

CHALLENGING POST 9/11 STEREOTYPES IN LORRAINE ADAMS' *HARBOR* (2004)

تحدي الصور النمطية لما بعد أحداث الحادي عشر من سبتمبر في رواية المرفأ
للورين ادامز(2004)

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المخلص :

نُشر عدد كبير من الروايات بعد الأحداث التي وقعت في الحادي عشر من سبتمبر 2001 في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وقد تميزت هذه الروايات بدرجة عالية من الصور النمطية و التي كانت الأكثر وضوحاً في الروايات الأمريكية الرئيسية في تلك الفترة مثل الإرهابي لجون ابدايك, الرجل الساقط لدون دليلو و جوهرة المدينة المنورة لشيري جونز بالإضافة إلى روايات أخرى. فيعرف المسلم على أنه عنيف يحب سفك الدماء ,مظهره الخارجي غير نظيف, يحب تعدد الزوجات ,يحترق المرأة , متخلف, كسول و نظرتة للحياة سلبية جدا .في الواقع ، غالباً ما كان الأدب الغربي ينظر إلى الإسلام والمسلمين بطرق نمطية لكن يبدو أن أحداث الحادي عشر من سبتمبر قد عززت الخطاب الاستشراقي القديم . في ضوء الاستشراق لإدوارد سعيد (المنشور سنة 1978) يسعى هذا المقال إلى توضيح الصور الإيجابية المختلفة للشخصيات المسلمة في رواية هاربور(المرفأ) للورين ادامز. نريد أن نثبت أن رواية ادامز قدمت صورة جديدة للمسلمين تعارض تشويه صورتهم التي سادت على نطاق واسع في الخيال الغربي في أعقاب أحداث 11 سبتمبر .

الكلمات المفتاحية : الاستشراق ؛ تحدي ؛ الصور النمطية ما بعد أحداث 11 سبتمبر ؛ إدوارد سعيد؛ المسلمين.

Abstract:

Post 9/11 American fiction is highly characterized by Orientalist stereotyping which is most apparent in key American novels of that period. Although Islam and Muslims have often been viewed in stereotypical ways by Western literature, it seems that the 9/11 events have strengthened the old Orientalist discourse. In the light of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, this article seeks to elaborate on the positive image of the Muslim characters in Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* (2004). By referring to key novels in post 9/11 American fiction such as John Updike's *Terrorist*, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Sherry Jones' *A Jewel of Medina*, we would like to demonstrate that Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* opposes the demonization of Muslims extensively set in the Western imagination in the aftermath of 9/11.

Key words: Orientalism ; post 9/11 stereotypes; challenge; Edward Said; Muslims.

1-Introduction:

A great number of novels have been published after the tragic events of September 11th 2001 in the United States (commonly referred to as 9/11). Most of these novels deal with the post- traumatic aftermaths of the events and the way they affect the American individuals and their environment. This latter has been harshly changed by "terrorists" or "violent intruders" followers of Islam which is claimed to be not only "a religion of fatalism and inaction" but also "a religion driving its people to fanaticism, bigotry, may hem and world terrorism."¹ Indeed, post 9/11 American fiction is highly characterized by Orientalist stereotyping which is most apparent in key American novels of that period such as *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo and *Terrorist* by John Updike among many other literary works to which we will refer throughout this article.

This article seeks to elaborate on the different images of the Muslim Other in Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* (2004). By exploiting the Muslim characters' portrayal in this selected novel and referring to key novels in post 9/11 American fiction which provide key features of the stereotypes, we would like to demonstrate that Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* opposes the demonization of Muslims extensively set in the Western imagination in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. In the light of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, we intend to highlight and discuss the writer's challenge of the strongly established stereotypes which post 9/11 American fiction emphatically mirrors.

In his *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said maintains that "the Orient was almost a European invention."² According to him, Orientalism is not just a study of the East by the West but also a way of perceiving Arab peoples and cultures and distorting the reality by means of representations that accommodate preconceived notions.³ In his comment about Orientalism, Daniel Martin Varisco states that "Any European or American representation of Islam and the geographic space that claims it is often called a kind of "Orientalism." He explains that "centuries of contact on all levels between Christian Europe and its Islamic East have generated a long and varied historical trajectory of textual discourse. The East was a concern for the West on virtually every level: material, political, aesthetic, and spiritual."⁴

Islam and Muslims have often been viewed in stereotypical ways by Western literature but it seems that the 9/11 events have hardened and strengthened the old Orientalist discourse. 9/11 marked a change observed in the world's focus on Islam and Arabs/Middle Easterners specifically. In other words, these events of worldwide significance have had a heavy impact on Westerners' attitudes towards Islam, the religion which is highly claimed to nurture terrorism and promote bloodshed and Muslims, the "terrorists" who have been behind the 9/11 attacks. Many Americans hold an extremely negative opinion about Islam and its followers and fear of terrorism is commonly associated with fear of Islam and Muslims.⁵

Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* never directly mentions 9/11 events. Yet, the shadow of these attacks and their consequences are omnipresent in this literary piece and pervade the whole narrative. This shows itself in the increased attention shed on the illegal Algerian immigrants throughout the novel. They are first invisible then become, after the events, extremely visible and suspected. Indeed, the whole novel is described as "a vivid portrayal of innocents swept up by forces beyond their control, the alienation of immigrant life and the ambiguities of the War on Terror."⁶ What concerns us in this post 9/11 novel is the way the Muslim Other or rather the so called "terrorist" Other is presented to the reader.

2- Post 9/11 stereotypical images of Muslims

In his *Orientalism*, Edward Said explains that the "backward Other" is constructed through many symbols and images attributed to both sexes. From veils that cover the heads of oppressed women to bearded men with swords, images that essentialize the Orientals as dangerous, violent and exotic.⁷ Stereotypical images of Muslims were pervasive in the aftermath of 9/11. "Stereotypes of the dark-skinned, bearded, Muslim man as representative of the primary threat to national security" in addition to his major role as the "oppressor" of woman have been entrenched in the minds of Westerners. This is due to media which highly promoted such stereotypes as Edward Said argues. Said points out that "media images command too much attention and can be exploited at times of crisis and insecurity of the kind that the post-9/11 period has produced."⁸ Media is of crucial importance in the creation of the enemy other:

Media emphasis on ideology and spectacle also contributes to the creation of an enemy *other*. Media demonize an enemy through stereotypes that exaggerate preexisting fears and perceptions of difference. This is not new. American media participated in the shameful transformation of Japanese Americans from citizens to enemies during World War II that justified their internment in camps on the West Coast. The media also served both as the medium and the target of the red scare of McCarthyism that dominated the Cold War years with recurrent anti-communist messages. In the years since the Cold War, fears and images of hate have coalesced around deeply held stereotypes of the Middle East that harm others and distort public decision making. These media stereotypes strongly influence what Americans believe

about important international issues and contribute to the intractability of intercultural conflicts.⁹

Although several scholars argue that the negative images of Muslims in the media is much the same as any other minority group,¹⁰ many other scholars on the other hand assert that Muslims are different from the other minority groups in the United States; they are a targeted minority:

Muslims should be part of a “band of others” in the American mind. However, Americans actually may see two “bands,” with racial and religious minority groups such as Jews and African Americans in one, and cultural minority groups such as illegal immigrants and gays and lesbians in another that white Americans view far more negatively. Muslims thus may be distinctive. Because they are a religious minority group with cultural practices that are very different from mainstream conventions, they may be associated with both bands.¹¹

Hence, Muslims are associated with both bands and consequently receive the double amount of discrimination.

In his *Covering Islam*, Said argues that Western media distorts the image of Islam and he highlights its tenacious tendency to maintain stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. The negative images of Islam “correspond not with what Islam ‘is’...but to what prominent sectors of a particular society take it to be”¹² In this context, John Esposito points out in his “Political Islam: Beyond the Green Menace,” that the creation of the Muslim enemy image in the minds of Americans is due to the media’s presentation of the stereotypical Muslim. This presentation draws a picture of a monolithic Islam in which all Muslims are the same in terms of belief, thinking, feelings, and actions. This renders the Americans’ expectations of Muslims always based on stereotypes and far from factual knowledge. He adds that by focusing on Islamic fundamentalism, the media stresses the idea of Muslim threat and makes it stronger. Furthermore, fundamentalism and terrorism have become strongly connected in the minds of Americans with a hazy distinction between the two terms, the thing which reinforces the stereotypes of Islam against the West, extremism and terrorism.¹³ According to Hylland Eriksen, the problem of this stereotyping lies in dealing with whole categories of people, cultures, and traditions all together as problematic instead of dealing with specific events, actions and cultures separately.¹⁴

These stereotypes which have been promoted in media are strongly reinforced by post 9/11 American fiction,¹⁵ and can be best illustrated through Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, John Updike’s *Terrorist*, Sherry Jones’ *The Jewel of Medina* among many other post 9/11 fictional narratives. In this context, light is shed on the beard as the Islamic symbol which identifies the “terrorists”: whoever has a beard is unquestionably considered a “terrorist.” Beards form a discourse of fear and danger and have become the most important element of dangerous “terrorists.” Greta Olsson argues that “facial hair appears to have symbolic quality, as it is often taken as an outward identifying feature for terrorists.” That is to say, the 9/11

events have provided a new image of the Muslim world, that of “fundamentalists and terrorists and beards became immediately suspect”¹⁶

Many other negative stereotypes have been attributed to Muslims or “Scary Brown People”¹⁷ as James Ryan calls them. They are indeed dehumanized and presented “as a homogeneous, zombielike body, incapable of independent thought and liable to be whipped into a frenzy at the least disturbance to their unchanging backward worldview.”¹⁸ These features are claimed to be derived from the religion they follow and the “Bedouin land” in which they live or rather the “desert land, where the fighting mood is a chronic mental condition.”¹⁹ This “desert land” can be best seen in Sherry Jones’ *The Jewel of Medina*. At the very beginning of this novel, Jones tells the readers: “Join me in a harsh, exotic world of saffron and sword fights, of desert nomads living in camel's-hair tents, of caravans laden with Persian carpets and frankincense.”²⁰ Furthermore, Muslims/Arabs are depicted as “dirty, immoral, uneducated” individuals who are not welcomed in America. All these stereotyped images are extensively portrayed in post 9/11 American novels by means of their Muslim characters whom we will exploit later in comparison to the characters of the novel under study: Lorraine Adams’ *Harbor*.

3- An innocent Muslim escaping violence: Thirst for peace

Aziz, the Muslim main character in Adams’ *Harbor* is a peaceful man. His portrayal stands in opposition to the violent Muslim characters who are widely used in post 9/11 fictional narratives. He is a man of peace, innocent from any act of violence: He escapes the violence that prevailed Algeria in the 1990’s and refuses to be a terrorist once in New York and has never indulged himself in dubious affairs. Aziz is not like Delillo’s Hammad in *Falling Man*, for instance, who gets influenced by Amir, the most prominent figure of the novel’s terrorists. This character fills Hammad’s mind with beliefs and concepts he claims to bring from Quran, leading him to get involved in terrorist acts. Contrarily, no one in *Harbor* has been able to get Aziz involved in illegal affairs and most importantly in terrorism. In other words, Aziz never lets himself enroll in a terrorist cell or advocate terrorism.

The members of Aziz’s family call him “a pigeon” because he “was always flying away.” His mother finds difficulty in finding him; as if he has wings. Thus his sister Anissa calls him “Hamaam” and it sticks to him. Though this does not show that he is called so on account of his peacefulness, it seems to be the appropriate nickname for a man like Aziz who throughout his story searches stability moving from his country ,Algeria, to America then traveling from one place to another within America peacefully without harming anyone neither Americans nor Arab fellows.

Besides, though it is not explicitly said to be a hint to peace, it is very positive and unexpected to attribute the nickname (Pigeon) to a Muslim in the post 9/11 context because whatever the explanation is, “Pigeon” has always been a symbol of peace. Indeed, “Pigeon” does not go with the stereotypical images of bloody Muslim characters offered in post 9/11 American fiction. Delillo’s Muslim character, for instance can in no way be offered such a

nickname (Pigeon) since he is ready to kill the Americans believing that violent acts and death make him closer to God, and this strengthens him. While Aziz lives with the Americans and has never thought to harm any of them, Hammad's duty in *Falling Man* is "to kill Americans"²¹

Likewise, neither John Elray's nor Tom Clancy's Muslim characters, for instance, can be given the nickname "pigeon." In *Khalifa: A Novel of Conquest And Personal Triumph*, John Elray portrays his Muslim characters as "The Bedouin" who "live like animals" and use "the foul odor of fresh dung...to be used later as fuel"²² and in *The Teeth of the Tiger*, Tom Clancy depicts Muslims as savage and blood-thirsty not even human beings but animals "holding a weapon." Clancy makes use of Mustafa, a leader of a group sent to attack malls across the United States, as a typical example of Muslims' savagery.²³ In both cases, thus, the animal metaphor used in relation to the Muslim characters indicates aggressivity and violence; it is far from the image of "pigeon" which symbolizes peace.

Indeed, all the details in *Harbor* allude to Aziz's peacefulness. Aziz's experience in the army in Algeria continues to haunt him in his new life in America and he hates being told of the massacres taking place in Algiers; "he saw this as cowardice."²⁴ When his friends once discuss the atrocities of terrorism, "Aziz, eyes down, encouraged peace to his chest, his belly, his eyes, his ears, repeating a word of one kind or another to still himself."²⁵ Aziz does not use physical violence against anyone neither does he practise a psychological one. Violence has never been part of his notion of life which is for him "a series of dramas in which the goal was a place where you could talk, truly talk, and say whatever it was that haunted you at night alone. He would get to that place."²⁶ The place Aziz wishes to reach is "to talk" and not "to kill", a statement which reflects his non-violent soul and his thirst for peace.

Therefore, even Aziz's way of thinking tends towards peace and not violence. This is made obvious in another scene in the novel. At his arrival in Boston, Aziz feels wretched. He possesses nothing to eat or to put on; yet, he does not have the slightest idea to commit a violent act to save himself. Instead, he moves into the blocks of the city; the first thing he looks for is a peaceful place where to sleep. He thinks of a church and he imagines a kind priest with "a face of love"²⁷ that he really needs in his loneliness and tough conditions in USA. Such a face may well reassure him and feed his peaceful nature.

3-1 Words instead of swords

One of Aziz's jobs to gain his living in USA is selling coffee in cups with a piece of writing on them. While Muslims are portrayed in post 9/11 novels "as bearded men with swords," Adams' Muslim protagonist Aziz comes as a bearded man who believes in "the power of words" instead of "swords." Adams once says in an interview:

I wanted to use it (this idea of selling coffee) because I think it speaks to several things. The first thing is that it speaks to a kind of sweetness in Aziz...that he has this idea about how to make money. And it is very modest in its way, but it also has something to do with writing. Because I think Aziz in a lot of ways is a character who even though he isn't a writer does believe in the power of the written words.²⁸

Therefore, Adams distances her Aziz from “swords” and talks about a “kind of sweetness in Aziz” which makes it evident that Aziz is not violent because “sweetness” and violence can never ever meet.

In fact, Islam has been portrayed as a source of terrorism and Muslims have often been said to believe in the power of “swords.” Zoe Ferraris’ novel *Finding Nouf* (2008) may be the best illustration of this: “Should we Muslim sit back until we are devoured by the unbelievers?” demanded Ibn Azziz. “I say, put them to the sword and scatter their bones! I say, whatever good exists is thanks to the sword! Compromise with unbelievers is a defeat for righteousness! The sword is the Key to paradise.”²⁹ Thus, the swords, the means of violence in post 9/11 American fiction are beautifully replaced with “words” in Adams’ *Harbor*.

Words are vital instruments which may either promote violence or establish peace and happiness. Interestingly, Adams provides more details about the words Aziz uses. This cancels any possibility of violence. Aziz’s written words are proverbs which serve peace. All the proverbs he uses can in no way be linked to violence: “Min ratl hakya tafham wiqya : From a pound of talk, an ounce of understanding”³⁰ which means being talkative is not good, “Kun namla wa takul sukr: work like an ant and you’ll eat sugar,” and “Al ketheb bem’hallu ebada :Lying in its proper place is equal to worship”³¹ which stress hard work and good intentions respectively. In other words, Aziz does not write anything on the paper cups and significantly he does not write words that suggest violence. Contrarily, he writes words that promote a wise peaceful life to a great extent.

3-2 The beard, the symbol of fear:

Karen Culcasi and Mahmut Gokman have studied beards as “key symbols in the manufacturing of Middle Eastern, Arab, and Muslim men as “the dangerous other””³² Their study which focuses on media representations of bearded men in post 9/11 world, shows “how certain men’s beards have been embedded in a discourse of fear, danger, and terror; and how the removal of the beard symbolizes modernization, westernization, and liberation.”³³ The purpose of their study is to “argue that this othering of Middle Eastern, Arab, and Muslim men as “dangerous” not only creates a homogenized and distorted image of these diverse groups of people, but has also been used to justify social discrimination and U.S. hegemony”³⁴ They have provided examples of hate crimes which show the consequences of the link drawn between the beard and terrorism asserting that “the perceived connection of terrorism to a particular bodily image has become so profound that just a beard can invoke active profiling and discrimination.”³⁵ The point is that “Orientalist imaginings do not just remain in one’s mind, but are performed and practiced” and help justify the US hegemonic practices abroad, being economic or political polices.³⁶

The beard triggers suspicion and fear in the US Islamophobic environment but this is not applicable to Adams’ *Harbor* though it belongs to post 9/11 American fiction. Aziz is “dressed up in a beard”³⁷; however, his beard scares nobody in the novel; it has been in no way a sign of terrorism. This is indicated from the very beginning of the novel when Aziz is rescued by an Egyptian man at his arrival in USA. At home, while this man’s wife prepares

dinner, one of the women who help her in the kitchen talks to Aziz; “she looked at him, without any fear but with something of what he had hoped the imaginary priest would have looked at him with.”³⁸ That is to say, she looks at him with “a face of love,”³⁹ the face he wishes to encounter at any church as he searches rescue. “Fear” thus is replaced by “Love” something rare in post 9/11 fiction which strongly links the beard with terrorist acts.

Terror and fear are supposed to take place at the sight of a bearded man since the beard is strongly linked to Islamic “Jihad” and thus to terrorism. Unlike the portrayal of the beard in *Harbor*, the Orientalist representation of the beard in *Falling Man* stresses this link and makes it obvious. The narrator of this novel states that all Muslims grow beards, and there is even a son who asks his “father to grow a beard.”⁴⁰ Delillo’s Hammad feels ill at ease at growing a beard but he does because it is compulsory: “he spent time at the mirror looking at his beard, knowing he was not supposed to trim it”⁴¹ because he is a member of the group of Jihad and this later and the beard are inextricable.

3-3 A “Clean” Muslim man

The non-threatening appearance of the bearded Aziz discussed above entails the discussion of another rampant stereotypical image related to Muslims’ physical appearance in post 9/11 fiction. In addition to the beard, Muslim/Arab men are often stereotyped as “dirty” people:

A common symbol used to depict all Arabs is that of an Arab man who looks unkempt or disheveled. This hints at the “dirty Arab” stereotype not uncommon in both the United States and Europe. In this context, Arabs represents the unhygienic inhabitants of the bleak and waterless desert or of foul and overcrowded cities.⁴²

This stereotype is remarkably debunked in the novel under study. Aziz, the Muslim character in *Harbor* is good looking and more importantly he is not portrayed to be “dirty.” Indeed, the most attracting image of neat Muslims in *Harbor* is that of the old Yamani man.

When Aziz leaves Boston for New York, he meets an old Yamani man called Tahir Hussein who helps him find a job and a place to live in. What is discernible in the portrayal of this man throughout the novel is the “well washed djellaba” he wears. This expression in the novel strikes the reader: The writer insists on this expression almost each time Tahir Hussein appears, to the extent which makes it not only remarkable but questionable as well. It seems that the writer is keen on reminding the readers of this Muslim man’s cleanliness. Adams repeats it in different passages (p 153, p198, p221), one of them draws the attention to his “new djellaba”⁴³ instead of the washed one. This implies the fact that this Muslim man changes his clothes constantly. By means of these details, Adams stresses the idea that Muslims are far from “dirty.”

Adams’ presentation of Muslim’s physical appearance in *Harbor* is totally different from the one disseminated in post 9/11 fiction. Don Dellilo’s Hammad, for instance, is

presented as being very “dirty.” While Adams’ Tahir Hussein changes his “djellaba,” Delillo’s Hammad wears the same clothes, even the underwear, for weeks without changing.

He basically stopped changing his clothes. He wore the same shirt and trousers every day into the following week and underwear as well. He shaved but basically did not dress or undress, often sleeping in his clothes. The others made forceful comments.⁴⁴

Hammad even takes his friend's clothes to wear if he wants to wash the only “dirty” clothes he wears:

There was one time he took his clothes to the laundromat wearing someone else’s clothes. He wore these clothes for a week and wanted the other man to wear his clothes now that they were clean, although clean or dirty didn’t matter.⁴⁵

While Delillo reinforces the stereotype of “dirty” Muslims through his bearded Hammad in *Falling Man*, Adams dismantles this stereotype by insisting on the Yamani man’s “well washed djellaba” in *Harbor*.

4- A non misogynist Muslim

Adams’ Aziz is not a polygamous or a misogynist as Arab characters have widely been portrayed in post 9/11 fiction. In Sherry Jones’ *The Jewel of Medina*, the prophet Muhammad is portrayed as a man who both practises and encourages polygamous marriages which is not something abnormal in a society where Arab men are said to have many wives and concubines. Muhammad plans to have more wives. In addition to the ones who already live in his harem, Mohamed is portrayed showing interest for marrying the widows of his friends who die defending Islam. In Updike’s *Terrorist*, for instance, Muslim characters are explicitly and emphatically shown as misogynists. The imam tells Ahmed in one of the novel’s passages ““Do without these women without Heavenly-flesh, these earthly baggage, these unclean hostages to fortune”⁴⁶ Ahmed who is loyal to the imam, also grasps his teaching that women are but “earthly things” who distract him from his main aim: “Jihad”⁴⁷

Adams’ Aziz is totally different from both Jones’ and Updike’s characters. Aziz is in no way a misogynist. He is not a person who hates or mistrusts women. What is noticeable is that he is vigilant in his relations and trusts almost no one including his brother Mourad. Interestingly, the only ones he trusts all along his story are women and not men. Different passages throughout the novel show that he trusts his mother, his sister and the nurse at the hospital. In a very difficult moment in his life, when his parents plan to announce the death of his future bride to him, “he looked at his mother trustingly,”⁴⁸ because he knows that she is the one who can tell him the truth. Effectively, it is his mother who skillfully makes him know the bad news which his father has failed to announce. In addition to his mother, Aziz trusts his sister although he has brothers, Mourad for instance: “Aziz had never considered confiding in him. His older sister Hazar was the one he trusted,”⁴⁹ as the writer reveals.

In one of his first difficult experiences in the hospital, the ones he longs to confide to are women and not men. When he is shocked at the discovery that his feet have no skin, he “needed to talk to someone who was not Rafik”⁵⁰ He needs either the Nigerian nurse or his sister Anissa. Significantly, he has Anissa in mind and not his brothers, though he has three of them. As there is no way to contact his sister who is in Algeria, the only one confident left for him is the nurse. He wants to tell her everything about his real name and situation. “He felt he could tell her,”⁵¹ but the law he sets for himself (“Think and wait and see and listen”) and the fact that she is a foreigner restrict his actions. The point here is that this scene shows again that Aziz is not a misogynist and the idea to confide to a woman comes to his mind: He does not tell the nurse his secret because he is vigilant and not because she is a “woman.”

Thus, Aziz’s attitude towards women in *Harbor* reveals that they can be trustworthy friends. This is not the case in Updike’s *Terrorist*. All women are devils for Ahmed; even his mother Teresa whom he depicts as “trashy and immoral.”⁵² Ahmed and his imam strongly believe in the inferiority of women. They see them as “animals”⁵³ which are easily led, they can never be trusted or be friends. In short, they are unhuman in the male’s eyes and can never rise to the status of moral beings. Updike reinforces this belief using verses from Quran: “Do without women of non-Heavenly flesh, this earthly baggage, these unclean hostages to fortune! Travel light, straight in to paradise!”⁵⁴ These verses are Updike’s evidence that the imam’s and Ahmed’s concepts originate from the Holy Book.

Apart from Aziz, the protagonist, other characters in *Harbor* reveal an image of non misogynist Muslims. For instance, Aziz’s uncle, Chadli, loves his daughter Fouzia and his granddaughter Amina in whom “he saw only good”⁵⁵ Fouzia marries into a family that her father “felt [...] was not the best”⁵⁶ and he was angry with her. Yet, his love to his daughter prevents him from cutting her off. His love to his daughter is very strong and stands in opposition to the issue known as “forced marriage.” This latter is associated with Islam which is claimed to “ [lead] the pack in the misogyny stakes.”⁵⁷ Islam “comes as an important factor”⁵⁸ in this matter; “almost all the studies on forced marriage found that it is being practised in Muslim communities largely than others.”⁵⁹ However, Aziz’s uncle does not force his daughter to marry the man he wishes. She marries the man she chooses herself and despite her doing so, he does not cut her off. This is yet another example of non misogynist Muslims in *Harbor*.

4-1 Challenging the myth of the “oversexed Muslim”

Western fiction shows the Oriental as a sexual being coming from the Orient which suggests “sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire,”⁶⁰ It often draws a link “between the Orient and the freedom of licentious sex.”⁶¹ That is to say, in the eyes of the West the Oriental is but an oversexed degenerate. Mohamed the most sacred figure in Islam is viewed in Orientalist discourse as a slave to his sexual desires fulfilled by means of Quranic verses. In his *Orientalism*, Said points out that “Mohammed was viewed as the disseminator of a false Revelation, he became as well the epitome of lechery, debauchery, sodomy, and a whole battery of assorted treacheries, all of which derived "logically" from his

doctrinal impostures.”⁶² This can be best illustrated in Jones' *The Jewel* which presents the prophet as a man with many wives (the youngest is Aicha aging six); the more he marries women the more he wants others to the extent that he shows interest to marry all the widows of the defenders of Islam as mentioned above.

Aziz has never been the kind of stereotyped Arab who is constantly searching for women like Delillo's Hammad, whose flirtations are apparent and pervasive throughout *Falling Man*. One example, among many others, is his flirtations with the checkout girl at the grocery store. His attraction to her body is clear in this description: "He looked at women sometimes, yes, the girl at the checkout named Meg or Peg ... In the drenching light he saw a faint trace of fine soft silky down on her forearm and once he said something that made her smile." Aziz is not portrayed in the same way as Hammad whose sight of women wherever they are is sexualized. In several passages in the novel, Hammad explicitly shows feeling of desire and lust at the sight of women. His erotic attraction is clearly reflected in his words. One example to mention is that of the woman on a bike whom he sees pedaling. As he looks at her, he "kept thinking that another woman would come by on a bike, someone to look at, hair wet, legs pumping"⁶³ This explicit desire for women has led critics to argue that "Hammad is reduced to the level of a pleasure seeking man"⁶⁴

Aziz resembles neither Hammad in *Falling Man* nor the Prophet Mohamed in *The Jewel*. As a Muslim man, Aziz is supposed to be one of the prophet's followers and thus a male slave to his desires. Yet, this does not occur in Adams' *Harbor*. Unlike the prophet who is portrayed to show sexual attraction to new women he encounters, Aziz does not like nightclubs and having relationships with women. During the time he spends in America, he notices that there are two kinds of women there; either "nervous" who "looked around and looked around and then they looked down"⁶⁵ or "so sexy"⁶⁶; the category of women he almost fears and with one of whom he has once a shocking and unpleasant experience. He leaves her immediately and significantly this is his first and last sexual relationship in the novel. It is for him a nasty sexual experience.

In short, Aziz has never been oversexed and "women" for him "are only signposts pointing to Soumeya,"⁶⁷ his intended bride whom he loves and respects. That Aziz, the Muslim character, is not oversexed and does not resemble Hammad in his dealing with women is significant in the post 9/11 era because it dismantles the established representations of oversexed Arabs/Muslims. Portraying Aziz in this way suggests a non oversexed East. Ironically, it seems that it is the West that Adams portrays as oversexed instead. Adams seems to criticize her own Western society through Aziz's comments. While in America, Aziz shows astonishment at the overuse of the word "sexy" that he hears so often in Boston that it is one of the first English words he learns: Sexy, what did it mean? So many women and so many men saying *sexy*, everywhere he went. It may have been the word he learned first, after yes."⁶⁸ The overuse of the word "sexy" in America suggests an oversexed West, thus reversing the stereotype of "an eroticized and decadent East"⁶⁹

5- A strong minded Muslim

In his *Orientalism*, Edward Said makes use of Evelyn Baring Cromer's Orientalist view in the thirty-fourth chapter of his two-volume work *Modern Egypt*. In that book, he points out that Sir Alfred Lyall, one of the authors Cromer cites, once tells him that "Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind"⁷⁰ and he compares the European mind with the Oriental mind saying:

The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he is by nature sceptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description.⁷¹

This supposed weakness of the Arab mind is expressed and emphasized in post 9/11 works such as John Updike's *Terrorist*. Throughout the novel, Ahmad's mind proves incapable of independent thought and constantly works under the influence of both Shaikh Rashid and Omar Mulloy. These two characters have deep impact on Ahmad's thoughts. Shaikh Rashid's teachings, for instance, are ingrained in Ahmad's mind to such an extent that he is ready to sacrifice his life in a suicide mission. In this context, Michiko Kakutani talks about Ahmed as a person "so incomprehensible", she argues that:

such a cliché that the reader cannot help suspecting that Mr. Updike found the idea of such a person so incomprehensible that he at some point abandoned any earnest attempt to depict his inner life and settled instead for giving us a static, one-dimensional stereotype.⁷²

Besides, Kakutani stresses Ahmed's weak mind by depicting him to be "more robot than human being."⁷³

However, Adams' Aziz embodies a strong Muslim mind. Though *Harbor's* protagonist wears a beard, he is portrayed as a rational character with a critical mind that goes in opposition with the Orientalist depictions of the Arab mind spread in the aftermath of 9/11:

"Bearded Muslims (other bearded religious people are not of course included) are usually equated to prehistoric and barbaric persons who are likely to be disposed to perform any irrational act."⁷⁴ Aziz "is a single-minded self, one that saw clarity where there was silt and storm."⁷⁵ Aziz seems younger than his real age but older in experiencing life. He is shown in several scenes as someone who "looked no more than a teenager..."⁷⁶ yet, the writer stresses the fact that he is "one who had seen what a man knew by forty, at least."⁷⁷ This implies a rational mind which displays itself throughout the events.

Among the widely spread Orientalist assumptions mentioned in Deepa Kumar's *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* is that "the 'Muslim mind' is incapable of reason and rationality"⁷⁸ However, Aziz's rational mind is reflected in the "rule" or "principle" he sets for himself when dealing with Rafik for instance: "Wait, see, listen, observe, consider"⁷⁹; these

steps sound like a scientific procedure to follow an experience. This rule in fact gives the impression that Aziz is not a youth but an older and more experienced man; “a buried treasure,”⁸⁰ as the old Yamani describes him. Aziz’s rational mind lies in taking the decision to follow this rule which seems to be the most appropriate thing to do in the unsafe city (Boston) he inhabits. Throughout his dealing with Rafik, his cousin from the same village, Aziz proves to be not only rational but intelligent and vigilant too. He does not believe everything said to him; “In his long acquaintanceship with Rafik, Aziz had learned that three-quarters of what Rafik told him was false.”⁸¹ That is why “[Aziz] did not count on any job with Heather’s father”⁸² when he promises it to him, though his promise seems out of a good intention. Aziz is intelligent enough to grasp that this would never happen.

Aziz is different from Delillo’s Hammad who unquestionably receives Amir’s orders performing terrorist acts that he thinks fulfill his manhood. Being ready to die and to kill others is synonymous to manhood in Hammad’s view: “He wore a bomb vest and knew he was a man now, finally, ready to close the distance to God.”⁸³ Unlike Hammad, Aziz has a high potential to observe things and make difference between evil and good. For instance, Aziz goes with Ghazi to Charlie, the man supposed to be an immigration lawyer, for an application for asylum by means of which they can have the green card and thus have a legal job. Ghazi insists on Aziz to apply but he refuses. He suspects this man to be a spy. His “fake” office, his odd appearance, “his name and talking Arabic did not match, of that Aziz was sure”⁸⁴. Aziz is sure that this man is untrustworthy and “knew it was Charlie who was playing Ghazi, though for what, Aziz could not exactly imagine.”⁸⁵ Suspecting evil in this man, Aziz avoids applying for asylum though this latter, if possessed, would offer a legal life to him.

These are just examples among many others that highlight the kind of man Aziz is, a man who does not assume that things are normal without questioning them. A man who is not like a robot. Adams’ character thus stands in opposition to the image of Orientals and Arabs “shown to be gullible”⁸⁶

6- Muslims’ approach to life: From craving to die to yearning to live

Aziz’s approach to life stands in contrast to the stereotypical attitude which claims that Muslims/Arabs value life less than others,^{87a} concept which Hammad perfectly illustrates in *Falling Man*. Hammad is greatly influenced by Amir’s commanding words which he claims derive from the Holy Book. Talking in the name of religion, he instills in Hammad’s mind his philosophy about life

, that the world is not worth living: ““Forget the world. Be unmindful of the thing called the world ... This is your long wish, to die with your brothers.”⁸⁸ Yet, while Hammad in *Falling Man* longs to die, Aziz in *Harbor* longs to live a happy peaceful life.

In contrast to Hammad who joins a terrorist group and believes in the concept of death as desirable, Aziz flees terrorism and goes to America hoping for a better life. Once in America, he has the possibility to join terrorists but he refuses a decision that highlights his strong attachment to life. Interestingly, he wants to live for himself and for the others too. Aziz’s hopes

to find a job and to work very hard (which are obviously signs of life) are not only intended to secure good living conditions for himself but to help his family with money as well. He wants to improve his living conditions as well as his family's and he does indeed. With the money Aziz and his brother send home, their family "finally could afford to buy a car, ten years old, to replace the always failing motorbike. His mother went to the doctor for the first time in years...." ⁸⁹ Moreover, apart from this, Aziz's love of life is more apparent in his aspiration to meet his fiancée in Algeria and get married. This is another sign of life which pictures Aziz in a position totally different from the stereotyped image of Muslims as "death lovers."

7- Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that Western literature has often seen Islam and Muslims in stereotypical ways but the world's focus on Islam and Arabs/Middle Easterners specifically was extremely apparent after 9/11. These events have strengthened the old Orientalist discourse. Westerners' attitudes towards Islam and Muslims are very negative: They believe that Islam is the religion which highly promotes bloodshed and Muslims are the "terrorists" who have been behind the 9/11 attacks. In short, fear of Islam and Muslims is commonly associated with Terrorism. This is due to media which distorted the image of Islam and Muslims and highly promoted post 9/11 stereotypes. While media has participated in the creation of the enemy Muslim Other, this image which encompasses negative stereotypes has been reinforced by post 9/11 fiction. Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* contradicts the culturally structured notions and stereotyping established by white Americans in the aftermath of the 9/11 events.

Our analysis of Adams' Muslim characters has unveiled considerable unexpected positive images that dismantle the common post 9/11 clichés of Muslims as predominantly violent, dirty, misogynists, oversexed, weak minded, backward, and death lovers. These stereotypes are pervasive in novels such as Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, John Updike's *Terrorist*, Sherry Jones *The Jewel of Medina* among many other post 9/11 fictional narratives. Instead, Adams paints a very positive image of peaceful, clean, non-misogynist, balanced, strong minded Muslims whose approach to life is not pessimistic. This image strongly reveals a new way of thinking in the aftermath of 9/11 and leads us to state that Lorraine Adams' purpose in *Harbor* seems to be the same as Edward Said's in his *Orientalism*. In that influential book, Said explicates that his idea is "to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us in labels and antagonistic debate." ⁹⁰ Likewise, it seems that Adams' portrayals of her Muslim characters in *Harbor* offer a different engrossing representation of Muslims in an attempt to dismantle the old rigid stereotypes and create new tolerant possibilities of thoughts.

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