while still maintaining the particularity of his unique Islamic contribution, and to become a representative spokesperson of various global causes. Formulating the intention of the *jihadist* allows Muslim theorists to insert Islam into theory at a moment of critical disjuncture. By translating the discontent represented by the *jihadists*, Muslim thinkers offer challenges to the multiculturalist, neo-liberal paradigm from diverse political positions. This chapter will examine the intersections of the work of Imam Abdul Rauf, Anouar Majid, Ziaddiun Sardar, and Tariq Ramadan with other non-Muslim writers, such as John Esposito, Olivier Roy, Terry Eagleton and Slavoj Žižek, as they attempt to theorize how the challenges presented by the *jihadist* might lead to a reconfiguration of global landscapes.

while migrating from *jihad* theory to a theory of *ijtihad*, and sometimes back again in a complex semiotic circuit.

There are basically two major trends across the humanities in explaining the intentionality of the Western *jihadist*, outside the traditional Orientalism argument of the inherent violence of Islam discussed in the previous chapter. The first argument firmly connects the intentionality of the *jihadist* to the foreign occupation of Muslim lands and to the Western alliances with corrupt regimes in these lands. It notes that even when the *jihadists* are Western in education and culture, they identify themselves with the plight of their Muslim community and see their struggle as a political one with a specific purpose. The second argument tends to disassociate the European *jihadist* from his Middle Eastern progenitors and posits him as a de-culturated individual, alienated from Western society, and symbolic of the global discontent of numerous minority communities. In this perspective the *jihadist* assumes an ethical, rather than political, posture. Muslim interlocutors, who directly attempt to explain the intentionality of the *jihadist*, circulate around these two basic arguments.

The first argument is advocated by John Esposito, Professor of Religion and International Affairs and Islamic Studies at Georgetown University, Founding Director of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding in the Walsh School of Foreign Service, who has served as consultant to the U.S. Department of State, various governments, corporations, universities, and the media worldwide. No doubt,

Esposito, whose books have been translated into thirty languages,<sup>3</sup> has emerged as a leading figure on political Islam and the rise of the *jihad* post-9/11. If Esposito has been at the forefront of the American academy and media in explaining *jihad*, Olivier Roy has held a similar position in the European academy and press. Roy is a political scientist and scholar of Persian language and civilization, professor at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* (School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences) in Paris and a senior researcher in political science at the CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research). He was consultant to UNOCA (United Nations Office of the Coordinator for Afghanistan) and to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has written numerous books on subjects including Iran, Islam, and Asian politics.<sup>4</sup> Both Esposito and Roy are academics; at the same time both have been called forward in the post-9/11 world to advise foreign policy makers on the role of Islam in the changing world, and how best to fight extremism. Both are highly valuable commodities in understanding the intentions of the *jihadist* and both have also had their arguments misrepresented on Campus Watch's "howler of the month page," which the organization claims "demonstrate[s] the moral obtuseness, politicized outlook, and rank absurdity in the field of Middle East studies, and thus the need for Campus Watch."<sup>5</sup>

Esposito is perhaps the most prominent non-Muslim scholar who attempts to highlight the socioeconomic and political root causes of *jihad*; his work on *jihad* focuses on the rise of political Islamism in predominantly Muslim countries which Esposito sees

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<sup>3</sup> See < <http://explore.georgetown.edu/people/jle2/> >.

<sup>4</sup> See < <http://www.eui.eu/DepartmentsAndCentres/PoliticalAndSocialSciences/People/Professors/Roy.aspx> >.

<sup>5</sup> See < <http://www.campus-watch.org/quotes.php> >.

as the root of the formation of *jihad* in both Muslim countries and in the West. As early as 1996 in *Islam and Democracy*, Esposito used the case studies of six Muslim countries to argue that Islamism is a diverse and multifaceted phenomenon which he placed in a political and socioeconomic context, and that terror is firmly rooted in political realities rather than in an ideological or religious agenda. He placed the causes of Islamic radicalization on the continuing failure of governments in Islamic societies to respond effectively to social and economic problems, since the incompetence and corruption associated with a number of authoritarian regimes has led many across all segments of society to seek in Islam a reinvigoration of their society. He also specified American and European foreign policies in the region as being a major cause of radicalization. Esposito further contended that the tendency to dismiss political Islam is erroneous since its more articulate adherents constitute a new elite that is engaged in a sophisticated debate about how best to rectify the cultural contradictions which beset the Muslim world.

Esposito's opening question in *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* set the frame for his argument regarding the nature of the *jihad*, specifically. With reference to Osama bin Laden, he asks, "Have they hijacked Islam for their own unholy purposes, or do they, as they claim, represent a return to the authentic teachings of the faith?" (xii). His answer to this question involves humanizing the figure of bin Laden himself to help explicate the choices that bin Laden made and the historical and geopolitical circumstances that shaped his destiny. Esposito puts bin Laden in the context of his environment growing up in the 1970s in Wahabi Saudi Arabia and the growing Islamic resurgence of the period, noting influences on him such as Dr Abdulla Azzam, his

professor at King Abdulaziz University and Jordanian member of the Palestinian Muslim brotherhood; and Dr Mohammed Qutb, another of bin Laden's teachers, brother of Sayyid Qutub; and his deep intellectual friendship with Ayman Al Zawahiri, considered the ideologue of Al Qaeda. In addition to these intellectual influences, Esposito places bin Laden in the context of the 1967 Six-Day Arab Israeli War, and the 1973 oil embargo. Of course, later events included bin Laden's time in Afghanistan as a *mujahid*, warrior for God, his disillusionment with Saudi politics upon his return, and then his exile to Afghanistan and Sudan. After painting the landscape in which bin Laden navigated, contextualizing the political history which formed him and became part of his own personal history, Esposito notes, "bin Laden played to Muslims' sense of historic oppressions, occupation and injustice at the hands of the West" (22), and that the heart of bin Laden's *jihad* against America started with his "outrage at the injustice in his homeland" (22). He explains that bin Laden holds the American people, who elect their President and Congress, directly responsible for actions against Muslims, particularly Palestine, and that he rejects charges of terrorism (24). Esposito reviews bin Laden's statements to demonstrate how he integrates key issues such as politics, honor and retribution into his philosophy of *jihad*. At the same time, Esposito argues that while *jihad* began as a local response to authoritarianism, a very particularized and unusual element of political Islamism, it migrated into a more universal movement, while still rooted in the political realities of the Middle East. *Jihad* has become "a new form of terrorism, born of trans-nationalism and globalization. It is transnational in its ideology

and recruitment and global in its ideology, strategy, targets, network of organizations, and economic transactions (151).

Thus, in describing the intentionality of *jihad*, Esposito uses the real political and historical figure of bin Laden to contextualize the struggle, taking it out of a purely Islamic context, and into the political landscape of both the Middle East and the new global transnational reality. In doing so, he challenges the loud claims of neoconservatives who argue that Islam itself is inherently incompatible with Western values and warns that unless Muslim grievances are addressed wisely and the economic and political conditions that engender terrorism ameliorated, terrorism will continue to plague the West and authoritarian Muslim regimes. This argument is further elaborated in Esposito's later work, *Who Speaks for Islam*, which reveals the results of a Gallup poll across Muslim countries and concludes that "the religion of Islam and the mainstream Muslim majority have been conflated with the beliefs and actions of an extremist minority" (x). Esposito moves the debate out of the Western metropolis to show that "moderate" Muslims are in fact the majority in the Muslim outposts throughout the world and the only way to avoid a continued conflict with Muslim communities is "by winning the loyalty of the people in the region" (165).

Roy's argument takes quite a different turn as it focuses on the transnational and global nature of the *jihad*, arguably at the expense of particular socio-political causes. In *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, Roy presents the *jihad* as a secular, ethical movement, rather than a religious movement, noting the striking parallels between today's *jihadists* and Europe's radical left of the 1960s and 1970s (46). For Roy, the *jihad*

is at the crossroads of a tradition of radical Third World anticolonial struggle, Marxist traditions and Islamic radicalization (47). Like Esposito, he argues that understanding the *jihadist* cannot be accomplished by looking in Quranic text for the justification of violence, but, unlike Esposito, he maintains that neither can intentionality be comprehended by connecting it to the particular politics of predominantly Muslim countries. Roy claims the *jihad* can only be understood in a larger global context.

Here Roy has made one of his most useful interventions as he discusses the de-territorialized nature of modern Islamism and argues that *jihadists* are utopians who “fight not to protect a community but to recreate a community” (*Globalised Islam* 289). Al Qaeda has developed, according to Roy, a “two pronged strategy” of “spectacular anti-Western attacks, but also high-jacking local conflicts to bring them under the banner of global jihad” (*Politics of Chaos in the Middle East* 154). In order to achieve these objectives, the *jihad* “embodies in itself an explicit procedure of de-culturation” since it promotes the de-contextualization of religious practice...in this sense it is perfectly adapted to the basic dimension of contemporary globalization: that of turning human behavior into codes, and patterns of consumption and communication delinked from any specific culture” (*Globalised Islam* 258). Thus, unlike the neoconservatives discussed in the previous chapter, Roy asserts that neo-fundamentalism, upon which *jihad* is built, breaks radically with tradition, and its logic cannot be found either in Muslim history alone nor in injunctions from Islamic texts. De-culturation involves a growing hostility to the wrongs of one’s native culture for exiles, including both the home culture and the

adopted one. Integration into the new imaginary *Ummah*<sup>6</sup> takes on the form of codes, actions and recitations. Roy points to the documents left by 9/11 hijackers as a glimpse into this highly codified world (*Globalised Islam* 266). The inscription of these codes is part of a process whereby identity is both deconstructed and reformulated. As Roy notes, faith itself is constructed:

What is reconstructed is not only the religion; it is the self itself, in some sort of representation and staging of the self. Believers (and especially converts and born again Muslims) act in such a way as to stage their own faith; a sort of exhibitionism is often manifested among neo-fundamentalists, who use deliberate markers of their own religious identity. (267)

The two central arguments of Esposito and Roy, briefly presented above, form the core of the accepted counter-discourse to the clash of civilizations theory discussed in the previous chapter. Though branded as radicals by Campus Watch, both thinkers have served useful roles as advisors to governments and agencies, and their recommendations are considered in the construction of policies and recommendations on fighting *jihad*. As a result, their ideas have become part of the neo-liberal discourse of reform which argues for a three-pronged approach to fighting *jihad*. First, there is a perceived need to reform foreign policies that increase the militarization of Muslim lands and strengthen authoritarian regimes, since such policies lead to a further radicalization of the population and a fortifying of Al Qaeda. Second, there is a need to reform Muslim societies

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<sup>6</sup> "A fundamental concept in Islam expressing the essential unity and theoretical equality of Muslims from diverse cultural and geographical settings" (John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* 327)

themselves, to provide economic and social development, so the root causes of radicalization will be removed. Third, the problem of the radicalization of Muslim populations in Europe, particularly, needs to be addressed by dealing with the difficulties in the current model of multiculturalism which has allowed Muslims to become alienated and vulnerable to the de-culturizing recruitment strategies of al Qaeda. It is within this counter-discourse that we can place the migration from *jihad* to *ijtihad* as theorized by Muslim writers. This reform movement of “good” Muslims consists of a diverse group whose ideas interact in a number of ways.

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, Imam since 1983 of Masjid al-Farah, a mosque in New York City, like Esposito, argues that violence is not inherent in Islamic doctrine, but that *jihad* has been taken up by a minority of radicals. Like Esposito, Rauf focuses on socio-political reasons for *jihad*, as well as psychological and cultural reasons. In contrast to Irshad Manji, discussed in the previous chapter, Rauf assumes an oppositional response to Bernard Lewis in his book, *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America*, directly referring to Bernard Lewis' complaint about the problems of Islam. While Rauf condemns the 9/11 attacks as un-Islamic, his call on the U.S. government to reduce the threat of terrorism by altering its Middle Eastern foreign policy has often been met with controversy. For example, in an interview with Ed Bradley on CBS's *60 Minutes* in 2001, Rauf stated that that the United States was an “accessory” to the crime of 9/11 and that bin Laden was “made in the U.S.A.,” referring to the C.I.A. support for bin Laden in Afghanistan in the war against the Soviets. In 2010, his plans to build Park 51, an Islamic community centre two blocks away from Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan have been

met with mixed response. Rauf has been accused of doublespeak, particularly by Ibn Warraq, self proclaimed Muslim apostate and author of *Why I am Not a Muslim* and *Defending the West*. Ibn Warraq claims that Rauf belongs to a group who “still has not learned that 9/11 had nothing to do with U.S. foreign policy” and argues that “Rauf says one thing to Western audiences and another to Muslim audiences”(“One Imam, Multiple Messages” n.pag).

The difficulties Rauf and Esposito have faced lie in the layers of their messages which do not fit the Orientalisms prevalent in the prevailing discourse as neatly as those of Manji or Ibn Warraq; for example, that the postcolonial *jihad* as employed today is not orthodox to Islamic belief but is in fact heretical to Islamic doctrine, and second that this *jihad* needs to be understood in the context of American foreign policy. In order to explain this message, in *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America*, Rauf set out to describe the compatibilities between the Islamic and the American traditions. To do this, he positions himself, like Manji, as a native informant of a different kind: as an insider to both cultures, hoping to inform Americans about Muslims and Muslims about Americans. He notes that Islam comprises “my essential identity as a human being” and America is “a land whose values I cherish” (xvii). Consequently, he strategically posits himself as a hybrid with an authentic essential Muslim identity that allows him to interpret the current clash of civilizations for America, and as an American who cares about the preservation of American values.

If Manji takes pains to position herself as an authentic anti-intellectual, the Imam firmly positions himself inside Western intellectual tradition. On numerous occasions he

attempts to draw parallels between Western intellectual traditions and Muslims ones, including the Kharijites and General Patton.<sup>7</sup> He specifically draws on theories of Western psychology and sociology to explain the phenomenon of “suicide” bombers in particular, to uproot it from the Quran and put it in a language Americans can understand. For example, he borrows Richard Dawkin’s controversial theory of the selfish gene to explain how an individual commits supposed suicide aggression to save the community. He notes that what might appear to be selfishness may be explained by game theory in which the pay-off for a variety of behavioral traits is computed. The payoff benefits less the well being of the individual than the well being of the gene, and it bypasses our conscious behavior (125). He also refers to social theorist Emile Durkheim, rather than to the Quran, to offer further explanations for “suicide” bombing. Noting Durkheim’s observation that those who use suicide the most are not necessarily those who suffer the most, and that high income groups have high suicide rates, he applies this conclusion to the World Trade Center bombers, all middle class professionals. Referring to Durkheim’s altruistic and anomic suicide, he notes that suicide bombing is “extreme altruism,” an “anomic” caused by a tear in traditional societies (146). He concludes that “suicide bombing in the name of Islam is a sociopolitical phenomenon, not a theological one” (147).

Rauf, unlike Manji, is intent on rescuing the Quran from heretical interpretation. Therefore, he asserts his religious authority as Imam and quotes specific verses from the

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<sup>7</sup> The Kharijites seceded from the 4th Caliph Ali, believing he was too weak, and developed a new theory of the Caliphate. Patton, at the end of the Second World War, wanted America to confront Germany and the Soviet Union.

Quran which place clear restrictions on aggression and assert that “when people kill in God’s name they are really doing so in the name of their own ego, their struggle for power, or their desire to obtain some other asset” (134). Urging a *jihad* for peace, Rauf’s goal is to rejuvenate the “true” tradition of *jihad*, the inner spiritual striving of which *ijtihad* is a component, by discrediting the roots of contemporary political violence as *jihad* masquerading in an Islamic tradition. He also places his argument in a political context and proposes long-term solutions, which for him are only partly anchored in the critical thinking of *Operation Ijtihad* and the reform of Muslim preconceptions. He calls for a reform of American foreign policy, in encouraging the growth of modern societies in Muslim countries: economic freedom for Muslims, application of the rule of law, democratization and the separation of powers. The goal of *jihad* for peace would be to support “a free society stated in Islamically orthodox vocabulary” (260). His appeal is remarkably similar to Esposito’s foreign policy.

A favorite strategy of almost all the Muslim theorists discussed here is contrapuntality: comparing the desire for freedom and self-determination in Muslim thinkers and Western thinkers. As the title of Rauf’s book indicates, he compares the ideas of various Muslim reformers to American founding fathers. Such a contrapuntal reading is also provided by Anouar Majid, Director of the Center for Global Humanities and Associate Provost for Global Initiatives at the University of New England. Majid attempts to demonstrate how this might be done in *A Call for Heresy* where he maintains that the value system of the reform and change in Islam complements the revolutionary ethics upon which America has been formed. In an attempt to produce a truly

contrapuntal discourse, Majid traces the religious beginnings of American society, drawing correlations between its founding documents and the documents of the Islamists. He compares the rhetoric of the founding fathers of America to the voices of various Islamist thinkers to highlight the radical nature of their founding vision, highly privileging the thoughts of heretical thinkers such as Jefferson, Washington, Paine, and Whitman and the Mu'tazilites, Abdul Ala Al Ma-arri (poet) Al Warraq, and Ibn Al Rawandi.

Such a contrapuntal reading allows Majid to universalize the Muslim message for freedom of critical thought and freedom from oppression, which he maintains has always been part of the Western tradition, as well. In a truly creative refiguring of history, in *Freedom and Orthodoxy*, Majid maps a post Andalusian world where, after the collapse of Muslim Spain, the colonization of the world began, with a complex process of wiping Arabs and Muslims out of the history of the West and constructing a new Greco lineage that asserted the White Eurocentricism convenient for colonization. But Majid also connects the erasure of Muslimness to a direct capitalist agenda of exploitation of the New World in which all Others were necessarily seen as the Muslim Other, as inferior in the process of capitalist exploitation. Majid's goal is similar to Raul's in that he attempts to revive the ideas of Muslim free thinkers, to rejuvenate Islamic terminology, history and discourse that will lead toward strong Islamic cultures. However, in *Unveiling Traditions* he notes that while hybridity has been presented as the best alternative to dismantle polarizations and is celebrated as a cultural achievement by intellectuals, it does little for the cause of seriously questioning the relations of global capital. In fact, he

notes the secularist bias of the hybridity project, indeed of postcoloniality itself, which has excluded religious traditions, including Islam, from the debate, has disallowed grand causes and utopian projects, such as Islam, which have been replaced with theoretical playfulness, resulting in an absence of Western intellectuals to mount a significant resistance. Arguing that Islamic discourse on human rights focuses on the right to freedom from economic exploitation Majid extends the cultural debate to economic territories, and places the whole issue of resistance,  *jihad* , in context of a Third World narrative, of the reclaiming of economic and political rights from foreign occupiers (*Unveiling Traditions* 39-42). Thus, for Majid, the challenge of the  *jihadist* , though he does not refer to the  *jihadist*  specifically, is not only a response to military occupation of foreign power, but a Third World expression of dissidence to economic exploitation. Majid posits as a solution a polycentric world that can accept various cultures, including Islamic ones. However, an integral part of this process involves a strengthening of Islamic cultures, through an active process of offering solutions to global capital, within an Islamic framework:

If delinking the Islamic social imaginary from the capitalist driven process of Westernization could help maintain, expand or even reclaim noncapitalist spaces of social relations, then Islam would be re-imagined in more utopian terms and become a founding bloc in a multicultural world governed by a strong ethic of reciprocity. (*Unveiling Traditions* 63)

To elaborate upon this idea, Majid extrapolates a system of Islamic ethics that is opposed to global capitalism. Arguing that capitalism has created the polarization of the world

through various peripheries, he hypothesizes how these peripheries can strengthen their indigenous economic, social, and cultural systems to confront a homogenizing global capitalism. These peripheries, including such communities as Native Americans, South Americans, Asian farmers, Muslims, and so on, need to develop their own indigenous systems, many based on tradition and faith, to challenge global capital. Yet, Majid believes that Islam still lacks the universalistic view necessary for the project of polycentricity. While he notes that the Islamists are right in their arguments about Western hegemony, he argues that they have been unable to articulate a world view that meets global challenges. For Majid, this is the critical role of *ijtihad*, or creative reinterpretation of texts, which he argues must expand outside a purely textual and theological framework to encompass a cultural practice to revitalize Islam, to delink it from the capitalist system, and launch a new dialogue based on reciprocity, not hegemony, similar to the way liberation theory of Latin America has developed. Majid argues that “liberation theory and a progressively defined Islam could address the injustices of the modern capital system and provide alternatives to failed Eurocentric models for social, economic and political arrangements” (*Unveiling Traditions* 150). In this way, the Islamic revival which Majid envisions is connected to Third World resistance, an alliance of peripheries, where Islam serves as critical leader. To realize such polycentricity, he argues that secular academics must include religious world views and Islamic thinkers must rethink their attachment to texts that veil the liberatory role of Islam (*Unveiling Traditions* 153). Unlike Rauf, the goal of *ijtihad* for Majid is not to reclaim an authentic Islam, and build Muslim neo-liberal societies that are compatible

with American values, but to offer Islamic alternatives for a serious Third World challenge to global capital. Rauf's position remains that of a "moderate" Muslim intent on reclaiming an authentic Islam, disassociating himself from "bad" Muslims, and instructing American policy makers on what needs to be done to win over the Muslims. Instead, Majid's migration from *jihad* to *ijtihad* demonstrates, as does Said's reading of Fanon discussed in "Travelling Theory" at the beginning of this chapter, a recognition of both a politics of resistance, never named as *jihad*, and a process of indigenous self-reflection, intellectual discussion and development which Majid assigns as *ijtihad* and Fanon would have described as a new consciousness.

Similarly, in his two works post-9/11, Ziaddiun Sardar attempts to address how *ijtihad* can transform the world. In *Islam Postmodernism and Other Futures* he calls for *ijtihad* and places responsibility on Muslims, as do Rauf and Majid, to transform their internal systems, arguing that ethical statements need to be transferred into policy statements to produce Islamic alternatives that are complete models (107). In this act of *ijtihad*, Sardar authoritatively rejects *jihad* and opts for reform over revolution, claiming that "the zeal of the righteous and the fanaticism of the revolutionary end in tyranny" and "a reformist is not a revolutionary; he or she is not foolish enough to believe that the world can be put right by a single act of political violence" (*Postmodernism and Other Futures* 108). Change, for Sardar, has to be systematically implemented in achieving the goal of a multicivilizational world, not unlike Majid's polycentric world: "Such a multi civilizational world offers hope if it is based on a God-centered ethics" (*Postmodernism and Other Futures* 179). These thoughts are developed further in *How Do You Know?* in

which Sardar argues that rather than harmonizing Islamic thought with Western norms and values, Muslim intellectuals should scrutinize all modern scientific culture through the discriminatory eye. Thus, as Majid divides his world into First and Third, Sardar divides his into West and non-West, both advocating for serious challenges to the Western mode of scientific rationalism, and neo-liberal market economies. For both, Islam provides a direction for the way ahead, a way out of the crisis of modernism and postmodernism. But in order to do this it has to distance itself from the terminology of *jihad* and replace it with *ijtihad*, as they both do.

Tariq Ramadan learned his lesson well, as to what happens when a Muslim uses the term *jihad* forthrightly as an agent for social change. The Department of Homeland Security revoked Ramadan's visa in July 2004, preventing him from taking a teaching position at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana, stating as its reason that Ramadan once made a financial contribution to a French charity "Comite de Bienfaisance et de Secours aux Palestiniens" (CBSP), which was blacklisted by the US Department of the Treasury in 2003.<sup>8</sup> Ramadan has become a highly controversial figure in Europe and America and is treated with suspicion, particularly because of his family history—a direct lineage to the Muslim Brotherhood. More than other theorists, Ramadan confronts the role of *jihad* in radical reform. He explicates the now familiar differentiation between the greater inner and spiritual *jihad* and the lesser outer one for social justice:

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<sup>8</sup> In a lengthy article in *The New Republic*, liberal professor Paul Berman detailed the criticism of Ramadan's views and the criticism they foster. See Paul Berman, "Who's Afraid of Tariq Ramadan," *The New Republic*, 4 Jun. 2007. Web. 28 Oct 2008. < <http://www.tnr.com/>>.

*Jihad* is the expression of a rejection of all injustice, as also the necessary assertion of balance and harmony in equity. One hopes for a nonviolent struggle, far removed from the horrors of armed conflict...Resisting the very violent expression of this tendency and trying to implement the necessary balance of forces seem to be the conditions for an order that looks human. The latter being the only situation whereby violence is given legitimacy; situations whereby violence is sustained, repression imposed or rights denied, to the extent, that if one succumbs, one loses one's dignity. (*Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity* 65)

There is a critical argument here which differentiates Ramadan from other Western Muslim scholars, namely his acceptance of the legitimacy of violence through *jihad* in cases where nonviolent means have been exhausted as a means to resist the repression of rights. While Majid focuses on polycentric economic and cultural configurations in a Third World setting and avoids the issue of *jihad*, and Sardar firmly migrates from *jihad* to *ijtihad*, Ramadan asserts the right to violence, under qualification, and uses the explicit and controversial term of *jihad* to describe this violence. He argues for an understanding of the reasons behind *jihad*:

Every day that passes, entire peoples sustain repression, abuse of power, and the most inhumane violations of rights. Until when will these peoples remain silent or see themselves deemed "dangerous," by the West, whenever they dare to express their rejection? Here, it is not a question of defending violence but rather of

understanding the circumstances wherein it takes shape. North-South imbalances and the exploitation of men and raw materials, combined with the resignation of the peoples of the North, produce a much more devastating violence than that of armed groups, even if the latter are spectacular. As the end of the 20th century draws close, can we call all men to mobilize themselves towards more social, political and economic justice, for it seems to us that this is the only way to give back to men the rights that will silence arms? Such an effort would be the literal translation of the word *jihad*. (*Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity* 66)

While explaining the reasons for *jihad* as residing both in economic imbalance and the need for a wake- up call of sorts to the cultural and political resignation of the populations of the West, Ramadan calls for a common mobilization of peoples. “a social *jihad*” (66). Thus, Ramadan asserts the revolutionary terminology of Islam, refashioned to move away from its connotation of violence toward the vocabulary of international social mobilization. Interestingly, the social *jihad* of which Ramadan writes includes *ijtihad* but is not confined to it. For Ramadan, resistance is a dual process: of fighting outward repression on one’s rights (social *jihad*) and of internally reforming Muslim societies themselves (*ijtihad*). For Ramadan, *jihad* does not belong to Muslims only; he seeks to internationalize this terminology as a fight against injustice to be held by all people:

This situation necessitates an urgent response and a general call for *jihad*. Here, it is about giving from one’s own person and property, calling all the forces of all

diverse societies and engaging in the work of reform. We will not deny that there are struggles wherein circumstances lead us to direct confrontation, in order to oppose a purge here, a military occupation there, or another type of aggression such as the one we have witnessed in Bosnia and Chechnya. However, it cannot simply be a question of focusing our attention on these events alone and forgetting the broader type of fight which occurs daily and it is, therefore, so much more urgent. Nowadays, our enemies, in the path of God, are oppression, hunger, unemployment, exploitation, delinquency and drug addiction. They require intense efforts, a continuous fight and a complete *jihad* which requires each and everyone's participation. (*Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity* 68)

Ramadan explicitly notes whom he hopes will engage in this redefined social *jihad*, which to him, as for Majid and Sardar, is a liberatory movement of the economically dispossessed and those faith-based communities who place their resistance on liberation theology:

The Pope calls for a general mobilization against poverty and the imbalance of wealth and asserts that it is the duty of Christians to act in this sense. The *jihad* of Muslims is, of course, part of this engagement in the West, but it is equally so in all the countries of the South. It is a wholehearted *jihad* engaged by South-American communities who express it in the form of liberation theology, or as it is manifested in the popular and trade unionist forces in the Near East and Asia. (*Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity* 69)

However, Ramadan's posited universal *social* jihad, which is international, does not mean he does not focus specifically on the responsibilities for Muslims living in the West who, he sees, must perform a twofold work of deconstruction and reconstruction (*What I Believe* 43). This is the nature of *ijihad* for Ramadan. This deconstruction is not focused only on a critique of secular liberalism, as is emphasized in the work of Majid and Sardar, but of Islamic sources themselves. Perhaps, it is his distinctive qualification as a graduate of Al Azhar University, with in-depth knowledge of Islamic exegesis and terminology, informed by a PhD dissertation on Nietzsche, that allows Ramadan to occupy a unique space from which he can offer this kind of sustained critique. Using Islamic terminology, Ramadan theorizes an "abode of testimony" for Muslims. He argues that the old binary division of *dar al islam* (abode of Islam) and *dar al harb* (abode of war) must be broken down, and suggests the term *dar ash shahadah* (abode of testimony), which means Muslims and all people of faith should strive to be living witnesses of their beliefs through their presence and behaviour (*What I Believe* 51-52). Importantly, for Ramadan, the "Islamic message" to which Muslims are expected to bear witness is not primarily the particularistic, socially conservative code of traditionalist jurists, but a commitment to universalism and the welfare of non-Muslims as well as Muslims; it is also an injunction not merely to make demands on un-Islamic societies but to express solidarity with them:

The European environment is a space of responsibility for Muslims. This is exactly the meaning of the notion of "space of testimony" [*dar al-shahada*] that we propose here, a notion that totally reverses perspectives: whereas Muslims

have, for years, been wondering whether and how they would be accepted, the in-depth study and evaluation of the Western environment entrusts them, in light of their Islamic frame of reference, with a most important mission. ...Muslims now attain, in the space of testimony, the meaning of an essential duty and of an exacting responsibility: to contribute, wherever they are, to promoting good and equity within and through human brotherhood. Muslims' outlook must now change from the reality of "protection" alone to that of an authentic "contribution." (*To Be a European Muslim* 150)

In order for European Muslims to achieve this goal of *ijtihad*, the challenge for Ramadan is to deepen the understanding of Islam among Muslims, understanding their own terms such as *fiqh* *ijtihad*, *fatwa*, *jihad* and *shariah*, as well as secularization, citizenship, human rights and democratic models (*To Be a European Muslim* 56). Clarifying terminology is critical before a dialogic debate can take place across civilizations. He argues that he wishes Muslims to belong as citizens who are aware of their own terminologies and can negotiate change by engaging with them. To do this, Muslims must be interested in all issues that other citizens are interested in: race, ecology, education, urban violence; in other words, arguing for a post integration approach. Likewise, he notes that the West requires a real dialogue with itself and cannot go on defining itself by what it is not, with Muslims as its Other.

Ramadan's description of how familiarity with Islamic concepts can transform global society is mapped out in *Radical Reform* where he draws up an agenda for radical reform which is a transformative process, rather than an adaptive one. He insists that his

argument is not to modernize Islam or Islamize modernity, but that Islamic ethics have universal implications. Ramadan laments the lack of interaction in social studies with Islamic scholars outside their own field, as well as lack of consultation with “The Real,” meaning the real communities of Muslims (176). For Ramadan, a dialogue of civilizations is not enough, as one must insist that *a priori* conditions be set in order for the goals of the dialogue to be achieved (308). These conditions necessarily lead to reflections on the relationship between Islam and capitalism.

Ramadan applies his transformational approach to capitalism on two levels: first, to question the Islamicity of capitalism, and, second, to question the Islamic nature of capitalism itself. Ramadan points to the growing market of Islamic products and argues that by merely putting an Islamic label on products that are produced by an oppressive system, outside of Islamic ethics, cannot make them Islamic. The means of production of commodities through the use of poorly waged workers, the destruction of the environment, unfair trade, and the exploitation of the environment is often left unchallenged by contemporary Muslim scholars who are content with Islamic labels, such as in Islamic banking, or *halal* food.<sup>9</sup> In fact, labels of superficial Islamicity have opened up a new market for capitalists in Islamic countries, particularly the Islamic banking industry which operates with a capitalist ethics by merely integrating a few Muslim terms, such as rejecting interest and risk sharing and providing *zakat*.<sup>10</sup> In this

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<sup>9</sup> “Qur’anic term used to indicate what is lawful or permitted...often used in conjunction with established dietary restrictions” (John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* 105).

<sup>10</sup> “Required almsgiving that is one of the five pillars of Islam. Muslims with financial means are required to give 2.5% annually of their net worth in *zakat*” (John L. Esposito *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* 345).

way, capitalism has been superficially Islamized for the consumption of its commodities. Second, Ramadan argues that Islamic thinkers have offered no alternatives to and neither have they been engaged in a sustained critique of capitalism. Muslims have not participated, except in cosmetic ways, in searching for better models of overall human development and instead deal with the issues of global capitalism by integrating into it. Ramadan concedes that at present there is no Islamic alternative to the neo-liberal economic model, but there is an ethics upon which a new model can be built. Global “Islamized capitalism” must be resisted because “the capitalist system has managed to efficiently take over an ideational frame of reference that was supposed to resist it, with the collaboration of its operators and of Muslim consumers themselves” (250). Ramadan notes that the ideational frame of Islam provides the resistance and Muslims should not allow it to be appropriated. He calls for Muslims to work with non-Muslim critics of capitalism to develop new critiques and new economic forms that engage with other “universes of resistance to the dominant economic order,” even engaging with Marxist and atheist thinkers to work out a critique of a system from within (248).

Are there any likely candidates to assist Ramadan in this radical reform, the social *jihad* and *ijtihad* for which he calls? He explicitly notes that this work must be carried out by Muslims and others, particularly leftist critics and atheists who are engaged in a radical critique of capitalism. His call for radical reform directly synchronizes with the theological turn in theory as represented in the work of Terry Eagleton and Slavoj Žižek.

I have already discussed Žižek's position on the *jihadist* in the previous chapter and so will not repeat it here. In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, he sees in the *jihadist* a willingness to sacrifice herself for change to the existing economic and political system, with an eye on the objectives of the other world. The Western response to this excess is, of course, excess—the reassertion of conservative dialogue about the Other and the construction of administrative functions to contain dissent. Instead of taking the opportunity to change the system from which the *jihadist* is being produced—global capitalism—there is an active attempt to either villainize the *jihadist*, or Islam in general, or restrict the expression of dissidence by accommodating it to liberal multiculturalism in naïve gestures of superficial inclusion. Thus, for Žižek, the *jihadist*, in his excessiveness, may serve as a hope to start from a “completely alternate position which changes the very coordinates of discourse” (40). Žižek also theorizes about the nature of *ijtihad* and notes that

*Ijtihad* is a properly dialectical notion: neither a spontaneous immersion in old traditions nor the need to adapt to new conditions and compromise, but the urge to reinvent eternity itself in new historical conditions. (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 53)

In *jihad* he sees a similar kind of hope:

The basic meaning of *jihad* in Islam is not a war against the external enemy, but the effort of inner purification. The struggle is against one's own moral failure and weakness. So perhaps Muslims should more actively practice the passage

from the publicly best known meaning to the true meaning of *jihad*. (*Violence* 126)

In fact, it appears that Žižek's appropriation of *ijtihad* and *jihad* are remarkably similar to Ramadan's vision of both concepts in his radical reform project.

However, the question remains as to how far a contrapuntal relationship with Ramadan and Žižek can be extended to create an authentic partnership in radical reform. The way ahead for Žižek is, in fact, quite different than it is for Ramadan. Muslims can help, according to Žižek, if they can engage in a proper *ijtihad* to reform their societies and a redefined *jihad*. For Žižek, the hope to move out of a post political society lies in the excess as represented by the *jihadist*, not in an accommodation to multiculturalism, or a reconfiguration of multiculturalism into multicivilizational or polycentric models as propagated by Majid and Sardar. Though Ramadan would claim multiculturalism is a reality and that a proper framework has not been developed to manage this reality, Žižek posits it as a mere illusion with identity politics itself as a dead end, for it is a diversion from the real class struggle. Žižek sees multiculturalism as incapable of escaping the model of victimhood, and unlike the Muslim writers discussed in this chapter, offers no hope for an inclusive truly multicivilizational model. Instead, he argues "postmodern identity politics of particular (ethnic, sexual and so forth) lifestyles fits perfectly the depoliticized notion of society," one "in which every particular group is accounted for and has its specific status (of victimhood) acknowledged through affirmative action or other measures" ("A Leftist Plea for Eurocentricism" 1006). Rather than multiculturalism which contains the Muslim as *Homo Sacer*, Žižek argues for a move to

the status of “neighbor.” In “Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence,” Žižek argues that if one sticks to “love thy neighbor,” one tries to develop an ethics without violence, instead of recognizing the “alien traumatic kernel” that forever persists in the neighbor, the “inert, impenetrable, enigmatic presence that hystericizes me” (140-41), for beneath the neighbor, “one’s mirror image, lurks a radical otherness” (143). Perhaps, this is where the *Homo Islamicus* lurks.

This becomes more evident in *Violence* where, in referring to the Paris riots of 2005, the 9/11 bombers, and floods of immigration to Europe, Žižek articulates the difficulty of global capitalism and multiculturalism in dealing with the neighbor, or perhaps what I have argued in this thesis as the *Homo Islamicus*. The Muslims in France, for example, did not protest because they wanted to be recognized as Muslims, but because they wanted to be French; an argument with which Ramadan would agree. Likewise, the walls in Europe against immigration are a signal of the failure of global capitalism that does not allow people to stay at home (where they belong, perhaps). The bombing of the Twin Towers had no other goal, like the Paris riots, other than a performative one of getting noticed. All these acts of violence are attempts of the Other, or *Homo Islamicus*, to break out of the alienation or the indifference shown to her, to be seen, not as a neighbor, but as a citizen. But global capitalism has no citizens, Žižek would argue; in a sense they all are at a “zero level protest” (81), meaning they want nothing but recognition. Liberal multiculturalism cannot contain these aimless acts, Žižek argues, and liberal platitudes will result in a society that is “regulated by a perverse pact between religious fundamentalists and the politically correct preachers of

tolerance and respect for the other's beliefs: a society immobilized by the concern for not hurting the Other" (130) The same people who call for the building of mosques in Europe, for example, also call for the right to print the Danish cartoons to demonstrate liberalism, therefore creating an irresolvable knot. Ironically, Žižek concludes, those who reprint the cartons are the Muslims' only real allies. Such a paradox for Žižek means that Muslims are showing us the limits of secular disenchantment (133).

Interestingly, we have noted that Ramadan has noted the same dilemma, placing faith in the atheist left to accommodate a space for the vision and ethics of Muslims, while Majid and Sardar, on the other hand, have placed a faith in parallel faith-based communities. But if the atheist left is represented by Žižek, can a multicivilizational polycentric world exist in his Europe? Žižek puzzles why Muslims bother with the cartoon issue, for example, instead of attacking their real enemy—global capitalism. For Žižek, if both *jihād* and *ijtihād* turn Muslims inward to reform their own moral weaknesses, they are left with basically only one ethical choice:

This means the choice for Muslims is not either Islamo fascist fundamentalism or the painful process of Islamic Protestantism which would make Islam compatible with modernization. There is a third option, which has already been tried—Islamic socialism. The proper political attitude is to emphasize, with symptomatic insistence, how the terrorist attacks have nothing to do with real Islam, that great and sublime religion—would it not be more appropriate to recognize Islam's resistance to modernization? And, rather than bemoaning the fact that Islam, of all the great religions, is the most resistant to modernization, we

should, rather, conceive of this resistance as an open chance, as “undecidable”: this resistance does not necessarily lead to Islamo fascism, it could also be articulated into a socialist project. Precisely because Islam harbours the “worst” potentials of the Fascist answer to our present predicament, it could also turn out to be the site for the “best.” (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 133-4)

In the end, Žižek, believes that Islam itself may contain the element of radical energy that is required to lead a socialist revolution of sorts, but the dangers of a pact with right-wing fundamentalist cultural values is quite high. Thus, Žižek argues that instead of renouncing violence and saying religion is good, we ought to renounce religion and continue violence (*Violence* 134). And in this, Islam, as a pool of mad energy and violence, in the tradition of Nietzsche and Foucault, may be of some service in providing the *Homo Islamicus* as sacrifice required for the revolution—the sacrificial violence that atheism cannot offer since an atheist post-ideological society cannot seem to mobilize its masses for killing and dying. Islam can be employed in a pragmatic manner to spearhead a Eurocentric revolution, which is suspiciously empty of real Muslims. In Žižek’s view, even this is a harsh compromise since the atheists have a more highly developed sense of morality than the *Homo Islamicus*—the religious, after all, do good deals to gain God’s approval while atheists do them because they believe they are the right thing to do (*Violence* 138). For Žižek, only Europe is capable of using atheism as its moral principle. This is why the only possibility for the new society is constructed from a European model, as he posits a unified Europe as the only hope against an American-led global capital. By *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, Žižek’s anxiety with Islam is obvious, as he

claims that no matter how anti-imperialist the Islamic movement appears, it lacks the dimension of a “communal utopia” (71). It is only worthy of short term consideration:

Although in the long term, the success of the radical emancipatory struggle depends on mobilizing the lower classes who are often today in thrall to fundamentalist populism, one should have no qualms about concluding short term alliances with egalitarian liberals as part of the anti-sexist and anti-racist struggle.  
(73)

Therefore, Žižek can become a rather untrustworthy partner in Ramadan’s radical reform, if Ramadan, Rauf, Sardar, Majid and others can prove themselves as “egalitarian liberals,” who are not sexist racists, and then this partnership will be for the convenience of mobilizing the *Homo Islamicus* who can be of use in the communist struggle. Ultimately, Žižek’s Muslim partners remain unnervingly dehumanized *Homo Islamicus*, to be used as sacrifices in the communist struggle. Žižek’s theological turn is not quite sustained but diverted back to European atheism and communism. Perhaps Terry Eagleton might be a more appropriate accomplice?

To his credit, Eagleton confesses in *Reason Faith and Revolution* that he knows little about theology, and the little he knows is about Christian theology, and so he will confine his work to that for “it is better to be provincial than presumptuous” (3). While acknowledging that he may be accused of universalizing Islamic principles about which he knows little, he continues to make various assertions about the role of *jihad* in the contemporary debate and the attack on multiculturalist capitalism. Playing the middle ground, Eagleton surprisingly places himself in a position as interlocutor: “I also seek to

strike a minor blow on behalf of those many millions of Muslims whose creed of peace, justice and compassion has been rubbished and traduced by cultural supremacists in the West" (34). He directly aligns himself with Muslims: "good," moderates whose religion has been high-jacked by the Western right and a "bigoted and benighted Islamism" (35).

Eagleton's attack on Islamic fundamentalism, while aligning itself with Muslim moderates, is similar to those positions taken by Rauf and Sardar, but, in *Reason, Faith and Revolution*, it is to fellow Marxist Aijaz Ahmad that Eagleton refers to develop his explanation of Islamic radicalism. Eagleton's recourse to Ahmad allows him to place his own discourse within a leftist and secular, but also Muslim, critique.<sup>11</sup> He accepts Ahmad's argument that, being betrayed by their rulers who are seduced by capitalism, with no army to join in to protest, and seeing countless civilians killed by Americans and Israelis, the *jihadists* do not deem their own killing of civilians as terrorism, or even comparable to what their own people have suffered. If anything, they would consider themselves counter terrorists. Eagleton elaborates on Ahmad's point that a combination of domestic, anti-left and mostly autocratic right wing (Muslim) regimes on the one hand, and, on the other, determined imperialist Zionist policies (by the West) have created the conditions for extremism (101-6). Such engagement allows Eagleton to conclude that "it is rather that, without the vast concentration camp known as the Gaza Strip, it is not at all out of the question that the Twin Towers would still be standing" (107). Eagleton, however, does not claim that without Western imperialism there would be no Islamic fanaticism, leaving the door open for further reflection on the radical nature of Islamic

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<sup>11</sup> Eagleton's references are to Ahmad's "Islam, Islamism and the West," *Socialist Register* 44 (2008): 1-37.

theology itself. For sure, he argues, the global significance of Islam has brought the West's own internal questions to the forefront, as witnessed in the aggressive new atheism of Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins. Further, Eagleton argues while the West is in the throes of late capitalism and postmodernity, undermining its own metaphysical foundations, building itself on practical materialism, it is now confronted with another vision which believes in universals and truths (141-42). Therefore, the West is now confronted with its metaphysical foe—Islam. But Eagleton goes no further. He does not theorize exactly how Islam is the metaphysical foe of the West, but merely asserts it as the West's Other, which can facilitate self reflection and thus progress for the West:

If the British or American way of life really were to take on board the critique of materialism, hedonism, and individualism made by many devout Muslims, Western civilization would most certainly be altered for good. This is a rather different vision from the kind of multiculturalism that leaves Muslims and others alone to do their charmingly esoteric stuff, commending them from a safe distance. (154)

But what should the West do when faced with, in Eagleton's view, the universals of Islam which Ramadan advocates for in his *Radical Reform*? Eagleton answers,

Either it trusts its native pragmatism in the face of its enemy's absolutism, or it falls back on metaphysical values of its own—values that are looking increasingly tarnished and implausible. Does the West need to go full-bloodedly metaphysical to save itself? And if it does, can it do so without inflicting too

much damage on its liberal secular values, thus ensuring there is still something worth protecting from its illiberal opponents? (166)

Eagleton is, of course, aware of the risk of facing the dilemma from a purely theological view, which is why he depends on a materialist like Ahmad to prove the point. He notes that while theology is part of the problem, it also fosters a kind of critical reflection that might offer some answers. However, the core of Eagleton's dialogue is not with Muslims themselves but with theologians and leftists in the West. If Žižek's objective is to save the world with communism, Eagleton's is to save the West by propagating a form of tragic humanism: "Tragic humanism whether in its socialist, Christian, or psychoanalytical varieties holds that only by a process of self dispossession and radical remaking can humanity come into its own" (167-68). Surely, this is a rather obscure agenda and so difficult to assess as an appropriate companion to Ramadan's admittedly rather scattered radical reform. However, it was in his denser earlier work, *Unholy Terror*, that Eagleton's clarified his view of the role of the *jihad* including Ramadan's social *jihad*, in the making of "tragic humanism."

In *Unholy Terror*, Eagleton posits the figure of the modern tragic protagonist, not unlike the *Homo Sacer*, caught between desire and consumption, struggling as a Christ-like scapegoat, suffering the sins of global capitalism. Our contemporary tragedy, according to Eagleton, is that we have lost one of the two main components of tragedy, fear and pity: we feel fear but not pity (133). When we see the face of terror only in the Other we are unable to see it in ourselves, and so we must dehumanize and exoticize the Other in order to fear him. Because we cannot see ourselves as complicit in terror, we

further terrorize the other, even at the cost of limiting and terrorizing ourselves, in order to try to prevent the terrorist from terrorizing us. Like Butler, Eagleton concludes that unless we can feel pity for the Other, those oppressed for whom the terrorists are speaking, we are doomed to repeat tragic activities. Eagleton explains terrorism not in a socio-political context as he opts for in *Reason, Faith and Revolution* but within a metaphysical framework. *Unholy Terror* does not deal with reasons for terrorism or *jihad*, *per se*, but merely seeks to extend the language of the left into metaphysics with concepts such as sacrifice and evil (v). The *jihadist* for Eagleton is capable of sacrifice as a way of articulating his allegiance to the divine, not as a sacrifice to redeem a community. Specific references to Islam in Eagleton's work are abstract and it is unclear as what kind of worldliness the *jihadist* and the tragic humanist should work toward, or even if their aims are compatible.

As I have demonstrated in this journey through Muslim and non-Muslim discourse concerning the intentionality of the *jihadist*, there has been a considerable migration to the nature of *jihad* and its relationship to *ijtihad*. These migrations are similar to the migrations noted in Fanon by Said, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Said argued that when theory travels it is often emptied of its revolutionary urges, but it can sometimes become re-radicalized. He also noted that the consciousness for which Fanon was advocating, which I have highlighted contained definite *jihadist* components, was far ahead of the revolutionary impulses of particularistic struggles, such as nationalism. All of Said's arguments can be applied to the migrations of *jihad*. An essential part of the *jihad's* travels has involved a careful engagement with the radical

terminology of *jihad*, often replacing it with the less dangerous terminology of *ijtihad* or social *jihad* which navigates away from the contentious issue of violence. There is a contradictory tendency here, perhaps because *jihad* has developed such a negative connotation as a manic form of terror. There is a desire to explain the socio-political aspects of *jihad*, a desire to de-radicalize it by replacing it with *ijtihad*, and at the same time a desire to reinsert *jihad* as a universal form of resistance for a more ethical global community. Therefore, as it travels the full semiotic circuitry, *jihad* re-emerges, simultaneously maintaining its troublesome and violent particularity, as well as its universality. It is situated in a particular historical situation but arises as a possible global form of futuristic resistance.

In its travels, *jihad* is transformed into *ijtihad* on occasion, particularly by Majid and Sardar, exoticized with various degrees of caution, by non-Muslim writers such as Eagleton and Žižek, and globalized with universal intentionality, as in the work of Ramadan, Sardar, Majid and Roy. Its Islamic particularity is emphasized by some as a starting base, for example Esposito, and its universal application highlighted by others, such as Ramadan. In all cases, the figure of the *jihadist* himself remains a troublesome one: a pitiful scapegoat (Eagleton); a *Homo Sacer* (Žižek), a heretical *Homo Islamicus* marginalized from the body of “good” Muslims (Sardar, Rauf, Esposito); and possibly a developing global humanitarian (Ramadan, Majid).

Because the discussions of intentionality in academic circles are deep and intensive, the curiosity regarding the intentions of the *jihadist* has also become institutionalized in popular culture. Numerous films and nonfictional accounts of the lives

of the *jihadists* delineate the spectral world of this figure which has exploded into popular culture: from the political explorations in *The Kingdom*, *Syriana*, and *Unthinkable*, the debut of the *jihadist* in rap music's *Al Qaeda Unit* and the work of Immortal Technique, to the numerous television serials, such as *24* where the *jihadist* serves as the perennial Other. In addition to these examples, is the huge amount of attention paid to the letters, audio recordings and videos of various *jihadists*, no doubt which will grow exponentially after the May 2011 assassination of Osama bin Laden, and the gruesome beheading videos accessed on numerous radical websites.

These diverse representations of the *jihadist* are particularly evident in fiction, which, to a certain degree, competes with the self-representation of the *jihadist* himself in the videos and speeches which serve as testimony to his act. Writers construct the *jihadist* as a full-fledged character, acting as a mediator through which to describe his intentions to a largely Western audience. At the same time, the *jihadist* speaks for himself, stubbornly asserting his intentionality in the form of a spectacular and contradictory universal ethics. The mediation of these enunciations of the *jihadists*, real and fictional, is particularly problematic, as I will examine in the following chapters through a comparison of representations of fictionalized and real jihadists.

## Chapter Four

### Fictional *Jihadists*

In the previous two chapters, I have explored two essential characteristics of cultural criticism and fiction by Muslim writers as related to the figure of the *jihadist*: the desire to place themselves in a Western intellectual tradition where they have credibility as interpreters, and the need to offer indigenous, inside information regarding the current perceived confrontation between Islam and the West or globalization. I have also demonstrated a multiplicity of subject positions: some writers are deeply attached to the Orientalist narratives of the inherent violence of Islam and assist, perhaps inadvertently, in justifying the militarization of Muslim countries; others are eager to disassociate themselves from “bad” Muslims, reclaiming an “authentic” Islam and positioning themselves as the most viable interlocutors; and yet others insist on positing the current debate on *jihad* as a moment of significant interjection from Islam on the state of capitalism and globalization. My approach has been contrapuntal to the extent that it has demonstrated how the works of Muslim writers and critics are contained within a fairly rigid public discourse on Islam and globalization. Through an in-depth analysis of cultural theory, I have demonstrated that the mythology of the *jihadist* has permeated academic consciousness, allowing the *jihadist* to transcend the Islamic field to become a spokesperson of different sorts for global causes.

This phenomenon does not only apply to theory, but to literature as well. In popular literature and film, particularly, the *jihadist* possesses an oscillating strangeness and familiarity. Familiar motives, such as personal despair at the loss of a parent, unemployment, humiliation, and alienation, are assigned as possible intentions for his violent act. At the same time, foreign unknowns, such as Quranic incitation to violence, Bedouin codes of family honour, or the politics of far-away countries, also inform these portraits rendering the *jihadist* as strange, and alien. Depending on the depiction and even nuances within the same depiction, the portrait of the *jihadist* resonates as a familiar neighbor, while remaining foreign and unknowable.

Further, the line between fiction and nonfiction is consistently blurred in this process of construction, as popular knowledge on actual *jihadists* finds its way into the fictionalization of *jihadist* characters. Indeed, the critics I have discussed in the previous chapter spend considerable time in elaborating upon specific profiles and portraits of individual *jihadists*, and drawing conclusions as to the intentionality of the *jihad* itself, through the lives of Osama bin Laden, the various 9/11 bombers, and the culprits in the Madrid and London bombings. This analytical approach to the individual lives and motivations of these real-life characters has generated a certain narrative consistency in presenting the *jihadists*' intentions to a Western audience, an approach derived from critical commentary and fiction and ceaselessly reproduced. Interestingly, fictional accounts of *jihadists* mirror the nonfictional analysis, in this sense clearly illuminating the historicity of texts. Of course, it can also be argued that these fictional accounts generate, rather than reflect, current popular knowledge about the *jihadist*. One can argue

that the fictional imagery of *jihadists* presented in contemporary film and novels, for example, does as much to generate popular knowledge of *jihad* as does academic analysis of the roots of *jihadist* motives. In either case, the important point is not whether fiction informs cultural criticism or cultural criticism informs fiction, but that both are intricately tied up in constructing a genealogy of terror in a Foucaultian sense.<sup>12</sup>

Various Muslim fiction writers have played an important role in describing this genealogy by emphasizing the intentionality of the *jihadist* as a major theme connected to numerous vectors, such as religion, politics, and personal quests for identity and honor. In *Plotting Terror: Novelists and Terrorists in Contemporary Fiction*, Margaret Scanlon noted that terrorist themes have been prominent in numerous novels from the birth of the genre in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as “writers seem increasingly drawn to presenting their societies as a Foucaultian nightmare, a formidable blank like the Siberian wastelands of Dostoevsky and Conrad depict, or the vast impersonal city that overwhelms James’ would- be terrorist and ignores his suicide” (4). Many of the works examined in this chapter fall into this genre of the popular “terrorist” novel. Further, there are both similarities and differences in the presentation of the *jihadist* between Muslim writers writing for a Western audience in European languages and non-Muslim writers writing to the same audience. While some of the most noted non-Muslim fiction writers, who have written about terror, such as Don DeLillo and John Updike, accentuate the role of Islam

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<sup>12</sup> For Foucault, genealogy refers to how human practices and interpretations change. See particularly *Language, Counter memory, Practice*, ed. Donald Bouchard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977). The contemporary emphasis on both the genealogy of terror and the intentionality of *jihad* counteract the purely culturalist arguments of Huntington and Lewis who ascertain that there is something inherently violent and irreducible in Islam that perpetrates terror.

in the process, Muslim writers, such as Slimane Benaïssa, Mohsin Hamid, and Orhan Pamuk situate terror in political and personal circumstances. This chapter argues that the interventions of Muslim fiction writers deconstruct the culturalist argument about the intentionality of the *jihadist* as being fully shaped and informed by Islam. While these writers do follow certain novelistic formulas, they simultaneously offer alternative reasons behind the inspiration for *jihad*.

In his critical work, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*, Amin Malak offers a fresh look at fiction by Muslim writers and notes that they “project the culture and civilization of Islam from within” (2), emphasizing that their engagement with Islam is “a dimension worth probing and deconstructing” (151). While useful, Malak’s innovative introduction to modern Muslim classics does not offer a contrapuntal reading by comparing the contributions of Muslim and non-Muslim writers within a thematic and historic framework, or of the intersections between disciplines on certain Muslim themes. This chapter builds upon these excellent contributions of both Scanlon and Malak in examining some of the divergences between Muslim and non-Muslim fictional portrayals of the *jihadist* figure, and how these portrayals conform to or counteract conventional academic wisdom.

John Updike’s 2007 *Terrorist*, a *New York Times* best seller, manipulates numerous Orientalisms to present the paper-thin and pathetic character of Ahmad, son of an absent Egyptian father and an Irish-American nurse’s aide, who prepares to blow up the Lincoln Bridge, but fails. The critics are merciful with the book when they note that when faced with a plot relying heavily on coincidental connections and undeveloped

heroes “it seems meant as a fable, and any good fable requires some derring-do (Stone n.pag). Updike is praised for giving the reader the terrorist’s point of view (Leonard n.pag), with the failure of the character Ahmad being due to the fact that he is too Updikean a character, too aesthetic, to be a real suicide bomber (Adams n.pag).

Updike’s *jihadist*, Ahmad, is drawn to Islamic radicalism after being bullied in high school and brainwashed by a neighborhood Sheikh. He interprets his world through a distorted Quranic text which Updike intersperses throughout his novel and which he confesses in a 2006 interview for the *New York Times* was translated for him by a graduate student. In the same interview, Updike states his intention in creating a humanized *jihadist*:

I think I felt I could understand the animosity and hatred which an Islamic believer would have for our system. Nobody’s trying to see it from that point of view. I guess I have stuck my neck out here in a number of ways, but that’s what writers are for, maybe....I sometimes think ‘Why did I do this?’ I’m delving into what can be a very sore subject for some people. But when those shadows would cross my mind, I’d say, ‘They can’t ask for a more sympathetic and, in a way, more loving portrait of a terrorist.’(n.pag)

Unfortunately, Updike does not succeed in drawing this “loving portrait”; Ahmad remains undeveloped and unconvincing as a character. The hatred he feels for the society around him is never fully crystallized except through the clumsy Quranic translations which seem to be echoing permanently in his head. Ahmad also has no transformation of any sort. In the beginning of the novel, he notes, “These devils seek to take away my

God" (3); at the end, he utters, "these devils have taken away my God" (310). Ahmad does not succumb to a sentimental jolt of awareness, as does Khadra's nameless narrator in *The Sirens of Baghdad*, as examined in Chapter Two. On the other hand, his plan is subverted by his mother's lover and high school, Jewish counsellor, Mr. Levy, perhaps the most memorable character in the novel who, in an unconvincing heroic moment, foils Ahmad's plan. In fact, Ahmad even remains unmoved by Mr. Levy's arguments to circumvent his act of terror, just as he is unmoved by the children looking at him, soon to be his victims, in the next van. Ahmad aborts his act only when faced with his arch enemy's attempt to foil his plan. Updike constructs no transformative moment for his character, nor does he succeed in humanizing him. Ahmad is left unredeemed, foiled by a Jewish antihero. If the novel is indeed intended as a fable, the old Orientalist argument here is very thinly veiled: there is no hope of redemption for the *jihadi*; the solution lies in intervention, perhaps by a Jewish neighbor.

Though definitely a much more successful novel than Updike's, Don DeLillo's multilayered *Falling Man*, which refers directly to 9/11, also stops short in humanizing the character of the *jihadi*. Critics eagerly awaited DeLillo's intervention as a long-time chronicler of the relationship between the terrorist and the writer, with many praising his insightful reflection on the victims of 9/11, while noting the decline in his writing when he writes about the *jihadi* himself (Litt n.pag). As Frank Rich notes in his 2007 *New York Times* review: "When "*Falling Man* "sporadically leaves Keith and Lianne behind to retrace 9/11 from the point of view of the hijackers, that spell is broken. These brief

interruptions seem potted, adding little beyond mellifluous writing to the journalistic record” (n.pag).

The narration of *Falling Man* is split in perspective between Keith and Lianne, the survivors of 9/11, and the *jihadist* identified only as Hammad, a follower of Mohamed Atta, whom the novel puts on the first plane to crash into the World Trade Center. As a fictional character, Hammad, like Updike’s Ahmad, is not particularly persuasive. DeLillo’s account of his actions in the period leading up to 9/11 follow the same formula as Updike’s with the same process of radicalization being articulated: the long political conversations, the dull monotony of rituals, and the dehumanization of the victims. Below is one of these typical Hammad reflections:

There was the feeling of lost history. They were too long in isolation. This is what they talked about, being crowded out by other cultures, other futures, the all-enfolding will of capital markets and foreign policies. (80)

When Hammad has a temporary attack of conscience about his victims, he quickly resolves his conflict: “The others exist only to the degree that they fill the role we have destined for them. This is their function as other. (176)

Perhaps, one of the most interesting achievements in the novel is that DeLillo presents a near nihilistic view of the relationship between the *jihadist* and the victim, each caught in the mad meaninglessness of the present, each dependent on the other for its necessary implosion. This becomes evident in the last chapter when the attack itself is recounted through the eyes of both Hammad, the *jihadist*, and Keith, the victim, so that the reader has to discern where Hammad’s narrative stops and Keith’s begins:

He fastened his seatbelt.

A bottle fell off the counter in the galley, on the other side of the aisle, and he 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 scatter across the floor an instant before the aircraft struck 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 the wall. He found himself walking into a wall. He didn't drop the telephone until he hit the wall. The floor began to slide beneath him and he lost his balance and eased along the wall to the floor. (239)

This is DeLillo's most explicit connection between the two men, but the similarity in their behaviour is already present throughout *Falling Man*. Both discover blood on their clothes without knowing where it came from; both seek solace in ritualistic acts—for Hammad, the physical preparations he makes for the attacks, for Keith, the arbitrary rules that govern his poker playing and the physical therapy exercises he compulsively repeats. Both distill their lives down to the essentials—Hammad prays and sleeps, prays and eats; Keith reduces his sleep to five hours to have more time at the poker table. DeLillo, like Updike, seems to be suggesting that the *jihadi* and the victim are caught up in one process of self annihilation. In many ways, DeLillo's fiction articulates the message of Baudrillard and Žižek regarding the *jihadi*'s response to the consumerism of globalization and the alienation of the individual. Yet, the reader does not get a fully developed human *jihadi* from either DeLillo or Updike. Certainly, the *jihadi* is made more familiar,

simply because he lurks in a familiar landscape, but he still remains largely foreign, exotic, and not quite human enough.

Perhaps this is why the film *Paradise Now* made such an impact, for it disrupted the Orientalist narrative consistency, prevalent in even America's most heavyweight writers, with a fully humanized fictional account of the *jihadist* on the big screen. *Paradise Now*, directed by Hany Abu Asad and released in 2005 after the London bombings, winner of multiple prizes at the 2005 Berlin Film Festival and of the Oscar for Best Foreign Film of the year, played a seminal role in humanizing the intentionality of the *jihadist*. The film was condemned in some quarters in Hollywood as being pro-terrorist, while conversely, and typical of the way extreme reactions vie for attention in the popular imaginary, there were rumours that the culture minister for the Palestinian government considered banning the film for being too critical of the suicide bombers (Bradshaw n.pag). *Paradise Now* problematizes the intentions of *jiḥād* through two friends, Said and Khaled, who are not particularly religious, not apparently very political (though politics turns out to be an important looming force in their background), but they accept a "suicide bombing" mission in Tel Aviv. While the terrorist network propelling the young men forward is presented as cold, exploitative and bureaucratic, Said and Khaled are quite likeable; in fact, their lives are remarkably ordinary, as ordinary they can be in the occupied West Bank, and both are motivated by reasons outside the neoconservative debate. Said is motivated by a desire to prove himself, to repay the crime of his absent father who was accused of being a collaborator with the Israelis.

Khaled merely follows Said, out of despair, boredom, and hopelessness, and the desire to make his family proud of him.

A particularly illuminating achievement of the film is how it makes the life of the *jihadi*st ordinary, even though it is set in the foreign landscape of occupied Palestine. For example, the sombre filming of the “suicide bombers”’ last message is given a comic turn when both the audience watching the filming of the video, fellow radicals, and the camera man, eating sandwiches, are unmoved by the prewritten messages which have become almost mundane to them. The construction of the video itself becomes the subject of commentary and humour, with its staging, nonworking cameras, eruptions and interventions of daily life, such as when Khalid remembers to interrupt his video and mention to his mother about the best place to buy water filters. The shock at the end of the movie occurs because the audience has become accustomed to seeing the *jihadi*st as a normal person. Ironically, it is Said who turns away from the act and Khaled, who was never as committed to it as Said, who goes through with it—demonstrated by a suddenly blank, black screen at the moment of the attack.

What makes *Paradise Now* unusual and controversial is that it presented the political and religious landscapes as mere backdrops for the personal landscapes of despair and honour in the two central characters struggling to survive in occupied Palestine. The film succeeds in making the characters both human and exotic. The two young men are both likeable and understandable, and thus familiar, though their action, “suicide bombing,” is foreign and unfamiliar. The very attempt to explore the intentionality of the *jihadi*st, outside of a purely religious and culturist narrative, to make

him human, is indeed an effort at building a counter narrative to the dominant discourse of *jihad* and of contemporary power relations. This effort is also evident, with varying degrees of success, in numerous works of fiction by Muslim writers. Three novels particularly demonstrate these contributions: Slimane Benaïssa's *The Last Night of a Damned Soul*, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*.

Slimane Benaïssa is most well known for his plays. Following the eruption of the Algerian Civil War he exiled himself to France from Algeria permanently. Benaïssa received the Grand Prix Francophone de la SACD in 1993 and his work has won the recognition of institutions such as the Commission Internationale des Francophonies, the Association Beaumarchais, and the Maison du Théâtre et de la Danse d'Epinay-sur-Seine. In 2000, French President Jacques Chirac named him to the Haut Conseil de la Francophonie,<sup>13</sup> firmly establishing him as an influential figure in the French culture industry. *Les fils de l'amertume* ("Sons of Bitterness"), created at the Festival d'Avignon, narrated the parallel lives of a radical Islamist and a journalist whose life was under threat. At Avignon, Benaïssa himself played the character of journalist Youcef. His play *Prophètes sans dieu* ("Prophets without a God"), which depicted a conversation between Moses, Jesus, and the author as they await the absent Muhammad, presented at the

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<sup>13</sup> See <<http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/5594/Bena-ssa-Slimane-1943.html>>

Théâtre International de Langue Française (TILF) in Paris, also met with worldwide success.

His novel *La dernière nuit d'un damné* (*The Last Night of a Damned Soul*), written in 2003 in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and released in English in 2004, explores the psychological, spiritual, and religious dimensions of the *jihād*, and earned recognition in France, winning the Prix Méditerranée 2003. Perhaps even more critically valuable than the novel itself is how Benaïssa uses the value of his Muslimness to interject his own intentions in the Foreword of the book, which reads like a personal manifesto. In the Foreword, he positions himself firmly in a Western intellectual tradition, citing the influence of Victor Hugo's *The Last Day of a Condemned Man* and Solzhenitsyn's *One day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. He writes,

I feel connected to both these writers, first because they are my literary masters, but especially because of the present historical context. As in their case, I feel history forces me to speak out responsibly against certain unjust, inadmissible and inconceivable deaths. My response as a Muslim is dictated by my personal experience with religious extremism, which forces me to speak out, and, like Tom Thumb, to place the third stone in the way of ogres in order to point the way toward humanity. (vi)

Benaïssa then goes on to speak of what he believes to be the plight facing Muslims: to live out "an Islam that is expressed through all manner of violence" or be silent, positioning himself as one of the rare who refuses to be silent (viii). No doubt, like his fellow Algerian Khadra, Benaïssa did suffer personal trauma, specifically self-imposed

exile in France, where he, like Khadra, became a literary star after writing about the Algerian civil war.

After assigning value to his literary talent and personal voice, Benaïssa continues to explain what he believes are the various reasons for terror, including those cited by Esposito and Roy: globalization, poverty, and the need to belong, noting that in the global system of domination “religions are becoming more political as a way to fill a vacuum and construct, each in their own way, an opposing position” (viii). In this way, Benaïssa attempts to place his novel, though fiction, within the dialogue of contemporary historical academic discourse. But, unlike Esposito or Majid, for example, he does not attribute Islam with the capacity to speak to any of these problems: “The solution to all of these problems, admittedly significant, is, in my mind, to be found outside of the realm of religion” (viii). He also made a rather embarrassingly sentimental appeal as a Muslim, taking it upon himself to speak for all Muslims in asking for forgiveness: “Speaking as a Muslim, I ask for forgiveness from all the families who have been victims of religious extremism across the globe, regardless of their faith” (ix). This rather unusual plea allows Benaïssa to position himself as a “good” Muslim and distance himself from the “bad” ones.

If Benaïssa feels an affinity to Hugo, Hugo he most definitely is not. The novel is a cumbersome read, adapting a familiar and tired formula, not unlike Updike’s: a symbolic, missing father, a sense of exile and dislocation, a process of de-culturation, treatises on the political radicalization behind the *jihadist*, codification of faith, the emergence of a new ethics focused on righting present wrongs, symbolic impotence and

an aborted act. Despite the failure of the novel as a literary work, it is worth exploring to elaborate upon how Benaïssa, certainly more effectively than Updike and DeLillo, inventively employs the novelistic form to explore the issue of exile and its connection to the formation of the Western *jihadi*st.

*The Last Night of a Damned Soul* is heavily peppered with Quranic quotes, as in Updike's *Terrorist*, at times to justify  *Jihad* as the  *Jihadists* do, at other times to discourage violence, as "moderate" Muslims do. Strangely enough, the quotations from the Quran are not taken from standard translations but from the author's own French translation from Arabic, which is then rendered into English. So it is that the original Quran is twice removed in the text, displaced and yet heavy with authority, as each verse is identified for easy access. The identification of the sections of these twice-removed Quranic references exemplify the plight of the exile, who is also twice removed from culture, the culture of his origin and the culture he has adopted. This is, of course, a central theme in the novel and various narrative strategies are deployed to demonstrate this state of dislocation and to reflect on the location of  *Jihad*, perhaps as being in a de-cultured zone of personal and exilic strife. Benaïssa emphasizes repetitively that as the Quran and  *Hadith* (traditions of the Prophet) all become removed from their historical period and reinterpreted for political objectives, they too are exiled from their metaphysical roots, just as his character Raouf is exiled from his culture.

Benaïssa's characters are not Saidian metaphoric exiles, blending hybridity to locate a new opposition in the cosmopolitan metropolis, a secular criticism. To the contrary, they are radicalized and dislocated individuals who are merely symbolic

mouthpieces for various ideologies. The two central characters, Raouf and Athman, are software engineers living in the Bay Area of California, who join a team of five, ready to hijack a Boeing plane and crash it into a building. The characters refer directly to what is now well known about the 9/11 bombers; like Atta, et al, Raouf, the narrator, grew up in a comfortable middle-class Muslim household (both parents are professionals) and benefited from an education in the West (which parallels the fact that several of the 9/11 bombers seemed to be long-term graduate students in Germany). Athman himself has even completed his PhD studies in Germany.

It is under Athman's firm tutelage that Raouf begins his descent into *jihad*, involving an in-depth process of deconstruction. Raouf notes about Athman, "He likes to say that by destroying logic, a new structure of meaning could result, and those new meanings could undermine the logical structure upon which they are based" (10). Athman's objective is to strip Raouf of the adopted culture in which he had wrapped himself, by merging the historical past of the Quran with the present. As Raouf notes,

Athman uncovered my true identity, the one I had always kept in check so I could finish my studies, not upset my parents, maintain a certain distance from the country of my roots, and question the country of my birth still in keeping with my parent's principles. (52)

Athman, having made the transition from Marxist to Muslim, has his own Islam with its own Machiavellian ethics. He rejects the notion of the *jihadist* as a tragic figure, Egeleton's scapegoat for globalization, or Žižek's *Homo Sacer*. In fact, Athman rejects the notion of tragedy in general:

I'm in the divine, you're in the tragic. I stand up vertically; you lie down horizontally. Nietzsche said "Tragedy is when those below don't know, and those above can't go on anymore." For us Muslims, the one above can always go on: it's God. Those of us below must always know that. There is no such thing as tragedy in Islam. (74)

If the *jihadist* is not a tragic figure for Athman, neither does he completely identify himself with the politics of anti globalization, though he does recognize the nature of implosion inherent in globalization. Noting that America needs to be attacked at the heart of its contradictions—"You have terrorize those who terrorize you" (67) — Athman highlights the difference between the *jihadists* and the activists of the antiglobalization movement, whom he believes lack a coherent intentionality because their ideas are based in worldly politics: "like the anti-globalization militants who don't really know how to destroy the system. It's up to us to do it for them" (118). Athman philosophizes his own form of Islamic politics, outside Marxism and the antiglobalization movement: "Politics is the art of creating a structure for your expansion. In order to live your religion fully you need this structure, and as long as you don't have it, you're just plain political period. I am really a politicized believer" (119).

The difference between the political activist and the *jihadist*, then, lies in utopian belief, not in changing the current system but in creating an entirely new one, an argument with which Žižek would not disagree. Athman also elaborates on the exhibitionist nature of the *jihad* in this utopian project when he recounts a story of how

he discovered terror as a child by breaking dishes in order to get the attention of his parents who were not listening to them. The breaking of the dishes had nothing to do with what he wanted to say, but it did get him attention. . Thus, Athman claims that the “terrorist act is the one that has nothing to do with reality. But one that gets listened to” (121).

In opposition to the political treatises of Athman, the *jihadist* recruiter, Benaïssa, develops the sensitive character of Raouf, who is often uncertain of his own transformation. Unfortunately, he employs some awkward narrative strategies to humanize the character of Raouf: the first person narration through which he accounts his own process of transformation is the most effective, while his verbatim memories of eulogies and letters are less so: the recalling of his mother’s eulogy at his father’s funeral, a letter from his dead mother, and his letter to his mentor Jamal serve as treatises that counteract Athman’s and give a voice to the opposing view of the moderate Muslim. Like the Quran in the text, these treatises are twice removed, dislocated, and though unconvincing as literary strategies, function metaphorically to express exile itself.

Raouf’s first person account of his descent into terror is centred on identity and basic existential questions arising from his sense of dislocation, rather than on Athman’s radical post politics. Benaïssa downplays description in the novel and the reader lacks a strong sense of place; the story could happen anywhere. The location is the narrator’s own consciousness, at the centre of which are his parents, symbolic of a distorted homelessness, removed, exiled, and deformed in some way. The only description of Raouf’s father is of a dead body embalmed in his casket, against Muslim tradition,

bloated and distorted so much that Raouf throws up when he sees him, the object of a cross-cultural debate between Raouf's mother and his father's relatives as to the proper mode of burial. The dead, absent father is remembered only in relation to the exiled Lebanese mother who serves to deliver various speeches on exile, including the unconvincing eulogy at her husband's death Benaïssa retrieves only when he is hypnotized, and the letter she writes for her son before her death and after his arrest, delivered to him by his girlfriend. In this sense, the litanies are separated in the novel as *expliqués* on exile, rather than integrated into the plot. As such, they are always removed from the narrator himself, either by his own unconscious, or through the meditation of a woman.

Throughout the novel the mother serves as an acculturated Muslim, echoing a secular belief in multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. She chooses the rather unconvincing occasion of her husband's death to give the following philosophical reflection on exile:

I am an exile from a utopian country. I am exiled from a utopia which would be a fusion of my country of birth and my adopted country. But what saves true exiles is that they develop an extraordinary energy, and if they are talented, they will be exceptional. (186)

She echoes Said's sentiments on the privileged position of those between cultures, believing that exile leads to a kind of universalism, a kind of disinterested space: "we become unfettered observers of others, of ourselves" (186). This worldliness allows the metaphorical exile, the intellectual, to escape both filiative and affiliative connections to a

certain degree. The mother escapes her bonds as a Lebanese and an American to conjure up her version of a cosmopolitan Islam. Her last letter to her son after his arrest synthesizes her secular approach, positioning her as a metaphor for a moderate and genuine Islam which has given birth to a deformation, her son. Tellingly, she feels as if she has had a miscarriage, drawing an analogy to *jihad* as a miscarriage from Islam: "I feel all the changes a woman's body feels in the beginning of a pregnancy as it gets ready for a baby, except that in mine they are occurring in a vacuum" (239). She hopes her son would be her father, the carrier of a new vital Islam, and wonders "did our history transform us into savages.... Are we capable of becoming adult Muslims?" (242). The letter resembles Said's musings on exile and raises all the questions that moderate interlocutors raise about the role of Islam in terrorism: the relationship between Islam, modernity, socialism, and exile, and the role of the international community in negotiating current conflicts. While it is hardly a letter a dying mother would write to a suicidal son, it does exhort a basic premise upon which the novel ends: "the solution is not to fight violence, but to eradicate the causes that created this violence in the first place" (252).

If both Athman and the mother are representative characters, exhorting opposing political treatises to explore the issues of *jihad*, Raouf is the site for the collision of these conflicts and for the process of de-culturation and codification so aptly described by Roy, as discussed in the previous chapter. The detailed description of Raouf's process through first person narrative follows a formulaic approach. First, Raouf's engagement is an emotional and an intellectual one which requires separation from his past. In his

repentance, he says, "I give up my former life as I gave up the milk of my mother" (80). Once he becomes a born-again Muslim, Raouf cannot remember how he had organized his world before: "When I try to remember how I thought before and about what, I haven't the slightest idea, no memory whatsoever. I became an amnesiac of the void that used to be inside me" (94). The process of becoming a *jihadist* is equated to the process of being in exile: "I had to exile myself by naming my country of origin, by inventing my adopted country" (136). With this separation from his previous life, including his lover and his mother, the process of politicization takes hold and he intellectualizes the position of the middle class Western *jihadist*: "If real minds don't die for Islam, martyrdom will remain an idiotic idea for idiots. I think the fact that people like us agree to do it will change the scope of the problem" (108). By people like us he means thinkers, Westerners: "those trained in their universities" (109).

The period of isolation leading to the event reads almost exactly like the letter of instruction from Atta, as fictionalized by both Updike and DeLillo. Raouf and his fellow *jihadists* live in a house, isolated, hooded when they are together, with a life of ritual, deprivation and purification of the body, and prayer. During this time, the erasure of self is supposedly completed: "They recreated me for another world. I was no longer the same, and in my eyes, the world was no longer the same either" (160). This period of purification, through codification, is described in painstaking detail by Raouf who outlines the supplications and codes to ensure paradise, and the ritual of the event rather than the spiritual meaning behind it: shaving, ablutions, and the recitation of certain words at every step.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the novel besides the close correlations made between *jihad* and exile is that Raouf remains both guilty and innocent of the act itself. The event does occur and he does watch it on television screens among many other spectators. His calculations led to the event; however, he did not board the plane. Again, as in Khadra's *The Sirens of Baghdad* and in Updike's *Terrorist*, the logic of the failed *jihadist* is never really made clear. When asked why he had chosen martyrdom, Raouf connects his reason to the death of his symbolic father, which had left him alone spiritually, and with a need to redeem his father's sins which he suffered due to exile, and to right the wrongs done against him. The father, at once a real and personal figure, representative of the failed Muslim community, becomes Raouf's major reason for *jihad*. However, the reader is never quite sure of why Raouf did not go through with the act of terror except that he aborts his act when he stops taking his pills, and finds clarity. For Benaïssa, then, the codification of the *jihadist* experience is a kind of hypnotic and drug induced state, from which his character emerges, if not totally. The conflicted Raouf is remorseful, but as he watches the event on television, as a member of an unsuspecting audience, he is also proud of his contribution: "the rapidity, precision and acrobatics of the manoeuvre intensified the violence of the act to the extreme. Maybe that's the one divine aspect of it all .I'm really proud of my calculations" (224). In contrast to this pride, Raouf's reasons for not going through with the act, as with the letter of his mother, become a mantra for a new-found moderate Islam. The moment of illumination is left open, as if it is unexplainable, except for the knowledge that God "is fundamentally against all extremes and immoderation" (232).

If the character of Raouf is conflicted and neurotic, it is at least human. The character is left disoriented and almost inarticulate in the face of the results of his actions. Though the novel is of questionable literary merit, it does raise some interesting interventions on a “real” fictional character, trying to explain the process which led him to terror. The awkward, but politically effective, counter narratives of the mother and Athman place the text firmly in the counter discourse about *jihad* and its intentionality. This counter discourse forefronts the role of exile and dislocation in producing the Western *jihadist*, and presents various arguments for placing the phenomenon of the *jihadist* in the exilic experience of globalization, accentuates the urgency for reclaiming a more authentic and nonviolent Islam as advocated by moderate Muslims.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid, short listed for the 2007 Booker Prize, is much more successful at humanizing the *jihadist*, but does not leave open such a wide range of possibilities. The novel recounts a dramatic monologue between Changez, a young Pakistani man who had studied at Princeton and works for Underwood Samson, and an anonymous American at a coffee shop in Lahore where Changez tells the story of his transformation from Wall Street executive to a “reluctant fundamentalist.” The narrative of disenchantment with the West is reminiscent of the classics of the growing canon of Muslim literature, such as Tayeb Salih’s 1968 *Season of Migration to the North* and Taher ben Jelloun’s 1988 *Solitaire*. Ben Jelloun’s Paris and Salih’s London are reflected in Hamid’s New York, particularly as women and cities become metaphors for the violence of colonization and postcolonial responses to it.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, there are no political treatises or ritualistic hypnotic religious experiences. Instead, Changez dispassionately recounts his disillusionment with the world of global finance with which he had become embroiled and his failed love affair with the inaccessible Erica, who serves as a metaphor for the West. In the beginning, when Changez recounts their trip to Greece, Erica is introduced as the fragile, slightly detached girl who shows an interest in him as a friend and whom he entertains with anecdotes of Pakistan. Symbolic Greece serves as a location to open the relationship between the New Yorker and the Pakistani, since Greece has always stood between the West and the Muslim world, a space mediated to the West through Muslim translators, and a space through which this interlocution has been erased to form a direct lineage between Greek and Western cultures.<sup>14</sup> Symbolic Greece allows the novel to be read allegorically as a sustained commentary on the nature of the Muslim/West relationship.

The relationship with Erica demonstrates the violence of this encounter. Erica is a neurotic and hysterical West, emotionally unbalanced and scarred because of the death of her fiancée, Chris. Meanwhile, it is significant that Changez, who feels protective of her, can only have sexual relations with Erica by reminding her of Chris, actually taking on his identity during the sexual act, for without this performance, Erica is frigid: "it reminded me of a wound, giving our sex a violent undertone" and after "I felt at once both satiated and ashamed" (106). Thus, only by taking on the identity of a dead lover can the physical relationship between Changez, the Muslim, and Erica, the West, actually

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<sup>14</sup> This erasure has been commented upon extensively by Anouar Majid in *Unveiling Traditions* and Akbar Ahmed in *Islam and Postmodernism*.

occur. At the same time, this relationship facilitates Erica's self destruction; she starves herself to death and then commits suicide (or at least disappears, since her death is not conclusive in the novel). Changez, then, the Muslim, brings on the suicide or disappearance of the West itself.

Read allegorically, the novel presents a familiar narrative in postcolonial Muslim fiction. The metaphoric relationship between White women and Black men, representative of a larger relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, was theorized by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "When my restless hands caress these white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine" (63). Likewise, in *The Season of Migration to the North*, Mustafa Saeed, a Sudanese economist at the London School of Economics also known as the Black Englishman, is put on trial for murdering a woman, his wife Jean Morris, and for contributing to the suicides of three other women. In his trial, Saeed articulates, "I came as an intruder into your very homes: a drop of the poison that you have injected into the veins of history. I am no Othello. Othello was a lie" (95). In *Solitaire*, ben Jelloun's North African immigrant murders or imagines the murder of, (the reader cannot be certain), an imaginary White woman whom he has constructed from images in magazines. In fact, murder, real or imaginary, becomes a scene for the reconstruction of the self and nation in ben Jelloun and Salih. Hamid's book can be placed in this postcolonial Muslim literary tradition as it reflects on the impossibility of a conversation between Muslims and the West and on the role of violence in such mediation in a post-9/11 world.

Yet this simply written but complex narrative can be read on another level by focusing on the relationship between Changez and the nameless American whom the reader knows only as Changez's silent audience. The novel is narrated as a monologue in which a nervous American listens to Changez's story at a coffee shop and then follows him in a walk through Lahore. The conversation between the two men is based on a shared paranoia and suspicion, yet bound by a certain intimacy and even moments of trust, perhaps representative of the relationship between Islam and the West. Throughout the conversation, only Changez speaks; the American speaks only through body language. Strangely, at the end of the novel, the American and Changez find themselves in an alley being approached by two ominous looking men. The reader does not know if either one of the characters will be a victim or not, and if so which one of them will become the victim. Has the American brought Changez to his capture or has Changez brought the American to his demise? The question is left unresolved. As Hamid himself notes in a 2009 interview with Harcourt Books,

The form of the novel, with the narrator and his audience both acting as characters, allowed me to mirror the mutual suspicion with which America and Pakistan (or the Muslim world) look at one another. The Pakistani narrator wonders: Is this just a normal guy or is he a killer out to get me? The American man who is his audience wonders the same. And this allows the novel to inhabit the interior emotional world much like the exterior political world in which it will be read. The form of the novel is an invitation to the reader. If the reader accepts,

then he or she will be called upon to judge the novel's outcome and shape its ending. (n.pag)

Further, in "My Reluctant Fundamentalist," Hamid discusses his choice of monologue as a form appropriate to the rich postcolonial tradition of Muslim fiction:

The frame of a dramatic monologue in which the Pakistani protagonist speaks to an American listener, and a voice born of the British colonial inflections taught in elite Pakistani schools and colored by an anachronistic, courtly menace that resonates well with popular Western preconceptions of Islam.(n.pag)

Thus Hamid's novel uses narrative techniques much more discreetly than the awkward maneuvers of Benaïssa, without the need for long political treatises. Further, the character of Changez is much more believable than that of Raouf, and much more likeable and human. Yet, both writers focus on one basic reason for the transformation of the Western *jihadi*: the sense of exclusion from his adopted country and the reclaiming of his origins in response. Hamid, however, adds none of the Quranic or religious references typical of Benaïssa and Updike's works, but, instead, situates his character and his motives firmly in the world of Wall Street capitalism, and failed encounters at intimacy. In this way, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* allegorizes the plight of the "bad" Muslim, who tells his story to an unresponsive and silent audience.

This allows us to elaborate on an issue discussed in the beginning of this chapter: the audience of the *jihadi* which in all the novels discussed thus far is a Western audience. With the sometimes Islamophobic debates on the possible inclusion of Turkey in the

European Union,<sup>15</sup> Orhan Pamuk's work, particularly the post-9/11 novel, *Snow*, provides an example of critical intervention into the concerns regarding the *jihadi* among us, or in other words, the possibility of Turkey with a population of over seventy million Muslims and the second largest military in NATO becoming officially European.

The worldliness of Pamuk's texts became obvious in 2005 when he complained in a series of interviews that Turkey had been responsible for the massacre of a million Armenians and 30,000 Kurds and, as a result, Turkish prosecutors charged him with "insulting Turkishness." The charge was eventually dropped following an international outcry, but had hit international headlines just weeks before talks about Turkey's entry into the EU. Pamuk, who has always argued for Turkey's entry into the EU, was used to demonstrate that Turkey, with its human rights violations, was not ready to join the democratic EU. Pamuk commented directly on this scenario: "In Europe, conservative people who do not want to see Turkey in Europe tried to abuse my situation. They wanted to show that this country does not deserve Europe, which put me in an awfully awkward situation" ("I want to continue" n.pag).

Pamuk's work continued to come under even more scrutiny since he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006. Since then, Pamuk, who writes in Turkish, has become known to a larger international audience, politicizing his work in the debate over Turkey's negotiation for EU membership. Pamuk, commenting on his Nobel win, noted

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<sup>15</sup> Public opinion in EU countries generally opposes Turkish membership, though with varying degrees of intensity. The Eurobarometer September–October 2006 survey shows that 59% of EU-27 citizens are against Turkey joining the EU, while only about 28% are in favor. European Commission: Eurobarometer 66 - Public Opinion in the European Union, Sep-Oct 2006. Web. 25 Oct. 2010. <[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_en.pdf)>.

his own value in this situation: “Well, unfortunately, that makes the thing very precious in Turkey, which is good for Turkey of course, getting this prize, but makes it more extra sensitive and political and it somehow tends to make it as a sort of a burden” (“Interviews,” nobelprize.org n.pag) . It is in this context, read against the ongoing debate on Turkey’s entry into the EU, that *Snow* offers a direct commentary on the *jihadist* among us, particularly on the political tensions in Turkey, notably among secular nationalists and Islamist political movements. Although Margaret Atwood’s 2004 *New York Times* review of *Snow* places it firmly in the tradition of post-9/11 literature, *Snow* is more than a post-9/11 novel—it is also an articulation into the debate on the potential increasing Muslimness of Europe.

Pamuk has commented that the novel was intentionally written as a political novel since he wanted to write “a political novel in which I explored my own spiritual dilemmas—coming from an upper-middle-class family and feeling responsible for those who had no political representation?” (“The Art of Fiction” n.pag). *Snow* became an exploration of the political conflict between secularism and Islam in Turkey, as well as a philosophical commentary of the mediation of the novelist and poet in representing others. Pamuk noted that neither the secularist nor the Islamists were happy with the novel:

The secularists were upset because I wrote that the cost of being a secular radical in Turkey is that you forget that you also have to be a democrat. The power of the secularists in Turkey comes from the army. This destroys Turkey’s democracy and culture of tolerance... They also didn’t like that I portrayed Islamists as

human beings. The political Islamists were upset because I wrote about an Islamist who had enjoyed sex before marriage. It was that kind of simplistic thing. Islamists are always suspicious of me because I don't come from their culture, and because I have the language, attitude, and even gestures of a more Westernized and privileged person. They have their own problems of representation and ask: How can he write about us anyway? He doesn't understand. This I also included in parts of the novel. ("The Art of Fiction," n.pag)

Of course, it is this debate on the secular versus Muslim nature of Turkey that permeates many of the debates of Turkey's entry into the European Union.

In *Snow*, Orhan, a novelist, goes to Kars, snow in Turkish, in Anatolia years after his now departed friend Ka, short for Kafka, had returned there after a decade abroad in Germany (Stoda n.pag). Orhan wishes to retrace Ka's journey to find out why girls were committing suicide and to rekindle his lost love with Ipek who has recently divorced her Islamist husband. The conflict between the Islamists and the aggressive secularists provides the political argument of the novel and Pamuk problematizes the binaries of Islam and secularism, often making the Islamists the victims of violence rather than perpetrators of it. Pamuk's art in this novel is ultimately to destabilize the image of the potential *jihadist* and the modern secularist, the religious and the secular, as two separate and self contained entities. For example, even the motives of the girls who are committing suicide, supposedly out of religious conviction, are not what they appear: there are rumors that the first girl committed suicide, not as a political statement about

her right to wear *hijab*, but because her father was planning her marriage to an older gentlemen, not allowing her to marry for love. Kadife, ringleader of the headscarf movement, is also having an affair with the Islamist leader, Blue, and her sister, Ipek, a secularist, did not divorce her husband for his new-found fundamentalism, but because of a love affair, like her sister's, with Blue. These contradictions destabilize the world of appearances: nothing is as it appears; private acts are politicized, and sometimes private acts compete with ideology for the identity and allegiance of the individual.

Unlike Updike, De Lillo and Benaïssa's characters, all of Pamuk's Islamists are multifaceted, articulate and aware of their contradictions. Every character is shown wrestling with belief and all characters go through believable transformations in their thinking about God and the roles of Islamic and secular symbols in society. Blue, the potential and suspected *jihadi*, is a rich and complex character, fully aware of and articulate about his complexities. When Blue is first introduced, Ka (and the reader) is aware of his mythological status, as a shadowy figure in hiding whose history has been mythologized. He is immediately positioned as a performer and activist who has taken the opportunity of numerous media appearances: "he was such a hit as the 'wild eyed scimitar wielding Islamist' that he was invited to repeat his performance on other channels" (69). Yet when Ka meets Blue, he is amazed at his grace and handsomeness and how different he is in reality than the image presented in media: "in his manner, expression and appearance there was nothing of the truculent, bearded, provincial fundamentalist whom the secular press had depicted with a gun in one hand and a string of prayer beads in the other" (72).

Blue is interested in Ka because he sees him as a link to the West, as a possible journalist and mediator. In order to convince Blue of his false status as journalist, Ka invents a German whom he assures Blue will publish his "Statement to the West." The conversation between the two becomes a fine example of the ironic stance of mediation between the scribe and the *jihadist*. For example, as Ka edits Blue's statement he focuses on the role of language in winning sympathy from a Western audience. It begins when Ka attempts to explain the discomfort the fictional editor might feel at the terminology "the West" itself:

"He takes offense when people discuss the West as if it's a single person with a single point of view," Ka said carefully.

"But that's how it is" Blue said, after another pause. "There is, after all, only one West and only one Western point of view. And we take the opposite point of view."

"The fact remains that they don't live that way in the West," said Ka. "It's not as if it is here; they don't want everyone thinking alike. Everyone, even the most ordinary grocer, feels compelled to boast of having one's own personal views. If we used the term Western democrats instead of the West, you'd have a better chance of pricking people's consciences." (228)

Blue concedes to Ka's analysis and recognizes the power of language and articulation in representing oneself. In short, he plays the game. This is evident later, when Blue asserts his exhibitionistic and individualistic stance and chooses to be executed rather than compromise:

There's a word Europhiles very commonly use when they denigrate our people. To be a true Westerner, a person must first become an individual, and then they go on to say that that in Turkey, there are no individuals? Well, that's how I see my execution. I'm standing up against the westerners as an individual; it's because I am an individual that I refuse to imitate them (324).

Blue is capable of using the terminology of his enemies to turn it back on them in his performance, and he is aware of the role of journalism in creating and sustaining his mythological status. Blue notes the inability of the Islamists to represent themselves under their own terms and notes the reason for it: "we've fallen under the spell of the West, we've forgotten our own stories. They've removed all the old stories from our children's textbooks" (78). The only way to reach the Turkish public, he admits ruefully, is via the Western press. At the same time, the journalist himself becomes responsible for the articulation of the message. Blue, similarly, notes the complicit role of the writer, as one responsible, in articulating the *jihadi*st's message: "But having heard it from me, you can't claim to be innocent from now on" (237).

The role of journalism in creating a community of responsible victims is explored further by Pamuk through various conversations between Ka and Serday Bey, the owner of the *Border City Gazette*. Bey writes stories before they happen, ironically noting that the writing itself makes the event real, that papers print what sells, are purely commercial enterprises run by commercial interests and that if people wanted the truth papers would sell it: "they even come to believe the lies we print about them" (302). The fact that all the prewritten articles come true in the novel suggests that the audience is prepared for

the violent enactment of the real violence produced and performed in the symbolic system, as Baudrillard had claimed in *The Spirit of Terrorism*.

The beauty of art, and particularly the role of poetry, is a major subject of consideration throughout the novel. It is after all, Ka, the poet, who betrays Blue, the *jihadist*, directly causing his death. Ka himself is weak, romantic and frustrated; in Germany, where he is murdered, he spends his time giving small poetry readings, living in an apartment building and renting pornographic films. Blue, on the other hand, is respected, mythologized and significant, and also a poet. Surprisingly, Blue decides to leave behind his poems as his “testament” to be published after his death (322). It is not political violence itself that becomes his testament but it is his poetry that becomes his *shahadah*.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, while both characters end up dead, Ka at the hands of supposed Islamists and Blue at the hands of secularists, throughout the novel there is an ongoing rivalry between the poet and the *jihadist*, with Ka admiring and liking Blue, despite himself. Indeed, the novel is populated with a variety of frustrated poets. Besides Ka, there is Muhtar, an ex-Marxist and Ipek’s husband who turned to political Islamism, Necip and Fazil, the young Islamists, and Blue himself.

When Muthar speaks to Ka about his conversion to Islam he also talks of a great pain he felt when he could not find an audience for his poetry: “the truths in these poems deserved to stand alongside the truths in Western poetry” (56-7). His inability to find an audience led Muttar to the political Islamist party “that values the spiritual side” (57). Like the *jihadist* who requires an audience for his act of violence, Muthar the poet

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<sup>16</sup> “Witness. Recitation of the Islamic witness of faith. “There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God.” (John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* 229).

requires an audience to make his conversion real. This exhibitionism, Pamuk insinuates, is at the center of conversion and of political Islam itself. Likewise, Necip is a young Islamist, caught between his world of political Islam and his desire to be a poet, who sees in writing the ability to exert control over existence: "We could be the poets of our own lives if we could first write about what shall be and later enjoy the marvels of what we have written" (141). It is Necip's account of his feared atheism that becomes one of Ka's major poems. Ironically, Ka, a secular, exiled Turkish poet, who claims "I wanted to be a Westerner and a believer" (142), finds himself mediating the existential doubts of an Islamist. Later in the novel, Necip is shot in the head, much the same way Ka is shot: Necip the victim of secularist violence and Ka the victim of Islamist violence.

It is worth noting that though Necip and Ka both die, the soul of Necip supposedly lives on in Fazil, an Islamist science fiction writer, who himself has a few direct words of warning to the novelist, Orhan, about representation. Fazil, Necip's double, warns Orhan, Ka's double, that he refuses to be represented unfairly in his novel and will only agree to be represented if he can speak directly to his Western audience:

Your Western readers would be so caught up in pitying me or being poor that they wouldn't even have a chance to see my life. For example, if you said I was writing an Islamist science fiction novel, they'd just laugh. I don't want to be described as someone people smile at out of pity and compassion. (410)

He continues, "I'd like to tell your readers not to believe anything you say about me, anything you say about any of us. No one could understand us from so far away" (426).

Fazıl warns Orhan that he must insert this disclaimer into his novel, making an important point about the nature of mediation. The reason he asks for this disclaimer is not because Fazıl does not respect art, but the opposite, because he knows it often constructs a reality that is difficult to change.

In the end, the reader is left with the novelist and narrator Orhan as the most viable and convincing mediator. Nevertheless, the novelist competes with both the poet, Ka, and the *jihadist* Blue. When Orhan discovers evidence that Ka really did betray Blue and cause his murder, he wonders, “Could it be that the writer clerk was secretly delighted at the fall of the sublime poet” (419). He also recognizes something about himself: “I was jealous not of Ka but of Blue” (414). Thus, both Ka and Orhan are jealous of Blue, the *jihadist*, lover and rival, a man with whose mythology they cannot compete. Though the poet is directly responsible for the death of the *jihadist*, and so in turn dies, the mythology of the *jihadist* lives on while the poet becomes a broken memory in Kars, a betrayer. Further, even though the *jihadist* is murdered, indirectly, by the poet, the poet’s own mediation, his poems, are lost and unrecoverable. In fact, Ka has no message for the world. Only Orhan and Blue do, and Orhan is much more uncertain about his, based on an absent and lost text of poems, and a tedious chronicling of details of the life of a poet he wishes to be. It is the mythology of Blue, then, that remains as the greatest work of art in the novel, a mythology so strong that the authorities dump his body in a nameless lake to avoid massive political pilgrimages to his burial site. Ka and Orhan are both diminished in front of Blue. Pamuk never makes any grandiose claims

for the novelist whose role is more of an anthropologist and historian, a documenter, but he does make claims, for the *jihadi*’s value, a major focus in the text.

In this way, Pamuk’s *Snow* has more in common with DeLillo’s *Mao II*, than it does with *Falling Man*. *Mao II* did not deploy any *jihadists* among its important characters, but it did entertain plenty of troubled thoughts on the subject of the novelist’s jealous rivalry with the terrorist. The novelist, according to DeLillo’s protagonist, Bill Gray, has been superseded by the terrorist as an infiltrator of everyday consciousness. In fact, in *Mao II* terrorists are positioned as rivals and doubles of writers, as Blue is the rival of both Orhan and Ka. Likewise, Scott archives Bill’s work as Orhan attempts to archive Ka’s lost poetry. The irony in DeLillo’s novel is that when Bill gives himself up as a hostage to terror, his sacrifice is not accepted; he dies as a result of delayed injuries of a hit and run accident when on a boat from Cyprus to Beirut. Likewise, Ka is murdered by an unknown and suspected Islamist on the streets of Germany without any publicity or fuss. In *Mao II*, terrorism’s televised narrative has replaced the novel. Likewise, in *Snow* theatre replaces reality.

Pamuk’s use of two acts of staged theatre in *Snow* accentuates this relationship between reality and performance and the complicit relationship between the audience and the performers. The first play, “My Fatherland or My Head Scarf,” tells a tale of religious fanatics who plot a conspiracy and are gunned down by the protectors of the Turkish state. However, the absurdity occurs when the actors, who are real police agents, gun down the boys from the religious school who are members of the audience. A massacre results which is written into Kars’ history as a coup, blamed on Kurdish nationalists and

supported by Ka. Therefore, history is reversed as the actors perpetrate violence on the audience, a metaphoric commentary on the nature of the *jihad* which attacks its audience. However, ironically, here the attackers are the secularists and the audience, or victims, the Islamists. In the second act of violence, a play called “The Spanish Tragedy”, Kadife, who is supposed to remove her headscarf in a submission to secularism, instead makes a deal with the actor Sunay, a secularist, to shoot him, theatrically and really, and then kill herself. Hence, in the second play, one performer commits violence, accepted and agreed upon, on the other, and the audience participates in witnessing and even willing this death, since the murder-suicide has already been predicted in the paper before the act itself has occurred. In both performances, the audience has become so disconnected from the real that it is unable to recognize it when it sees it.

In Pamuk’s world, the theatre does the very thing it seems to be representing and as such confuses the audience that has come to expect performance to be fictional. The audience of “My Fatherland, My Headscarf” is baffled and unsure if the violence is real or merely part of the performance: “a number of Kars residents out of touch as they were with modern theatrical conventions took it for yet another bit of experimental staging” (156). Even the admirers of theatre rise to clap for the “beauty of the theatrical effects” (157). When someone utters that the guns are loaded “his words gave utterance to what everyone in the hall knew in his heart but still could not bring his mind to accept” (157). Even if the real is too real to accept, the play continues after the murders, with an uncertainty between what is theatre and what is real. The second piece of theatre, which is clearly staged for political purposes as a way to assert secularist hegemony over the

Islamist rebellion of both the head scarf-wearing girls and Blue, makes a direct connection between real political results and artistic performance. Kadife and Sunay discuss the relationship between reality and art and she tells him directly, in front of the audience, that she will kill him. Though the actors both tell the audience what really will happen, Sunay assures the audience that his death will not happen when he convinces them the gun is not loaded. When Kadife finally shoots Sunay and the audience does not believe he is really shot, Sunay is disappointed at their inability to understand his deception: "they know nothing about modern art"(404). Even though the audience sees the actions on stage, they only really believe Sunay's death has occurred when they read it in the paper. This savvy audience is so suspicious of the real that when it is performed in front of them, murder becomes mere performance; it needs to be mediated to be accepted as reality. Pamuk insinuates, therefore, that the audience is responsible, in part, for the death of the performer. As the Colonel who investigated the act concludes, "If the people of Kars were so eager to see him kill himself on stage, if they were still prepared to enjoy the drama, telling themselves it was just a play, they too were complicit" (407). Pamuk's destabilization of the binary between secular and *jihadist* motives and his humanization of the Islamists send a strong message to European audiences regarding their perceptions of a fearful Muslim Turkey. His reflections on identity, the European and Turkish nature of his main characters, Ka, Orhan and Blue, also imply that the Turkey is already part of Europe, and always has been, involved in the same metaphysical battles with the nature of identity and politics. His comments on the role of "theatre" and journalism in creating reality also sends a strong message regarding the

diabolical image of Turkey, its politics and people, which is held by many Europeans, and which, at times, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Further, Pamuk's deconstruction of *ihadists'* motives and the role of performance raise some pertinent questions of mediation and responsibility, which have not been raised to the same extent by any of the writers discussed in this chapter.

What is the unique contribution of Muslim mediators in delineating the intentionality of the *ihadist*? First, it is evident that these interventions have problematized the nature of the native informant or comprador intellectual, as a mere insider offering credence to the dominant discourse on the war on terror. The novels explored here engage directly with the now popular and academically common knowledge of patterns found in the lives of the *ihadists*: the authors share a certain formula with non-Muslim writers, such as Updike and DeLillo, but at the same time they attempt to contextualize the *ihad* outside of a purely Islamic context. They also humanize the character of the *ihadist*, portraying his intentions as identifiable, while being aware of and sensitive to the unfamiliarity of the codes and ideologies the disillusioned young men in these novels graft onto an Islamic cause. Second, there is an awareness of writing in a European language for a European audience and the process of exoticization and familiarization that weighs heavy on the writers' consciousness: all the Muslim writers in the chapter comment directly on their own personal experiences and credibility as viable interlocutors. For example, when asked in an interview about his Muslimness, considering that he has written a book to "represent" political Islamists, Pamuk responds carefully in a 2005 *Der Spiegel* interview:

My religion is complicated. Literature is my true religion. After all, I come from a completely nonreligious family....I consider myself a person who comes from a Muslim culture. In any case, I would not say that I'm an atheist. So I'm a Muslim who associates historical and cultural identification with this religion. (n.pag)

Third, all writers are acutely aware of the exhibitionist positioning of the *jihadist*, his engagement with his audience, his role as story teller, a chronicler of our times, as the novelist was in earlier times.

Clearly, the insertion of a sustained relationship between the *jihadist* and the victim is part of a counter discourse that challenges the dominant paradigm circulating in the discourse on the war on terror. The very attempt to explore the intentionality of the *jihadist*, outside of a purely religious and culturist narrative is indeed an effort, itself, at building a counter narrative to the dominant discourse of *jihad* and of contemporary power relations. The articulations of the *jihadist* herself are an integral part of this counter-discourse—the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Five  
Secular and Divine Intentions: Re(a)el Jihadists and the Community of Responsible Victims

Said's focus on the difference between secular and religious criticism, in a metaphorical sense, has heavily permeated the discussions reviewed in the last few chapters regarding the intentionality of the *jihadist*. I have noted, for example, in Chapter Two, how the *jihadist* is demonized and dehumanized in various novels and cultural criticism in a complicit relationship with the militarization of Muslim countries in the war on terror. In Chapter Three I discussed how the secularization of the intentionality of the *jihad* has become paramount in describing its intentionality in both neoliberal and leftist discourse, and also in the move from *jihad* to *ijtihad* in the radical reform process. In fictional representations of the *jihadist*, such as those examined in Chapter Four, the *jihadist* becomes humanized and the binary between secularism and religion is blurred: the *jihadist*, employing the framework of Islamic ideologies and codes of honor, undertakes political, personal and symbolic acts. As the *jihad* becomes secularized in intention, the binary between the religious and the secular is also deconstructed.

In this chapter, I will maintain that while the secularization of the *jihad* helps us understand its global role and its sense of global ethics, and takes it out of the neo-Orientalist debate regarding the inherent violence of Islam, it also underestimates the particularity of the *jihad* as a faith-based global, postcolonial articulation. The *jihadists* themselves continuously communicate the Islamic basis of their argument, and this seems to be either overemphasized as a singular motive by neoconservatives, or overlooked by

those who replace it with a secular discourse on globalization and human rights. The fact that *jihadists* consistency explain their faith-based ethics is often taken as confused ranting or incoherent argumentation. Occupying the same field as the “good” Muslims and their mediators makes it more difficult for the *jihadists* to be heard, since the audience has become accustomed to hearing them through the interpretation of their “moderate” interlocutors. In this chapter I will argue that the *jihadist* is indeed speaking, though it is contentious as to whether she is being heard. I will identify two issues which I believe make the environment for this hearing particularly static prone: first, the dual misunderstanding regarding the “sacrificial” nature of the *jihad* and the “sovereign-less” status of the *jihadists*, and, second, the sometimes unitary attention paid to the performative and spectacular role of the *jihad* at the expense of its political consequences. By addressing the contributions of Faisal Devji and Henry Giroux, I will highlight some of the ways the *jihadists* are being simultaneously heard and silenced. By using examples from speeches and videos of noted *jihadists*, I will argue that the *jihadist* stance, though often times not coherent, is in fact performative *and* political, secular *and* other-worldly, not based in a discourse of sacrifice and sovereignty but in a utopian vision of the founding of a new *ummah*. The Islamic vision is more than a loose narrative that underlies secular motives; it is a radical reimagining of a utopian faith-based project.

The *jihadist* humanizes himself for his audience, while committing violence upon himself and his audience. Yet, it is not the violence itself, or even the recording of this violence for public consumption that has placed the *jihadist* at the center of theory. The media is replete with far greater examples of mass violence to which we have become

relatively desensitized. However, it is the willingness of the *jihadist* to annihilate himself, wrongly perceived as suicide, which fascinates the public. If, as Žižek argues in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, people can no longer imagine a cause worth dying for, it is also true that they can *only* imagine a cause worth killing for. The *jihadist* rejects the terms of terrorism and suicide vehemently, though analysts, even Muslim ones, continuously apply these terms to him. For the *jihadist*, his act is one of both secular and sacred intent and can only be fully comprehended within this frame. He does not consider himself “sovereign-less,” for his sovereignty is defined by belonging to Islam, to belonging to God, which cannot be defined in terms of national sovereignty. And his act is not suicide, highly condemned in Islam, and neither is it an act of sacrifice of self for the formation of a human community, but an act of witnessing to his faith as a Muslim who fights the oppression of socially constructed justice to achieve divine justice. It is critical to use the *jihadist*’s own terms to comprehend fully the multi dimensions of his intentionality which, I will argue, is both symbolic and political, not one or the other.

In general, the debate over the intentionality of the *jihad* focuses on worldly and otherworldly motives, the latter a thoroughly under-discussed issue, perhaps, because the other other-worldly has been denigrated in postcolonial theory as the opposite of Said’s worldliness, and so inhabits the site of a dogmatic stance with little to offer radical theory. The dominant paradigm in accentuating secular and religious motives is to emphasize that religious violence is more fanatical, fearful and unmanageable, with its perpetrators referred to as “new terrorists.” Walter Laqueur, in *No End to War*, explains “the ‘new’ terrorism has increasingly become indiscriminate in the choice of its victims.

Its aim is no longer to conduct propaganda but to effect maximum destruction, especially in terrorism inspired by religious fanaticism” (9). Simon and Benjamin also note the difference between secular and religious-inspired violence and the consequent paradigm shift:

The old paradigm of predominantly state sponsored terrorism has been joined by a new, religiously motivated terrorism that neither relies on the support of sovereign states nor is constrained by the limits on violence that the state sponsors have observed themselves or placed on their proxies. (59)

As Bruce Hoffman likewise elaborates “whereas secular terrorists attempt to appeal to a constituency of actual supporters or potential sympathizers, religious terrorists are at once activists and constituents engaged in what they regard as a total war. They seek to appeal to no other constituency than themselves” (95). At the core of this division between the new (religious) and old (secular) binary is the view that the practitioners of this new form of terrorism are more fanatical, radical, and perhaps irrational than the secular organizations of old terrorism, with the paranoia and fanaticism of the new terrorism creating an increased distance from the political and rational motives of the phenomenon’s predecessors. Thus, the new terrorists engage in symbolic “performances of violence that symbolize a cosmic war” and their acts are framed as largely symbolic and transformative (Jurgensmeyer 162).

The issue under consideration here, then, is not so much the violence of *jihad*, but the nature of this violence, particularly the fact that the *jihadist* kills himself as well as others. This act is discursively referred to as “suicide bombing” as a method by which the

*jihadist* inscribes his own death on the public consciousness, makes his act forever a public performance. As this thesis has explored, the motives for this “suicide,” in fiction and criticism, are sometimes considered as socially constructed, either for personal or socio-political reasons, and other times mocked as misguided other-worldly motives, a hysterical desire for numerous virgins or drinking endlessly from rivers of wine. In fact, the lack of discussion on divine motives, other-worldly intentions, allows the discourse to be punctuated with the terminology of sacrifice, rather than one of testimony, which is the *jihadist* tradition.

These considerations are taken up by Talal Asad in *On Suicide Bombing*. Asad traces the genealogy of *jihad* and concludes that modern explanations for suicide bombings focus on the notion of sacrifice which originates more in Christian tradition rather than in the Muslim one, where *jihad* is firmly connected to self defense. He argues that connecting the concept of sacrifice to *jihad* designates it as religious terrorism which defines the bomber as morally underdeveloped- and therefore premodern when compared with people whose civilized status is partly indicated by their secular politics and their private religion, and whose violence is therefore, in principle, disciplined, reasoned and just. (45) To formulate *jihad* as sacrifice, foreign to its Islamic roots, sets it as a “perverse form of national politics and permits unhelpful references to a unique culture of death” (50). Instead of tying suicide to a premodern Islamic tradition, Asad argues that suicide bombing is generated by neo-liberalism itself. Asad notes that liberal societies were founded on the Christian notion of sacrifice with individuals sacrificing rights in

order to achieve the protection of the State which is given legitimacy to perpetrate violence on behalf of its citizens:

I want to suggest that the cult of sacrifice, blood and death that secular liberals find so repellent in pre-liberal Christianity is a part of the genealogy of modern liberalism itself, in which violence and tenderness go together. This is encountered in many places in our modern culture, not least in what is generally taken to be “just” war.” (88)

He further elaborates that liberalism disapproves of a violent exercise of freedom outside the frame of the law, though it constantly shifts these boundaries, redefining law to address its needs. Suicide bombers, he continues, operate within this ideology of a continually shifting legitimization of violence: of a “limitless pursuit of freedom” (91). In this way it confronts liberalism with its own internal contradictions. For Asad, not only is the postcolonial concept of *jihad* a deviation of Islamic theology that cannot be understood by postulating a culture of death and sacrifice inherent to Islam, it is deeply rooted in the metaphysical tradition of liberalism and the socio-political conditions brought about by neo-liberal capitalist expansion. Asad accuses Western theorists of reading *jihad* through a neo-liberal Christian lens, therefore asserting it as a form of sacrifice, implicitly compared to the sacrifice of Jesus.

However, Asad does not elaborate this argument by comparing the Islamic and Christian versions of the death of Jesus, which would, in fact, further support his point. In Islam, Jesus, Issa, was not actually sacrificed, and instead was made to appear to be sacrificed. According to the Quran, the sacrifice or death of Jesus was a collective

illusion, instigated by God himself, as he rescued Jesus from death and enthroned him to immortality. Therefore, for Muslims, Jesus was not sacrificed, or even killed, and his sacrifice had nothing to do with redeeming the world of its sins. In fact, he was saved from death and granted immortality, and in this way the transgressions of his opponents were defeated. The appearance of his death was in fact an illusion to cover his actual crossing over into an immortal realm. The Muslim rejection of the notion of sacrifice as evident in the story of Issa necessitates, I believe, a more thorough analysis of this concept, particularly as seen by *jihadists* themselves.

It is important to note that the *jihadists* consistently refer to their struggle as a *jihad*, articulating a vision of immortality as a reward for their struggle, not a sacrifice. At the same time, however, to displace *jihad* from its Islamic tradition and posit it as a secular misreading by the Christian neoliberal tradition silences one of the arguments of the *jihadists* themselves as to the nature of his particularity. To claim that *jihad* is not part of an Islamic tradition because its postcolonial configurations which we are witnessing do not fit that of traditional jurists, is, in fact, taking an ahistorical, theological and purely textual view of *jihad*. It is important to trace these postcolonial transfigurations and use the terminologies which its perpetrators do: *jihadists* consistently refer to themselves as *jihadists*. Therefore, it seems Asad, perhaps because of frustration with the use of the term *jihad* to assert a premodern culture of death in Islam, is guilty of not following his own advice: "If one is to talk about religious subjectivities, one must work through the concepts the people concerned actually use" (44). It is important to take a brief journey

into the Islamic conception of the terms of martyrdom and suicide in order to understand the intentionality of the *jihadist*, from the discourse of the *jihadist* himself.

In short, there is no Islamic concept of martyrdom or suicide, though the current debate focuses largely on these concepts. Ali Shariati,<sup>17</sup> for example, described the relationship between the concept of *shahid*<sup>18</sup> and martyr as actual antonyms. He noted that the root of the word martyr is derived from the (Latin) root "mort, and "implies "death and dying, and so martyr refers to "the one who dies for God and faith";

Thus a martyr is, in any case, the one who dies. The only difference between his death and that of others is to be seen in the "cause." He dies for the cause of God, whereas the cause of the death of another may be cancer. Otherwise, the essence of the phenomenon in both cases, that is to say, death, is one and the same. As far as death is concerned it makes no difference whether the person is killed for God, for passion, or in an accident. In this sense, Christ and those killed for Christianity are "martyrs." In other words, they were "mortals," because, in Christendom's the term "martyr" refers to the person who has died [as such].

But a *shahid* is always alive and present. He is not absent. Thus the two terms,

"*shahid*" and "martyr," are antonyms of each other. (n.pag)

Shariati maintained that the *shahid* is always present, and does not die, unlike a martyr who actually dies. To support this argument, he clarified that the word *shahid* has a

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<sup>17</sup> Dr Ali Shariati (1933-1977), an Iranian sociologist, is considered one of the major intellectuals behind the Iranian revolution. His vast body of work combines Marxist and Islamic principles and includes translations of Fanon's work.

<sup>18</sup> "One who suffers or loses one's life in the process of carrying out religious duty" (John L.Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* 229).

double meaning. First, it means one who gives testimony to his faith with his death and, second, it means a model or paradigm which is eternal. Therefore, a *shahid* dies as a witness to Islam, struggling to institute justice and Divine Law on earth. If it meant only that, then *shahid* would be the same as martyr. However, the second meaning of his paradigmatic status indicates that he is immortal. This is demonstrated in the special burial procedures for the *shahid*, who because he is rendered free from sin through his act is considered already purified, and, therefore, is not washed, according to regular Islamic ritual, but is buried in his clothes. He is entitled to immediate immortality, entry into paradise and enjoys special status there since his faith has already been tested. Therefore, the notion of the “present” *shahid* indicates that he is an immortal paradigm and a model, but also that he transcends death and merely crosses directly over into paradise. Shariati explained,

A *shahid* is the one who negates his whole existence for the sacred ideal in which we all believe. It is natural then that all the sacredness of that ideal and goal transports itself to his existence. True, that his existence has suddenly become nonexistent, but he has absorbed the whole value of the idea for which he has negated himself. No wonder then, that he, in the mind of the people, becomes sacredness itself. In this way, man becomes absolute man, because he is no longer a person, an individual. He is "thought." (n.pag)

These *shahid*, Shariati notes, are “alive, present, witnesses, and observers. They are not only so in the sight of God, but also in the sight of the masses in every age and every land” (n. pag).

Shariati's description of *shahid* is directly relevant to the perception of *jihad* in contemporary *jihadist* discourse since Osama bin Laden, in particular, though Sunni, borrowed quite freely from the Shia doctrine of *jihad* and *shahid* (Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad* 13-32). For example, in a September 2009 recording, bin Laden argued,

Praise be to God, we are carrying our weapons on our shoulders and have been fighting the two poles of evil in the East and the West for 30 years. Throughout this period, we have not seen any cases of suicide among us despite the international pursuit against us. We praise God for this. This proves the soundness of our belief and the justice of our cause. God willing, we will continue our way to liberate our land. ("The Latest bin Laden Statement" n.pag)

Here, bin Laden obstinately rejected the terminology of suicide bombing, instead focusing on the soundness of belief in his struggle for justice which is protected by the laws and will of the Divine. The *jihadists* die for a Divine cause, the establishment of a just *ummah*, as ordered by God. This just society on earth is, of course, worldly but ordained by Divine Law. Therefore, the *jihadist* is not sacrificing or martyring himself as an individual for the good of worldly justice only, but transforming himself from individual into a thought, becoming the "absolute man," crossing over into the realm of God's justice. As such, *jihad* cannot be articulated as sacrifice but as a living, immortal testimony to faith. For certain, it also a political and worldly struggle for the existence of an earthly *ummah* at a specific historical moment, but it is not *only* that. The continued existence of this earthly *ummah* immortalizes the *jihadist's* efforts, who is always present and observing, according to Shariati. This otherworldly intention also transforms the

nature of sovereignty, another misused term which is often misinterpreted, in discussing the *jihadist's* stance.

Sayyid Qutb argued that the modern world is a form of *jahiliyyah*<sup>19</sup>:

The *jahiliyyah* is based on rebellion against God's sovereignty on earth. It transfers to men, one of the greatest attributes of God, sovereignty, which makes some men lords over others... Only in the Islamic way of life do men become free from the servitude of some men to others and devote themselves to the worship of God alone, derive guidance from Him alone and bow before him alone. This is where the roads separate and this is the new concept we possess and can present it to mankind... that is the vital message which mankind does not know. It is not a product of western invention, nor European genius, whether Western or Eastern. (6-7)

Therefore, for Qutb and for the *jihadists* who follow his teachings, all men are "sovereign-less," since sovereignty can only be granted to God. No other power has the right to demand obedience or allegiance if it is not based on Divine Laws. The concept of the nation state that demands sovereignty is absent for *jihadists*. In fact, *jihad* is the way out of *jahiliyya* and false sovereignty. According to Qutb, the *jihad* must use persuasion and force to destroy institutions that keep people enslaved; it does not compel conversion but destroys institutions that prevent it: "Its purpose is to free people who wish to be freed from the enslavement to men, so they may serve God alone " (42). The

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<sup>19</sup> "Pre-Islamic period or ignorance of monotheism and divine law. In current use refers to secular modernity.... Sayyid Qutb interpreted *jahiliyyah* as the domination of humans over humans, rather than submission of humans to God." (John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* 154).

*jihadi*, therefore, does not sacrifice himself for country; he fights to free others from the sovereignty of men and unjust institutions and his testimony is that there is no god but God, meaning that nothing can be worshiped but God. Qutb eloquently explained the notions of “sovereign-less” for Muslims: “The homeland of the Muslim in which he lives and which he defends is not a piece of land. The nationality of a Muslim, by which he is identified, is not the nationality determined by a government (102).

Bin Laden consistently repeated Qutb’s argument. In “The Solution,” which addressed the American people on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of 9/11, bin Laden spoke at length about American failure in Iraq, but used it to focus on his main point, the problem to which he later provided a “solution,” that of capitalism and its effect on the globe. He argued that the war in Iraq, despite the American people appearing to repudiate the Bush administration and its foreign policy by electing the Democrats to Congress in 2006, was doomed to continue because of the greed of capitalists and corporations, the “real tyrannical terrorists,” controlling American interests through corrupt government officials. He declared that capitalism and democracy have detrimentally affected not only the people of Iraq and Afghanistan through war, but also the people in Africa through displacement and mankind, in general, through global warming. bin Laden claimed that despite the talk of democracy by Bush, Blair, Sarkozy and Brown, these figures display a “flagrant disregard for the intellects of human beings,” and people must rid themselves of the shackles of the capitalist system. The “solution,” bin Laden argued, is for the American people to embrace and join Islam:

However, there are two solutions for stopping it. The first is from our side, and it is to continue to escalate the killing and fighting against you. This is our duty, and our brothers are carrying it out, and I ask Allah to grant them resolve and victory. And the second solution is from your side. It has now become clear to you and the entire world the impotence of the democratic system and how it plays with the interests of the peoples and their blood by sacrificing soldiers and populations to achieve the interests of the major corporations. And with that, it has become clear to all that they are the real tyrannical terrorists. And despite this brazen attack on the people, the leaders of the West—especially Bush, Blair, Sarkozy and Brown—still talk about freedom and human rights with a flagrant disregard for the intellects of human beings. So is there a form of terrorism stronger, clearer and more dangerous than this? This is why I tell you: as you liberated yourselves before from the slavery of monks, kings, and feudalism, you should liberate yourselves from the deception, shackles and attrition of the capitalist system. The capitalist system seeks to turn the entire world into a fiefdom of the major corporations under the label of “globalization” in order to protect democracy.

(“The Solution” n.pag)

Here, bin Laden posited the Western populations as victims of their political leaders and capitalism, living in a state of false consciousness, under a false sovereignty or *jahiliyyah*. Interestingly, he assured his Western audience that as they managed to free themselves from the false consciousness of their religion through secularism, they can now transcend secular capitalism to engage in a greater morality by sharing in the utopian vision of

Islam. He pointed to the *Mujahidin*,<sup>20</sup> *jihadists*, as an example: “There is a message for you in the *Mujahidin*: the entire world is in pursuit of them, yet their hearts, by the grace of Allah, are satisfied and tranquil.” Even the *Mujahidin*, the *jihadists*, are not victims as they are living by the laws of truth as opposed to the materialistic laws of capitalism. In Islam, for bin Laden, there were no victims, and he asked his audience to transcend their status as victims by embracing Islam: “The true religion also puts peoples’ lives in order with its laws; protects their needs and interests; refines their morals; protects them from evils; and guarantees for them entrance into Paradise.” If they accept Islam, bin Laden, argued, the wars will end, for people will see the truth and no longer agree to be governed by their rulers “because as soon as the war-mongering owners of the major corporations realize that you have lost confidence in your democratic system and begun to search for an alternative, and that this alternative is Islam, they will run after you to please you and achieve what you want to steer you away from Islam.” Because people’s new-found faith will deprive the capitalist of “the opportunity to defraud the peoples and take their money under numerous pretexts, like arms deals and so on,” the war will stop. For bin Laden, the objective was not stopping the war and then hoping that people will join Islam. His objective was having people join Islam which he was certain will stop the war. In this way his intentions were clearly both secular and other-worldly, since only by living by Divine injunctions can worldly life be just. He even provided an example of the advantage of such Divine Laws, arguing they are worldly, practical and just: “There are

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<sup>20</sup> “One who engages in *jihad*. Technically the term does not have a necessary connection with war. In recent years those Muslims who engage in armed defense of Muslim lands call themselves or are called *mujahidin*. They are not a monolithic movement of one origin but rather are diverse.” (John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* 213).

no taxes in Islam, but rather there is a limited *zakat* [alms] totaling only 2.5%.” This entire excerpt is quite remarkable because it is evident that bin Laden clearly wished to convince his audience that the solution is Islam, which does not allow victimhood or sovereignty to anything but God, and he asserted that after embracing Islam there will be no more victimhood.

It is evident from this extended discussion of bin Laden’s “The Solution,” and those of his intellectual predecessors that the concept of martyrhood, victimization and worldly sovereignty are highly problematic for the *jihadi* who does not see himself as a victim, or *homo sacer*, a “sovereign-less” body. Yet such terminologies are frequently employed in cultural criticism when writing about the *jihadi*. This leads to fault lines in otherwise valuable theorization. An interesting example of this is the intriguing work of Faisal Devji, Zanibari/Canadian historian, former head of Graduate Studies at The Ismaili Institute in London and reader at Oxford University. In the preface to his *Landscapes of the Jihad*, Devji positions himself as a viable spokesperson, a Muslim from Indian ethnicity born in Dar-es-Salam, where the American Embassy was blown up in a 1998 Al Qaeda attack, in fact, an inhabitant of the de-territorialized zones of which Olivier Roy has written. Devji’s choice to position his own history in the introduction, “I was in Dar-es-Salam—the town of my birth, on August 7, 1998, when the American embassy was blown up” (viii), allows him to insert a personal element into the debate on the nature of the *jihad* which had struck at the heart of community with which he was familiar. He also directly comments, as do all of the Muslim writers discussed in the thesis, upon the new role for interpreters, such as himself, to play in the discourse on Islam and *jihad*:

When the Quran is on the *New York Times* bestseller list, are we not justified in saying that Islam has become an American phenomenon, to the degree that Americans might be even more interested in Islam than are Muslims? This is demonstrated by the fact that Islam no longer remains the preserve of academic or religious specialists but has become a subject upon which anybody can pronounce – because it has indeed become part of not just American but also global culture. (xiii)

Similarly, in *The Terrorist in Search of Humanity*, Devji personalizes his position as a Muslim as both a potential victim and suspect in the *jihad*:

On July 7, 2005, as I was going through the airport security in New Delhi, en route to Mumbai, four bombs ripped through London's mass transit network. Just before being herded onto the plane, I saw images of the carnage on a television monitor in a departure lounge. Among these were shots of the bus that Hasib Hussain had blown up in Tavistock Square, directly in front of the pedestrian walkway that led to my flat...I was left thinking not only how close I had come to being one of the victims, but also of how I had equally become a potential suspect in the process. (57)

In both books, Devji uses his status as a Western Muslim from the peripheral areas of Islam to rightly suggest that as a supranational movement the current *jihad* can be interpreted as part of what he sees as a central trend of the post-Cold War era, namely the replacement of territorial politics with ethical issues. He argues that *jihadists* tend to view the West as a negative mirror image of Islam, in other words as a metaphysical entity,

which is a rather obvious point as made clear in how the notion of *jahiliyyah* is echoed in various *jihadist* texts. Devji goes on to argue that intentionality itself is not enough to understand the nature of the *jihad*, which is a “series of global events that have assumed a universality of their own beyond such particularities” (*Landscapes* 87). Since intentionality cannot fully explain the nature of the *jihad*, the symbiotic relationship between the media and martyrdom can offer some insight: “as a series of global effects the *jihad* is more a product of the media than it is of any local tradition or situation and school or lineage of Muslim authority” (87). Devji further argues that the media is a means of both exhibitionism and recruitment and allows Islam to become a global spectacle, both for Muslims and non-Muslims, not as a “religious universality expressed in the vision of converting the world” but as a “conversion of vision itself” (*Landscapes* 93). For Devji, this is Islam devoid of real intentionality, and therefore of political objective, replaced with ethical objectives displayed through spectacular and symbolic performances through acts of martyrdom:

Islam comes to exist universally in the places where its particularity is destroyed, the presence of its ruins on television screens bearing witness to the Muslim’s universality as martyr and militant. What makes Islam universal then, then, is the forging of a generic Muslim, one who loses all cultural and historical particularity by his or her own destruction in the act of martyrdom.” (*Landscapes* 94)

Thus, for Devji the *jihadist* emerges as universal mediator, although speaking from within a Muslim context, speaking to grand causes, and the victims of global capitalism. Muslim comes to stand in for humanity and the *jihadist* uses the

rhetoric of the humanitarian. Thus far, Devji's argument is consistent with bin Laden's, from whose early speeches he quotes.

However, although Devji's analysis is insightful, it unfortunately leads him to some dubious conclusions. Just because the intentionality of the *jihād* cannot be explained by secular or religious binaries alone, *and* because its claims are ethical and universal, *and* because the media is critical to its articulation and recruitment, does not empty it of its Islamic motive, assigning it a performative and nonpolitical status. Devji sees the rhetoric and actions of the *jihadist* as spectacular in the sense that they cannot propel political action but attain a similar status to globalization and environmentalist movements. To do this, however, he often ignores the direct interventions of the *jihadists* to their audiences and the manner in which they present Islam as an alternative to the audience's current mode of victimization, as analyzed above in bin Laden's treatise. It is true that that *jihadist* globalization goes beyond territory, culture, or politics and is now described in sweeping ethical terms, and it is also true that it brings together people of heterogeneous beliefs and backgrounds who do not share a common prior history. However, Devji does not note how this prior history is refashioned into an Islamic utopian vision that denies victimization, and strives for both worldly and other-worldly objectives. On bin Laden, for example, he states,

His full list includes the following accusations against America; attacks on Muslims, support of dictatorial client regimes, theft of wealth and natural

resources which are bought at negligible prices, occupation and corruption of Muslim lands spread of immorality and debauchery in the forms of sex, usury and intoxicants, exploitation of women, environmental degradation, racism, deploying weapons of mass destruction, war crimes and violations of human rights.... it is on this level, then, that jihad joins movements like environmentalism or anti-globalization.... At the forefront of ethical life today. (130)

For Devji, however, this signals a shift from geopolitics to metaphysics, and the acts themselves are encoded as part of a highly metaphysical act only. Again, this is *partially* true only, as part of the *jihadist's* objective is to create a just community on earth, which is a worldly rather than metaphysical act. In short, the *jihad* is not only a response to globalization but, in itself, is founded on a global vision to begin with, since Islam is a global vision for the postcolonial *jihadists*, following in Qutb's formulation.

In *The Terrorist in Search of Humanity*, Devji's soundly supported argument unfortunately runs amok due to his overdependence on the concept of martyrdom and victimization. He argues that *jihadists* "make the connection between Islam and the victimized humanity" (40), therefore becoming victims and joining the victims in their own death, while demanding that humanity stand up against injustices. These same arguments have been made by Eagleton, especially in *Unholy Terror*, where he argues that the intentionality of sacrifice is to expose the structures of injustice (135) and to provide a reason for a precondition for moral responsibility (116). For Eagleton, the victim is the terrorist and the terrorized, both victims of a secularized and late capitalist world consumed by global power. The *jihadists*, however, while seeing his targets as

victims of global capitalism, as clearly stated in bin Laden's texts as discussed above, does not see himself as a victim. He, as a *shahid*, is ever-present and observing; his death, in this sense, is as ordinary as his life. The *jihadist* then maintains a stance of superiority to his victims, whom he may pity as well as despise, as they are enslaved as sovereigns to corrupt ideologies of *jahilliya*, which the *jihadist* has transcended. Both Devji and Eagleton's otherwise reasoned arguments about the connection between the *jihadist* and the victim makes the mistake of assuming that the *jihadist* perceives himself as a victim while, in fact, he perceives herself as powerful in his transcendence of death and asks his victims to share in the same experience. In a 2005 article in *The Guardian*, Eagleton claims,

Like hunger strikers, suicide bombers are not necessarily in love with death. They kill themselves because they can see no other way of attaining justice; and the fact that they have to do so is part of the injustice. It is possible to act in a way that makes your death inevitable without actually desiring it. ("A Different Way of Death" n.pag)

In fact, *jihadists* have said time and time again "we love death," with the love of death as opposed to life, being a key message, for example, in a statement released by Al Qaeda claiming responsibility for the 2004 Madrid bombing.<sup>21</sup>

This is not to say, of course, that Muslim culture is death-obsessed as various neoconservatives point out, but to emphasize that death becomes a form of power for the *jihadist* who hopes, by example, to set it as a testimony to his faith and intention to

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<sup>21</sup> See for example "Full text: 'Al-Qaeda' Madrid claim," *BBC News*, 14 Mar.2004. Web. 21 Apr. 2007 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3509556.stm>>.

establish Divine Law. Talal Asad has pointed out that the love of death is also a dominant theme in Christian theology and the privileging of the “culture of death” as a favored explanation for Islamic “suicide bombing” is popular because it presents “a model that lends itself to the discourse of the protection of civilization (committed to life) against barbarism (a love of death)” (56). Similarly, Devji has noted how the concept of “sacrifice” permeates various Eastern ideologies, specifically Gandhi’s philosophy of resistance, and concludes, “What the hysteria over militant Islam’s death cult” or “nihilism” entails, then, is an attempt to redraw humanity’s borders around the love of life in such a way as to deprive those who love death of their status as human beings” (*The Terrorist in Search of Humanity* 202). In short, there is a definitive relationship, as Eagleton asserts, between faith and violence, whether it is considered sacrifice, as in the Christian belief or testimony, as in Muslim belief. In fact, the claims of the *jihadists* are directly responsible for the theological turn in theory evidenced in the work of Žižek and Eagleton who are open to the idea that an act of apparent self destruction can bring about a genuine transformation in values, a metaphysical reassessment of the structures of injustice. In this sense, as discussed in Chapter Three, the *jihadist* is deconstructing the secular/religious binary which has dominated theory. Devji would agree that the *jihad* is propelling theory outside the confines of humanist discourse and pushing the globe toward a post human politics: “Having destroyed the body as a subject within which such human virtues could be grounded, and dismissed life itself as the limit of humanity, militant practices like suicide bombing open up a space for the post human” (*The Terrorist in Search of Humanity* 221). bin Laden’s statements, as discussed above,

clearly show that this was his aim, to destroy structures of injustice and convert the world to his Islamic vision where death is not the limit of human life, nor is it associated with nihilism. No doubt bin Laden would have framed his argument differently, without the terminology of sacrifice and suicide, but emphasizing that it is obedience to the One Sovereign which makes humans fully human, including the transcendence of death.

One unfortunate result of scrutinizing only the symbolic value of the *jihadist*, which otherwise offers valuable contributions to theory, is to allocate the *jihad* a purely *performative* role, devoid of real political intention. For Devji, for example, the audience of the *jihad* is both fabricated and catered to by the media, and therefore remains indefinable. The *jihadist*, because he does not clearly map out an alternative vision, remains nonparticular in his demands, while the consequences of his actions are to exhibit, rather than effect, any real political actions. The *jihadist*, therefore, is first and foremost a performer:

The community created by the spectacle of martyrdom, therefore, is purely abstract, as much an effect of the media as the jihad itself. And in fact the abstract audience of the jihad as a media spectacle implies that it is truly witnessed only by a universal being who is everywhere and so nowhere: who else but God.” (*Landscapes of the Jihad* 103)

Henry Giroux’s *The Spectacle of Terrorism* offers a seminal contribution to our understanding of how the terror of the *jihadist* and terror by the *jihadist* act as means of social control and the closure of democracy. Giroux rightly argues that the theatre of

terror accentuates that the state is an object (and perpetrator) of terror and vulnerable to the attacks, the origin of which are stateless, bereft of state organization and legitimization (48). This possibility of a stateless sovereignty has been enabled, Giroux notes, “by the ascendancy of fundamentalist religious authority throughout the globe” (48). This notion of the stateless sovereign has been used by America to torture and illegally detain perceived enemies, and Giroux develops a very useful differentiation between the “terror of the spectacle” and the “spectacle of terrorism” to describe the mechanism of terror as a form of social control. The “terror of the spectacle” refers to use of fear by America to militarize and privatize public space, build consensus and rituals where politics and power are hidden in broader appeals to solidarity like fascism and communism (29-30). The “spectacle of terror” refers to a new kind of politics of how terrorism can be marketed, contrasted to the previous, politicized through fear and shock, and is not about illusion but the thrill of the real (30-31). The “spectacle of terrorism,” he argues, manipulates a small screen culture, constructs a subject and a public in a state of permanent fear in a chaotic world, and creates a new kind of politics “organized around the modalities of death, hysteria, panic and violence” (31). For Giroux, “the public interest has largely been fashioned as a giant Reality TV show where notions of collectivity register as a conglomeration of private concerns” (3). Likewise, both the “terror of the spectacle” and the “spectacle of terror” privatizes discourse:

In the post-9/11 world, the space of shared responsibility has given way to the space of private fears; the social obligations of citizenships are now reduced to the

highly individualized imperatives of consumerism, and militarism has become the central motif of national identity.” (1)

Giroux is right to notice that the “spectacle of terror” has political motive as well as a symbolic value, but he is not completely correct in assuming that it has privatized public space. To be fair, Giroux, focuses namely on the effects of the *jihād* on Western society, arguing that the language of the social has been sacrificed for state protection, translated into the suspension of civil liberties, expansions of government surveillance and the proliferation of the view that dissent is anti-American (3). In this he is correct; since citizens are terrified for their safety, they respond as powerless individuals, clinging to a perverted sense of patriotism that justifies the torture of others. However, in regard to “the spectacle of terror,” Giroux’s argument is not entirely sound as the “spectacle of terror” has been a critical part of Al Qaeda’s recruitment strategy and has significantly politicized Islamist discourse in predominantly Muslim countries as well as for Muslim minorities in the West, having a direct public impact. It can even be noted, as I have argued in this thesis, that this spectacle of the *jihadist* has re-politicized theory, acting as an impetus for an urgent social engagement between the intellectual and society. Giroux notes that the insurgent videos provide a means of response to the saturation of American images of crimes against Muslims and a “measure of revenge” (50), and it is this identification that “ties us to a retrograde notion of the social that is organized around a culture of shared fears rather than shared responsibilities” (50). Here, I argue that, in fact, the *jihadist* demands a new public engagement, and her goal is not privatization of fear but a genuine social engagement that will shatter the illusions of the *jahilliya*, the

false consciousness of which bin Laden spoke. *Jihadists* use the familiar methodologies of the private, for example reality TV, while addressing a very large and specific public, with specific messages which they expect that public to act upon. Their objective is not a politics organized around panic, but one organized around metaphysics and faith, which they consider as an invitation, though a violent one, to a just public engagement. Again and again the *jihadists* attempt to propel Americans, including American Muslims, out of private space and into public space, not by attempting to make them solitary, panicked individuals, but individuals who collectively take responsibility for the violence of the system they continually support. The goal of the *jihadists*, therefore, is not to privatize terror but to put it firmly in public space as an impetus for public action: in this sense their role is definitely political as well as performative and spectacular.

The *jihadist* then consistently addresses a community of responsible victims and often subverts the form of reality TV for his oppositional politics. Various speeches, especially those of bin Laden, Adam Gadahn and Anwar Alwaki, and videos which document the *jihadist's* death, commonly known as suicide videos, exemplify the process by which his death is made a public spectacle requiring political deliberation. The speeches and videos hold no significance without the spectacle of the media, since bin Laden, Gadahn and Alwaki are not statesmen in the ordinary sense and the deaths themselves of the “suicide bombers” are significant to others only by the fact that they kill others. As Devji notes, the death which conveys this message has to be witnessed in order to be relevant, and so it becomes a “social and therefore inclusive act” (*Terrorist in Search of Humanity* 95). The witnessing of these events also imposes a responsibility on

those who witness the act. For the *jihadist*, since the performance of making his death public makes those who witness it responsible to act “the spectacle of martyrdom makes ignorance inexcusable” (Devji, *Terrorist in Search of Humanity* 102). Therefore, the actual witnessing of the act moves it from the arena of a performance to a real political act, witnessed by a community. The ideologues of the *jihad*, bin Laden, and his American front men Alwaki and Gadahn, articulate repetitively that social engagement and public action are their objectives. If we consider the audience, for example, the community of responsible victims to which each of them speaks, the implied and sometimes directly implied reader, it is evident that for all this audience is specific, not abstract.

bin Laden, for example, was very clear about his multiple audiences and addressed both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences. In an early interview with CNN in 1997, bin Laden spoke to an obviously Western audience. When asked what message he would have for then President Clinton, he retorted, none, but he did have one for the mothers of the American troops stationed on the Arabian Peninsula:

To these mothers I say if they are concerned for their sons, let them then object to the American government’s policy and to the American president. Do not let themselves be cheated by his standing before the bodies of the killed soldiers describing the freedom fighters in Saudi Arabia as terrorists. It is he who is a terrorist who pushed their sons into this for the sake of Israeli interest. (“Bin Laden’s Interviews,” *Al Qaeda in its Own Words* 52)

There are a few points of interest here: first, the call to American mothers to witness the deception of the government and their responsibility to stand against it, and, second, a belief in their ability to understand the objectives of power. bin Laden appealed directly to this community of women, as one who was compassionate to their loss, for they have been deceived by the President and his war machine. He therefore attempted to create a bond of identification between himself and these victims. Note that he was careful not to call the American soldiers terrorists, but instead positioned them as misguided victims, with President Clinton as the real terrorist. Therefore, he recreated a new community of victims of the American administration. Similarly, over a year later, in an interview with Al Jazeera, bin Laden appealed to the responsibility of a Muslim audience:

We believe very strongly...that they want to deprive us of our manhood. We see ourselves as men, Muslim men, committed to defend the greatest house in this universe, the holy Kaaba, which is an honor to die for and defend. ("Bin Laden's Interviews," *Al Qaeda in its Own Words* 59)

Here, bin Laden evoked the concept of honour and religious obligation to inspire the Muslim masses to stimulate their support and action. In this way he tried to appeal to and activate both an American and a Muslim audience, shifting registers to address the different groups.

Perhaps one of bin Laden's most interesting addresses was his "Message to the American People," released days before the 2004 American Presidential election. This was a bin Laden intervention into the American democratic process, acting as an equal

statesman for the “sovereign-less” State of Islam, a stance he repeated in years to come, using America’s own rhetoric of “we fight because we are free men who do not slumber under oppression” (“Bin Laden’s Interviews,” *Al Qaeda in its Own Words* 71). bin Laden chastised his American audience for their mental lethargy with the personalized affront, “I am amazed at you,” amazed because the American audience continued to believe the lies they are told. He made an emotional and personal appeal to them, explaining his motivations as spokesperson for the *jihād*: “the events that affected me personally began in 1982” (72). As Devji has noted, here bin Laden was describing Lebanon, and although his account of the event was real, bin Laden was never in Lebanon in 1982, and so the personal way he presents Lebanon was representative of the Muslims, the eyes of their collective vision of the event (*Landscapes of the Jihād* 96). He described Lebanon in a graphic manner as if he were present, with the goal of describing what 1982 Lebanon meant for Muslims, directly relating what he saw in Lebanon to the plot to bring down the Twin Towers, tracing a line of cause and effect, and told his American audience that “we had no choice” (“Bin Laden’s Interviews,” *Al Qaeda in its Own Words* 73). He argued that he had no choice but to commit a spectacular and violent act because all other forms of mediation had failed:

This is the message I sought to communicate to you in word and deed, repeatedly for years before September 11<sup>th</sup>. You can read it, if you like, in my interview with Scott in *Time* magazine in 1996, or with Peter Arnett on CNN or with John Miller in 1998. You can see it in practice if you wish in Kenya, Tanzania and Aden. And you can read it in my interview with Abdul Bari Atwan, as well as my

interviews with Robert Fisk. The latter is one of your compatriots and coreligionists, and I consider him to be neutral. Did the alleged defenders of freedom at the White House and the channels controlled by them bother to speak with these people, so that they could tell the American people the reasons for our fight against you? (73)

Here bin Laden clearly expressed his sense of disappointment at his failed interventions, through actions (Tanzania, Kenya and Aden bombings) and mediation—the various news sources that he used in an attempt to make the public responsible witnesses to current events—directly mentioning familiar names of journalists whom he believed were also ignored. Since the American audience had ignored all these attempts at communication, they were now responsible for their own victimhood. bin Laden assured them that their security was in their own hands, not those of their leaders, giving them direct responsibility for the acts their politicians are perpetuating on Muslim countries. In this way, he gave his audience the power to change the system which he was attacking, with the assurance that if they use that power to change this system they would be safe from his attack upon it, bin Laden wished to transform his audience of victims into a community of responsible citizens who could actively challenge the unjust system they are living under.

The same message was consistently clear in bin Laden's later messages. As examined above in "The Solution," he expressed his surprise at the lethargy of American people, whom he further presented as powerless because of not only their political leaders, but also the corrupt aims of corporations and capitalists: "you permitted Bush to

complete his first term, and stranger still, chose him for a second term, which gave him a clear mandate from you—with your full knowledge and consent to continue to murder our people in Iraq and Afghanistan” (“The Solution” n.pag). Accusing Bush, Blair, Sarkozy and Brown of displaying a “flagrant disregard for the intellects of human beings,” he cited works by Noam Chomsky and Michael Scheuer, asking his American audience to read these books to open their minds. He repeated this call for critical consciousness through his audience’s own sources in his September 2009 release, referring to other texts of his target culture, such as Mearsheimer and Walt’s book *The Israel Lobby in the United States* (Transcript” The Latest bin Laden Statement n.pag). Again, he argued, “it is time to free yourselves from fear and intellectual terrorism being practiced against you by the neoconservatives and the Israeli lobby.” It is evident that bin Laden was keenly interested in communicating his messages to American audiences and claimed consistently that he was attempting to free them from the intellectual terrorism of their leaders and open their minds to a critical discussion. This is hardly the authoritarian closing of discourse of which Giroux writes. It is also clear that he spoke as an insider, from inside their own cultural heritage, referencing the texts and the analysis of political events that could aid in their critical reconstruction and propel them into public life. Devji compares bin Laden to a ventriloquist when he refers to the works of dissenting figures such as Chomsky:

His own critique of the west is therefore an imminent or internal one, but more than that it is a form of ventriloquism in which the prince of terrorists speaks through one or more dummies rather than in his own name. In itself this adoption

of ready-made positions is not strange, marking in fact the language of most politicians in Europe and America, but in the case of bin Laden it illustrates additionally the fact that he possesses no position outside the world of his enemies. (*The Terrorist in Search of Humanity* 204)

However, as already argued above, bin Laden's arguments on the Islamic solution, had already been articulated by Qutb, though it can be argued that bin Laden globalized this argument. The point here is that bin Laden did attempt to propel his American audience to public life, contrary to Giroux's claim, and he did call for critical thought. He was more than a ventriloquist, and instead engaged in an inter-textual debate with sources he obviously admired in the target culture. No doubt, there will much more attention paid to his work and its implications following his May 2011 assassination. And clearly the arguments which he voiced will continue to be articulated.

Similar persistent messages can also be divined in the speeches of two American al Qaeda operatives: Adam (Al Amriki- the American) Gadahn and Anwar Awlaki, this time to intercede in the discourse to Americans in general and American Muslims specifically. Gadahn first appeared on ABC in October 2004, identifying himself as "Adam the American," speaking in American English and directly addressing his fellow Americans and again in 2005, on the fourth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on *Good Morning America*, attacking U.S. foreign policy and military activity, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, predicting there would be future attacks in Los Angeles and Melbourne, Australia. There have been numerous other interventions by Gadahn, enough to have him listed on the FBI most wanted list.

The appearance of Gadahn, and the fact that his identity was kept uncertain for some time, had a strong impact on the community of responsible victims. This spokesperson is an American, speaking in English, making cultural references an American would make, but donned in Arab clothes and arguing the reasons for *jihad* in a socio-political context. On September 2, 2006, in a video called "Invitation to Islam," Gadahn directly reflected on the importance of mediation in the jihad, and invited a number of Orientalists to join Islam, including Daniel Pipes, Robert Spencer, Michael Scheuer, Steven Emerson, and George W. Bush. In the same recording, Gadahn praised British politician George Galloway and journalist Robert Fisk for expressing their respect and admiration for Islam and for "demonstrating their sympathy for Muslims their causes," and he urged American soldiers to "surrender to the truth," "escape from the unbelieving Army," and "join the winning side"( n.pag). The diversity of this audience is interesting: American opponents who construct neoconservative views of Islam, the leftist politicians and journalists who try to contextualize the geopolitical nature of the *jihad*, and the American soldiers in occupied lands. The text addressed multitude audiences, echoing bin Laden's "Message to the American People," and called on them to convert to Islam. Similarly, on October 4, 2008, Gadahn released a video primarily focused on Pakistan, but with reference to economic woes in the US, arguing, again like bin Laden, that the capitalist system is the cause of the world's ailments and urging victims of this system to find truth and justice in Islam and the sovereignty of God, the only sovereign who should be obeyed ("Azzam the American releases video focusing on

Pakistan” n.pag). Throughout 2009-2010, he made various recruitment videos for English-speaking converts.

Anwar Awlaki, another English-speaking American, has served an even larger role than Gadahn in addressing Western Muslims and in 2010 caused a major civil rights protest when he became the first American citizen to be openly put on the CIA hit list. After spending over twenty-one years in America and Britain as a student and then imam, Awlaki’s call to a *jihad* for justice has become more militant and put him into direct confrontation with moderate Muslims mediators upon whom he remarked:

They reject the principle of pride and demanding justice, they want to promote the principle of humiliation and compliance. They want to market the democratic and peaceful U.S. Islam that calls for obeying the superiors even if they were traitors and collaborators, they want an Islam that recognizes the occupation and deals with it, they want an Islam that has no Sharia ruling, no *jihad* and no Islamic caliphate. (“Interview with Al Jazeera” n.pag)

In another message, he clearly articulated the difference between the mediators, many of whom have been discussed in this thesis, and the *jihadists*, and directly interceded to contradict them and speak to Muslims in America:

To the Muslims in America, I have this to say; how can your conscience allow you to live peaceful co-existence with the nation that is responsible for the tyranny and crimes committed against your own brothers and sisters? How can you have your loyalty to a government that is leading the war against Islamic Muslims? The Muslim community in American has been witnessing a gradual

erosion and decline in core Islamic principals so today many of your scholars and Islamic organizations are openly approving of Muslims serving in the US Army to kill Muslims, joining the FBI to spy against Muslims, and are standing between you and your duty of *jihad*. Slowly but surely your situation is becoming similar to that of the embattled Muslim community of Spain after the fall of Granada. Muslims of the West, take heed and learn from the lessons of history. There are and ominous clouds gathering in your horizon. Yesterday America was the land of slavery, segregation, lynching and Klu Klux Klan and tomorrow it will be a land of religious discrimination and concentration camps. Don't be deceived by the promises of preserving your rights from a government that is right now killing your own brothers and sisters. Today with the war between Muslims and the West escalating you cannot count on the message of solidarity you may get from a civic group or political party or the words of support you hear from a kind neighbor or nice co-worker. The West will eventually turn against its Muslim citizens. ("A Call to Jihad" n.pag).

This message is intriguing because it focuses upon a very specific audience in the "spectacle of terror." Western Muslims are not threatened, but they are warned not to have faith in the American system to protect their rights, for "The West will eventually turn against its Muslim citizens." This is an open attempt to radicalize Western Muslims into a critical consciousness, a violent one, perhaps, with which Giroux may not agree, but a critical consciousness all the less. This is an effort to activate the Muslim minority

to reject their government's policies and to act publicly, not as private individuals, but as members of a collectivity—as Muslim Americans.

From this analysis of the audiences of bin Laden, Gadaffi and Awlaki's speeches, we can easily discern clear audiences and intentions and a concerted effort to propel the Western public from a private to a public stance. This is contrary to Devji's claim that the audience remains abstract and Giroux's notion that public space is becoming increasingly privatized, as discussed above. It appears that the messages of the *jihadi* are clearly political and intended to elicit political responses from a multitude of audiences. The role the media plays in forming and disseminating these messages is indeed critical but we should be careful to heed Chomsky's warning when assigning globalization and spectacle as the sole cause of the *ji*had, as "bin Laden is quite clear about what he wants" (9-11 60). As we have discussed, his list is concrete and diverse. By personalizing the "enemy's" goals, we often ignore our own role, Chomsky notes (32). In this case, by positioning the *ji*hadists as abstract, spectacular, and barbaric, we absolve ourselves of responsibility for the violence of which bin Laden reminded us we are a critical part.

This message is eerily present in the video of Mohamed Siddique Khan, one of the London bombers:

I'm going to keep this short and to the point because it's all been said before by far more eloquent people than me. And our words have no impact upon you, therefore I'm going to talk to you in a language that you understand. Our words

are dead until we give them life with our blood. I'm sure by now the media has painted a suitable picture of me, this predictable propaganda machine will naturally try to put a spin on things to suit the government and to scare the masses into conforming to their power and wealth-obsessed agendas. I and thousands like me are forsaking everything for what we believe. Our driving motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer. Our religion is Islam - obedience to the one true God, Allah, and following the footsteps of the final prophet and messenger Muhammad.... This is how our ethical stances are dictated. Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation. ("London Bomber Text in Full," *BBC News* n.pag)

The audience is clear: the victims and a community to which Khan, with his Northern English accent, clearly belongs. The appeal to "you" not only makes the audience the witness to his act after the event, but also puts them in a position of responsibility for it. Second, Khan directly raised the issue of media representation of his stance, commenting on how the media will represent him and how people will blindly follow this interpretation, serving "power and wealth obsessed agendas," and he noted that it is these

agendas which cause the fear, not his act. Finally, his use of the pronoun “our” put him in the position of mediator for oppressed Muslim communities: he spoke as a Muslim, for “my people,” disassociating himself from the community of victims to which he speaks. He clearly stated his goals are political as well as other-worldly; he made no mention of “sacrifice” but instead focuses on his “responsibility” as a Muslim to obey only God and institute these principles on earth, noting that he was a “soldier.” Interestingly, his use of the term “by now” directly draws attention to the fact that his message will be received after his death and after the media image and spectacle of him has been constructed. His message attempted to supply a counter narrative to this representation, as a mediator for Muslims describing the reasons for their actions, which may not be relayed through media analysis.

The desire to relate the ordinariness of his life and death is accentuated by the release of a second video, showing Khan as a father (“New 7/7 Bomber Video,” *MSN News*). Here we see Khan holding his daughter and talking to her while recording himself. The viewer focuses on his message to his toddler, obviously too young to understand a single word of what he is saying and not the real audience for the video; he tells her that he was “doing this for the sake of Islam, not for materialistic or worldly benefits.” The effect is to present himself as a loving father, explaining his motives in the mode of reality television. However, the video is also a video of Khan recording himself and his daughter, holding the camera in front of him, which means that a second camera is present, in order to record Khan recording himself. The audience can assume that this second camera is somehow connected to the other three bombers, who appear on screen

to flex their muscles and make other playful gestures. Thus, the viewer is watching the *jihadist* (Khan) enact a staged performance while he is willingly being *viewed* and recorded. This playful home video, then, comments directly on his role as mediator, and makes obvious the act of recording, and the synoptic and panoptic nature of the event.

Because the *jihadist* is deeply cognizant of the panoptic and synoptic nature of viewing, he openly reflects on this relationship. Shehzad Tanweer's video, released on July 6, 2006 and broadcast by Al-Jazeera, is shot in the form of a documentary with accompanying commentary by Ayman Zawhiri and Adam Gadahn, maps of London, and a description of the bomb-making process, as well as a message from Tanweer. ("Video of 7 July Bomber," *BBC News*). In this way, Tanweer manages both to document the process of his own death and return to comment on it a year later. His death has been viewed, but it was as if he too were viewing the result of this death, as the observant and ever-present *shahid*, offering answers one year on as to the meaning of the event. In this way, he acted as both viewed and viewer.

It is evident from Khan and Tanweer's videos that it is not a culture of fear that they were trying to create, in which people withdraw into a world of private hysteria, but a culture of shared responsibility. The spectacle of violence, however, is real violence: victims actually died. Unlike reality television shows, where real people become unreal characters, the *jihadists'* performances have real and political repercussions which cannot be accounted for by merely seeing the *jihadist's* role as performative. In fact, it can be argued that the *jihadist* engages in a metanarrative, commenting on his role as mediator, openly reflecting on his simultaneous exhibitionistic and voyeuristic role. In *Reality TV*:

*The Work of Being Watched*, Mark Andrejevic refers to Žižek's description of the savvy audience and applies it to reality television by recounting Žižek's interpretation of a Lacanian joke. He recounts Žižek's description of Lacan's travelers who meet each other on a street, when one man asks the other "why do you lie to me and say you are going to Cracow so I should believe you're going to Lemberg, when in reality, you ARE going to Cracow" (17). Andrejevic notes that the same applies to reality television which pretends to be real, so that we can believe it is phony, while it "accurately portrays the reality of contrivance in contemporary society" (18). This observation of the savvy watcher can be applied to the situation of the *jihadist* as performer. Why do you convince me you are a murdering *jihadist*, when I should believe you are only a performer, when in reality you *are* a *jihadist*? In this case, both the performance (of the actor) and the real action (death) occur. The videos discussed here, with Khan acting as loving *jihadist* father, and Tanweer as panoptic *shahid*, all seduce the audience with performance. In the end, the viewer is seduced by a performance and then shocked by the crisp reality of transparency: the video is in fact what it says it is; despite its performative value, it is a testament to a real *jihad*—with real deaths.

A similar kind of Lacanian turn occurs in beheading videos, which start out as crude enactments of a barbaric scene, but actual beheading does occur. Devji argues that these videos are namely performative:

It is as if the *jihad* is fulfilling the desire of the mass media for real horror, but on the same model as reality TV shows. So while this reality strives to achieve authenticity by its very extremity, just as in reality television shows, it in fact

achieves exactly the opposite by becoming a piece of theatre. (*Landscapes of the Jihad* 105)

While it is true that the videos play up to a fearful and barbaric image of Muslims, as Devji claims, such performances did have real political effects. Unlike Devji, Giroux has noted that “the political overshadows the aesthetic” and that “the representation of politics has not disappeared “into the vortex of simulacra” (*Spectacle of Terror* 65). However, he interprets the videos as a way to “sanction a renewed commitment to authoritarianism,... to promoting a view of the social defined almost exclusively through shared apprehension and distrust” (65). This notion of the social, he argues, used to promote threatening religious orthodoxies function by “prohibiting the exercise of critical thought and transforming citizens into automans” (66). Though this may be true, it is important to add that these videos had real political value; the threatened beheadings of Philippine workers in Iraq resulted in that government withdrawing all Philippine contractors as per the *jihadist* demands.

It is obvious that the American government recognizes the potential political impact of such videos, their appeal to a real audience, not merely their performative value. The videos themselves are distributed on websites which are regularly monitored and shut down.<sup>22</sup> The debate around what is allowed to be shown in the war of terror reached a pinnacle in 2006 when it became evident that the American government had plans to bomb the Al Jazeera headquarters in Qatar, a friendly and pro-American state,

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<sup>22</sup> Kahan and Kellner, have documented how the “Total Information Awareness Project” of the Bush administration, a government database, traced the web activities of individuals with a Big Brother surveillance enthusiasm (“Internet Subcultures”).

accusing Al Jazeera of supporting terror because it aired various *jihadi* messages. This debate over access to the Internet and particularly access to Al Jazeera raises a pertinent question as to why access is denied to some violent materials and yet widely televised on others. For example, the disturbing content of torture in Abu Ghraib was circulated freely on television and the Internet, while horrific content of beheadings by *jihadists* was banned. Kellner positions Abu Ghraib as a depiction of “brutal colonial mentality” and notes that the archive, which was the work of young U.S. soldiers, included over a hundred photos, not only of the torture but also of daily life in Iraq: pictures of camels, and scenes of Iraq were side by side with the photos of abuse, as if it were a document of travel literature (*Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy* 83). This spectacle lasted for a few weeks, and though much discussed in human rights circles, faded from television screens. Immediately following this was the May 11, 2004 beheading of Nick Berg. The actual beheading was not shown on television, but deferred. Why was it that the Abu Ghraib photos were so widely circulated but the Nick Berg beheading remained unseen? Did audiences really identify themselves with the Abu Ghraib prisoners as they did with Nick Berg? Giroux would answer this by arguing that in today’s global network images cannot be stopped; this is true but this does not mean they must be shown on major television networks. Why was Al Jazeera’s airing of *jihadi* speeches and beheadings of such concern to the American administration while the major network broadcasts of the abuse conducted by this very administration were not? Perhaps images of such colonialist abuse as evidenced in the Abu Ghraib archive intentionally serve as a kind of warning to the *jihadist* that this can happen to anyone; perhaps the American

administration had its finger on the pulse of its citizens when it assumed the Abu Ghraib images would be less bothersome than the Nick Berg beheading because Muslim victims remain less important and identifiable than American ones. When the *Homo Islamicus* is the victim, his victimhood is both constructed and photographed by American soldiers, whose performance is viewed by an international audience. These images were widely distributed by the same satellite and cable networks which had not allowed viewing of the bodies of American soldiers being sent home from Iraq. It is easier to see the *Homo Islamicus* denigrated, the objects of degradation and sexual abuse, and perhaps even advantageous in the “spectacle of terror” than it is to see a fully human American body.

It appears evident then, that the American government, at least, is cognizant of the fact that spectacles have direct political implications both for the recruitment of potential followers and for the general perception of the American public of their own government. While, governments claim they will not negotiate with terrorists, it is common knowledge that secret negotiations take place and there is ample evidence that terrorism works. Gould and Klor, for example, after examining attacks in Israel from 1988-2006, conclude that local attacks cause Israelis to be more willing to grant territorial concessions to the Palestinians, and that terrorism appears to be an effective strategy in terms of shifting the entire political landscape to the left. Robert Pape claims that terrorists achieved significant policy changes in six of the eleven terrorist campaigns that he analyzed and argues that terrorism is particularly effective against democracies because the electorate typically is highly sensitive to civilian casualties from terrorist acts. Karol and Miguel provide empirical support to voters’ sensitivity to casualties by showing that American

casualties in Iraq caused George Bush to receive significantly fewer votes in several key states in the 2004 elections. The March 11, 2004 Madrid train bombings altered history by installing a party in power that might not otherwise have been elected. Just three days after the bombings, a government that was a strong supporter of America's global war on terror and a participant in the war in Iraq was replaced with a government determined to pull Spanish troops out (Jenkins n.pag)

The obvious connection between violence and achieving political goals allows us to return to some of the major queries raised in this chapter as to the role of the *jihadist* in mediating his connection to his audience and his relationship to contemporary forms of media expression. The evidence seems to suggest that the *jihadist* has directly interjected himself into both the symbolic and real, raising serious questions about the nature of mediation and performance and the possibility of political action. The *jihadist* is now speaking for himself directly, though at times he does use various other mediating forces. He operates in the same field as his Muslim interlocutors, often employing the same kind of engagement and terminologies to assert a voice. Though he competes with them for his performance, he is capable of real political action. Second, he is a sophisticated and savvy performer, who, however, does not perform for the sake of performing, but does so to institute real political result and change. Third, he operates within a faith-based frame of reference that refers to the will of the Divine, not to the authority of the nation state nor even the Sheikh, questioning the nature of sovereignty and sacrifice which has come to dominate discourse on the war on terror, even that of the most astute observers. His acts of violence on himself and others are an articulation for change, a rupture in the real

and symbolic systems. Finally, his intentions may not be unitary, and may contain personal, worldly, ethical and other-worldly motives; complicating the binary between secular and religious motives, for only in attaining secular justice can his religious motives be achieved. His actions blur the very nature of the relationship between performance and real political action, as well as the secular and the Divine. It is too soon to know if the rupture as represented by the *jihadist* can really offer an alternative to the existing world order or if it too will have its intentions emptied and circulated back only as a form of Western reflection on itself. However, the possibilities exist, and it is to these possibilities we now turn.

Conclusion:  
The Arab Revolution, Postcolonialism and the Revival of Theory

In this thesis I have argued that the figure of the *jihadist* offers a fertile area from which to launch a discussion about the limits of current theory, particularly regarding the role of interlocutors in interpretation and the limits of secularism as the founding doctrine of postcolonial theory. The texts discussed throughout this thesis are diverse in form and theoretical view and demonstrate persistent attempts to insert the *jihadist*, as a simultaneously exotic and familiar figure, into a discourse on the future of democracy, humanism, capitalism, and multiculturalism. Chapter One theorizes how Islam has been left out of theory, particularly postcolonial discussions on representation and radical challenges to metropolitan power, by examining some of the antinomies in Said's work. Chapters Two and Three discuss how *jihad* has been inserted, across disciplines and political persuasions, into the discourse on globalization, representation and political alternatives. These chapters examine the relationship between the works of "good" Muslims and the militarization of Muslim lands, as well as the theoretical travelling of *jihad* to *ijtihad*. Chapters Four and Five examine the perceptions of the intentionality of the *jihadist*, through theory, fiction, and the words and acts of infamous *jihadists*. Particular attention is been paid to how Muslim interlocutors position themselves as credible translators of their radical counterparts, and the competition in the field to explain intentionality from various perspectives.

It is evident that *jihad* has "travelled" a great deal over the past decade, and has aroused the interest of many theorists and writers, but the conditions for hearing are just beginning to be created. One of the central queries which have been raised in this study is whether *jihad* is a commodity that is being circulated in a fully charged semiotic circuit, digested through First World interpretation and moderate Muslim interlocutors and regurgitated back in a new,

digestible form, or whether *jihad* is seriously destabilizing the political paralysis and secular bias of postcolonial criticism. Two critical conclusions can be made. First, we have seen how the binary of secular and religious, prevalent in Said's own work, attaches itself to the newly established binary of "good" and "bad" Muslim, raising questions regarding the nature of representation, particularly when the "bad" Muslims are clearly speaking for themselves. I have argued that it is evident that the global eruption of *jihad* has disrupted the postcolonial privileging of the seminal role of Third World interlocutors in the metropolitan centers, as theory has begun to shift to understanding the internal differences within the field of Islam, rather than merely the relationship of Islam to the metropolitan West. Secondly, *jihad*, with its insistence on the right and need to use violence for change, has raised critical questions about how postcolonial theory has migrated from its radical roots to its home in secular, First World institutions. It is these two points as related to representation and violence which I wish to explore further here.

Let me begin with representation. The focus of this thesis is not terror, but *jihad*, a specifically self defined form of religious violence that has been at the very formation of postcolonial theory, and is also been responsible for the recent turn in theory toward the theological and the ethical. I argue that *jihad* presents a challenge to the secular bias of contemporary criticism, as well as subverts the underlying assumptions regarding the necessary representation and mediation of the "subaltern" by Third World intellectuals located in the metropolitan centers of power. In the rhetoric of resistance on *jihad*, Muslims are assigned value by their position on the continuum of radicality--- in other words, on how close they are to trying to erase *jihad* as an embarrassing and misguided interpretation of their creed, on one end, or asserting the right to violent *jihad* to resist oppression, on the other end. There have been active

attempts by both Muslims and non Muslims to assign the value of “good” to *al jihad al akbar* (the greater *jihad*) and align it with the need for *ijtihad*, or perhaps secularization and modernization of Muslim societies, and the value of “bad” to *al jihad al asghar* (the lesser *jihad*) because of its violent and spectacular attacks, misnamed as “suicide” bombings. Popular figures as diverse as Irshad Manji, Imam Abul Rauf, Ziaddiun Sardar, and Tariq Ramadan, for example, assert their individuality, by highlighting their credentials as practicing Muslims and staking their familiarity with American and European traditions. On the other hand, Osama bin Laden and Adam Ghadan position themselves in a tag team of Arabian knight and American stand-up comic to dramatize the role of the interlocutor in transmitting bin Laden’s radical Third World message to a First World audience. They demonstrate an awareness of Western discourse but firmly insist on the indigenous vocabulary of the *jihad*. Without doubt, bin Laden’s interventions will resonate long after his death. This rather unstable continuum of “good” and “bad” foregrounds the central problematic of the postcolonial theory of representation. Do the “good” Muslims represent the “bad”? Who do “bad” Muslims represent? Who is the majority? Just as Said’s secular and religious criticism is a displacement of East and West, the binary between “good” and “bad” Muslim is a reflection of the persistence of the perceived tension between the secular and the religious. I argue that a Muslim can easily become a *Homo Islamicus*, the Muslim counterpart of *Homo Sacer*, if she slides too far toward the “bad” end of the binary. Applying a contrapuntal approach, this thesis discusses how neo-Orientalists, the left, and liberals have used *jihad* as a means for reflection on the state of democracy in Western societies, without quite hearing the messages of *jihadists* themselves. This is due, in part, to the fact that the conditions for hearing are now only struggling to be born as the secular assumptions behind

theory come under serious scrutiny, and various Muslim theorists become more articulate about clarifying their indigenous theoretical vocabulary.

The 2011 Arab Revolution is playing a rupturous role in setting the conditions for hearing and seriously calling into question both the secular/religious binary which has framed debates on Muslim societies and the role of First World intellectuals in mediating revolution, particularly violent revolutionary change. At the time of writing, about four months into what is being packaged as the “Arab” revolution, new generations of Muslims in Bahrain, Tunisia, Yemen, Syria, Libya and Egypt are demonstrating a media savvy in presenting their revolutions to the world, which clearly demonstrate lessons learned over the past decade when it comes to positioning any protest originating in Muslim majority communities. All attempts, by both Arab dictators and early attempts by American and European media, to label the revolutions “Islamic” have failed, thanks to the youth who initiated the movements. This generation grew up in the rhetoric of the “war on terror” and is familiar with the tenuous categorization of “good” and “bad” Muslims. They are aware that the binary of traditional Orientalism – Islam versus the West – has been replaced by a new binary of “good” and “bad” Muslims. They have lived in a world where simply being Muslim has become a highly contentious and visibly political stance. Therefore, the communication strategy of the youth movements began with a conscious decision to articulate a revolution by Muslim masses in secular language, contrary to various movements which pre-dated it which often expressed secular, political ambitions in religious language. This new communications plan is a direct attempt to create a counter-narrative to the predominant one which has dominated Western discourse for the past decade. The left has been particularly euphoric with the youthful secular messaging of the “Arab” revolution and is hopeful that it can be appropriated to universally invigorate the left. For example, Hardt and Negri, in a February

24, 2011 article in *The Guardian*, place hope that the Arab revolutions will be this generation's Latin American struggle, as a laboratory of political experimentation," a kind of "ideological house-cleaning, sweeping away the racist conceptions of a clash of civilizations that consign Arab politics to the past." They argue,

This is a threshold through which neo-liberalism cannot pass and capitalism is put to question. And Islamic rule is completely inadequate to meet these needs. Here insurrection touches on not only the equilibriums of North Africa and the Middle East but also the global system of economic governance. (n.pag)

Hardt and Negri are right to note that the revolutions rejuvenate some basic principles of the left which had been discarded as outdated: principles of justice and universalism and popular power, but they ignore that these principles which they praise are the very foundations of Islam itself, the cultural foundation from which these revolutions are being generated. In their haste to condemn "Islamic rule," without ever defining what that might mean, and in their nostalgia to migrate the revolution into a communist agenda, they betray a need to leave Islam out of any serious inquiry into both the reason behind the revolution and the future of its achievement. A similar plea for a type of Islamic socialism, which basically leaves Islam out, has been made by Žižek in a February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 opinion editorial in *The Guardian* titled "Why Fear the Arab Revolutionary Spirit," and in his February 01 2011 appearance, with Tariq Ramadan, on *Riz Khan* on Al Jazeera.

In fact, the discussion which took place on *Riz Khan* in February 2011 where both Tariq Ramadan and Slavoj Žižek offer their insights is representative of the lenses being used to interpret this revolution and steer it away from the reality that it is a revolution by Muslims, but not necessarily Islamists. Ramadan carefully argues that the revolution is not ideologically

inspired and that we must be cognizant of the reality that Western power wants changes in the region which at the same time enable the global situation to remain the same. Ramadan confronts head on the concerns about the involvement of Islamist politics, now that Arab dictators are disappearing, and argues that the fear of a monolithical, radical Islam is merely a guise upon which the West and Israel maintain hegemony over Muslim populations. Using the example of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which he argues is diverse in ideologies, he longingly looks to the example of Turkey, not Iran, where Islamism and political life has been successfully integrated, be it, under the eye of very watchful military. Žižek uses the occasion to comment on universalism, and expresses his admiration of the Arabs who he argues truly understand democracy much better than does the West. Echoing his arguments from *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, and not responding to Ramadan's contention of the diversity contained under the umbrella of Islamist politics, he claims that the choices open to the revolution are not just "Muslim fundamentalist Islam" or liberal democracy, but must include a synthesis of Islamic and leftist ideologies. Unfortunately, however, Žižek's well-intentioned conclusions betray the same bias as Hardt and Negri ---that is that the Arab revolution must speak the language of the left. The reality is, right now, the revolution is speaking many languages, as it contains diverse aspirations. It is speaking the language of universalism, which is neither left nor neo-liberal, but at the very foundation of pluralistic Muslim societies.

Perhaps what Žižek fails to mention, and Ramadan merely hints at, is that the silence of Islamists of various stripes, and *jihadists*, has helped the revolution immensely. That doesn't mean, however, that the Muslim social structure of the societies under upheaval is not related to the revolution itself. Few commentators have paused to note how the struggle against injustice, indeed the much maligned *jihad*, is the root of Muslim civil life and the young revolutionaries

have been raised in this tradition where five pillars organize both social and spiritual life. The first pillar is to worship no God, but God and to recognize Muhammad as his messenger. This pillar, when applied to a contemporary reality, puts spiritual life and equality of all people as a first priority over the striving for global capital and Western liberalism. To place more attention on the material at the expense of the good of the whole community is against the major principle of *tawheed* in Islam, which always places God as the priority. Further, this very first pillar, by recognizing the role of revelation in the acquisition of knowledge, challenges one of the major contentions of the Western metaphysical tradition - that knowledge is secular, learned in the world, only, not transcendental. The recognition of the validity of both secular and transcendental knowledge poses a major philosophical challenge to this paradigm. The second and third pillars of daily prayers and fasting, also focus social life on the spiritual and identification with the poor and the dispossessed. The fourth pillar of *zakat*, institutes a system for the distribution of community wealth. The fifth pillar, the *hajj*, is a spiritual and politically symbolic ritual of the equality of all human beings, regardless of race or gender. This rather rudimentary description of how basic pillars of Islam are related to an agenda for economic, social, and political equality, as well as the right of self governance, demonstrates how these pillars are present in the spirit of the contemporary revolutions. The point is that the revolutionaries have been socialized in this Islamic context and thus they are articulating this context. The revolution does not need to turn to the principles of secular liberalism or the left to express its vision. The roots of the revolution are in Muslim societies and as such contain the roots of Islam which are now being articulated to Western audiences through action, in a manner which had been impossible over the past decade under the oppression of the "war on terror."

I argue throughout this thesis that Muslim theorists demonstrate a keen knowledge of Western discourse, in fact, so do some of the *jihadists*, while Western theorists, on the other hand, are willing to leave *ijtihad* and reform in the hands of Muslims in “their” societies, and consider the ideas of the *jihadists* themselves too irrational or infantile to even respond to. Instead, with no interest in learning about the Islamic concepts that frame this debate, they nullify the conditions of hearing and use the *jihad* only as a chance to reflect on the state of the West - a deformed Self, reflected back in the postcolonialist mirror. The bias remains, as Mufti has noted that “they” have literatures but only “we” have theory (123). Until the conditions for hearing exist, the debates between Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers remain limited. The absence of these conditions are demonstrated not only in responses to the Arab revolution and can be further exemplified by a few attempts at “dialogue” between Muslim and non-Muslim theorists, generated by issues which have erupted because of *jihad*, over the past decade. The following brief examples of dialogues between Talal Asad, Saba Mahmood and Judith Butler; and another between Mustapha Chérif and Jacques Derrida further demonstrate the specific kind of intellectual barriers to true engagement.

An interesting and inspiring debate on the nature of freedom of speech, and the role of secularism versus religious thinking is undertaken by Talal Asad, Saba Mahmood and Judith Butler in a response to the Danish cartoon crisis of 2005 in *Is Critique Secular: Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech*. All argue that in the domain of power and governance, the blasphemy debate frames the secularism versus Islam debate. Asad extends his interrogation of secularism and argues that in Western societies different vocabularies are used to place limits on individuals’ self ownership and the West is not as secular as it thinks, while Mahmood explains the nature of moral injury, rather than blasphemy, as derived from a different semiotics of

iconography in cultures. Asad refers directly to specific Islamic concepts of *tajdīf* (scoffing at God's bounty) and *isā'ah* (insult, harm and offense) (38), while Mahmood applies Aristotle's notion of *schesis* to a Muslim's relationship to the Prophet Mohammed (76). Both critical sections of these essays were entirely misinterpreted by Butler. For example, in extending his explanation of what is considered blasphemous in Islam by usage of the above terms, Asad asked

What would happen if religious language were to be taken more serious in secular Europe and the preventable deaths in the South of millions from hunger and war was to be denounced as "blasphemy", as the flouting of ethical limits for the sake of what is claimed to be freedom? What is this were done without any declarations of "belief", and yet done in all seriousness as a way of rejecting passionately the aspiration to totalized global control? Of course Europe's proscription of theological language in the political domain makes such a use of the word "blasphemy" inconceivable. But does this impossibility merely signal a secular reluctance to politicize "religion", or it is it the symptom of an incapacity? (56-7)

Butler does not respond to this central argument but instead focuses on how Asad has not clearly differentiated between criticism and critique. When she does engage with Asad's Islamic terminology she concludes that because it is transcendent in nature, it cannot be accounted for by law:

To situate blasphemy, or in this case, *isā'ah*, insult, injury- in relation to a way of life that is not based on self ownership, but in an abiding and vital dispossession, changes the terms of the debate. It does not provide an immediate answer to how the question of prohibition or censorship should be legally decided, but shifts us to a model of understanding that is not constrained by that juridical model... It would seem we are

being asked to understand this battle between, on the one hand, a presumptively secular framework tied to an ontology of the subject as self owned, and on the other hand, a nonsecular framework that offers an ontology of the subject as dispossessed in transcendence. (118-119)

In effect, Butler argues, like Asad, that actually there is no such a binary between the secular and religious, but she offers no method for dealing with the issue under discussion, since Asad's terminology remains "transcendent." Similarly Butler's response to Mahmood does not tackle Mahmood's nuanced description of injury but tries to fit it into an existing normative framework as she asks, "Where does Mahmood stand on the question of legal redress for injuries sustained?" (120) and then concludes that the issues of culture, ethics, the legal and political domains are unclear in Mahmood's essay. What Butler fails to notice is that it is not a normative legal answer which Mahmood is looking for, but analysis of "the structure of sensitivities, affects and commitments (ethics) upon which the language of the public order rests" (148-149). Though Butler makes interesting observations on Danish politics and valuable insights into minority conflicts, she does not truly engage with the Islamic conceptions in Asad and Mahmood's arguments. In fact she states,

These two anthropologists are trying to get us to expand our understanding of what was at stake, but I gather they are doing this because they think not just that we should all become more knowledgeable (and that the broader knowledge of our world is a moral good) but also that the secular terms should not have the power to define the meaning or effect of religious concepts. (105)

In fact one of the central points in Asad and Mahmood's articles is that we *should* become more knowledgeable of Islamic concepts in order to understand the logic and rationality behind the

Muslim response to the Danish cartoons and other issues. And what would be wrong with a little didacticism in this case considering the real absence of knowledge in contemporary theory of indigenous Muslim vocabularies and conceptual frameworks? It appears, unfortunately, that Butler dismisses this conceptual framework, and instead focuses her attention on the secular only.

A similar kind of disjuncture occurs in an equally engaging discussion between Mustapha Chérif, a professor of philosophy and Islamic studies at the University of Algiers, and Jacques Derrida. In the Foreword to *Islam and the West: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, Borradori sets Chérif up as prominent politician, serving in the Algerian government as secretary of higher education and ambassador to Egypt, in contrast to Derrida, a deconstructionist who dismantles institutions but works within them, unearthing the religious and nonreligious functions which “entails a commitment to secularization” (xii), calling them an “odd couple” (x). Derrida uncharacteristically spoke of his own personal history:

I want to speak here, today, as an Algerian, as an Algerian who became French at any a given moment, lost his French citizenship, then recovered it. Of all the cultural wealth I have received, that I have inherited, my Algerian culture has sustained me the most. This is what I wanted to say as a testimony from the heart (30).

The new, personalized Derrida and Chérif initiate a debate on the issue of faith and its role in launching the politics of the future, though it soon becomes obvious that the vocabulary of faith both employ does not intersect at any point. Chérif notes that “Islam wants engagement with regard to the “Mystery”, loyalty to the “revealed message”, and a specific attachment to the religious vision that the last life is the final aim (56) and asks Derrida “What can philosophy say today on the subject of the Mystery?” (56). In his reply, Derrida is careful to separate faith and

religion, because for him faith is connected to a social bond, while religion remains exclusionary. He argues that since the relation to the Other presupposes faith, there is no conflict between the secularization of politics and Chérif's "Mystery (57-8). Derrida displaces the debate about faith, or about religion, simply by refusing to talk about religion, with the cliché "there are many Islams, there are many Wests" (39).<sup>65</sup> There is no room for the faith-based values of which Chérif speaks; indeed, Derrida does not even explore them:

I believe that what we must consider as our first task is to ally ourselves to that in the Arab and Muslim world which is trying to advance the idea of secularization of the political, the idea of a separation between the theocratic and the political, this out of respect for the political and for democratization and out of respect for faith and religion (53-4).

The problem briefly demonstrated by these two dialogues is that the basis for such discussion is largely absent. If even Butler and Derrida could not be seduced to explore Islamic terminologies and epistemologies, then what is the hope for a genuine contrapuntal discourse? As I have argued throughout this thesis, cultural theorists do not seriously engage in the cultural terminology which the Muslim cultural critics are introducing, let alone the arguments of the *jihadists*. Therefore, will the contrapuntal discourse to come be only one with, to borrow an Žižekian term, "decaffeinated Others" ("Interview with Riz Khan: Are We Living in the End of Times"); in other words, Muslim interlocutors who speak only within the framework of Western

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<sup>65</sup> Ian Almond has noted Derrida's view of Islam shifted from time to time, sometimes considering Islam like Christian and Jewish traditions, another master narrative to be deconstructed, and sometimes as something quite different and Other, as "a potential pool of violence and fanaticism which seems to deserve special comment" (43). Sometimes Derrida placed Judaism and Islam together "both Judaism and Islam are seen as two pockets of resistance against what Derrida calls the globalization of the world, an essentially Christian Anglo American wave of modernity that Derrida juxtaposes against Judaism and Islam" (49). And other times, Derrida, like Nietzsche could not decide if Islam is the Other or the brother-brother when he connects it to a monotheistic tradition which he wants to deconstruct and other when he wants to use it to critique European Christianity. Almond notes that at times Derrida's Islam takes on "an archaic and ostensibly more savage radicalization of "religious" violence faith and knowledge" (53).

philosophy? It is too early to tell if the 2011 revolution, a living Muslim tradition of resistance, will continue to be packaged in secular language which makes it digestible to Western theory. There is hope that this new political space will be fertile ground for moving beyond simplistic divisions of 'religious' versus 'secular' and allow us to return full circle to Said's "democratic criticism."

If democratic criticism can be seen as a space that deeply engages with diverse frameworks, then following in the work of Asad's *Formations of the Secular*, for example, it must begin with a multicultural critique of secularism, including the dynamic relationship between Islam and secularism. This effort to seriously consider the role of the Other in the construction of the West's terminology, as well as to conduct a serious inquiry into the Other's own specific vocabulary, will require genuine intellectual curiosity, beyond reflection on the Self. This narcissistic trend in theory needs its own *ijtihad* to take the intellectual risk of venturing into new territory, thus far marked off bounds as religious and irrational. Vincent Pecora hopes for "a more inclusive model of cultural criticism across the boundaries of religion and nation even as it "provincializes" secularism per se" (204), but what are the hopes for this when our most radical critics avoid engaging with Islam and are bound by ambiguities when they approach Islam's role in cultural criticism? When radicals like Eagleton hold firm to the binary of "good" and "bad" Islam: praising the benign and humanistic Islam and simultaneously labeling it as "the creed which has become in our time the doctrine of oil-rich autocrats and the stoners of women, racist-minded mullahs and murderous bigots" (*After Theory* 178) ?

Giroux, perhaps more than any of the theorists discussed in this thesis, notes that the spectacle of terrorism illustrates the degree to which the state and corporate power can be

challenged while suggesting the importance of what it means to address audiences through a political discourse:

The spectacle of terrorism, if examined closely, provides some resources for rethinking how the political is connected to particular understandings of the social; how distinctive modes of address are used to marshal specific identities, memories and histories; and how certain pedagogical practices are employed to mobilize a range of affective investments around images of trauma and suffering. All of these issues raise important questions about how new circuits of power, technology, and visual production, rearticulate the relationships between meaning and action, modes of information and agency, affect and collectivity, and the public and the private. (*Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism* 72)

He is quick to point out, however, that this social form must be reclaimed from the “necropolitics” of the stateless terrorists (71). While Giroux applauds democratic usage of technologies and visual culture, it is only the *form* of this message which interests him, not the *content* if it comes from *jihadists* since it “has no vision of the future outside of the culture of fear and the discourse of risk” (77). Giroux’s oppositional politics obviously does not include the *jihadists*. While he argues there is need of a sober assessment of democratic tendencies in Latin America, particularly, Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, he makes no reference to any movements across diverse Muslim countries, even those which do not include the stateless *jihadists*. His failure to recognize the potential of Muslim societies to spearhead exactly the type of revolution which is currently sweeping the Arab world displays a deadening deafness to the multiplicity of messages that have been contained in the radical stance of the *jihadists* over the past decade. Are Giroux’s solidarities to be formed through Baudrillard’s “ruptural events,” where the real irrupts into the virtual as “the internal convulsion of history,” events which

“appear inspired by some power of evil, appear no longer the bearers of constructive disorder, but of an absolute disorder”? (*The Intelligence of Evil* 126) Are the events of 2011 examples of such ruptural events? Can they generate Giroux’s planetary oppositional politics as Hardt and Negri hope? What is the place of Muslims, “good” and “bad” in this global transformation?

The argument for a genuine engagement with Islam does not mean that cultural critics have to become Orientalists, in the traditional use of the term, but it does require a commitment to learn about Islam’s metaphysical and ethical frameworks. The reality is that a true contrapuntal discourse cannot take place through Western Muslim interlocutors alone, who are, as I have highlighted in this study, confronted with the dilemma of articulating the radical demands of *jihadists* and Islamist politics, in general, to a rather secular and unsympathetic audience. As long as the category of “bad” Muslim remains so broad based, genuine engagement between Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers, and even between Muslim thinkers themselves, will not be fruitful. On this point Olivier Roy’s categorization of four major ideological players in the Middle East has been particularly useful. These categories contain Islamists who campaign for a political entity; fundamentalists who want to establish Shariah law; *jihadists* who undermine the pillars of the West through symbolic targeted attack; and cultural Muslims who advocate for multiculturalism or community identity (*The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East* 51). Roy points out that often the four movements contradict each other, reflecting “a tension between deterritorialization and deculturation on the one hand (terrorists and multiculturalists), and reterritorialization and acculturation on the other (Islamists and fundamentalists) (52). The differences between the Islamist groups and nationalist ones, such as Fatah and Hamas, are not ideological, nor can the alliances between Hezbollah and Aoun’s Christians in Lebanon be explained, Roy argues, by maintaining the conservative binary of a secular and religious divide.

In fact, the tolerance of Islamic movements has been demonstrated by nationalist intellectuals in Egypt and Pakistan, as both define and defend social and cultural norms and mobilize popular support: "In short, there are countless examples, but nowhere in the Middle East is there a war with Islamists on one side and the secular democrats on the other, whereas media debates in Europe give the impression that this is the main difference" (60).

This is becoming increasingly obvious through the recent events of the Arab revolutions. The real division is not between secular intellectuals and religious intellectuals, but between the forces pulling between de-culturation, which I argue takes the form of a universalism often associated with secularism and neo-liberalism, and acculturation, which argues for a delinking from the universal of globalized liberalism. It is this tension that best explains the current stress between Muslim multiculturalist interlocutors and the crowded group of "bad" Muslims to which the West does not speak or hear. And it is this tension that needs to be dissected before the conditions of hearing are born. In this regard, Alastair Crooke's *Resistance: The Essence of the Islamist Revolution* is a unique and valuable contribution as it concentrates on systematically analyzing the philosophical, ethical, cultural, religious, economic, psychological, national and political values of Islamism. Crooke focused on philosophical and ethical differences between Islamism and Western traditions which have been translated into operational politics by a number of powerful personalities, including Sayyed Qutb, Mohammed Baqer al-Sadr, Musa al-Sadr, Ali Shariati, Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadallah, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and Khaled Mesha'al. Crooke argued that Islamists seek to recuperate an alternative consciousness, one drawn from their own intellectual traditions that would stand in opposition to the Western paradigm and as such represent a complete inversion of secular capitalist liberalism. Instead of the pre-eminence of the market, for

example, to which other social and community objectives are subordinated, the making of a society based on compassion, equity and justice becomes the overriding objective to which other objectives, including markets, are subordinated. Instead of the individual being the organizational principle around which politics, economics and society are shaped, it is the collective welfare of the community in terms of such principles, rather than the individual, that becomes the index of political achievement. Thus, for Crooke, as evidenced in his practical work in the Conflicts Forum which practices dialogue with Islamists, and other “bad” Muslims,<sup>66</sup> The Islamist revolution is much more than politics:

It is an attempt to shape a new consciousness – to escape from, and challenge, the most far-reaching pre-suppositions of our time. It has many shortcomings and setbacks – the radical suicide bombings might be one manifestation of it- but its intellectual insights offer Muslims (and Westerners too) the potential to step beyond the shortcomings of Western material consciousness. (“Why Can’t Muslim Societies be More like the Globalized West” n.pag)

Faisal Devji makes a similar plea for hearing when he elaborates on the gap between the last two of Roy’s groups- multiculturalist Muslim interlocutors and *jihadists*. Devji argues that the role of moderate Muslims is minimized because they have not been able to assume any leadership role globally because the frame of their debate, which remains mainly theological, is wrong. Devji argues “These epistles mark an imaginary alliance between Muslims, Christians and Jews by displacing violence and going against the geographies of the global world with Hindus and Buddhists being the real neighbors of Muslims (*The Terrorist in Search of Humanity*

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<sup>66</sup> The Conflicts Forum was founded in 2004 by Alastair Crooke and Mark Perry, to encourage dialogue with a wide range of leading Islamists. The Forum works through three channels: the *Roberts Center Dialogues*, the *Islamic Economics Program* and the *Media and Public Discourse Program* to engage Western policymakers and the leaders of political Islam in discussions. See <http://conflictsforum.org>

198). Instead, for Devji, the real hope to carry change forward lies in the radicals who are capable of revolutionizing Islam more than their liberal counterparts because militancy to Devji represents a kind of democratization, an acting without authority. He claims “militants are much more creative in their religious thinking and much more imaginative in their means of propagating it” (200). In fact, the 2011 militancy across the Arab world has required no mediation from Muslim interlocutors living in the West; it proves that Muslims living in predominantly Muslim countries are not only capable of representing themselves, but of leading global revolutionary, which is sometimes violent, change.

It is fair to argue that cultural criticism needs to manage its “denial of the rationality of Islam” (Crooke, *Resistance* 3) and stop dismissing fundamentalism, Islamism, and *jihadism* as irrational, refusing engagement, except with moderate interlocutors in a debate framed in Western terminology. However, it seems few theorists are yet up to the task. This avoidance leads to the second point I wish to argue here regarding how far postcolonial theory, in particular, has travelled from its radical roots.

To begin this reflection, recall, for example, a photograph taken on July 3, 2000, of Edward Said in South Lebanon throwing a stone across the Lebanon-Israel border in a contest with his son. He received so much criticism that Said was compelled to explain, “It was a pebble. There was nobody there. The guardhouse was at least half a mile away.”<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the media frenzy that erupted was enough to have Said uninvited as a lecturer at the Freud Society of Vienna. How far has postcolonial theory travelled when a simple rock (or pebble) thrown by one of its progenitors stirred so much negative publicity? The Western support for the 2011 Arab revolutions has been tenuous as long as the protesters are “peaceful,” while at the

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<sup>67</sup>Dinitia Smith, “A Stone’s Throw is a Freudian Slip,” *New York Times*, 10 March 2000. Web. 16 December 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/10/arts/a-stone-s-throw-is-a-freudian-slip.html?scp=1&sq=%22edward+said%22&st=nyt>

same time it has virtually ignored the violent catalyst of these revolutions, the act of testimony by Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire on December 17, 2010, now hailed as a *shahid* throughout the Muslim world. The “revolutionaries,” as the Western media labels them, in Libya freely speak of their struggle as *jihad*, and indeed it is an armed struggle. Postcolonial theorists now look with hope to the Arab region because its revolution is articulated in a language with which they can identify. Will the revolution, remain in favor once Islamist and *jihadist* elements enter the formations of these new societies?

The response of Western theorists, such as those discussed here, to the formation of governments across the region which will, no doubt, contain strong Islamist and even *jihadist* elements will highlight whether or not postcolonialism has already forgotten that its father, Frantz Fanon was an active member of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) and was buried in Algeria under the name Ibrahim Fanon in a graveyard for *shahid*. We have already noted Said’s discomfort with Fanon’s advocacy of violence in Chapter Three, as well as how other Muslim interlocutors try to manage the issue of violence as they discuss *al jihad al akbar* (the greater *jihad*), and *ijtihad* instead of *al jihad al asghar* ( the lesser *jihad*) and its often violent manifestations. Sardar for example, in his foreword to *Black Skin White Masks*, calls Fanon’s violence “problematic” and in an interview with *Naked Punch* notes that “Violence is where I depart from Fanon. Fanon thought violence was necessary to resist imperialism. Gandhi proved him wrong” (n.pag). Perhaps it is this abhorrence of violence in First World postcoloniality that prevents true engagement with radical Islamic politics. It did not stop Frantz Fanon, however, from borrowing greatly from the Islamic resistance in developing his theory of violence known through *The Wretched of the Earth*, an argument which Slisi has developed and which has been put forth in Chapter One of this thesis.

Fanon himself was clear about the Islamic influence on his ideas and actions in one of his lesser known books *A Dying Colonialism*, first published as *L'an cinq de la revolution algerienne* in 1959. It is in this book that Fanon wrote directly of his “Moslem comrades” (165) and recounted an interesting meeting he had with Muslims and Jews in Algeria which provoked the development of his ideas on violence as an “excess made possible by the excess of colonialism” (165). Fanon wrote about his inner struggle with accepting violence as a necessary part of the Algerian struggle and how, in the end, he was convinced by a Jewish speaker at the meeting who seduced him with a “profession of faith” that was “patriotic, lyrical and passionate” (166). Interestingly, Fanon also reflected on his own biases and the fact that he was more easily convinced by a Jew than a Muslim, noting “I still had too much unconscious anti-Arab feeling in me” (166). Throughout *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon elaborated how his theory of the necessity of violence deepened through his discussions with Muslims and referred to their “conscientiousness and moderation,” noting that “little by little I was coming to understanding the meaning of the armed struggle and its necessity” (167). The most convincing evidence for Fanon came from the fellahen (peasants) who the media had branded as “extremists and highway bandits” (167). Reflecting on his confusion in becoming a member of the FLN, Fanon wrote,

My leftist leanings drove me toward the same goal as Muslim nationalists. Yet I was too conscious of the different roads by which we had reached the same aspiration.

Independence yes I agreed, but what independence? Were we going to fight to build a feudal, theocratic Moslem state that was frowned on by foreigners? Who would claim that we had a place in such an Algeria? (168)

His answer to this question came brilliantly from a fellow comrade of the FLN who retorted that it was up to the Algerian people to decide. That same answer is being heard throughout the Arab world today as the West struggles to catch up to revolutions for which it was not prepared.

In the end, Fanon's analysis of colonialism began and ended with the question of violence, which he developed through his engagement with the Islamist FLN. Through violence, as Said noted as discussed in Chapter Three, Fanon was looking for a way to break completely from the past and seek a new humanity: not only to overthrow the colonizers, but a new consciousness based on equality and justice. For Fanon violence played a critical role in the reconstruction of self and nation, but it accompanied an epistemological revolution that pit the colonizer directly against the colonized. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon argued that an entirely new world must come into being. This utopian desire, to be absolutely free of the past, required total revolution, "absolute violence" (37), and this true revolution could only come from the peasants, or "fellaheen" who must also overthrow the bourgeoisie in their own society who cooperate with the colonizers. In short, for Fanon, violence was both "instrumental" and "absolute." Samira Kawash notes that instrumental violence in Fanon's text is the violence of revolt and of reversal, the violence whereby the colonized challenge and attempt to upend the domination that has oppressed them. At the same time, another violence (perhaps alongside or unleashed by instrumental acts of violence) emerges as the world-shattering violence of decolonization. Decolonization destroys both colonizer and colonized; in its wake, something altogether different and unknown, a "new humanity" will rise up. This is absolute violence (235). Kawash argues that "while the violence of reversal can be identified in terms of its material manifestations, the absolute violence of decolonization can only be 'symbolic violence,' violence that threatens the symbolic order, violence that bursts through history" (243).

This concept of violence as serving a creative role to revive indigenous thought and throw off the chains of colonialism and occupation resonates well with some of the *jihadists* I have discussed in Chapter Five, as well as with Tariq Ramadan's social *jihad*, as discussed in Chapter Three. I have noted throughout this study that *jihad* has both inner and outer dimensions, for individuals and societies. The inner dimensions, on a societal level, involve a restructuring of knowledge and a creative challenging and reclaiming of tradition; it is the greater *jihad*, *al jihad al akbar*, the fight against the desire of oneself and the desires of greed inside one's own society. The outer dimension involves translating this ethics into action in the form of engagement with global issues, and, if necessary, defending oneself, through violence, from occupation and colonization, the lesser *jihad* then or *al jihad al asghar*. It is easy to see the transformation of these ideas in Fanon's thought. Instrumental and absolute violence refer to the reciprocal relationship between the greater *jihad* and lesser *jihad* in the process of decolonization and reconstruction. And for Fanon, like the *jihadists* discussed in Chapter Five, both processes are important. For example, bin Laden employed both instrumental and absolute violence, attacks on the bourgeoisie of predominantly Muslim countries in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, for example, as well as spectacular attacks on the neo-colonizers in America and Europe. The symbolic role of bin Laden's absolute violence was due to the enormity of the rupture in epistemologies that he was trying to achieve, asking citizens to transform from being subjects of capitalist nation states to subjects of God only. While the fellaheen are the hope Fanon posits for the leaders of his revolution, it is the masses of Muslim countries, the *Homo Islamicus*, Muslims in Western countries, and even oppressed non-Muslims to whom bin Laden spoke. bin Laden's vision was toward a completely new society that broke from secular Western liberalism and

capitalism, similar to the complete break which was directly referred to in Fanon's text. Neither, of course, lived to see their dreams realized.

The new man that Fanon envisioned, free from the shackles of colonial oppression and inner limitations on his desire for equality and justice, is similar to the reconstructed *Homo Islamicus*, the true Muslim, in the utopian Muslim state as envisioned by bin Laden and writers such as Qutb and Shariati. For example, Fanon argued, "Let us combine our muscles and our brains in a new direction. Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 253). These words were echoed by Ali Shariati, as discussed in Chapter Five, who also collaborated with the Algerian FLN and translated an anthology of Fanon's work into Persian: "In this way, man becomes absolute man, because he is no longer a person, an individual. He is "thought." (n.pag). A similar vision was exhorted by Qutb:

Indeed the capacity exists in human nature to change completely from one way or life to another, and this is much easier from it than many partial changes. And if the complete change were to be from one system of life to another which is higher, more perfect and more pure than the former other, this complete change is agreeable to human psychology (112).

This hope for a new humanity, which necessitates both decolonization and the generation of a new society, instrumental and absolute violence, involve both the greater and lesser *jihad*. Perhaps, then, it can be argued that the notion of *jihad* is at the very essence of Fanon's theory of liberation, and as such the very cornerstone of postcolonial theory itself. By extension, perhaps the "oppositional politics" of Giroux and the "democratic criticism" of Said, which represent the great neo-humanist projects of the West, are not Western at all, but have been

formed through the encounter of the West with the Islamic tradition, which to this day, the West is unable to recognize.

At the time of writing the world looks anxiously at the unfolding Arab revolutions, fretting as to whether they will turn into *jihad* and become unfriendly to the West, while simultaneously rejoicing that the assassination of Osama bin Laden will signal an end to *jihad*. What it doesn't realize is that these revolutions are *jihad* in the truest sense, and that bin Laden was merely one manifestation of a tradition established long before him. One critical reality of the current Arab revolutions is that the Muslim masses are not only revolting against Arab dictators, but against the humiliation Muslims have been facing in the post 9/11 global landscape. In other words, the Arab/Muslim people are not just enraged with political, social and economic oppression, they are also angry with their rulers' complicity with imperialism, particularly American and Israeli. In short, the revolution has erupted from Muslim societies as a result of internal oppression and as a response to political, economic and cultural imperialism, with which the post 9/11 youth are intricately familiar. In this regard, the international community must get the message that this revolution is as much against its hypocritical and condescending manner of dealing with Muslim societies as it is against Mubarak, Ben Ali or Gaddafi. The upheavals are violent, with death tolls rising every day, and the violence is both instrumental and absolute. This violence contains all the elements of *jihad*, representative in the outer struggle to overthrow oppression of leaders who thrived by perpetrating injustice on their people for personal gain in turn for protecting Western economic and security interests, and of the inner *jihad* of conquering fear and testifying to the possibility of the birth of a new consciousness or a Fanon's "whole man."

In a February 2011 opinion piece titled "Delayed Defiance," Hamid Dabashi, loyal friend of Edward Said, expressed optimism that we are at a crossroads of postcoloniality:

After Gaddafi's speech on February 22, the discourse of postcoloniality as we have known it over the last two hundred years has come to an end -- not with a bang but with a whimper. After that speech we need a new language -- the language of postcoloniality, having had a false dawn when the European colonial powers packed and left, has just started. After forty-two years of unsurpassed banality and cruelty, he is among the last vestiges of a European colonial destruction of not just world material resources but far more crucial of a liberated moral imagination. There are a number of these relics still around. Two of them have been deposed. But still the criminal cruelty and the identical gibberish of many more -- from Morocco to Iran, from Syria to Yemen -- are to be taught the dignity of a graceful exit, an ennobling silence. (n.pag)

Dabashi goes on to argue that what we are witnessing in the recent revolutions across the Arab world is a "deferred postcolonial defiance" and the liberation of the Arab states, particularly North Africa, from the oppressive remnants of postcolonialism will open "a new imaginative geography of liberation, mapped far from the false and falsifying binary of "Islam and the West," or "the West and the Rest." He rightly argued that this liberating geography goes far beyond the Arab and even Muslim world:

From Senegal to Djibouti similar uprisings are brewing. The commencement of the Green Movement in Iran almost two years before the uprising in the Arab world has had far-reaching implications deep into Afghanistan and Central Asia, and today as far as China there are official fears of a "Jasmine Revolution. (n.pag)

No doubt Dabashi's observations are right on target, but one critical point needs to be added: political Islamism, and even *jihadists*, will, no doubt, play a defining role in the "new imaginative geography of liberation." And even more importantly, this "imaginative geography" will be mapped within the reality of Muslim societies out of which the revolutions are being generated. There is an unprecedented opportunity for Muslim societies to have a debate on the role of Islam in the formation of their civil and political life, a conversation which has been deferred since their break from their colonial masters. We must not forget, as well, the role of the "war on terror" has played in stifling this conversation since all of the autocrats now being deposed were partners in the CIA's controversial "extraordinary rendition program" and used the threat of insecurity to suppress political expression. For example, Martin Scheinin, the UN special rapporteur on the protection of human rights, has detailed how Tunisia's counterterrorism laws and policies played a central part in the former government's crushing of political opposition. The same arguments used by Ben Ali were employed by Mubarak and, more recently, Qaddafi in discounting the popular revolution, accusing radicals, Islamists and al Qaeda of brainwashing and drugging the youth into action. It is evident that the shameful and awkward baggage of the "war on terror," particularly in North Africa, is coming to haunt the West. The decision to assassinate bin Laden, rather than bring him to trial, also illuminates the fact that the United States, particularly, is eager to keep this baggage buried for good (at sea).

There is also evidence in Egypt and Tunisia, that the people, having come this far, will not accept the replacement of one dictator with another, compliant to American interests, and are eager to explore diverse alliances which include political Islamists. In Egypt protests are continuing with the populations demanding accountability and justice and the Muslim Brotherhood has become a vocal part of this negotiating process. In Tunisia Rashid Ghannouchi's

Al Nadha Party has been legalized. The situation in Libya is much more complex because of the absence of a strong civil society, like that promoted and sustained by the moderate Islamist politics of the Brotherhood in Egypt for example, due to the extreme suppression of Islamism of all sorts by Qaddafi. For this reason Libya runs a greater risk at falling prey to the agendas of more radical Islamic and *jihadist* factions. And certainly we can predict that any acts of violence by *jihadists* in the region are bound to be highlighted as evidence that Muslims are simply too medieval and infantile to determine the destinies of their own societies. The realities of the past decade have shown that a true contrapuntal discourse between the “West” and Muslim societies cannot take place through the interpretations of Western Muslim interlocutors and academics alone, who are confronted with the dilemma of articulating the demands of Muslim societies to a rather secular and unsympathetic audience. As long as the category of “bad” Muslim remains so broad based, and includes all Islamists from Al Qaeda to the Muslim Brotherhood in the same ferocious tribe, genuine engagement between Muslim and non-Muslim societies, and even between Muslim thinkers themselves, will not be fruitful. And the moment for Dabashi’s “new imaginative geography of liberation” will once again be deferred.

As neo-colonialism is threatened, Muslims will now finally have the conversations they need to have in order to create the type of postcolonial society Fanon envisioned for Algeria. This thesis has argued that the *Homo Islamicus*, central to the formation of postcolonial theory, as the fellahen in Fanon’s reputed work, is at the foundation of the postcolonial tradition, as well as the concept of *jihad*. Though *jihad* continues to travel through theory and literature, becoming reformulated, digested and repackaged along the way, the embrace of *jihad* and postcolonialism is, no doubt, one of the most challenging and interesting contributions to contemporary theory. The Muslim masses, which now include not only the youth, but opposition

figures, rebels, peasants, the cosmopolitan middle class and even *jihadists*, are well aware of the international politics at play as well as the impending world economic crisis of historic proportions. They are spearheading a social and cultural revolution, organizing across class and ideology from within their own indigenous Muslim social fabric which provides the universality of such an enabling mobilization. The revolution may have been started by media savvy youth who led the way in framing the argument in a secular narrative, understandable to the accepted discourse of the West. It will be carried forward, however, by Muslim societies which have truly come of age in giving birth to a new political space that the entire world is watching being born. As Muslims become more and more articulate at introducing their vocabularies, aspirations, and political and philosophical frameworks to the West, and since the West is now pushed into a corner where it is forced to listen, perhaps genuine “democratic criticism” can emerge. Such an engagement must *refuse* to leave Islam out of the discussion about the future of the Arab revolution, the formation of genuine post postcolonial states, and indeed the brewing universal revolutions yet to be born. If the “democratic criticism” that Said envisioned is ever to take root, both Muslim and non-Muslim critics, as well as others from diverse traditions, will have to invest immense energy in learning each other’s languages and rediscovering the origins of their own.

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