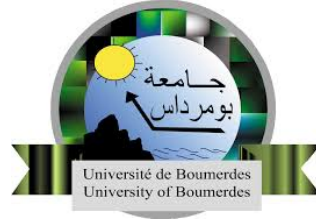


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Thesis Submitted by:

Keltoum Bendjaballah

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**Challenging Stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims
in Post 9/11 Female American Novels:**

**The Case of Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* (2004), Lorrie
Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs* (2009), and Claire
Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* (2013)**

The Board of Examiners:

Dr. Assia Kaced	MCA	University of Algiers	Chairwoman
Prof. Lynda Chouiten	Prof.	UMBB	Supervisor
Dr. Mohammed Chabane	MCA	University of Blida	Examiner
Dr. Farid Benmezal	MCA	UMBB	Examiner
Dr. Rafik Laceb	MCA	UMMTO	Examiner

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Dedication

I dedicate my Doctoral thesis to

The memory of a great man, one of the most inspiring people in my life, my role model: my father **ABDELMALEK BENDJABALLAH** who would have been happy to see me complete my Doctoral degree. My heart fills with pride when I think of you, my dear father.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to shed light on the positive representations of Arabs/Muslims in three post 9/11 female American novels: Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* (2013), Lorraine Adams's *Harbor* (2004) and Lorrie Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs* (2009). The 9/11 attacks in the United States have completely changed the world by drawing a strong connection between Islam and "terrorism." The teachings of Islam are emphatically said to encourage bloodshed and violence and Muslims/Arabs are systematically called "terrorists" by Westerners. The post 9/11 has also been heavily marked by Orientalist discourse which extremely reinforces the superiority of the West and the inferiority of the East as Edward Said argues in his *Orientalism*. This period has witnessed harsh depictions of Arabs/Muslims or anyone who looks like them. More importantly, the stereotypical images about Arabs/Muslims have gone beyond the abusively disparaging speech or writing and have reached concrete violence and extreme discrimination in the United States.

Post 9/11 American fiction reproduces and reinforces the stereotypical images about Arabs/Muslims. Post 9/11 novels such as Sherry Jones's *The Jewel Of Medina* (2008), Homa Pourasgari's *The Dawn of Saudi* (2009), John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006), and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) provide an Orientalist depiction of Arabs/Muslims and take part in the vilification of these people and their religion: Islam is depicted as a source of violence and oppression for women and Muslims/Arabs are claimed to be the threatening "terrorist" Other whose presence among the American people is not only a threat to the national security but a source of personal trauma and psychic disturbance as well.

In such a context, offering a startlingly positive portrayal of Arabs/Muslims in the aftermath of the 9/11 events seems to be a challenge. Messud, Adams, and Moore destabilize the demonization of the so-called "terrorist" Other and substitute to this stereotype portraits of peaceful Arab/Muslim characters who live with the American people without causing any harm to them, neither physical nor psychological. Their Arab/Muslim male characters treat women appropriately and lovingly without any kind of misogyny. Similarly, veiled/Muslim women in the selected novels appear to be positively portrayed. They are ordinary characters neither oppressed nor submissive. Unexpectedly, patriarchy which is associated with the East within the Orientalist discourse and is reinforced in post 9/11 American fiction, appears to be linked to the West in the post 9/11 novels under study. Messud, Adams and Moore extend the thread of their positive depiction of both Arab/Muslim males and females to their relationship

with the American characters in the novels. This relationship is supposed to be fraught with psychological disturbance as portrayed in other post 9/11 American fiction; yet, the writers inject new positive images of peaceful coexistence, with an emphasis on the positive influence of the Muslim/Arab Other on the American Self.

Key words: Stereotypes, Arabs, Muslims, Post 9/11 American fiction, positive representations, Edward Said.

Introduction

This thesis sheds light on the positive images of Arabs/Muslims in three post 9/11 female American novels: Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* (2013), Lorrie Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs* (2009) and Lorraine Adams's *Harbor* (2004). These post 9/11 fictional pieces offer representations that depart from the negative feelings which usually appear in post 9/11 American fiction.

False images and stereotypes which are rooted in the Western minds have been reproduced and reinforced after 9/11 and their effect extends its thread to recent years. In the aftermath of the events, "distorted mass media campaigns are used to create fear, reinforce stereotypes, and exacerbate pre-existing divisions in the world that are often based on race, ethnicity, and class" (Bonn 130). At that time "it [was] often assumed that it is easy to tell if someone is Muslim (and therefore subject to the stereotypes) by the way they look. One way this works is the assumption that Muslims share a "brown" phenotype" (Sandhoff 22).

Another assumption attributed to Muslims/Arabs (among other racial groups) relates to the way they dress:

Attire associated with being Muslim includes the *hijab* – a headscarf – and the long robe known as an *abaya* or *jilbab* for women. For men, attire includes a beard, a skullcap, commonly called a *kufi*, and clothes such as a *thobe* – a long robe common in the Arabian Gulf – or *shalwar khameez*, an outfit consisting of pants and a long tunic common in South Asia. Muslims may or may not wear any of these items of clothing, and decisions about how to dress are complicated by the recognition that clothing choice may be perceived by others through a lens of anti-Muslim stereotypes (Sandhoff 22).

This draws "a specific Muslim look" which is "problematic because it connects appearance with negative stereotypes about Muslims" (Sandhoff 22). This means that appearance is strongly related to negative reactions: "complexion or attire can elicit negative responses" and this in turn can lead to misidentification and serious discrimination such as the Indian Sikh, Sodhi was mistaken for a Muslim and killed by a man seeking to retaliate for 9/11 by killing Muslims" (Sandhoff 22). About the harassment of women who wear a headscarf in the

aftermath of 9/11, Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber comment stating that “a general consensus among community leaders was that federal government policies disproportionately targeted men while hate crimes and incidents of harassment in the public sphere disproportionately targeted women.” (293) All of the demonstrations conducted in solidarity with veiled women in response to the backlash demonstrated their understanding that they were in more risk and were more impacted than men. Across the country, days of solidarity were arranged. A number of examples in which employers fired women for wearing headscarves sparked concern about the acceptability of discrimination against Muslim women in the public realm (293). Hence, looking like a Muslim/Arab for both men and women results in discrimination and violence: “Persons who closely resembled the corporate media’s “Arab/Middle Eastern Muslim look” were particularly vulnerable to federal government policies and harassment on the streets” (296). This is because “the federal government went after “the CNN version of what a terrorist looks like.” The terrorist is, as portrayed by the CNN, a person who is “dark, Middle Eastern, and had a full beard” (296).

Nadine Naber maintains “that men who had beards, coupled with dark skin, were among those most severely concerned for their safety – particularly if they wore religious forms of dress perceived to be associated with Islam” (296). Besides, the appearance of women wearing a veil has been strongly used to fulfill the West’s desire for power. The war on terror discourse was based on the rhetoric of the oppressed women, “women who have largely remained faceless, nameless, figural, reduced to the snapshot of the veil – the women on behalf of whom this war is claimed to be waged” (Masters 29). Women in Afghanistan and Iraq are said to be victims of brutal regimes; the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq; “they are oppressed, dominated and subjugated, unlike women in the West, liberated and free. These are the women in whose name war has been waged, the women we claim to have saved in the act of war” (Masters 20). In his article “Telling Stories about Women and Gender in the War on Terror,” Jill Steans sustains that “the evocation of “liberated Western women” and “oppressed Muslim” women in narratives on the War on Terror has been useful in the project of casting the United States as a beacon of civilisation and in constructing, reinforcing and reproducing a polarity between the West and the Islamic world” (160).

Martin Randall argues that 9/11 “has contributed to racism, cultural paranoia, illegal invasions, war crimes, civil right abuses, and global political tensions. In particular, there remains the subject of Islam and its relationship with Islamist terrorism and how this problematic impacts upon individuals, communities and nations” (36). Islam and “terrorism”

were considered to be synonymous, the fact which pictures Muslims/Arabs as the dangerous “terrorist” Other; “specifically, the administration’s punitive post 9/11 rhetoric promoted prejudice, fear, and hatred toward Arabs/Muslims, in general, and toward Iraqis, in particular” (Bonn 130). In this connection, it is argued that “President Bush’s rhetoric concerning Saddam Hussein and his political regime following 9/11 built on negative, stereotypical images of Arabs in order to fuel public outrage toward them” (Bonn 130). This does not mean that these stereotypes were new images. Indeed, “the stereotypes employed by the Bush administration were already established through more than twenty years of news media and popular culture portrayals of Arabs as evil, bloodthirsty, and animalistic terrorists” (Bonn 130). About the Western attitude towards Arabs, it is maintained that:

attitudes toward Arabs have been found to be overwhelmingly negative. Even studies conducted prior to 9/11 demonstrated that participants held negative stereotypes toward Arabs, believing them to be radical Muslims who are either terrorist supporters or terrorists themselves. Following 9/11, attitudes appear to have become stronger and more salient (Maeder and Pfeifer 256).

In this context, Isam Shihada argues that “the American reaction toward Muslims after the tragic attacks on 9/11 have been blind, indiscriminate, and disproportionate to such an extent that the very concept of multiculturalism on which the American society is based is threatened” (462).

After 9/11, Islam and Muslims’ issue have increasingly moved into political and social life around the world and an environment of intolerance has grown due to confrontational religious issues between Islam and the West. That is to say, the debate of Islam and the West has become more intense after 9/11 within the globalised world which includes Islam. Muslims were obliged in a way or another to face the effects and ramifications of modernity. The interdependent relations brought about by Globalisation led to social and political transformations on Islam and its perceptions by the West. A great number of articles and television programs grew, asserting the Islamic roots of terrorism. In her dissertation which aims at investigating the assertion that Islam is an inherently and uniquely violent religion, Heather Selma Gregg highlights researchers’ tendency to draw a strong link between Islam and violence. She states: “In the wake of September 11th, policy analysts, journalists, and academics have tried to make sense of the rise of militant Islam, particularly its role as a motivating and legitimating force for violence against the US” (3).

Much ink has been spilled about Islam and Muslims in the aftermath of the events to the extent that “any writer writing about 9/11 cannot bypass the issue of Islam or Muslims” (Alireza and Abolfazl 12). This is “because the government and the media have strongly taken the stance that Muslims are the first and the only suspects of this terrorist attack, and have later proved their claim” (Alireza and Abolfazl 12). In fact, George Bush's War on Terror has been propelled by both public rhetoric and literary fictional narratives (Shihada 454). Isam Shihada comments: Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton assert that the post-9/11 corpus of literature is complicit with the US-led global War on Terror goal, which is mainly founded on Orientalist discourse (454).

In his article “Global Terror and the Rise of Xenophobia/Islamophobia: An Analysis of American Cultural Production since September 11,” Muhammad Safeer Awan argues that “the process of radical indoctrination has been explored in several post- 9/11 novels where the writers have attempted to explore the mindset of the 9/11 hijackers” (523). He carries on his argument noting: “However, none of the Western writers have created a context large enough to include ordinary Muslims, who are the people who have various political and religious perspectives” (523). Awan comments: “Margaret Scanlan notes that after the 9/11 attacks, violent revolutionaries have created public terror that can be manipulated and multiplied by politicians, the press and literary writers” (523). He explains that “the terms like Islamic terrorism and Islamic fascism were deliberately created and frequently repeated in the news media with the single objective of justifying many acts of discrimination against Muslims” (523). Awan adds that “such a violent image of Islam is not only reinforced by the popular films and television programmes, but also by the post-9/11 novels written by some well-known American authors including Don DeLillo, John Updike and Sherman Alexie” (523).

The 9/11 events have thus resulted in the writing of numerous fictional works which are widely stereotypical. In addition to the mainstream media and official representations, post 9/11 literature has become complicit in reproducing and reinforcing the stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims. Hence, attributing positive images to Arabs or Muslims in post 9/11 American fiction is both unexpected and engrossing. This is because the aftermath of 9/11 is a time when every detail related to these people is extremely evil. Yet, this is not the case with the novels under study: Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs*, Lorraine Adams's *Harbor* and Lorrie Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs*.

Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* is about Nora Eldridge, a middle school teacher in her forties, single, childless, furious and unhappy with her former life. She has always dreamt to be a great artist, but this does not come true. She describes herself as a "woman upstairs, the quiet woman at the end of the third-floor hallway, whose trash is always tidy, who smiles brightly in the stairwell with a cheerful greeting, and who, from behind closed doors, never makes a sound" (Messud 6). A new pupil comes into her class and charms her. His name is Reza Shahid. He has a Lebanese intellectual father, Skandar, and an Italian artist mother, Sirena. Some students call Reza "a terrorist" and violently beat him. This incident gives Nora the opportunity to meet his family, and gradually falls in love with its members.

Lorraine Adams's *Harbor* is about Aziz, a young Algerian who makes his way illegally to America looking for better working and living conditions a year before the 9/11 events. He escapes terrorism in Algeria and finds himself with a community of fellow Algerians in America. They become under surveillance because they are suspected to be dangerous "terrorists." The third selected novel is *A Gate at the Stairs* by Lorrie Moore, one of the most highly acclaimed writers of her generation. Lorrie Moore's story, *A Gate*, starts a few months after 9/11. It is about a twenty-year-old Tassie Keltjin, a college student from a small town. Her younger brother, Robert, fails to succeed academically and randomly enlists in the United States Army. Tassie, the protagonist of the novel, moves to Troy to attend university. Simultaneously, she looks for a job as a nanny and she is finally hired by a woman called Sarah Brink, a Chef who runs her own restaurant. In a class on religion called "Intro to Sufism," Tassie meets Reynaldo, a Muslim young man who hides his real identity and claims to be from Brazil. Tassie and Reynaldo were first classmates then friends. With time their relationship evolves into romance: it is Tassie's first significant relationship. Yet he unexpectedly reveals his being Muslim and assures Tassie that he has never been a member of a "terrorist cell." In addition to her love story with the Muslim Reynaldo, Tassie experiences the loss of her brother in the War on Terror.

These above selected novels have received little criticism compared to other post 9/11 American narratives such as John Updike's *Terrorist* and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, two literary pieces (in addition to others) to which reference will often be made in this dissertation. Joanna Briscoe argues that Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* "roars in its own muted way, and dares to pin down things that are both excruciating and universal" (Briscoe). As a post-9/11 craft, the novel is also said to "make use of transnational characters to emphasize the hidden bigotry and hypocrisy in the current age" (Bornaki and Salami 20).

Yet, no emphasis has been put on the representation of Arab/Muslim characters of this novel. As regards *Harbor*, some critics state that it is about “terrorism” and what is a “terrorist cell” and its origins. Adams herself states that “the book is only about terrorism in the sense that *Moby Dick* is about whaling. It is about how we see and understand the world. . . . That is the heart of this novel – we have an incomplete picture of reality, and trying to make it more complete is the highest good” (qtd. in Lythgoe). Other critics go further and claim that it is “barely a novel about terrorism at all . . . it is designed to illustrate the clash of cultures, the way we fail to understand Islamic immigrants just as surely as they’re unable to understand us” (Finder). However, both views agree on the idea that the writer Adams suggests an entirely different interpretation of the War on Terror than is available from the government or the media (pure accusation of Muslims as terrorists), “one that cries out for understanding and compassion” (Lythgoe), an interpretation which we would like to scrutinize in our thesis.

The third novel under study, Lorrie Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs*, has also received some critical responses. While Jane Shilling, for instance, “finds Lorrie Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs*, a novel about a childminder, both brilliant and disturbing,” (Shilling) Ron Charles asserts that “the story’s apparent modesty and ambling pace are deceptive, a cover for profound reflections on marriage and parenthood, racism and terrorism, and especially the baffling, hilarious, brutal initiation to adult life” (Charles). In this context, Alike Varvogli thinks that “Moore’s contribution to the sub-genre of “9/11 fiction” has been overlooked because her concerns appear to be with the limited sphere of domestic relations” (177) emphasizing that “Moore’s novel examines the state of her nation after 9/11 in a context that extends well beyond the home, understood as both domestic and national space” (177).

As post 9/11 American novels, Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs*, Lorrie Moore’s *A Gate*, and Adams’s *Harbor* are supposed to come under the umbrella of post 9/11 American literature which reproduces and reinforces the stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims. Yet, the analysis of these fictional narratives in this thesis shows the opposite. Muhammad Safer Awan argues that “the post-9/11 literary production and media depict the Muslims and Arabs in utterly negative way even if they fall short of open hostility” (536). Post 9/11 works “treat Islam and terrorism as almost synonymous terms because they project such an image of Muslims and Arabs as if they were inherently violence prone and harbored hatred for their host communities” (Awan 536). Noticeably, “a considerable number of Americans and Westerners give credence to such views because they accept the sporadic incidents of violence as a true representative of a terror-sponsoring and fanatic culture that is bent on

degenerating American values” (Awan 536). John Updike’s misrepresentation of Islam in his *Terrorist* (as it will be extensively highlighted throughout this thesis), for instance, is argued to be “deliberate” and more importantly, its underlying message suggests that Islam as a creed supports indiscriminate violence against civilians (Awan 537). Interestingly, in his *Covering Islam*, Edward Said argues that “the narrative depiction of Islam through the acts of terrorism, wars, deaths, fatwas, jihads or bombings sustains a Western sociological imagination of Islam but at the same token, it thrusts the Ummah, or the global Muslim community into a constant struggle to re-represent Islam” (55). The writers under study (Messud, Adams, and Moore) are obviously not part of “Ummah,” or “the global Muslim community”; still, their literary works, as will be argued throughout this study, challenge post 9/11 debasing stereotypical writings and show an effort to re-represent Islam and Muslims/Arabs. That is to say, they positively portray Muslims/Arabs or rather “re-represent” them, in Said’s words.

The novels under study illustrate these American writers’ attempt to re-represent Islam and Muslims/Arabs in post 9/11 fiction. This seems like an emergence of an American counterdiscourse that strives to convey a positive image of Arabs/Muslims in the midst of the harsh stereotypical clichés in post 9/11 era. While post 9/11 American fiction reproduces the same clichés and stereotypes about the Muslims/Arabs, clichés that have existed since the Middle Ages in European Orientalist texts, the narratives under study bring an alternative information which challenges the old Orientalist discourse, the guiding spirit of post 9/11 fiction. Portraying Arabs/Muslims positively, the writers under study thus hold a different voice, a different view of Muslims/Arabs compared to post 9/11 American writers. *The Woman Upstairs*, *Harbor* and *A Gate at the Stairs* make their writers appear in a position of empathy which is the “core skill” of a novelist according to Mohsin Hamid, who believes that lack of empathy is the main cause of post 9/11 attitude of Americans towards the Muslim world and vice versa:

I believe that the core skill of a novelist is empathy: the ability to imagine what someone else might feel. And I believe that the world is suffering from a deficit of empathy at the moment: the political positions of both Osama Bin Laden and George W. Bush are founded on failures of empathy, failures of compassion towards people who seem different. (Hamid)

Through their positive portrayal of Arabs /Muslims and the good relationships between the Americans and the so-called “terrorist” Other, as will be argued later, the novels under study create a space for the readers to re-examine and re-imagine the misrepresentations spread in the aftermath of the 9/11 events.

This thesis concentrates on the representation of the Muslim/Arab Other in the three post 9/11 female American novels mentioned above. My selection of these works, in particular, as case studies is motivated by three main reasons: first, because they offer crucial and widely debated post 9/11 issues and provide material for discussion. That is to say, the selected novels tackle the most pervasive post 9/11 stereotypical images of Islam and the Muslim/Arab Other. Second, and more importantly, because post 9/11 stereotypes about Arabs/Muslims seem to be brilliantly and unexpectedly challenged compared to the images post 9/11 American fiction offer. Third, because the study of these fictional works will highlight the tendency of their American writers to effectively inject new thoughts in the post 9/11 era which has made the Muslim/Arab Other synonymous to evil. In doing so, this study makes the evaluation of the writers’ thinking and initiative a valuable task.

The three selected novels will be read in the light of, among others, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam*, Reina Lewis’s *Gendering Orientalism* and *Muslim Fashion: Contemporary Style Cultures*, and Billie Melman’s *Women’s Orients*. I deem this choice appropriate on one important account: these theories will be instrumental in enunciating (articulating) the writers’ challenge of post 9/11 stereotyping of the Arab/Muslim Other in post 9/11 American fiction as it will be shown throughout this thesis. In addition to these main theories, the thesis makes use of Charles Taylor’s *Sources Of the Self: The Making Of the Modern Identity*, specifically his notion of “the constitutive good,” and “framework,” along with other concepts by theorists such as Katherine Bullock, and Sigmund Freud, among others.

Edward Said’s works are overwhelmingly important for our study. Said’s *Orientalism*, *Covering Islam* and *Culture and Imperialism* establish “numerous instances of how Western literature, media and politics systematically misrepresent Arabs and the Islamic world (Altwaiji 19). They provide a useful critical lens to display the images of the Muslim/Arab “Other” that have been widely used in American fiction. It is important to note that Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, published in 1978, reignited the present debate regarding Western perspectives of the Orient (Donnan 20). And that “before the publication of Edward Said’s

Orientalism, only a few Western scholars provided critical assessments of the prejudice against Islam” (Varisco 17). Orientalism according to Edward Said is

an influential academic tradition (when one refers to an academic specialist who is called an Orientalist), as well as an area of concern defined by travelers, commercial enterprises, governments, military expeditions, readers of novels and accounts of exotic adventure, natural historians, and pilgrims to whom the Orient is a specific kind of knowledge about specific places, peoples, and civilizations. (*Orientalism* 203)

Orientalism, as Maryam Khalid explains, exposes the ways in which non Western cultures, traditions and peoples are and have been seen in the “West” through binary oppositions which portray “the “East” as irrational, backward, exotic, despotic and lazy, and the West as rational, moral and the pinnacle of civilisation” (17). Noticeably, in both academia and the political realm, “discourse divides the world between two cultural poles: East and West, where historic Orientalist positions reaffirm Western cultural superiority and Eastern inferiority” (Daniels 9). What is worth mentioning is that although Said’s study covers the nineteenth and twentieth century, the Orientalist attitudes he describes are still present in the twenty first century in what might be termed “Neo-Orientalism.”¹

Orientalist discourse pictures the Orient as an object and extremely reinforces the superiority of the West; politics plays a crucial role in this vision. In his *Orientalism*, Said states that Orientalism was, at its core, a political vision of reality based on the distinction between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the exotic (the Orient, the East, "them") (44-45). Said explains: “This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived. Orientals lived in their world, "we" lived in ours. The vision and material reality propped each other up, kept each other going” (44-45). He carries on saying that the Westerner has always had a certain freedom of intercourse because his culture was stronger, he could penetrate, wrestle with (44-45). Said concludes asserting that the Orientalist reality, according to his argument, is both antihuman and durable. Its scope, as well as its institutions and all-pervasive impact, extends to the present day (44-45).

After the 9/11 attacks, the symbolic role of America “as the country of freedom and democracy started a new era of political, social and religious uproar and chaos inexperienced so far” (Dickert 5). The claim of countering Islamic terrorism, the military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan and the perception of an Islamic threat continued to dominate national

defence strategies in the aftermath of 9/11. It is clear that the 9/11 events led consequently to US interventions throughout the world along with its allied forces substituting previous historical events such as the Second World War and the Cold War and Orientalism takes the most important part in these developments: “Orientalism often colliding with racism, Islamophobia, selective prejudice, model minoritization, and other doctrines of civilizational difference, has been at the crux of these developments” (Malreddy 3). In his “Representation of Middle Easterners in Contemporary North American TV Series,” Matthias Köbrich brings into light Robert Nichols’ thoughts. He states that “according to him, Orientalism is a ‘complex process of dominating the representation of non-Western peoples through the production of specific forms of knowledge about the non-West’” (Köbrich).

The West creates an image of the Orient based on a body of knowledge taking control of the scholarship and creating attitudes which constitute a myth. In Edward Said’s view, Orientalism is “a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective” (Said *Orientalism* 41-42). Said puts it in a nutshell saying that, “Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought than it is simply as a positive doctrine” (41- 42). In his *Orientalism*, Edward Said insists on the attitude of power that the West possessed and still possess over its Orient Other: Orientalism, he states,

is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied—indeed, made truly productive—the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture. (7)

Said’s theory has received criticism which has come from feminist historians such as Reina Lewis and Billie Melman. Lewis and Melman criticize *Orientalism* for being only concerned with men’s experience, pointing to the missing insight into female versions of Orientalism as evidence of Orientalism. They shed light on Orientalist representations by women and disagree with Edward Said’s stress on the stability and homogeneity of Orientalism. Reina Lewis’s *Gendering Orientalism* and *Rethinking Orientalism*, and Billie Melman's *Women's Orients* study European women writers’ and artists’ representations of the East, asserting that

they must be taken into consideration. While Melman “describes the many ways in which women looked at oriental people and places and developed a discourse which presented a challenge to hegemonic notions on the exotic and ‘different’” (Melman 393), Lewis’s focus in *Gendering Orientalism* is “on the role of white European women as cultural agents, within an analysis of the constitutive role of culture in the formation of imperial relations” (2). She asserts that Orientalism is heterogeneous as opposed to Said’s description of a monolithic discourse created by imperialist males (2).

This thesis comprises four chapters. Chapter 1, entitled “Islam and the 9/11 era, the historical and literary context”, examines the 9/11 events and their relation to the representation of Islam and Muslims/Arabs. It gives a survey of post 9/11 American history and literature which helps us pinpoint the main factors that play a crucial role in dehumanizing and demonizing Muslims, Arabs or any person who looks like them: Arabs/Muslims are portrayed by Western media and fiction as “terrorists” (in addition to many other pervasive stereotypes) and considered as a threat to the American security. In short, this chapter makes post 9/11 political, social and literary context familiar to the reader of this thesis; it provides background information for discussing the writers’ challenge of the stereotypical images in the selected narratives in the following three chapters.

Chapter 2 entitled “Messud, Moore, and Adams on Islam, veiling and oppression” sheds light on both post 9/11 veil, the symbolic Islamic piece of clothing, and veiled/Muslim women in the novels. It examines the veil which does not only create an atmosphere of suspicion in the United States, but suggests insurmountable obstacles to women who wear it in public in the aftermath of the events. The chapter discusses and interprets the presence of the Muslim/veiled woman in the three novels; it brings into light the writers’ challenge, which lies in their opposing of post 9/11 stereotypes, arguing that the writers provide positive images about the veil and veiled/Muslim women. This chapter also discusses manifestations of the patriarchal code; it analyses the writers’ questioning of the widespread stereotypical image that has always made the East the residence of patriarchy, oppression and hierarchized Muslim/Arab male/female dichotomy.

Having examined the stereotypes about Muslim women in chapter 2, chapter 3 entitled “A positive image of the post 9/11 male ‘terrorist’” explores the most pervasive male stereotypes that characterize post 9/11 American fiction. The beard, backwardness, violence, misogyny, sexuality are precisely some of the clichés that will be emphasized in this chapter.

These stereotypes are emphatically challenged in the selected novels: Muslim/Arab male characters are positively depicted as peaceful, intelligent, and intellectual individuals who do not show or express any kind of misogyny or hatred towards women. The chapter also deals with Arabs'/Muslims' approach to life, an approach which has always been depicted as pessimistic in post 9/11 fiction. Yet, it seems that Muslims'/Arabs' approach to life in the novels under study proves to be highly optimistic: they are not "death lovers"; they struggle to live peacefully and happily as it will be argued later.

The fourth chapter is entitled "Transcending the Conflict between the American Self and the "terrorist" Other." It is intended to discuss the relationship between the American Self and the so-called "terrorist" Other. Indeed, the discussion of the stereotypes about women in the second chapter and the stereotypes about men in the third chapter pictures the kind of Arab/Muslim characters who construct the events of the novels under study and pave the way for a full-scale discussion of the positive relationship between the American Self and the Muslim/Arab Other in the novels. These two sides are widely shown to be in conflict in post 9/11 American fiction, but seem to be in harmony with each other in Messud's, Adams's and Moore's fictional narratives. While the second and third chapter of this thesis encompass images which are constantly set against examples from post 9/11 works such as Sherry Jones' *The Jewel Of Medina*, Homa Pourasgari's *The Down of Saudi*, John Updike's *Terrorist*, and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, the most important examples in the fourth chapter are basically from Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*. This is because this post 9/11 novel encompasses a metaphor that can best illustrate the claimed "melancholic" and "parasitic" relation between the American Self and the Muslim/Arab Other in post 9/11 era. In short, the last chapter argues that the conflict between the American Self and the so-called "terrorist" Other in the post 9/11 context takes a positive shape of peaceful co-existence in Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs*, Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* and Lorrie Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs*.

Chapter 1

Islam and the 9/11 era, the historical and literary context

Introduction

Much of the scholarship and media have shed light on analyses of Muslim communities after the 9/11 events. Focus on religion, specifically Islam was apparent (El-Sayed 39). The Western Islamologist, John Esposito, for instance, views the twenty first century “as the century for Islam and Muslims” (ix). In this context, Naoual Elkoubaiti highlights the emphasis of the world, the USA in particular, on this religion and its followers. She thinks that the 9/11 events have generated this interest in this religion and its adherents. In her article “Women and Conversion to Islam,” Elkoubaiti explains the significance of 9/11 and its relation to Islam. She thinks that

September 11th was a tragic event that brought death and deep suffering, but from another perspective, this date signifies the advent of a new birth for Islam in America. Islam was unknown to many in America, but after September 11th it has suddenly become a major topic of discussion and more and more political leaders, scientists, researchers, and thinkers consider it necessary to understand Islam correctly. Islam at that time has been critical more than ever before, questioning Islam has been raised and American people become more interested in knowing more about it. There has been a new and sustained interest in the study of Islam and Muslim societies. (5- 6)

However, the West’s attitude towards Islam and Muslims has been more biased than balanced. Katherine Bullock points out:

At the beginning of the twenty first century, the topic of Islam, fundamentalism, terrorism, extremism and women’s position in Islam is on many people’s minds, from the local bus driver to the specialist scholar. The discourse in the popular mind is one of the backwardness, violence and barbarity of Islam, Arabs and Muslims. The oppression of women is a given (xxxiii).

In this context, W. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld argue that “the past three decades have produced a considerable increase in scientific and journalistic publications about Islam, the Muslim World, and the position of Muslims in Western Europe” (174). According to them,

the relationships between Westerners and the Muslim world “are based mainly on stereotypes and prejudice, which are clearly observable in the various reports in the media in which Muslims are described as fanatics, irrational, primitive, belligerent, and dangerous” (174).

In their article “The Negative Image of Islam,” Shadid and Koningsveld emphasize that such broad generalizations and simplifications suggest that where expertise is missing, fantasy takes precedence, and where “knowledge is faulty,” emotion plays a key role in determining the direction of reciprocal relationships. More importantly, warning against the threat of the Muslim enemy is not recent in the Western world. It goes back to the eighties and carries on until the present day. This is highly apparent in the media frequent reference to the alleged danger of Islam. In the same article, Shadid and Koningsveld maintain that since the 1980s, some scientists, politicians, and journalists have repeatedly issued such alerts without providing any substantial evidence to support their concerns. This results in the intensity of the negative attitude of the West towards Islam and Muslims which is undeserved and is not supported by evidence (174).

This negative attitude towards Islam and Muslims has allowed the American hegemony in the Middle East for instance. Edward Said maintains that Islam in the United States occupies a significant amount of space not just in literary textbooks but also in media, film, and radio, facilitating American hegemony in the Middle East (Said *Covering Islam* 15). In his book *The Modern Middle East*, Ilan Pappé argues that “among other things, the Middle East is identified with Islamic fundamentalism, which equates with terror, dogmatism, inflexibility and a threat to the world’s stability and peace” (269). He asserts that this is particularly apparent in the media, where Islamic fanaticism and violence were the most prominent associations with the Middle East in the last quarter of the twentieth century. As a result, it was unsurprising that, in the aftermath of the horrific attacks in New York and Washington, scholars with a primary interest in Islam were asked to describe the meaning and goals of Islamic fundamentalism, which is found not just in the Middle East, but also in Southeast Asia and Africa (Pappé 269). This is due to “the mode of control” imposed by the West in Edward Said’s view as expressed in his *Orientalism*: “The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (6). Among the features of Oriental-European relations according to Said “was that Europe was always in a position of strength, not to say domination” (40). Said asserts that “Oriental-ism, which is the system of European or Western knowledge about the Orient becomes synonymous with European domination of the Orient” (201).

In his book *The Battle for Saudi Arabia*, As'Ad Abukhalil refers to Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which he argues, "reminds us that Orientalism is more than a system of knowledge and study; it is a mode of control" (115). In other words, "Orientalism is the product of an ignorant system that promotes epistemological – and in some cases genetic- distinctions between Western people (who are supposed to be rational, humane, and advanced) and Eastern people, who remain hostages to backwardness, irrationality, and barbarism" (Abukhalil 116). This is, for instance, illustrated in Abukhalil's comment about the West's interest in Saudi Arabia:

There is no question that Saudi Arabia arouses the interest of Western media and academia. To most in the United States and elsewhere in the West, Saudi Arabia's political system and fundamentalist ideology seem bizarre and extreme, and thus only reinforce the sense of the exotic that has long attracted Orientalist interests. That there are more biographies of Bin Ladin and Abu Nidal in the West than there are of Arab artists, architects, and thinkers demonstrates Western fixation with the violent and fanatical. The Orientalist paradox is that such writings claim concern for the plight of human rights in Saudi Arabia, yet many Western writings (especially in popular culture) about Saudi Arabia reek with ignorance and contempt for Saudi people. (165)

Consequently, Eastern people are held captive by backwardness, irrationality, and barbarism.

Demonizing Islam and Muslims seems to be the utmost task of the West: "Most of the politicians, media commentators and authors have been very focused in their campaign of demonizing Islam as a faith and Muslims as community" (Awan 525). Muslims were accused of carrying out the 9/11 terrorist attacks. "Because the accused in the events were Muslims, Islamophobia spread and media coverage attempts to link Islam with that tragic event" (Salih). This has widened the gap between the West and Islam, "so that governments in America and Europe close their eyes and leave the door open to Media and filmmakers to portray and depict Islam in a wrong way" (Salih). Scholars have argued that the media, including television and radio networks, daily newspapers, magazines as well as Hollywood movies are responsible for the cultural apparatus which has been representing Islam in the West:

Together, this powerful concentration of mass media can be said to constitute a communal core of interpretations providing a certain picture of Islam and, of course,

reflecting powerful interests in the society served by the media. Along with this picture, which is not merely a picture but also a communicable set of feelings about the picture, goes what we may call its over-all context. By context I mean the picture's setting, its place in reality, the values implicit in it, and, not least, the kind of attitude it promotes in the beholder. (Said *Covering Islam* 69)

In his article “Global Terror and the Rise of Xenophobia/Islamophobia,” Muhammad Safeer Awan points out that “due to the myth-making capabilities of the American corporate media, new “fears of the other” or the immigrant have been systematically induced in the minds of the American public; they were newly schooled in Islam and its geography” (525). Awan reinforces his argument using Abdus Sattar Ghazali’s view about the rising wave of anti-Muslim rhetoric in the U.S, in his *Islam and Muslims in the post-9/11 America*. He states: “Ghazali notes that the American attitudes regarding the Muslim community and Islamic faith are fuelled largely by political statements of various military and civil leaders and reporting in the media that focuses mostly on projecting a negative image of the Muslims and their faith” (525). In this context, Edward Said maintains that “negative images of Islam continue to be very much more prevalent than any others, and that such images correspond not to what Islam ‘is’, but to what prominent sectors of a particular society take it to be. Those sectors have the power and the will to propagate that particular image of Islam, and this image therefore becomes more prevalent, more present, than all others” (Said *Covering Islam* 123).

This chapter looks at the events of 9/11 and how they relate to Islam and Muslims/Arabs. It provides an overview of post-9/11 American history and literature, allowing us to identify the main factors that contribute to the dehumanization and demonization of Muslims, Arabs, and everyone who looks like them: Arabs/Muslims are depicted as “terrorists” in Western media and fiction (among many other stereotypes) and are seen as a threat to the American security. In short, this chapter familiarizes the reader of this thesis with the post-9/11 political, social, and literary context and makes it easier to analyze the writers' responses to stereotypical images in the chosen works in the following three chapters.

It is argued that “in novels and films, Muslims are depicted in the same ways they are perceived of in real life by Westerners; in other words, they actually reflect historical realities” (Abdullah 58). Because post 9/11 depictions of Islam and Muslims in fictional narratives are based on historical realities, it would be necessary to scrutinize post 9/11

historical facts and depictions of Islam and Muslims. The aim of this chapter is to introduce, and to present the historical and literary background of the study. To pave the way for the three coming analytical chapters, we will shed light on the post 9/11 reality which encompasses stereotypical images of Islam and Muslims, and pervasive images which have largely prevailed in post 9/11 American fictional narratives. To this aim, it would be essential to inspect closely post 9/11 official discourse and mainstream media in the Western world since “the vilification of Muslim community and their faith has been relentless among certain segments of the media and almost all political parties since 9/11” (Awan 525). These sectors do not only reflect the gendered and Orientalist images of the Middle Eastern or Islamic “Other” in reality and fiction but are also responsible for their appearance and spreading as well.

In the aftermath of the horrific attacks of September 11, addressing a joint session of Congress and the American people, President George W. Bush announced:

Americans are asking, how will we fight and win this war? We will direct every resource at our command- every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence , every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war- to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network ... Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations , secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime. (1142)

The statement “either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists,” seems to be a way of persuading other nations all over the world to choose sides in the post 9/11 conflict and thus limits or rather prohibits the possibility of neutrality in the post 9/11 era. In other words, the nations which do not join the Americans are to be deemed enemies. This implies an invitation to the nations unaligned in the 9/11 conflict to become either allies or enemies.

Interestingly, time has proved that this announcement was not just rhetorical. That is to say, this bipolar categorization was intentionally used by President Bush and promoted by the American foreign policy which legitimated unlawful political activities. This is apparent in “the prolonged military involvement of the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq with heavy cost of men and money without much success in sight” (Bajpai 59). This involvement “has produced strong domestic as well as international reactions against the adventurist policy of the U.S. in the Middle East” (Bajpai 59). The U.S has thus been the sole judge for determining who is or is not a “terrorist.” In this context, Dr Arunoday Bajpai maintains that “since the 9/11 the U.S. has been working as a world policeman against the terrorists and their supporters” (60). It has also been the sole judge to decide which regime is authoritarian. In short, the U.S was the sole executor of its own verdict: “The U.S intervened militarily in Afghanistan to punish Taliban terrorists. Similarly in 2003, it launched military attack against Iraq and Saddam Hussain as it was believed to be harbouring anti-American forces, detrimental to the U.S interests” (Bajpai 61).

Today’s world is thus divided into two opposing poles “good” and “evil” , “us” and “them” or rather “ the West” and “Islam.” This can be seen at the political level and more importantly in the wider layers of the Western public sphere. In his essay “Arab Muslim Americans after the 9/11 attacks,” Mysara Abu-Hashem refers to Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism which “operates on a binary logic according to which the world consists of two unequal and mutually exclusive entities Occident vs. Orient, European vs. others, us vs. them” (109). Within this logic, specific features are strongly attributed to both sides: “the Orient is feminine, untrustworthy, over-sexual, irrational and inclined toward despotism; meanwhile the West is masculine, civilized, restrained, rational, humane and democratic” (qtd. in Viteri and Tobler 109). These Orientalist clichés are continually repeated and do not only dominate scholarly, technical and journalistic debates, but also influence and control them. In the U.S. media and speeches of politicians in Washington D.C., the same clichés and prejudices about Arabs and Muslims that one reads in works of the eighteenth century and travelers accounts are still widely read (Viteri and Tobler 109).

This sense of the “otherness” suggests the “inferiority” of Islam versus the “superiority” of the West. Scholars argue that this representation of Islam in the West is mostly produced by the media (television, radio, daily newspapers, magazines and Hollywood movies) which served political interests. In his *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues 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” (xxi). Moreover, in his book *Covering Islam*, Said highlights the monolithic influence of experts and the media as they interpret Islam for others, the fact which has resulted not only in a misunderstanding of the subject matter, but also in a mistrust of the people of this religion. He states:

No one, of course, expects journalists or media personalities to spend a great deal of time being scholarly, reading books, looking for alternative views, or trying to inform themselves in ways that do not presume that Islam is both monolithic and hostile. But why the slavish and uncritical adoption of views that stress the unvaryingly reductive arguments about Islam, and why the extraordinary willingness to accept the official rhetoric emanating from the government in its irresponsible characterizations of Islam. (19)

The modern life of the twenty first century which is “a media saturated, technologically dependent, and globally connected world,” (Mackey-Kalis 218) is characterized by changes in technology, media, and society:

we live in a multimedia age where the majority of information people receive comes less often from print sources and more typically from highly constructed visual images, complex sounds arrangements, and multiple media formats. The influential role that broadcasting and emergent information and computer media play in organizing, shaping, and disseminating information, ideas, and values is creating a powerful *public pedagogy*. (Kellner 3)

Mass media often tend to depict minorities and out-groups negatively. Most research has indicated that the mass media continue to reinforce negative stereotypical images of minorities and of Arabs in particular (Parker iii).

Mass media are so powerful that they influence the way the American view Muslims and the stereotypical images they have about them. In other words, “the power of the media stems from an ability to reach mass audiences and to become a primary source of information about people, places and events that the audience has not directly experienced. Such is the case in respect to the media’s coverage of Muslims” (Rane et al. 3). It is argued that, “immediately following the 9/11 attacks, mainstream Americans’ favorable view of Muslims fell below 50 percent and continues to decline . . .” (Tutt). More important, “public opinion polls reveal that a majority of Americans formulate their views about Muslims and Islam

based on media depictions” (Tutt). A visible attraction towards Islam has been noticeable all over the world: “Largely as a consequence of intense media coverage since 9/11, Islam has been brought to the attention of people across the globe. However, most Westerners know little about the faith and its adherents” (Rane et al 15). In this context, the authors of the book entitled *Media Framing of the Muslim World*, examine and explain the way the news about Islam and the Muslim world is produced and consumed, and how it impacts on relations between Islam and the West. Interestingly, “the topics addressed in this book include how news values and media frames contribute to Western audiences’ perceptions and understandings of Islam and Muslims” (Rane et al vi). In fact, “this is not the first book on the media coverage of the Muslim world. Other prominent books include *Fueling Our Fears* by Nacos and Torres Reyna and *Framing Muslims* by Morey and Yaqin” (Rane et. al vii). What is unique about *Media Framing of the Muslim World* is “the breadth and depth with which it engages with key concepts, theories and issues in media studies as they pertain to Islam– West relations. Additionally, it is written by three scholars with specific expertise in Islamic studies, media studies and journalism” (Rane et. al vii).

What is worth of interest is that “coverage of news stories about Islam, especially after 9/11 have framed the religion and its adherents as innately backwards and in opposition to Western values of modernity and liberty” (Anderson and Webster 126). Media coverage seems to be more confusing than enlightening:

In general, American journalists (as would, I suppose, journalists from other countries) tend to report world events in accordance with their own ethnocentrism, through their eyes, and largely in line with the views of their government . . . Such ethnocentric reports coupled with the global reach of the American media, often tend to be more confusing than enlightening, entertaining than informative, sensational and factual, and biased than balanced. What is lacking in the American media coverage of the Middle East is precisely what the journalists should have learned in their journalism classes in colleges and universities to be objective or impartial observers of events, and to report events in an accurate, balanced, and fair manner. (Kamalipour 66)

Indeed, both official discourses and mainstream media in the Western world reflect the gendered and Orientalist depictions of the Middle Eastern or Islamic “Other.” In his article “Malleable stereotypes,” Daniel Tutt points out that “studies of popular media content show that the vast majority of media images related to Islam and Muslims depict characters and

stories as foreign, violent and disproportionately associated with political issues” (Tutt). After the 9/11 events, the American media and official discourse focused on two main stories: terrorism/ Islamic fundamentalism and veiling, the point which will be examined in the coming sections). Stereotypes about Muslims which vary from the Muslim dangerous “terrorist” to the oppressed veiled woman are offered to the American news audiences through the official discourse and media stories (Ittefaq and Ahmad 39).

1. The 9/11 events

On the morning of September 11, 2001, an airliner flying at hundreds of miles per hour carrying about 10,000 gallons of jet fuel plowed into the World Trade Center's North Tower in Lower Manhattan. A second airliner struck the South Tower at 9:03. Fire and smoke gushed upward. Steel, glass, ash, and bodies fell below. Less than 90 minutes later, the Twin Towers where up to 50,000 people worked every day collapsed. A third airliner crashed into the west side of the Pentagon at 9:37 that same morning. A fourth airliner, which was indeed targeted at the U.S. White House, crashed in a field in southern Pennsylvania at 10:03 (Kean 238).

Many scholars have analyzed and discussed the after effects of the 9/11 attacks in the world. It is argued that the 9/11 attacks did not only terrorize the Americans all over the United States, but shocked the whole world as well. Al Qaida, an “Islamic” group led by someone called Osama Bin Laden, is held responsible for these attacks. More importantly, in the coming days, the media drew the following conclusions: “Terrorists have attacked the United States. The United States is faced with a serious terrorist threat from now on. America has to defend itself against terrorists. This attack is organized and carried out by Al-Qaida. Al-Qaida is an Islamic organization” (Alireza and Khademi 2). In his article “Xenophobia in Language,” Ahmed M. Salih depicts the 9/11 events as “a landmark and a turning point in history” (52). This is “because it has left geopolitical impact all over the world” (52). Moreover, this event “sparked a wildfire in fostering xenophobia in 21st century to be age of fear” (52). He explains the strong effect of these events on immigrants stating: “If immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees have been a threat to jobs and social issues in in-group societies, they became after 11 September a threat to citizens’ life” (52). In the same vein, Md Abu Shahid Abdullah points out: “The traumatic event of 9/11 has a strong impact on Westerners’ attitudes towards Islam and Muslims. This small community suddenly came under limelight, and became visible and exposed to the public glare. Muslims started to be suspected as either terrorists or sympathetic to terrorism and terrorists, and were distrusted” (52). More than this,

“since 9/11, the perception of Islam by the majority of Americans is as follows: The Muslim religion (Islam) is perceived to be indifferent to change ,with values not in common with other cultures. The radically aggressive Muslims are seen as cruel, irrational, violent, archaic and sexist” (Franks). What is striking, thus, is the impact of 9/11 on Islam and Muslims which can be summarized in one image: “the whole religion, Islam, and its more than one billion adherents are viewed as violent, aggressive and anti-America” (Al-Twajji 1).

The 9/11 terrorist attacks were difficult to interpret. The president Bush denounced them with a declaration of “War on Terrorism.” The government interpreted the attacks as military and the world witnessed the outbreak of the “War on Terror” in spite of the fact that “war is normally declared on another country, not on an ideology” (Eriksen 134). This is due to the complexity of the events which lies in “the network of militant Islamists of which they were a part, al-Qaeda, [being] decentralized and to a great extent deterritorialized” (Eriksen 135). This draws the specificity of the enemy: “the enemy was neither a group of insurgents or revolutionaries wishing to overthrow the regime in Washington, nor a resentful alien state” (Eriksen 135). In 2002, John Esposito attempted to explain 9/11 through his own view in his *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. He tried to reconstruct the bridge between the Muslim world and the West:

I wrote *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* both to explain why 9/11 occurred and to place the attacks within their broader context. This understanding is now even more important because of what has happened since 9/11: the continued threat of terrorism internationally and domestically, the American led war against terrorism and the exponential growth of anti-Americanism and hatred of America globally. (x)

The newly emerged circumstances gave birth to a new government which created the discourse of “War against Terrorism.” The latter generated strategic statements. Bush openly described the War on Terrorism as a “crusade” and stressed the need of a new world order. Consequently, “media began to talk more openly about Islam as a religion with a supportive attitude toward violence and terror by arranging programs talking about Islam or Muslims only on occasions in which a bomb explosion or a terrorist attack had had happened somewhere around the world” (Alireza and Khademi 2). The 9/11 acts of terrorism committed by extremists “raise the question of whether there is something in Islam or the Quran that fosters violence and terrorism” (Esposito 119).

It is argued that “ “War against terrorism” turned out to be a dominant discourse, since it was strongly emphasized by the Bush administration at the time, and the Obama administration afterward” (Alireza and Khademi 10). In his address to the nation in the evening of the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush stated: “America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining” (Bush). This statement clearly shows the role the USA envisaged for itself at the very beginning of the War on Terror. About one year later, on June 1, 2002, in his Address at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, Bush stated:

This war [The War on Terror] will take many turns we cannot predict. Yet, I am certain of this: Wherever we carry it, the American flag will stand not only for our power but for freedom. Our Nation's cause has always been larger than our Nation's defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace, a peace that favors human liberty. We will defend the peace against threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent. (Bush)

This piece of Bush's speech comes to reinforce the U.S government's conception of the world and the position of America as a leader in it. Debra L. Merskin argues that “Bush positioned America as the world's leader of obvious virtues when he declared, “we are freedom's defenders” and “whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done”” (149). This vision of America as the leader of the world was to be fortified through the American military powers, “a military that must be ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world” (149) as Bush stressed. In his address at the United States Military Academy, he comments: “You graduate from this Academy in a time of war, taking your place in an American military that is powerful and is honorable. Our war on terror is only begun, but in Afghanistan it was begun well” (Bush). He adds: “And our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives” (Bush).

1.1 US and THEM

The bombings of the world trade towers in New York on the 11th of September 2001 changed the landscape of the West-East relations into palpable binary opposites of “Us” and “Them.” Shortly after the 9/11 events, (three days after the attacks), Bush started using binary

oppositions in his rhetoric. He refers to the enemy as “a dark faceless, soul-less source of evil” (qtd. in Elliott 97), and to the approaching war as a “crusade.” In doing so, “Bush positioned the retaliation as a battle between the forces of good and evil” (qtd. in Elliott 97). This is made clearer in Bush’s address on 20th September 2001 before a Joint Meeting of Congress that “every nation in the region now has a decision to make. Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” (Bush), a statement which encompasses a crucial bipolar categorization. Besides, in his address to West Point cadets, Bush emphasizes the idea that the conflict is between good and evil. Andrew B. R. Elliott argues:

The Us /Them dualism, however, did not stop at denouncing the Arab countries as Muslims and harbourers of terrorists, but was superimposed onto an unchallenged dialectic between good and evil, reflecting once again, the “crusading spirit” of the entire campaign. Throughout, the rhetoric, both in the build-up to the Iraq invasion as well as its aftermath, there was a seemingly conscious – or at least alarmingly consistent – effort to emphasize that this was a conflict not only between us and them but between good and evil itself. (97)

Thus, this way of thinking has divided today’s world into two opposing poles, “good” and “evil”, “us” and “them” or “the West” and “Islam.” More importantly, it enabled the U.S. to be a judge in determining who is or is not a “terrorist,” or which regime in the world is authoritarian and which one is democratic.

Furthermore, this way of thinking has strengthened the portrayal of Muslims or even Arabs born in the U.S, as a threat to American values such as individual freedom, gender equality, sexual freedom and democracy. This has generated a gap between “Us” and “Them”:

Just as the media have anthropomorphized courage and bravery in the post September 11 world, a face has also been put on terror and it is Arab. The political rhetoric of George W. Bush following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon employed words and expressions – “us,” “them,” “they,” “evil,” “those people,” “demons,” “wanted: dead or alive” – to characterize people of Arab/Middle Eastern descent. While these descriptions have largely been applied to non-U.S. citizens, they cannot help but include the approximately three million Arab individuals living in the United States, many of whom were born in the States as well

as others who have adopted America as home – Iraqis, Iranians, Palestinians, Egyptians, Arabs, Yamanis, and others. (Merskin 138)

By means of the notion of “US” versus “THEM,” Muslims and/or Islamic affiliations are excluded from the dominant discourse, and a power relation of us the Occident (or the West) versus them the Orient becomes highly visible. Edward Said explains this relationship in his *Covering Islam* saying:

The general basis of Orientalist thought is an imaginative and yet drastically polarized geography dividing the world into two unequal parts, the larger, “different” one called the Orient, the other, also known as “our” world, called the Occident or the West . . . There are, of course, many religious, psychological, and political reasons for this, but all of these reasons derive from a sense that so far as the West is concerned, Islam represents not only a formidable competitor but also a late coming challenge to Christianity. (4-5)

This way of thinking has thus directed the landscape of the West-East relations into binary opposites of Islam and the West.

In his book *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* John L. Esposito states: “Islam’s early expansion and success constituted a challenge theologically, politically and culturally which proved a stumbling block to understanding, and a threat to the Christian West” (25). According to him, “both Islam and Christianity possessed a sense of universal message and mission which in retrospect were destined to lead to confrontation rather than mutual cooperation” (25). In addition, he believes that “Islam’s relationship to the West has often been marked by mutual ignorance, stereotyping, contempt, and conflict” (25). This stance seems to be emphasized by several thinkers. Lütfi Sunar, for instance, views Islam as the main rival of Christianity. He believes that Islam has been Christianity's main rival since it appeared in the early 600s CE. It bereaved Christianity of its status as the last Abrahamic faith and ,hence, has continuously been described as a false religion by the Church. While there was a chaotic political system under feudalism in the West, Islam united the Eastern world under its roof and trembled the World power balance. In this era, Islam began being known as an enemy of Christianity (Sunar 36- 37) .

Sunar refers to Edward Said’s argument about the relation between Islam and the West highlighting the idea that the relation between Islam and the West is not new; it has a long

history full of conflicts. He emphasizes this relying on Said's statement that "the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe," that "it is also the place of Europe's greatest, richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (36). Sunar carries on his argument stating that the most active enemy for the West and its closest Other is Islam (36). In this context, Ziauddin Sardar argues that Islam is considered and evoked as a "problem" from film to fiction, from foreign policy to polemics, resulting in an impasse: Islam as an insurmountable barrier between Western culture and its estiny: globalization. This impasse is the concept of Orientalism as a theory and practice as it is known, as it has functioned and continues to function in the West (Sardar 55). While Sardar highlights Islam as a "problem," Edward Said shows it as a "competitor" to the West. In his *Orientalism*, Said suggests that European interest in this religion can be interpreted as a fear of a fierce competitor: "European interest in Islam derived not from curiosity but from fear of a monotheistic, culturally and militarily formidable competitor to Christianity" (344).

In the same context, Akbar S. Ahmed thinks that the Western fear of Islam is due to the misunderstanding of this religion. According to him, Islam is considered "problematic" because the West is not only unable to understand it fully but impatient with it as well. Hence, for him, Islam "will be seen as the main counterforce to Western civilization" (230- 231). He carries on explaining that "into the 1990s, an opinion is already taking shape of Islam as the major enemy after the collapse of communism. There are signs that some of the free-floating hostility directed against communism over the last decade will move toward Islam" (230-231). This brings Samuel Huntington's theory of "the Clash of Civilisations" into discussion. Samuel Huntington, whose ideas will be inserted in the last chapter of this thesis, maintains that the commanding source of conflict in the modern world will be cultural:

the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural . . . The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics . . . Conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world. (22)

Samuel Huntington excludes "ideology" from his concept of "clash of civilizations". This is explained in one of his interviews when he was asked about his book *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (1996); what was this book about? He asserts that

his argument in this book on the clash of civilizations “is that ideology is out now. It is not important. But culture is, and civilizations are the broadest cultural entities in the world” (8).

Indeed, it is claimed that “Samuel Huntington’s theory of “the Clash of Civilisations” became very popular all over the world, and many commentators claimed that the 9/11 attacks proved Huntington right about the rising Islamic threat to the Western societies” (Aslan 16-17). However, this was not the view of some thinkers such as Edward Said, Burak Erdenir, and Thomas Hylland Eriksen, whose opinion differs from Huntington’s. Introduced in 2001, Edward Said’s “The Clash of Ignorance” challenges the assumptions that civilizations are monolithic entities which do not interact. Said’s “The Clash of Ignorance” served “as refutation of Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations.” Said describes Huntington’s argument as a “belligerent kind of thought” (qtd .in Al-Twaiji 6). He argues that Huntington does not make any profound investigations. According to Said, Huntington’s article is focused more on personal assumptions than on solid proof: Huntington, according to Said, does not have any exact proof of his speech (Al-Twaiji 6). Likewise, the political analyst Burak Erdenir agrees with Thomas Hylland Eriksen on the idea that religion has nothing to do with the clash between the West and Islam today. Rather, it is due to contemporary social issues dealt with through a religious discourse in a Western secular system; the clash thus “is not between civilizations as Huntington had claimed, but more between lifestyles” (Erdenir 28). In this context, the veiling issue, for instance, is rooted in cultural customs and not in Islam as a religion, a question which will be extensively discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, in the three post 9/11 novels selected for study. Thomas Hylland Eriksen thinks that “Huntington is correct in saying that cultural differences are important, but he is hopelessly off the mark when he tries to map out those differences” (Eriksen 18). He describes Huntington’s concept of civilizations as “misleading” arguing that there is not any reason to suppose that such differences inevitably lead to conflict (Eriksen 18).

According to Eriksen, the new ideological conflict is not between two competing religions like Islam and Christianity. He argues that the new stereotyping and enemy image of Islam and Muslims is a cultural phenomenon in Christian societies. This phenomenon has a different form and serves different interests: “The enemy image, incidentally, is adjusted as its proponents change historically. While the generalised Muslim woman today is depicted as an oppressed, intimidated and powerless person, it was common in Victorian times to depict her as a profoundly erotic, mystical and seductive character” (Eriksen *Media and Glocal Change*

33). Enemy images and stereotypes according to Eriksen develop gradually over time as the balance of power and political regimes change. The stereotyping of Muslims, for him, is based on assumed cultural differences and not religion. The problem of this new stereotyping, in his opinion, 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 (Eriksen *Globalization* 224- 225).

1.2. Islam and Muslims, the enemies of the West

According to Debra L. Merskin, “Nations “need” enemies. Governments use the idea of a common enemy as a method of social control, of reinforcing values of the dominant system” (Merskin 140). Merskin maintains that “as a hegemonic device, a common enemy can serve to distract attention and divert aggression and energy toward a common threat” (140). The common enemy against which Americans were united for nearly half a century was the Soviet Union, and more generally the ideology of communism, known as the red menace. Then, the threats towards American national security held a new understanding with the end of the Cold War. The new enemy that the government’s rhetoric growingly stressed, even before the 9/11 events, was Islamic terrorism. In “Islamic Terrorism,” Krista Wiegand explains:

Today, the ideology of Islamic terrorism is undoubtedly the enemy of the United States, more so than any sovereign state. It is much easier to declare war on terrorism sponsored by self-proclaimed, mysterious, and dangerous radicals than it is on another sovereign state. For this reason, and the fact that terrorism is perceived as an absolutely deplorable act, it is easy to assert Islamic terrorism as the enemy. It has also been easier to justify foreign policy actions based on the ever present threat of Islamic terrorism, much like the threat of the spread of communism during the cold war. (51)

The 9/11 attacks gave birth to a new phase of the relationship between Islam and the West: “Islam as a whole becomes the enemy of the United States and humanity as a whole, particularly Christendom” (Al-Twaiji 3- 4). Thomas Hylland Eriksen argues that the image of Islam as a violent religion has existed in the West since the Middle Ages. Muslims and Christians have been enemies in each other’s eyes for a long time, criticizing each other’s religion as distorted and inferior. Moreover, both Muslims and Christians use their religious differences for

cultural and territorial dominance. Reinforcing his argument with the Crusades and the Moors from Spain in 1492, Eriksen asserts that Christians are in no way more tolerant and peaceful than Muslims and that the simplified stereotypical depictions of the “other” plays an important role in enemy images (Eriksen 33-34). In the same vein, “some historians claim that the perception of Islam and Muslims as “the enemy” dates back centuries (as far back as the Crusades) and current events only give a new impulse to that” (Lachhab et al. 10). That is to say, the 9/11 attacks “have further inflamed the view of Islam as the “enemy,” an image informed by centuries of Orientalist thinking” (Cesari 45).

In the aftermath of the horrific attacks of September 11, addressing a joint session of Congress and the American people, President George W. Bush stated:

the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows. Many will be involved in this effort . . . The hour is coming when America will act . . . This is not, however, just America’s fight, and what is at stake is not just America’s freedom .This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s fight. (1142)

Amir B. Marvasti and Karyn D. McKinney point out that “for many Americans the so-called war of civilizations has become a standard explanation for the political hostilities and terrorist activities that have ravaged the Middle East” (42). Furthermore, it is argued that the “war on terror was initially influentially framed as a new Crusade or a holy war” (Steuter and Wills 261). In a speech on 16 September 2001, George Bush made this wording clear, warning Americans that this “Crusade”, this war on terrorism, will take some time. The word entails images of a spiritual war that began with God and not with governments. The 11th century Crusades also used this tactic, calling soldiers to a war of religious liberation; historians see this language now as a disguise for more pragmatic conquest (Steuter and Wills 261). Additionally, according to Debra L. Merskin, Bush’s rhetoric implies “a battle between the forces of good and evil”:

Historically and contemporarily, shadow imagery and the word “evil” have been used to draw the image of a dark, menacing, stereotypical threat. Significantly, Bush used them in his rhetoric. By referring to the enemy as a mysterious, faceless, soul-less source of evil, and by referring to the impending war as a "Crusade," Bush set up the retaliation as a struggle between good and evil powers. (149)

Targeting Islam and Muslims as the “enemy” in Bush’s rhetoric and the American policies which accompanied the American led War on Terror seems more explicit and obvious than implicit and ambiguous. Debra L . Merskin thinks that Bush’s talks about Muslims and Arabs are clear and do not imply any ambiguity; his speeches, according to her, encompass “the construction of all Arabs as terrorists and all Muslims as Arab terrorists – through political rhetoric reducing vast populations into a single dark image” (153).

Consequently, the American led military campaign extended its threats beyond Afghanistan, the first targeted country in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. In his *Unholy War*, John Esposito argues that American statements and actions have strengthened the belief among Muslims that the American led war is, in fact, a war against Islam although The White House and the Pentagon apologized for the use of the provocative words such as "Crusade" (Esposito 75).

1.3. Media, a source of the stereotypical images

Media’s role in building the stereotypical image of Arabs and Muslims is very important. The media and popular culture have contributed to the creation of an evil Arab stereotype by using images and vocabulary in news, movies, comics, and magazine articles (Merskin 158). In this context, Md Abu Shahid Abdullah’s article “Muslims in Pre- and Post-9/11 contexts,” portrays “the stereotypical, vilifying and antagonistic attitudes of the West to Arabs and Muslims in both pre and post – 9/11 era” (52). It clarifies the idea that “Muslims have never ceased to be important for the West and have been depicted in vilifying and stereotypical manners in western literature and films . . . ” (52). Interestingly, it proves “that the depiction is highly motivated by the media, Western authorities, and the West’s desire for social, cultural, and political dominance over the East” (Abdullah 52). In this context, Edward Said discusses how the Western media distort the image of Islam highlighting the tenacious tendency of Western media 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” (Said *Covering Islam* 136). Said asserts that “Perceptions and political attitudes molded and manipulated by the media” (Said *Culture and Imperialism* 36) are important. He argues that the political elite’s and the media’s perpetuation of anti-Muslim rhetoric leads to the continuity of viewing Muslims/Arabs negatively:

In the West, representations of the Arabs ever since the 1967 War have been crude, reductionist, coarsely racist as much critical literature in Europe and the United States has ascertained and verified. Yet, films and television shows portraying Arabs as sleazy “camel-jockeys,” terrorists, and offensively wealthy “sheikhs” pour forth anyway. (36)

In her essay “Unequal Combatants on an Uneven Media Battlefield,” Susan Dente Ross paraphrases both Dov Shinnar’s argument about media in “Peace process in cultural conflict” and Joseph N. Cappella’s and Kathleen Hall Jamieson’s in their “News Frames, Political Cynicism, and Media Cynicism stating”:

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 international issues and contribute to the intractability of intercultural conflicts. (58)

The source of the stereotypical images is often attributed to the mass media. Bradley W. Gorham argues that researchers in mass communication and social psychology often refer to the media as a major source of stereotypical images, believing that these images cause or perpetuate bias and discrimination among audiences (Gorham 289).

In this context, John Esposito argues that the creation of the Muslim enemy image in the minds of Americans relates 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 (Esposito).

According to some scholars, lacking knowledge about the Quran as a Holy scripture, Islam, and Muslim culture in general leads to the stereotyping and negative depictions in the American media (Trevino et al. 3). More importantly, it is argued that “there is often a vast gulf between image and reality in the Western media reporting of the Muslim world” (Rane et. al 8). Providing the context and the way the public should feel and react to issues or events suggest “twisting the facts, or bending the truth rather than breaking it, using emphasis, and other auxiliary embellishments” (Shabir et. al 90). In doing so, “media practitioner can create a desired impression without departing too far from the appearance of objectivity” (Shabir et. al 90).

The desired negative impression about Islam and Muslims is widely apparent in Western Media reports. Md Abu Shahid Abdullah states:

Western media reports contain a continuous distorted image of Arabs and Muslims; false stereotype of Muslims and Islam is very much common in the Western media by every possible way. Often Arabs and Muslims are confused as same entity and are considered as anti democratic, irrational, hot-tempered, barbaric, uncultured, lustful, and so on. (52)

More importantly, to achieve their goal, the media distort many Islamic principles such as prayer, recitation, and ablution. They also misunderstand the real meaning of the term "jihad," associating it incorrectly with violent acts (Abdullah 52). Amir B. Marvasti and Karyn D. McKinney note that “the sketchy news media coverage about Islam plays no small role in exacerbating these negative attitudes” (44). According to many scholars, visual language plays a very important role in creating and conveying meaning. Roland Bleiker maintains that we are living in a visual age. International affairs and our perception of them are influenced by photographs and visual objects. Photographs, video, and television have an impact on how we perceive and respond to events such as war, diplomacy, financial crises, and election campaigns (4). He asserts that visual language creates meanings about the world through representing it. That is to say visual language does not reveal a pre-existing “truth” about the world (4). Similarly, in her article “Popular visual language as global communication,”

Cynthia Weber argues that a lot of politics is done through popular visual language which is expressed through visual media such as photos, film, web pages. This way of obtaining information about the world requires seeing it as a form of representation. This latter, permits to “read” meanings and values attached to various artefacts (137- 138).

In addition to this, Edward S. Herman argues that “the mainstream media carry out their propaganda service on behalf of the corporate and political establishment in many ways: by choice of topics addressed . . . , by their framing of issues . . . , and by their use of language, among other practices” (27). He believes that “the integration of word usage, framing, and source selection points up the fact that language is an arena of conflict and struggle. Word meanings, connotations, and applications are fluid and change in the course of struggle” (28). He carries on explaining that “words are regularly transformed in the service of the powerful. “Terrorism,” originally used to describe state violence, as in the French Revolution era’s “reign of terror,” has evolved in modern times to focus mainly on anti-government, anti-establishment forms of political violence” (28). Discussing word tricks in the media, Edward Herman refers to what he calls “Snarl words” which “are those that induce negative reactions and feelings of anger and rejection, like extremist, terrorist, dictator, dependency, reckless, outlaw, and “snarling” itself” (28). And these are exactly the words used by the US media to describe Arabs and Muslims. Herman argues that “words are manipulated to serve bias and propaganda. In many cases, the process entails passing along the word usage and frame of the originating source. But the media claim to be seeking truth and serving the public (not corporate or elite) interest. That should be the standard by which we evaluate and criticize them as we seek to shrink the immense gap between their own proclaimed ideal and actual performance” (34).

2. Islamophobia

Designating “Islam” and “Muslims” as the enemy of the West has resulted in an extreme feeling of hatred and fear of “Islam” as a religion, “Muslims” as its believers or even just “Muslim-looking” people, a tendency known as “Islamophobia.”

2.1. Definitions

Several definitions have been ascribed to this phenomenon. Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, for instance, describe Islamophobia as “a social anxiety towards Islam and

Muslim cultures” (6-7). In her book *Islamophobia in Australia*, Alice Aslan refers to Gottschalk and Greenberg’s analysis of Islamophobia stating that “Gottschalk and Greenberg challenge the skeptics of Islamophobia urging them to do a quick exercise and to write down what the words “Islam” and “Muslim” bring to mind,” (7) and that most Americans who took part in this exercise correlated Islam with violent activities and practices like jihads, the September 11 terrorist attacks, and Palestinian suicide bombers; with terrorists like Osama bin Laden; with allegedly oppressive practices linked to Islamic sharia law and the veiling of Muslim women; and with some particular Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran (7).

Indeed, the term Islamophobia has always been complicated. Even “the widespread use of the term in the contemporary context, especially in the wake of the War on Terror, has not necessarily meant that its meaning has become any clearer” (Sian 122). In the introduction of his book *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance*, Carl W. Ernst describes Islamophobia as “a complex phenomenon.” He exposes its meaning in the opinion of different authors (among them Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenburg mentioned previously) who have approached it from a variety of perspectives as he states:

Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenburg treat it as a largely unwarranted social anxiety about Islam and Muslims, although they focus on the element of fear of Islam rather than other stereotypes. Kambiz Ghanea Bassiri considers it to be a prejudice against Islam that is particularly associated with violence in media representations, although he emphasizes the similarity of Islamophobia to prejudice against other minority “out-groups” like Catholics, Jews, and blacks. Edward Curtis highlights the element of racism in Islamophobia, which he links to state repression of political dissent. Juliane Hammer draws attention to the importance of gender in images of terrorists and the construction of Islamophobia, although she cautions that particular examples of Islamophobia must be analysed in terms of the particular political and intellectual currents that drive them. Andrew Shryock focuses on Islamophobia as an ideology related to nationalism and the problems of minority identity; he contrasts Islamophobic identification of “the Muslim as enemy” with the equally simplistic concept of “the Muslim as friend,” as found in Islamophilia. (2)

This concept, “the Muslim as friend,” seems to take a large part in the novels under study in contrast to the post 9/11 American writings whose content encourages the Islamophobic

identification as the coming chapters will extensively demonstrate. Then, Ernst comments saying that “the basic point is that, for the many Americans who have no personal experience knowing Muslims as human beings, the overwhelmingly negative images of Islam circulated in the popular media amount to prejudice” (2). This seems to be the same basic point that the writers under study allude to in their novels. Lorraine Adams’s, Lorrie Moore’s, and Claire Messud’s fictional writings dealt with in the coming three chapters highlight positive images about Muslims/Arabs and invite the readers to know Muslims as human beings as it will be argued.

2.2. Islamophobia and the 9/11 events

Many scholars believe that 9/11 is not the starting point of Islamophobia; it seems that its roots go back to earlier times. Lütfi Sunar explains that “many people accept the 9/11 attacks as the beginning of the rise of Islamophobia in the West. However, as Esposito states ‘it did not suddenly come into being’ after this date . . . it has deep historical roots” (40). Indeed, John L. Esposito claims that “fear of Islam is not new. The tendency to judge the actions of Muslims in isolation, to generalize from the action of the few to the many, to disregard similar excesses committed in the name of other religions and ideologies is also not new” (218- 219). This is also the view of Jackie Dreyer. The term “Islamophobia,” according to Dreyer, means “prejudice against, or an irrational fear of, Islam or Muslims” (qtd. in Manqoush et al. 301); it “has been present in American society since the 1980s, coming into more frequent usage on and after Sept. 11, 2001” (qtd. in Manqoush et al. 301).

Likewise, according to Todd H. Green the word “Islamophobia” is not new; its first appearance was in its French form *Islamophobie* in 1918 in the painter Etienne Dinet’s book *La Vie de Mohammed, prophète d'Allah (The life of Muhammed, the prophet of Allah)*, a biography of the prophet Mohammed, written in collaboration with his friend Sliman Ben Ibrahim. Islamophobia “has become an integral part of political and public discourse” (Green 9) in the past few decades. This is ascribed to a great extent “to a much-cited study conducted by a British think tank, the Runnymede Trust, in 1997” (Green 9). Established in 1968, The Runnymede Trust’s aim was to counsel the British government on race relations. Its British Commission on Muslims and Islamophobia was created in 1996. One year later, it released its report entitled “Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All.” This study which is often referred to as Runnymede Report has served as the starting point for considerable subsequent analyses of Islamophobia in Europe and North America (Green 11).

The 9/11 events reinforced the American phobia. Significantly, “the most heated encounters take place over mosques” (Ghosh 2). Bobby Ghosh asserts that “places of worship are often the most tangible targets for hatred” (2). In his article entitled “Islamophobia: Does America Have a Muslim Problem?” Ghosh pictures U.S Islamophobia through the bitter opposition mosque projects faced in the United States. He asserts that six mosque projects, at least, have been met with fierce resistance in the United States in 2010: in Temecula, California, and in Gainesville, Fla., for instance. Moreover, groups naming themselves the Freedom Defense Initiative and Stop the Islamization of America have funded ads offering Muslims a "safe" way to abandon Islam (2). This opposition towards this religion positions it as separate and Other, and thus mirrors one of the characteristics of Islamophobia.

2.3. Characteristics of Islamophobia

Among the Islamophobic characteristics as identified by the Runnymede Report (the study mentioned in the above lines; it has served as the starting point for several subsequent studies of Islamophobia in Europe and North America) and discussed by Todd H. Green are the following:

- 1- Islam as monolithic and static, which encompasses the idea that “ all Muslims are basically the same, holding uniform worldviews and ideologies.”
- 2- Islam as separate and other which implies the assumption that “ Western values such as respect for religious diversity or freedom of religion have no home in Islam.”
- 3- Islam as inferior which indicates that this religion is different from and more importantly inferior to the West: “Islam is barbaric, irrational, and sexist, in contrast to the civilized, enlightened, and gender-equal West.”
- 4- Islam as the enemy; this Islamophobic characteristic pictures Islam as “a religion bent on conquest.”
- 5- Racial discrimination against Muslims justified; “when Muslims are involved, racist practices and prejudices get a pass” (12-16).

Interestingly, The Runnymede Trust Report defines Islamophobia as “unfounded hostility towards Islam. It refers also to the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs” (qtd. in Sian 122).

3. Stereotyping

In his article “Xenophobia in Language,” Ahmed M. Salih indicates that:

ALL societies, no exception, have their own attitudes while they are in contact with others. Some of them have prejudicial attitudes and negative sentimental feelings, whether conscious or unconscious, which are expressed in various forms such as physical violence and verbal behavior; the latter is commonly used by individuals. Xenophobic prejudice, exaggerated hatred towards foreigners, has significant costs for the targeted group because of these negative attitudes. What makes the matter worse is when these attitudes extend to the next generation(s). As a result, host or receiver countries generate derogatory terms and expressions to stigmatize individuals of out-group. Less hostility can be shown toward out-group members depending on values, norms, and the religious and cultural gap between members of the two (in and out group). Cultural, political, religious and economic factors manage the situation when groups communicate. The similarity and closeness in behavior they share are helpful to understand each other. (39)

In this context, Bradley W. Gorham sees stereotypes as “a particular subset of social reality beliefs” (232). According to him stereotypes “are understandings about particular social groups that we have learned from our social world” (232). Yet, he believes that “such meanings and representations are not universally agreed upon” (232). Debra Merskin defines stereotypes as “collections of traits or characteristics that present members of a group as being all the same” (160). Moreover, this group of people is denied change throughout time. This is, according to Ronald Stockton, part of the “essential quality” of stereotypes. He maintains that one of stereotypes' most important characteristics is that it takes people “out of history” and denies them the ability to adapt over time. It is as if their characteristics were set or established at some ancient time, and their behavior has been pre-determined and ahistorical since then (120). Additionally, Stockton explains that stereotypes do not only encompass negative images; they “can be hostile or nonhostile” (119). The Examples of nonhostile stereotypes Stockton gives “are that the Irish are cheerful or that Chinese are good at mathematics” (119-120). However, he clarifies that his concern in his essay “Ethnic Archetypes and the Arab Image” is “with hostile stereotypes that cause harm or do damage” (119- 120).

In his book *Public Opinion*, Walter Lippmann brings the meaning of the word “stereotype” into its contemporary meaning:

Modern life is hurried and multifarious, above all physical distance separates men who are often in vital contact with each other, such as employer and employee, official and voter. There is neither time nor opportunity for intimate acquaintance. Instead, we notice a trait which marks a well known type, and fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry about in our heads. (49)

Thus, the image people have about the stereotyped group is not due to their real experience with this group but usually derives from their own society’s influences. Walter Lippmann draws a link between the use of stereotypes and one’s philosophy of life: “What matters is the character of the stereotypes, and the gullibility with which we employ them. And these in the end depend upon those inclusive patterns which constitute our philosophy of life” (49- 50). Lippmann explains:

If in that philosophy we assume that the world is codified according to a code which we possess, we are likely to make our reports of what is going on describe a world run by our code. But if our philosophy of life tells us that each man is only a small part of the world, that his intelligence catches at best only phases and aspects in a coarse net of ideas, then, when we use our stereotypes, we tend to know that they are only stereotypes, to hold them lightly, to modify them gladly. (49- 50)

What is certain is that characteristics which are believed to be shared by all members of the stereotyped group force them into a category of the outsider, the Other.

Walter Lippman is the political commentator who has popularized the use of the word stereotype. About the origins of this word, Ronald Stockton comments:

The word stereotype originated in the early publishing industry and refers to the wood block from which identical prints were derived without variation or deviation. The word was popularized by Walter Lippman in 1922 in his classic work on public opinion. Today it is routinely used to describe unfriendly, undifferentiated imaging of cultural or ethnic groups. (119)

Additionally, in his article, “Stereotypes in the Media: So what?” Bradley W. Gorham refers to Walter Lippmann stating that “ the contribution of the media to people’s image of the rest

of the world was recognized early in this century when Lippmann (1992) talked about the “pictures in our heads” (231). Gorham carries on explaining that “these pictures are formed not only by our personal experiences, but also by what we learn from other people” (231). He concludes saying that we develop stereotypes as a result of social interaction, and these stereotypes are likely to represent the prejudices of those experiences. He explains that although we have a lot of images about the world, just a small percentage of them are focused on personal experiences. As a result, much of what we “know” about the world is based on our agreement with others that a certain truth is “reality.” In light of the fact that much of our knowledge- those images and pictures in our heads- comes not from personal experiences but from other people, the media could play a big role in providing some of these images and pictures (231).

This conclusion highly reflects the central role the media played in shaping popular and elite perceptions of the “terrorist” threat after the 9/11 attacks and its serious consequences on Arabs and Muslims all over the world. In the aftermath of the events, media coverage was extensive and included prolonged discourse about the attacks and endless reproduction of stereotypical images about Arabs and Muslims, images which characterize post 9/11 American fiction. The possibility for “serious media- based consequences,” using Gorham’s words, seems to be in the profound and long lasting effect of the stereotypical images on which Westerners base their behavior. These stereotypes concern both male and female Arabs/Muslims and even people who only look like them as it will be extensively discussed in the three coming chapters of this thesis.

3.1. Stereotyping Islam and Muslims

The available image of Muslims in pre- and post 9/11 context had always been negative. Rebecca Lind and James Danowski point out that Arabs and Muslims often appear when there is a negative context and do not appear at all when they are successful or when they face discrimination (165). In their study of media representation of Arabs, Lind and Danowski assert that Arabs’ and Muslims’ everyday stories are missing and their representation in the media helps reinforcing the stereotypes and form a distorted picture for the average American citizen. From their study they conclude:

It appears reasonable to assume that if a people and their culture are ignored, this leaves a fertile field for negative stereotyping. The picture that emerges by the lack of

attention to Arabs and Arab cultures is [that they are] neither significant nor important. If the American public counts on television for its news, it is not learning much about Arabs. Arabs and Arab culture thus are marginalized. (164- 165)

In the same vein, Michael W. Suleiman expresses his disapproval of the media arguing: “Muslims/Arabs are in the anomalous situation of being highly visible, especially in specific situations which reflect very negatively on them (incidents of terrorism or Middle East conflict), while remaining simultaneously invisible as communities which suffer bias and discrimination” (36). He thus highlights the role of the media in reinforcing the peculiar circumstances of Arabs and Muslims, being visible and invisible at the same time.

Although several scholars argue that the negative images of Muslims in the media is much the same as any other minority group (Gottschalk and Greenberg 67), 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. (Kalkan et al. 848)

Hence, Muslims are associated with both bands and consequently receive the double amount of discrimination (Kalkan et al. 242). In this context, Tommy Franks believes that active hostility against Arabs and Muslims takes place because of the idea the Americans hold about this people. He argues that “most Americans believe that most Muslims support terrorists.” Consequently, the American people form and believe in the idea that to be hostile toward Muslims is “natural, normal and patriotic” (Franks).

According to the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, Islam, among all other religions in U.S, holds the most negative views (Jones 20). It is argued that “most Americans, being descendants of European immigrants, grow up with a folklore in which negative images of the people, cultures, and religion of the Middle East persist” (Ba-Yunus and Kone 110). It is also argued that to find out the negative stereotypes of Europeans toward Muslims, it is necessary

“to only turn pages of the post-Crusade literature,” the 9/11 may be just a reminder (Ba-Yunus and Kone 110).

These negative images of Arabs and Muslims are trotted out whenever Middle East crises emerge. As a result, Arab-Americans face the burdens of sorrow for their country’s catastrophe and stereotypes about their Arab heritage (Cainkar 252). Irum Sheikh asserts that Arabs and Muslims have been portrayed as “terrorists” and “dangerous” since the Arab-Israeli conflicts, the 1967 Arab Israeli war being the prominent:

Middle Eastern themes started to change with the 1960s. While the tropes of Arabian night, harems, sheikhs, mummies, and Arab villains still prevailed, a new image started to emerge after the establishment of Israel in 1948 and more specifically after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. This vilification and construction of the Muslim male as an increasingly violent and barbaric terrorist occurred alongside gradual acceptance of Israel and the merging of Israeli and American heroes. (46)

Alice Aslan explains that “individuals accept and internalise the negative stereotypical portrayals of Islam and Muslims perpetuated in the media and in political discourse” (6-7). More importantly, these images gradually become ingrained in social and personal memory, resulting in Islamophobic attitudes (6-7).

3.1.1. Islamic Fundamentalism

In his “Islamophobia and Anti- Americanism,” Mohamed Nimer states that “Franklin Graham, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson, religious leaders often courted by elected officials and politicians, have called Islam “a wicked religion,” the prophet Muhammad “a terrorist,” and Muslims “worse than Nazis” (45). Even though these stereotypes date back to the Middle Ages when Muhammad was considered as “a threat” mainly because “he represented a rival religion and civilization that was both triumphant and attractive,” (Tolan 113) it is claimed that such depictions which have deep implications took place after the 9/11 attacks:

Since 9/11 public commentary has portrayed Muhammad as a fanatic and a killer, a terrorist and a demon- possessed pedophile. The American public may not recognize that such references are part of a larger picture that includes the rise in global efforts at evangelization of Muslims, and has implications for American foreign policy in the Middle East. Muslims, meanwhile, have to live with the humiliation of such attacks on

their faith and its founder who serves as a model for their belief and behavior. (Smith 40)

This does not mean that Muslims were seen positively before the 9/11 events. Insulting terms such as “ignorant”, “primitive”, in addition to many other terms, have always characterized the stereotypical depiction of Arabs/Muslims in the United States before the 9/11. Yet, after these events terms such as “terrorist”, “blood-thirsty”, and “fundamentalist” were commonly associated with Arabs and Muslims (Driss). Members of the Bush administration such as U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft, a religious fundamentalist who view Islam as “the main cause of global terrorism” (Akram 103) believes that the difference between Islam and Christianity is that the former is “a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith in which God sends his son to die for you” (Akram 103). This view is completely different from that of Thomas Hylland Eriksen, who believes in power relations between Islam and Christianity which are apparent through the tendency to dichotomize between Europe as a rational and enlightened community and Islam as an irrational and backwards collective. That is to say, Muslims are considered as masses – being backward and subordinate to the enlightened “West” which embodies the colonialist power. From an American point of view, Islam and its adherents “appear as undemocratic, sexist, illiberal, underdeveloped, brutal and culturally stagnated” (Eriksen 33). However, from a Muslim point of view, the people of the West in general, “may appear as cold individualists, as normless, immoral, arrogant, brutal, decadent and insensitive” (Erikson 224). Yet, Eriksen views that “these dichotomisations owe little to objective differences between Islam and Christianity, but to power relations feeding into assumptions about cultural differences” (33-34).

Negative terms such as “fundamentalist”, “terrorist”, “militant” “extremist” , “9/11”, “Osama Bin Laden”, “ Jihad”, “ Sharia”, “Suicide bombers”, “ veiling”, “ Islamic Law”, “oppression” are often overwhelmingly found when Islam and Muslims are referred to in any discussion. These negative terms leave the impression that all Muslim countries are populated by “fundamentalists” or “terrorists” and thus result in Islamophobic fears. Lina Khatib maintains that many Hollywood films often offer, in addition to other stereotypes of Arabs/Muslims, the image of the “ faceless Islamic fundamentalist killers” (64). She refers to fundamentalism as “a symptom of the Otherness”:

Islamic fundamentalists are reduced to terrorists and therefore dehumanized. There is often no distinction between the notions “Arab”, “Muslim” or “Islamic fundamentalist.” This mythical Other is perceived usually as an “enemy” in a battle of good versus evil, “us against them.” Thus fundamentalism has been looked at as a symptom of the Otherness of the Arab world, rather than as a “problem” within it. (64)

Khatib carries on explaining that the United States as a nation is the other side of this construction. In Hollywood, the US stands superior, morally right, and unbeatable, in comparison to the degeneracy of the Arab/Muslim/fundamentalist Other (64). This construction colours post 9/11 era and has an influence on its fiction.

Khatib also clarifies that “Islamic fundamentalism has been perceived and represented in the context of several myths based on an East/West binary” (63). She gives the example of the theorist Samuel P. Huntington who has used Islamic fundamentalism “to indicate a clash between the cultures of the West and those of the East” (63). What is worthy of interest is the fact that “Islamic fundamentalism has been conflated often with Islam and the Middle East in general” (Khatib 63), the fact which characterizes post 9/11 era. However such a stance has been criticized. Fred Hallyday, for instance, is against viewing Islam as a “monolithic force.” Contrarily, he “has criticized the construction of the West itself as a homogeneous entity that is necessarily oppositional to a threatening Islam” (Khatib 64). As it will be demonstrated at length, this view seems to stand for the representation of Muslims/Arabs in the novels under study and go against post 9/11 American fiction which equates Islam with “fundamentalism” as previously mentioned.

In his *Covering Islam*, Said argues: “fundamentalism equals Islam equals everything-we-must-now-fight-against, as we did with communism during the Cold War . . . The norms of rational sense are suspended when discussions of Islam are carried on” (14). Said highlights the way these assumptions are reached stating:

Instead of scholarship, we often find only journalists making extravagant statements, which are instantly picked up and further dramatized by the media. Looming over their work is the slippery concept, to which they constantly allude, of “*fundamentalism*,” a word that has come to be associated almost automatically with Islam . . . (12)

Said carries on explaining that Islam and fundamentalism are seen as essentially the same thing by the average reader because of the intentionally created associations between this religion and fundamentalism. In view of the propensity to reduce Islam to a handful of stereotypes, and generalizations about the religion and all its men and women, the strengthening of every negative fact associated with Islam is perpetuated. Noticeably, all this is without any serious effort to give accurate definition to the word “fundamentalism,” or “extremism” or even provide a limited number of fundamentalist/ extremist Muslims (Said 12). In this context, Amir B. Marvasti and Karyn D. McKinney express their disappointment with this fact. They feel sorry that much of what is learned about Islam and its distinctions from Christianity is based on news stories and talk shows presented in a sensational manner and more importantly provide out – of context passages from the Koran (the sacred text of Islam) as evidence of Islam's inherent violence and intolerance. The implicit implication is that being a Muslim is an indicator of one's propensity toward terrorism and thus violence, a stance which is officially adopted by the Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in their law enforcement strategies that have explicitly targeted Middle Eastern Americans, especially those of the Islamic faith (Marvasti and McKinney 42).

While the above views explain the linkage between Islam and fundamentalism as a result of media reports, Lina Khatib's comment suggests some events as the main cause of linking “Islamic fundamentalism” with “terrorism.” In her “Nationalism and Otherness,” Khatib argues that “the events of September 11, 2001, the War on Iraq and the conflict in Palestine have aided in linking Islamic fundamentalism with terrorism, and in turn positioning fundamentalism as an essential anti-Western enemy” (63). This link is, indeed, reflected in post 9/11 key American novels such as, among others, John Updike's *Terrorist* and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*. These fictional narratives, as it will be highlighted throughout the analytical chapters of this thesis, highly mirror the post 9/11 attitude towards Islam and the strong association drawn between Islam and fundamentalism in post 9/11 America. In addition to this stereotypical way in which the Americans view Muslims, a visible racial stereotype has been attributed to Muslim men and women: In his “Five years after 9/11: American Muslims remain under siege,” Abdus Sattar Ghazali maintains that “as the “war on terror” heads into its sixth year, a new racial stereotype is emerging in America. Brown-skinned men with beards and women with head scarves are seen as “Muslims” – regardless of their actual faith or nationality” (Ghazali). These stereotypical images will be the focus of the second and third analytical chapters precisely.

3.1.2. Women and veiling

“Veiling and, by extension, veiled Muslim women” are one of the most apparent signs of Islam; they represent “the scapegoats for the anger towards the perpetrators of the horrific events of 9/11 and for the frustration of not being able to catch Osama Bin Laden for almost a decade after the attacks” (Amer 114). Muslim women’s veils have been associated with both “Islamic terrorism” and the American sense of security which had been destabilized (Amer 114). “For many Americans, the events of 9/11 constructed a mental grid that predetermined the way they came to perceive Islam and veiled Muslim women” (Amer 114). Muslim women and the veiling issue have been widely discussed in the West. It is in fact “ a discourse that is disseminated through mainstream Western media. The *hijab* – a veil that covers a Muslim woman’s hair and neck area – has been hotly contested in the West” (Saisi 123). In her article “Global Contexts and the Veil,” Body Gendrot compares the veil controversy in the U.S and in European countries, highlighting the difference that lies in its being a matter of integration and assimilation in Europe whereas it is a matter of religious freedom in the U.S. (due to The First Amendment). This can be seen through France’s and the U.S.’s understanding of secularity which forms these people’s view of veiling. According to Kristine J. Ajrouch, “ in France, secularity means removing from the public realm any sign of religion, whereas in the U.S. secularity allows broad latitude for the freedom to practice religion” (322). However, this was not the case in USA in the aftermaths of 9/11:

At the same time, and at least since the turn of the millennium, Muslim women’s clothing has come under increasing scrutiny in American civil society. In fact, despite the official separation of state and religion affirmed by the U.S. Constitution, and even though clothing worn for religious reasons is indirectly protected under the First Amendment, there are several documented disputes over headscarves in the United States and mounting discrimination against women who wear them. (Amer 114-115)

While “a number of scholars and a growing number of Muslim women and activists consider veiling a symbol of an emerging American Islamic identity, precisely because of the American constitutional protection of religious expression,” (Amer 122) the *hijab* has represented fear and terrorism in the aftermath of the events: “The *hijab* has been constructed as a symbol of fear and criminality. The *hijab*, alongside other modes of veiling, has come to symbolize a discourse about Muslims that perpetuates Islamophobia, particularly after the attacks of September 11th, 2001” (Saisi 126). In her article “Women and Conversion to

Islam,” Naoual Elkoubaiti states: “Many Americans view Islam as a religion that restricts, oppresses and subordinates women in both private and public life.” She asserts that “the American perceptions on Muslim women are historically negative; Muslim women are usually associated with sex, oppression and violence” (2). Moreover, some thinkers go further to indicate that women prevent the modernization of Islam. In “Social and Cultural Barriers,” the third chapter of his book *What Went Wrong*, Bernard Lewis identifies women, in addition to other elements, as a barrier to Islam’s modernization (64- 80). Furthermore, in “Modernity and Social Equality,” the fourth chapter of his book *What Went Wrong*, Lewis argues that Islam represents a barrier to social equality. He refers to “the slave, the woman, and the unbeliever,” emphasizing women’s inferiority:

According to Islamic law and tradition, there were three groups of people who did not benefit from the general Muslim principle of legal and religious quality—unbelievers, slaves, and women. The woman was obviously in one significant respect the worst-placed of the three. The slave could be freed by his master; the unbeliever could at any time become a believer by his own choice, and thus end his inferiority. Only the woman was doomed forever to remain what she was. (67- 68)

This emphasis on women’s inferiority brings to mind John Stuart Mill’s essay “The Subjection of Women.” In this essay, Mill maintains that women are denied independence and equality. He emphasizes women’s inferiority in Christianity stating that “we are continually told that civilisation and Christianity have restored to the woman her just rights. Meanwhile the wife is the actual bond servant of her husband: no less so than slaves commonly so called” (36). Mill denies the general perception among men, that a woman’s natural vocation is that of a wife and mother (32) .

The negative image of Muslim women has been encouraged by U.S and Western national interests which have not only “allowed the demonization of Islam in the public mind to flourish” (Bullock xxv- xxxvi) but also helped spread “ideas about Islam’s oppression of women and the role of the veil in that oppression” as well (Bullock xxv- xxxvi). Indeed, “ideas about Islam’s oppression of women and the role of the veil in that oppression are part of this discourse” (Bullock xxv - xxxvi). That is to say:

When the Western populace is predisposed to disliking Muslims and Arabs, asserting US/Western foreign policy needs is easier, because the public supports rather than

criticizes the foreign policy...People who consume mainstream news as their only source of information about Islam cannot know anything but the negative perspective on the veil. (Bullock xxv- xxxvi)

A particular prominent image from the War on Terror discourse is that of the “veiled oppressed Muslim woman.” In other words, the image of the “veiled oppressed Muslim woman” is inescapable and most noticeable in War on Terror discourse. It is highly visible in mainstream news media and official discourse. “People who consume mainstream news as their only source of information about Islam cannot know anything but the negative perspective on the veil” (Bullock Xxxv- xxxvi). US War on Terror discourse narratives relied on the salvation of women who wear the veil and lack their rights in their own societies. Furthermore, images of the “oppressed Muslim woman” who lives under the control of a patriarchal Muslim/Arab man were pervasive. In her article “Under Western Eyes,” Chandra Talpade Mohanty states:

Not only are all Arab and Muslim women seen to constitute a homogeneous oppressed group, but there is no discussion of the specific practices within the family which constitute women as mothers, wives, sisters, etc. Arabs and Muslims, it appears, don't change at all. Their patriarchal family is carried over from the times of the Prophet Muhammad. They exist, as it were, outside history. (71)

This monolithic image of the Arab/Muslim woman is opposed to the image of the Western woman: The Muslim woman is shown as “an oppressed individual deprived of agency or will, usually represented as the opposite of the Western woman, independent, self-reliant and sexually emancipated” (Lopes 94). Mohanty suggests that the image of the “oppressed Muslim woman” is constructed “in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the “freedom” to make their own decisions” (65).

Women’s rights rhetoric is an essential part of War on Terror discourses as effectively expressed by media, officials, and some feminists. Women’s rights in Afghanistan and Iraq are integrated in a discourse used to justify U.S military interventions. In other words, the gendered and Orientalist nature of the media and of the Bush administration’s interventions and his speeches in the aftermath of 9/11 are based on the use of women’s rights rhetoric to justify the Afghan and Iraq wars:

After 9/11, the US government, the media and “experts” collaborated to signify the oppression of Arab/Muslim women as the categorical proof of Islamic terror, and women accordingly became a central point of the war on terror. Despite US involvement in the regimes of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein, the USA suddenly turned the long-term persecution of women in Afghanistan and Iraq into a spectacle for public consumption and justification for military intervention. Images of Afghan women throwing off their burqas and Iraqi women marching and shouting political slogans alleviated some of the public concern about the validity of the military operations. (Nayak 49)

Even Laura Bush’s speech at the Republican convention follows the same path. She did not use any women in her speech but the Iraqi and Afghan. About Laura Bush’s talk, Kim Rygiel comments:

Laura Bush’s talk at the Republican convention spoke of democracy and how hard it is to create it. Interestingly enough, when she wanted to talk about women and women’s lives being better under her husband’s watch, she chose to speak of Afghanistan and Iraq . . . where she misrepresented the gains made by women and silenced the realities of war. (195)

Stereotyping Afghan people and their culture was something extremely visible in the aftermath of 9/11. Wazhmah Osman argues:

After 9/11, Afghan people were increasingly stereotyped in the mainstream Western media and popular culture. In order to justify the American military assault on the Taliban, all Afghan women became powerless victims of their backward, misogynist, villainous brethren. Afghan culture is interpellated as static, unchanging, and bound by problematic archaic traditions. (335)

Moreover, it is maintained that “after 11 September 2001, coverage of Afghan women increased as part of the lead-up to the war. Much of the initial coverage combined the protection scenario with an Orientalist version of Afghan history, suggesting that women’s oppression began with the Taliban” (Stabile and Kumar 772). Consequently, Afghan women were more visible in mainstream newspaper articles as well as broadcast media. For instance, from 12 September 2001 to 1 January 2002, there were ninety three mainstream newspaper articles (three times the number of articles that appeared in 1999 and six times the number

that appeared in the eighteen months before 11 September 2001), and 628 broadcast programmes on Afghan women's "oppressed" lives under the Taliban. This is compared to fifteen articles in mainstream newspapers and thirty three broadcast programmes between 1 January 2001 and 11 September 2001 (Stabile and Kumar 772-773). Among War on Terror narratives shaped by gendered Orientalism is the rescue missions to save Afghan and Iraqi women in which USA has played the role of the "ultimate protector":

The Bush administration's security rhetoric in the 'war on terror' was underpinned both by the fact that women appeared to disappear from view domestically immediately after the attacks on September 11th 2001, but also because, in order to justify the invasion of Afghanistan, the women of Afghanistan were written as the ultimate victims, putting the US in the position of the ultimate protector. (Åhäll 51)

Like Afghanistan, Women's rights in Iraq were used to frame the U.S intervention into this country. Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, believes that "women's rights were abused terribly under Saddam" whom he describes as "the tyrant." Bremer stresses women's right to education commenting that "women's education was so degraded that, according to the United Nations, 73 percent of Iraqi women are illiterate" (qtd. in Miles). He promised "that the coalition would continue to work to ensure equality for all Iraqis" (qtd. in Miles).

3.1.3. Stereotypes about male Muslims

Muslim women were not the only element the U.S has made use of ; Muslim men have also been largely targeted. More than this, both Muslim men and women have been used together as "the perfect Orient" in Ziauddin Sardar's words. Sardar argues: "Symbolically, the violent and barbaric Muslim male and sensual, passive female, come together to represent the perfect Orient of the Western perception: they fuse together to produce a concrete image of sensuality and despotism and thus inferiority" (48). In this context, Meghana Nayak asserts that "9/11's post-traumatic space requires U.S participation in an orientalist project that institutionalizes gendered and racialized violence through the infantilization, demonization, dehumanization and sexual commodification of the "Other"" (42). In the same vein, John L. Esposito states that "at the heart of Western misinterpretation , stereotyping, and exaggerated fears of Islam is a clash of view points. Older stereotypes of "the Arab" and Islam in terms of Bedouin, desert, camel, polygamy, harem, and rich oil shaykhs have been replaced by those of

gun-toting mullahs, bearded, anti-Western fundamentalists, and veiled women” (257). In the aftermath of the 9/11 events, the beard has been considered the Islamic symbol of terrorism and violence (Janak and Blum 120). It is one of the most important characteristics of the prophet Muhammad, who was depicted in a frightening way “with aggressive looks, a dark and wild beard, and thick eyebrows” (Janak and Blum 120). The image of the “typical terrorist” which the CNN offered in the aftermath of the 9/11 events has widened the circle of discrimination to reach even people who have nothing to do with Islam, such as Sikhs, non-Muslim South Asian men. Sikhs wear beards and thus fit the description of Muslims provided in post 9/11 era. That is to say, “not only Muslims were persecuted after 9/11: many Sikhs were vilified by members of the wider society because of their visibility (their beard and turban)” (Kabir 19). The way they are “repeatedly misidentified as Muslims (and in some cases killed) points to the way that can stand in as symbols of an “Arab/Eastern / Muslim look” (Naber 296).

4 . Discrimination

Discrimination against a particular group within a society is something common throughout history which marked an apparent rise of prejudice and intolerance against Islam and Muslims after the 9/11 events. “History has shown many examples of people targeting a particular group within society, especially in situations of economic crisis and/or threats to security. These patterns of discrimination are often based on race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, residence status (e.g. refugees) and/or religion” (Lachhab et al. 10).

Some scholars assert that the last decades have known a visible rise of prejudice and intolerance towards Islam and Muslims believing that “several international events have fuelled this. The most striking turning point for most people have been the attacks of 9/11 in the United States” (Lachhab et al. 10). In his paper “Muslims in pre- and post- 9/11 contexts,” Md Abu Shahid Abdullah argues that:

The disastrous event of 9/11 is undoubtedly traumatic for Americans but the consequences of this event are even worse for the Muslim community. Because of the wrong-doings of very few Islamic fanatics who conduct suicide missions, peace-loving and simpleminded Muslim people suffer a lot from suspicion, hate crime, discrimination and psychological pressure. (55)

However, while some scholars have emphasized this fact, post 9/11 American fiction writers tend to stress the traumatic effect of the 9/11 attacks on the American individuals' psyche rather than unveil the discrimination and intolerance towards Islam and Muslims/Arabs in the aftermath of the events. This will be emphatically discussed in the last chapter of this thesis.

4.1. Muslims as victims of violent backlash

The 9/11 events have strengthened the stereotyping of Islam and Muslims and consequently raise the level of prejudice. In his "Five years after 9/11: American Muslims remain under siege;" Abdus Sattar Ghazali comments:

The way America is now is not the way it was five years ago, the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon have irrevocably changed everything. The 9/11 attacks were a tragic watershed which turned American Muslims from ordinary citizens into objects of suspicion and discrimination overnight. Not only the Muslims but their faith itself came under attack and distrust. The passing of five years has done little to dispel that. Muslims see that the United States is slipping into being a police state, at least to them. For Muslims, Bush Administration's "global war on terror" has become euphuism for racial profiling at airports and borders, monitoring of mosques, closing down of charities, FBI moles in their community, sting operations, high profile arrests on terrorism charges which are seldom proved in a court of law, and discrimination and harassment by law enforcement. It will not be too much to say that American Muslims remain under siege five years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. (Ghazali)

Noticeably, Muslims have faced a dramatic increase in all types of discrimination since 9/11: "ECRI stresses that Muslims are the minority group that appears to have been affected most by these events. More and more, Muslims have been the subject of stereotyping, stigmatising, racism and discrimination" (Lachhab et al. 19). More importantly, this latter is not fulfilled by random citizens, "but also by politicians, media, security officials and other groups and places" (Lachhab et al. 19). This bias does not exclude the pre 9/11 era. Indeed, "Muslims have been continuously subjected to extremely hostile treatment in the United States both pre- and post-9/11" (Hassounah 369). What is particular is that "in the post 9/11 era public support for infringement on Arab and Muslim civil rights, widespread negative stereotyping, and hate crimes have escalated at alarming rates" (Hassounah 369).

Muslims throughout America thus became the victims of violent backlash in the aftermath of the events. Muslims or people who just fit the description of Muslim/Arab or have Arabic or Islamic sounding names became the target of Americans' revenge. They were all victims of post 9/11 hatred, racial and religious profiling. In other words, the victims were not necessarily Muslims; not only "Muslims across the Western societies become subject of racism and suspicion," but "other brown Asians who resemble Arab Muslims particularly. Indians and Sikhs share the same discrimination with their Arab counterparts" (Al-Twaiji 1). In the aftermath of the events, "the perceived similarity between Bin Laden and turbaned Sikhs made Sikhs, already one of the most visible minority groups in the United States" (Sidhu and Gohil 2). This is because "Bin Laden's image, complete with his white turban and flowing beard, had been seared into the American consciousness, which was still reeling with grief and anger" (Sidhu and Gohil 2). More importantly, "it was continually reinforced by replays of the attacks, reports on the tragedies, explanations of how the attackers carried out their mission (Sidhu and Gohil 2).

There was both a visual connection between Bin Laden and the dark-skinned bearded men and a reinforcement of the horror of the attacks. Consequently, "Sikhs in America were victims of significant violence" (Sidhu and Gohil 2). In his article "Muslims in pre- and post-9/11 Contexts," Md Abu Shahid Abdullah points out:

This particular event [9/11 attacks] marked the beginning of a new era where Muslims became the victims of backlash. For many, this tragic event paved the way for a period of hate crimes, profiling, and discrimination. Muslims were viewed as violent, aggressive and anti-American, and the media were hugely responsible for shaping people's attitudes towards them. (52)

In this context, Abdullah proclaims that "the social marginalization and persecution of Muslims wasn't merely a problem of rhetoric and public perception, but it manifested itself in physically violent ways" (Abdullah 56). Jocelyne Cesari, a Lecturer in Islamic studies at Harvard University, contends that

A number of American Muslim mosques and public buildings have been the targets of crime and destruction. Even before 9/11, many Muslims identified American prejudice against Islam, for which the European term "Islamophobia" has now been adopted, as the major concern they face trying to live in the US. The stakes continue to be raised,

and polls consistently show that Americans do not understand the religion of Islam.
(40)

Consequently, this kept the whole Muslim community under a continuous bitter suffering which did not seem to have an end. This suffering is due to what Md Abu Shahid Abdullah calls “institutionalized discrimination”:

Although some Muslim fanatics accomplished the terrible task of destroying the towers, the entire Muslim community had to suffer for this. They suffered immediately from hate-crimes and discrimination although these were initially sporadic. Later, because of the US government’s social, local and foreign policy, the Muslim community started to suffer from what can be labeled as “institutionalized discrimination”. Muslims who had long been living in the US found themselves in a difficult and totally different situation, and discovered a different America. Their social rights were curtailed and they were under religious and racial profiling; lots of Muslims had to leave America because of the discrimination. Muslims who were suspected of having involvement with terrorism were tortured for information. Post-9/11 attitudes towards Muslims were reflected in literature and film. (58)

Muslims were thus victims of post 9/11 hatred, and racial and religious profiling.

Interestingly, in all this, the 9/11 events uncovered what is hidden in the American Self. The events of 9/11 necessitates that “Arabs,” “Muslims,” and various constructed categories of Others be made into something to be feared and despised, not quite-humans whose misery must have been brought upon themselves, and therefore is not really significant, as it harshly revealed the latent anxiety still present in the US Selves (Nayak 50-51). Othering Muslims and marginalizing them has made it easy for the Americans to keep Muslims out of the public sphere; “when a group is an “other,” it is easier to suppress them and exclude them from the public sphere” (Sunar 36). The long history of Islam as a Western collective other offers ample justification for Muslim suppression and exclusion (Sunar 36). Therefore, positioning Muslims as the “collective other” does not only allow exclusion of this category of people but permits extreme violence against them as well.

4.2. U.S. government and the backlash against Muslims and Arabs

A few weeks after 9/11, the U.S government announced a series of policies that targeted Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrant populations. Instead of stopping terrorism as claimed, these policies rendered the backlash legitimate in the eyes of the world and the American people in particular (Abdullah 56). For instance, shortly after the events, the USA signed the Patriot Act into law which “allows law enforcement agencies to use surveillance, and to search and deport people suspected of terrorism-related acts” (Kabir 18). Consequently, “the lives of Muslims (and Arabs) in America have become exceedingly difficult” under this Act (Kabir 18). In this context, “John Esposito observed that in the five years after 9/11 the Bush administration held 6,472 persons under “terrorist” or “anti – terrorist” programmes....By 2006 the vast majority had been released without receiving any prison term” (Kabir 18). The US government engaged in investigations about Muslims in general and supported public members who regard Muslims with suspicion, the fact which stands in opposition to Bush’s statement in September 20th speech that “no one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith” (Zarefsky 146). Irum Sheikh points at the hollowness of such investigations stating: “the stories all follow a familiar pattern: the arrest of a Muslim or Muslim looking individual, sizzling news stories about the individual’s connection to el Qaeda, and, months later deportation on minor charges unrelated to terrorism. Deportation occurs quietly, in vivid contrast to the arrest” (81). Sheikh explains that “these sensational arrests keep the general public preoccupied with the fear of new attacks by Muslim terrorists who are intent on killing Americans” (81).

After 9/11, Muslims who had long been living in the U.S experienced a fearful life and discovered a new America. Lots of them left it because of extreme discrimination (Lachhab et al. 15). Over time, “Muslims feel that discrimination against them has grown enormously. For example in the United States, where Muslims are facing discrimination at work, school, the airport and even in their own neighbourhood after the 9/11 attacks” (Lachhab et al. 15). This may be apparent in the activities that the group called “stop Islamization of America” led with spokesperson Pamela Geller. For example, this group “initiated a series of advertorials in the subway in New York in September 2012, connecting photos of the attacks of 9/11 to quotes from the Quran” (Lachhab et al. 15). Indeed, anti Muslim popular backlash includes the destruction of many mosques, passengers’ refusal to board airplanes with individuals who just fit the description of a Muslim. “In 2003, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reported that hate crimes against Muslim Americans were up by at least 300% from

2001. By 2005, hate crimes against Muslim American had increased by another 50 % from 2004 levels” (Jamal 201). Such prejudices increase and become more visible with time:

Every year, the number of incidents of Muslim-discrimination is higher or at least in the same range. The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) reported 107 anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2009, 160 in 2010 and 157 in 2011, the most recent year for which the FBI has released statistics (Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2013). Especially at work, Muslims are facing discrimination more and more. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the number of charges concerning discrimination of Muslims because of their religion has also increased, from 330 in 2001 to 880 in 2011. (Lachhab et al. 15)

More important, what produced and strengthened hatred of Muslims among many American citizens, in addition to the harmful media coverage, is the negative comments and policies made by many foremost political and religious leaders (Abdullah 55-56). As a result, Muslims and Arabs become unwanted and unwelcome in the American society. This fact is best reflected in post 9/11 American fiction which conveys the refusal of the American people to accept the Arab/Muslim Other among them showing the danger this “terrorist” Other causes to them. Interestingly, this attitude is opposed in the post 9/11 fictional works under study as it will be demonstrated at length in the coming chapters.

5. Post 9/11 Movies and fiction

Post 9/11 attitudes towards Islam and Muslims are reflected in literature and films which, at first, have dealt with the trauma of the events then have started depicting the “terrorist” Muslim Other. After the 9/11 events, “lots of novels were written and films were made on the theme of terrorism where Muslims were directly associated with terrorist activities” (Abdullah 52). About their depiction, it is maintained that: “In pre- 9/11 movies, television shows, and novels, Arabs were predominantly portrayed as sheiks, genies, and belly dancers . . . while less violent than representations of the terrorist, these reductive representations are the “ foundations upon which [more negative] stereotypes and judgments are based (El- Farra 3). Therefore, these forms of popular media help create and spread other “reductive representations” of Arabs/Muslims, and engrave them in the minds of the Westerners.

5.1. Post 9/11 movies

American cinema and television, represent one of the principal sources of information: Umberto Eco, an Italian novelist, maintains that “70 percent of our knowledge derives from watching “Hollywood movies” (qtd. in Riegler 37). In the same vein, Jack G. Shaheen’s essay “Hollywood’s Muslim Arabs,” contends that “for more than a century, movies have created myths. Ever since the camera began to crank, the unkempt Muslim Arab has appeared as an uncivilized character, the outsider in need of a shower and a shave, starkly contrasting in behavior and appearance with the white Western protagonist” (25). In his article “How Hollywood vilifies a people,” Shaheen argues that “live images on big screen and television go beyond a thousand words in perpetuating stereotypes and clichés” (172). Moreover, the repetition of the stereotypes over time is highly effective in perpetuating them: “For more than a century, Hollywood has used repetition as a teaching tool, tutoring movie audiences by repeating over and over, in film after film, insidious images of the Arab people” (172). Shaheen’s article “How Hollywood vilifies a people” surveys more than a century of Hollywood projection of negative images of Arabs and Muslims. This article is based on the study of more than 900 films; “it shows how moviegoers are led to believe that all Arabs are Muslims and all Muslims are Arabs” (171). The article highlights how “the moviemakers’ distorted lenses have shown Arabs as heartless, brutal, uncivilized, religious fanatics” (171). This is emphatically conveyed “through common depictions of Arabs kidnapping or raping a fair maiden; expressing hatred against the Jews and Christians; and demonstrating a love for wealth and power” (171).

In the same context, Tim Semmerling analyses three particular Hollywood films produced in the seventies in his book *Evil Arabs in American Popular film*. He extensively discusses the inhuman portrayal of Arabs in movies, the fact which results in generating several cultural misconceptions about them. Semmerling claims that the misrepresentation of Arabs in these films help reinforce the feelings of dominance and power of Americans. He believes that the development and use of the stereotypical images of Arabs at that particular time (the seventies) was a result of the feeling of fear or rather “anxiety” among Americans due to their possible loss of economic and political supremacy. He argues that “once the stereotype is effectively articulated, the anxiety is, for the short term, ameliorated. Stereotype is the response to anxiety, not the anxiety itself” (6).

Semmerling comments on the ends of the above movies, which show the “evil” Arabs as not completely defeated by the American protagonists, stating:

the films of Orientalist fear provide no clear defeat of the Arabs, or at least no clear victory for the Americans, and keep the “evil” Arabs as recurring characters and continual objects of the prejudicial act. The absence of a decisive resolution most likely produces a shared fear in an American audience, and thereby supports prejudicial perceptions of the “evil” Arabs with an impression of universality—in our depictions of them and acceptance of such depictions. (25-26)

Thus, the indecisive ends of American movies, according to him, reflect the American “anxiety” and help accepting the depictions of the “evil” Arabs and fearing them as well. Furthermore, Semmerling believes that “concentration on stereotype alone dangerously encourages us to leave the images of the “evil” Arabs as they are rather than to scrutinize them for our prejudicial roots and risk our own psychic comfort” (6).

In the same vein, before both Shaheen’s and Semmerling’s studies, Edward Said’s *Covering Islam* refers to the Orient in Hollywood films. Said depicts the media as “profit-seeking corporations” and thus unquestionably have an interest in actively encouraging some images rather than others (69). Said contends that “they do so within a *political* context made active and effective by an unconscious ideology, which the media disseminate without serious reservations or opposition” (70). He speaks about “a new wave of large-scale” films, such as *True Lies* and *Delta Force* (1985) with villains classic Arab terrorists who possess a passionate desire to kill Americans. The main aim of this kind of movies is “to first demonize and dehumanize Muslims in order to show an intrepid Western, usually American, hero killing them off” (18).

What has characterized the first decade of the twenty-first century is the entry into our media landscape of the so-called global War on Terror, with numerous films and TV shows from all over the world highlighting the topic of international terrorism (Clini 1). In the immediate post 9/11 era, Hollywood did not treat the subject of “terrorism.” Rather it concentrated on science fiction and family entertainment (Riegler 40). *The Sum of all Fears* (2002), one of the first films to address terrorism after the terrorist attacks, “was considered as out of touch with the post 9/11 reality since the story focuses on the ensuing escalating tensions between the US and Russia” (Riegler 40). One of the earliest examples of films dealing with the post 9/11 U.S situation is *The War Within* (2005). Its events turn around the Pakistani engineer Hassan Ayad Akhtar who is accused of terrorist activities and put in prison. Being tortured and wrongly accused, Hassan seeks revenge and deliberately connects

with a terrorist group which is in the process of preparing an attack on New York's Grand Central Station. *Syriana* is another 2005 movie whose main character is Bob Barnes, an elderly CIA agent who is entangled in a network of power relationships that binds the U.S government and corrupt elites from the Middle East. This "system," in the film, uses all the necessary means to advance its political economic interests and produces terrorism (Riegler 40). While *The War Within* does not present its protagonist as a religious fanatic and seems to be a warning against discriminating the Muslims, *Syriana* highlights the complexities of the war on terror and sheds light on America's thirst for oil and its policies in the Middle East. Interestingly, both movies invite the viewers to reflect on terrorism.

The entertainment industry took more than five years to address 9/11 directly. *United 93* (2006), for instance retells the story of the hijacked flight which failed to meet its intended target on 11 September 2001; it crashed into a Pennsylvania plain supposedly because the passengers revolted against the hijackers. The movie provides a distant image of the hijackers except the first scene which shows them as devout Muslims having a prayer ritual in the morning hours of the 9/11 attacks. The movies which followed *United 93*, are all about the passengers' brave acts and sacrifice and the personal background of the terrorists. An example of this is Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (2006) which focuses on a tale of the miraculous rescue of two survivors of the attacks. Then, with time, movie makers started to shed light on the domestic and international implications of the War on Terror, we can mention *Body of Lies* (2008), and *The Kingdom* (2007) as examples (Riegler 41). Therefore, addressing the 9/11 attacks directly took time; it went gradually from exposing the details of the events: the hijacked flights, their passengers, and Islamic jihadists to the consequences of the attacks on the national and international scale.

Similarly, Muslims and Arabs are portrayed in derogatory ways in post 9/11 novels. Literature is a reflection of social, political and religious circumstances, and it is precisely this relation which is of particular interest in the aftermath of the 9/11 events (Dickert): "The terrorist attacks on the United States by a very small group of radical Muslims who claim to be true Muslims have brought the whole religion and its prominent religious figures into the literary focus" (Al-Twajji 3-4). Besides, the attacks help creating the political discourse which has not only reinforced the stereotypical images of Arabs/Muslims but has legitimized social discrimination (as already explained) as well. More importantly, "scholars who conduct research in Islamic societies, insist that representation of Islam in post 9/11 American novel is

a negative one and Arab Muslims' image gets worsened after the 9/11 terrorist attacks" (Al-Twaiji 1).

5.2. Post 9/11 fiction

Muslims/Arabs have always been significant to the West, and they have been vilified and stereotypically portrayed not only in Western movies, as previously mentioned, but in Western literature as well. After the 9/11 events, the Muslim community came under sharp focus: In his article "Muslims in Pre- and Post- 9/11 contexts," Md Abu Shahid Abdullah contends that "suddenly [Muslims] were under focus and tight scrutiny, and found themselves the protagonists of many post-9/11 literary works and films" (55). Hence, the Muslims' representation is far from being objective or positive; this is apparent in the content of the literary works: "American novelists are not in a quandary to draw a direct link between Islam and terrorism. Post 9/11 novels satisfy the readers' curiosity by dealing with either "prominent Islamic figures or Muslim Arab terrorists" (qtd. in Al-Twaiji 3). However, post 9/11 publications on the East and Islam have not delved into a thorough academic study of Arabs/Muslims as it will be demonstrated in the coming chapters.

Several novels have appeared after the 9/11 attacks both inside and outside the United States. They deal directly or indirectly with the effect of the events on individuals. One of the editors for *The New York Times Book Review* states that "the necessity for a 9/11 novel goes on because it reflects "a new age of terror"" (Dickert). What is noticeable is that the writers of these novels regularly use Orientalist stereotyping, the attitude towards Muslims/Arabs that the 9/11 attacks has strengthened (as the analytical chapters will thoroughly explain). It has thus hardened the old Orientalist discourse. Besides conveying the image of Muslims as being all "terrorists," the representation of Muslim women reiterates her image as oppressed, submissive, and above all subhuman, a position which is claimed to be imposed by Islamic rules. "Most of the published novels pertaining to Arabs and Islam focus on dehumanizing of Muslim Arabs, defaming all the prominent Islamic figures and pitying Muslim Arab women who live under the tyranny of Islamic code of life" (Ghazali qtd. in Al-Twaiji 3). Interestingly, post 9/11 novels were written in a time when there was an increasing contact with Muslims; yet, they reiterate the Orientalist representation reproducing and reinforcing the same clichés about Muslims/Arabs which have existed since the Middle Ages. This is well explained by Sardar who comments: "Willful misunderstanding and knowledgeable ignorance have remained the guiding spirit of Orientalism, it has survived defiantly and remained dominant

when alternative information has been readily available. Orientalism is composed of what the West wishes to know, not of what can be known (19). Furthermore, the imposed new reality after 9/11 influenced American literature. The latter has known an increase in the national awareness which “imposes a new direction in subject matter” (Al-Twaiji 2). This “can be seen in the shift from an aesthetic and pleasant literature to moral, functional, instructional and informative narratives” (Al-Twaiji 2). This shift involves providing knowledge related to 9/11 in modern narrative, the knowledge which includes “the nature of the attacks, their perpetrators and the possible means for avenging the insult of the American territory” (Al-Twaiji 2). Consequently, being the main not to say the only suspect, Arabs of the Middle East and their religion Islam “become the most recurrent characters for demonstrating evil, wickedness and terrorism in modern narratives” (Al-Twaiji 2).

The number of literary texts, novels in particular, have been incontrovertibly increasing in the aftermath of the events. The American novel’s response to the catastrophic attacks, however, was both slow and coloured with uncertainty about how to represent the events. Furthermore, after the attacks, the Americans were eager “to know more about their assailants” (Al-Twaiji 2). The subject matter of the books that were published at that time was clearly influenced. It was adjusted to the readers who needed books “which provided them with information relevant to the attacks and books which offered spiritual comfort” (Gustafson 69). Noticeably, “sales of books related to Islam and Arabs reaches the highest level in the history of the United States . . . Similarly, Islamic religious figures like Muhammad, Aisha, Abi Bakr and Omar become the subject matter of many novels” (Al-Twaiji 2). Post 9/11 novels deal with both Islamic figures and modern ordinary Muslims. Some post 9/11 fictional narratives such as *The Jewel of Medina*, *Mother of the Believers* and *Khalifah* aim at exploring the history of Islam, and show interest in Islamic figures such as the Prophet Muhammad and his wives. The other fictional narratives such as John Updike’s *Terrorist*, Don DeLillo’s *Falling man*, Tom Clancy’s *The Teeth of the Tiger*, Zoe Ferraris’ *Finding Nouf*, Homa Pourasgari’s *Dawn of Saudi* focus on modern ordinary Muslims/Arabs and show them as terrorists and oppressors of women in addition to their being Anti-American. Actively, the interest in Islam and Muslims in these fictional narratives implies both the attitude of writers toward informative literature in the aftermath of 9/11 and their participation in the reinforcement of stereotypical images of Islam and its adherents.

The most important image post 9/11 American fictional narratives have reinforced is that of Islam nurturing violence and “Terrorism.” Although providing an adequate and

comprehensive definition of “Terrorism” has always been hard, “Islam has been falsely and closely associated with this concept in post 9/11 literature” (Al-Ibia 19). Among the post 9/11 novels which emphatically mirror this association and present the Muslim/Arab Other as a “terrorist” are Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, Amis Martin’s *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta*, John Updike’s *Terrorist*, Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland* (2008), and Joel Rosenberg’s *The Last Jihad* (2002). The latter, for instance, strongly connects “Terrorism” to Islam; it blames Muslims and Arabs for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Rosenberg includes the daily newspaper reports pointing the finger of accusation towards Muslims and Arabs especially Saddam Hussein’s regime, the fact which “gave the West a golden opportunity to strike Iraq and destroy its potentials to create an endless chaos in the Middle East” (Dickert). It is argued that “his narrative is not very different from the Western media official reports which cast the blame upon Muslims” (Dickert). About it, Rashad Mohammed Moqbel Al Areqi comments: “Rosenberg’s narrative showed how Arabs conspire to kill the American president and Arabs run Islamic cells that work on destroying the Western interests. This narrative portrays the Middle East, particularly Muslims and Iraqis, as the only exporter of terrorism to the west” (80). This idea also prevails in other post 9/11 novels such as Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* in which “Muslims are rendered more enemy-like and less humane” and “Islam is viewed as the most operative factor in motivating Muslims’ antagonist views and deeds against non-Muslims” (Alosman 24).

In his article “Global Terror and the Rise of Xenophobia/Islamophobia,” Muhammad Safer Awan draws an analogy between two post 9/11 novels: Amis Martin’s *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* and John Updike’s *Terrorist* “in showing that the acts of suicide terrorism committed by the protagonists are necessarily inspired by the teachings of imams of the mosques” (527). Awan comments saying that “this cannot be considered a mere coincidence that the general trend in post-9/11 fiction and other art forms is to portray a Western position on the issue of terrorism and essentially see the phenomenon of terrorism associated with the faith of Islam. This amounts to adding to the old Orientalist discourse” (527). Additionally, about the strong link between violence and Islam in John Updike’s *Terrorist*, Awan comments:

The Islamic religious symbols like the mosque and the Qur’ān have been signified as the sole cause of all the personal flaws of Ahmad's life. The portrayal of such symbols in the negative light underscores the cultural politics of the author that the intolerance

of Ahmad and other Muslim characters is solely inflamed by the injunctions of their Islamic faith and it leads them to commit violence and terrorism. (530)

In the same vein, it is maintained that “Ahmad is a symbol of terrorism” and *Terrorist* “gives the usual image of the west that the name of terrorism is connected with Arabs and Muslims” (Al Areqi 76). This connection is clearly apparent throughout this novel and a wide range of post 9/11 fictional narratives. Interestingly, it is dismantled in the works under study: Claire Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs*, Lorraine Adams’s *Harbor*, and Lorrie Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs*. These three post 9/11 American fictional narratives stand in opposition to the West’s dominant discourse about the East which focuses on projecting stereotypes. This will be demonstrated in the course of this thesis.

Conclusion

The United states holds discriminatory attitudes and practices towards Muslims/Arabs. What has made these attitudes and practices apparent is the 9/11 attacks. These events have not only put the Muslim community and their religion under rigid scrutiny, but have strengthened their stereotypical images and the discrimination against them as well. The media, which reflects and supports the official discourse, plays an important role in foregrounding issues related to Muslims in the American public domain in the aftermath of the 9/11. These attacks have intensified the media’s spotlight on Islam and Muslims/Arabs. The effect of media portrayals on people’s attitudes toward Islam in general and Muslims in particular is obvious. Hate crimes against Muslims have reached their highest levels in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. This period witnessed a violent backlash. That is to say, Muslims across America were the victims of violent backlash; people who resembled Middle Easterners or had Arabs or Islamic sounding names became the scapegoats of the rage or revenge of some Americans, and violent attacks and bias incidents soared immediately (Abdullah 56).

This chapter examines the events of September 11th and their implications for Islam and Muslims/Arabs. It provides a broad overview of post 9/11 American history and literature, helping the reader of this thesis to pinpoint the main factors that lead to the dehumanization and demonization of Muslims, Arabs, and anyone who looks like them: Arabs/Muslims are stereotyped as “terrorists” in Western media and fiction (among many other stereotypes), and are seen as a security threat to the United States. In short, this chapter

familiarizes the reader with the post 9/11 political, social, and literary context. It also makes it easier to analyze the writers' responses to stereotypical images in the chosen works throughout the following three chapters. In brief, this chapter introduces the post 9/11 political, social, and literary background to the reader. It also makes analyzing the writers' reactions to stereotypical images in the selected works throughout the analytical chapters much easier.

Edward Said asserts that ever since the Middle Ages and some part of the Renaissance in Europe, “Islam was believed to be a demonic religion of apostasy, blasphemy, and obscurity” (Said *Covering Islam* 5). Islam and its adherents have thus been viewed negatively since the Middle Ages. Actively, the ways Muslims and Arabs are stereotyped in American popular culture, in the media and in post 9/11 literature negate the heterogeneity of the Arabic community and the cultural backgrounds of Muslims. They are presented as potential “terrorists” and threats to national security. In fact, “cultural representations of Muslims and Arabs derive from an American media regime that has vilified this population for decades” (Jamal 206). With time, media have generated and sustained these stereotypes to the extent that “the continuous negative portrayal of Muslims in the media has led many Muslims to regard the media as the enemy for stereotyping them. The stereotypes against Muslims had been in-built in the U.S media and it is impossible to refute it” (Abdullah 53). The result is a set of stereotypes that gather all Muslims and Middle Easterners in one bag, that of the evil Arab: “these stereotypes constructed all Muslims as Arabs and all Arabs as terrorists. Using representations and language in news, movies, cartoons, and magazine stories, the media and popular culture have participated in the construction of an evil Arab stereotype (Merskin 138).

In his *America and Political Islam*, Fawaz A. Gerges discusses the way Americans view the Muslim world referring to Robert Allison’s critical book *The Crescent Obscured*, which according to him “lays bare the historical and cultural roots of how Americans view Islam and Muslims” (Gerges 9). The US did not have overt colonial control over Arab/Muslim societies, nor did it establish the imperial structure that its European counterparts did. Still, as Robert Allison demonstrates in *The Crescent Obscured*, the picture of Islam as a religion born of tyranny, one that fosters religious and political injustice as well as economic stagnation, was passed down from Christian Europe to Americans. According to his analysis, Americans have been unconcerned about whether this definition of Islam is correct, but have blindly accepted it for political reasons. Allison claims that Americans have repeatedly used the Muslim World to illustrate their exceptionalism in terms of liberty, wealth, and human

development (Gerges 9). Gerges adds that Allison “also shows how Americans have readily reclaimed and reinvented those views, particularly during periods of crises”(9). According to him, this makes the Americans in possession of “a rich, full reservoir of negative stereotypes about the Muslim world that are perpetuated and reinforced by the mass media. These stereotypes have a large role in the making of U.S. policy toward Arab and Muslim states” (9). Stereotyping Arabs/Muslims, thus, go beyond simple fortuitous images spread in the USA and all over the world.

The image of the “Other” is a whole strategy led by prominent sectors. Lütfi Sunar argues: “Otherizing it is not only a cultural, but also a strategical matter. Controlling and shaping perceptions of Islam is essential for the continuation of the world domination of the West” (Sunar 36). Michael W. Suleiman argues that “stereotypes, especially negative ones of Arabs, have been used as weapon that has proved to be as effective as some of the military, economic, or political weapons” (qtd.in Merskin 144). This eventually mirrors Edward Said’s statement about “Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said *Orientalism* 4). Interestingly, the stereotypes which allow the West to have authority over the Orient seem to be challenged in the literary works under study. Contrary to a wide range of post 9/11 American fictional narratives, which have perpetuated a racially prejudiced image of Arabs/ Muslims and Middle Easterners in general, Lorraine Adams’s *Harbor*, Claire Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs* and Lorrie Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs* attempt to offer an image of Arabs/Muslims, more reflective and positive. The three coming analytical chapters are intended to demonstrate how these novels break free from the classical stereotypes about Arabs/Muslims.

Chapter 2

Messud, Moore, and Adams on Islam, veiling and oppression

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), for instance, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Nora Raleigh Baskin's *Nine, Ten: A September 11 Story* (2016), Eric Walters's *We All Fall Down* (2006), and Julia Glass's *The Whole World Over* (2006). Most of these novels deal with the post traumatic aftermath of the events and the way they affect the American individuals and their environment which has been harshly changed by "terrorists" or "violent intruders," "followers of Islam" (Suleiman 33). Post 9/11 fiction is highly characterized by Orientalist stereotyping which may be most apparent in key American novels of that period such as Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006), Sherry Jones's *The Jewel of Medina* (2008), and Zoë Ferraris's *Finding Nouf* (2008) among many other narratives.

Edward Said argues that Orientalism is not just a study of the East by the West but it is also a way of perceiving Arab peoples and cultures and then distorting the reality by means of representations that accommodate preconceived notions. In his *Orientalism*, Said maintains that "the Orient was almost a European invention" (1). Said continuously saying that "so far as it existed in the West's awareness, the Orient was a word which later accrued to it a wide field of meanings, associations, and connotations," he adds "and that these did not necessarily refer to the real Orient, but to the field surrounding the word" (204). 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 (Martin Varisco).

Indeed, 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. This chapter sheds light on the stereotypical image of the oppressed veiled/Muslim woman in the aftermath of 9/11. It seeks to elaborate on the different images of the Muslim and veiled female characters who take part in three post 9/11 female American novels: Claire

Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* (2013), Lorrie Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs* (2009) and Lorraine Adams *Harbor* (2004). By exploiting these characters' portrayal in the selected novels and referring to key novels in post 9/11 American fiction which indeed provide key features of the stereotypes, we would like to demonstrate that the novels under study dismantle the stereotypical image of the oppressed veiled/Muslim woman who is in need of liberation from the West. Interestingly, this image has been extensively spread in the aftermath of the 9/11 events and highly reflected in post 9/11 American fiction. In the light of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and his feminist responses: Billie Melman's *Women's Orients and* Reina Lewis's *Rethinking Orientalism, and Gendering Orientalism* and her concept of "Fashion" as argued in her *Muslim Fashion*, in addition to other concepts by theorists such as, among others, Barbara Perry, Katherine Bullock, Maureen Fitzgerald, Lila Abu Lughod, Virginia Woolf and Simone De Beauvoir, we intend to highlight and discuss the writers' challenge of the strongly established Muslim woman's stereotypes which post 9/11 fiction emphatically mirrors to maintain the Western superiority and Oriental inferiority.

In her essay "The Power of Images and the Danger of Pity," Lila Abu Lughod points out:

What images do we, in the United States or Europe, have of Muslim women, or women from the region known as the Middle East? Our lives are saturated by images, images that are strangely confined to a very limited set of tropes or themes. The oppressed Muslim woman. The veiled Muslim woman. The Muslim woman who does not have the same freedoms we have. The woman ruled by her religion. The woman ruled by her man. (46)

This above passage summarizes the set of stereotypes attributed to Muslim women or Middle Eastern women, two categories of women who are considered the same. Noticeably, throughout all her essay, Abu Lughod discusses the stereotypes in relation to Muslim or Middle Eastern women. This reflects the Western understanding of Muslim women. Priscilla Offenhauer comments:

The Western understanding of Muslim women remains unduly influenced by evidence from a single region. The social science scholarship most familiar to the West about Muslim women focuses disproportionately on the Middle East and North Africa

region (MENA). Often seen as the land of Muslims par excellence, MENA is home to fewer than 20 percent of the world's Muslims. (1)

Indeed, “monolithic stereotypes of Muslim women have long prevailed in the West, distorting the enormous interregional, intraregional, and class variations in their circumstances and status” (Offenhauer 1). About this issue, Sahar F. Aziz states:

it is worth emphasizing that there is no singular, unitary “Muslim woman” that can represent the experiences and grievances of the diversity of women who identify as Muslim. These women come from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, hold diverse political viewpoints, and adopt beliefs ranging from staunch secularism to religious orthodoxy. (1)

The fact is that “half a billion Muslim women inhabit some 45 Muslim-majority countries, and another 30 or more countries have significant Muslim minorities, including, increasingly, countries in the developed West” (Offenhauer 1). That is to say, the Middle Eastern woman can be Muslim as she can belong to any other religion and a Muslim woman can be from the Middle East as she can be from any other region in the world. However, it seems that such confusions in the post 9/11 era were widely made. In this context, in her introduction of her book *Gender and Diversity in the Middle East and North Africa*, Zahia Smail Salhi explains that “it is a known fact that Western audiences are informed by images of Middle Eastern women as a single entity; they are the suppressed, secluded, veiled, and passive victims of a hostile religion” (1). She carries on her explanation stating: “while Middle Eastern and North African women are unified by their adherence to Islam as the religion of the vast majority, and often live under the dictates of Islamic family laws, a large amount of diversity is to be found not only from one region to another and from one country to another but also within each country”(2). In this regard, the most important point Zahia Smail Salhi stresses in the whole book is the amount of diversity that exists within each country.

The reinforcement of the Muslim woman stereotype in the aftermath of 9/11 facilitates the US intervention in Muslim countries. The idea of “saving brown women” (Spivak 93) draws an image of victimized and subjugated women who need liberation carried out by the “civilizing mission” of colonialism. The images provided in post 9/11 fiction serve to define the East in Western knowledge and ultimately contribute to Western control of the East. Said

argues that this “knowledge” about the “East” is transformed into a tradition over time which then consistently influences further knowledge about the Orient (Said *Orientalism* 7).

The image of the veiled oppressed Muslim woman is salient in War on Terror discourse. It became highly visible in mainstream news media and official discourse. There were repeated references to “women’s rights” in the official rhetoric which forms a layer of justification for the war in Afghanistan and Iran in which the USA has given itself the role of the defender of the world and liberator of the oppressed (Rich 2- 3). Stories of Afghan women increased and formed the most prominent event in widely read magazines. Moving scenes of liberation were widespread in magazines, the ones that were displayed in *USA Today* and *Time Magazine* to mention but few examples. *USA Today* described a striking scene of liberation which recounted “Six of them shed the enveloping burqas that the Taliban forces all women to wear, threw them on the fire and lit the way for their rescuers” (Wiseman and Kelly 10). *Time Magazine* showed a photo spread of Afghan women without veils with a short article stating that the US victory was the “greatest pageant of mass liberation since the fight for suffrage” (qtd. in Stabile and Kumar 773).

The cover image of the November 2001 edition of *Time Magazine* portrayed the Afghan women during the Afghan war. This image showed them with their veils or more precisely their burqas removed under the heading: “Liberation: Women in Kabul showed their faces in public for the first time in year” (Khalid 22). One month after the war began, a special issue titled “Lifting the veil” was published. This issue cover showed the photo of an Afghan woman accompanied with a story whose main theme was how the military intervention had freed Afghan women. Likewise, women’s rights in Iraq were claimed to be abused by Saddam Hussein’s regime to a large extent and therefore women need US assistance. The intervention in Iraq was fulfilled through the rhetoric of war securing women’s rights though women in Iraq had high levels of participation in public life: they were neither helpless nor silenced as they were presented in the official discourse. This may best illustrate the way “knowledge” was manipulated to lead military interventions.

The images of women in Muslim countries reinforce the discourse that attempts to perpetuate Western superiority and Oriental inferiority and the invasion of Afghanistan in the aftermath of 9/11 is the best example. The “kind of colonialist feminism” (Abdelrazek 7) that the Bush administration has established to justify this invasion is based on constructing the image of the “beaten, covered, and silenced Afghan woman” (Abdelrazek 7). This image has

been extended to be the general image of all Arab/Muslim women who suffer from the oppression of Arab/Muslim man in their patriarchal Islamic societies. More importantly, the source of these women's suffering is said to derive from Islam, the "misogynistic religion" (Abdelrazek 7) whose instructions are claimed to impose unfair and miserable living conditions on women.

According to Riad Manqoush, Noraini Md Yusof and Ruzy Suliza Hashim, literature has helped spread these 9/11 repercussions and the heightened tension which has formed Islamophobia. In other words, they argue that literature takes part in these repercussions which are not only socio political but literary as well (217). This is illustrated, for instance, in the post 9/11 novel Sherry Jones' *Jewel of Medina* (2008) in which Muslim women are portrayed as oppressed, an oppression explicitly linked to the prophet Mohamed and to the verses of Quran, thus to Islam. Indeed, it has been commonplace to refer to the Prophet of Islam as the oppressor of women, precisely his wives who are portrayed to be oppressed during his life by their confinement and Islamic dress and after his death by preventing their remarriage. All this oppression is claimed to be a fulfillment of Islamic instructions revealed to the Prophet.

After the 9/11 events, Muslim women have increasingly been the concern of many novels and their representations have been influenced by the events to a great extent. Their appearance, roles and status have been the subject matter of diverse stereotypes used by American writers to depict them. One of the main themes of Zoe Ferraris' *Finding Nouf* (2008), for instance, is the suffering of Muslim women in Saudi Arabia portrayed in her novel as one of the most rigidly gender biased countries in the world. These women are portrayed as oppressed, weak, and dependent, but "the image of a veiled Muslim woman seems to be one of the most popular Western ways of representing the "problems of Islam." A commonplace observation within Western discourse on the veil has been that it is an overt sign of Islam's oppression of women" (Ahmed and Donnan 149).

The stereotype of the veiled woman is widely used in post 9/11 fiction. Veiled women are seen as oppressed and deprived of their rights and the veil is considered the symbol of oppression. In her novel *Jewel of Medina*, Sherry Jones, for instance, presents the veil as a dress that restrains woman's sensuality and stresses the idea that this kind of oppression and restriction is part of the Islamic faith practised by the prophet Mohamed himself, the most sacred figure in Islam. In one of their discussions, Umar, the prophet's advisor and friend in

the novel, explains the reason behind imposing the veil. Umar tells Mohamed: “A woman’s eyes are her most enticing feature . . . Even your wives know how to use them for seduction. Covering one eye is the only true way to avoid scandal” (Jones 163).

Ironically, the veil which is supposed to be protective from the Islamic point of view is associated with erotic allusions in John Updike’s *Terrorist*, for instance. Whereas the scarf entails covering and goes opposite to a naked body, Theresa’s headscarf in Updike’s *Terrorist* has an ironic effect on Jack Levy, a central high guidance counselor in the novel : ““a provocation, implying a dazzling ultimate nakedness. Her headscarf speaks of submission, which stirs him” (Updike114). And thus Theresa offers to his eyes the “sexual delights” that the scarf is supposed to prevent. In this connection, Ziauddin Sardar explains: “For the Western gaze, the Orient offers exotic, sinful, sexual delights all wrapped in an ancient, mystical and mysterious tradition” (6). Post 9/11 fiction reinforces the stereotypical images of the Muslim and veiled woman in general; yet, the novels under study oppose them.

Indeed, *The Woman Upstairs* and *A Gate at the Stairs* mention the 9/11 events. Yet, *Harbor* never directly mentions it, but the shadow of these attacks and their consequences are omnipresent in it and pervade the whole narrative. This shows itself in the increased attention shed on the illegal Algerian immigrants throughout the story. 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” (Hammer).

Claire Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs*, Lorrie Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs* and Lorraine Adams’s *Harbor* seem to oppose the Western stereotypical images of Muslim women in post 9/11 fiction. These stereotypical images do not concern only Muslims precisely, but anyone who might just fit the description of a Middle Easterner/Arab. Juanjo Bermúdez de Castro speaks about “a new identity label that emerged after 9/11” (Bermúdez de Castro). He states: “a new identity label that emerged after 9/11 – a religious, racial and ethnic mix merely based on physical appearance and conformed by Muslims, Arabs, Middle Easterners, and whoever looks like Muslim, Arab or Middle Easterner – becomes the constructed “evil” object of both suspicion and retaliation” (Bermúdez de Castro). In the same vein, Adnan Osama Shareefi comments:

People started to associate Islam and all its fearful misconceptions with physical appearances of races and nationalities where large Muslim populations reside like India, the Middle East, North Africa, and Java. All individuals who hold these facial and body characteristics might be subjected to Islamophobic attitudes and actions regardless of their actual religion, if any. (15-16)

In spite of the fact that “it is a gratuitous error to conflate Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims,” (Kulcasi and Gokmen 84) many Americans tend to “equate Muslims with Middle Easterners and/or Arabs” (Kulcasi and Gokmen 84).

Interestingly, while Lorraine Adams incorporates genuine Muslim females in *Harbor*, Lorrie Moore and Claire Messud make use of “quasi” Arab/Middle Eastern female characters. Moore does not include any female Muslim characters, but she makes use of an American character with a remarkable Middle Eastern touch: The half-Jewish protagonist Tassie Keltjin who wears a scarf most of the times. For her part, Messud makes use of both a genuine Muslim character and “quasi” Middle Eastern one. She utilizes a Sufi artist character Sana, and a Western character, the Italian Sirena, the wife of the Lebanese Skandar. Messud extensively attributes Middle Eastern features to Sirena to the extent that the reader may well expect this character to be really from the Middle East. Precisely, her physical description and the portrayal of the place where she spends her time make the reader think she is a Middle Eastern woman. Nora, the protagonist of the novel, herself acknowledges this:

You’d be forgiven for thinking Sirena was herself from the Middle East, on account of her skin, that fine olive skin, which on her son looked as though he’d been dusted with powder, glaucous almost, but on her elegant bones appeared at once old and young, young because her cheeks were so smooth and full, like fruit . . . She has Reza’s eyes, and the fierce black brows, and straight glossy black hair streaked with silver. (Messud 28- 29)

According to Emily Witt, giving Sirena Middle Eastern features is a way “to complicate her as a character” (21-22). Witt argues that “Messud tends to adorn her non-American characters with obvious cultural signifiers” asserting that: “To complicate her as a character, Messud also gives her a touch of old-fashioned Orientalism. She decorates the studio with ‘jewel-coloured lengths of Indian silk’ along with ‘tufted poufs and a tiny Moroccan brass table’; she wears scarves and smells of lemons” (21-22). In addition, the studio, the place where Sirena

“spent entire days” (Messud 75) is described as an “Oriental Souk” (Messud 75) and it pleases both Nora, the protagonist of the novel, and Sirena. With this, Sirena’s environment also links her to the Orient.

In this context, what concerns us throughout this chapter is the way the Muslim and the veiled female characters are presented to the reader. Interestingly, unlike post 9/11 novels which offer stereotypical images of Islam, Muslim women and veiled women, there is a considerable number of unexpected positive images that dismantle the common post 9/11 cliché of the Muslim woman and veiled woman as predominantly oppressed or terrorists and Islam as a religion that promotes women’s oppression, violence and “terrorism.” This chapter discusses the stereotypical images of the oppressed veiled/Muslim woman in the aftermath of 9/11. It analyzes the images of the Muslim and veiled characters who take part in Claire Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs* (2013), Lorrie Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs* (2009) and Lorraine Adams’ *Harbor* (2004). In addition to these three works, the chapter makes use of key novels in post 9/11 fiction and their representations of the veiled/Muslim women. Studied together, the selected novels reveal a pertinent challenge of post 9/11 stereotypical images of oppressed veiled/Muslim woman, images which post 9/11 fiction highly mirrors.

1. Moving beyond the headscarf as a symbol of oppression and terror

Islam, woman, the scarf, and terrorism are interrelated in the post 9/11 western discourse. For this reason, it seems that it is impossible to discuss Islam without mentioning woman and impossible to speak about woman without talking about the veil, the “external threat” that symbolizes “terrorism.” In fact, after the 9/11 events, the scarf is not only seen as “a marker of misogynistic oppression,” (Vial 248) and a restriction on the woman’s sexuality and thus her freedom. Rather, it has become a sign that marks the Arab/Middle Eastern woman as the suspicious, inherently violent, and foreign “Terrorist other” (Aziz). These images were pervasive in US media and they have been reinforced by post 9/11 fiction. Consequently, the scarf is associated with negative things such as oppression, suspicion and terrorism and has been highly rejected in the West. However, the image of the scarf provided in the selected novels does not reveal any bias. While the presence of the scarf in Adams’ *Harbor* is hardly noticeable (for reasons that will be explained later) but never rejected, it is strongly present in both Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs* and Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs*, which both make use of it positively without any oppression or terror.

1.1. Dwarfing the veil's issue

What is conspicuous about the use of the veil in Adams's *Harbor* is that it is almost absent in a period of time when most post 9/11 novels throw light on this so-called Islamic symbol as discussed previously. Except for an old man's daughter who is veiled, the Muslim female characters in *Harbor* are not depicted as veiled or even unveiled. This does not mean that Adams rejects this piece of clothing or is against wearing the *hijab*. Rather, Adams seems to avoid focusing on religious sensibilities (*hidjab*) in post 9/11 era, and also to reject the systematic association between Islam and the veil. Instead, her female Muslim characters' values and qualities, their good relationships with their male relatives (which will be discussed in the coming sections) characterize Adams's portrayal of Muslim women.

Dwarfing the veil issue in her *Harbor*, Adams seems to share Shelina Janmohamed's view about woman's rights as revealed in her "Calling all feminists: Get over the veil debate, focus on real problems." Janmohamed states that Western feminists miss "the bigger picture that women's rights movements need to work together" (Janmohamed). She believes that women should make the issue of the veil small and insignificant: "Women around the world need to get over the obsession with the veil and work with Muslim women, and here's why: we are all on the same side, and we need to lay some ground rules that will help us work together to eradicate the problems women face around the world (Janmohamed). "Women around the world need to get over the obsession with the veil and work with Muslim women, and here's why: we are all on the same side, and we need to lay some ground rules that will help us work together to eradicate the problems women face around the world" (Janmohamed). This passage raises the idea that there are more critical issues to be addressed than fighting over veiled women. This seems to be the problem that Adams tries to highlight through her post 9/11 work.

Adams also tends to dismantle the belief that women in Muslim countries are all veiled and oppressed by Islam's instructions. This is apparent in her depiction of the Muslim female characters, a depiction which does not reveal whether they are veiled or unveiled. Moreover, Aziz's comment in one of the novel's passages alludes to the idea Adams wants to convey, that not all Muslim women wear veils. When describing Rita, an American character in the novel, Aziz mentions that "she reminded him of someone, but for now he could not place her . . . It was her hair. It was like the hair of girls from home. It was blue-black" (Adams 83). This suggests that "the hair of girls from home" is unveiled, that Muslim Algerian girls are

not all veiled. In doing so, Adams highlights the same idea as Nawar Al-Hassan Golley in her book *Reading Arab Women's Autobiographies*:

The veil and the “harem” have always been associated with Arab woman and especially with their oppression. It is a fact that various forms of the veil are still being worn by many Muslim women who still live in some form of seclusion or “harems.” However, first not all Muslim women wear a veil and are segregated from men; and second, it was not Islam which first introduced the idea of either the veil or the harem. (18)

Adams appears to condemn the exaggerated focus on the issue of the veil in a world of women that is fraught with issues which call for the feminists’ interests and energy more than the veil. In her article entitled “Beyond the Burka,” she explicitly states: “The veiled, oppressed Muslim woman has become overexposed. American book clubs consume her memoirs. Novels about her, as long as they are bleak, appear in the windows of our bookstores. Intellectuals argue over how she should be described and who can save her” (Adams). The focus is thus on this so called veiled, oppressed Muslim woman who needs a rescuer. In her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Spivak calls the oppressed men and women “Subaltern” and refers to the Orientalist notion that defends the claimed oppressed Arab woman through a colonialist discourse which is based according to Spivak on the idea that “the white men are saving brown women from brown men” (93). In this regard, Adams seems to side with Arzu Mirali ’s following statement:

Whether we are Western, Muslim, both or neither, we must wake up to the possibility that what we see as problematic for women is much the same whoever and wherever we are. Plastered over billboards, or banished from view, women are subjugated by patriarchy. Demeaning Islam excludes voices of Islamic women and that liberates no one. (Mirali)

The obsession of the veil which characterizes post 9/11 era seems to be excessively heightened when it should not be the case in Adams’s opinion: the veil, according to Adams, does not deserve that greater than normal attention and debates in the post 9/11 narratives and discourses. In this context, Adams states that “the burqa effect is a habit of mind” (Adams). She quotes Virginia Woolf to explain this idea saying:

Virginia Woolf described it in 1925 when she wrote about British views of the exotic territory known as American letters: “Excursions into the literature of a foreign country much resemble our travels abroad. Sights that are taken for granted by the inhabitants seem to us astonishing. . . . In our desire to get at the heart of the country we seek out whatever it may be that is most unlike what we are used to, and declare this to be the very essence. (Adams)

Woolf draws a similarity between excursions into a foreign country's literature and journeys abroad. Her explanation of the veil issue, thus, lies in the sights that the locals take for granted but strike the foreigners as incredible, an explanation which suggests viewing the veil in moderation. Fighting over the hijab, “one of the most problematic issues for Western feminists,” according to Shadi Hamid, is due not to the Western feminists’ “willful malice” but to their limited knowledge of the Muslim world (Eltantawy 22). In this respect, it is argued that Western feminism has fallen short in comprehending and conceptualizing the diversity of women around the globe” (Eltantawy 20): Western feminists cannot approach Eastern women’s struggles and liberations because their knowledge is “based on Western history, needs, experiences, and values that are not necessarily similar to those of Eastern women” (Eltantawy 20). Adams’s job as a journalist seems to play an important role in this matter. She seems to gain these experiences and values through her work for *The Washington Post*, the fact which is reflected in her *Harbor*.

Indeed, Adams has worked as a journalist for *The Washington Post* for almost twenty years. Her experience as a journalist has allowed her to be in contact with the diverse realities and experiences and the social reality of Muslim women’s life to some extent. Being in touch with Arabs and Muslims has allowed her to notice that there is “a lot of love and respect for women. It's never exactly like the stereotype” (Adams). In her article entitled “Lorraine Adams -celebrating Pakistani culture,” Momina Sibtain states that Adams gave up her job as a journalist for *The Washington Post* and refused this newspaper post 9/11 commenting “I did not like the way the Washington Post was covering 9/11 . . . the coverage was too pro-government and it seemed biased. The hysteria against Muslims was so extreme that I wanted to learn more about the people” (Sibtain).

Comparing her job as a journalist with her passion as a novelist, Adams points out that “Journalism does not allow for compassion. Fiction produces a more true-to-life experience.

Journalism produces a text that is very unreal. That is the reason for a lot of frustration with the media” (Adams). She continues explaining the way the events should be approached:

I think it's important to be intelligent, to look closely to determine the factual basis of any event. I'm just so interested in what is happening . . . Human intelligence (not electronic intercepts). One big problem is that the United States did not have someone inside Afghanistan in the 1990s who could come close to the al-Qaida circle. Government operatives literally sat on all kinds of data - and the data gives us a false sense of security. You can't win the war on terror with technology alone. (Adams)

Adams enlightens her readers, rescuing them from falling into the trap of blindly following the stereotypical images the West propagates. Furthermore, Adams expresses her experience with writing stories and transmitting reality to the reader feeling ill at ease: “I have a backlog of stories I feel compelled to tell,” Adams says “If you go to an editor with something that is not a stereotype, he may say, 'You can't write a story like that!' I went into journalism because I was curious about the world, but I found I just couldn't tell about what I had seen under the strictures of journalism” (Adams). During the years she covered the Justice Department for *The Post*, Adams had many conversations with Algerians, Moroccans and Arab-Americans. Adams comments: “When you're reporting, you hear a lot of stories, and the ones that are most soul-changing are those that say 'You can't use this' or 'This is off the record” (Adams). Adams resorts to writing to express what cannot be expressed in journalism. In doing so she allows her literary work to be nearer to “facts.”

Adams’s dwarfing of the veil’s issue in her post 9/11 *Harbor* seems to be inspired from her real contact with Arab and Muslim people and is intended to show that the widespread representations of the East and the stereotypes produced by the West do not necessarily resemble the “reality” of the East. Adams stands in opposition to the post 9/11 novels’ support of the fabrications and reproduction of stereotyped images that replace the reality. Instead of exposing the readers to the distortion of reality through an amalgamation of fabrication and stereotypes which ultimately lead to more stereotyping, Adams offers positive images of Muslim women’s real social life. This will be extensively discussed in the coming sections.

1.2. The scarf: no longer “dangerously Islamic”

Unlike Adams’s *Harbor*, the scarf is highly present in Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs*. More important than Sirena’s physical description and surroundings which link her to the

Orient in *The Woman Upstairs*, is the writer's inclusion of a symbolic Oriental piece of clothing: the scarf. The scarf, which became highly significant soon after the 9/11 events, marks its presence in Sirena's studio and is often part of Sirena's clothes. It is carefully mentioned in scenes that put on display her use of this Islamic symbol. Within her descriptions of the studio, Nora mentions the scarves which are not part of the studio decoration as the reader may think, but are part of the clothes Sirena uses as they "smelled of her perfume- of lemons" (Messud 121).

It is true that the scarf does not appear on Sirena's or Nora's head throughout the novel, but this significant piece of clothing is incorporated in a meaningful metaphor that beautifully links three significant elements: Sirena, the Western character with Middle Eastern features, her scarves and "a papoose." This metaphor is revealed in a passage that cannot be passed over especially in a post 9/11 novel. This passage is the one in which we know from Nora about Sirena's scarves. This happens when Nora does not find Sirena once in the studio: "I'd been so certain that she'd be there, bent over some finicky detail, or smoking by the open window, or even lying on the cushions wrapped up, like a papoose, in her scarves" (Messud 196). As the novel unfolds, we come to know that this is one of Sirena's rituals.

Messud's portrayal of Sirena in the above passage resembles Richard Flanagan's portrayal of Gina Davis in *The Unknown Terrorist* (2006). Gina Davis is a young woman known as "The Doll." Like Sirena, she is a Western woman and seems to be what the media call of middle Eastern appearance. In addition, she has almost the same ritual as Sirena. Yet, the difference is that in *The Unknown Terrorist*, Gina covers herself with money, in \$100 bills, while in *The Woman Upstairs*, Sirena covers herself with scarves. While Gina's covering of her body with money is interpreted as a hope or an aspiration to become wealthy, Sirena's covering with scarves "like a papoose" seems more complex and may call for pivotal implications in the 9/11 context.

First, before interpreting the metaphor, what is worth mentioning is that the image of Sirena wrapped up in scarves suggests the idea of covering the body which is highly significant in the post 9/11 context. Covering the female body is a symbolic form of the "hijab" which "describes the act of covering up generally" (Koshulko 14). In other words, through this image, Messud calls up the image of a "covered woman" which has become a symbol of subjugation and backwardness in the Orientalist discourses (qtd. in Kulcasi and Gokmen 85). Many Western political leaders have expressed their sympathy for these

“covered women” who are oppressed and deprived from their rights (Soltani). Consequently, covered female bodies have entered political discourse on “terrorism” and they have been seen as potential “terrorist” bodies. The more the female body is covered, the more suspicion it draws and the more negative responses it receives (Gidaris 2).

In an article entitled “Covered in Stigma?” Jim A.C.E Verett argues that the more women are covered the more they elicit negative responses. That is to say, the mere covering of the female body in the post 9/11 era is seen as a reflection of something threatening, dangerous, that of a “terrorist” confined within the boundaries of the scarf. However, while the covered body causes insidious risk and is stereotyped as the wife or daughter of a “terrorist” or a “terrorist” sympathizer, Sirena’s covered body in Messud’s novel is portrayed as “a papoose,” a young child, and thus a symbol of innocence and peace. Noticeably, Sirena’s covered body has not elicited any negative response from Nora. If it had she would not have described her as “a papoose.” This metaphor implicitly destabilizes the post 9/11 stereotype of the “covered woman” as “a disloyal, anti-American, terrorist or terrorist sympathizer” (Aziz). It can also be deduced that this metaphor dismantles the stereotype spread by the U.S. media’s representation of the Arab/Middle Eastern woman as exotically mysterious (Blakeman 11) given that Sirena’s depiction as covered with scarves does not reveal anything mysterious.

The image of Sirena wrapped up in scarves is re-inforced by Nora’s repetition of the same action: in her identification with Sirena, Nora repeats the same action when she “wrapped [herself] in all [Sirena’s] scarves and shawls” (Messud 121). This emphasis on the image entails that the veil is not a sign of danger infiltrating the American society as established by post 9/11 stereotypes. If so, Nora would not have touched them and wrapped herself in “danger,” or even fingered them “catching their vestigial scent” (Messud 126). This action happens when Nora wonders about questions that panic her as revealed in another passage in the novel. Rather, she would have shown her rejection of this dangerous element or at least distanced herself from it. Therefore, the stereotypical images of “women of cover” (Korantema and Koranteng 15) which are spread by the media and which have influenced post 9/11 American fiction seem to be challenged by both Sirena’s depiction as a “papoose” and Nora’s insistence on the action of covering the body in *The Woman Upstairs*.

The image of Sirena wrapped up in scarves can also have other connotations. Through Sirena, Messud joins the East and the West in one person: a Western female character with

Middle Eastern description. The Western female character covers her body with scarves, the visible and controversial symbol of Arabs/Muslim woman in the aftermath of 9/11. This image unifies the Eastern and Western woman in one cover, the scarf, in spite of its religious and cultural associations in the 9/11 context. This may allude to the idea that the scarf is not exclusively Islamic and does not belong to the East in particular but it is a piece of clothing that belongs to the West as well.

Likewise, it seems that Lorrie Moore tries to disassociate the veil from Islam. This appears when Tassie describes the “scarf wrapped around [Sarah’s] head” (Moore 38) as “a babushka” (Moore 38), a headscarf tied under the chin typical of those traditionally worn by Russian women. This makes it obvious that Moore’s narrative departs from the predominant strong association of the veil with Islam, an association that the theorist Reina Lewis opposes. In her writings, Reina Lewis argues that although the veil is predominantly and emphatically associated with Islam, it “is pre-Islamic in origin and that has been adopted by diverse religious and ethnic communities, especially in the Middle East” (16). Lewis supports her view by giving an example from Britain where “there are substantial communities of Hindus and Sikhs, some of whose female members also sometimes veil” (20). Moore, thus, seems to join Lewis in her view about the veiled woman.

The image of Sirena wrapped up in scarves can also allude to the conception of veiling developed by Billie Melman. Melman believes that scholars are now starting to be more conscious of the wrongs of the unified picture of the representation of the Orient and specifically of the veil and harem by Europe, when they look at various kinds of materials, including the writings of women and men beyond the colonialist elite (Melman 18). Melman demonstrates that the oriental veiled women’s resistance to male interference allowed female autonomy through their control over sexuality denied to unveiled occidental women” (121). Melman refers to the veil in relation to freedom, autonomy and power. Talking about Western women who traveled to the East, she states that they believe their “veiled” counterparts to be better off than they were: “they really thought that there was freedom.” She explains: “There was freedom behind the veil, which, incidentally, is in many ways similar to what we find now in the writings of Muslim women in Iran or Egypt, for instance, who are putting on the veil because it gives them a sense of privacy, autonomy and, sometimes, power” (299). Melman’s reference to the veil above dissociates it from the restricted symbolic meaning of oppression to a wider symbolism which includes autonomy, freedom and privacy to which Sirena’s image might well allude.

Messud's image of Sirena wrapped up in scarves seems to dismantle Western codes: The veil was consistently seen as an issue and its lifting as the most crucial sign of change and modernization, despite its status as an indisputable symbol of Islamic culture's essential traditionalism (Yegenoglu 100). In "Sartorial fabric-ations: The Enlightenment and Western feminism," Meyda Yegenoglu stresses the idea that "lifting the veil," means "modernizing the woman":

Within the grim picture of the Orient, the situation of its woman, who is secluded behind her veil, looked even more gruesome to the Western colonial gaze. Her situation thus required a much more serious working, for the most essential features of the culture are assumed to be inscribed onto her; she is taken as the concrete embodiment of oppressive Islamic traditions which the Orient desperately needed to break up in order to reach the level of development the West achieved a long time ago. (97- 98)

In a similar vein, Meyda Yegenoglu comments: "when the necessity to modernize [the oriental cultures] was taken for granted, there was no hesitation in morally condemning the practice of veiling, for it was regarded as an impediment to modernization (99). In this context, it is argued that lifting the veil, the symbol of backwardness, and making the body visible elevates the veiled woman to the level of her Western counterpart: "It was only by rendering Muslim women's bodies visible that they became capable of being recodified, redefined, and reformulated according to new, Western codes" (Yegenoglu 116). While making the veiled woman's body visible entails its modernization in the Western imagination, Messud's image covers Sirena's body with scarves, a body which is Western with Middle Eastern portrayal. This covering of a Western woman's body breaks the link between the unveiled Western body and modernization and thus dismantles Western codes.

1.3. The scarf and woman's happiness

The scarf which is associated with oppression, the prolonged cruel or unjust treatment of women is also associated with sadness and pity. In her PhD thesis, Loubna Bijdiguen sheds light on Orientalist associations of the veil with unhappiness during the nineteenth century. Bijdiguen mentions that she "did not predict to study the veil through tropes of happiness and unhappiness but was surprised by how often they emerged" (93). She carries on stating: "If Orientalism is a technique of 'essentialising other cultures, people and geographical

regions' (Said, 1979, pp. 108-109), then I explore how and why happiness becomes a technique, that is to say how the veil becomes a signifier of the misery of others" (93). Bijdiguen relies on the arguments of Valérie de Gasparin, the prolific writer who "inscribes misery to the veiled woman" (93) Bijdiguen states:

During travels with her husband to different parts of the Orient in the nineteenth century, Gasparin took great care in writing about the Muslim 'veiled woman'. Writing about Turkish women in the harem, for instance, she notes how they are living under 'miserable conditions' . . . During one of her trips to Turkey, she portrays what she perceives as the harem confinement, a term which she equates with the veil. (93)

The association of the veiled woman with unhappiness is highly noticeable in the media. Indeed, "the covers of books about Muslim women have often been designed with figures of sad veiled women even when this is not related to the theme of the book." The wearing of the scarf by Queen Beatrix on her state visit to Oman in 2012 for instance draws the image of a sad veiled woman. Wearing the scarf when visiting the mosque is described by the newspaper as a "sad spectacle" that "legitimized women's oppression" (qtd. in Korteweg and Yurdakul 117). This also appears in some critics' survey about wearing the headscarf in the United States. One of the survey respondents observes: "when someone wears a headscarf, people tend to think "Oh how sad it is, what a pity, she's oppressed, she doesn't have rights"" (Welborne et al. 86).

In addition to this, the representation of the veiled woman in the advertisement by the perfume company Bijan (printed in *New York Magazine* in 1992) illustrates the veiled woman's sadness perfectly:

There are three side by side photos of the same woman. The first picture features the woman draped in black, looking seriously miserable and unhappy. A message written below her reads, "women should be quiet, composed, obedient, grateful, modest, respectful, submissive and very very serious." On the next picture we find the same woman (probably presenting a European woman) looking much happier and relaxed holding a cigar and wearing a revealing outfit. The message written below her is different: "Women should be sophisticated, exotic, intriguing, snobby, chic, alluring, intelligent and very very sexy." The last picture features the same woman transformed into the quintessential all American girl, smiling with a baseball bat in

hand looking feisty and vivacious.” The message below her reads: “Women should be bright, wild, flirty, fun, accentric, though, bold , and very very Bijan. (Hassen 20)

The sad “draped” woman is thus a stereotypical image that is strongly linked to her being oppressed. In this context, the scarf is associated with happiness through the veiled woman who is made beautiful and attractive in Skandar’s friend’s wedding ceremony. Noticeably, neither the occasion nor the wearer suggest sadness. The daughter of a Lebanese family who attends the wedding is described as “very pretty, with sparkles in her hijab” (Messud 187). The veiled woman in this scene is not sad in her hijab. More importantly, describing this family, Skandar guesses that she has “saved for months to buy that cloth,” (Messud 187) regarding the poor place they come from. This implies that the girl does her best to buy this garment which costs her a lot of money. This displaces her hijab from a means of oppression and sadness to something desirable. The veil thus not only appears in a happy event, but the wearer is depicted as “pretty” and is shown to spend effort to buy it as well, a portrayal which strongly links the scarf to happiness.

While the scarf in Messud’s novel is associated with happiness, it is incorporated in a scene of sadness and disappointment in Moore’s *A Gate*. However, it is simultaneously and totally freed from being the cause of sadness, thus avoiding any reproduction of the stereotype. When coming back from the first unsuccessful meeting to adopt a child, Tassie, the protagonist of the novel, describes her employer Sarah saying “When I glanced over at her, driving without her sunglasses, her scarf wrapped now around her head like a babushka, she seemed watery, far away, lost in thought...” (Moore 38). The veiled Sarah in this scene is deprived of happiness; “her face looked fantastically sad” (Moore 39). However, Tassie quickly explains that Sarah’s state of despair and sadness is due to this first appointment with the birth mother and not to something else. This links sadness with the unsuccessful meeting of Sarah, the veiled woman, with the birth mother and prevents any possible association of the scarf with sadness. This dismantles the stereotype explained above.

1.4. The veiled woman and the “Us” versus “Them” ideology

The imaginary geography on which the Orientalist framework is based is marked by the strict binary of “Us” and “Them” whereby the image of the East is distorted to offer a widely privileged position to the West over the Orient (Said *Orientalism* 4). This framework was used in relation to the dress code of women in Islam:

There are several problems with these uniform and ubiquitous images of veiled women. First, they make it hard to think about the Muslim world without thinking about women, creating a seemingly huge divide between “us” and “them” based on the treatment or positions of women. This prevents us from thinking about the connections between our various parts of the world, helping setting up a civilizational divide. (Abu-Lughod)

The negative image of veiled women attributed to female Muslims /Middle Easterners reinforces the “Us” and “Them” ideology. Lila Abu Lughod argues that “one of the most dangerous functions of these images of Middle Eastern or Muslim women is to enable many of us to imagine that these women need rescuing by us or by our governments” (Abu-Lughod).

The way Moore uses veiled characters in her work dismantles the “Us” and “Them” dynamics. Making her non-Muslim characters Tassie and Sarah wear the veil in the post 9/11 context can have several interpretations. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Jane I. Smith and Kathleen M. Moore argue that some feminists in America strongly think that American culture and values should be imposed on all other people. In other words, they are thought to be universal (Haddad et al. 262). Lorrie Moore seems tolerant in her representation of the veiled woman and does not appear to have a desire to impose the American culture and values on other people. Indeed, the American lifestyle highly opposes the veil because it is seen as a symbol of oppression and limits the individual’s freedom (Haddad et al. 260). Wearing a headscarf in the aftermath of 9/11 spread up negative responses and slowed down positive responses; that Moore’s veiled characters do wear the headscarf in the US reveals the writer’s tolerance towards wearing the veil and thus towards “Them.” Therefore, by veiling her non Muslim characters, Moore does not only seem to stand in opposition to the American feminists who advocate the American culture, but seems to introduce a remarkable change in the American lifestyle which opposes the veil as mentioned previously.

In addition, making her non Muslim characters wear the veil voices Moore’s solidarity with Muslims in the post 9/11 context. Throughout the novel’s events, the veiled Tassie and Sarah are not exposed to the repercussions of the 9/11 events (dealt with in the first chapter of this thesis) which are felt and experienced by minority veiled Muslims living within the larger non Muslim mainstream society such as America. Moore seems to be inspired by the West’s antipathy towards Islam and Muslims in a way that makes her side with some

intellectuals such as Katherine Bullock who urges Western feminists to consider and accept Muslim women's choices rather than dismissing and ridiculing the *hijab* (Bullock 25). Such a view, if fulfilled, would dismantle the “Us” and “Them” dichotomy.

Making her American female characters Tassie and Sarah wear the headscarf, the symbol of Islam in the post 9/11 era may well suggest that Islam and Muslims are compatible with modernity, a subject of debate among scholars. Some Western scholars accuse Islam to be “a religion that retards progress” (Budiman 1), and thus deny its compatibility with modernity (Budiman 1). This idea draws attention to Reina Lewis’ concept of “Muslim Fashion.” In her book *Fashion*, Lewis introduces this concept: she treats the Islamic dress/*hijab* as fashion. In doing so, Lewis offers a different view of women in veils and opposes the use of the stereotypical images of veiled women as a proof that Islam is incompatible with Western modernity. In other words, this concept runs counter to the prevalent suggestion that Muslims and Islam are incompatible with Western modernity and that is why it has not been welcomed in the West which sees the veil as being “outside the worldview of the fashion industry” which is widely claimed to be predominantly a Western experience. Two related presumptions build this view: “that fashion is a Western experience and that Muslims are not part of the West” (Lewis 12).

Lewis’s concept has been rejected believing that fashion cannot be “fabricated with garments from “other “clothing system” (Lewis 13). According to Lewis, this suggests “that Muslims, even if “in” the West, will be wearing clothing that is “ethnic” or is “religious,” categories outside the parameters of Western fashion” (12). It is, in short, a “religiously related fashion; the veil whatever its form is taken as “controversial, political symbol, not as fashion” (2). This re- inforces the veiled woman’s place in “Them” and forces her out from “Us”. Interestingly, this is not the case with Moore’s veiled characters Tassie and Sarah who impose themselves within the “Us” category in the novel.

Moore seems to challenge the “Us” and “Them” relationship with Muslim women in the post 9/11 world, “a world that has been left with no choice but ‘to be with us or against us’” as Muzaffar Iqbal states (Iqbal 105). Portrayed positively, Moore’s veiled women put the “Us” and “Them” division into question: Moore places the veiled characters within the “Us” category whereas they should have been systematically placed within the “Them” category in the 9/11 context. Interestingly, while Moore challenges the “Us” and “Them” relationship with Muslim women, Messud welcomes the Other, in the post 9/11 world.

1.5. Welcoming the Other

Within the post 9/11 atmosphere of rejecting the “terrorist” Other clearly displayed in *The Woman Upstairs* through Reza’s and Skandar’s life in America (which will be extensively discussed in the third chapter), Messud opens a window of welcoming this Other. This is apparent in the writer’s portrayal of Sirena’s attitude towards the scarf and her invitation of the Sufi Sana to perform a dance in her studio. Sirena’s studio seems to stand for America: the characters from different nations that Messud uses to fill this studio stress the multinational network of America, and accordingly the studio. Apart from Nora who is American, the characters who dwell in the studio or visit it are from different nations. The Shahids are non-American: Sirena is Italian, her husband Skandar is Lebanese. This patchwork is stressed through the depiction of the meals of exotic Lebanese spices and the Italian dinners with wine, cupcakes and coffee on the studio floor. When it comes to the participants in Sirena’s project in the studio, the Sufi Sana and Marlene, the Hungarian photographer (Messud 209) are but two examples of different people who visit the studio. Interestingly, the presence of some characters like the Sufi Sana, whose whole body is covered, is highly significant.

In the post 9/11 context, the scarf is the garment that brings disrespect and anger to women even if they are not Muslim: The veiled woman as “anti American, terrorist, or terrorist sympathizer” (Aziz). Furthermore, “several countries have gone so far as to prohibit different articles of clothing associated with Islam” (Janson 181). This piece of clothing is said to belong to “garments from “other ‘clothing system.’” In her book *Fashion*, Reina Lewis explains why “Muslim fashion is easily rendered outside the place and time of fashion” (13), a notion with which we will deal in our discussion of Moore’s novel. While the scarf represents something negative in the eyes of the American people, it seems to be positive for Sirena, Messud’s character in the novel.

The scarf in *The Woman Upstairs* is associated with Sirena’s welcoming attitude. Scarves are all the time in the studio and Sirena does not show any intention to get rid of them. It is implicitly alluded that scarves are welcomed and not rejected in Sirena’s studio or rather in America. This is apparent in her special attitude towards garments as revealed by Nora: “Sirena fingered everything with her eyes closed, as if the garments had messages in braille upon them- “It’s to know if I can work with this,” she explained, when I teased her. “Some fabrics, the synthetics, the fake ones, like some people, is this” - and she mimed

scraping her fingernails on a blackboard” (Messud 158). Sirena does not see garments as mere clothes but considers them “like some people” (Messud 158). Drawing analogy between garments and people, she explains to Nora that in the same way she rejects the people she does not like, she throws the “fabrics, the synthetics, the fake ones” (Messud 158) and simply does not take them home: “I can’t work with people I don’t choose, not in this way. For me, life’s too short. Yes, Life is too short. When they’ - she mimed the fingernails- “then they must go. Like the fabric, I don’t take it home; so with the people, they’re the same” (Messud 158). And when Nora comments that “there must be a word for that,” (Messud 158) Sirena answers in Italian: “Respingere, maybe - to reject, to return something” (Messud 158). Therefore, it is implicitly alluded that scarves are welcomed and not “rejected” in her studio since they are all the time there and so they prove to be positive. The scarf is thus a welcome garment in the American social life symbolized by Sirena’s studio in *The Woman Upstairs*.

Sirena’s positive attitude towards the scarves might allude to Messud’s attempt to extract the scarf from its established negative context in the Western imagination and put it in a positive context of non rejection. The sight of the scarf, the garment which reveals women’s oppression before 9/11 and is seen as a source of suspicion, involves “a terrorist” and brings terror to mind in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. Interestingly, it is displayed among the clothes of a Western woman, an individual who is far from any oppression or suspicion of “terrorism” in the 9/11 context. More importantly, its presence is welcome in Sirena’s studio and thus in America which may well allude to the writer’s opposition to the Western objection and opposition of the scarf as an external threat. Second, the detail about garments in Sirena’s comment equals garments to people and thus equals the scarf to a person. Knowing that the veil has become a symbol of danger against America and “it was associated with those who had declared war on the United States” (Blackeman 263) and standing for the enemy and everything against America, it would be unexpected from Sirena to welcome this piece of clothing and thus this “person,” positively in her studio, in America. Sirena’s non rejection of the scarf or rather this “person” may well refer to a tendency to accept the Muslim/Arab Other. This seems to transmit a message to the West to better accept this Other. Interestingly, as the novel unfolds, this idea (accepting the Muslim/Arab Other) seems more explicit.

Welcoming the Other implicitly in the studio or rather in America anticipates both the presence and also the participation of Sana, the Sufi artist, in Sirena’s big project called the “Wonderland.” Sana is invited by Sirena to perform a dance as part of her Wonderland. Sana

is “a woman in white, head to toe in pure white” (Messud 210). She wears a long-sleeved plain white dress with an enormous skirt and white leggings” (Messud 210). That is to say, all her body is covered. This description of a covered female body suggests the stereotype of “potential terrorist bodies” in the 9/11 context, yet it is not the case in *The Woman Upstairs*. Unexpectedly, Nora tells this Sufi Sana “that she was beautiful” (Messud 213) adding that “[Sana] seemed to grow out of the Astroturf like the carved flowers around her” (Messud 210), a depiction which pictures Sana as a flower and not as a “terrorist.” Such statements do not only dismantle the stereotype and dissolve the Islamophobic fears, but go further to display a remarkable appreciation of Sana and thus of the covered woman.

This tendency is also transmitted through Sirena’s Wonderland (an artistic project in which she creates and films a world based on *Alice in Wonderland*) and her aims behind it. Sirena wants her Wonderland to be extremely broad so that everyone can see themselves in it: “We must keep the doors as open as possible, let as many fantasies come into Wonderland as we can. So that everyone can see themselves there . . . because in the end, we want above all to be safe, yes? Almost everybody wants this in the end” (Messud 155). In addition to Sirena’s attitude towards scarves and the incorporation of the Sufi Sana, Messud seems to reveal her acceptance of the Muslim/Arab Other through Sirena herself. Nora’s depiction of Sirena serves this purpose: Nora describes Sirena, the builder of the Wonderland which “is both East and West,” as “someone who opens doors to possibility, to the barely imagined. Someone who embraces the colors and textures, the tastes and transformations-someone who embraces, period” (Messud 152), a portrayal which encourages tolerance.

Sirena’s portrayal of “the wonderland” and specifically her sentence “because in the end, we want above all to be safe, yes? Almost everybody wants this in the end” stresses tolerance towards the so called “terrorist” Other and the idea of peace to which Sufism is traditionally associated : Sufism is indeed viewed favorably in the West unlike other trends of Islam. Although “the encounter of Sufism with the West also creates new tensions as this ancient tradition grapples with twentieth and twenty first century processes of modernization” (Genn), the Westerners’ interest in Sufism is remarkable in recent times; it is viewed differently from post 9/11 stereotypes as Celia A. Genn highlights: “The recent enthusiasm for Jalaluddin Rumi’s poetry in North America and Europe has brought Sufism to the attention of many Westerners in a liberal and liberating way that contrasts sharply with post 9/11 stereotypes of the Islamic tradition from which it derives. That Sufism should stimulate receptivity to Islam is not a new phenomenon” (257). Messud’s portrayal of Sirena’s

Wonderland in post 9/11 America seems to stress peace which is synonymous to Sufism and bring the attention to this trend of Islam in a way that highly dismantles post 9/11 stereotypes opening thus a new door of accepting the Muslim Other.

2. Muslim/veiled women, from objects to subjects

2.1. The headscarved woman, an ordinary woman

Contrary to post 9/11 fiction which reinforces the Arab/Muslim Women's stereotypes, the works under study dismantle the stereotype that shows a headscarved woman as either oppressed by her "terrorist" husband or father or as a "terrorist" herself; this is apparent in several scenes throughout the novels. Like Messud, Moore makes use of the scarf in her novel but contrary to Messud who does not provide details about the way Sirena wears the scarf in her everyday life, Moore deliberately makes Tassie wear this item of clothing (associated with Islam) on her head. Specifically, she emphasizes the idea that it is not any scarf but "a muslin headscarf," (Moore194) an allusion to the Muslim headscarf confirmed by her statement that Reynaldo, her boyfriend "thought [she]'d called it "Muslim" rather than "Muslin" (Moore 194). Besides, wearing the scarf is a detail that seems to be important for Tassie. In one of her visits to Reynaldo, Tassie is said to be in a hurry but she insists on putting "[her] hair in a scarf" (Moore 202). But, Tassie is not the only character who wears the scarf. Her employer Sarah also wears one.

Though, as indicated previously, the veil issue does not take up a lot of attention in *Harbor*, the narrative does include an allusion to oppressed veiled Muslim women. The incorporation of this symbol (the veil) through allusion within the story's events is not really noticeable, but it offers interpretations that dismantle the stereotypes available in the aftermath of 9/11. When explaining how Lynda, one of *Harbor's* American characters, gets to know Rafik, a Muslim character and the protagonist's cousin, Adams makes Lynda's thoughts go in the way the stereotypical image of Muslims works: "Muslims, the ones who make nuns out of their women" (Adams 48). Lynda carries on commenting: "Heather with that?" (Adams 48) Noticeably, the writer utilizes the word "nuns" which suggests veiling, alluding to oppressed veiled Muslim women.

Nuns are veiled women who are said to be oppressed by men. In his book *Habits of Compassion*, Maureen Fitzgerald points out that "Catholic women generally, nuns in

particular, were more oppressed by men in their group than were protestant and secular women”(8). Interestingly, he observes: “From the vantage point of the early twenty first century we might imagine nuns’ position in nineteenth century American popular imagination as roughly analogous to that of Islamic women today” (8). Therefore, “nuns” in Lynda’s statement refer to the stereotype of the oppressed veiled Muslim women. Additionally, Lynda’s comment about her friend Heather: “Heather with that?” (Adams 48) alludes to the “ideological hierarchy” Fitzgerald refers to in his mentioned above book : “Whether stated explicitly or not, there exists an ideological hierarchy in which American or Western secular women are considered most “liberated”; religious but not “orthodox” women are less so; and the most religiously orthodox women, whether Catholics, Jews or Muslims, the most oppressed” (8). In other words, Lynda cannot grasp the idea that Heather, the American free woman, is with a Muslim man who oppresses women in her imagination.

This ideological hierarchy that controls Western thoughts seems to be opposed in Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs*. This is most apparent through Sirena’s Arab husband Skandar. Significantly, presenting Sirena as a woman with Middle Eastern features, the fact which helps confusing her with a Muslim woman in the aftermath of 9/11 for many Western readers, the presence of the “scarf” among Sirena’s clothes, and the inclusion of the idea of covering the body in the way explained previously, and above all choosing an Arab husband for her, strongly entails the stereotype of the oppressed woman who is deprived of all her rights and forced to wear the headscarf by her Arab husband. However, Sirena, Skandar’s wife is a strong woman who enjoys total freedom and agency in her life. She is not a shadow of her male counterpart; she is a dynamic character interacting with her immediate environment.

Sirena is neither oppressed nor marginalized or treated as inferior by Skandar. She is completely different from Dawn, the protagonist of *The Dawn of Saudi*, the post 9/11 novel by Homa Paurasgari. Dawn is a Western character who marries an Arab man and experiences cruelty and oppression under his unilateral control: “He had an insatiable hunger for intercourse...He hurt her by biting, punching and whipping her . . . She had tried several times to go to the Saudi courts to complain to officials, only to be sent back to her husband, telling her that she didn’t have any proof. The officials requested that she obey him” (Pourasgari 20). On the contrary, Sirena enjoys her artistic as well as her marital life to a large extent and this is clear throughout the whole novel. In short, through Sirena, Messud provides a new image that does not fit into the traditional picture of an oppressed “Middle Eastern

woman” or more precisely an Arab man’s wife. The latter owns headscarves but is not forced to put them on her head the way the prophet Mohamed orders his wives to wear the headscarf as portrayed by Jones in *The Jewel*. Messud dismantles the old cliché that stresses the image of the oppressed women who live under the cruelty of their Arab husbands.

Likewise, Moore’s work dismantles the stereotype that a headscarved woman “is associated with terrorists and oppressed by her terrorist husband or father” (Aziz). Although the veil is intensively a symbol of oppression and subjugation of women or even “terrorism,” Moore’s veiled characters are portrayed in a way which has nothing to do with oppression or terrorism. Contrary to post 9/11 veiled characters who reinforce the Arab/Muslim Women’s stereotypes, Tassie who is headscarved has never been said in the novel to be oppressed by her father or brother who are always at her service. Moreover, as previously mentioned, one of the most important themes in post 9/11 fiction is the suffering of veiled women. Jones’ *The Jewel*, for instance, portrays its veiled women as strictly confined in the harem. The prophet’s wives’ veil in Jones’ *The Jewel* is said to restrict their sexual freedom to a great extent and thus the veil is marked as a form of oppression. However, Moore makes use of the veil on the head of a non Muslim young girl, Tassie, who has never been confined or oppressed. Tassie is a student who has traveled from Dellacrosse Central High, a small farm on the old Perryville Road, to the University town of Troy, “the Athens of the Midwest” (Moore 4) to study there. Freely, she looks for a job that would begin at the start of the January term to sustain her studies. The veiled Tassie thus studies and works out of any kind of oppression or restriction that prevents her from building a successful career.

An other example of oppressed veiled Muslims in post 9/11 fiction is Pourasgari’s Sahar Al-Hijazi in *The Dawn*. Sahar, the main character in Homa Pourasgari’s *The Dawn* is fed up with her dress and expresses herself saying: “I needed my freedom. I needed to be able to walk out without being covered” (Pourasgari 164). She strongly wants to be free from the limitations her society impose: “From the day a girl is born, she’s taught that her role in life is to get married and bear sons to carry out the husband’s name” (Pourasgari 210). Whereas Pourasgari presents Sahar’s veil as a barrier that prevents her from reaching freedom and ultimately encourages lifting the veil and Jones associates the Islamic dress with a limitation of the sexual freedom of women, Moore discredits the view that “unveiling was synonymous with progress and female emancipation” (Behiery 418); through Tassie’s veil which has never interfered with her personal or professional freedom. Moore has thus offered a new image of Post 9/11 veiled woman, an image which is different from that presented in post 9/11 fiction.

In the same vein, Adams in *Harbor* provides images which go in opposition to post 9/11 stereotypes.

2.2. Picturing Muslim women's social life

Contrarily to post 9/11 fiction, Adams offers scenes which do not perpetuate the most common perceptions of women suffocated under the veil, living under the oppressive dictatorships of their husbands, fathers, or brothers. The writer tries to dismantle the stereotype by displaying passages of Muslim women's lives in their Muslim society, neglecting the issue of the veil and displaying relationships of love and care. Intelligently, Adams seems to stand in opposition to the stereotype of patriarchy in the East by substituting the issue of the veil, the symbol of oppression and patriarchy, with more important aspects such as male/female relationships. These aspects are apparent in passages that do not leave room to any claim about patriarchal Muslim society and oppressed veiled women. Adams believes that "the discussion in the Western world needs to be broader than the [debate over] veiling and non-veiling" (qtd. in Sibtain). Her experience as a journalist allows her to observe that "investigative journalism is a limited reality...It does not allow you to connect with people" (Sibtain). About Adams's visit and experience in Pakistan, Momina Sibtain states that Adams criticizes some investigative journalists, who according to her, "get embarrassed talking about the Pakistani soul. They do not want to know about the generosity of the people and the values they hold" (Sibtain).

Whereas Jones creates a cruel family environment for her Muslim women characters embodied in Aicha and established by the prophet himself, Adams's Muslim women's lives paint a picture of love and unity and strong care of each other. Aicha's oppression in *The Jewel* leads her to think to escape and live with the Badouins where she "would be free to live [her] life the way she wanted," (Jones 20) an aspiration which totally stands in contrast to the scene Adams draws in her novel and which conveys a nice family atmosphere: Aziz's sisters, Anissa and Hazar; his father's sisters Dalal and Ghadah; his mother's sisters Hala and Hassibah; together with their husbands and children are all present at the Harbor to welcome Aziz. The welcoming scene on the beach, when Aziz comes back from the army atrocities on Nassim's boat "el Karam," speaks about itself:

Not just his family- his parents; his brothers Latif, Bilal, and Mourad; his sisters Anissa and Hazar; their husbands Ghaleb and Issam; his father's sisters Dalal and

Ghadah; his mother's sisters Hala and Hassibah; all their husbands; all their children- it was more than his family; at least a hundred or more had come. They were standing on the beach near his father's hotel, some with infants in their arms, and a few he saw had brought chairs for the older ones. But when one of them caught sight of el Karam, they told another and another. They began to wave. (Adams 216)

This passage provides a more accurate understanding of Muslim social life. This gathering of Muslim women and men has not been prepared or thought before as Nassim, Aziz's father's friend admits: "I told them, in Algiers, I had found you...I did not tell them to do this" (Adams 216); it is love which inspires them to do this. Interestingly, this scene lacks veiled women; the veil, the symbol that always appears with Muslim characters, is absent in the writer's portrayal. Instead, it is replaced with strong emotions of love.

Therefore, the gathering in Adams's above scene does not convey the image of Muslim women propagated by the West, that of "women who need rescuing from their violent families" (Aquil 21). In her article "Muslim women and War on Terror," Salma Yaqoob argues that "nothing was more symbolic of Islamic tyranny than the plight of Muslim women" (150) which is used as a context in the War on Terror. However, the image *Harbor* offers can in no way be seen as a "plight" that deserves a "liberation" conquest. On the contrary, what the West considers as a "rescuing" would be in this case a destruction of Muslim women's families and kinship. Though brief, this passage encompasses a direct opposition to the Western media and the political debates that distort the image of Muslim women and Muslim society. It seems that the most important symbolic meaning the West utilizes to conquest the East is contradicted by Adams in this passage.

In spite of the fact that post 9/11 fiction has been written in the twenty first century when information about and contact with Muslims and the Muslim world has increased, Western writers insist on using the same clichés about this people. De Ziauddin Sardar argues:

Willful misunderstanding and knowledgeable ignorance have remained the guiding spirit of Orientalism, it has survived defiantly and remained dominant when alternative information has been readily available. Orientalism is composed of what the West wishes to know, not of what can be known. Once created the Orientalist image grew more and more entrenched as Islam continued to expand. (19)

Adams seems to rely on actual images in her representation of Muslim women. Her *Harbor* seems to be the post 9/11 narrative which illustrates a dismantling of the Orientalist “willful misunderstanding and knowledgeable ignorance” in Sardar’s words.

Adams is thus different from Updike, for instance, regarding the way he represents Muslim women and what he relies on to give authenticity to his representations. While Adams relies on actual images of the lived experience of Muslim women, Updike resorts to Quranic verses. In *Terrorist*, Updike’s the Holy Quran is represented as the root of women’s mistreatment. Without contextualization, Updike selects verses or chapters of the Quran to serve his denigrating purposes. In their article “Orientalism in John Updike’s *Terrorist*,” Fikret Güven and Bülent Güven argue that “in *Terrorist*, the context is not given, whereas the out of-context information is connected through authorial comments to reinforce a certain stereotype” (233). The example that reflects this strategy is that which is used to prove that women are “unclean” in Islam.

Updike’s Ahmed finds that the Quran “talked of uncleanness but only in regard to women, their menstruation, their suckling of infants” (Updike 156). This happens when Ahmed decides to consult the Qur'an for sexual advice:

It talked of uncleanness but only in regard to women, their menstruation, their suckling of infants. In the second sura, he found the mysterious words, *Your wives are your field: go in, therefore, to your field as ye will; but do first some act for your souls' good: and fear ye God, and know that ye must meet Him.* In the verse before that, he read that women are a pollution. *Separate yourselves therefore from women and approach them not, until they be cleansed. But when they are cleansed, go in unto them as God hath ordained for you [...]* Ahmed feels clean and free, flying his orange box kite behind him in the side mirrors. (Updike 63)

In this context, Fikret Güven and Bulent Güven comment:

The text in the novel says that the Quran only talks about cleanliness only in regard to women. However, the reality is that the injunctions about cleanliness are directed to both men and women in the Quran. At this moment, Updike introduces the verse about wives being fields to create a certain effect. He connects this with another verse, which appears immediately after, by saying: “In the verse before that, he reads that

women are a pollution” (Updike 156). The verse after this talks about women’s menstruation, and their “uncleanliness” according to Updike. (233)

According to Güven, Updike disregards the metaphorical meanings of the verses’ words mainly the word “field”: “Muslim scholars have interpreted it differently in the context of reproduction, injunctions about proper means and ends of sex, and in some interpretations, even the appropriate way to perform sex” (233). In addition, he reduces a very long time of history of Islam in one sentence; “Fourteen hundred years of Islam’s history have not fixed its meanings, but Updike does it in a single sentence” (233). All this for the sake of proving that Quran instructs women’s subjugation and inferiority. Consequently, Adams’s choice to rely on actual images of Muslim women rather than a text seems appropriate since the text may be distorted or misunderstood like in the case of Updike’s *Terrorist*.

Relying on actual images in her novel, Adams seems to remove the “veil” she mentions in “Behind the Burqa.” In this article, she refers to the oppressed veiled Muslim woman then she mentions “another sort of veil” observing that “the nations of [Muslim woman’s] birth remain behind another sort of veil” (Adams). This “veil” resembles Rebecca Hillauer’s “curtain” indeed. In other words, Adams’s veil in “Behind the Burqa” brings to mind the “curtain” Rebecca Hillauer talks about when writing about Arab Women Filmmakers. Hillauer maintains that “their films deal with giving women a voice, empowering them revealing unknown facets of their lives and worlds, and with looking behind the veil of social traditions, but also that of generalizing clichés” (10). She carries on arguing that “the world of Arab women remains closed to most Westerners. A thick curtain of clichés consequently veils the image of the Arab woman” (10). This “thick curtain” appears to do the same task in post 9/11 fiction, which reproduces the stereotyped images of the Muslim woman. Hillauer adds: “By looking at the everyday lives and history of Arab women, the directors tear away at this curtain, and instead of “victims” the filmmakers show strong yet vulnerable personalities who play a role in shaping not only their own destinies but those of their families and homelands” (10). Interestingly, the idea of the “veil” in which Adams believes extends its thread to her second novel *The Room and the Chair*. In this novel, she removes this “veil” by showing the real image of Pakistani women.

Momina Sibtain states that in Adams’s second novel (her first novel is *Harbor*), Adams insists on displaying other types of Muslim women than the stereotypes spread in post 9/11 fiction; “ [she] wants to write about the strength of women in Pakistan” (Sibtain). When she

wrote her second novel, she modeled one of her characters on Dr. Shehla Akram, a Pakistani woman who “runs a hospital, a pharmaceutical company and also set up a women’s chamber of commerce.” Adams believes that “These are the type of stories that need to come out of Pakistan to bridge this social disconnect that now exists between it and the West” (Sibtain). This reinforces our argument about restricting the veil issue/question in *Harbor* and highlighting instead qualities Muslim women hold.

2.3. The veiled woman, from oppression to empowerment

The veil in Moore’s novel is presented as a symbol of empowerment rather than disempowerment and oppression. While Moore’s veiled Tassie and Sarah enjoy freedom in America as depicted in *A Gate*, Pourasgari’s oppressed Sahar rebels in *The Dawn*; she escapes from Saudi Arabia to America and unveils challenging the tyranny of patriarchy. In his article “Twenty-First Century Arab Feminism,” Mubarak Altwaiji maintains:

If American culture begins its encounter with Islam by representing the Muslim woman primarily as a “bad” woman, this badness is not left irredeemable in the post 9/11 novel. Muslim woman becomes more appreciative of her role in changing the patriarchal forces. Accordingly, the ideal woman is not the one who accepts the oppressive treatment of Islamic culture, but the one who rebels. (7)

By removing her veil, Sahar is portrayed opening the door of freedom for herself. What is worthy of interest here is that the unveiled Sahar enjoys the same freedom that the veiled Tassie and Sarah find pleasure in experiencing: veiled, Tassie enjoys her university life and her part-time job as a babysitter and Sarah enjoys her being a Chef, running a big restaurant.

The veil does not place any restrictions on Tassie’s education and any difficulties in her search for work for instance. This is made obvious at the very beginning of the novel in the passages where Tassie talks about her need to be employed:

I was looking for a job. I was a student and needed babysitting work, and so I would walk from interview to interview in these attractive but wintry neighborhoods . . . I was looking in December for work that would begin at the start of the January term. I’d finished my exams and was answering ads from the student job board, ones for “childcare provider.” (Moore 1)

The passage does not allude to any anxiety about the veil issue in relation to job opportunities. Besides, when the novel unfolds, Tassie recounts the details of her employment without any reference to the veil causing a problem, the fact which proves that it has not been an obstacle at all. Moore seems to reinforce the view that the veil gives women “entire Liberty of following their inclinations” (qtd. in Melman 86). Moreover, the veil does not interfere with sexuality in Moore’s work in the way it hinders women from following their sexual desire in Jones’ novel.² In other words, the sexual freedom of the headscarved Tassie, for instance, is very clear throughout the novel. This is apparent in her everyday life depicted in the novel. Hence, unlike post 9/11 fiction, Moore’s use of the veil in her narrative encourages women to wear this piece of clothing without being afraid that the veil would stand against their freedom and hamper its fulfillment. It seems that Moore normalises wearing the veil and thus challenges the stereotypical image of the veiled woman in the same way that the women travel writers “normalised and humanized the harem . . . a challenge to traditional notions of the Orient” (Melman 62) as Billie Melman mentions in her study *Women’s Orients*.

Moore’s *A Gate* does not only dismantle the established stereotype and inject new thoughts and positive sentiments about the headscarf presenting it as a symbol of freedom instead of oppression, but reinforces several social scientists’ view about the headscarf as well: many social scientists argue that the headscarf should not be considered a lack of free will as often considered by Western discourses that depict Arab/Middle Eastern women as oppressed. Lila Abu Lughod, for instance, argues that wearing a headscarf does not necessarily mean a lack of freedom as often spread by Western discourses. In her view, “veiling should not be confused with a lack of agency or even traditionalism” (1). It is rather an object of women’s liberation.

In Sarah’s case too, the scarf is far from being a sign of oppression and Sarah’s free lifestyle and liberal spirit are the evidence. Through her character Sarah, Moore associates the veil with Sarah’s liberal spirit, two opposite elements that can never meet in liberal feminists view:

Liberal feminists reason in terms of equality, individual freedom, and oppression. They view Islam, alongside other traditional religious cultures, as suffused with practices and ideologies concerning gender that endorse and facilitate the control of men over women. According to them, the disparities of power between the sexes within Islam determine that male members are those who are in a position to

determine and articulate the group's beliefs, practices, and interests. This limits the possibility of women belonging to such culture to live with human dignity equal to that of men, and to live as freely chosen lives as they can. The veil, or certain types of it, thus represents unjust in-group power dynamics. (Mancini)

Liberals support gender and racial equality and civil rights in general (Harrison and Boyd 203). In their opinion, “rights are innate, inherited as a consequence of being born. The state exists to support these rights” (Harrison and Boyd 203). Moore’s character Sarah supports gender equality but wears a veil which does not adhere to the values mentioned in the above quotation.

Sarah’s liberal spirit is clear throughout the novel’s events. She is shown to defend African Americans, Mary Emma, her adopted little girl, the bi-racial African American toddler in particular. She even organizes meetings at her house every Wednesday for parents of mixed race children. This is after the incident which happens to Mary Emma: a teenager in the street calls her “Nigger.” More importantly, Sarah also supports gender equality. Indeed, what interests us here is that Liberals believe that the veil is a symbol of female subjugation (Lockard 765). Thus, making the liberal Sarah wear the veil is significant. In doing so, Moore purposefully combines the modern Western woman with the veil in a time when “a veiled woman stands in stark contrast to an unveiled, modern woman; her appearance violates socially valued images of Western women” (Mancini). This combination of the veil, the symbol of restraint with a modern woman who enjoys her total freedom is a rejection of the stereotype which assumes that the freedom of the veiled woman is limited and an interesting introduction to a new image of this woman in the aftermath of the 9/11 events.

It seems that Moore’s approach to the veiled woman tends to oppose the Western feminist stance. Rather, it tends to call for the notion of Islamic feminism whereby veiling is an expression of agency and empowerment. Admittedly, the practice of Muslim women’s veiling has raised crucial questions to those interested in women’s rights and who have offered different explanatory frameworks. Some scholars believe that veiling make the women stay out of the public sphere in societies and it is thus a symbol of their oppression. Yet, Islamic feminists believe that veiling is a tool of “liberation” which “allows the women to get access to the public sphere in their societies” (Khan), as Masood Khan mentions in his article “The Muslim Veiling: A Symbol of Oppression or a Tool of Liberation?” Khan discusses the debate surrounding women’s veiling, a debate which has been shaped by two

opposing discourses in his opinion: the oppression discourse and that which views veiling as a tool of liberation and resistance for women, a stance mostly advocated by Islamic feminists:

A conflicting underlying assumption to both of these discourses on veiling is that of women's agency. While in the oppression discourse the veiled women are considered to be devoid of agency, in the liberation and resistance discourse, the veiled women's agency is understood in terms of viewing the veiling as a conscious practice which is upheld by women to pave the way for furthering their own interests within the society.
(1)

Khan argues against the oppression discourse basing his argument on the representation of Muslim veiled women as victims of oppression in Western liberal feminist scholarship. Khan suggests to pay close attention to the experiences of the veiled women who, according to him, "adopt the veil for myriad different reasons" (1).

In this context, Moore's veiled characters are obviously active in the public sphere which renders the approach to veiling close to Islamic feminists "who urge that there can be many different meanings of the veiling depending on context" (2) as Khan comments. He states that in their opinion, "veiling provides women with an opportunity to have access to the public sphere of society which otherwise is inaccessible to them" (2). The striking point here is that Moore's characters (Tassie and Sarah) do have access to the public sphere of their society even unveiled, but they veil. This displays Moore's insistence on personal choice in wearing the veil in the post 9/11 context. Khan carries on commenting that advocates of the Islamic feminists' view argue that "the upholding of the practice of veiling in non Muslim, especially western, societies hints at the fact that a personal choice of women is involved in it" (3). Personal choice represents one of "the different meanings of the veiling for women across different societies," (3) a detail that Islamic feminists have mentioned in their argument of the veiling (according to Khan's article) and which Moore seems to hint at in her post 9/11 narrative.

In Messud's *The Woman Upstairs*, the veiled woman is used as the source of empowerment instead of terror or oppression. This is made obvious through Sana and her artistic performance in Sirena's project the "Wonderland." When Nora asks her about the music that accompanies the video, Sirena replies:

I want it to be silent. Completely silent. Ibn Tufail's recluse on his desert island didn't twirl to any music - didn't *know* any music- but nature's, or what he might have imagined in his own head . So I want it to be silent. But then my question is- and I have to decide so fast – whether also, in addition to the silence, we give them music to choose from. (Messud 214)

However, Messud exposes veiled Sana's power in spite of her silence. While preparing her Wonderland project, in one of her preparation steps, Sirena invites Nora to see the video of the Sufi Sana:

we both looked . . . And suddenly [Sana's] dancing, her prayer if you will, her *resonance* – suddenly the power of her Wonderland is even greater, do you see? Even more free. Because she can be transported there in her own mind, by her own thoughts, not only when the music, like Pavlov, tells her to be; or not only when the birds are singing, like in heaven; but even when the outside world is in total chaos. (Messud 216)

Sana's dancing empowers Sirena's project; the veiled Sana thus is portrayed as a source of empowerment instead of an object of oppression. Noticeably, Sana, the source of empowerment, is depicted as a human being with “her own mind” and “her own thought” and not as “inhumane” (Ghareeb 316) the stereotype which characterizes “Muslims and Arabs in almost all contemporary fiction that deals with Middle East themes” (Ghareeb 316). Interestingly, this source of empowerment is not occasional; it is not limited to the time of dancing as the quotation indicates. More importantly, it does not follow Pavlovian conditioning: Sana's power is not a response to the music but seems to be inherent in herself.

2.3.1. Desexualized Muslim female characters

The Muslim female body and sexuality are at the heart of post 9/11 debates and they are always discussed in relation to the veil (Aziz 207). In this context, Muslim women in *Harbor* provide material for discussion. Their portrayal breaks away from the depiction spread in post 9/11 fiction. In their study “Media (Mis) Representations,” Katherine H. Bullock's and Gul Joya Jafri “highlight three ‘personas’ that Muslim women are thought to occupy in the popular imagination, and thus define what Muslim women ‘are supposed to be and do’: The first is the “harem belly -dancer character, ” the mysterious and sexualized woman of the “Orient”; the second is “the oppressed Muslim woman,” often represented as the *hijab*

(headscarf) wearer... and; finally there is “the militant Muslim woman,” often shown in *hijab* with a gun and military clothes” (Bullock and Jafri). While the previous discussions of both Moore’s and Messud’s novels dismantle the second and third type (both novels reveal a representation of Muslim and “quasi” Arab/ Middle Eastern female characters who are neither “oppressed” nor “terrorists”), Adams’s *Harbor* seems to offer an alternative of the first type related to sexuality.

The depiction of Muslim women has often focused on their physical description which is often exaggerated in a way that makes them appear as sexual objects. Indeed, Orientalist discourse associates the Orient as a whole with sex. Edward Said argues that in nineteenth century Europe, sex had been institutionalized with strict rules as a result of Christian church teachings about sex: “We may as well recognize that for nineteenth-century Europe, sex had been institutionalized to a very considerable degree. On the one hand, there was no such thing as “free” sex, and on the other, sex in society entailed a web of legal, moral, even political and economic obligations of a detailed and certainly encumbering sort” (Said *Orientalism* 191). This has a direct effect on the Orient which “was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe” (191). In this context, the Oriental women in general and Muslim women in particular are depicted as the oppressed subhuman, but they are simultaneously seen as being alluring and an epitome of immorality and transgressive sexuality (Claviez 88).

Therefore, Muslim women are regarded as an epitome of immorality and transgressive sexuality: “They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing” (Said *Orientalism* 208). Don DeLillo’s Oriental female character in *Falling Man* illustrates this depiction: she has an Oriental body, “she had dark eyes and floppy body that liked contact” (DeLillo 81) and the writer stresses her desire towards Hammad: “she wanted him to know her whole presence, inside and out” (DeLillo 82). Her questions to Hammad suggest that she is naturally stupid. The strength of this stereotype touches even Ahmad’s mother in John Updike’s *Terrorist* though she is not Muslim. Though Christian, being Ahmed’s mother renders her strongly carrying the sexual features of the Oriental woman and the words Updike uses to describe Jack Levy’s gaze to her are the evidence of this. Words such as “nakedness”, “provocation” imply transgressive sexuality: “a provocation, implying a dazzling ultimate nakedness” (Updike 114). Both DeLillo’s and Updike’s above female characters, thus, emphasize the use of the stereotypical image of the sexual feature of Oriental woman’s body in post 9/11 fiction.

In this context, the Muslim woman's body is the focal point; her activities and human qualities seem to be less important or completely inexistent compared to her physical appearance. Muslim women's description in *Harbor* shows the opposite: their physical appearance seems to be less important than their activities and human qualities. This is shown in the fact that Adams ignores her Muslim characters' bodies to a great extent not to say fullest extent. This is noticeable throughout the novel which lacks depictions of Adams's Muslim female characters' bodies. Instead, she attracts the readers' attention to their reactions and their feelings; the stereotyped image of Muslim women as the epitome of immorality and transgressive sexuality does not find room in *Harbor*.

Disregarding her physical appearance, Adams portrays Yassirah, Aziz's mother, as "bighearted." This human quality is attributed to a Muslim woman who is supposed to be subhuman in the 9/11 context. Aziz's mother is portrayed as a human being who has feelings, who can be happy or sad. This is made obvious in passages throughout the novel, for instance, that which describes her happiness due to the money Aziz sends home (Adams 79) or the other passage which describes her sadness and anxiety about Aziz who makes his journey to USA: "[Aziz] wondered how many times his mother would have liked to call Rafik. He wondered how many times she did . . . his mother would be quiet, and then angry, and then shouting, and then weeping, and then finally, would come the last awful quiet, which is where, he estimated, she had been for at least a month" (Adams12). This passage gathers many reactions that a human being can have and thus may best reflect the humanity of this Muslim woman.

Besides being "bighearted," Yassirah seems to dismantle the stereotype depicting Arab/Muslim women as weak, silenced, oppressed, helpless, features that characterize this category of women in addition to their transgressive sexuality in post 9/11 American fiction. In Jones's novel, everything related to women is decided by men and this is stated explicitly in one of the passages related to Aicha and her mother: "Being female meant being helpless. Powerless. They [women] weren't supposed to plan, but to let others plan for them. They weren't supposed to live, only to serve" (Jones 29). By contrast, Yassirah illustrates how the Arab woman reacts and thinks properly. She takes part in her family events and shows a strong personality and a great capacity in dealing with her family members. This is clearly apparent in the scene where she announces to Aziz that his fiancée has been killed. It has been extremely difficult for both parents to tell him the bad news, but it is the mother who skillfully controls the situation in the presence of Aziz's father. She does not only take part in

the family event but proves to be stronger and more knowledgeable than the father in dealing with their son.

Adams's portrayal of her Muslim female characters, thus, stands in opposition to the stereotype of the subhuman, subjugated, silenced women of the harem and brings to mind the alternative representations of Muslim women offered by the female travel writers whose "travel accounts, memoirs and fictions reveal a gendered counter-discourse that challenges Occidental stereotypes" (1) as mentioned in Reina Lewis's *Rethinking Orientalism*. Analysing Ottoman women writers' literary works, Lewis asserts that Ottoman women writers' deliberate portrayals contest the systematic eroticization of Eastern women activated within Western dominant representations of the Orient (Lewis *Rethinking Orientalism* 2).

Furthermore, Adams's Muslim women are not "terrorists" as claimed by Western Media reports which shed light on what they describe as the "Muslim woman "warrior" or "terrorist"" who alongside with "her male counterpart is also ready to wage war on the West." In "A Globe and Mail," journalists give Muslim Women the label of "mothers of suicide bombers" stressing the difference between the Western and Eastern mothers, the so-called "mothers of suicide bombers": "These were not "real" women or mothers like Western women. They were the reproducers of evil and barbarism, active promoters of the most violent forms of Islamic fundamentalism" (Perry 10). By contrast, Adams never draws a link between the 9/11 events or the War on Terror and her Muslim women in the novel. Additionally, Yassirah, the Muslim woman Adams chooses is not a "mother of suicide bomber" but the mother of a peaceful character who emphatically refuses joining terrorists' groups as it will be discussed at length in the coming chapter.

Adams thus insists on displaying her female Muslim characters' qualities more than bodies. Regardless of their being veiled or not, Muslim women in *Harbor* hold crucial human qualities. This might be the message Adams wants to convey through her only veiled character in the novel. In addition to Adams's reference to veiling through "nuns" (discussed previously), there is a scene which includes a Muslim girl wearing the *hijab* in *Harbor*. What gives material for discussion is the fact that this girl, the daughter of an old Muslim man is described negatively but she is neither oppressed nor associated with "terrorism." She is veiled but "outside the apartment this same daughter wore hair highlighted with blue, eyes kohl and topaz, her tight tits in a lame bustier or a Wonderbra with emerald sequins" (Adams 175). In addition, it is mentioned that she claims pregnancy to Dhakir, one of the illegal

immigrants in *Harbor*. This piece of information implies that this veiled daughter is not a “good Muslim” but a “whore” since she is depicted as “the hijab temptress” (Adams 176).

In their critical reading of *Harbor*, Manqoush, et al (2014) point out that Adams’s *Harbor* casts irony on the Muslim fanatics “who view the wearer of hijab as a good Muslim” (Manqouch et al 73). This attitude may be best shown through Ahmed in Updike’s *Terrorist* for instance. The fanatic Ahmed who has an Irish American mother and an Egyptian father insists on his mother to wear the headscarf though she is not Muslim. She says: “He wanted me to wear it. He said if there was one thing he wanted for his graduation it was his mother not looking like a whore” (Updike 114). Thus Ahmed believes that the headscarf prevents his mother from being a “whore,” an idea which is clearly rejected by Adams in *Harbor*.

Whether the Muslim woman who wears the *hijab* is a good Muslim or not is indeed debatable. This issue has received much debate in the West and has even caused social pressure among Muslims themselves who are said to be “active and responsible agents in this debate” (Alvi et al.92). A survey published in *The Muslim Veil in North America*, conveys the idea that “Muslim women are more inclined than Muslim men to pass judgment on the choices of their co-religionists in this matter. This is perhaps not surprising in view of the fact that the question of dress is, in this case, gender exclusive, and because it raises a moral flag as well” (Alvi et al 92). One of the women surveyed observes:

The debate in our Muslim community is around [this question] . . . is a Muslim woman a good Muslim if she doesn’t wear ,hijab? Some of the Muslim hijabee [sic] women sometimes look down upon other non-hijabee women in the mosque and outside too. It sometimes feels that the issue will never be resolved because of people always judging others. (qtd. in Meshal 92)

Another veiled woman comments that Muslim women often find that their *hijab* accords them “pride” and a status of “pious”, “pure” and “good” in general (Alvi et al 109). It is true that the *hijab* is a garment worn to show respect to the teachings of God and religiously, it is a sign of self-respect and dignity for women according to a number of participants in a survey about “The *Hijab* and its meanings” published in Tabassum Ruby’s *Immigrant Muslim Women and the Hijab* (Ruby 14). However, the *hijab* does not indicate if the woman who wears it is good or bad. The point is that one cannot say or interpret what a person is thinking just by looking at his or her face. The same logic applies with the *hijab*. In short, people

behave according to their will and not according to their clothes. Statistics show that there is “a large number of prostitutes in countries that force women to wear hijab” (Manqoush et al.76) in Iran and Tehran for instance. This is a confirmation that “the hijab is not the measure of one’s morality or abstinence from illicit sexual relationship” (Manqoush et al.76). Not wearing it does not make one less good Muslim than someone who wears it. This is the point that Adams seems to convey through the portrayal of the old man’s daughter. This girl is Muslim, wears the *hijab* but she is a whore: Adams rejects the consideration that a veiled woman is certainly a good Muslim.

2.3.2. Opposing unveiling

While Adams dwarfs the veil issue but at the same time does not seem to reject veiling or support the Western desire to unveil, both Messud and Moore show acceptance towards veiling through their veiled characters. Moore’s two headscarved characters seem to call for optimistic non prejudiced stance towards women with headscarves in America. Likewise, the appearance of the young woman “on the evening news, on CNN, in a headscarf,” (Messud 74) in Messud’s work seems to serve the same purpose especially that her appearance is in the medium which has fueled stereotypes and Islamophobia after 9/11. We know about this young woman from Nora who informs the reader that her job is to count the hurt and dead in Iraq. She first comes unveiled “to the school (where Nora works) in order to speak about her NGO” (Messud 73) for the kids. She is a woman who wants to help “everybody who got hurt, Iraqis, the same as Americans” (Messud 73). Then, a couple of months later, she appears on the evening news, but this time veiling, “telling terrible stories about the numbers of Iraqis-children, families, old women whose injuries and deaths were not being officially reported, but she was going door to door with her clipboard and with a dozen others she’d recruited” (Messud 74). Besides, the writer makes this non Muslim character wear the veil publically, on CNN and at a very critical time that condemned veiled women, the fact which implies Messud’s acceptance of veiling. Through these veiled characters both Messud and Moore contradict the Western desire to unveil. They seem to stand in opposition to the idea of unveiling.

In fact, the Western desire to unveil the Muslim woman is not new. This desire, according to Katherine Bullock, goes back to the nineteenth century colonizers of the Middle East and continues with present Europeans. Bullock explains the reason why the unveiling of

Muslim women was, and continues to be, a central objective of both of them in the past and the present:

The veiled women violated all the requirements of the world-as exhibition: they could not be seen; they could not be seen, but were seeing; and they were not a picture that could be read. They were mysterious beings who refused to offer themselves up to the visitor. For me, this is a key aspect of the European campaign against the veil. Europeans arrived in the Middle East with the confident knowledge of being at the apex of civilization, but this conviction was destabilized upon arrival in the Middle East. How could one be superior, or establish authority over creatures who could not be known [.....] What could not be seen, grasped as a spectacle, could not be controlled. Moreover, Europeans felt uneasy about the veiled women: the Europeans knew they were being watched by women who were themselves unseen. That gave the women some power over the Europeans. That was a reversal of the expected relationship between superior and inferior – to see without being seen. And so – and here is the crux of my argument – the Europeans retaliated. They attacked the veil, they tried to rip it off; they tried everything they could to see the women. They exposed women in paintings, photographs, etc., by portraying them naked, or otherwise undressed. And thus began the campaign to unveil Muslim women. (5-6)

In the same context, in his “Algeria Unveiled,” Frantz Fanon highlights that the French colonialists targeted the Algerian society’s women to actually colonize it. Fanon states: “The colonial administration could then define a precise political doctrine: “if we want to hit the Algerian society in its deep contexture, in its resistance strategies, we must start to conquer the women ; we must go and find them behind the veils under which they conceal themselves and in the houses where the men hide them”” (37- 38).

Western constructs of Arabs/Muslims have been used to justify conquests and colonialism for a very long time. Frantz Fanon argues that “In the Arab world, for example, the veil worn by women is at once noticed by the tourist. [.....] the veil worn by the women appears with such constancy that it generally suffices to characterize Arab society” (35). Fanon stresses the idea that “the occupying forces, in applying their maximum psychological attention to the veil worn by Algerian women, were obviously bound to achieve some results. Here and there it thus happened that a woman was “saved,” and symbolically unveiled” (42). In the post 9/11 context, the US led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq are the best example

of using the veil as a justification of the interventions. The use of women's rights rhetoric to justify US interventions gained acceptance from the FMF a liberal feminist group which has defended Afghan women's rights since 1997 and believes that US intervention is the best way for these women's liberation. The FMF supported the liberation of women in Afghanistan stating: "the US and its allies must rescue and liberate the people especially the women and children..." (Khalid 106). They furthermore encourage women to lift their veil (burqas) and go out without their male relatives to prove their liberation which comes as a result of the War on Terror (Khalid 106).

Unlike the works under study, post 9/11 novels such as Homa Pourasgari's *The Dawn of Saudi* show the Western desire to unveil Muslim women. Sahar, the protagonist of this novel believes that it is not fair to wear the veil; it is unjust "that she was forced to look at the beautiful blue sky through the blackness of her veil" (Pourasgari 6). As the novel unfolds, she does remove the veil, the sign of oppression, and thus gets the liberation that the Western women are said to enjoy. This reflects Helen Watson's statement about the way the veil is seen by many non Muslim writers: "For non Muslim writers the veil is variously depicted as a tangible symbol of women's oppression, a constraining and constricting form of dress and a form of social control" (Watson 137). By making her character remove her veil, Pourasgari encourages unveiling.

The Muslim Sahar then gets rid of her veil and lives in America where the veiled non Muslim Tassie and Sarah live and where the Sufi Sana is invited. While Pourasgari's post 9/11 novel encourages Arab women to remove the veil, Moore's and Messud's novels seem to accept the veil. More importantly, by making the veil on Western women's heads in the West, Moore's veiled characters seem to aspire to disconnect the discourse about a woman's right to wear a headscarf in America from any reference to terrorism since "any meaningful discourse surrounding a woman's right to wear a headscarf in America cannot be disconnected from the racial subtext of the "Terrorist Other" associated with the Muslim headscarf" (Aziz). Furthermore, what the FMF (the liberal feminist group mentioned previously) strives to fulfill (lift women's veil (burqas) and go out without their male relatives) is achieved in Moore's and Messud's stories without lifting the veil. Veiled, Tassie and Sarah go out freely. Likewise no male relative is said to accompany Sana to Sirena's Studio.

2.3.3. Muslim intellectuals encouraging unveiling

Being against the veil and calling for removing it is not specific to Westerners or non-Muslims particularly. It is a stance that has been adopted and emphatically defended by Muslim intellectuals as well: Hoda Shaarawi, Duria Shafiq, Amina Al Said, Iqbal Baraka and Fatima Mernissi. These women's call for unveiling might, to some extent, be paralleled to post 9/11 American writers' stance towards the veil and opposed to the presentation of the veil in the novels under study as it will be discussed in the coming lines. The above mentioned intellectual women decided to uncover their faces and fought against the veil. This leads us to talk about the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century when "there was mass unveiling all over the Middle East" (Woldesemait 10). During that period, a lot of Arab male and female reformers called for lifting the veil: "Feminism linked with nationalism, and from the mid-1900s to the 1960s unveiling became the norm in most Arab Muslim countries" (Woldesemait 10). But this lasted until the 1970s when the Middle East witnessed a new rise of the veil, "which took on new meanings and new styles" (Woldesemait 10).

Huda Shaarawi is a central figure in early twentieth century Egyptian feminism and nationalism. In 1923, this Egyptian feminist leader, took her veil off in public, precisely in a Cairo train station. Shaarawi lived and grew up in the transformative colonial decades and the nationalist revolution which gave impetus to her actions. She struggled for national and feminist liberation engaging herself in the two struggles; for Egyptian women and for Egyptian independence. As a feminist and an activist, she defended the rights of Egyptian women "and was one of the first women activists to emphasize that Islam was not incompatible with women's rights, including political participation and paid labor (Stanton 350).

Another example of Muslim intellectuals who advocate unveiling is Fatima Mernissi, a towering figure in Middle East studies. Though from a different country and a different generation, Mernissi shares with Shaarawi her struggle to defend women's rights and more importantly for our discussion, her encouragement for lifting the veil. Fatima Mernissi is another famous feminist who rejects the veil. This does not mean that she believes that Islam is the source of women's oppression. Like Shaarawi, she calls for unveiling but far from accusing Islam and the prophet of persecuting Muslim women.

Though from a different generation from Shaarawi, Mernissi shares the same belief with her. She believes that the “*hijab* means limitation, segregation and isolation, anything that keeps women out of the public domain” (Tuppurainen169). Hence, Shaarawi and Mernissi share the same belief about the veil with Pourasgari as presented in her post 9/11 work. That is to say, these feminist leaders reject the veil which is in their view the obstacle that prevents women from entering the public life and limits their freedom and rights which is exactly the same vision offered in Pourasgari’s *The Dawn*. The veil in these Muslim feminists’ view thus represents the same symbol of restriction and oppression that the West uses in the post 9/11 era and even before, though the origins of this oppression for these feminists and for the Westerners is not said to be the same as explained before.

Although about a century of time separates post 9/11 era and these feminist leaders’ era, the veil seems to keep always the same label of oppression. However, the reaction towards the veiled woman issue is different: while Shaarawi and Mernissi, the Muslim feminists totally reject the veil, and call women for unveiling to get their liberation, having thus the same stance of post 9/11 American writers, Moore and Messud the American writers accept veiling in their post 9/11 literary works and associate it with liberation. This is very clear through their veiled women portrayals discussed previously. Adding to it the open and available possibility for these veiled characters to practise politics: Every Wednesday, Moore’s Sarah organizes political meetings at home to discuss racism in America. Messud’s veiled character who visits Nora’s school is active in political organization and appears on TV to announce post 9/11 circumstances.

2.4. Absence of the “motif of enclosure,” the harem

Unlike Messud’s and Moore’s narratives whose focus is on the veiled woman stereotype, Adams illustrates other stereotypical images that have been ascribed to Arab/Muslim women such as the “domesticated Muslim woman” (Mohanty 22). Adams’s *Harbor* seems to totally reject the harem stereotype or the “motif of enclosure,” (105) as Mohdja Kahf calls it. This stereotype is extensively re-inforced by post 9/11 fiction, Sherry Jones’s *The Jewel* is one example. It is true that *Harbor*’s focus is on a group of Muslim male immigrants ;yet, it also displays Muslim female characters briefly but effectively. Adams’ Muslim women contradict the stereotypical image of “the oppressed, subjugated, and domesticated woman” (Aziz) prevailing post 9/11 fiction. Novels in which women are perceived as being oppressed and abused with little or no rights to exercise their agency.

Among post 9/11 novels discussed previously, *The Jewel* may be the best work that can reflect the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman in the “harem.” This novel explicitly exposes the prophet’s wives confinement. Aicha, the youngest wife, is confined to the prophet’s “harem,” a severe restriction of personal freedom. The prophet is said to exercise this restriction over his wives under the instructions of Islam, the religion which is said to restrict women’s public interaction and to prevent women from talking or meeting other people than relatives unless she is accompanied by a “male guardian.” Aicha is not “allowed to step outside [her] parents’ house” (Jones 18). She is prevented from going outside to the market, for instance, or anywhere else only with her father or husband.

Unlike the above portrayal which strengthens the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman in the “harem,” *Harbor* offers an opposite image. In this novel, the Muslim mother who lives in Algeria, a Muslim country, is free from these restrictions claimed in post 9/11 novels. This woman works outside home. She takes two jobs, one behind the counter at a computer store and the other as a maid at a downtown hotel” (Adams 177). These two jobs need interaction with all categories of people both males and females. This means that this Muslim woman is placed in a public atmosphere where she is more exposed to men. This stands in opposition to the seclusion of women and the restricted nature of activities outside the household. About the seclusion of Muslim/Arab women, Chandra Talpade Mohanty comments that it is “carried over from the times of the prophet Muhammad” and that “Arabs and Muslims, it appears, don’t change at all” (28). This form of restriction and oppression is exercised by the Muslim/Arab man in post 9/11 fiction. Yet, this seems to be absent in *Harbor*: The woman’s husband does not show any opposition to the fact that his wife works and interacts with male strangers, nor does he oblige her to wear a veil as expected from a Muslim husband.

This example of Adams’s Muslim woman stands in total opposition to Katya Hijazi, one of the main characters in Zoe Ferraris’ *Finding Nouf*. Katya Hijazi, who is well educated, a PhD holder, is forbidden to follow the common process of applying for a job that fits her specialism because “[t]here were few jobs for women, especially educated women. Women were allowed to work only in places where they wouldn’t interact with men...the country’s scientific jobs were filled by men first” (Ferraris 144). Furthermore, Nayir, a Muslim character in the novel, is shocked at his knowledge that Katya, the lab assistant, is engaged to Othman, a member of the Sharawis family. He cannot understand how this respectable well-known family, one of the richest families in Saudi Arabia, accepts a

woman who works among men to be one of them. This Muslim man's reaction towards the woman who works among men does not only display the Muslim woman's aspirations for a career as very restricted and desperate but, more importantly, stresses the rejection of this woman by her own Islamic society if she dares entering the professional world with men.

Another example of Adams' Muslim free women lies in Aziz's mother who is also free from the restrictions of the "harem" claimed in post 9/11 novels. In one of Aziz's flashbacks about his family, he recalls the play that his mother takes him to see when he was a child. Interestingly, his mother who is supposed to stay at home accompanies him to watch the play. This passage lacks the presence of the "guardian" who is said to be the companion of women in the supposedly patriarchal Islamic societies (Moghadam 147): Aziz's mother is alone with her child. Furthermore, the veil does not mark its presence in the writer's passage; whether Aziz's mother wears the veil or not is not mentioned and seems unimportant. Thus, the Muslim woman in *Harbor* has the possibility to go out and is not domesticated and oppressed as it has often been depicted in the post 9/11 context. Her life is not enclosed within the "harem" which Mohja Kahf calls the "motif of enclosure" according to which the Muslim man guards, veils, and encloses women (Kahf 105).

Interestingly, these above examples of Muslim women are not the only illustration in the story. The Egyptian family who rescues Aziz when he arrives in US is perhaps the strongest example which challenges the harem stereotype. In the very beginning of the story, it is revealed that the Egyptian man takes Aziz to his own apartment "where [his] wife accepted him with no expression into a hallway with blush-colored broadloom stretching into rooms with white furniture" (Adams 7). This Egyptian wife's welcoming a stranger certainly raises questions about the stereotype of Arab women's restricted freedom or rather the "harem." In her *Rethinking Orientalism*, Reina Lewis argues that the harem was the family part of the household. She comments saying: "For most families those living in the harem would include the wife of the eldest man (head of the family) and any daughters, daughters-in-law and their children. Children of both sexes had access to the selamlık [part of the house reserved for men], girls only being secluded when they took the veil at the onset of puberty" (97). In the same vein, in his *Harem: The World Behind the Veil*, Alev Lytle Croutier clarifies the meaning of the "harem" stating that it "refers to the separate, protected part of a household where women, children and servants live in maximum seclusion and privacy" (17). Yet, inserting Aziz, a male stranger within the Egyptian family: the wife and a baby boy and a girl (Adams 12) dismantles the "seclusion and privacy" of the harem. More importantly, the

couple's welcoming of Aziz is not only for one day but for three days and it is the wife who takes care of him. During these days, he only sleeps and eats "the juice and chicken sandwiches" (Adams 19) that the wife brings to his room. She even insists on bandaging his feet after dinner and before he goes to his friend Rafik: "Those feet! I must bandage those feet before we take you to your friend," (Adams 19) and she intensely warns him that he must get them looked at because it "is not something that can heal on its own" (Adams 23).

This happens in the apartment in the presence of her Egyptian husband and with his knowledge. This husband is supposed to hide his wife and strictly prevent her from meeting males other than relatives. This is the behavior of Muslims in Jones' *The Jewel*. Sherry Jones's Aisha in *The Jewel*, for instance, is strictly given the authoritative instruction to "remain indoors" (Jones 18) preventing her from meeting "boys or men" (Jones 18) except if they are relatives. This is what Fatima Mernissi, the Egyptian feminist leader, calls "segregation of the sexes" and which "refers to the systematic prevention of interaction between men and women not related by blood or marriage" (Noon 5). In the light of this notion, "female space is limited to the domestic domain" and the veil hides her when entering a male space (Noon 5). Yet, this "segregation of the sexes" does not characterize the Egyptian wife's dealing with Aziz with whom she has neither a relation of blood nor of marriage. Interestingly, the Egyptian wife is portrayed as totally free to interact with Aziz who is not a relative; he is a stranger that her husband has found in the street and about whom he knows nothing. Adams thus dismantles the stereotype reinforced in Jones' novel: the Egyptian wife stands in opposition to Aicha who is locked and prevented from public interactions. More importantly, Adams opposes what is regarded by poets and artists as the focal point of Oriental power, the harem, as Reina Lewis mentions in her *Gendering Orientalism*:

Although European Orientalism was a heterogeneous phenomenon, it can be argued that the cult of the harem was central to the fantasies that structure Orientalist discourse. The mystique of the forbidden harem stemmed from the vision of it as a segregated space, a polygamous realm, from which all men except the husband (generally conceptualized as the Sultan) and his eunuchs are barred. Although some artists include the Sultan, eunuchs or male guards at the harem entrance, the presence of men is most often signified by their absence. (111)

In a nutshell, Adams does not reproduce the stereotype of the harem and the oppressed Muslim woman who lives under the control of patriarchal males. Whereas her narrative sheds

light on this stereotype, Messud's and Moore's fictional works emphasize the veiled woman stereotype as discussed previously.

3. Non patriarchal male/female relationships

The veil stereotypes which are highlighted in Messud's and Moore's *The Woman Upstairs* and *A Gate at the Stairs* respectively (as far as females are concerned) seem to be dwarfed in Adams' *Harbor*, which rather focuses its attention on the stereotype of the so called patriarchal Muslim society. While Messud's Skandar does not talk about his family—"he talked about their time in America, and global politics, and Paris, a bit; but often about Lebanon," (Messud 186) – and Moore's Reynaldo avoids mentioning his relatives because he hides his whole identity from Tassie, the characters in *Harbor* offer details about Muslim male and female relationships. These details shake the rigid assumptions that Muslim women are oppressed and live in Muslim patriarchal societies. Their portrayal corrects the distorted image attributed to them and to their society by post 9/11 fiction.

The good relationship of *Harbor's* Muslim females with their male relatives is highly apparent in several scenes throughout the novel. For example, Adams' portrayal of Lahouari's and Ghazi's mother and father, Aziz's mother, sisters and father. Lahouari, one of the Muslim characters in the novel, is confused when he sees "his mother screeching at his father in the garden back home" (Adams 74); he feels embarrassed and asks his father why he does not defend himself and his father's answer is: "As long as there are men and women, they will scream at one another. There is no disrespect. There is the flame of love," (Adams 74) a reply that defuses the image of the authoritarian husband and the oppressed silent wife. This reply also unveils the fact that no efforts are needed to incite the Muslim men and women to learn how to live together in mutual respect. This seems to be the positive behavior of Aziz's father who always keeps his wife away from being upset; "he was forever diluting things to protect her" (Adams 244). Another example that beautifully stresses the same idea is Ghazi's comments about Aziz's family, completing Heather's fascination with this family: "There is great love in that family. Their father is not hard. His mother, she is best friend with my mother. She is – how do you say in English that she is – oh, large inside? "Bighearted," something like that" (Adams 224).

In the same vein, the depiction of Aziz recalling bygone images of his sisters and his strong relationship with his mother reinforce good Muslim male/female relationships in the

novel, not only wife/husband ones as in the examples above, but also brother/ sister relationships. Remembering moments he has spent with his sisters in Algeria alleviates his suffering in USA: “his sisters singing a mocking song. Stop doing that with your eyes, his father was saying. The roundel of his sisters teased him. *Squinting, squinting, Aziz is always squinting*” (Adams 185). This passage paints a picture of happy Muslim females playing with their brother and does not show any authoritative attitude of the Muslim brother over his sisters.

Furthermore, Aziz’s good relationship to his mother is stressed throughout almost every scene in the novel. His dealing with his mother extensively reveals great respect, love and caring for this woman. For instance, the horrific experience in the army and its horrible events have forced Aziz to leave his beloved family in Algeria. Yet, though abroad, Aziz’s mind and soul are constantly linked to his mother. Noticeably, the most important steps he undergoes in USA are often linked to either a vivid remembering of his mother or a direct contact on the phone. When he first moves to the city of Boston, once at the Egyptian’s apartment taking a shower, he repeats “an old prayer his mother had taught him” (Adams 9). And after the three-day stay when he decides to call Rafik to pick him, he plans to call his mother immediately after calling Rafik (Adams 12).

4. Patriarchy and shallow human connections in the West

Within Orientalist discourse “Islam and Muslims are believed to be inherently inferior and backward when compared to the West, which, in contrast, is emblematic of supposed liberation and progress” (Masud 515). In the aftermaths of the 9/11 events, the Arab/Muslim woman is depicted as the victim of Islam and the prophet’s legislations which result in the frustrating Islamic world. She is portrayed in the American novels as no more than an object of sexual gratification struggling for freedom. In this context, American writers and media insist on conveying the message that the Western woman is free and her life does not depend on a male guardian being her father, brother or husband as mentioned in the previous sections. A November 2001 article in *Time magazine*, “The Women of Islam,” written by Lisa Beyer is only one example of how journalists use simplified complex representational strategies while advancing a monolithic image of Islam as brutal, violent, and oppressive” (Alsultany 76). One of the *Time* articles’ subtitles states: “The Taliban perfected subjugation. But nowhere in the Muslim world are women treated as equals” (Alsultany 76). This implies that patriarchal violence resides in the East and gender equality in the West, an image which is rampant in

post 9/11 fiction. However, Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* shakes the rigid assumptions that patriarchy resides in the East and women's oppression's source is Islam. Unexpectedly, it sheds light on patriarchy in the West. This is not the case with the two other novels, Moore's *A Gate* and Adams's *Harbor* which tend to highlight other issues related to females' life in the Western society: their writers seem to throw light on the Western family fragile relationships instead of patriarchy.

4.1. Patriarchy and Western oppressed women

The stereotypical image that patriarchy and oppressed women dwell in the East is rampant in post 9/11 novels. Pourasgari's *The Dawn* best reflects these assumptions. It is argued that Pourasgari follows on the steps of Sherry Jones in portraying Muslims as patriarchal and Islam as the source of this power:

Arab Muslim woman is oppressed, marginalized and silenced by Muslims' absolute power endowed to them by their Prophet. In Pourasgari's *The Dawn of Saudi* (2009), a reader comes across people who resemble their Prophet in oppression and sexuality: "Men preferred their women as young as one year old . . . The Prophet Muhammad was the model they followed. Aisha became his wife when she was six years of age, and the marriage was when she was nine. The younger a woman married the better. She would be more subservient. (qtd. in Altwaiji 7)

This post 9/11 work explores the situation of women in Modern Saudi society and takes the reader on a journey from Saudi Arabia, where women are depicted as the property of men, to the United States where women are said to be totally independent. The novel's two main settings are Saudi Arabia presented to the reader as a strict conservative country deprived of the right of freedom and the United States as the country which values and advocates freedom.

Strangely enough, the role provided by Pourasgari to the Saudi Muslim woman in *The Dawn* seems to be exactly the same played by the Western character Bella, Nora's mother in *The Woman Upstairs*. To make our argument clear, we should highlight the story's synopsis because we need to know some of its details. *The Dawn* turns around the two main characters, the American girl Dawn Parnell who falls in love with a Saudi man and marries him and the Saudi girl Sahar el Hidjazi who is forced to marry an old Saudi man. Dawn is a Western

woman who is totally free and enjoys all her rights and Sahar is the oppressed Muslim woman who longs to be in her place. The relation between Sahar and Dawn is that of a friendship.

After her marriage, Dawn discovers that her Saudi husband has two other wives and she falls in the hands of the Muslim patriarchal society which does not even give the right to women to divorce as portrayed in the novel. Consequently, she kills her husband and then her brother-in-law kills her. What is important here is that the other main character Sahar escapes to the US where she starts working and defending Saudi women's rights under the name of Dawn Parnell. Intelligently, Pourasgari uses two characters from both sides, the Orient and the West, to strengthen the stereotype of the oppressed woman: the Saudi Sahar who is oppressed in her own society and the American Dawn who is not only oppressed but killed in this patriarchal society. In one of the book reviews, Malcolm R. Campbell comments:

Pourasgari's inventive plot and strong characters not only open a wide window onto Saudi oppression of women, but make for a very strong story with the poignant moments of well-told romance and the twists and turns of page-turning mystery. Both the oppression and the fear associated with it are aptly shown from a woman's perspective through Dawn and Sahar. (Campbell)

Throughout the whole story, Dawn is given the role of enlightening her Saudi friend Sahar and inspiring her to fight for freedom: A Western woman enlightens an Arab woman. Interestingly, Nora's mother, Bella, plays the same role as Dawn: Bella keeps enlightening her daughter and urging her to be free and independent. When she recalls her mother's talks to her, Nora informs the reader that her mother who "stayed at home" (Messud 20) wants her to "see the world" to go to college and to art school and to do everything she likes; "to have it all" (Messud 49):

You're such a baby, you can go to art school afterward and still come out even. Get a master's in Painting on top of your B.A., and you'll be ready for all of it. I want you to have it all. It's not like when I was a girl, the MRS degree and all that. You won't live off pin money, off any man, no matter how much you love him. You won't depend on anyone but yourself. (Messud 49)

What matters to her is to "be employable at the end" (Messud 49) so that she will not depend on anyone but herself. In short, she wants her daughter to be different from her, she whose University of Michigan degree was "all but ornamental" (Messud 50). She has always felt

embarrassed because “she hadn’t done anything with it” (Messud 50). Ironically, Nora comments that giving birth to her brother in 1959, was what her mother “did with her precious education” (Messud 50). The striking difference the two pairs Dawn and Sahar, Bella and Nora lies in the fact that both women Nora and her mother are Westerners. Bella constantly advises Nora or rather warns her not to let herself live under the authority of a husband or any other man. While Dawn enlightens Sahar in *The Dawn*, Bella warns her daughter in *The Woman Upstairs*. This highlights the fact that oppressed women exist in the West and consequently dismantles the stereotypical image that the oppressed women dwell the East.

While liberation and total freedom are the supposed features of the Westerners, the stereotype of backwardness, of the oppressed women and the patriarchal men who impose severe restrictions on them is associated with the Orientals and reinforced in post 9/11 fiction. Chandra Talpade Mohanty observes that presenting the Western woman “as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the freedom to make their own decisions” (22) helps construct the image of the oppressed Other women. However, this is not the case in *The Woman Upstairs*: although she belongs to another epoch, Bella offers a powerful image of the oppressed woman in the West. The description of this Western woman’s plight occupies many pages in the novel. Here is a passage about this plight, recounted by Nora:

I always understood that the great dilemma of my mother’s life had been to glimpse freedom too late, at too high a price. She was of the generation for which the rules changed halfway,.... in which women were educated and then deployed for domestic purposes-rather like using an elaborately embroidered tablecloth on which to serve messy children their breakfast. Her University of Michigan degree was all but ornamental, and it always seemed significant that it stood in its frame under the eaves in the attic, festooned with dust bunnies, among a dozen disavowed minor artworks, behind boxes of discarded toys. The first woman in her family to go to college, she’d cared enough to frame her diploma, only then to be embarrassed about having cared, embarrassed because she felt she hadn’t done anything with it, had squandered her opportunity. (Messud 50)

Nora’s mother does not enjoy freedom. She is a woman who has been “educated and then deployed for domestic purposes,” (Messud 50) the very same role played by the Muslim women in *The Dawn*. In this post 9/11 novel, women are said to be “precious commodities

who bore sons” and this is the task that makes them worthy in life, a depiction which is applicable to Nora’s mother indeed. This latter also lives “on an allowance from [Nora’s] father – or a salary” (Messud 53). These conditions make her obsessed with the idea of being independent from man. This is why she constantly and emphatically transmits this desire and necessity, in her opinion, to her daughter Nora.

In addition to oppressed Bella, the name chosen for her daughter, Nora, the protagonist of *The Woman Upstairs* is highly significant: it, too, stands for an oppressed woman. Nora has the same name as the protagonist of Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. Messud is asked in a phone interview whether Nora is in some ways a descendant of other literary characters and whether she has any lineage. Among others, Messud mentions Ibsen’s Nora. She asserts that her choice of the name Nora is a reference to Ibsen’s *The Doll’s House* and the plight of women in this play (Grassi). Critics relate Nora to Ibsen’s protagonist’s search for identity: “Nora, as we quickly learn, is one very angry woman, who, like her namesake in Ibsen’s ‘Doll’s House,’ is in search of an identity for herself” (Kakutani). Ibsen’s Nora lives under the rules of a godlike husband, a patriarchal husband who strictly controls her life: “she experiences discrimination and oppressive attitudes from her husband and the society at that time” (Pravitasari 38). Interestingly, this patriarchal Western husband brings to mind the stereotypical image of patriarchal Muslim husbands. Yet, it collides with the image of caring Muslim husbands in Lorraine Adams’ *Harbor* for instance.

Messud does not only make her protagonist hold the name of an oppressed woman, but she makes her disturbed as well. Nora’s disturbed self is apparent at the very beginning of the novel in her furious self-introduction: “How angry am I?” (Messud 3) which is argued to be the “Feminine fury that is kept silent” and it is “represented in Nora as an American Woman” (Bornaki and Salami 2). Interestingly, Nora’s disturbed self is but a consequence of the Western patriarchal society as some critics argue:

The characterization of Nora as an ideal self-made obedient and kind woman depicts the satiric struggles between a woman’s individuality and her social responsibility. Messud’s depiction of such furious American self-made feminine identity ironically represents a contradictory type of feminine identity that the American patriarchal hegemony has engendered. (Bornaki and Salami 2)

Thus both the character's name and her disturbed self reveal the existence of patriarchy in the Western society. Oppressed women and patriarchy thus have existed even in the West and are not features of the East as post 9/11 fiction propagates. It seems that the issue of patriarchy and the oppressed Western woman in Messud's novel is not only conveyed through the mother but through the daughter as well by means of her borrowed name and disturbed self.

It is true that Messud's Nora's life is free from any patriarchal authority and thus seems different from her mother's and from Ibsen's Nora who both suffer from their husbands' strict control. However, the particular and deliberate choice of the name of an oppressed woman who lives under patriarchy in addition to her mother's constant warning about this issue give the impression that the Western society is still threatened not to say patriarchal. In other words, Messud's work implies the idea that not only older Western generations of women lived under patriarchy and were oppressed but the new generations are threatened as well: although the Western women seem to be liberated, the new generations of women live under the threat of patriarchy. More importantly, it seems that Messud focuses on Western older generations of women suffering from patriarchy more than new ones. This is because patriarchy in the West also appears in Messud's novel through the explicit reference to Virginia Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own," a reference which brings another epoch into light, as will now be highlighted.

4.2. Virginia Woolf and Patriarchy

Nora's artistic project in the novel consists of little doll house like constructions (a reference to Ibsen's play) depicting small rooms inhabited by famous feminist writers Virginia Woolf being an example. Virginia Woolf struggled for women's emancipation. She is herself "the victim of such society that underwent father dominance and society dominance and brother rape . . . she was affected by her father's domination of his wife and daughters and suffers these realities so screams this fact in her novels" (Azizmohammadi et al. 136).

Through her dioramas, Nora tries to identify herself with the feminist writers, "her personal heroines," (Schillinger) who express "a sense of the woman artist so fundamentally isolated." Nora entitles this artistic project: "A Room of One's Own." This direct reference to Virginia Woolf's extended essay, "A Room of One's Own," updates Virginia Woolf's conceptions of women (especially the woman writer) as presented in her feminist text. Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" (1929) is a feminist text that discusses the ability

of women writers to produce under the limitations they experience, most importantly poverty and patriarchy (in England). She emphasizes the crucial role of education in women's lives and she sheds light on the contradictory images of women in fiction and reality: an idealized image of women provided in fiction written by men goes in contrast with the patriarchy these men exercise upon women in real life:

Women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of time. Indeed if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some would say greater. But this is woman in fiction. In fact, as Professor Trevelyan points out, she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room. A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words and profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read; scarcely spell; and was the property of her husband. (590)

This passage highlights the image of the oppressed Western women in the patriarchal Western society, and is once again a proof that weakens the stereotype that patriarchy is specific to the East. What interests us here is this picture of women in the West that Virginia Woolf conveys and Messud implicitly integrates in her post 9/11 work through the artistic work of her protagonist.

In fact, Messud's significant reference to Woolf does not end here. While the first reference to Virginia Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own" is explicit, the second reference is less so. It lies in Nora's portrayal of her life as a fun house. Throughout the novel, Nora articulates her struggles with life and meaning by comparing it to a "Fun House" with mirrors:

I've tried so hard to get out of the hall of mirrors, this sham and pretend of the world, or of my world, on the East Coast of the United States of America in the first decade of the twenty-first century. And behind every mirror is another fucking mirror, and down every corridor is another corridor, and the Fun House isn't fun anymore and it isn't even funny, but there doesn't seem to be a door marked EXIT. (Messud 4)

This passage captures Virginia Woolf's mirror metaphor in her essay "A Room of One's Own," the extended essay about male female relationship as indicated previously. The mirror metaphor is among Woolf's contributions as an artist and as a feminist thinker. Virginia Woolf is a writer who observed firsthand the horrors of World War 1. Woolf's ideas about gender roles as presented in "A Room of One's Own" are explicitly and radically political. In "A Room of One's Own," Woolf creates the mirror encounter as image of current gender relations, examining the main cause for woman's oppression. She argues that the cruelty of war plays the role of a mirror magnifying the destructiveness of rigid gender roles and gender roles constructed in society reflect the warring feelings. Woolf suggests that woman's role is a magnifying mirror for men. That is to say, men need women to act as magnifying mirrors, a diminutive image of woman which symbolizes patriarchy. In her article: "Mirroring and Mothering," Susan Squier explains Woolf's view:

men need women to act as magnifying mirrors: because men need to combat that primitive image of themselves as weak, needy creatures; because men desire to control and even to humiliate the woman figure who enforced that early powerless self-image. Men need women to serve as magnifying mirrors in order to fight off the continuing, debilitating suspicion that they are never free of their primitive longing for that powerful mother figure. (277)

"A Room of One's Own" is Woolf's extended analysis of male-female relations, "where it appears as the encounter between man and woman-as-magnifying-mirror" (Squier 272). This metaphore, thus, highlights the patriarchal male/female relationship in the Western society, the idea which messud integrates in her post 9/11 novel.

In her essay, Woolf applies the mirror metaphor to real life, more precisely to patriarchy and gender oppression. In this context, the mirror presents distorted images of reality. For Woolf, men are bolstered by a false sense of superiority that makes them feel powerful and able to commit actions that she labels as "violent" and "heroic":

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice his natural size . . . Whatever may be their use in civilised societies, mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action, That is why Napoleon and Mussolini insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for if they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge. This serves to

explain how restless they are under her criticism. For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the lookingglass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished. How is he to go on giving judgment, civilising natives, making laws, writing books and dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and dinner at least twice the size he really is? (30)

In this way, Woolf stresses the inferiority of the Western woman, the idea which Messud seems to uncover in her novel. Therefore, Messud does not only make her protagonist hold the name of an oppressed Western woman as clarified previously, but she also makes her identify herself with Virginia Woolf, the woman who both experiences patriarchy and denounces it. Strikingly, Messud's reference to Woolf takes the reader almost a century before her post 9/11 novel's publication. This seems to be the writer's attempt to show that patriarchy existed in the West a long time ago. In doing so, Messud stresses the image of the oppressed Western woman in the patriarchal Western society and more importantly dismantles the stereotype that unquestionably associates patriarchy with the East.

4.3. Patriarchy, oppressed women and Islam

Messud seems to go further in her representation of the issue of patriarchy and the oppression of women in the 9/11 context that strongly links it to Islam as a religion. In addition to the integration of the mirror metaphor which provides a political explanation of women's inferiority rather than a religious one (as indicated above), Messud makes use of Simone De Beauvoir's thoughts, another woman thinker's ideas in this field of study. Maura Gaughan argues :

When Nora asks how we have ended up where we are, despite "all that revolutionary talk of the seventies," she captures the force of civilization and the survival of the species mentioned by Simone de Beauvoir when she writes, "it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature. (Messud, 21; De Beauvoir, 301)" It will take more than a mere half-century of post-structuralist thought to kill civilization and the creatures it creates (Messud, 21; De Beauvoir, 301). (qtd. in Gaughan 75)

Nora's comments and Gaughan's argument bring Simone De Beauvoir's concept about women, oppression and patriarchy into our discussion. De Beauvoir was known for her 1949 book *The Second Sex*, a detailed analysis of women's oppression which encompasses her well known statement: "One is not born, but becomes a woman." This book, which has profoundly

influenced Western feminism, presents Beauvoir's argument that "woman" is a man-made concept and female humans should not be forced to become a "woman" as defined by the patriarchal world. In short, *The Second Sex* is Beauvoir's critique of patriarchy; it is a challenge to all categories which justify women's inferior status. It advocates women's equality without denying the sexual differences between men and women as a fact.

The presence of Simone De Beauvoir's thoughts in Messud's novel seems significant; it discloses the association between the oppression of women and Islam. According to Beauvoir, biology has been used by men to justify the inferiority of women. In other words, women are passive in sex but pivotal in procreation. Biology offers the assumptions that in the act of copulation, men are principal and active whereas women are inactive, passive, dependent and thus inferior. In addition to this, women's ability to give birth is another explanation to their subjugation. Giving birth, raising children and sacrificing their whole life for them is their main task (De Beauvoir 29). Consequently, the inferior status of women is derived from biology and becomes fixed and eternal. However, De Beauvoir believes this subsequent women's inferiority and gender inequality in society cannot be eternal. She therefore denies it stating:

These biological considerations are extremely important. In the history of woman they play a part of the first rank and constitute an essential element in her situation . . . But I deny that they establish for her a fixed and inevitable destiny. They are insufficient for setting up a hierarchy of the sexes; they fail to explain why woman is the Other, they do not condemn her to remain in this subordinate role forever. (33)

According to Beauvoir, women's subjugation will change with time thanks to historical development and economic considerations. Interestingly, this subjugation is not related to religion.

By injecting Simone de Beauvoir's thoughts in her novel, Messud implicitly renders obsolete the stereotype that connects the oppression of women to Islam. In her book *Believing Women in Islam*, Asma Barlas argues that many recent studies reveal that "women's status and roles in Muslim societies, as well as patriarchal structures and gender relationships, are a function of multiple factors, most of which have nothing to do with religion" (3). And this tones with the secular arguments for sexual equality that Beauvoir provides in *The Second Sex* and Messud implicitly makes use of in her novel. This reference implies Messud's

attitude towards the pervasive stereotype that accuses Islam of women's oppression. That is to say, by injecting Virginia Woolf's political examination of women's inferiority through the mirror metaphor and Beauvoir's biological considerations of this issue through Nora's comment (mentioned above), Messud intends to widen the area of explanations about women's oppression in a way that dismantles the post 9/11 stereotype and offers other possible explanations free from any connections with Islam.

4.4. Unhappy Western women

While Messud devotes a space to the oppressed Western woman in *The Woman Upstairs*, it seems that Moore and Adams choose to portray the unhappy Western woman who lives within a frustrated Western family in *A Gate and Harbor*. Moore's narrative does not show any portrayal of western female characters living happily within their families. Nowhere in the novel is a scene which depicts Tassie's happiness within her family. Her family relations seem to be deprived of love and careful care of one another, and the scene where Robert picks her up at the Dellacrosse bus station may summarize everything. On the ride back from college to the house, they talk about everything but it is until they are about to enter the house that Tassie asks "How's Mom?" (Moore 43) and the answer is "just the same" (Moore 43). Then once they reach home, Tassie is struck by the "warm neglect and elegant poverty" (Moore 44) of the house and then "greeted like a neighbor" by her mother "who never called [her] "honey"" (Moore 45). Describing her mother's behavior at her coming home for the holidays, Tassie feels herself as "a neighbor" and not as a member of her family: "coming home for the holidays, I was often greeted like a neighbor stopping by on Sunday after church, a neighbor she saw all the time but did not want to be unkind to" (Moore 44). Besides, when Tassie asks her brother about their parents in another passage: "'How are Mom and Dad *doing*?' Her brother answers: "Oh, OK, I guess . . . They still go at each other tooth and nail, but I've learned not to pay too much attention. It's really all nothing'" (Moore 56), a response which does not reveal any interest towards the parents.

Moore's novel highlights the breakdown of the Western family. Remarkably, all the Western families that take part in the story reflect a failure; Tassie's and Sarah's families are the best illustrations. Though she likes the members of her family, "having to draw on her past and making it come to her, was like coaxing a reluctant thing" (Moore 22). Tassie's father, a farmer, is always busy with his work and often misses family meetings. His dealing with his son, Robert, shows that he is "not always one for helpfully stern parenting" (Moore

42). Additionally, there is indeed no real sense of brother and sister between Tassie and Robert. Their contact on the ride back to the house clearly reflects the type of their relation: “he told me how he was doing, though I had to ask two times. Sometimes a stammer came over him, which made him hesitant to speak at all” (Moore 42). Yet, no one of them shows a tendency to mend this rupture. Tassie does not pay attention to Robert; this is revealed through the e-mail he sends her and that she does not answer. This email is very important and it ends up Robert life forever. Robert in turn does not really listen to what she says most of the time; he “rarely shared” (Moore 41). In other words, though gentle and “essentially always nice to her” (Moore 42), there is a kind of rupture between this Western brother and sister.

Even wedding, the happy ceremony which implies the notion of marriage and family suggests the Western women’s unhappiness. Tassie has once been in one of her friends’ weddings, Marianne Sturch’s. Attending this wedding, Tassie wishes not to be there at all. Tassie and her mother were not happy with its outfits and with the entire wedding as a whole. Her mother “perceived the loud ugliness of the dress even through the fog of her bad eyesight” (Moore 65). The wedding “felt tawdry and embarrassing” and after spending only thirty minutes in, Tassie comments that “[she] never wanted to marry” (Moore 65). This statement stresses the awfulness of that wedding. In short, both Tassie and her mother are portrayed as unhappy.

Sarah’s family also mirrors the image of fragile Western family in which the Western woman is unhappy. This is apparent at the beginning of the novel when Sarah meets the birth mother of the child she intends to adopt. Her husband Edward misses the first appointment with the first birth mother and comes very late in the second appointment leaving his wife embarrassed with the justifications she should provide (Moore 34). Sarah’s unhappiness is also emphasized by the end of the novel when Sarah recounts “her secret. Susan’s secret” (Moore 231) to Tassie: the irresponsible behavior of Sarah and Edward (whose real names are Susan and John) which led to the death of their child Gabriel.

Likewise, the author of *Harbor* draws a picture of the unhappy Western woman through Heather’s dispersed family. Heather’s only family contact is her father who lives in Virginia. He is a rich man who speaks ill of his wife, Heather’s mother, in front of Rafik and his fellows. In addition, the fact that Rafik upsets Heather’s mother extensively delights her father. This reflects the extent to which this Western man hates his wife. Moreover, Heather has only one brother whom she mentions in a conversation with Ghazi but she does so coldly:

“I have one” (Adams 224). In the same conversation, Ghazi mentions that Mourad quits his job; he does it for his brother Aziz. Then, he asks her if she would do something like that for her brother. She answers “it’s not the same . . . My brother, it is a long story. It’s not like Aziz and Mourad” (Adams 224). Furthermore, she wants to know more about them as kids in their hometown, and she admits “I want to be with that family” (Adams 224). Ghazi answers that “There is great love in that family” (Adams 225). Like Moore’s Tassie, Heather’s reaction does not show any desire to renew her relation with her brother. Both of them are shown as unhappy Western women.

On the one hand, Messud explicitly displays the oppressed Western woman in *The Woman Upstairs* as clarified previously. On the other hand, Moore and Adams portray the frustrated Western family which strongly implies the unhappy Western woman in *A Gate and Harbor*. Therefore, the writers under study suggest the possibility of oppressed/unhappy women in the West in their post 9/11 literary works. Interestingly, portraying the Western women as oppressed/unhappy, Messud, Moore and Adams tend to dismantle the stereotype of the oppressed/unhappy Arab/Muslim woman who longs to be in the Western woman’s place as displayed through Sarah in Pourasgari’s *The Dawn* (mentioned in previous sections). This means that oppression and unhappiness is not a feature of the Muslim/Arab woman specifically, but can also characterize the Western woman. This leads us to state that the writers put the Western woman more or less in the same position as the stereotyped Arab/Muslim woman in their post 9/11 narratives. More importantly, they introduce a new image of the West in the post 9/11 context: A patriarchal Western family that oppresses the woman (as revealed in *The Woman Upstairs*) and if not, a Western family which offers a sad life to this woman (as portrayed in *A Gate and Harbor*). This image lightens the heavy literary attacks Arab/Muslim women have received and helps dismantling the post 9/11 stereotype that restricts the oppression and unhappiness of Muslim women to Islam as a religion and to Islamic patriarchal societies.

Conclusion

The stereotype of the veiled/Muslim woman is widely and negatively used in post 9/11 American fiction. Veiled/Muslim women are seen as either oppressed and deprived of their rights or as “terrorists” and the veil is considered the symbol of oppression or “terrorism.” This chapter has discussed the stereotypical images of the oppressed veiled/Muslim woman in the aftermath of 9/11. It has analysed the different images of the Muslim and veiled

characters who take part in three post 9/11 female American fictional narratives: Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* (2013), Lorrie Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs* (2009), and Lorraine Adams *Harbor* (2004).

Post 9/11 fiction is highly characterized by Orientalist stereotyping which is clearly apparent in key American novels of that period such as Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, John Updike's *Terrorist*, Homa Pourasgari's *The Dawn of Saudi*, and Amy Waldman's *The Submission* among many other fictional works. The representation of Muslims/Arabs in these works mirrors the Orientalist discourse which distorts the reality. In fact, this is not new; Islam and Muslims have often been viewed in a stereotypical way by Western literature but the 9/11 events have remarkably hardened and strengthened it. These events of worldwide significance have strengthened the world's focus on Islam and Arabs/Middle Easterners specifically. Islam is claimed to nurture "terrorism" and Arabs/Middle Easterners are labeled "terrorists." This image is widespread and reinforced through the aggressive literary attack that has targeted contemporary Arab and Muslim societies for their violence, backwardness and for their abrogation of women's rights. This discourse emphatically attempts to perpetuate Western superiority and Oriental inferiority.

On the one hand, both *The Woman Upstairs* and *A Gate* encompass veiled characters and passages about the veil that offer interesting interpretations in the post 9/11 context. The portrayal of the veil and Muslim/veiled woman in *The Woman Upstairs* and *A Gate at the Stairs* is unexpectedly positive. It stands in opposition to the stereotypical images pervasive in the post 9/11 context. First, the veil is displayed as a positive piece of clothing which does not reveal oppression or terrorism. In addition, the novels' veiled characters are Muslim/non Muslim women who wear the veil voluntarily. This dismantles the stereotype of the veil as an Islamic symbol imposed on women. Furthermore, they are neither oppressed nor prejudiced by any male character in the novels. Rather, they are portrayed as free veiled women who enjoy all their rights. This new image of the veiled women offers new thoughts that encourage veiling in a time the Orientalist discourse encourages unveiling.

While Messud and Moore choose to tackle the stereotype of the veiled oppressed woman in their post 9/11 works in a way that opposes the strongly established images and disconnect women's oppression from Islam, Adams dwarfs the veil issue in her *Harbor* and prefers to exchange the widespread negative image of the veiled Muslim woman by the values and qualities that characterize this woman regardless of her being veiled or unveiled. She goes

further to dismantle the stereotype of the patriarchal Islamic society that causes the plight of the Muslim woman in Western imagination by displaying good Muslim male female relationships. In the same vein, Messud seems to focus on patriarchy in the West and displays the image of the oppressed Western woman instead of the oppressed veiled/Muslim woman. On the other hand, Moore and Adams reveal a different image of the Western woman who is not oppressed by patriarchy but does not live happily within her family. Interestingly, in both cases, the Western woman is not portrayed positively in a way that makes her better than the stereotyped Muslim/Arab woman in the post 9/11 context.

In a nutshell, the writers under study seem to stand in opposition to the West's dominant discourse about the East which is based on the projection of stereotypes which do not reflect social realities of the Orient. Post 9/11 fiction emphatically mirrors the strongly established stereotype of the oppressed Muslim/veiled woman which maintains the Western superiority and Oriental inferiority. Yet, the novels under study dismantle this stereotypical image and thus destabilizes Western superiority and Eastern inferiority logic.

Chapter 3

A positive image of the post 9/11 male “terrorist”

Introduction

Stereotyping in the post 9/11 era does not only concern Muslim/Arab females as discussed in the previous chapter, but encompasses Muslim/Arab males as well. When it comes to Muslim/Arab men, “stereotypes of the dark-skinned, bearded, Muslim man as representative of the primary threat to national security” (Aziz) are added to their major role as the “oppressors” of women. These stereotypes have been promoted in media and reinforced in post 9/11 fiction, (Aziz) and can be best illustrated through fictional characters of several post 9/11 literary works such as Hammad, a fictional version of one of the 9/11 hijackers in Don Delillo’s *Falling Man*.

While the veil is often seen as the symbol of oppression for females, beards form a discourse of fear and danger and have become the most important element of dangerous terrorists (Salaita 140). Greta Olson argues that “facial hair appears to have symbolic quality, as it is often taken as an outward identifying feature for terrorist” (1). Thus, the 9/11 events have provided a new image of the Muslim world, that of “fundamentalists and terrorists and beards became immediately suspect” (1). This stereotype has been extensively reinforced by post 9/11 novels by means of their Arab/Muslim characters or any character who might just fit the description of a Middle Easterner.

Many other negative stereotypes have been attributed to Arabs and Muslims or “Scary Brown People” as James Ryan calls them (qtd. in Ibrahim 168). 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” (Morey and Yaqin 1). These features are claimed to be derived from Islam, 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” (Hitti 25). Moreover, they are depicted as “dirty, immoral, uneducated” (Danky and Berm 348) individuals who are not welcome in America.

Many Americans hold an extremely negative opinion about Islam and its followers because they associate this religion with terrorism. They seem to consider Muslims as either

Arabs or Middle Easterners and in both cases they are “terrorists.” In this context, Lorraine Adams observes:

Many Americans fail to understand that Muslims can be Arab, African or Asian, not to mention European or American. They forget that Muslims may write in Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, Dari, Pashto, Chinese, Indonesian, Malay and a host of other languages, including Farsi, another name for Persian, the language of Iran. Lost too is the full spectrum of Islam in the lives of authors and their characters. There are secular Muslims, culturally influenced but non-practicing; moderate Muslims, practicing but tolerant; and radical fundamentalists, murderous and anti-Western. (Adams)

In spite of this fact, post 9/11 American literary production such as *Falling Man*, *Terrorist*, *The Jewel of Medina*, and *Finding Nouf*, among other fictional narratives, depict Muslims as a monolithic block and “treat Islam and terrorism as almost synonymous terms” (Awan 536). This is “because they project such an image of Muslims and Arabs as if they were inherently violence prone and harbored hatred for their host communities” (Awan 536). As a result, this leads to a popular fear of Muslims/Arabs in general.

This chapter seeks to elaborate on the different images of the Arab/Muslim male characters that construct three post 9/11 female American novels: Claire Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs* (2013), Lorrie Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs* (2009) and Lorraine Adams’s *Harbor* (2004). By exploring the Arab/Muslim characters’ portrayal in these novels and referring to key novels in post 9/11 fiction, we would like to demonstrate that the novels under study oppose the demonization of Arab/Muslim males and their religion, the fact which spread in the aftermath of the 9/11 events and is reflected in post 9/11 American fiction. In the light of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and other concepts by theorists such as Samuel Huntington, Richard Gray, Narmeen El Farra, Karen Culcasi and Mahmut Gakman, we intend to highlight and discuss the writers’ challenge of the strongly established Muslim/Arab man’s stereotypes which post 9/11 fiction emphatically mirrors.

Edward Said whose *Orientalism* “tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self,” (3) explains how the Orient has been used in Western imagination for centuries to define the West:

the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. (2)

The Westerners do not define themselves by saying what they are but by what they are not; they define themselves against an inferior, Orientalized “Other”. Samuel Huntington and Richard Gray express a similar view. In his book *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, Huntington argues that “We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against” (4). Richard Gray also makes a similar point in his essay about the future of post 9/11 literature when he claims that “with the collapse of communism, a sinister other that enables American self-definition may have disappeared . . . it has now been replaced by Islam” (32). That is to say, if post 9/11 writers describe Arabs/Middle Easterners as backward, violent, repressive and misogynist, in addition to many other stereotypical images, this serves to highlight that Americans are supposedly not these things. This entails the superiority of the West and the inferiority of the East.

1. The male Muslim’s appearance

1.1. A non-threatening bearded Muslim character

Edward Said explains that the “backward Other” is constructed through many symbols and images attributed to both sexes: the image of veils that cover the heads of oppressed women and that of bearded men with swords, images that essentialize the Orientals as dangerous, violent and exotic (Said *Orientalism* 142). It is worth mentioning that “within Orientalist discourses, a beard is a powerful symbol that frequently invokes fear” (Kulcasi and Gokmen 86). 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”” (82). 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” (82). 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” (82).

The beard triggers suspicion and fear in the US Islamophobic environment. Terror and fear is supposed to take place at the sight of a bearded man since the beard is strongly linked to Islamic “Jihad” and thus to “terrorism” as the Orientalist representation of the beard in *Falling Man* 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” (Delillo 79). Delillo’s Hammad feels ill-at-ease at growing a beard but he does so because it is a must. He grows a beard and “he spent time at the mirror looking at [it], knowing he was not supposed to trim it” (Delillo 82). This is because he is a member of the group of Jihad: this group and the beard are inextricable.

This attitude towards the beard implies that whoever has a beard is unavoidably a “terrorist.” And because the beard is an Islamic symbol, this attitude leads non-Muslims to hate bearded men. Yet, Adams’s *Harbor* provides a different representation of the bearded Muslim man. Adams’s Aziz is “dressed up in a beard” (Adams 10); however, it is not mentioned that it is a must or that Aziz grows it under pressure. Moreover, his beard scares nobody in the novel; it is 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, this man’s wife prepares dinner together with some women whose identity is not mentioned. Adams depicts them saying that they “were wearing blue jeans and skirts and sweaters and jewelry and make up” (Adams 10). One of these women who helps the man’s wife in the kitchen, talks to Aziz: “She looked at [Aziz], without any fear but with something of what he had hoped the imaginary priest would have looked at him with” (Adams 10). That is to say, she looks at him with “a face of love” (Adams 6): the very face he wishes to encounter at any church as he searches rescue at his arrival in Boston. “Fear,” thus, is replaced by “Love.” This is uncommon in post 9/11 American fiction.

More than being a sign of Islam and a must as previously mentioned, the beard in Delillo’s novel forms an obsession. Delillo’s Muslim characters suffer from an obsession of growing beard and this is ironically presented in one of the novel’s passages when Hammad goes for killing a man, but finds two men on the spot. The most important thing that distinguishes them is the beard. He “advanced and hit him three or four times and he went down. The other men advanced and kicked him. Hammad hadn’t known his name until they

shouted it out and he wasn't sure what this was all about, the guy paying an Albanian whore for sex or the guy not growing a beard. He had no beard, Hammad noticed, just before he hit him" (Delillo 81- 82). Hammad's remark that the man has no beard at the very moment of the murder seems inapt: such a situation requires special attention to be paid to the man himself (the one intended to be killed), and not to whom is growing a beard. It becomes clear, thus, that the beard is of special importance and Hammad is obsessed with it. Indeed, this obsession reoccurs throughout *Falling Man*. In one of the terrorists' meetings in the narrative, Hammad is portrayed listening to their vehement discussions, but he does not show any will to participate. All what fills his mind is that "they were all growing beards" (Delillo 79). What is worth mentioning here is that this obsession with the beard and the idea that all Muslims must grow it, displayed in *Falling Man* are present neither in *Harbor* nor in *The Woman Upstairs* and *A Gate at the Stairs*. Interestingly, while Aziz wears a beard, this "Islamic symbol" is totally avoided in *The Woman Upstairs* and *A Gate*, whose Arab/Muslim protagonists are unbearded.

1.2. Clean unbearded Arab/Muslim characters

The only Muslim male character in Moore's *A Gate*, Reynaldo, does not wear a beard at all. His physical portrayal does not reveal any stereotypical image. Reynaldo is the student who claims to be Brazilian: "a tall and long-limbed" (Moore 165) man who sits next to Tassie, the protagonist of the novel, in "the Sufi class," attracts her attention, enters her life beautifully then unexpectedly reveals his Muslim origins and leaves forever.

The novel seeks to undermine the stereotypical picture of Muslims widely spread in the media and fiction after 9/11, sample of which is found in *Falling Man* which links the beard to "Islamic Jihad", as previously mentioned. Reynaldo is "a brown man" (Moore 192) with a "familiar and beautiful face" (Moore 205). He does not frighten anybody in the novel, rather he is "attentive and appreciative" (Moore 168). He wears "wrapped around his neck a black – and-white scarf," a piece of cloth that Tassie thinks of as "Middle Eastern" (Moore 167), and which, in fact, anticipates his real Muslim origins.

Tassie's reaction to the truth indicates the effect of the stereotypical images about Muslims that has been entrenched in the American society. As soon as Reynaldo tells Tassie that he is Muslim, she directly and unconsciously guesses that he is a "Jihadist," but this does not change her feelings towards him and she shows indifference towards this fact. Moore first

breaks the firmly established link between the “Jihadist” and the beard by making Reynaldo unbearded and then weakens the image of the Muslim as a dangerous “terrorist” by strengthening Tassie’s love for Reynaldo and making it go beyond this stereotypical presentation of danger.

Although her piece belongs to post 9/11 American fiction, Messud’s two main Arab characters do not wear a beard either. The beard is totally absent in *The Woman Upstairs*. Ironically, the character who is called “a terrorist” in the school yard and who is expected to wear a beard is but a “marvelous” innocent child who captivates everybody’s attention in the school according to the writer’s depiction. As to his father Skandar, Nora often draws attention to his “rounded cheeks” and “chin,” which seem to replace the “awful” beard in post 9/11 Western writings. Skandar’s physical appearance and behavior are portrayed positively. Nora describes him as a handsome man, attractive, and pleasant to look at with his “luxuriant dark wavy hair” and his eyes “heavily lashed and dark as wells” (Messud 91).

Nora also shows admiration for his behavior and describes him as a gentleman in one of the novel’s scenes in which “he smiled, but did not show his teeth” (Messud 90). Talking to him, she keeps following his “very handsome square hands” (Messud 185), especially when he “waved them about in the cold air, displacing smoke, or breath, or both” (Messud 185). Moreover, instead of being afraid of this Arab man, she falls in love with him. Nora mentions explicitly that there is a kind of physical attraction towards Skandar as made obvious by the “sexual dream” she has, not long after their first encounter (Messud 96). Hence, the stereotyped bearded Arab/Muslim who invokes fear in post 9/11 era is replaced by an unbearded well-behaved, and good- looking Arab/Muslim in both *The Woman Upstairs* and *A Gate*.

The pleasant physical appearance of the Arab/Muslim bearded/unbearded characters discussed above entails the discussion of another rampant stereotypical image 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 represent the unhygienic inhabitants of the bleak and waterless desert or of foul and overcrowded cities” (Gottschalk and Greenberg 87). This stereotypical image appears, for instance, in Clifford Geertz’s *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*. Geertz recounts the story of a famous seventeenth-

century Moroccan Sufi saint depicting the Sufi saint's teacher, "the sheikh" in unsanitary conditions; writing about the "sheikh," who is seriously ill at an oasis, Greertz mentions that none of his students has the courage to wash his "filthy shirt" (32). This cliché is, indeed, mentioned in several stereotypical images that represent Arabs in both films and fiction. In his article "The Making of the Arab Menace," Rayan El-Amine argues that "Arabs in films are portrayed as being terrorists, fanatics, dirty, irrational, violent and above all disposable" (82). El Amine believes that "Hollywood films have played an important role in perpetuating" (82) these stereotypes. As regards fiction, the "dirty" Arabs in films are portrayed as "filthy Bedouins" in literature. Fahd Mohammed Taleb Saeed Al-Olaqi contends that "the English medieval literary depiction distorted the image of Arabs. Some literary portraits of the Arabs have depicted Arabs as tyrant caliphs, weak kings, lustful princes, medieval Saracens, mysterious travellers, filthy Bedouins" (1767).

Depicting Muslims as "dirty" goes beyond films and fiction to reach the real world. In his book entitled *(Re-) Framing the Arab/Muslim Mediating Orientalism in Contemporary Arab American Life*, Silke Schmidt refers to the experience of Tamim Ansary, an Afghan-American author and public speaker, who recounts his experience of being American of Afghan descent. He remembers a scene when some boys did not allow him to enter a youth clubhouse in America claiming that he was going to make this clean place dirty. They called him, together with some friends, "dirty Afghans": "Don't let those dirty Afghans in here!" the boys comment pointing at his clothes. Ansary, who did not expect this insult because he believed in his American identity, was shocked and confused at calling him so (199). In short, Muslims and every individual who looks like them are seen as "dirty." Richard Harvey Brown et al discuss the stereotypes which characterize Muslims (and also Sikhs and Hindus) in some provinces in India. They assert that they are considered as "uneducated people who have "dirty habits," live in unsanitary conditions, and crowd together in small places which always smell of curry" (Harvey Brown et al. 74).

These stereotypes which show Arabs /Muslims as unhygienic individuals are strengthened in post 9/11 American literary narratives as the coming examples will demonstrate. However, they are remarkably debunked in the novels under study. If the Muslim/Arab characters in *The Woman Upstairs*, *Harbor* and *A Gate* are good-looking they are also, and more importantly, "clean." In *Harbor*, the most striking image of neat Muslims 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 (Adams 198). This expression jumps to the reader’s eyes: The writer insists on this expression almost each time he appears, to an extent that makes it remarkable. As if the writer feared that the reader might forget that the old Yamani’s djellaba was clean; she keeps insisting on this point. Adams repeats this expression in different passages (p153, p198, p221), and in one instance, she draws the attention to his “new djellaba” instead of the washed one (Adams 221). By means of these details, Adams stresses the idea that Muslims are not “dirty.”

Similarly, in both *The Woman Upstairs* and *A Gate*, the Arab/Muslim protagonists are clean. They are particularly chosen to be the men to whom the female Western protagonists (Nora and Tassie respectively) are strongly attracted, a fact which detaches them from the stereotypical image of “dirty” Arabs/Muslims. Although not much emphasis is put on this matter, their physical appearance is positively portrayed. In *A Gate*, Reynaldo is said to be attractive. In *The Woman Upstairs*, Nora, for instance, observes that Skandar looks “especially dapper in a crisp white shirt” (Messud 272) when she sees him on YouTube. As to his son Reza, she emphatically observes that “he didn’t look like the other children” (Messud 10) when he first came into her class. This is “because his clothes were so tidy” (Messud 10). Nowhere in the novels is a depiction of uncleanliness, or a state of being grubby, filthy, grimy, or otherwise dirty related to Moore’s Reynaldo or Messud’s Skandar or Reza.

Moore refers briefly and explicitly to “cleanliness” in the passage that portrays Reynaldo’s departure. Tassie notices a roll of toilet paper and two white pills near his things when he packs his luggage and asks what they are. Reynaldo replies that the toilet paper is “for cleanliness, obviously” (Moore 209). In fact, Tassie visits Reynaldo several times throughout the events, but she never mentions or even hints at “unsanitary conditions” or “dirty habits” there. Rather, dirt seems to be present in the apartment she shares with Murph: “I forgot about the container in the fridge .As with the wasabi at Christmas, I was careless with takeout. Things mounted in the refrigerator and the sink as Murph and I let a life of spring rains, warming air, romantic dissolution, and pointless essay writing make further mincemeat of domesticity” (Moore 251). Tassie also mentions that she does not tidy up her apartment for a long time when Reynaldo leaves her (Moore 213). She explains: “sometimes, when out of paper towels, I would use one of the wipes I often packed in my backpack for Mary-Emma, and I would start with the counters and work down: it seemed I could clean

almost an entire room with just one- that was the sort of delusional housekeeping I was becoming a devotee of” (Moore 214). The justification for this unsanitary situation is her “broken heart” at Reynaldo’s disappearance; yet, it seems that it does not matter for her to live in these conditions. Before she experiences Reynaldo’s departure, things at the apartment were not better. This is made clear through other passages in the novel.

Talking about herself and her friend, Tassie mentions that she stays alone in her room because Murph has “completely vanished except for the waxy smell of her unclean hairbrush still sitting there in the bathroom, along with her black dental floss and soap and an assortment of other items” (Moore 171). This explicitly reveals uncleanliness and displays Murph, the Western character, as very dirty. What is highly significant and unexpected in Moore’s novel is that she, though briefly, highlights cleanliness in relation to Reynaldo, a Muslim character whereas she attributes uncleanliness to Murph and Tassie, the Western characters. In this way, both Messud and Moore devote a little but a revealing space to dismantle the stereotype of the “dirty” Muslim/Arab. Moore goes even further to suggest that it is Westerners who are “dirty.”

These writers’ presentation of Arab’s /Muslim’s physical appearance is totally different from the one disseminated in post 9/11 American fiction. Don DeLillo’s Hammad is presented as being very “dirty,” for instance. DeLillo makes Hammad wear 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” (DeLillo 107). More than this, it is mentioned in the novel that Hammad borrows his friend’s clothes and puts them on when he intends to wash his: “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 (DeLillo 107). This fact implies that Hammad does not have clothes other than the ones he wears and this emphasizes the stereotype of the “dirty” Muslim.

Thus, whether bearded or unbearded, the Muslim/Arab man in the novels under study is portrayed as a clean, good-looking man whose appearance does not entail disgust or suggest fear. More than this, it is not only his appearance which is not fearful, but his deeds as

well. Indeed, several details in the selected works detach the Muslim/Arab Other from violent acts and dismantle the stereotype of the “dangerous terrorist” Other.

2. Peaceful Arabs/Muslims

2.1. The peaceful “terrorist” child

The character who is called a “terrorist” in Claire Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs* and thus is supposed to be violent and to embody post 9/11 stereotypes is ironically the youngest character with Arab background: a child who is particularly inventive at school (Messud 268). Reza Shahid is not an ordinary child, but “an exception,” as his teacher Nora observes. More importantly, the moment of encounter of this so called “terrorist” with Nora seems to bloom the whole story as she states when she starts recounting it: “It all started with the boy. With Reza,” (Messud 2) the first member of the Shahid family and the one who leads her to find fulfillment.

Reza is “Exceptional. Adaptable. Compassionate. Generous. So intelligent. So quick. So sweet. With such a sense of humor,” (Messud 13) and never violent. The possibility that Reza is violent or will be violent when he grows up is totally eliminated in Nora’s depiction of this Arab child. Nora compares Reza to the other schoolboys she teaches and reveals the remarkable attraction he draws at school and which helps him earn the good graces of his classmates and teachers, starting with Nora herself: “What did any of our praise mean, but that we’d all fallen in love with him” (Messud 13). Several passages in the novel show this boy’s softness. This is conveyed by Nora in different scenes both at school and at home: “When, in the first week, he knocked Françoise down on the playground, by accident, in the exuberant throes of an impromptu soccer match, he put his arm around her trembling shoulder and sat out with her on the curb until she felt ready to sally forth again. He had tears in his eyes: I saw them” (Messud 13). Reza is not only soft with his classmates as made obvious in the passage above, but he is so with his teacher as well. This is apparent in some details Nora recounts:

When, also early on, the children suffered a particularly rambunctious afternoon – it was pouring ; they’d been cooped up all day, the sky outside so dark that we bathed for hours in aggravating fluorescence – and in art hour – supposedly my favorite, as I am , or am supposed to be, an artist – the boys had the bright idea of squirting tempera

paints from their plastic bottles, first at their papers but then, by the time noticed, at the furniture, and the floor, and each other – when, in spite of my considerable, vaunted self- control, I raised my voice and thunderously proclaimed myself sorely disappointed that day, at school’s end, a full hour afterward, Reza stopped at my desk and placed a small hand upon my forearm, delicate as a leaf. “I’m sorry, Miss Eldridge,” he said. “I’m sorry we made a mess. Sorry you’re angry. (Messud 14)

Attractively, Reza proves to have the same softness towards Nora, his babysitter at home: “Reza sat up in bed and reached out both arms to embrace me . . . “Good night, Miss E,” he spoke softly in my ear. “You’re the best.” Then, he pulled back and bestowed upon me a luminous and loving smile” (Messud 139). This scene, in addition to others, are recurrent throughout the novel.

Reza seems to keep the same traits even when he grows up as the writer points out: Nora “still saw in him the perfection that was,” (Messud 9) a statement which eliminates the possibility that he may be violent in his adulthood. Additionally, Messud hints at the kind of man Reza will be in the future. This Arab child wants to make the world better when he grows up. He tells Nora: “when I grow up . . . I’m going to be an architect. I want to create worlds for people” (Messud 237). Messud presents this Arab child as a future “architect,” a person who designs buildings and supervises their construction. Reza’s statement pictures the opposite image of a 9/11 hijacker in post 9/11 narratives such as Hammad in Don Delillo’s *Falling Man*. About this character, Lenore Bell argues:

Hammad is not directly based on any of the original nineteen hijackers, but he follows orders from Muhammad Atta. Atta goes by the name Amir, but Delillo takes pains to convey his original identity: “Amir spoke in his face. His full name was Mohamed Mohamed el-Amir el-Sayid Atta” (2007: 80). Atta was the most notable hijacker for his role as the ringleader , and the only hijacker to become a household name. Contemporary readers will automatically know that this character is based on a real person. (53)

Therefore, Reza’s portrayal stands in opposition to “the stereotypes of Arabs as evil aggressors determined to destroy the West” (Jackson 76). While the stereotyped Arab character in post 9/11 novels is a “terrorist” who destroys the world and kills people, Messud’s Arab character intends to construct the world for people.

It is rather to Western characters that violence is attributed; it is attributed to Owen, “a large boy and stupid one,” (Messud 30) as Nora points out. This pupil attacks Reza twice. In the school yard, Owen punches Reza in the ears and calls him “a terrorist.” Together with three other Western bullies— Bethany, Margot and Sarah (who somehow have contrived not to see anything as Nora states)— Owen thus performs two types of violence: verbal and physical. This is also the case with the second time he attacks Reza. The second attack conducted “more surreptitiously, more brutally,” (Messud 98) also takes place at school. There were “two dozen kids” (Messud 98) or so, among them Owen, the “evil spore” (Messud 98) as Nora depicts him. He packs a snowball with rocks, “and the misfortune that he chose a sharp one” (Messud 99). The attack is so violent that Reza “fell at once to his knees,” (Messud 99) and the girl who stands next to him “could see blood through his fingers” (Messud 99). This girl also “heard the fat boy [Owen] mutter “Oh, shit” before he turned and ran away” (Messud 99).

Attributing violence to Western characters in this context implies a destabilization of the established stereotypes in post 9/11 American fiction. Jack G. Shaheen argues that “almost all portraits of Arabs seen in America were dangerously threatening. Arabs were either billionaires or bombers – rarely victims. They were hardly ever seen as ordinary people practicing law, driving taxis, singing lullabies, or healing the sick” (qtd. in VanderMey 359). Unexpectedly, Reza takes the role of the victim of violence instead of the victimizer. In post 9/11 novels such as DeLillo’s *Falling Man* and Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Americans play the role of victims of violence. Two examples to mention are DeLillo’s Justin and Foer’s Oskar. Justin is a child character in *Falling Man*. He is as deeply and badly affected by the 9/11 events as his parents Keith and Lianne; he experiences “expansive fantasies about ‘Bill Lawton,’ a comfortably anglicized version of Bin Laden” (Smith 62). On the other hand, Foer’s Oskar, the narrator, is a nine year old autistic character. In the novel, “the “ineffable tragedy” of autism stands in for the tragic events of 9/11 so that the autistic victim child who is unable to communicate, unable to answer the vital message of his father reflects a mourning nation unable to find words in the face of tragedy” (Loftis 109). While these characters are victims of the violence carried out by Arab “terrorists,” Messud’s Reza is a victim of violence carried out by Westerners.

Reacting to such violence, Nora shows sympathy towards Reza. Her special treatment of Reza after each attack and her comments about the attacks highlight this and re-inforce the

image of Reza as a victim. She carefully takes care of him just after both attacks and does her best to calm him down, being sometimes furious “with the three bullies, with Bethany, Margot and Sarah, who somehow had contrived not to see a thing, and somehow furious also with Reza’s mother” (Messud 31) because she leaves “him unprotected in a strange land” (Messud 31). Nora explains that these attacks against Reza have taken some time to be settled because they are discussed in relation to Owen’s uncle, who seems to have had a bad experience in Iraq, which makes him suffer from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). However, as Nora comments, “nothing, frankly, could excuse or explain the whole appalling fiasco” (Messud 30). By reversing the roles of victim and victimizer and re-enforcing the image of the Arab victim through Nora’s sympathy towards him, Messud challenges the narrative of the American victimhood in the aftermath of the 9/11 events.

2.2. A loving Arab father

Likewise, Reza’s father, Skandar Shahid, a Lebanese character, has extremely suffered from the discrimination directed towards Muslims in America for the simple reason that he is Arab. Skandar does not seem to be an example of “the classic Orientalist representation of Muslim masculinity as inherently violent, barbaric, and misogynist: a representation which constructs White masculinity as civilized, enlightened, and thus justifying White superiority” (Grewal 82). Skandar despises any kind of violence which is according to him “very upsetting, wherever it takes place, whomever it hurts” (Messud 179). Nowhere in the novel is a sign of violence attributed to Skandar. Instead, he proves to have a peaceful spirit through his reaction to his son’s problem. Reza is violently attacked in the school by three bullies, but Skandar’s reaction is peaceful and optimistic too.

In one of the novel’s passages, when Nora asks Skandar about his opinion regarding what happens to Reza, before the vacation— about punching him and calling him “a terrorist” — Skandar does not show any verbal or physical violence. He wishes it had not happened, but he knows in his inner feelings and thoughts that he is “wishing the impossible;” he describes himself as “a realist,” a pragmatist” (Messud 140) and “also an optimist” (Messud 140). Skandar reinforces these adjectives saying that he could not do what he did if he were not so: “To what end does one speak about the ethics of history, about the moral questions inherent in the very history of history, if not then to look to the future and hope — no, not to hope, to work, for better?” (Messud 141). Significantly, Skandar says “to work, for better” and not “to fight” or “to kill” for better. Thus, through her Arab character Skandar, the writer challenges

the stereotype of the violent Arab and goes totally against Emmett Tyrrell's claim in *Harper's* magazine, "that Arabs are basically murderers and that violence and deceit are carried in the Arab genes" (qtd in Said *Orientalism* 96).

Skandar's principle in dealing with people in his everyday life offers a picture of a peaceful man. In one of the novel's passages, Skandar reveals that "[he] often thinks that almost everyone is a child. That if you suddenly were to take off the masks of each of us, we would all be revealed as children" (Messud 229). What is important here is that this belief keeps violence away from his reactions to people, especially those who are "annoying." Skandar emphasizes this idea as follows: "I say a version of that almost every day. Sometimes I tell myself, when I'm dealing with annoying adults, to picture the kid is, I can feel compassion for him or her" (Messud 229).

Messud, thus, detaches her Arab character from violence. Interestingly, she goes further and makes him fully aware of the way stereotypes are established. What is worth mentioning, first, is that Skandar is writing a book about "ethics and history" (Messud 41). "He's interested in how we can't tell a history truly" (Messud 41). In reply to Nora, who asks him about Sirena's artistic work, Skandar states:

I haven't really thought about [Sirena's artistic work], but if you ask me for an answer straight off, I'll say yes. With a set of facts, as in historical facts, there are obviously incorrect interpretations. So, with art—a different sort of assemblage of signs, and of course signs are not facts, although they may refer to facts—there might be more leeway, but there would certainly be a point at which a reading or interpretation would be not merely inept, or extreme, but simply wrong. (Messud 254- 255)

Skandar's above statements figure prominently in Edward Said's study of *Orientalism*. Said argues that in both "avowedly artistic texts" and the so called "truthful texts" (Said 22) what are often represented are far from correct or faithful depictions of the Orient. That is to say, Said emphasizes the fact that neither the artistic texts nor histories or the so called truthful texts reflect a correct depiction of the Orient. This awareness on the part of the peaceful Arab, Skandar, is intended to throw light on the "incorrect interpretations" the West attributes to Arabs/Muslims. Messud tries to break down the established stereotype and promote a new

positive picture of Arabs through the depiction of one Arab: Skandar. It seems that she attempts to show the way stereotypes work. Narmeen El-Farra argues that:

A stereotype is the creation of a biased opinion or view -- an individual will take the behavior of one person and state that all people belonging to that particular group, be it an ethnic, religious or social group, behave in the same manner. The establishment of stereotypes encourages people to react and behave in a manner that is both judgmental and biased. (El- Farra)

Indeed, the spread of the stereotypes is dangerous if the natives are not aware of the ideologies exercised upon them and accept them. This acceptance makes them effective participants who unconsciously reinforce the stereotypes attributed to them. Yet, this is not the case with Messud's Skandar who shows awareness and consciousness of this ideology.

2.3. Innocent Arabs escaping violence: thirst for peace

Like Messud's Arab characters in *The Woman Upstairs*, Adams's Arab male characters in *Harbor* tend to be positive, especially Aziz, the protagonist of the novel. First, he is a man of peace, innocent from any act of violence. He escapes the violence which prevailed Algeria in the 1990s and refuses to be a terrorist once in New York : he has never indulged in terrorist activities. Aziz searches stability and peace, moving from Algeria to America. Then, in America, Aziz travels from one place to another peacefully without harming neither Americans nor Arabs; he is the opposite image of Hammad whose mission is essentially aimed at killing Americans. In short, all the details in *Harbor* allude to Aziz's peacefulness. His experience in the army 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 violence] as cowardice" (Adams 66). Aziz does not like hearing of people dying; he "rejoiced each time he knew none of the dead" (Adams 66) in the massacre his father tells him about. Aziz feels ill at ease when his friends discuss the atrocities of terrorism; his eyes "encouraged peace" as Adams points out.

Throughout the novel's events, Aziz never resorts to violence to solve his problems. For instance, at his arrival in Boston, Aziz feels wretched. He possesses nothing to eat or to put on, yet, the idea of committing a violent act to save himself never occurs to him. 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" (Adams 6)

which he really needs in his loneliness and tough conditions in USA. Such a face may well reassure him and feed his peaceful nature. Aziz's way of thinking thus tends towards peace. Violence has never been part of his vision of life, indeed. Life for him is "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" (Adams 114). Leaving his country, the place Aziz wishes to reach is "to talk" and not "to kill" as depicted in the novel. This statement shows him as inherently peaceful and reflects his thirst for peace.

Adams makes Ghazi, one of *Harbor's* characters, call Aziz "A fighter" (Adams131). This adjective suggests violence when it is used to describe a Muslim; it is strongly linked with the "terrorist" Ben Laden, el Qaeda founder. Norm Dixon comments: "In the aftermath of a series of terrorist atrocities-the most despicable being the mass murder of more than 6000 working people in New York and Washington on September 11- Bin Laden the "freedom fighter" is now lambasted by us leaders and the western mass media as "a terrorist mastermind" and an "evil doer." (47) However, Adams seems to deliberately choose another context and thus suggests another meaning for the word "fighter," a meaning which totally opposes the Orientalist discourse, the sort used by Delillo and Updike. Aziz is a "fighter" in the sense that he is a hard worker, one of his characteristics which will be developed in the coming section at length.

Unlike Aziz, Delillo's Hammad and Updike's Ahmad are depicted as "fighters," precisely, "terrorists" who fight the American people or rather the "unbelievers" as they call them. These characters reflect Richard M. Medina's and George F. Hepner's argument about "terrorist" immigrants. Discussing questions as to why people travel to foreign lands, and the use of foreign fighters in "Islamist terrorism," in terrorist groups such as al Qaeda, Medina and Hepner explain:

one is much more likely to be a foreign fighter terrorist than a resident terrorist and that most foreign fighters do not return to their countries with the intent to terrorize the homeland . Some foreign fighters do have plans to attack the homeland, which may have been their own in the first place or may have been heavily influenced by the organisation they joined as foreign fighters. For globally minded terrorist organisations, having members within various countries is an asset, especially if the organisation is anti-western and the members are in the West. (52)

Aziz, however, is “a foreign fighter” who does not have any plan to attack the US. He “fights” for better living conditions in this foreign country; he earns his living far from any violent act as revealed throughout the novel. While Delillo and Updike use the meaning of “terrorist” for their “fighters,” Adams makes it synonymous to a peaceful hard worker.

Whereas any “fighter” must hold a weapon, Adams intelligently makes Aziz a different kind of fighter with a distinct kind of weapons. One of Aziz’s many jobs to earn a living in USA (which will be discussed later) is selling coffee in cups with a piece of writing on them. This paints a very positive picture of Muslims in the 9/11 context. Indeed, in post 9/11 fiction, Arabs/Muslims are portrayed as “bearded men with swords”; yet, Adams’s 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. (Adams)

Adams distances her Aziz from “swords” and talks about a “kind of sweetness in Aziz” which makes it evident that Aziz is not violent. In addition, it is Aziz’s belief in the “power of words” which seems highly significant. This is because Arabs/Muslims are said to believe in “the power of swords,” not in that of words.

What is worth noting is that post 9/11 American fiction is colored by the Muslims/Arabs’ belief in “the power of swords,” Zoe Ferraris’ novel *Finding Nouf* is one example: “Should we Muslims 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” (Ferraris 392). Thus, Adams’s Aziz dismantles the stereotype of violence: the swords, the means of violence in post 9/11 fiction, are beautifully replaced with “words” in *Harbor*. However, words are also vital instruments which may either promote violence or establish peace. Interestingly, the phrases Aziz writes on the paper cups are proverbs which stress hard work and good intentions (Messud 218). It seems, thus, that Adams insists on drawing a nice positive picture of peaceful Muslims in the post 9/11 context.

Aziz writes words that promote a wise peaceful life; words that stress the beauty and wisdom of Arab culture, for instance:

“Min ratl hakya tafham wiqya: From a pound of talk, an ounce of understanding”

“Kun namla wa takul sukr: work like an ant and you’ll eat sugar”

“Al ketheb bem’hallu ebada: Lying in its proper place is equal to worship.” (Messud 218)

By means of these proverbs, Adams seems to kill two birds with one stone. She disrupts two stereotypes: the first one is that of the “violent” Arabs/Muslims and the second is the one which represents Arabs as possessing “centuries of experience and no wisdom” (Said *Orientalism* 231). Thus, Adams does not only replace “swords” with peaceful words but she also displays the beauty and wisdom of Arab culture through these words. In doing so, she seems to make Aziz the ambassador of Arab wisdom and beautiful culture in USA in the aftermath of the 9/11 events.

Aziz’s very nickname in the novel partakes in Adams’s portrayal of this Muslim character as peaceful. The members of Aziz’s family call him “a pigeon” (Adams 31) because he “was always flying away” (Adams 31). His sister, Anissa, calls him “Hamaam” (Adams 31) and it sticks to him. Attributing such a nickname to a person alludes to peace because whatever the explanation is, “pigeon” has always been a symbol of peace. Though it is neither explained as a hint to peace nor mentioned that Aziz is called so on account of his peacefulness, it is very positive and unexpected to attribute such a nickname (pigeon) to an Arab/ Muslim in the post 9/11 context. Indeed, “Pigeon” does not match with the post 9/11 stereotypical images of bloody Arab characters. Instead, other kinds of birds, aggressive birds, would be more appropriate in a post 9/11 American novel: aggressive birds which may reflect characters who are ready to kill, the sort of Updike’s Ahmad and Delillo’s Hammad.

It is not only Aziz’s nickname which suggests a peaceful character; his last name, Arkoun, seems more conveying. This surname brings Mohammed Arkoun’s thought into our discussion, the essence of which is peace and tolerance. Adams’s use of this surname for her protagonist might well be a reference to this Islamologist’s modern vision of Islam, especially that both Adams’s protagonist Aziz Arkoun and the thinker Mohammed Arkoun are Algerian. Mohammed Arkoun thinks that Islam in the so-called modern scholarship “is assumed to be a specific, essential, unchangeable system of thought, beliefs, and non-beliefs,

one which is superior or inferior (according to Muslims or non-Muslims) to the Western (or Christian) system” (19). In his article “Rethinking Islam Today,” Arkoun calls for an enlightened and open version of Islam which is far from fanaticism and violence:

The social scientists do not pay attention to what I call the "silent Islam"- the Islam of true believers who attach more importance to the religious relationship with the absolute of God than to the vehement demonstrations of political movements. I refer to the Islam of thinkers and intellectuals who are having great difficulties inserting their critical approach into a social and cultural space that is, at present, totally dominated by militant ideologies. (19)

This scholar’s article, “Rethinking Islam Today,” suggests a need to study Islam as an epistemological project. This is because Islam, according to him, is still considered as “unchanging, and militant by the West; and superior, dynamic, and peace loving by Muslims” (18).

In the same article, Arkoun shows optimism towards introducing new thoughts about Islam:

The enterprise of thinking Islam today can only be achieved-if ever-by dynamic teams of thinkers, writers, artists, scholars, and politicians. I am aware that long and deeply rooted traditions of thinking cannot be changed or even revised through a few essays or suggestions made by individuals. But I believe that thoughts have their own force and life. Some, at least, could survive and break through the wall of uncontrolled beliefs and dominating ideologies. (19)

In this context, Mohammad Abedullah Altawallbeh asserts that “Arkoun criticized Orientalists in that their work remained a prisoner of the descriptive experimental, the narrow topics and scattered and fragmented studies, and deprived of any coherent program, and free of any post explanatory or any practical goal to benefit the communities examined by their studies” (453). Adams’s dismantling of post 9/11 stereotypical images (the “terrorist” Muslim and other stereotypes that will be discussed in the coming sections) means standing against the idea that Islam is the “unchangeable system of thought, beliefs,” and advocating a more tolerant vision which bridges the gap between the West and the East. This seems to be the most important feature of Arkoun’s thought. Siti Rohmah Soekarba contends that “the main characteristic of Arkoun’s thoughts is in the conjoining between Western world and Islamic

world, in line with his dream to arrange the specific combination of different ways of thinking” (80). This is, in Soekarba’s opinion, Arkoun’s “wish that motivates his activities and works, that is particular combining of different ways of thinking” (80). In this way, Adams seems to make use of her protagonist’s nickname and last name to reveal the peacefulness of her Muslim character and to introduce a Muslim thinker who encourages peace between the Western and the Islamic worlds.

2.4. The “Terrorist” lover

The Muslim character in Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs* is Reynaldo. This character is supposed to be a “terrorist” in the post 9/11 context because of his origins (as extensively explained in the first chapter of this thesis), but he takes a peaceful role throughout the novel. Violence in *A Gate* is turned into a scene of love whose actors are a Muslim man and an American woman. Tassie, the American character, plays the role of a 9/11 “terrorist” whose mission is to carry out the attack, and Reynaldo, the Muslim character, seems to be her victim: Tassie depicts herself saying: “As if adorned for a costume party’s idea of a terrorist, I wore my Egyptian scarab necklace and my Arabian Goddess perfume and a clumsy blue ring made in the backstreets of Karachi.” She adds, “I was politically incorrect. The idea was a surprise attack which seemed to work” (Moore 184). After this introduction, Tassie describes the scene of love which melts them together: “Often we didn’t talk at all. His arms were soft and strong. His penis was as small and satiny as a trumper mushroom in Easter basket grass. His mouth slurped carefully as if every part of me were an oyster, his, which made me feel I loved him” (Moore 184). Reynaldo, thus, is not like Delillo’s Hammad, “a fictional construct based on the actual Hijackers” (Randall 159) of the 9/11 attacks, but a peaceful lover in the “surprise attack,” which is an allusion to the 9/11 attacks. Noticeably, whereas these attacks were extremely violent and have resulted in Islamophobia, the “surprise attack” depicted by Tassie is full of love and tenderness, as Tassie mentions “there was a tender but energetic adhocery to our sex” (Moore 184). The above passage encompasses many interpretations. It implies Moore’s rejection of the post 9/11 paradigm of “terrorism.”

Dominic Bryan, Liam Kelly and Sara Templer argue that “terrorism” is widely acknowledged to be a “politically loaded term” (5). In this connection, Moore’s above passage seems to illustrate Mohamad Khalid’s argument in his paper “Is terrorism a Muslim Monopoly ?” that “terrorism is neither the monopoly of Islam nor it is even the speciality of Muslims” (2). Through Tassie’s comment “I was politically incorrect,” Moore alludes to the

fact that, politically speaking, it is the Muslim character who is supposed to play the role of a “terrorist” in the post 9/11 era in which “Islam has become a center of fear (i.e., Islamophobia)” and “images of suicidal bombings for the United States and Europe, or the West, have become iconic of the Islamic “culture of death”” (El-Aswad 41). Interestingly, it is Tassie who plays this role instead of Reynaldo. By replacing the terrorist attack, a traumatic, life –threatening experience by a scene of love full of tenderness, and more importantly by reversing the roles : attributing the role of a “terrorist” to an American character, Moore seems to debunk the post 9/11 paradigm of “terrorism.”

In fact, Tassie is not the only Western character who plays the role of a “terrorist” in the novel; she is not the only character who is “politically incorrect.” Sarah also plays this role every year with her husband Edward. Unlike Tassie, Sarah appears with a rifle. This weapon is displayed in a scene about the way this Western couple celebrates their marriage anniversary. Edward tells Sarah: “Don’t you remember? Every year on that day you put on a black armband and then I go looking for you and find you on top of some bell tower with a bag of chips and some Diet Coke and a rifle” (Moore 98). This is a strange, violent, way of celebrating a happy event in which Sarah looks like a “terrorist” preparing himself for a violent act and this is explicitly apparent in the above description. The terrorist attack here seems to be replaced by the couple’s marriage anniversary. Moore thus seems to insist on dismantling the post 9/11 paradigm of “terrorism” by attributing the role of a “terrorist” to a Western character twice in the novel: to both Tassie and Sarah.

In doing so, it seems that Moore agrees with Bryan et al in their argument “that the paradigm of “terrorism” is fundamentally flawed” (1). Her portrayal of Tassie and Reynaldo together seems to reflect the belief that the more critically engaged scholars “must start to argue that it is time to stop using the “t word” because, among other reasons, it is impossible to define (Bryan et al 15). Whereas the post 9/11 political discourse on “terrorism” defines this concept in terms of Islam and Muslims and the mass media and post 9/11 fiction highly re-enforce this discourse (as discussed at length in the first chapter of this thesis), many scholars believe that “terrorism” is undefinable. Mohamad Khalid argues that “it’s very difficult to define the word terrorism,” (1) this is because “there are various different definitions of terrorism and many of them are contradict, the definition is intangible, it keeps on changing depending on the geographic location and historical fact” (1).

In the same vein, Dominic Bryan, Liam Kelly and Sara Templer, the authors of the essay “The failed paradigm of “terrorism”” have referred “to the huge range of definitions of “terrorism” that exist” (2). In their essay, they point out that there are a lot of publications on “terrorism” which critically engage with the definitional problem of this concept. Bryan et al. expose the arguments of some Terrorism studies’ scholars in their critique of the concept of “terrorism,” scholars such as Richard English, Bruce Hoffman, Dipak K .Gupta and Richard Jackson. What is noticeable according to the authors of this essay is that the definitions provided lack clarity (2). Bryan et al. argue that these scholars’ definition of “terrorism” is broad and have the risk of including an enormous range of violent acts. They contend that “the term is indefinable; and that some of the common elements of a definition are unconvincing” (1).

Among the elements of definition that cause a problem according to Bryan et al. lies in “the legality of the act” which is determined by state or trans-national institutions:

The problem with this element of a definition was highlighted by the recent “crusade” against “terrorism” which has been consciously defined by the United States and its allies as the ‘war on terror.’ If ‘terrorism’ is distinct from war how can it, at the same time, be conceptualised within a war? Indeed, it is relevant to note that a former British Foreign Secretary has all but conceded that this understanding of ‘terrorism’ is now defunct. (5)

Eman Ahmed Khamas points out that “9/11 has been iconized within the war trope. Modern terrorism has been largely associated with Islam and represented generally as a confrontation between the Western world and Islamic culture where violence is supposed to be endemic” (371).

In his paper “Religious fundamentalism: A Paradigm for Terrorism ?” Douglas Pratt refers to Tarik Ali, a contemporary commentator who offers a critique about the war against terror : “In regard to the so-called war against terror [Tarik Ali] categorises the current contest as occurring between two fundamentalist trajectories. On the surface, one is religious, namely the Islamic world, and the other political, namely America, or the Americanised, globalized, and secularised West” (3). In this context, the scene of love that the American Tassie and the Muslim Reynaldo have under the title of “a surprise attack” which symbolizes the 9/11 attacks does not only dismantle the paradigm of “terrorism,” but it might also

encompass the idea of excluding the term “terrorism” from accepted academic discourse. Dominic Bryan et al. maintain that “the strongest and most challenging political and social message that academics can articulate with regard to this ill-defined, politically loaded and pejorative term is to exclude it from accepted academic discourse” (9). This may well be the message Moore wants to convey in her post 9/11 novel. This writer does not seem to accept the “terrorist paradigm,” the way so many writers do as Bryan et al assert: “so many writers accept the inadequacies of the “terrorist” paradigm yet keep on using it, apparently to satisfy popular sentiment and powerful funders. This is the equivalent of knowing the world is round but maintaining that it is flat” (15).

Moore’s rejection of the post 9/11 “paradigm of terrorism” and her apparent belief that this concept, “terrorism,” is undefinable and should be avoided are not only revealed through the scene of love and the marriage anniversary discussed above, but they appear in other passages throughout the novel, passages which attribute violence to Westerners: Moore’s work incorporates signs of violence attributed to characters such as Robert, Sarah, Edward and even the child Gabriel, the American characters who symbolize the West. Unlike the Arab Reza in *The Woman Upstairs*, Edward’s and Sarah’s son Gabriel in *A Gate* is tremendously violent. This is apparent in the passage recounting the car accident that leads to Gabriel’s death and after which his parents change their identity (Edward’s and Sarah’s real names are John and Susan). While inside the car, neither John nor Susan is able to calm Gabriel, who “began to lean forward in his car seat and plunked John on the head with his fist and grabbed his flipped and capey hair” (Moore 233). Although John shouts in pain, the mother “was caught between these two male energies, one grown and one growing and unformed like a fire” (Moore 232). She proves incapable of controlling her son. Both Gabriel and his father are violent. John “turned while driving and swatted the child on his knee” (Moore 232). Instead of crying as expected from any child, Gabriel “removed one of his own shoes and from the backseat leaned in and hit John over the head with it” (Moore 232). John, the father, offers an image different from the peaceful Skandar in *The Woman Upstairs* and his son Gabriel seems to be more or less like Owen, the violent child who attacks Skandar’s son, Reza.

In addition to this violent child and his father, Tassie’s brother’s nickname is “Gunny,” an allusion to guns and, thus, violence. Robert himself uses this nickname in his letters to his sister; he writes “Robert “Gunny” Keltjin” (Moore 307). Intriguingly, Robert’s everyday behavior reflects the sense of this nickname. In one of the novel’s passages, his sister Tassie

comments: “he was, essentially, always nice to me, though he did gun the engine a little wildly as we pulled out of the parking lot” (Moore 42). She adds:

On the ride back to the house he told me how he was doing though I had to ask two times. Sometimes a stammer came over him, which made him hesitant to speak at all- I’m sure he felt that the slightly choked and garbled voice did not accurately reflect his mind, though who knows, maybe it did. Sometimes you could see him trying to pick up speed when he spoke, velocity smoothing things over and getting him to the end sooner. Gunny, indeed. (Moore 42)

The picture of violence is also painted by his friends who call him “Gunny.” During Robert’s funeral, his friends and teacher express their love towards him, but this happens in a violent way. One of them reads a poem called “Gunny finally got His Gun” (Moore 296). More importantly, this poem is reinforced by the rifles fired in the air in the cemetery, with the statement which says “More guns for Gunny” (Moore 301). Both the title of the poem and the action which accompanies it allude to violence.

Moore insists on attributing violence to Westerners whether the event is sad (Robert’s funeral) or happy. New Year’s Eve in Tassie’s town is a vivid picture of real violence:

The fireworks every year grew more explosive and raucous, beginning days before New Year’s Eve, and every year they were still legal. I could hear the whistle and pop of them, the metallic shower of pellets. They were no longer the fireworks of my childhood-simple ladyfinger firecrackers jammed like sausages into tangerines or dried goat bladders that had been hung on the Christmas trees, then yanked off and lobbed, loaded, across the field in a kind of snowball fight. As the winters grew less cold and white, the fireworks grew fancier. They now had evolved from homely grenades that could give you no more than a small blistery burn to cherry bombs and M-80, weapons-grade devices used most often in military training. Last year the detritus of one had set a marsh on fire- in winter. (Moore 69)

What is noticeable is that the celebration is growing more violent year after year to the extent that Tassie comments: “One year, I feared, someone would take the occasion to slyly shoot an actual gun, without notice, and I just hoped it wouldn’t be me” (Moore 70).

Weapons such as the rifle, the gun, the knife are carried by Western characters in different passages throughout *A Gate*. The knife, for instance, appears in the possession of Sarah. Tassie mentions that Sarah once leaves home then comes back suddenly because she has forgotten something. She goes to the kitchen “opened a drawer, and grabbed a kitchen knife, which she stuck gleefully in her leather bag” (Moore 131). What is of utmost importance here is that even though this weapon is not used, the simple fact of exposing weapons in the possession of Western characters in the post 9/11 context is revealing: it destabilizes the post 9/11 “paradigm of terrorism.” This is because weapons always appear in the possession of the so called Muslim /Arab “terrorists.”

Berkowitz and LePage argue that the presence of weapons is strongly related to aggressive behavior, the fact which reinforces the picture of violent Western characters Moore draws. These researchers’ first published study demonstrates “that the mere presence of a weapon increases aggressive behavior.” In other words, “the presence of weapons (a rifle and a revolver) produce more retaliative aggression against an antagonist than did the presence of badminton rackets.” This is called the “weapons effect” according to them. Then, several research teams have replicated these results about this “weapons effect” on aggressive behavior (Anderson et al. 308). This makes the presence of weapons in the possession of Moore’s Western characters significant; it alludes to “more retaliative aggression.” Intriguingly, Sarah is not only exposed to the weapon, but does carry it. Indeed, the possibility of the aggressive behavior at the exposure to weapons (the knife), in her case, is made obvious through her comment at the strange deed of going back home and taking the knife: “a concealed weapon, or a chef’s tool? Who can say? Already, driving around in winter with a shovel in my car makes me feel like a serial killer” (Moore 131). This suggests the “weapon effect” (Anderson et al. 308) on her, which is explicitly confirmed by Tassie who, by the end of the novel, points out that Sarah has the “potential to kill someone,” (Moore 262) the characteristic which is attributed to Muslims/Arabs in post 9/11 American fiction as mentioned in the previous sections.

Such a potential is also apparent in another passage in the novel. When studying Bonnie Jankling Crowe’s file (the birth mother of the child Sarah and Edward intend to adopt), Edward comments: “Nobody’s perfect. Everyone has a relative or two that’s come down with some crud or stuck a fork in someone’s eye or dynamited a perfectly good shed” (Moore 113). As the novel unfolds, Tassie googles the name of this birth mother but what she finds seems

to be about another Western person who carries the same name. Significantly, this person is violent:

I instead found a notice from a Georgia newspaper about someone named Bonnie J. Crowe who had been found murdered in an apartment in Atlanta. No known suspect. No evidence of robbery. Investigation pending. My heart leaped up. Of course! I thought. This would be exactly the sort thing that would happen to poor doomed Bonnie. Here I was worried she was suicidal when in fact getting herself murdered would be more her style. (Moore 183)

The last statement of the above passage puts emphasis on Moore's Western violent characters who are not only depicted to have the potential to kill, but they are also portrayed, in other passages, to have an inner tendency towards violence.

The Western characters in *A Gate* tend to have violent ideas. Two examples from the novel, among many others, can illustrate this tendency. Talking about the time they will make their CD, Tassie's and Murph's comments prove to be extremely violent: Murph asks and suggests: "When we make our CD? We'll put a razor blade right inside each and everyone" (Moore 221) and Tassie adds: "And those little bottles of gin and a pistol" (Moore 221). Moreover, Tassie and her brother prove to have violent ideas and language. This is made obvious in Tassie's stories about their childhood: "In winter my brother and I actually used to shoot (potatoes) out of pipes, with firecrackers,...Potato guns. It was a big pastime for us when we were young. With cold-storage potatoes from the root cellar and some PVC pipe. We would arrange little armies and have battles" (Moore 21). The number of times the novel's Western characters express themselves using violent words such as "murder", "bomb", "kill" is very striking. In this connection, it is argued that "violent thoughts lead to violent speech and violent action" (Keegan). Hence, this use of violent language and this tendency towards violence suggest a violent West in the post 9/11 context.

What is worth noting is that all the above arguments that show Westerners as violent or highlight the Westerners' tendency towards violence in Moore's novel stand in opposition to the discourse of war on terror which "has naturalized violence and hatred in Middle Eastern identity, relegating all the problems that the people there have to face to defects in their character, resulting from the backwardness of their culture that does not fit with the modern civilization of the West" (Khamas 371). On the whole, the portrayal of Reynaldo, the Muslim

character, as peaceful on the one hand and the combination of Western characters with both signs of violence and real violence on the other hand do not only destabilize the post 9/11 paradigm of “terrorism,” but also offer the possibility of a violent West instead of a violent East, thus, reversing the traditional racial schema.

2.5. Arabs’/Muslims’ approach to life: from craving to die to yearning to live

In addition to picturing their Muslim/Arab characters as peaceful as argued above, Adams, Messud, and Moore go further to dismantle the stereotype that depicts death as desirable for Muslims/Arabs. Aziz’s, Skandar’s and Reynaldo’s approach to life stands in contrast to the stereotypical attitude which claims that Muslims/Arabs value life less than others (Ismael and Rippin 148), a concept which Hammad perfectly illustrates in Delillo’s *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, that love of death is valuable : ““Forget the world. Be unmindful of the thing called the world ... This is your long wish, to die with your brothers” (Delillo 238). Yet, while Hammad in *Falling Man* longs to die, Aziz, Reynaldo and Skandar in *Harbor, A Gate and The Woman Upstairs* respectively, long to live as the coming lines will demonstrate.

In his book *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, Erich Fromm explains that the modern society confronts a basic social- psychological problem: to choose between the love of life or the love of death, which he calls *biophilia* and *necrophilia* respectively. While the most significant element of *biophilia* is “Extravagance,” taking profit of all the pleasures of life without taking into consideration those that might go against one’s health, war and the destruction of life are the basic aspects which characterize *necrophilia*, the most important threat of modern times in Fromm’s view. *Necrophilia* is defined as “the passionate attraction to all that is dead, decayed, putrid, sickly; it is the passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive. It is the passion to tear apart living structures (Fromm 369). These features of “death lovers”- *Necrophilious* characters in Fromm’s words- including “the passion to tear apart living structures” seem to characterize post 9/11 Muslim characters such as Delillo’s Hammad and Amir.

In contrast to Hammad who joins a terrorist group, a powerful symbol of death and destruction, and believes in the concept of death as desirable, Aziz flees terrorism and goes

to America hoping for a better life. Once in America, Aziz has the possibility to join terrorists and thus kill and destroy, but he refuses, a decision that highlights his strong attachment to life. Interestingly, he wants to live for himself and for the others too; he never aims at “Extravagance” or rather *biophilia*. Aziz’s hopes to find a job and to work very hard (which are obviously signs of life) are intended both to fulfill good living conditions for himself and to help his family with money. 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 . . .” (Adams 79). Moreover, apart from this, Aziz’s love of life is more apparent in his aspiration to meet his fiancée in Algeria and get married. Once again a sign of life that pictures Aziz in a position totally different from the stereotyped image. Aziz thus is not a *Necrophilious* character; his love of life is made obvious, but noticeably it does not illustrate Fromm’s notion of *biophilia*.

In like manner, both Reynaldo’s and Skandar’s approach to life is optimistic; they are far from being *Necrophilious* characters. Like Aziz, Reynaldo is presented as a Muslim character who struggles silently within the 9/11 context for better living conditions. He always believes that there is a possibility to carry on life. He loses his job as a consequence to the prejudices that prevail in the world after the events and cannot reveal his real identity in US for fear of being suspected as a “djihadist.” Yet, this does not affect his positive approach to life; it does not turn him into a “terrorist,” or a “death lover.” Contrarily, he decides to hide his origins and go to college, studying and waiting for things to improve. This optimistic momentary solution shows his positive approach to life; his love of life which extends its thread to reach Tassie, his girlfriend.

Unlike the *Necrophilious* character Amir in Delillo’s novel, who spreads his pessimistic philosophy about life (based on killing the unbelievers and loving death), Reynaldo is portrayed as someone who spreads a positive approach to life: the love of life. At their last encounter, Reynaldo tries to encourage Tassie to carry on living without him. He reveals to her the fact that he is Muslim and he must move to London: “I’m moving to London . . . I’m part of an Islamic charity for Afghan children. That is all. They think I’m part of a cell. I’m not” (Moore 204). Reynaldo is thus suspected for terrorist activities and must disappear as soon as possible, but simultaneously he wants to help Tassie face reality and instill love of life into her mind. Yet, it seems that this love of life reveals the idea of taking profit of the pleasures of life, but not to the extent of “extravagance” as Fromm maintains. This is

conveyed through Reynaldo's statement: "There are a billion Muslims in the world," (Moore 207) and he carries on saying that there is the possibility to find another one, another man with whom she can love life (Moore 208). He wants her to understand that his departure is a must and it should not mean the end of the world for her. He packs his baggage and leaves US searching for a new possibility of life and not death.

Like Reynaldo, Skandar loves life. Shortly before his departure to Paris in his last encounter with Nora when they meet for a coffee in Harvard, Skandar has a significant talk to her, a talk which highlights his optimistic approach to life. This stands in opposition to the cliché of death as desirable for Arabs. There, Skandar proves to be very optimistic: he encourages Nora to seize every opportunity offered by life: "Live, my dear Nora. Satisfy your hunger. There's food all around you, you know . . . [Y]ou must taste all things, actually to know if you like them" (Adams 267). Such piece of advice cannot flow out of someone who is *Necrophilious* like Updike's characters, for instance. That is to say, Skandar is not the same as these post 9/11 stereotyped characters, the "death lovers" who are really proud to be different from "the unbelievers who love this fleeting life too well" (Messud 48).

Hence, Adams, Messud, and Moore first distance their Muslim/Arab characters from violence, depicting them as peaceful (as argued in the previous section), dismantling the stereotypical image of violence entrenched in the Western imagination. Then, they insist on this quality (their Muslim/Arab characters' peacefulness) by throwing light on their positive approach to life. About the cliché of violence, Jordan Denari Duffner comments:

For my entire life, I -like virtually all Americans- had been bombarded with news and images on TV that almost always presented Muslims in the context of war and violent political change. The nightly news had never shown Muslims yelling to sell fruits and vegetables; it had only shown Muslims yelling while launching rockets or protesting in the streets. One of the most enduring stereotypes about Muslims is that their religion encourages violence. On social media, we see memes with Qur'anic quotes that seem to call for indiscriminate violence against those of other faiths. Best-selling authors and television personalities portray the Prophet Muhammad as a bloodthirsty warlord whose violence Muslims are compelled to emulate. These notions are also confirmed in news media, which always seems filled with reports of militant groups with Arabic-sounding names whose complex motives are often reduced to simplistic explanations of religion. This narrative about Muslims and violence isn't a new one.

Since Europeans' earliest encounters with Islam centuries ago, European literature and visual art has portrayed Muslims as uniquely barbaric and warring. (41- 42)

Given this American writer's view about this stereotype within which Arabs/Muslims have become standardized, the insistence on dismantling it might well be an attempt on the part of the writers to help offset this negative stereotype of "violent," "death lover" Muslims/Arabs and improve the West's understanding of this people, thus, promoting tolerance and overcoming prejudice. To put it in another way, the writers' portrayals of their Muslim/Arab characters stand in opposition to the media's and fiction's portrayals which, using Craig Detweiler's words, "couple Islam and violence and Islam and misogyny, so that the entire tradition is reduced to the dual tropes of violence and misogyny" (132). Whereas this section decouples violence from Islam through passages in the novels under study, the coming sections will decouple misogyny from Islam and thus destabilize the stereotypical image of the Muslim/Arab "misogynist" in the same novels.

3. Non-misogynist Arabs/Muslims

3.1. An Arab man encouraging women to improve

Messud's Skandar is not a misogynist as Arab characters have widely been portrayed in post 9/11 fiction. Indeed, this stereotype is not new; it appears in earlier Western works about Muslims/Arabs. In his essay "A Neoimperial Discourse on the Middle East," Ralph Coury studies Western attitudes toward Islam. He exploits these attitudes by using the works of Paul Bowles which reflect, according to him, the features that have characterized the representation of the Arabs/Muslims since the nineteenth century. What characterize his works are the Orientalist themes expressed through the explicit statements of his protagonists. In his short stories and novels which appeared for nearly fifty years from the 1940s into the 1990s, "Bowles does not refrain from the traditional reference to Muslim misogyny," and his protagonists have "little of what we would call respect" towards women and they are convicted "that females are wild beasts and must be kept caged" (Coury 156- 157). This feeling towards women also appears in post 9/11 American fiction. Ross Perigoe, and Mahmoud Eid argue that in the aftermath of the attacks "Muslim men were typically stereotyped as misogynists, while Muslim women were cast as complacent" (201). Messud's Skandar is totally different from Bowles's and Updike's characters, for instance.

In Updike's *Terrorist*, Arab 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" (Updike 108). 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" (Messud 108). Intriguingly, Skandar's behavior towards both Sirena, his wife and Nora, the babysitter of his son Reza, does not show any sign of a misogyny as defined by Jean Chapman:

Misogyny is the hatred or dislike of females. The overt kind is when women are hated simply because they are women. Less overt is prejudice against all women or those women who fail to fall into one or more acceptable categories, examples being the mother/whore dichotomy, and the wife/mother dichotomy. Misogyny manifests itself in diverse ways: sexual discrimination, objectification and commodification of women, and mental and physical violence and the threat of violence. (50)

None of these ways in which misogyny manifests itself appears in Skandar's behavior towards women throughout the novel. Rather, "the mental and physical violence" which a misogynist is supposed to practise on women turn to be a kind encouragement, optimism and tenderness offered on the part of Skandar. This Arab character encourages both women (Sirena and Nora) to go further in their artistic works. This stands in opposition to the argument that Arabs "hate women, especially women with self-respect and freedom" (Cassandra 295): both Sirena and Nora are free independent Western women, each with her own job and projects as mentioned in the previous chapter.

Skandar urges Nora to challenge the limitations that she puts on her creative work. He describes her dioramas as "remarkable", "Quite extraordinary" and says that they are "at the same time truthful, and emotional" (Messud 230). He wonders about her choice to create an artistic work on such small scale: "Why not a whole room, a life-sized room, for each of these? Why only a little box?" (Messud 231); Skandar believes that "there's so much emotion in these rooms, in these artists-why is it all sad?" (Messud 231) Nora's justification is that she puts joy in each room and he only has to look for it (Messud 231). Yet, Skandar seems to be unsatisfied, and he wonders why joy does not take the whole room (Messud 231). When hearing this, tears come to her eyes, she deduces that "[her] art was sad, because [her] soul was sad" (Messud 231). Yet, when she asks him whether he thinks her soul is sad, he powerfully answers that her "soul is lovely" and behaves positively:

I think that you don't think so, but your soul is beautiful," he went on, and he took my left hand between his two hands . . . "And I think it has a great capacity for joy and for sadness both. You don't need to worry for a moment about your soul. Rather, you need only to move all of your emotions out of their little boxes, and let them take up the whole room. (Messud 232)

It is in this way that Skandar satisfies Nora. All this is to say that these details provided by the writer do not reflect the "mental violence" Jean Chapman mentions in the definition of misogyny. Furthermore, taking her "left hand between his two hands" disrupts the "physical violence" that Chapman talks about and offers tenderness instead.

Messud's depiction of Skandar thus dismantles the association of Arabs with misogyny, among other stereotypes according to Sunaina Maira who points out that "the attacks on September 11, 2001 generated a discourse about Islam in the United States that has congealed a set of historical associations between Islam, Arabs, and the Middle East, on the one hand, and terrorism, fanaticism, misogyny, and anti-modernity, on the other" (Maira 112). Skandar is far from believing that Nora's soul is sad. He does not only devote his time for her, but immerses her with his optimistic attitude to things as well, a kind of precious help that a misogynist like the Arab characters in Jones' *The Jewel*, for instance, would never hand to women who are seen as "evil." Women in *The Jewel* are suspected; they are so because Islam teaches that "if a woman glances at the mirror she's plotting evil" (Jones 157), a teaching that accuses every woman though innocent.

3.2. A Muslim man who likes women

On the basis of a survey about Modern Muslims which he has exposed in his book *Inside Muslim Minds*, Riaz Hassan argues that "misogynist and patriarchal attitudes are deeply entrenched in the modern Muslim consciousness" (55). While this is the argument of Riaz Hassan, Md. Mahmudul Hasan's article "Feminism as Islamophobia," asserts "that ignorance about, and prejudice against, Islam contribute to portraying it as a misogynistic creed" (55). Indeed, it is argued that "misogyny is built into Islam, and because Islam does not give a voice to "the people," especially women, it will forever oppress members of "the second sex" (Green 343). In short, it is argued that Muslims are people who "hate women," among other things (Elliott). This stereotypical image which characterizes post 9/11 fiction and even earlier fiction as mentioned previously seems to be contrasted in Moore's *A Gate*.

Moore's Muslim character, Reynaldo, does not show any hatred towards women in the novel more precisely towards Tassie, the protagonist, and Emma, the little female child in the novel. On the contrary, he likes them very much.

Like Messud's Skandar, Reynaldo's portrayal does not reveal any "mental or physical violence" towards Tassie and Emma and thus does not reflect Jean Chapman's definition of misogyny mentioned previously. Reynaldo explicitly tells Tassie that she "was his only friend," (Moore 192) a statement which questions the stereotypical image of a misogynist Muslim. Besides, he treats both Tassie and Emma well. What is worth mentioning here is that misogyny in the Orientalist discourse is not restricted to adult females only, but it extends its threads to little female children. Women's oppression stems from misogyny which "is defined as hatred of women or girls, expressed as disgust, intolerance or entrenched prejudice, serving to legitimate women's oppression" (Ussher 1). This is the case of Aicha in Jones' *The Jewel*, for instance. Jones depicts Aicha as a child deprived of enjoying her childhood and is forced to marry the prophet at a very young age: "'I'd known it would happen someday, but not when I was six. Only very few girls were engaged at birth, as I had been, but they were never confined until they began their monthly bleeding'" (Jones 20). Unlike the stereotyped image of the Muslim misogynist, Reynaldo has a fatherly behavior towards Sarah's adopted child, Mary Emma. This is apparent when Tassie takes Mary on walks to Reynaldo's apartment. He is "very kind" (Moore 169) to both of them and he lets Mary Emma play with xylophone each time she wants. Significantly, he does not only let her play with the instrument, but tenderly helps her to use it correctly, which really delights her (Moore 168). In addition to this, he does his best to make both Mary and Tassie happy and indeed they are, especially when he takes photos of both of them with a new digital camera he owns. Reynaldo's kindness towards these females remains the same even in the last moments of his story with Tassie. Packing his baggage, he gently informs Tassie that he has sent the xylophone to her house, observing: "it should show up there in a few days. Mary Emma can play it there. And you, too, of course" (Moore 204). Such behavior cannot come from the misogynist Muslim who dwells in post 9/11 American fiction.

Fascinatingly, "Islam's alleged oppression of women, evidenced in the "maltreatment" of both Muslim and non-Muslim women" (295) according to Christina Ho, is debunked through Moore's portrayal of Reynaldo who, though has not been depicted along with any Muslim woman in the novel, shows kindness towards the non-Muslim Tassie and Emma. In a

nutshell, Moore's positive portrayal of Reynaldo seems to support Peter Lamborn Wilson's view against the prejudices about Islam. In the foreword of *A History of Women's Seclusion in the Middle East* by J Dianne Garner, and Linn Prentis, Peter Lamborn Wilson discusses his Italian friend's statement that "Muslims hate women" stating: "What I object to are the selly misinformed prejudices about Islam that still circulate as "fact" in Western media and literature – and therefore in Western brains" (ix). Moore thus seems interested in changing the stereotypical image of the Muslim misogynist.

Indeed, Moore's representation of the Muslim Reynaldo does not only provide a new image of the Muslim man, but it extends its thread to offer new positive thoughts about Islam, precisely about the woman's position in this religion. In other words, Reynaldo's good treatment of Tassie and Emma dismantles the "discourse of protecting women's rights," which enables "Islam to be portrayed as inherently misogynistic" in Ho's view as it also breaks the link "between Islamophobia and the woman's position in Islam" which Ho suggests (296). In doing so, Moore stands in opposition to Islamophobia as "an ideology that has come to be accepted as normal" in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, as Jimmy Carter asserts:

I argue that Islamophobia is an ideology that has come to be accepted as normal, as "common sense," in the War on Terror era. In this sense, it is not just an individual bias but a systematic body of ideas which make certain constructions of Muslims—that they are prone to violence, that they are misogynistic, that they are driven by rage and lack rationality—appear natural. (62)

Moore's representation of Reynaldo is intended to break down this "systematic body of ideas which make certain constructions of Muslims" and also to invite her readers not to accept post 9/11 Islamophobia as "common sense."

3.3. Trusting women

Like Messud's Skandar and Moore's Reynaldo, Adams's 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. This stands in opposition to the idea that "in the Arab world, people seem to trust men more than women" (Punnett 61) or rather they do not trust women at all; their inferior status makes them untrustworthy (Punnett 61).

Different passages throughout the novel show that Aziz 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,” (Adams 245) because he knows that she is the one who can tell him the truth. Effectively, it is his mother who skillfully makes him know about the sad news at his father’s failure to do it. Aziz also trusts his sister although he has brothers, like Mourad: “Aziz had never considered confiding in him. His older sister Hazar was the one he trusted,” (Adams 97) as the writer reveals.

Similarly, 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” (Adams 35). 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. This contradicts the comment of Lexi Peters, the protagonist of Amanda Dubin’s novel *Assassins Wall* which deprives women in the Arab world of any kind of trust: “[Arabs] don’t trust women to be able to take care of themselves, and the first rule of any healthy relationship – be it friendship, romance, or a relationship with a relative- is to trust. Rule number two is communication. Once he trusts them he is going to communicate” (Dubin 132). The need to talk to the Nigerian nurse or his sister Anissa or rather to communicate his thoughts to them entails the fulfillment of the first rule which means that Aziz trusts these women. Obviously, there was certainly no way to contact his sister who is in Algeria and the only one left is the nurse. He wants to tell her everything about his real name and situation. “He felt he could tell her,” (Adams 35) 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. What is important here is that the idea to confide to a woman comes to his mind.

Thus, Aziz’s attitude towards women reveals that women can be trustworthy friends which is not the case with Updike’s characters. All women are devils for Ahmed, even his mother, Teresa, whom he depicts as “trashy and immoral” (Updike 35). Ahmed and his imam strongly believe in the inferiority of women. They see them as “animals” (Updike 10) which are easily led; they can never be trusted or be friends. In short, they are unhuman in man’s eyes and can never move 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!” (Updike 106) These distorted 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* offer 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" (Adams 68). Fouzia marries into a family. Her father "felt [this family] was not the best" (Adams 68), and he was angry against her. Yet, his love for her 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." The latter is strongly associated with Islam, the religion which is claimed to "lead the pack in the misogyny stakes" (Benson and Stangroom 151) as clarified in the previous sections. Indeed, it is argued that forced marriage, violence against women, honor crimes are often associated with Islam (Hanelt 357). Abu Sadik Maruf asserts: "Almost all the studies on forced marriage found that it is being practised in Muslim communities largely than others. Although Islam prohibited force into marriage, misinterpretation of Islam along with religious and cultural tradition of particular communities made it quite common in Muslim communities" (9). Forced marriage is classified among "the crimes of religion against women" of which "Islam has been indicted" by many researchers: "Honor killings, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, child marriage, ferocious control of female sexuality, restrictions on personal freedom, medieval dress codes, and the like, are disproportionately associated with Islam (Benson 151). However, Aziz's uncle does not force his daughter to marry the man he wishes. She marries the man she chooses and despite her doing so, he does not cut her off. This is another example of non misogynist Muslims in *Harbor*.

Indeed, the image of non-misogynist Muslim characters in *Harbor* is not only highlighted through their behavior, but it is also mirrored through the female characters of the novels. The daughter who marries the man she herself chooses in *Harbor* does not resemble the characters (actresses) in the short film *Submission*, for instance, which, according to Todd H. Green contributes in the condemnation of Islam for its supposed misogyny:

Submission dramatized the subjugation of Muslim women in Islam through four monologues. Each monologue voiced by an actress who has been a victim of misogyny and abuse at hands of Muslim men and, by implication, Allah. Evidence of this abuse is inscribed on her body in the form of bruises and lashes. Justification for this violence is also "inscribed" on her body in the form of Quaranic verses. (344)

Hence, Adams's depictions of both male and female Muslim characters stand in opposition to the stereotypical image of "misogynist" Muslims, and by implication, to the image of Islam as misogynistic.

4. Arabs/Muslims: from "oversexed oppressors" to "ideal"/ "beloved" men

4.1. The "Oversexed" Prophet

Western fiction shows the Oriental as a sexual being, which suggests "sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire" (Said *Orientalism* 189). It often draws a link "between the Orient and the freedom of licentious sex" (Said *Orientalism* 191). 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" (63). This can be best illustrated in Sherry Jones's *The Jewel*, which presents the prophet as a man with many wives (the youngest is Aicha, aged six); the more he marries women the more he covets others; so much so that he shows interest in marrying all the widows of the defenders of Islam.

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. This practice of polygamy seems to characterize Muslims in Jones's *The Jewel*. This cliché goes back to earlier times; several lurid stories in English writings depict Mohammed or rather "Mahomet" (as Christian authors referred to him) negatively, a fact which helped spread misrepresentations of the whole Muslim community: "Mahomet," and hence Muslims as a whole, was also proverbially licentious A lurid sexualised life of the prophet was thus used not only to discredit Islam, but also to explain its appeal to those thousands that converted in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Percy 184). This negative depiction of the prophet is discussed in Norman Daniel's *Islam and the West*. Norman Daniel, one of the writers who, prior to Edward Said, wrote books on Orientalism, sheds light on the study of Islam-Christian relations and discusses the prophet Muhammed's portrayals. Daniel studies the negative Western views of Islam through the examination of Christian-Muslim interaction from medieval times to the modern world. He

notices that “the use of false evidence to attack Islam was all but universal” (267). In his book, Daniel shows that the European Medieval representations of the prophet Muhammad and of the beginnings of Islam were uniformly negative. In his analysis of medieval representations of Muhammad in *Islam and the West*, Daniel discusses “the polemic biographies of Muhammad.” He points out that what characterizes the documented biographies and English writings in general is the portrayal of the prophet of Islam as a “false prophet” (78), violent, and above all a lustful character in invented stories which reveal his deceitfulness. In these stories, the Prophet is often accused of having invented revelations that suit his needs and desires (78). About this, William Percy asserts that “Medieval and early modern writers were obsessed with the ways in which they considered the Qur’an to be far from divinely inspired but rather, manipulated by Muhammad to serve his own base desires” (184). Such a depiction, which Daniel considers as commonplace in the tradition of Muhammad’s polemic biography, is intended to satisfy the Orientalist attitudes of the West.

Orientalists use seventh-century Islam to explain the working of early Islamic communities (Kadi 153). In an interview about her novel *The Jewel*, Sherry Jones states:

I came across the story of A’isha for the first time shortly after the World Trade Center attacks in 2001. As a woman and a feminist, I was captivated by her wit, intelligence, and strength. I began to read more about A’isha and her sister-wives, and about Muhammad and the revealing of Islam, and I was hooked. My goal was to bring these tales, already familiar to Muslims in the rest of the world, to Western audiences. I wanted to honor A’isha and the other wives by bringing them to life on the page and allowing their voices to be heard in a historical tradition that largely focuses on the men. (qtd. in Keskin)

Jones offers a detailed depiction of the prophet’s private life. She shows him as a slave to his desires and, more importantly, she incorporates Quranic verses, which give readers (who have a limited knowledge about Islam) the impression that she knows much about this religion and its prophet. Yet, this is not the case; she herself asserts that she has read few books and “[she] is certainly no expert, only an interested Westerner who is always learning” (Keskin).

In this, Jones is similar to John Updike, who inserts a lot of Arabic passages from the holy Quran in his *Terrorist* and offers interpretations without being knowledgeable about this religion, a fact which has made him subject to wide criticism:

Updike is not an initiate of the Quran, by his own admission. He has not learned Arabic and, therefore, depends on one of the dozens of translations readily available, translations that range in accuracy, elegance, and ideological mooring as far as one can imagine. So we may fairly say that Updike is not a devoted or even intermittent student of the sacred scripture. (Abusharif)

About the novel *Terrorist*, Marianne Vardalos argues: “The text buzzes with many verses from the Quran which are quoted to emphasize a point or convince the protagonist, but all of them reveal a desperate need to get more knowledge of this book and study it in more detail” (205).

Norman Daniel states that the ideological basis of Western hostility towards Islam is formed in Medieval Europe then the anti-Islamic attitudes have worked their way into scholarship. Basing his argument on specific historians and studies, he asserts that the roots of anti-Muslim prejudice lie deep in European history and that the negative stereotypical images of Arabs/Muslims are the result of centuries of accumulation of encounter between Muslims and the West. Daniel points out that in the period of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Christian scholars created the negative stereotypes of Islam as war propaganda in support of the Crusades. These stereotypes have long survived into modern times. He emphasises the idea that “the earliest Christian reactions to Islam were much the same as they have been until quite recently. The tradition has been continuous and it is still alive” (11). About this eminent historian and his studies, Peter Staples asserts that Daniel records the great number of misunderstandings – both deliberate and unintentional – that Western Christians have had about Islam. Attacks on the Qur'an, for example, have been shown to be the product of mistranslations of the Arabic language, but primarily of religious hate. The majority of the texts seem to have been written specifically for a Christian domestic audience. Daniel's account of more recent reactions to Islam gives the impression that the themes which Christian misrepresentation of Islam continues to employ are fundamentally consistent (Staples 526).

4.2. Desired “oversexed oppressors”

Messud's Skandar in *The Woman Upstairs* is not a polygamous figure, the sort of Jone's characters in *The Jewel*. Rather, he is totally the opposite of post 9/11 oversexed stereotypical images. The only woman in Skandar's life is his wife, Sirena. He does not show

any sexual desire towards any other woman in the novel, not even Nora, who is very close to him and to all the members of his family. Nora, the woman with whom he is in touch because she babysits his son and helps his wife in her art is but a person to whom he enjoys talking. He walks her back home after babysitting Reza at night and they spend a long time together talking, but Nora mentions that “he never took [her] arm. [they] never touched at all” (Messud 181). Nora herself admits the fact that Skandar is not interested in her sexually when she once discusses the matter with her friend Didi. At her friend’s statement that “men will be men will be men” (Messud 142). Nora denies that Skandar “has the seducer’s eyes” adding that “he is not trying to impress [her]; he’s really trying to talk to [her]” (Messud 142). Furthermore, most of his talks to Nora are about history, politics and his beloved country Lebanon (Messud 186), discussions which do not reveal sensuality or lead to erotic interactions.

Ironically, it is Nora who does her best to seduce Skandar. She feels desire for Skandar even before knowing him well. “Not long after” her first encounter with Skandar (Messud 96), she has a sexual dream about him that she describes as “so visceral that it can’t then be expunged from your memory, as though it were written on the body” (Messud 96). Her desire goes beyond mere longing and is fulfilled in a dream which is very strong and “vivid and more alive to [her] than much that [she] could see and smell and touch . . . [she] had to remind [herself] , for a second, that they had not yet taken place” (Messud 167-168).

Several times in the novel, Nora aspires to have Skandar’s attention and often misunderstands his gestures and talks to her for being signs of attraction to her which are not indeed:

I took [Skandar’s] gestures and talks to mean, in a flirtatious way, that he was offering to be my prisoner. I took it to mean he was attracted to me. Oh, come on, I took all those walks to mean that he was. Not straight away, not especially. But over time—the amount of time he gave to me, the attention—and who was I?—and that he gave it while his wife and son were at home, and his bed was calling. I took all this to have meaning. (Messud 181)

Yet, things become clear to her when Skandar puts an end to her wishful thinking and confirms that leaving his wife has never crossed his mind: “It wasn’t that I’d felt he had to choose me over her -- you wouldn’t ask that someone abandon his family -- but I’d thought -- I’d hoped -- to find his choice harder to make. I’d hoped to get the sense that there was even a

choice at all (Messud 255-256). Nora's longing for Skandar seems strange and unexpected in the post 9/11 context that highlights the Arab as the oppressor of women. The Oriental woman is described to long for liberation and separation from the Arab patriarchal man or rather her "oppressor" as in the case of Aicha in *The Jewel*. Aicha thinks of escaping to the desert where she can be free. Yet, while this is the case of Aicha, the Arab woman in *The Jewel*, Nora the Western woman, strives to be close to this Arab "oppressor," to catch this oppressor's attention. She longs for a glance of interest on his behalf. In short, Skandar never confesses any kind of desire towards Nora. It is Nora who acknowledges her attraction to him:

Have I said that for all I found his behavior unreadable, Skandar Shahid also proved, superficially, to be pretty much my ideal man. He was the sort of man I would have eyed, on the subway or in an airport, and wondered about; the sort of man before whom, had I been seated next to him at a dinner party, I would have felt tongue-tied and bashful; the sort of man—a grown-up—I would always have thought I could never know. (Messud 91)

The Arab "oppressor" of the Oriental woman becomes in Messud's novel a Western woman's (Nora's) "ideal man."

In the same vein, Aziz is not the kind of stereotyped Arab who is constantly searching for women as in the case with Delillo's Hammad, whose flirtations are apparent and pervasive throughout *Falling Man*. About this character's sexuality, Hossein Pirnajmuddin and Abbas Ali Borhan argue that:

he is described as a sensual, bodily young man leading a hedonistic life, and his experiences of the reality are mainly rendered through sensory impressions. His first appearance in the novel is a good example: "[he] cupped his hands to his mouth and exhaled six or seven times, slowly and deliberately, feeling a whisper of warm breath on his palms. A woman on a bike went past, pedaling hard" (77). Immediately after this scene, he is again described with the same implications and in similar moods: Hammad stood nodding. He felt the cold in his bones, the misery of wet winds and northern nights . . . waiting for the rain to stop, and he kept thinking that another woman would come by on a bike, someone to look at, hair wet, legs pumping. (78) The trope of body consciousness becomes a metaphor for Hammad's essential sensuality in the course of novel. And interestingly enough, the only aspect of

Hammad's life which is developed in detail is his sexual relationships with his roommate Leyla. (123-124)

Unlike Hammad, "women" for Aziz "are only signposts pointing to Soumeya," (Adams 249) his intended bride in Algeria whom he loves and respects. That is to say, Aziz is not portrayed in the Orientalist way like Hammad whose gaze at women wherever they are is sexualized as indicated previously. As a Muslim man, Aziz is supposed to be one of the prophet's followers and thus an Arab male who is a slave to his desires and one who shows sexual attraction towards new women he encounters as portrayed by Jones in her novel. Yet, this does not occur. 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" (Adams 52) or "so sexy" (Adams 52); 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.

Ironically it is the West that Adams portrays as oversexed. While in America, Aziz shows astonishment at the overuse of the word "sexy" he so often hears in Boston; it is actually 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" (Adams 52). Furthermore, Adams's American character Heather is portrayed to have love affairs with some immigrants; she does her best to seduce the one called Ghazi. It is she who wants him and would love to be "the cause of his sleeplessness" (Adams 219). She expresses several times her interest in him throughout the novel. Hence, the overuse of the word *sexy* in America and Ghazi's seduction by an American woman suggest an oversexed West, the fact which dismantles the stereotype of "an eroticized and decadent East" (Wayne and Moore 23). To put it another way, Adams seems to reveal the idea that to place the cliché of oversexuality entirely on the East or the Arab World is one-sided and erroneous.

Moore's Reynaldo, in turn, does not reflect the stereotype of the "oversexed" Muslim. Nowhere in the novel does the writer explicitly mention or even hint at Reynaldo as a man having relationships with Muslim women or Western women other than Tassie. In other words, the only woman to whom he is said to have a relation is the protagonist of the novel, Tassie. Ironically, and like Messud's Nora and Adams's Heather, Tassie constantly and

explicitly expresses her desire for this Muslim man and her longing to impress him. She indeed does her best to attract his attention: She dresses for him; she always chooses the brighter colors which make her eyes and hair shine as explained in the novel (Moore 164). In other words, Tassie pays too much attention to her physical appearance. The most important thing in this is the fact that she dresses for Reynaldo, the Muslim character in the novel and not for any other man. Significantly, this is a new behavior that characterizes her immediately after meeting this Muslim man. She seems to be the dangerous Western temptress as opposed to the Oriental temptress woman in Orientalist clichés. Like Messud's Skandar and Adams' Ghazi, Reynaldo who is supposed to be the "oversexed oppressor" in the post 9/11 context is thus portrayed in the Western woman's eyes (Tassie's eyes), as her beloved man, as the man to whom "[she] would find any time, any moment, any excuse to get on [her] Suzuki and zoom over" (Moore 193).

5. Intellectual instead of "backward" and "gullible"

Post 9/11 American fiction reinforces the cliché of "backwardness" of Arabs/Muslims. Ahmed in Updike's *Terrorist*, for instance, is depicted to have a strong desire to drive trucks and his teacher at the mosque, Chaikh Rashid, always encourages and advises him against going to college. Indeed, Ignorance and illiteracy are among the clichés attributed to Arabs/Muslims and reinforced by Western writings. Arabs/Muslims are said to have no propensity for learning; they are portrayed "as being illiterate" (La'Porte 110). This illiteracy and lack or neglect of education make the contemporary Muslim society "sick to the core" according to Markus Daechsel. In his opinion, the "ignorance" of Arabs/Muslims goes back to earlier times. Early Muslims/Arabs of the earliest period of Islamic history are detached from any kind of education; they are, in a word, "backward" people:

Do you think that the Muslims of that glorious age had even a minute left to discuss some tract on the intricacies of religious doctrine or to found a school or [social reform] association? Or did the Arabs, when they brought the world to its knees, first study in some school or university? (...) Didn't they make it their day and night obsession to conquer lands for the glory of Allah, sword in hand, once they had fulfilled their religious obligations? (qtd. in Daechsel 50)

In the same vein, William Martin points out that Arabs are "ignorant, savage, and cruel beyond description" (209) and Mohd. Akhtar Siddiqui asserts that "poor economic condition

of Muslims is also due to their educational backwardness” (161). In this context, Azra Khanam asserts that “available literature suggests that Muslims are socioeconomically and educationally backward” (47). Khanam mentions many authors among them A W B Quadri, Mohd. Shafiq-U- Zama. Quadri, M. A. Khan, and Fareed Zakaria: Quadri “has given valuable insight into the educational backwardness of Muslims and he is of the view that the main reason of the fall of Muslims is the negligence of the right type of education; right type of education means education through skill that may fulfill the objective of life” (47). Likewise, Shafiq-U- Zama “holds the view that due to lack of enthusiasm for the education, Muslims are backward. M.A. Khan observes that Muslims have very negligible participation in high school and college education. And poor economic condition is the biggest hurdle in education” (Khanam 47). In turn, Fareed Zakaria “concludes that Muslims are educationally backward.” Khanam adds that, according to an empirical analysis, Muslims are lagging behind in virtually every sphere of growth, including education, jobs, income, properties, and so on (47). Therefore, the claimed ignorance and illiteracy attributed to Arabs/Muslims calls for another stereotypical image: social backwardness.

In his book *Educational Empowerment of Kerala Muslims: A Socio-historical Perspective*, Prof. U. Mohammed discusses the socio economic backwardness of Kerala³ Muslims whose situation “has been the subject of several serious studies in the recent past” (8). The aim of his study “is to find out the extent of progress in the matter of educational empowerment of the Muslims of Kerala” (8) precisely. He mentions that “modern education was taboo in almost all Muslim houses” (8) and “neglect of education led to the backward position of the Muslims of Kerala” (8). Seeking to suggest remedies to the problem through historical analysis, “the outcome of the research project has highlighted the problem of social backwardness of Kerala Muslims” (9). On the whole, “Backwardness” is often listed among the stereotypical images of the Orient; the “essential ideas about the Orient, its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness” (Said *Orientalism* 206).

Standing in opposition to the Orientalist representation of Arabs as “backward” and “uneducated,” the writers under study make use of educated Arab/Muslim characters in their narratives. In *The Woman Upstairs*, Skandar is an outstanding lecturer, a visiting professor at Harvard working on a book about ethics and history. His conversations with Nora prove to be intellectual rather than personal more often than not: “Skandar didn’t always—or even often—tell stories about his youth, although surely, as he insisted, it was significant that he

told one of them first of all” (Messud 186). Furthermore, Skandar is engaged in activities requiring the creative use of the intellect. He is open to the world and contemporary events. We come to know this through Nora. Out of curiosity, she puts his name on “Google Alerts” and knows “about Skandar’s promotion at the university, and about the important lecture series he’d given in the fall of 2006 at Oxford” (Messud 272). These “lectures were to be published as a book” (Messud 272). Skandar appears on BBC and You Tube; “[Nora’d] heard him on the BBC online, talking about the Israeli bombings in Lebanon....and [she]’d seen him on You Tube discussing incomprehensibly in French the current politics of Algeria” (Messud 272). In another passage, Nora gets Skandar’s news from TV. We come to know that he takes “part of a panel discussion about race relations in America— meaning, in this instance, Arab relations-and he spoke eloquently about how the possible election of Obama might change the tenor of society” (Messud 279).

Like Messud’s Skandar, Moore’s Reynaldo is not illiterate; he is a student. His propensity for learning is highlighted through his decision to study despite the hard conditions he witnesses: he hides his origins and goes to college, studying and waiting for things to improve. This is because of the post 9/11 Islamophobic atmosphere in which any Muslim/Arab is suspected to be a dangerous “terrorist.” In like manner, most of the Muslim characters in Adams’s *Harbor* are well-educated and hold high degrees as is the case with the family of Ashraf Frarma, the man to whom Zahra, a woman from Aziz’s hometown, gets married. Ashraf Frarma is a philosophy professor and his sister is a novelist in London. His “mother was a doctor, and all their family had been college-educated in Algiers or Paris” (Adams 72). Other examples are Lahouari’s and Ghazi’s families. Lahouari’s family has all made it to college; “his family was smart: a novelist in Europe as an aunt or something, and his mother was a doctor” (Adams 166). His older brothers Ali and Hamid “had been to college,” too (Adams 75). Ghazi, on the other hand, is an architect, “his father was military intelligence. His brother was a high ranking officer in Algiers” (Adams 89).

Jonathan Lyons argues that “one of the core elements of the anti-Islam discourse: the notion that the Muslims’ inherent opposition to rational thought prevented their once-great scientific enterprise from attaining Western heights” (78). Making use of intellectual Muslim/Arab characters in post 9/11 American novels is revealing; it aims at dismantling the stereotype of “uneducated”, “ignorant”, “illiterate” Arabs/Muslims firmly established in the Western imagination. This also paves the way to establish Muslims’ rationality instead of their claimed “irrationality.” In doing so, the writers seem to share the same aim with

organizations such as, for instance, the “Pan-Islamic Society” founded in 1903 and renamed as the “Central Islamic Society” in 1910. The objective of this organization is to combat misrepresentations prevailing among Westerners: “the society’s goal is to dispel racist stereotypes that cast Muslims as backward, barbaric and unmodern” (Garcia 226). Hence, relating their Arab /Muslim characters to the intellect implies their rationality. This means that these characters have reason or understanding, the fact which stands in opposition to the cliché of the Muslims’/Arabs’ “inherent opposition to rational thought” (Lyons 78).

Whether Muslims/Arabs are rational human beings is still debatable in Western imagination. Vincent J. Cornell observes that a long time has passed since Edward Said wrote his studies *Orientalism and Covering Islam*, but the stereotypical images about Islam and Muslims still dominate the West:

When these books first appeared in print, many thought that the ignorance about the Middle East and the Muslim world in the West would finally be dispelled. However, there is little evidence that the public consciousness of Islam and Muslims has been raised to a significant degree in Western countries. Scholars of Islam in American universities still feel the need to humanize Muslims in the eyes of their students. A basic objective of many introductory courses on Islam is to demonstrate that Muslims are rational human beings and that their beliefs are worthy of respect. (Cornell vii)

In this context, H. A. R Gibb believes that the Arab mind cannot succeed in reaching the rationalist modes of Western thought. In his lecture “Modern Trends in Islam” about the Arab mind, H A R Gibb argues that “the Arab Mind, whether in relation to the outer world or in relation to the process of thought, cannot throw off its intense feelings for the separateness and the individuality of the concrete events” (7). In his opinion, the aversion to rationalism is the most important reason for the decline of the Muslim world. He adds that it is “so difficult for the Western student to grasp [until it is explained to him by the Orientalist]—the aversion of the Muslims from the thought-processes of rationalism” (7).

Gibb claims that the “Arab mind” cannot achieve full progress and is unable to grasp Western notions of progress. In this connection, Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi comments:

Gibb turns his attention to reasons that inhibit the “Arab mind” from achieving full progress. These reasons, he feels, are quite obvious. The “Arab mind” shaped by the long Islamic centuries, is resistant to accepting Western notions of progress . . . Arabs

and Muslims display internal or essentialistic obstacles to progress along Western lines. The structure of the “Arab mind” is not solid enough to affect and grasp recent Western scientific achievements and discoveries. The Arab mind lacks comprehensive vision and outlook. (13)

This is “pure Orientalism” according to Edward Said. About Gibb’s argument, Said asserts that “if Islam is flawed from the start by virtue of its permanent disabilities, the Orientalist will find himself opposing any Islamic attempts to reform Islam, because, according to his views, reform is a betrayal of Islam: this is exactly Gibb's argument” (Said *Orientalism* 106). Gibb, thus, does not only deny full progress of the Arab mind, according to Said, but calls off any possibility of its development as well. In this context, what cannot escape the notice of the attentive reader is the depiction of the Arab/ Muslim characters’ mind in the novels under study. These latter are given an opportunity to slip out from the manacles Said mentions. Their portrayal conveys their irrationality and thus discloses the common cliché of the irrationality of the Arab/Muslim mind. Indeed, the “weakness” of the Arab mind is expressed and emphasized in many post 9/11 works such as Sherry Jones’ *The Jewel* in which the portrayal of the prophet torn between his desires and mission and the circumstances of his several marriages provides an image which presents him as an irrational person with a weak mind. He is depicted struggling to fulfill both his mission and his desires; yet, his weak mind and irrationality always lead to his failure: he introduces revelations which meet his desires, but cause sharp criticism among Muslims around him, for instance, the one which limits four wives to Muslims whereas it gives him freedom to marry as many women as he wishes (Jones 153).

Contrarily, and in different scenes in *The Woman Upstairs*, Skandar proves to be rational; uses reason and clear thinking. He has an analytical mind. For instance, when Nora asks him about Sirena’s artistic installation; about what he thinks Sirena means, he replies rationally:

He took a moment to reply...Why do you ask such a question?” then answers saying “Each person can—and will—give their own answer—that’s what she wants, and surely you also?” He adds:“But think about it: it’s a collection of signs, right? And they might combine in different ways to create several different interpretations, right? But they wouldn’t be infinite, would they? I mean, there’s a limit to what’s plausible, meaningful interpretation, don’t you think? (Messud 254- 255)

This is just one excerpt of his many conversations which put emphasis on Skandar as a person who does not take things for granted but who is capable of analyzing things and capable of independent thoughts. In short, Skandar's speeches do not at all reflect the claimed "weakness" of the Arab mind or its irrationality.

Another positive trait that characterizes Skandar and detaches him from the Orientalist discourse which claims the "weakness" of the Arab mind is his eloquence. The "weak mind" attributed to the Orientals prevents them from being eloquent; weak minds provide statements with ambiguities which cannot reach eloquence. This trait characterizes Skandar. It manifests itself in his conversations with Nora and more important in being a "a good story teller" as both Nora and Sirena acknowledge. His eloquence is also apparent in his talks on TV as Nora notices (Messud 279). Messud's portrayal of Skandar thus stands in opposition to Sir Alfred Lyall's argument mentioned in Edward Said's *Orientalism*: he points out that the Oriental mind is weak and the Oriental "accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind" (39). He compares the European and the Oriental minds 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. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth . . . His explanation will generally be lengthy, and wanting in lucidity. He will probably contradict himself half-a-dozen times before he has finished his story. (39)

Said carries on saying that "Orientals or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, "devoid of energy and initiative" (39). Interestingly, Lyall's depiction of the Oriental mind is not applicable to Skandar, who is capable of drawing conclusions and never contradict himself in his talks and stories. This is made obvious in many passages throughout the novel. Among the striking examples which Messud offers is the passage in which Skandar shows both awareness and criticism of stereotyping Arabs as "violent." This happens when he recounts the history of his country to Nora. Skandar, first, tells her about the assassination of the

Lebanese Prime minister Hariri, about the Civil War in Lebanon and finally about his childhood dreams. Interestingly, he regrets starting his talk with violent events; “so, violence first, but second, the small boy full of dreams” (Messud 185). He thinks that he should have told her how Beirut is beautifully rebuilt instead of acts of killing. Skandar believes that with the way he recounts things, Lebanon and his people would be stereotyped, deducing that this is the way history is told to people and this is how the world works:

What does it mean, you see, that the first thing every American child knows about Germany is Hitler? What if the first thing you knew was something else? And maybe some people would say that now it’s important, after the Second World War, it’s ethical and vital that Hitler is the first thing a child knows. But someone else can argue the opposite. And what would it do, how would it change things, if nobody were allowed to know anything about Hitler, about the war, about any of it, until first they learned about Brahms, Beethoven and Bach, about Hegel and Lessing and Fichte, about Schopenhauer, about Rilke—but all this, you had to know first. Or one thing only, the Brahms Piano Quintet in F Minor, or the Goldberg Variations, or Laocoön—one of those things you had to know and appreciate before you learned about the Nazis. (Messud 185)

This passage reflects Skandar’s critical mind. It shows how history works to reveal “facts” providing Hitler as example, his aiming at the representation of the Orient. Skandar regrets having talked about violence before beauty in Lebanon for fear of stereotyping the Orient. Skandar’s statements seem to go in opposition to the conclusion William A. Rugh draws about the Arab mind through comparing an American and an Arab journalists. Rugh comes to confirm the idea that “it is a characteristic of the Arab mind to be swayed more by words than by ideas and more by ideas than by facts” (qtd. in Rugh 19). This is after comparing an American and an Arab journalist in describing an event: “the American journalist seems to have a passion for factual details and statistics,” whereas “the Arab journalist by contrast seems to give more attention to the correct words, phrasing, and grammar he should use in describing an event. Skandar, however, has a passion for factual details. Besides, his eloquence elevates him from paying “attention to the correct words, phrasing, and grammar” the way Rugh’s Arab journalist does. The names Skandar provides in his above talk (Brahms, Beethoven, Bach, Hegel, Lessing, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Rilke) do not only disclose the

cliché of Arab's mind "weakness," but they also reveal a well read, art loving and open minded Arab.

Like Messud's Skandar, both Moore's Reynaldo and Adams's Aziz picture a strong rational mind. Reynaldo's story in *A Gate* reflects his rational mind: he decides to stop working because of worse post 9/11 circumstances, hides his origins, and carries on his studies. He, then, decides to immediately pack his baggage and leave US when he is suspected to be a "terrorist." Finally, he tells Tassie the truth; that he is Muslim and leaves US in search for a peaceful place to live in. Likewise *Harbor*'s protagonist, Aziz, possesses a rational mind. Though he wears a beard, Aziz 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 disposed to perform any irrational act" (Ridouani). Aziz "is a single-minded self, one that saw clarity where there was silt and storm" (Adams 231). 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..." (Adams 38); yet, the writer stresses the fact that he is "one who had seen what a man knew by forty, at least" (Adams 38), an allusion to a kind of wisdom which displays itself throughout the events.

One of the widely used Orientalist assumptions is that "the "Muslim mind" is incapable of reason and rationality" (Kumar 92), which is not the case with Aziz. Aziz's rational mind is reflected in the "rule" or "principle" he sets for himself when dealing with Rafik and the other fellows too: "Wait, see, listen, observe, consider" (Adams 23), steps that look like a scientific procedure to follow an experience. This rule in fact gives the impression that Aziz is not a youth but an older experienced man; "a buried treasure" (Adams 222) 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. Additionally, the one who receives him in US is his cousin Rafik who is "untrustworthy," (Adams 23) the fact which "puts everything on a provisional basis," (Adams 23) and necessitates a rational mind. This leads us to say that Aziz differs greatly from Updike's Ahmed who is depicted by Michiko Kakutani to be "more robot than human being" (Kakutani). 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” (Adams 23). That is why “[Aziz] did not count on any job with Heather’s father” (Adams 52) when he promises him, though his promise is out of good intention. Aziz is intelligent enough to grasp that this would never happen.

Aziz’s rational mind is also mirrored in the conclusions he draws. Due to the complexities and ambivalences he witnesses, Aziz reaches the conclusion that to know little about things is always the best choice. He wishes not to know the details about Rafik’s and Kamal’s affairs to keep safe; “he just hoped Rafik would never tell him the details” (Adams 47). That is to say, “not to know was not to be responsible. To be loyal was to not try to know” (Adams 123). This is another rule on which Aziz relies and it seems very effective since he has come to USA. Furthermore, Aziz does not take everything for granted. He suspects Rafik’s relationship with Heather (Rafik’s rich American girlfriend) and her father and wonders several times about the possible reasons that make Heather accept to live with Rafik. He does not find his being “taller than the others” (Adams 21) “muscled” and good looking” enough for Rafik to be with her. In other words, the fact that Heather’s father is rich, “a man of such seeming stature” (Adams 6) and that the dwelling where Rafik lives is “so ragged, on a street so dismal,” (Adams 65) make both Rafik’s and Heather’s relationship and her father’s visits to this house questionable by Aziz. Once, in the apartment, Aziz scrutinizes its “cheap possessions” (Adams 21) and the “posters” on the wall wondering “how could any woman who was really what he knew a woman to be want a man such as Rafik ?” (Adams 21) In fact, from the very beginning “the riddle of Heather’s father preoccupied Aziz” (Adams 65), but he finally concludes that he would never recognize it. This is just one example among many others that highlight the kind of man Aziz is, a man who does not assume that things are normal without questioning them. Adams’s character thus stands in opposition to the image of Orientals and Arabs “shown to be gullible” (Nagy-Zekmi 87).

Among other clichés, the Muslim is stereotyped as “a gullible man” (Matar 103) and the Muslims as “a gullible people available as much for the morbid appeal of religious chauvinism as for the sane appeal of brotherhood and the “bonds” that tie us all” (Kothari 140). Muslims thus are referred to as “a gullible people,” (Kothari 140) a monolithic view which does not leave space for any Muslim to be seen otherwise. V. Pala Prasada Rao et al maintain that Muslims are referred to as “very gullible” (47). Unlike Adams’s *Harbor*, Updike’s *Terrorist* makes use of the “gullible Muslim” among other stereotypical images as contended:

Updike's Muslims are reduced to stereotypes such as the dishonest Imam, the gullible young man, the irresponsible husband. The implications of these stereotypes extend beyond the pages of the novel. As Allen Palmer has argued in his study of Arab images in political cartoons, "such images become dangerous when they materialize in the complex social narrative and foreign policies enacted simultaneously on the world stage in the human mind and heart. (qtd. in Deyab 228)

Updike takes part in reinforcing the stereotype of the "gullible" Muslim, an image which is also utilized in Delillo's *Falling Man*.

Delillo's Hammad unquestionably receives Amir's orders performing terrorist acts that he thinks fulfill his manhood; he feels "he was a man now, finally, ready to close the distance to God" (Delillo 106). Unlike Hammad, Aziz has a high potential to observe things and make the 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" (Adams 107). 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" (Adams 108). Suspecting evil in this man, Aziz avoids applying for asylum though this latter, if possessed, will offer a legal life to him.

The Muslim/Arab characters in Messud's *The Woman Upstairs*, Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs*, and Adams's *Harbor* thus are rational characters who introduce a new positive image of this people in the post 9/11 context. This positive image is extended to dismantle other clichés such as Arab/Muslim "indolence."

6. Active and generous Arabs/Muslims

6.1. Active Arabs/Muslims

The writers under study do not only dismantle the stereotype of Muslim's/Arab's "illiteracy", "ignorance" and thus "backwardness", but also debunk the stereotype of Arab's/Muslim's "indolence." Muslims are stereotyped as "stupid and lazy by nature" (Ghazālī 121). This cliché, among others, makes the East assume an inferior position, that of "the passive East" (Dean 138). Misao Dean asserts that "the Orient was created as open to

generalized description and characterization by the Occident, a dynamic in which the West assumed the position of authority over the passive East” (138).

Picturing the East and the West as two contrastive categories gives rise to the mythical East: “The idea of the East as some shadowy, threatening “other” with which the West is in sharp conflict , and the essentialising of East and West into two simple and contrastive categories, has a long history . . . giving rise to the mythical contrast between the heroic, liberty-loving and dynamic West and the despotic, stagnant and passive East” (Clarke 4). It is maintained that “Arabs spoke of manual labor as “fit only for slaves,” thus “validating officials’ sense that they were decadent and lazy” (Boddy 158). H. C. Jackson, for instance, points out that the incentive to work was low in the tropics, emphasizing that “Arabs abhorred manual labor” (Boddy 159). In this connection, Raphael Israeli mentions what a Spanish journalist states about Muslims in an article published in 2005: “we opened our gates to 20 million Muslims who brought us stupidity and ignorance, religious extremism, and lack of tolerance, crime and poverty, due to an unwillingness to work and support their families with pride. They have turned our beautiful Spanish cities into the third world, drowning in filth and crime” (qtd. in Israeli 95). However, this cliché is not present in the Arab/Muslim depictions; nowhere in the novels are the characters said to be lazy or show reluctance to work.

Indeed, Muslim/Arab characters, in the novels under study, are highly active. Adams’s Aziz, for instance, is an active and dynamic figure. He experiences different jobs such as a busboy, a dishwasher and a waiter for instance (Adams131). He is “A fighter, this one...Look at his hands,” (Adams 131) as Ghazi comments. Aziz works very hard to change his situation and live a better life, and his idea to sell coffee in the streets of Brooklyn is the best example. Throughout the novel, Aziz is not passive in front of the bad living conditions in America, but faces them with his belief in the golden value of work. Although some of his friends (mainly Ghazi) make fun of the overall concept, he, first, believes in the idea of selling coffee, then, insists on it. Consequently, this idea proves to be successful in Brooklyn: Aziz “made twenty dollars sometimes twenty five” (Adams 263) which makes a suitable sum for him in a month. This character stands in opposition to Daniel Defoe’s portrayal of Muslims. Defoe strongly believes that Muslims are “indolent” and cannot be merchants. Muslims for him

have very little Inclination to Trade, they have no Gust to it, no Taste of it, or of the Advantages of it; but dwelling on the Sea- coast, and being a rapacious, cruel, violent, and tyrannical People, void of all Industry or Application, neglecting all Culture and

Improvement, it made them Thieves and Robbers, as naturally as Idleness makes Beggars: They disdain'd all Industry and Labour ; but being bred up to Rapine and Spoil, when they were no longer able to ravage and plunder the fruitful Plains of *Valentia, Granada and Andalufia*, they fell to roving upon the Sea. (319)

Adams's portrayal of Aziz totally opposes the images Defoe offers in the above passage. Aziz is not a thief or a robber; he does not disdain labour. Rather, he is depicted as a hard working Muslim who beautifully invents the idea of coffee cups to practise trade and earn a living in very hard conditions.

Furthermore, Aziz's attitude towards work and gaining life and his refusal to deal with any illegal activity reveal a contrastive image of the "treacherous nature of Arabs" (Said *Orientalism* 307) advocated by the Orientalist discourse. Among the traditional negative Arab roles in the American cinema, as Edward Said mentions, is the role of the "treacherous, low" Arab (Said *Orientalism* 287). In other words, Arabs are always associated with dishonesty in American popular culture. Yet, it seems that it is not the case with Aziz who cannot accept anything but legal work even if it is menial and even if it lacks a clear title:

Aziz was unemployed. His jobs were many, his time at most short. His jobs, he realized, lacked titles. He was not a painter, just someone who scraped or hammered when told. He was not a janitor, only someone who hosed sidewalks or emptied trash. He was a busboy who never made it to waiter. He was someone who raked leaves or watered grass, not a gardener. Gas station attendant was a title, but one he mumbled when asked. (Adams 78)

Aziz asserts that it is "a hard thing looking for a job" (Adams 79) with "the incentive to go for interviews and be turned away" (Adams 79). Yet, in spite of this hardship and his miserable conditions, Aziz's idea of earning money is totally free of any illegal work.

Interestingly, it is not only Aziz who is active but his fellow immigrants too:

Lahouari worked at the Old New England Body Shop. One of his brothers, Hamid, delivered pizza in Cambridge. The other, Ali, fried doughnuts. The Three sent money home. Mourad, Aziz's stolid brother, the only legal immigrant sent money home. Aziz sent money home. Ghazi, now chef at Del Fuegos, sent money home; his father sent it back. (Adams 107)

This image of Muslims working and gaining their life stands in opposition to Leon Uris' statement about Muslims, precisely Palestinians, who are in his view "people who don't have the dignity to get up and better their own living conditions but are satisfied to live off the scrapings of charity and whose main thrust is the perpetuation of hatred" (321). It also stands in opposition to the cliché which associates all Arabs/Muslims and Islam with "avarice, and barbarism" (Riggins 158) and claims that wealthy people among them do not deserve to be so: "Violence intermingles with avarice in images that imply that the wealth owned by the inherently slothful Muslims is undeserved because it is not the result of labor but rather is obtained through illicit and violent means" (Riggins 158). Though not wealthy, the little money Adams's Muslim characters earn is never said to be obtained through violent means; it is the result of hard work as made clear throughout the novel.

The same image of active Arabs appears in *The Woman Upstairs* and *A Gate* through Skandar and Reynaldo respectively. Skandar is a university lecturer but his professional life is much more eventful than this job requires. Skandar does not only deliver lectures at university, but moves from one country to another, participating in conferences, having meetings and interviews and above all writing a book as mentioned in previous sections. This is apparent in the novel through his constant absence from home revealed by Sirena in different passages. Skandar thus does not reflect a character who is "devoid of energy and initiative," or an individual who relies on what Fareed Zakaria calls "easy money" (Zakaria 10). Rather, he is a person who relies on his intellectual capacities to build his professional career and, by extension, to take part in the development of his country towards which he shows great love. Skandar's active professional life and his hard work do not entail anything but self-reliance.

Likewise, Reynaldo is a character who does not reflect the image of a passive Muslim at all. Unlike Skandar, Reynaldo does not have a fixed occupation. Instead, his situation changes according to the post 9/11 circumstances. What is worth mentioning is that his unemployment is not due to his being "devoid of energy and initiative," or rather his passivity, as Leon Uris claims in his statement about Muslims above, but to the serious consequences of the stereotypical image of "violent" and "terrorist" Muslim in post 9/11 America. In one of the novel's passages, Reynaldo reveals to Tassie "how he had just moved here in January after his business in New York fell apart, a delivery business that took things to and from New Jersey" (Moore 192) :

After 9/11, his van could no longer make it through the tunnels and bridges in a timely fashion. As a brown man, he was constantly pulled aside and fleeced for drugs. One by one, he lost clients. Packages did not arrive quickly enough. And by December he has sold the panel truck to a white man and with the money was registering online for classes out here. “I thought I would go back to school a little. (Moore 192)

Facing post 9/11 circumstances, Reynaldo does not remain cross-armed. Rather, he decides to “go back to school a little.” The stereotypical images of Muslims that spread all over the world in the aftermath of the 9/11 events painfully prevent him from working but do not result in passivity.

Thus, all the details in the novels dismantle the stereotype of Arab/Muslim “indolence” and do not leave space to any hint that may highlight or reinforce this cliché. Furthermore, it seems that these details also break down the cliché which attributes lack of modernity to Middle Easterners. About this stereotype, it is argued that:

Laziness and stupidity are often assigned to the Middle East and serve as a de-facto “logic” or explanation for why there is a lack of modernity there. The discourse is : because Muslims are lazy, they don’t have the rewards of hard work. In other words, the lack of hard work might be evidence for the death of modernity and overall decay of cities in the Middle East as exemplified in popular culture representations as well as in textbooks depicting the Middle East. (Sensory 122)

This is because

in mainstream Western culture, meritocracy, exceptionalism, and hard work all determine the degree of access to the rewards of that labor. If it’s “normal” that Muslims don’t work very much or very well, then it won’t be surprising to see few markers of modernity (such as technology, high rise buildings, cars, cell phones, and computers) in their societies (Sensory 122).

Noticeably, the characters in the novels under study are hard workers. Adams’s, Messud’s and Moore’s Arab/Muslim characters dismantle the stereotype of laziness as indicated previously; they work very much and very well. Interestingly, this dispels, by implication, the discourse that denies the rewards of hard work to Arabs/Muslims. To put it another way, the writers under study suggest a new positive discourse. Their Muslim/Arab characters’ hard work

depicted in the novels implies modernity in their own societies, thus, the discourse becomes: because Muslims are hard workers, they certainly have the rewards of hard work. That is to say, the existence of hard work might be evidence for the presence of modernity and overall development of Muslim/Arab societies. In contrast to the statement that “connected to the depiction of little hard work among Arabs and Muslims is the barren nature of life in the Muslim “world” in general” (Sensory 122), the writers under study emphasize Muslims’/Arabs’ hard work and convey modernity in the Muslim/Arab world in general.

Hence, making use of Skandar, Reynaldo, and Aziz in their novels, Messud, Moore and Adams, do not only dispel the stereotypical image of Arab/Muslim “indolence,” but also disclose, by implication, the discourse which claims lack of modernity in Muslim/Arab countries. In this context, Hussein Alatas Syed argues that “the main problem of backward countries is how to overcome the shortcomings in their own society. The most obvious solution is to revive the spirit to think and the will to work hard” (168). While the solution provided to “backward” societies, and by implication, to their “backward” people, to overcome the shortcomings in their own societies is to revive the spirit to think and the will to work hard, these suggested features seem to be inherent in the Muslim/Arab characters of the novels under study.

6.2. Generous Arabs/Muslims

In his *Travels in Arabia*, Charles M. Doughty describes Arabs as “ungenerous” (250-437) with “ungenerous hearts” (247). In like manner, “Professor Brockelmann, a leading German Orientalist writes in his *History of the Muslim People* that “Arabs are selfish and selfcentered.” This cliché dominates the Western thoughts (Siddiqi 97). Noticeably, the “prejudice that Muslims are mean” (Wikan 103) controls the Western imagination and is reflected in their writings as it will be referred to later. However, the three novels under study seem to debunk this prejudice by offering images of generous Muslims/Arabs. By implication, this human quality which draws an opposite picture of the “inhumanity” attributed to Arabs and Muslims, discloses one of the key features of American and European mass media coverage of the war on terror, “the patterned and systematic dehumanization of Muslims” (Steuter 259-260). About this cliché, Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills comment: “The construction of the enemy as a dehumanized Other is more than a representational strategy performed by public officials or communications media; its results can be global in reach and consequence” (259-260). In *A Gate*, Moore’s Reynaldo welcomes Tassie and

Emma each time they visit him in his apartment; he offers them everything that can make them happy. The same behavior characterizes Messud's Skandar with Nora, the babysitter of his son in *The Woman Upstairs*. Yet, it seems that there is not much emphasis on this quality in these novels the way it is in *Harbor*. This may be due to the positive effect of Adams's real contact with Muslims.

In her article entitled "Lorraine Adams, celebrating Pakistani culture," Momina Sibtain mentions that "Adams looks composed and well-adapted to the local environment" in her visit to Pakistan (Lahore precisely). Visiting Pakistan and dealing with its people has been of a great influence on Adams; she even "wore a Hassan Sheheryar Yassin outfit on her wedding day back in the United States,"⁴ commenting that "[she] loves Pakistani fashion" (Sibtain) and that Adams feels at ease in Pakistani clothes (patchwork kameez and shawl) to the extent that makes it difficult "to discern whether she is a foreigner or has grown up in Pakistan" (Sibtain).

In the same article, Momina Sibtain quotes Adams saying "there is something so lovely in the generosity of Pakistani people, they selflessly do things for others and welcome guests with open arms" (Sibtain). The generosity Adams sees in Pakistani people also characterizes the Algerian people in *Harbor*. Muslims' generosity in *Harbor* is very clear and indubitable. Indeed, there are many scenes in the novel which display this generosity. First, the Egyptian family rescues Aziz and the same behavior is emphatically reproduced in Rafik's apartment when the three brothers arrive from their hometown (among them Lahouari who is the youngest): Because of the wrong timing, Aziz and Rafik have waited for them for three months after they learn from Rafik's father about their arrival. Then a special welcoming atmosphere characterizes their arrival: [Aziz] called Rafik at Brooks Street and babbled about the feasting that must be had, the food to be started, the bedding arranged. Rafik cooked, and cooked more. The kitchen counters were squeezed full of bowls and bags and jars and cartons (Adams 71). Aziz "was assigned the shower" and he unconsciously plays the same role of the Egyptian who rescues him: "He helped find them shirts and pants that fit. He saw in their faces his previous self, and he knew Rafik saw his own" (Adams 72).

What is striking is that these three guests are younger than Aziz and Rafik who barely knew them in their hometown. The only thing that links them is the fact that they are from the same hometown where "Aziz and Rafik had grown up with their older brothers; an older sister had been Aziz's first crush" (Adams 72). Their bond becomes stronger as they house other

friends from Algeria. Generosity seems to be rooted in these people though they are distant friends, what if they were from the same family. This image confirms the fallacy of the cliché stuck to Muslims and reinforces Hüseyin Hilmi Işık's comment that "some people who have not understood Islam and some enemies of Islam say that Muslims are selfish, egoistic and arrogant" (57).

Interestingly, this generosity also characterizes Rafik, Aziz's cousin; his second haven after the Egyptian family and it is also extended to Tahir Hussain, the Yamani who welcomes Aziz in New York. In other words, "these immigrants, trained to be openhearted and openhanded by their rich family traditions, are brought vividly to life. They are young men tutored in humanistic traditions that for the vast and moderate majority of the Muslim world are the heart of Islam" (Gordon). The group of the Muslim immigrants thus show immense generosity. In a nutshell, what is strikingly noticeable in all these scenes is Aziz and his fellows' generosity in spite of their menial jobs and miserable living conditions.

Through the depiction of her Muslim characters, Adams dismantles the stereotype of "ungenerous Muslims." In doing so, she emphasises the humanity of this people. Adams's Muslim characters share their income with other people: their families or acquaintances. Aziz works hard to secure good living conditions for himself and for his family. Together with his brother, he regularly sends some money home to help their family. Consequently, the money they send proves very effective in improving their family's living conditions as previously mentioned. Another example which highlights the humanity of Muslims in *Harbor* is that of Ghazi who works, gains money and helps his fiancée's family. As soon as he knows that her mother is sick and her father is dead, he sends her money to France for medical treatment (Adams 111).

Adams, Messud, and Moore do not deprive their Muslim/Arab characters of human qualities. They portray them in a way that does not obscure or demean these persons' humanity. This might well be an invitation addressed to the West to re-examine the Arab/Muslim societies, with more tolerance and open mindedness. To put it another way, the discussed portrayals seem to be directed to the Westerners, whose mind is filled with images about "ungenerous", "inhuman" Arab/Muslim societies: to attract their attention to the idea that these perceptions are not reflections of reality. The aim seems to be encouraging them to get in touch with Muslims/Arabs and dismantle these negative stereotypes which over time and through repetition "become self-perpetuating, enduring, and hard to eliminate" (Shehadeh

139). Adams thus suggests real contact instead of the monolithic perception of Muslims. She seems to side with Setareh Motamedi who argues that: “Monolithic views of Islam and Muslims are also the result of a reliance on second hand information, and lack of direct contact with the religion. To reduce these negative consequences we must minimize social category distinctions and establish meaningful connections with outgroup members” (26).

Dismantling and eliminating stereotypes thus is not easy, a fact confirmed by Jordan Denari Duffner. About her experience, Duffner states:

My decision to study abroad in the Middle East during college was born out of my desire to help break down stereotypes about Muslims back home in the United States. But this experience revealed to me that I still had my own implicit biases to overcome. My interactions with Muslims over the past several years both in the United States and abroad, have prompted numerous moments like this one I had in Jordan-realizations about the biases that I still hold and must continue to dismantle, both in myself and in my community. (43)

Adams, Messud, and Moore, thus, seem to promote accurate portrayals of Arabs and Muslims, portrayals which might well dispel the stereotypical images in the Western imagination or limit their pernicious influence. In this connection, Adams, Messud, and Moore seem to side with, for instance, Jack Shaheen who “eloquently describes the links between the ability to create fictional narratives and images and the power to form social attitudes, shape thoughts and beliefs, and construct prisms through which people view the world, themselves, and the other peoples” (Shehadeh 139). The writers seem to be aware of the power of fictional images in shaping social attitudes. By humanizing their Muslims/Arabs throughout the novels, they tend to form a new positive social attitude towards Muslims/Arabs.

Conclusion

Post 9/11 stereotyping concerns both Muslim/Arab females (as discussed in the previous chapter) and males. According to Edward Said, the stereotypical depictions of Muslims/Arabs help define the West and perpetuate Western superiority. Muslim/Arab men are widely portrayed as bearded, threatening, and backward people oppressing their women whether they are their wives, sisters, mothers or any other female relative. Other stereotypes, strongly associated with them, include misogyny, uncleanness, passivity and above all

violence and “terrorism.” These clichés have coloured European literature and visual art “since Europeans’ earliest encounters with Islam centuries ago” (Duffner 41- 42); however, 9/11 created a favorable condition to stereotype Muslims/Arabs further. In this context, these events have provided a new image of the Muslim world as a whole, that of “fundamentalists” and “terrorists” and this has been propagated in media and reinforced by post 9/11 fiction.

The fictional Muslim/Arab male characters of several post 9/11 literary works illustrate and reinforce these stereotypes. Post 9/11 American fiction such as Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, John Updike’s *Terrorist*, Sherry Jones’ *The Jewel of Medina*, and Zoe Ferraris’ *Finding Nouf* depict Muslims as a monolithic group and Islam as a religion of fatalism. Muslims are dehumanized and presented as people who are not even able to think properly, immoral, and uneducated. These features are claimed to derive from Islam, the religion they follow. In other words, this religion is said to be essentially the source of Muslims’/Arabs’ “backwardness” and extreme violence. Many Americans, thus, hold an extremely negative opinion about Islam and its followers and fear of “terrorism” is commonly and extremely associated with fear of Islam and Muslims.

This chapter has highlighted and discussed the different images of the Arab/Muslim male characters in three post 9/11 female American fictional narratives: Claire Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs* (2013), Lorrie Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs* (2009) and Lorraine Adams’s *Harbor* (2004). It has been argued that these novels challenge the dehumanization and demonization of Arabs/Muslims and their religion widely spread in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. Unlike the stereotypical images of Muslims/Arabs which basically characterize post 9/11 fiction, Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs*, Moore’s *A Gate* and Adams’s *Harbor* offer unexpectedly positive images of their Muslims/ Arabs. They are portrayed as non misogynist, non oversexed, educated, optimistic, generous and more importantly peaceful. The “terrorist Other” who is portrayed as a threat to the Americans in post 9/11 novels is replaced by peaceful Arab /Muslim characters who live with the Americans without having the slightest idea to harm anyone. The writers go further to suggest that it is the violent Westerners who harm Arabs/Muslims. Though not really exaggerated, the simple idea that violence exists in the West and the Westerner is/can be violent destabilizes the stereotype that stresses violence particularly in relation to the East.

Messud’s, Moore’s and Adams’s challenge of the strongly established stereotypes that post 9/11 American fiction emphatically mirrors suggests the destabilization of post 9/11

discourse of Western superiority and Eastern inferiority. Their positive portrayal of Muslims/Arabs in their novels shakes such assumptions and implies a tendency to change the established views, suggesting a superior or rather equal position for Muslims/Arabs in the post 9/11 world. In doing so, the writers' narratives tend to create a universal civilization which is the widest community where equality is evidently the most fundamental right. This civilization is inclusive of the Muslim/Arab Other. By escaping the boundaries of the established stereotypes and recognizing the full humanity of those who are different, precisely in this chapter, the male Muslim/Arab Other, this universal civilization can be realized and intolerance will probably be defeated.

Chapter 4

Transcending the Conflict between the American Self and the “terrorist” Other

Introduction

Post 9/11 novels discuss the conflict between the American Self and “Terrorist” Other, two terms that may refer to the totalized forms of identity considered in post 9/11 era. Many Americans tend to “equate Muslims with Middle Easterners and/or Arabs” (Culcasi and Gokmen 82). They conflate Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims” (Culcasi and Gokmen 82). In addition, they view a terrorist as being someone of Arab or Middle Eastern descent: This “terrorist” intruder becomes thus central and powerful in post 9/11 fiction. This figure has become the symbolic enemy for American people since 9/11, the events which have emphasized and extended the dehumanization of the “terrorist” intruder and have made the Westerners incapable to humanize him. Abel Macro explains: “[T]he other does not even acknowledge – is not capable of acknowledging – our self. The other bypasses us. The terrorist’s self is already other to our concept of the self; the terrorist’s self is non-self-identical: the I of the self is always already another” (200).

“Terrorism” has flourished as a literary theme after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. The inclusion of the attacks and thus “terrorism” in post 9/11 American fiction typifies the changes America has undergone and demonstrates how these changes have given rise to an anxiety that further complicates the search for Self in America. Post 9/11 division of people into Americans and “Terrorists” led to stereotyping Islam as a creed that nurtures “terrorism” and Muslims/Arabs as dangerous “terrorists.” Giving a stereotypical description of almost inhuman figure to its Middle Eastern characters such as Hammad in Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* and Ahmed in John Updike’s *Terrorist*, post 9/11 American fiction sheds light on the terrorist’s intrusion in the American space and more importantly in the American psyche causing injury, fear and trauma, and consequently, affecting post 9/11 American identity.

Post 9/11 American novels portray the Arab/Muslim as a dangerous threatening intruder who tortures the American Self. He is depicted as a dangerous element whose religion empowers his violent acts which affect the American Self. This is most apparent in the character of the imam in Updike's *Terrorist* and through the leader of the group known as Mohamed Atta (who is called in the novel by his nickname Amir) in Delillo's *Falling Man*. Amir's understanding of Islam puts the Americans in the position of an enemy: "Islam is the world outside the prayer room as well as the sūrahs in the Koran. Islam is the struggle against the enemy, near enemy and far, Jews first, for all things unjust and hateful, and then the Americans" (Delillo 80).

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the relationship between the Americans and the Muslim/Arab Other in post 9/11 American fiction: This relationship is based on hatred and fear in post 9/11 novels such as Delillo's *Falling Man* for instance; yet, it seems very positive in Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs*, Lorraine Adams's *Harbor* and Lorrie Moore's *A Gate At the Stairs*. Remarkably, the conflict between the American Self and the "terrorist" Other is made obvious in Delillo's novel. This latter "insists on an interactive relation between Self and Other," (Mihăilă 24) in the post 9/11 context, a relation which is clearly revealed through Delillo's metaphor of "organic shrapnel" (we will explain this concept in the coming lines) in *Falling Man*, the novel in which the Middle Easterner is the "perpetrator" and the American is the "victim," both "are forced into a melancholic and parasitic relationship with one another" (Szoltysek).

Drawing on Charles Taylor's *Sources Of the Self*, specifically on his notions of "the constitutive good," and "framework", in addition to other concepts by theorists such as Frankl Viktor, Sigmund Freud, and Samuel Huntington, among others, and basing this chapter primarily on Delillo's metaphor of "organic shrapnel" as presented in his *Falling Man*, we intend to demonstrate that the relationship between the Muslim/Arab Other and the Americans in the novels under analysis is neither "melancholic" nor "parasitic" as portrayed in the post 9/11 novel *Falling Man*. Rather, it is a relationship of love and peaceful co-existence in which the Arab/Muslim influences the American Self positively. In other words, the Muslim/Arab Other is not the "perpetrator" as shown in post 9/11 American novels, Delillo's novel in particular, but he is the "constitutive good" using Taylor's words: the good that "makes certain of our actions or aspirations good; it is what constitutes the goodness of these actions or motives" (92). We will extensively discuss this concept in the course of this chapter.

Even long after the attacks, Delillo's American characters in *Falling Man* bear the psychological effects of the attacks. Delillo creates an Arab character who destabilizes the American identity. The writer makes use of Hammad, a terrorist who penetrates the other characters' lives and minds and affects their identities negatively. This is one of the themes the novel deals with and which Delillo extensively explains in his essay "In the Ruins of the Future":

Today, again, the world narrative belongs to terrorists. But the primary target of the men who attacked the Pentagon and the World Trade Center was not the global economy. It is America that drew their fury. It is the high gloss of our modernity. It is the thrust of our technology. It is our perceived godlessness. It is the blunt force of our foreign policy. It is the power of American culture to penetrate every wall, home, life, and mind. Terror's response is a narrative that has been developing over years, only now becoming inescapable. It is our lives and minds that are occupied now. The catastrophic event changes the way we think and act [...] Our world, parts of our world, have crumbled into theirs, which means we are living in a place of danger and rage. (33)

Falling Man incorporates many passages that display the trauma the "terrorist" Other causes to Americans long time after the attacks. The novel switches between three characters: Keith, his wife Lianne, and the "terrorist" Hammad. Throughout the novel, images of terrorism permeate Lianne's consciousness: "She saw the face in the newspaper, the man from Flight 11. Only one of the nineteen [terrorists] seemed to have a face at this point, staring out of the photo, taut, with hard eyes that seemed too knowing to belong to a face on a driver's license" (Delillo 19). Another example is when Hammad is on the plane preparing for the crash, the point of view moves smoothly and continuously from Hammad to Keith:

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 skitter 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 a 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. (Delillo 239)

This description of the situation in the plane before it hits the tower shows the movement and the roll of a bottle on the floor of the aircraft and reflects different positions of the plane as it accelerates towards the tower. Then, the depiction moves to the “blast wave” which hits the building and sends Keith walking into a wall. What is apparent in Hammad’s observations in the plane are the entanglements where images of the “terrorist” haunts the American individual.

More importantly, Delillo makes his American characters a kind of “organic shrapnel;” they have survived physically intact but they have been emotionally and psychologically disturbed by the “terrorists.” The doctor explains the phenomenon of “organic shrapnel” to Keith when he receives medical treatment in the hospital. He warns saying, “Where there are suicide bombings . . . In those places where it happens, the survivors, the people nearby who are injured, sometimes, months later, they develop bumps, for lack of a better term, and it turns out this is caused by small fragments, tiny fragments of the suicide bomber’s body. . . . They call this organic shrapnel” (Delillo 16). To put it another way, “Organic shrapnel” is a phenomenon in which one’s flesh is embedded into another’s, precisely, a suicide bomber’s flesh moves under a survivor’s skin. Therefore, the pieces of flesh and bones become in this scene projectiles in the attacks.

This symbolic “organic shrapnel” alludes to the change Americans feel in their selves in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, carrying such shrapnel inside of them. Interestingly, this metaphor of “organic shrapnel” is described by Julia K. Szoltysek as the “violent closeness between “victims” and “perpetrators” in Don Delillo’s *Falling Man*” (Szoltysek). The collision of the two bodies, Hammad’s and Keith’s as the plane hits the Tower suggests that a piece of Hammad’s body is symbolically blasted into Keith’s. However, the doctor carries on his talk saying to Keith: “This is something I don’t think you have,” (Delillo 16) Keith does not suffer physically. This reflects Rachel Greenwald Smith’s interpretation of “organic shrapnel” which she reads as a metaphor for trauma: “This metaphor literalizes what we tend to think traumatic events of this magnitude do: not only do they change the way the world appears, but they dramatically alter the very physical constitution of survivors, as fragments of the catastrophe continue to live and grow within them” (Smith 61).

In this context which draws a picture of American characters psychologically tormented by the “terrorist” Other, it would be interesting to highlight the way Messud, Adams and Moore present both their American characters and the Muslim/Arab Other’s contact with

them, and more importantly, the way this Other influences the American Self throughout the novels. Is the Muslim /Arab Other a source of trauma and violence as presented in *Falling Man* or is he a source of love, reassurance and co-existence? To answer these questions and best display the nature and effect of the relationship between the American and the Muslim/ Arab Other in the novels with which we are dealing, we should first shed light on their American characters' bewilderment and search for meaning.

1. Bewilderment and search for meaning by the American characters

Novels which deal directly or indirectly with the 9/11 events focus on the aftermath of the attacks and its effect on the lives and relationships of the inhabitants of New York City specifically (Nance). In the early representations of the events, the writers' focus was "on psychic trauma and the domestic, disregarding the political and cultural consequences of the tragedy" (Baelo-Allué 65). Indeed, most of this fiction has been criticized for its focus on the enduring effects of the trauma on the American individuals, for doing no more than simply "registering that something traumatic . . . has happened" (Gray132) and, more importantly, for being mostly unconcerned with the attacks' global context and political consequences, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* is one example among many other novels. Hence, the focus on subjects such as marriage or relationships and ordinary life in general, led to harsh criticism.

In his essay "Open Doors, Closed Minds," Richard Gray offers an analysis of the literary production after the 9/11 events. He criticizes most post 9/11 fiction for its domesticity (130). In his view, most post 9/11 fiction "vacillates . . . between large rhetorical gestures acknowledging trauma and retreat into domestic detail" (134). About Gray's criticism, Michael Rothberg comments: "Richard Gray's "Open Doors, Closed Minds" offers a sharp and necessary diagnosis of the American novel since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001" (152). Gray thus criticizes this fiction for its reliance "on a familiar romance pattern in which couples meet, romantic and domestic problems follow, to be concluded in reconciliation or rupture" (152). Giving the example of DeLillo's *Falling Man*, he carries on explaining: "all life here is personal; cataclysmic public events are measured purely and simply in terms of their impact on the emotional entanglements of their protagonists" (134). In the same vein, Arin Keeble mentions that there is no more widely discussed subject in the emerging canon of literary fiction dealing explicitly with 9/11 than marriage and relationships. According to Keeble, major disruptions in the characters' personal lives, relationships are brought to the surface (70). Keeble argues that re-evaluation of relationships

and marriage in a post 9/11 condition of uncertainty becomes the primary theme of post 9/11 fiction, Delillo's *Falling Man* being an example.

Delillo's American characters are said to experience a renewed desire for meaning in the aftermath of the events, a depiction which does not occur in the novels under study. Delillo views that his characters are engaged in a process of re-evaluation. Keith, for instance, suddenly "realizes how much he loves his son, that he wants to be close to him. Lianne always wanted to be like other people, until through 9/11 she seems stronger herself" (qtd. in Keeble 360). Keith and Lianne, the protagonists of *Falling Man*, "have a renewed sense of the importance of "meaningful" relationships after 9/11" (Keeble 363). Being estranged for years before the 9/11, Keith goes out from the burning towers back to his marital home reconstituting his marriage. Arin Keeble observes that "Andrew O'Hagan draws attention to the importance of this in his lengthy review of the novel" (361). Analysing passages that focus on the relationship between Keith and Lianne, he comes to the conclusion that "they have the force of felt life, and through them we begin purely to understand what estrangement really means with this Manhattan couple" (qtd. in Keeble 362). The couple in *Falling Man* makes significant changes in their marital situation and gives more importance to relationships. This is made obvious through Lianne's renewed need to have Keith at home with her: "She wanted to go home and talk to Keith [. . .] Talk to Keith or not talk at all. But she wanted him to be there when she got home" (Delillo 69). Arin Keeble points out that this is a "marked behavioural turn based on a renewed importance in relationships." She comments stating that "the sense of re-evaluation and renewed desire for meaning in the protagonists is central" (Keeble 364).

Whereas this renewed desire for meaning marks Delillo's characters, the Western characters in the novels we are dealing with are portrayed as experiencing total meaninglessness. The American characters mainly Nora, Tassie and Heather in Messud's, Moore's, and Adams's novels respectively are emphatically marked by an aimlessness in their personal and sometimes professional life as in the case of Nora. In addition to the main characters, the other American characters such as Sarah, Edward and Tassie's parents in *A Gate*, Heather's father in *Harbor* and Nora's parents in *The Woman Upstairs* are all portrayed as unable to make their family work as a cohesive unit. On the other hand, the writers make use of Arabs/ Muslims (Skandar, the so called Reynaldo and Aziz) as characters who have a purpose in life. Skandar is a university lecturer and he is busy writing a book about history,

Reynaldo is a student and has a project to fulfill, and Aziz is looking for better living conditions.

1.1. Nora's striving for authenticity and meaning

Frankl Viktor believes that “life is not primarily a quest for pleasure, as Freud believed, or a quest for power, as Alfred Adler taught, but a quest for meaning. The greatest task for any person is to find meaning in his or her life” (x). Not finding meaning in one's life is the problem which is extensively discussed by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, one of the most renowned and influential contemporary philosophers. In his book *Sources of the Self*, he argues that the number one problem of modern identity is a “search for meaning” (17- 18). He refers to most people's groping for answers about what makes life worth living, the modern world's predicament.

Nora, the protagonist of Messud's novel seems to be an illustration of Taylor's argument. Throughout the novel, Nora articulates her struggles with life and meaning. Nora's search for self identity colors the novel's story. She is unhappy and experiences a life of quiet desperation. Long ago, she dreamt to be a well known successful artist and a mother but has instead become a single, childless elementary school teacher in Cambridge, Massachusetts: the “woman upstairs,” as she thinks of herself and as people see her, a reliable friend and neighbor always on the fringe of others' achievements or as she puts it: “the quiet woman at the end of the third-floor hallway, whose trash is always tidy, who smiles brightly in the stairwell with a cheerful greeting, and who, from behind closed doors, never makes a sound. In our lives of quiet desperation, . . . , and not a soul registers that we are furious” (Messud 6). Nora is constantly looking for meaning; she considers her life to be meaningless though “[she is] good at [her] job and [she is] great with kids” (Messud 1) in school and she is very dutiful towards her parents.

It seems that Nora is not the only American character in search for meaning. Sirena is also looking for meaning; her “Wonderland” project is evidence of this. Sirena, the head of this artistic project, asks Nora to help her with it. Nora points out that Sirena “was building a Wonderland for everyone. Each of us would be Alice” (Messud 151-152). She adds:

And while it was, in part, about the mysteries of the imagination, it was also about a spiritual discovery of the existing world: Sirena was mixing together Lewis Carroll and the vision of a twelfth-century Muslim named Ibn Tufail, who wrote a story about

a boy growing up alone on a desert island, discovering everything—including himself, and God—for the first time. (Messud 151-152)

The relevance of the two texts (Lewis Carroll's *The Wonderland* and Ibn Tufail's *Hayy Ibn Yaqdan*) to our discussion lies in that both protagonists are in search for meaning. The psychological grip in which Lewis Carroll holds his reader in *The Wonderland* is all about a search for identity: "Who in the world am I?" is Alice's refrain. It is a question she stresses when she meets the caterpillar on his mushroom. "I can't explain myself," she says, "because I'm not myself, you see" (qtd. in Fordyce and Marello 95). Throughout her travels, Alice continually attempts to make sense of the various situations and stories she has encountered. On the other hand, Hay, the baby raised by gazelles in the desert, and who grows up observing the natural environment and searching for meaning, arrives at a rational understanding of things; he discovers the principles by which things sustain their existence and he, on his own, comes to recognize God as the source of all existence and knowledge, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the world in which he lives and the natural and moral principles that govern this world. More importantly, he attempts to transmit it to the people on Absal's island who seem to possess confused beliefs compared to the noticeable clarity and precise conceptual form of Hayy's understanding of things.

The two works that have just been summed up reinforce the idea of Sirena's search for meaning. Indeed, Sirena does not make use of them at random. She deliberately makes the combination:

She wanted to bring together two different ideas of wonder, one imaginary and one spiritual. On the one hand, she had her story about a boy, then a man, raised alone on an island, and of his solitary discovery of science, and of spiritualism, culminating in his worship of a God he'd come to believe in absolutely—a worship that took the form of a spinning trance. She would mix this antique Eastern mysticism with a different kind of wonder, a modern Western wonder, that was Alice in Wonderland's: a place where reason—and the ground—didn't remain stable, where the imagination confused good and evil, friend and foe. One Wonderland was about trying to see things as they are, she said, about believing that such a thing as clarity was possible; and the other was about relativism, about seeing things from different perspectives, and also about being seen, and about how being seen differently also changes you. Both possibilities were amazing and frightening at the same time; but only one of them, she said, could

lead to wisdom. She wanted her artwork, she said, to offer the possibility, at least, of wisdom. For this, she said, she needed me. (Messud 155-156)

Significantly, search for meaning in the novel is strongly revealed through the combination of Carroll's *The Wonderland* with the vision of the twelfth century Muslim philosopher Ibn Tufail, a link that reinforces the American characters' search for Self in Messud's *The Woman Upstairs*. Interestingly, Skandar and his son Reza play an important role in this search for Self.

1.2. Skandar and Reza, a source of self-knowledge

The presence of the Arab Other, Reza and his father Skandar, in Nora's life seems to reflect Taylor's notion of the "constitutive good." According to Taylor, the "constitutive good" is something "the love of which empowers us to do and be good": "The constitutive good does more than just define the content of moral theory. Love of it is what empowers us to be good. And hence also loving it is part of what it is to be a good human being" (39). Skandar and Reza enter Nora's life when Reza is called "the terrorist" and is violently attacked by schoolyard bullies. This scene is supposed to remind the readers as well as Nora of the 9/11 attacks and more importantly of the "terrorist" who torments the American psyche. However, instead of fearing and avoiding this pupil's family as expected in post 9/11 American fiction and instead of considering the scene as a reminder of "terrorism" that permeates the American character's consciousness as in the case of DeLillo's Lianne mentioned previously, Messud makes Nora take the initiative and insist on meeting Reza's family, an encounter that later on leads to daily meetings with the racial Other, Skandar, the Lebanese professor and his son Reza. This stands against "the hysterical fear of "terrorism" in the aftermath of the September 11" (Kellner 38).

Fear of "Terrorism" characterizes the days immediately following the 9/11 attacks and has marked its endurance the fifteen years that followed. Setareh Motamedi insists on the fact that "attitudes concerning terrorist threat have remained relatively constant, even as the attacks become temporally distal, the fear of terrorism persists" (6). In the same vein, Ted Rall asserts that Americans "were propelled by 9/11 into a large-scale case of post-traumatic stress syndrome. Their reactions – rage, paranoia, anger, lashing out at enemies both real and perceived- surpassed anything that the attacks' planners dared to have hoped for. Hysteria drove people to beat and even shoot fellow Americans who, at first glance, appeared to be

Muslims” (Rall 9). Noticeably, this post-traumatic stress syndrome does not characterize Messud’s Nora. This is made obvious through her attitude towards Reza (mentioned above), an attitude which does not bear a resemblance to that of Americans prejudiced against Arabs/Muslims or anyone who bears physical or cultural resemblance to them.

Setareh Motamedi, whose study aims at identifying what motivates existing stereotypes about Muslims/Arabs, suggests that threat can serve as a predictor of prejudice. According to him, the unpredictable threat posed by the terrorist attacks to the physical safety of Americans has been the justification of negative images of Muslims/Arabs since the 9/11 attacks. He backs up his argument with The Integrated Threat Theory; it “is a social theory which suggests that the more individuals perceive certain social groups as threatening, the more likely they are to have prejudice against these groups” (11). This suggests that Nora does not perceive Reza and his family as threatening. Indeed, calling Reza “a terrorist” is supposed to awaken the feeling of fear and threat which, as argued, seems inseparable from the American people since the attacks. Yet, this does not happen with Nora who instead insists on meeting the family of this “terrorist.”

Interestingly, the absence of this feeling (fear) in the narrative conveys some interpretations. Motamedi demonstrates that “fear is indeed a motivator of stereotypical thinking” (25). His study comes to the conclusion that “the more afraid an individual is, the more stereotypical his thinking. Similarly, the less afraid an individual is, the less likely he is to engage in stereotypical thinking” (24). On the one hand, Nora is not afraid at all of Reza and his family, a fact which makes her belong to the second category of people Motamedi describes. Messud herself does not let any space for this feeling in her depiction; this may reveal the writer’s intention to suppress the engagement in stereotypical thinking at once. On the other hand, given “the role the media has played in the proliferation of fear and endorsement of stereotypes” (Motamedi 1), another interpretation might well be considered. Stripping Nora’s attitude towards Reza and his family of “fear” can also be interpreted as an alternative narrative intended to reduce the effect of Media on the American people in the post 9/11 era. Bruce Mau comments:

Particularly since 9/11 and the prosecution of the so-called “war on terrorism,” we live in a media environment which is aimed at the total mobilization of the population for warfare. For example, in the American “homeland,” mobilization of the population is psychologically conditioned by an image matrix, fostering deep feelings of fear and

insecurity. This is reinforced daily by the mass media operating as a repetition-machine: repeating, that is, the message of the threatening “terrorist” Other. (145)

Nora’s attitude towards the Arab Other resists the debilitating effects of mass media culture. In doing so, Messud reinforces Motamedi’s argument that instead of characterizing Muslims/Arabs “as the threatening “other,”” thus perpetuating negative attitudes and culture-based narratives, Media coverage “ought to, instead, refrain from social categorization, offer more balanced information, and reduce heightened threat perceptions to avoid further aggravating intergroup tensions” (26). This stands in opposition to the paradigms that have colored Western perspective of the “terrorist” Other.

Nora teaches a great number of children and she is surrounded by different kinds of pupils ; however, no one, except Reza, is said to leave their mark on her life. Reza seems to be the first “constitutive good” that empowers Nora. At a moment when Nora is desperate: “your life looks small and all and always the same around you, and you don’t think anything will change You think that hope is not is not for you” (Messud 46), Reza’s problem in school happens and everything changes in Nora’s life: “And then, suddenly, there’s something else. When you least expect it. Suddenly there’s an opportunity, an opening, a person or people you couldn’t have imagined, and—elation!—it feels as though you’ve found the pot of gold, when you’d thought all the guilt was gone from this world forever” (Messud 47). This “person” is actually two people: Skandar and Reza. Their presence has a positive effect on her life; her new life is “like the world was filled with light” (Messud 170) and her daily activities and feelings were full of energy, health and hope as “[she] laughed more, [she] worked more, [she] slept better. [She] was awake in [her] life in a way completely new to [her], and [she] knew that anything—anything!—was possible” (Messud 170). The emphasis on the word “anything” is significant in the sense that it highlights the high degree of power Nora feels in herself and stresses the “terrorist” Other’s positive effect on her.

The positive effect on Nora appears in her artistic work and her life in general. Nora eventually weaves these emotions into her artistic work. Precisely, her increasing closeness to Skandar influences her and urges her to include joy into her dioramas. This is explicitly mirrored in her reflection: “[I]t would have seemed wrong, . . . in the new, golden light of love with which I saw the world illuminated, to make [Alice Walker's] room reflect only . . . her darkest isolation, when she felt forsaken by life and by art and by love” (Messud 145). Being in touch with the Shahid family, Skandar and his son, who are crucial to our

discussion, Nora states: “I was happy. I was happy, indeed. I was in love with love and every lucky parking spot or particularly tasty melon or unexpectedly abbreviated staff meeting seemed to me not chance but an inevitable manifestation of the beauty of my life, a beauty that I had, on account of my lack of self-knowledge, been up till now unable to see” (Adams 168). Moreover, Skandar, the Arab Other in the novel liberates Nora, the American character, from the enclosed world where she lives and opens her eyes to the world. In one of the passages of the novel, Sirena notices Nora’s simple-minded nature when she tells her details about their life in America and the problems they have encountered and then comments: “You probably don’t even know what I’m talking about” (Messud 106). Nora herself becomes aware of “the cotton wool” of her American life. She admits that Sirena is right and she ponders: “I thought then that maybe Sirena was right about the cotton wool of my American life, that I’d been swaddled and protected from the world” (Messud 180). Significantly, Skandar’s talks to Nora about Lebanon awakens her to the fact that she is enclosed. In several passages throughout the novel, Nora pretends to understand the content of Skandar’s conversation not “to seem stupid.” She “ [doesn’t] know quite what that means” (Messud 185), but she fails and instead she follows his gestures, his “very handsome square hands,” when he “waved them about in the cold air, displacing smoke, or breath, or both” (Messud 185).

While Nora’s relation to Skandar is portrayed in the way explained above, “almost all of Delillo’s characters appear to be inflicted with “organic shrapnel”, whether in the form of post traumatic symptoms they display or in their actions” (Sözalan 24). Delillo’s Lianne, for instance, is depicted to be constantly under stress and trauma of 9/11 attacks. She once reveals her fear of loss of memory, a recurrent motive in the novel, which is introduced through the mental state of her patients. Lianne is shown to be interested in helping sufferers of Alzheimer disease. Her interest in this category of people is due to her father’s suffering from Alzheimer, but more importantly, from her ongoing confusion in the aftermath of the events.

To exercise their minds, her patients are asked to write their memories of the 9/11 attacks and the aftermath. To do so, Dr Apter provides Lianne with observations for her counseling:

From this point on, you understand, it’s all about loss. We are dealing inevitably here with diminishing returns . Their situation will grow increasingly delicate. These encounters need space around them. You don’t want them to feel there’s an urgency to

write everything , say everything before it's too late. You want them to look forward to this, not feel pressed or threatened. The writing is sweet music up to a point. Then, other things will take over. (Delillo 60)

He carries on saying: "What I'm saying is simple. This is for them . . . It's theirs . . . Don't make it yours" (Delillo 60). This last comment alludes to Lianne's frustrated psyche and loss of memory which becomes obvious throughout the novel.

Her patients are depicted to experience a slow disintegration of memory (Delillo 95). James Gourley argues that "the slow disintegration of memory is an ironic antithesis to the violent impact of September 11" (68). In his view, the passage in which Delillo introduces his concept of "organic shrapnel" (mentioned in the introduction of this chapter) is "one of the most crucial scenes of the novel" in which Delillo reveals the violence of "terrorism" and links it to the loss of memory (68). Commenting on the loss of memory of one of her patients, Lianne ponders: "This was an occasion that haunted [her], the breathless moment when things fall away, streets, names, all sense of direction and location, every fixed grid of memory" (Delillo 156). Sven Cvek argues that this phrasing "supports the view that the trauma in *Falling Man* should be read as pointing to a more general social anxiety boosted by the event of 9/11" (199-200) and thus by the "terrorist" Other.

In contrast to this trauma in *Falling Man*, the Arab Other's presence in Nora's life in *The Woman Upstairs* is very positive. Skandar's conversations fire Nora's imagination and make her "transported out into an actual world" (Messud 180). The Lebanese teacher ignites Nora's mental passions and inspires her with self-confidence. Nora reveals that "Skandar was the one who could convince [her] of [her] substance, of [her] genius, of the significance of [her] thoughts and efforts" (Messud 188). Consequently, she longs for "the expansion of [her] intellect" (Messud 180) by consulting the Internet.

As I read about it, I felt I should have known-I was a schoolteacher, for God's sake, and Reza was a child in my class! . . . but then again, I didn't know all the facts about Vietnamese boat people (some of our kids were the children or grandchildren of boat people), and I couldn't have given you a proper rundown on the history of Haiti, even though we had Haitian kids at Appleton; and we'd had a boy from Oman and there was a girl now in fourth grade from Liberia, and I would've had to Google that to

know the first facts beyond where it was located on the map, and in all the year she was in my classroom, I never had. (Messud 180)

Skandar's talks to Nora thus awakens her, allows her to expend her intellect and make her feel she should have done this earlier: "I wanted already to have known about such things as Hariri's assassination, to be able to make some sense of them . . . The complexity, the enormity of the world was suddenly briefly apparent to me, a giant looming object in the periphery of my vision. Almost too big, but not quite. It was there, and I wanted to know it" (Messud 180). And with this radical change in her life and her art, Nora discovers that she has wasted too much time in her life before meeting Skandar, the "constitutive good." She asks herself: "what had I done with my time up till now, I had to wonder, I had to wonder, and have to wonder now again: Does Being Happy simply Create More Time, in the way that Being Sad, as we all know, slows time and thickens it, like cornstarch in a sauce?), anyway, in addition to all these things, *I made my own art*" (Messud 173).

The Arab Other in Messud's novel, thus, rescues the American character from confinement and ignorance, a representation which escapes the post 9/11 discourse. Interestingly, it stands in opposition to the features of The 9/11 Commission Report, for instance, which promotes the binary of Self vs Other: "The US Self has nothing to learn from the Terrorist Other . . . But the Terrorist Other has everything to learn from the US Self. The Terrorist Other *needs* US (re) education because he is mired in incompetence, ignorance . . ." (Agathangelou 131). However, it seems that it is the US Self who has something to learn from the "terrorist" Other and it is the US Self who has everything to learn from this Other in Messud's novel. To put it another way, the features of The 9/11 Commission Report are irrelevant in the case of Messud's depiction of Nora who symbolizes the US Self and Skandar who stands for the "terrorist" Other in the post 9/11 context. This might well reflect Messud's intention to break this dichotomous logic.

1.3. Search for meaning and Loneliness

1.3.1. Search for meaning

Search for meaning also characterizes Tassie, Moore's protagonist. Critics such as Sandison Natalie argue that "*A Gate at the Stairs* is a coming-of-age story about the search for meaning in a post-9/11 world," (1) and the epigraph of the novel "All seats provide equal

viewing of the universe” from the Museum Guide, Hayden Planetarium, with which Moore inaugurates her novel, summarizes her preoccupation with the question where the truth lies.⁵ Rosemary Ahern comments about this in his article, writing that “it’s perhaps unfair to consider the epigraph a microcosm of the book as a whole, or to believe we hear the author’s voice in the borrowed words she’s chosen to introduce her story, but readers do” (Ahern).

Like Nora, Moore’s Tassie seems to be an illustration of Charles Taylor’s argument about meaning and identity indicated previously. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor outlines the evolution of the idea of the individual from early modernity to the present age of finding oneself. Taylor asserts:

To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand. (27)

Tassie is a girl struggling to find herself in a complex and troubled new century. She struggles to find meaning in life. She is forced to confront both the changes in the world around her and the changes in her Self. Singing along to her instrument in her free time, she describes “trying to find the midway place between melody and rhythm—was this searching not the very journey of life?” (Moore 137) These feelings mark many passages throughout the novel. Tassie cannot always understand the meaning of all the things whipping around her and her feeling of simultaneous wonder and bemusement is stressed throughout the novel. She feels as if she were at the center of some great life force, “I was like every kid who had grown up in the country, allowing the weather—good or bad—to describe life for me: its mocking, its magic, its contradictions, its moody grip. Why not? One was helpless before everything” (Moore 126).

A fragmented society of detached individuals is according to Taylor what lies behind the emergence of identity crises (52). Tassie finds as little sense in her farm town as she does in the college town, a feeling transmitted to the reader in the passage that inaugurates the first chapter of the novel. This meaninglessness seems to stretch its threads to the interactions between the main characters of the novel. When talking about Sarah’s (her employer) house, Tassie states: “The people in this house, I felt, and I included myself, were like characters

each from a different grim and gruesome fairy tale. None of us was in the same story. We were all grotesques, and self-riveted, but in separate narratives, and so our interactions seemed weird and richly meaningless” (Moore 249). Even when Tassie describes her brother’s graduation later in the novel, a feeling of uncertainty posits itself; it is unavoidable: “The girls all wore high heels beneath their black graduation gowns and wobbled across the stage with great uncertainty, except one who strode quickly, then slipped and almost fell” (Moore 267). And thus uncertainty extensively spreads its threads not only in the farm, but in the college town as well. This passage seems to symbolize the uncertainty the American people felt in the aftermath of the events or rather the “period of transition” U.S entered at that time as Amy M. Damico calls it (1). In this context, Vahabph. D Aghai asserts that the nation is no longer the same and that “the aftermath of 9/11 marked the beginning of a drastic change in American society” (47).

When talking about her quest for the narrative heart of her novel, *A Gate at the Stairs*, Moore admits that “it was not one of those novels where the events come from some fatal flaw within the protagonist, it's a novel that's more like *Alice in Wonderland* ” (qtd.in MacCrum 26). This statement confirms the resemblance between the two novels and their protagonists’ utmost search for meaning. Like Messud, Moore reinforces the prevalent “search for meaning” by alluding to Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in The Wonderland* which tells the story of a girl named Alice falling through a rabbit’s hole into a fantasy world populated by peculiar creatures. In the same way as Alice escapes through the rabbit hole, Tassie escapes through her books. Both search for meaning: “I remained the nerdy college girl under siege of the weather, my days full of books that were rabbit holes of escape” (Moore 64). Tassie is very similar to Alice. Tassie’s life reflects loss. It is empty of any meaningful plan. She openly admits: “I tried not to think about my life. I did not have any good solid plans for it long-term no bad plans either, no plans at all and the lostness of that, compared with the clear ambitions of my friends (marriage, children, law school), sometimes shamed me” (Moore 24). Furthermore, Tassie cannot escape loneliness in her life as a whole. Significantly, Tassie’s “life was open and ready and free—but that did not make it any less lonely” (Moore 29). It seems that meaninglessness in *A Gate* is intermingled with loneliness.

1.3.2. Loneliness

In his pioneering book *The Sacred Canopy*, Peter Berger asserts that loneliness as well as meaninglessness are due to the expansion (rise) of freedom in the modern world. Berger

argues that growing numbers of choices are offered to individuals by various ways of life that mark modernity. These individuals become gradually aware of possibilities which can change the conditions of life to a great extent; yet, they lose the support of the old social order which offered them unvarying structures on which they used to rely. Berger calls these structures “nomoi” arguing that they function as “a shield against terror” which is crucial because the individual, according to him, is basically “out of balance” with himself (5). That is to say, human beings require socially constructed worlds; without “nomoi”, life is threatened with meaninglessness. The absence of what Berger calls “a shield against terror”; that is against the lack of the usual social or ethical standards in the modern world, results in confusion: the modern individuals are confused about the many choices they have; they have much less idea about what can content them. Consequently, this leads to a growth in feelings of loneliness and meaninglessness (Berger 6).

Moving between an isolated farm town and the state’s university town, Tassie experiences bitter loneliness. Edmund Fuller observes that in our modern world, “man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problems . . . a conviction of isolation, randomness, meaninglessness in his way of existence” (3). Between the routine of attending classes and taking care of the toddler Mary-Emma as a babysitter, Tassie cannot escape the loneliness of her apartment, especially as her friend spends all her time with her boyfriend, and her family in Dellacrosse seems distant: “But life in Troy was to be taken without any lucky charms of any sort . . . The walls of my winter room seemed a silvery, quilted satin, like the interior of a coffin. I began to feel there was no such thing as wisdom. Only lack of wisdom” (Moore 125).

Coming from the conservative, rural Dellacrosse and living in a college town that is politically and culturally liberal, Tassie finds herself stuck between two worlds, a sudden expansion that needs experience. Both of these two worlds shelter loneliness. She suffers from loneliness in both her off campus apartment and her home town close to her family and friends. Tassie observes that Robert “had, however, the same loneliness in him that [she] did” (Moore 60). That is to say, loneliness prevails Dellacrosse, a town in which neither Tassie nor her brother Robert is content. Interestingly, it seems that loneliness does not touch only Tassie and her brother but extends to the people of the town whose individuals are described by Tassie as “strangers”, if not “outright aliens” (Moore 66).

Such individuals and town illustrate Hannah Arendt's conception of loneliness and modernity. Arendt believes that loneliness prevents the individuals from experiencing the world, from thinking, and from trusting their own sense of self (475). Lonely individuals do not realize their capacity for action as is the case with the people in Dellacrosse, "a town in which nothing happens, nothing is expected, and nothing changes" (Moore 65). Loneliness, according to Arendt, is the breeding ground for totalitarianism; it is "the essence of totalitarian government" (475). Arendt maintains that loneliness and isolation are, the "defining characteristics of the people who were so easily organized by the totalitarian movements" (316). However, loneliness and isolation do not mean the same thing in her opinion:

What we call isolation in the political sphere, is called loneliness in the sphere of social intercourse. Isolation and loneliness are not the same. I can be isolated- that is in a situation in which I cannot act, because there is nobody who will act with me- without being lonely; and I can be lonely- that is in a situation in which I as a person feel myself deserted by all human companionship- without being isolated. Isolation is that impasse into which men are driven when the political sphere of their lives, where they act together in the pursuit of a common concern, is destroyed. (474)

In this context, it seems that the inhabitants of Dellacrosse are not only lonely, but they are also isolated. This is because they are depicted as individuals who cannot act and they have the feeling of loneliness in them, which implies the destruction of the political sphere of their lives.

It seems that Murph's absence is not the only reason for the loneliness Tassie feels; rather it is rooted in the walls of the apartment itself (Moore 26); she comments: "But there was sometimes a quick, sinking ache when I walked in the door and saw she was not there. Twice, however, I'd felt the same sinking feeling when she was" (Moore 26). This is reinforced by Tassie's constant insistence on the inevitable presence of loneliness in Troy through several passages in the novel. Here is an example: "When I walked across the front room to throw my stuff on the couch, the floorboards, paradoxically worn and tentative, creaked loudly—more so now that all humidity had fled the place. Despite the busy, complaining crackle of pipe and floor, the rooms had a wintry loneliness" (Moore 27). This loneliness in *A Gate at the Stairs* proves to be very strong and touches even rural, non industrial spaces such as Dellacrosse. In his *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor maintains that loneliness is the product of "industrialization, the break-up of earlier primary communities,

the separation of work from home life, and the growth of a capitalist, mobile, large scale, bureaucratic world, which largely deserves the epithet “heartless” (292). In this connection, Hannah Arendt suggests that loneliness is due to lack of “a common ground.” Arendt believes that because of the loss of traditional standards and values in the modern age, individuals are obliged to look for new grounds of human community. This is because “without a common world, a shared experience that forms a common ground, individuals are not free and happy, but lonely and contemptuous,” as Serena Parekh comments in her book about Hannah Arendt (4).

In her book *Hannah Arendt and the Challenge of Modernity*, Serena Parekh mentions that “Loneliness is the experience of not belonging to the world at all” (4). According to sociologists, loneliness is “a kind of alienation which is found in the absence of intimacy with others.” What is obvious is that “when a man says that he often feels lonely, it is clear that he is dissociated and disconnected from others or his relations with others are not such as they can overcome his loneliness by meeting them” (Saleem 71). In the same vein, McClosky believes that “the meaning of the feeling of loneliness is the loss of significant relation with others. It is the lack or loss of this relation with others that generates a source of alienation” (Saleem 72). This seems to be applicable to Tassie’s loneliness and provides evidence of her lack of significant relation with others. Interestingly, it seems that the “significant relation” she lacks is that of Reynaldo. Her being in touch with this Muslim Other erases the traces of loneliness. This stands in total opposition to the traumatic melancholic relationship between the American and the Muslim Other in Delillo’s novel as explained previously.

1.3.3. Reynaldo, a love of enormous power

Julia Szoltysek asserts that “the figure of the terrorist forms a particular ghostly presence in the deep structures of texts devoted to 9/11 themes” (108). Yet, Reynaldo, the Muslim character in *A Gate* is far from reflecting this negative image. Rather, he seems to mirror Taylor’s “constitutive good.” Though temporarily, Reynaldo empowers Tassie and fills her life with energy. Her mere walking close to him after class “made [her] feel in possession of a prize” (Moore 173). This statement suggests the power to do more and be good, the kind of power one feels when winning a prize. Interestingly, it is Reynaldo who instills it in Tassie. What reinforces this is Tassie’s unequivocal description of Reynaldo: “He had a smile that made you realize that some skulls contained an entire power plant set up in miniature

inside, and the heat and electricity they generated spilled their voltage out through the teeth and eyes” (Moore 165). This metaphorical description asserts Reynaldo as the “constitutive good” in Tassie’s life.

The positive effect of Reynaldo on Tassie is emphasized in the active life she experiences during the months of their relationship as much as in her passive, desperate attitude she knows after his departure, which badly marks her. Her physical state becomes really deplorable and noticeable; she refers to it in details saying: “What I really felt was this: chopped down like a tree, a new feeling, and I was realizing that all new feelings from here on in would probably be bad ones” (Moore 214). With regard to her psychological condition, Tassie plainly explains:

My sleep was shallow, and the nights were long and full of chiding conversation from people who seemed actually to be in the room. But when I awoke there was no one. The apartment was muggy. The prairie, increasingly, I had noticed, could not hang on to spring. It was as if there were not enough branches to grip it, hills to hold it— it could get little traction, really, and the humid heat of summer slid right in. Soon the chiding conversation of hovering people was replaced with a feeling that I was being bitten by bugs I couldn’t see. Everything I ate seemed to collect in a clayey ball in my bowel, and my pulse would stop in my sleep then start up again in a hurry, discombobulated, waking me from dreams of blind alleys, naked running, and wrath. (Moore 213)

This eventually affects her everyday life which turns to be dark, messy, and deprived of any spark of optimism or hope so much so that “[she] had not mopped or swept the floors in months. [she] had used paper towels when there was a spill and hoped that eventually the entire apartment floor would get wiped up this way” (Moore 213).

Meeting Reynaldo seems like the “Meeting with the Goddess” in Joseph Campbell’s terminology. In his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell explains the steps through which the hero goes in his/her journey. Among these steps is what Campbell calls “The Meeting with the Goddess.” This is the point when the hero experiences an all-encompassing, all-powerful love. It is also known as “hieros gamos.” Although Campbell terms this step as a Meeting with a Goddess, it does not necessarily mean a woman, but rather the opposite sex (99-100). In other words, the hero experiences a love of enormous power and

significance just like the love story Tassie has with Reynaldo. The Muslim Reynaldo who is supposed to be the perpetrator in the post 9/11 context, rescues Tassie from the severe loneliness she experiences in her small town and also in Troy. Interestingly, Tassie's love for Reynaldo proves steady, not to say more powerful, even after he tells her the truth: that he is Muslim. Even so, Tassie sticks to him: "I found myself falling toward him, as if the rush of feeling tearing through me could magically be made into useful affection: perhaps if I tried to kiss him, but he pulled away" (Moore 207). This picture highly opposes the phenomenon of "organic shrapnel" in Delillo's novel.

While Delillo's American characters are psychologically tormented by the so-called "terrorist" Other, Tassie seems to be psychologically well with this same Other. The scene above brings to picture Julia K. Szoltysek's description of "organic shrapnel" mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. In her essay "They Call This "Organic Shrapnel,"" Szoltysek observes that the encounter between the victim and the perpetrator in *Falling Man* is postponed; it is until the close of the novel that "the moment of the direct impact" appears:

when Keith and Hammad, in their violent encounter, nearly literally merge with one another in but a couple of seconds. Importantly, the whole event occurs entirely on the level of the text, with the ultimate blurring of the bodily borders between Keith and Hammad, the significance of which lies in the symbolic fusion of the victim and the perpetrator. (112-113)

The symbolic fusion of Keith, the "victim" and Hammad, the "perpetrator" in this scene seems to be painted differently through Tassie, the lover and Reynaldo, her beloved in Moore's *A Gate*. To put it another way, the "violent closeness between the "victim" and the "perpetrator" in Don Delillo's *Falling Man*," is turned in *A Gate* into a "love closeness." Ironically, it is Reynaldo (the Muslim Other) who "pulls away" from Tassie (the American character) and not the other way around. Significantly, this scene takes place immediately after Tassie knows the truth (that Reynaldo is Muslim). In doing so, Moore dismantles "one of the most ominous symbols of the post 9/11 traumatic confusion-the organic shrapnel" (Szoltysek 113) which, according to Szoltysek, "might serve as a literal embodiment of the traumatic relationship between the victim and the perpetrator" (113).

This scene goes further to disclose the deep significance of "organic shrapnel", "the conflicted closeness between the constructs of the "East" and the "West"" (Szoltysek 109). It

thus calls for a non-violent encounter between the East, symbolized by Reynaldo, and the West, symbolized by Tassie. Romance is substituted for violence: the organic shrapnel which symbolizes the violent physical contact between the Americans and the Muslim Other through the “small fragments, tiny fragments of the suicide bomber’s body” (as the doctor in *Falling Man* explains) seems to be exchanged by “Romance language” with the Muslim Other in *A Gate*. Talking about the beginning of her relationship with Reynaldo, Tassie comments:

Romance languages eluded me both generally and specifically; nothing was as cryptic and ripe for misunderstanding as the physical language of a boy’s love. What was an involuntary grimace I took to be rapture. What was a simple natural masculine compulsion to be in, to tunnel and thrust, I saw as a tender desire to be sweetly engulfed and at least momentarily overpowered by another’s devoted attentions. What was an urgent, automatic back-and-forth of the body I thought of as the eternal romantic return of the lover. Kissing was not animal appetite but the heart flying up to the lips and speaking its unique attraction and deep eternal fondnesses in the only way it could. The juddering of climax, as involuntary as a death rattle, I took to be a statement of hopeless attachment. Why, I don’t know. I didn’t think of myself as sentimental. I thought of myself as spiritually alert. (Moore 166)

Experiencing Reynaldo’s departure, Tassie states: “I began to miss Murph. All I needed was her company, a sense of her presence again. Everyday I felt that if she would somehow come back into my life, things would be brighter” (Moore 217). The departure of Reynaldo, the “constitutive good”, creates a hole inside Tassie’s life and a feeling of emptiness that she wants to fill with Murph. Interestingly, throughout the events, a new “constitutive good” comes to the fore, a source of energy that Tassie sticks to. This time, it is not a person but the production of a person: Rumi’s selection of poems. In fact, Tassie enjoys her college classes; yet, she confesses that “school work was alternately tedious and mesmerizing. However, she claims Rumi to be among the “mesmerizing” work. She is mostly “alone in [her] room with Rumi” (Moore 180) while “Murph continued to stay away” (Moore 180).

While Tassie is home, there are no old or new friends she is interested in seeing or talking to. Thus, she spends some of her time playing the guitar with her brother. She always considers her town, her home, and the lives of the people there sad and desperate to her. However, there is a place there where she lovingly escapes, a place she creates for herself: her sanctuary. Tassie decides to realize a little project out of the meadow. With her father’s tools

and things and her intelligence and will, she manages to construct a device that hangs from the ceiling with a book of literature. Significantly, this book is the collection of Rumi poems. She makes it flat and unstrung with attentive care in order to fasten folded pages to some elevated point along the crease, fixing them into the rope. All this so that she could lay underneath and read this book (Moore 288). It is the “sanctuary” she creates for herself and which offers her a special strength and delight: “I found time everyday to go there, and it was a sanctuary from the bobcats and graders that were still at work in gazebo-land. If it was buggy I would bring some repellent and spray the air, then step through the cloud of it as if it were a spritz of cologne” (Moore 289). More important is what trails her tenderly to this “sanctuary” and who accompanies her there. Tassie tells about her time there saying:

I lay down and stared up: the shade of these words made a magical tent. Because of the field’s sheltering from the breezes, the pages didn’t flap around much in the air, and if I wanted to rearrange or reposition them in any way I could do so. While I read, butterflies occasionally landed, as if to check out these new cousins, and then took off again. I would read Rumi and ponder love and its ecstasies as well as the extinction of the self in divine essence until I found myself fumbling in the pockets of my shorts for a stick of gum. Which I would unwrap, blowing off any pocket dirt, and chew, while still reading. (Moore 289)

The positive influence of Rumi on her is powerful and Rumi’s collection shows signs of something priceless to her since she chooses it to be the gift she offers to her brother when leaving home and the country as a whole. Indeed, offering this gift to Robert fuses two contradictory elements: a character who is going to take part in the “war on terror” and a book whose writer is known for his messages and calls for love, peace, and humanity. For Rumi, “the only legitimate reason to wage war arises from a collective obligation to preserve peace by disarming any irrational entity that is using power for impulsive, emotional urges” (Mahallati 66). Mohammad Jafar Amir Mahallati adds: “if Rumi was critical of a warrior who enthusiastically looked for an occasion of war as a short cut to paradise, we can conclude with certainty that he would have condemned modern suicidal bombing, which take so many innocent lives” (Mahallati 66). Hence, making Robert, who symbolizes the West and the “war on terror,” receive Rumi’s collection from his sister Tassie, who stands for the West, implies Moore’s opposition to the “war on terror” and suggests the writer’s tendency to foster peace between the West and the East.

More importantly, given that Robert's major problem as expressed throughout the novel is loss and loneliness, offering him Rumi's collection implies that this gift is a precious thing that will help warm his heart, strengthen him and bring joy into his alienation, especially that he is leaving to face danger (War in Afghanistan). About Robert, Tassie explains: "it had often seemed to me, failed to apply himself," (Messud 41) in his everyday life, he "had never known what he wanted," (Messud 309) and he feels loneliness in spite of his mother's love which seems to be "useless." Specifically, Tassie notices and feels weakness and loss in him in their farewell when she comments saying: "I could see he felt shorthanded, underequipped, factually and otherwise" (Moore 309). By making Tassie offer Rumi's collection to Robert, Moore seems to extend the positive effect of Rumi's collection (the "constitutive good") Tassie feels in her "sanctuary" to her brother who is leaving home. In other words, Tassie's gift to her brother implies the extension of the image of the Muslim Other as the "constitutive good."

About the Islamic scholar Rumi, Thomas Michel states:

Among the medieval mystical poets, the one who speaks most clearly and directly to the modern world is Jalaluddin Rumi. In the Muslim world, he is simply known as *Mawlana*, "Our Master." Just like in St. Louis if you say "Stan the Man" or "El Hombre," everyone knows who you are talking about, so too in the Middle East if you speak of Mawlana, "Our Master," everyone recognizes that you are referring to Rumi. The depth of his spiritual experience, his original and arresting poetic images, his obvious sincerity and openheartedness, and his ability to transcend cultures, time periods, and religions, all go together to make Rumi one of the most accessible and influential of Muslim thinkers who speak to us from the past. (97)

The tolerance and peacefulness conveyed by Rumi's writings stand in total opposition to the violent encounter between the Western character and the Muslim Other in *Falling Man* as already indicated. The relationship between the Muslim Other and the Westerner is positive: instead of the Muslim Other who torments the Westerner's psyche, Moore suggests that the Muslim Other nourishes the Westerner's mind with a world vision which encourages unlimited tolerance and peace. To put it another way, by replacing the post 9/11 "intruder" with a set of significant thoughts summarized in Rumi's collection, instead of "shrapnel" from a body of the Muslim Other, the way it is presented in Delillo's *Falling Man*, Moore

dismantles the image of the Muslim Other as an “intruder” and goes further presenting it as “the constitutive good.”

Moore suggests an “intruder” who is not the Muslim/Arab Other. This appears in an interview with Angela Pneuman in which she discusses the relation of her writing to politics. She states:

As for the relationship of my writing to politics—in the broadest sense, of course, everything is political, and I am interested in power and powerlessness as it relates to people in various ways. I’m also interested in the way that the workings of governments and elected officials intrude upon the lives and minds of people who feel generally safe from the immediate effects of such workings. All the political things we discuss with our friends are things my characters consider, too. (Pneuman)

Moore’s use of the verb “intrude” in her answer is highly significant: this verb “intrude” and its noun “intruder” are often used to describe the Muslim/Arab Other who “intrudes” into the Americans’ minds and lives in the 9/11 context. In her book *Islam Is a Foreign Country*, Zareena Grewal describes the immigrant Muslim Other as the Other who “intrudes in our midst” (341). In the same vein, discussing issues related to the 9/11 events, Kerry G. Herron, and Hank C. Jenkins-Smith argue that “terrorists” “intrude” on American people’s rights and privacy (Herron and Jenkins-Smith 75). This post 9/11 “dangerous” Other is thus pictured as “the intruder.” Mentioning some key elements of the emerging xenophobia, Luis N. Rivera-Pagán comments “a shadowy sinister specter is created in the minds of the public: the image of the intruder and threatening “other”” (87). What adds to the entrenchment of these words (intruder, intrude) in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, are government warnings about likely terrorist threats which were supplied repeatedly and intensively. For instance, among the format of the lockdown drills which, after the attacks, “changed and became more sophisticated” was the following: “when the drill commenced, an “intruder” – often a school official- played the role of a terrorist or shooter, stalking the hall, checking classroom doors, and listening for any noise that might indicate the presence of students” (Altheide 129). Such drills at schools or even elsewhere aimed at protecting the Westerners against the threat of the “terrorist other” or rather “the intruder.”

However, in her interview indicated above, Moore makes use of the verb “intrude” with “the workings of governments and elected officials” instead. This

implies the idea that it is not the Muslim Other who plays the role of the threatening “intruder”, but rather “the workings of governments and elected officials” in U.S. Thus, Moore’s view is different from that prevailing post 9/11 era which unquestionably accepts the image of the Muslim Other as the threatening “intruder.” This image seems to be totally rejected in Moore’s novel. This is highly apparent in Tassie’s dream, a dream which suggests co-existence instead.

1.3.4. A post 9/11 dream of peace and reconciliation between the West and Muslims

After her brother’s departure, Tassie dreams of Robert together with Reynaldo, “standing side by side . . . Each had a cell phone and a volume of poems by Rumi” (Moore 292- 293). Such a dream might well have interesting interpretations especially that it encompasses the two major elements which motivate the post 9/11 conflict: the West, symbolized by Robert, and the East, symbolized by Reynaldo. Intriguingly, Tassie’s dream may well be interpreted in the light of Freud’s theory of dreams. Freud argues that “the interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind” (604). Through dreams, which serve as valuable clues to how the unconscious mind operates, some of the repressed material comes through to awareness.

Freud believes that the unconscious mind contains desires and thoughts that are not acceptable to the conscious mind (133). Freud uses the term the “manifest content” for the surface meaning of the dream; what the dreamer remembers when s/he wakes up, and the term “latent content” for the hidden meaning of the dream. The manifest content serves as a disguise to the latent content or the unconscious wishes of the dreamer. The “manifest contest” in Tassie’s dream lies in the scene of Reynaldo and her brother Robert standing together side by side holding Rumi’s collection. However, the dream reveals a hidden desire searched for in Tassie’s everyday life.

Among the principles on which Freud relies when interpreting dreams is the dreamer’s context (Freud 134), which is the 9/11 context in Tassie’s case. To understand any image in a dream, one must first understand how it fits in the dream and also how the dream itself fits in the dreamer’s life as a whole. In her dream, Tassie sees Reynaldo standing side by side with her brother Robert; the former is

supposed to be a “terrorist” and the latter is supposed to fight “terrorists” in the 9/11 context. Making them stand side by side implies physical peace since neither of them attacks the other. Besides, they have never met, but they hold the same book, Rumi’s collection. Indeed, making an American hold such a book in the 9/11 context is highly significant. It might well be an implicit invitation to the West to start dismantling the Orientalist clichés, and consider Islam a religion of peace instead of a religion synonymous with terror. This is because Rumi’s collection stands for Sufism, a branch of Islam known for its spiritual elevation and its messages which incorporate “that of sacrifice, patience and tolerance, equality and peace [and] through which the growing threats of extremism, fundamentalism, terrorism and obscurantism can be countered” (Begum and Awan 32). In doing so, Moore stands in opposition to the war on terror discourse and favors tolerance instead.

Tassie seems to fulfill a wish through her dream: peace and reconciliation between the West and Muslim people. For Freud, a dream is a form of wish fulfillment. In other words, in our dreams, we explore the feelings that we cannot act in our waking life but this is achieved in symbolic forms. In his book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud argues that our dreams are nothing more than wishes that we are looking to fulfill in our waking lives. He explains the origins of a wish as follows:

I think to the opposition between conscious daily life and an unconscious psychic activity which is able to make itself perceptible only at night. I thus, find a threefold possibility for the origin of a wish. Firstly, it may have been excited during the day, and owing to external circumstances may have remained unsatisfied; there is thus left for the night an acknowledged and unsatisfied wish. Secondly, it may have emerged during the day, only to be rejected; there is thus left for the night an unsatisfied but suppressed wish. Thirdly, it may have no relation to daily life, but may belong to those wishes which awake only at night out of the suppressed material in us. (390)

Tassie’s wish seems to reflect the second suggestion Freud provides. She wishes to reconcile the West with the Muslim East, a reconciliation that seems to be physical (Reynaldo and Robert standing side by side), and spiritual (holding Rumi’s collection), but which is impossible to happen in the 9/11 context. In doing so, Moore goes against the Islamophobic fears that prevail in America and the whole world in the aftermath of 9/11, fears which

display the Muslim Other as the “intruder” and which have been intensively reinforced by post 9/11 American fiction.

Hence, Moore makes use of her fictional narrator’s dream to open the door for new thoughts which do not consider Islam and Muslims a threat to the West. The fictional image of the dream Moore draws in her narrative seems to remove “the line” Huntington mentioned in his “Clash of Civilisations”: that which separates “peoples of Western Christianity, on the one hand, from Muslim and Orthodox peoples on the other” (Mooney 512). In his controversial thesis “Clash of Civilizations,” Samuel Huntington argues that the end of the Cold War led to new dangers and he refers to the post Cold War era as “the new world.” He asserts: “In the new world, the most pervasive, important and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between people belonging to different cultural entities” (22). In other words, Huntington asserts that the conflicts that the world witnessed after the Cold War were completely different from those experienced before. He continues explaining:

Tribal wars and ethnic conflicts will occur within civilizations...And the most dangerous cultural conflicts are those along the fault lines between civilizations . . . For forty-five years the Iron Curtain was the central dividing line in Europe. That line has moved several hundred miles east. It is now the line separating peoples of Western Christianity, on the one hand, from Muslim and Orthodox peoples on the other. (29)

Indeed, Huntington’s warning of this kind of conflicts was not new at that time. Edward Said had mentioned the “clash of civilizations” a long time (in 1981) before Samuel Huntington published his work. Said points out:

For the general public of America and Europe today, Islam is “new” of a particularly unpleasant sort. The media, the government ,the geopolitical strategists and- although they are marginal to the culture at large- the academic experts on Islam are all in concert: Islam is a threat to Western civilization. Now this is by no means the same as saying that only derogatory or racist caricatures of Islam are to be found in the West ...What I am saying is that negative images of Islam are very much more prevalent than any others, and that such images correspond not with what Islam “is”...but to what prominent sectors of a particular society take it to be: Islam and the West: A Clash Of Civilisation? Those sectors have the power and the will to propagate that

particular image of Islam, and this image therefore becomes more prevalent, more present, than all other. (Said *Covering Islam* 144).

In this context, the dream suggests Moore's tolerance towards the Muslim Other and Islam, precisely towards the co-existence of Muslims and Christians in post 9/11 America. This co-existence is reinforced by some specific elements which Moore incorporates in the dream: Moore makes use of the prayer mat, the yoga mat, and cell phones.

In addition to Rumi's collection, Reynaldo and Robert hold the prayer mat and the yoga mat respectively: "They were standing side by side at the end of the field, Robert with yoga mat, Reynaldo with his prayer mat" (Moore 292). The use of these pieces of material in the dream is really significant and might offer interesting interpretations in the post 9/11 era. In the aftermath of the 9/11 events, the prayer rug is associated with the "Oriental men hijacking planes;" it "became emblematic of radicals and fundamentalist Muslims in the West" (Iyhab Syed 16). "Images of Muslims performing Salat in their cells in Guantanamo Bay prisons "buzzed" in the media. The aim behind these images is "to solidify the idea that all those who perform Muslim prayers are a threat. These factors are represented in the rug prints and installations" (Iyhab Syed 24-25). The prayer mat suggests the "prayer actions" which along with the "use of words such as Inshallah (With Allah's blessings), Allah Hu Akbar (Allah is Great) solidify the main cause for Islam and Allah" (Syed 59). Abdullah Muhammad Iyhab Syed asserts that "the prayer rug connects to the idea that the Muslim man is ready to shed his blood and give his life for Allah" (59). In *A Gate*, the prayer mat, the Islamic symbol has brought the image of Robert's yoga mat to Tassie's mind; in Tassie's last encounter with Reynaldo, his prayer mat attracts her attention: "I had thought it was a yoga mat, like my brother's" (Moore 203). Significantly, this Islamic symbol does not remind Tassie of any "terrorist" or violent acts. This is because Moore aims at detaching the prayer mat from the stereotypical image the West creates widening its area of representation to other practices which are not necessarily Islamic.

The image Moore draws in her novel (indicated previously) may well bring into picture Elizabeth De Michelis's comparison between the prayer and yoga mat. In her book *A History of Modern Yoga*, De Michelis draws a parallel between the yoga mat and the Islamic prayer mat:

One tries to practise at a time and place where there will be no disturbance or interruption. One's "yoga gear," a cushion or other seat, props, dedicated clothing, but especially the blanket or mat used for practice, will represent the minimum expanse of this cordoned off space. As in the case of the Islamic prayer mat (the parallel is structurally closer than may appear at first sight), the yoga mat becomes a special object, not to be trodden on, not to be soiled, and not to be used for other purposes. Opening it up on the floor instantly creates a "special" time and space in which certain practices, ritual-like, are repeated at regular intervals. (253-254)

In the same vein, the interpretation Brad Kessler offers to both the prayer and yoga mat is that of a "square or circle of fabric to remind a person where to be" (167). This author who grows to love living with goats, recounts his experience in agrarian living when he moved away from society to nature. Talking about his "milk stand," he states:

The stand is slightly smaller than a yoga mat and larger than a sajjada, a Muslim prayer mat, but serves a similar function. A prayer mat is a physical reminder to place yourself in the world; and, while on it direct your thoughts to God. A prayer mat transports its user to a "higher" plane. The true believer stands with his hands crossed at the wrists and eyes closed. The yogi sits in a lotus position. The meditating Buddhist sits on a *zafu*. Each has their square or circle of fabric to remind them where to be. I sit on a milk stand with a goat. (167)

Hence, making use of both the prayer mat and the yoga mat in the same scene and making Tassie confuse the prayer mat with the yoga mat suggest Moore's intended message that the prayer mat is not specifically Islamic, as it is unquestionably considered in the aftermath of the 9/11 events, but can represent a "special time and space in which certain practices, ritual-like, are repeated at regular intervals" (De Michelis 253-254). It also suggests more or less the same interpretation as Brad Kessler, that the "prayer mat," the Islamic symbol, can be interpreted as a private space much like a "yoga mat." Thus, through Tassie's dream, Moore introduces a tolerant vision in the post 9/11 atmosphere which has not left space for the interpretation of the prayer mat other than the entrenched stereotypical image indicated previously. The prayer mat in Moore's *A Gate* is interestingly divested of the association with "Islamic fundamentalism" engraved in the Westerners' mind and does not bring any thoughts of the "terrorist" Other.

All this is to say that the interpretations of Tassie's dream in the light of Sigmund Freud, Brad Kessler, and Elizabeth De Michelis reveal Moore's invitation to the West to fulfill a peaceful civilizational dialogue in the aftermath of the 9/11 events, promoting tolerance instead of violence. This dream seems to be a one which removes the conflict between the so-called "terrorist Other" and the American people; it is a dream of reconciliation and peace between the West and Muslim people.

1.4. Heather's hidden search for meaning

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, it is important to analyse the way the writers under study present their American characters in order to examine the relationship between these characters and the Muslim/Arab Other in the novels. Unlike the other American characters, Messud's Nora and Moore's Tassie who extensively express their extreme feeling of meaninglessness, loss and uncertainty from the very beginning of the novel and stress it when the plots unfold, Adams's Heather in *Harbor* is a character whose predicament is not plainly revealed to the reader at the beginning of the novel. Rather, it is alluded to through its protagonist, Aziz. First, she is presented as the pampered daughter of a rich man. This wealth is evident in the BMW she drives and the city where her father lives; it is "like French castles" (Moore 279). Then, she is introduced as a fat, but pretty woman before we get a deeper portrait of a kind, and malleable girl. This latter unexpectedly falls in love with Mourad.

Indeed Heather's loss and search for meaning is not openly revealed until late in the novel when it appears to the reader in the scene that depicts her depression. When Ghazi visits her at home, Heather seems to have undergone a radical change, to the extent that he does not recognize her. Totally astonished, "Ghazi didn't know how to make his face look. She was easily half gone. She looked so much older . . . At least the coppery blond hair was there. She had it in a ponytail down her back. He wanted to touch it to make sure it was her" (Moore 210). Then, when sitting with her, "her face still wet from crying," (Moore 210) she invites him to drink wine and starts drinking herself, an act she has never done and which Ghazi can not believe. This scene reveals Heather's loss and meaninglessness; her depression is due to "the existential vacuum." In his book *Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl, argues that "depression, aggression, addiction are due to what is called in logotherapy "the existential vacuum," a feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness," (166) an explanation which illustrates Heather's case.

Heather is presented as a complex character who moves mysteriously from one love story to another in an environment which is not hers and with men who not only do not fit her social class, but are illegal immigrants considered “terrorists.” Heather’s stories raise a question in the reader’s mind: what makes an American rich and pretty girl seek to be among illegal immigrants living in a dwelling which is “so ragged, on a street so dismal” (Moore 65). It is indeed the same question or rather the same “riddle” that preoccupies Aziz from the very moment Rafik tells him about Heather and her rich father. Eventually, Aziz concludes that he would never recognize it (Moore 65).

Then, Heather’s depression comes to suggest an answer to the riddle: Heather has been looking for meaning. Her meaningless life leads her to live with Rafik and his fellows. Interestingly, among the things through which meaning can be found is “experiencing reality by interacting authentically with the environment and with others” (Frankl 90), and this is exactly what Heather does when she moves to live with Rafik and his fellows. Still, we need to highlight the “mask” behind which the “existential vacuum” hides; Frankl comments: “such widespread phenomena as depression, aggression and addiction are not understandable unless we recognize the existential vacuum underlying them . . . Moreover, there are various masks and guises under which the existential vacuum appears” (129). Frankl carries on explaining that money plays a crucial role: “sometimes the frustrated will to meaning is vicariously compensated for by a will to power, including the most primitive form of the will to power, the will to money” (129). In this connection, he points out: “In other cases, the place of frustrated will to meaning is taken by the will to pleasure. That is why existential frustration often eventuates in sexual compensation. We can observe in such cases that the sexual libido becomes rampant in the existential vacuum” (Frankl 129-130). While “the will to money” is irrelevant in Heather’s case since she is a woman who “came from money” (Adams 49), “the will to pleasure” seems illustrative. Her frustrated will to meaning is taken by the will to pleasure in which sexuality becomes unrestrained. In short, according to Frankl’s ideas, Heather’s depression is due to meaninglessness and it is a way of telling herself that something is seriously wrong and needs working through and changing. Unless change can be made, there will continue to be a mismatch between the meaninglessness of everyday life and the innate drive to find meaning. Interestingly, the positive change that happens to Heather, the American character, is fulfilled through her relationship with Mourad, the Muslim Other in the novel.

1.5. Mourad's empowering potential

Heather has love stories with Rafik and his fellows too, but the one that extensively affects her life is her experience with Mourad, Aziz's brother. Heather immensely enjoys Mourad's company; she emphatically admits that "it had become a relief to be with Mourad, actually" (Moore 165). She is delighted when she goes shopping with him, "[looks] forward to their talks after work" (Moore 165), and is constantly afraid that he would one day lose interest in her. Her love for Mourad seems to extend its strand to reach his family. She once expresses her sincere admiration of the two brothers' relationship and wishes she were a member of their family.

Mourad's positive influence on Heather posits him as "the constitutive good" in her life. This influence plainly appears not only on her physical appearance, but on her psyche as well. Physically speaking, Heather is a fat girl as revealed at the beginning of the novel, the fact on which Mourad has never commented. The powerful positive influence of Mourad on her self is very clear:

For the first time in her life, Heather was thinner. It was something that just happened, no effort. Mourad said one day, "Your clothes don't fit you." She was wearing a pair of blue jeans. The roll of her that had lifted over the top of them was gone, and she could stick both her hands under the waistband down to the tops of her thighs. The shirt where the buttons were straining as long as she could remember was so loose she felt cold. (Adams 16)

Being thinner, which usually needs serious regular effort, happens to Heather quickly. The fleeting remark about her physical appearance ("Your clothes don't fit you") which Mourad makes casually, makes her think of going shopping. And she does go with Mourad precisely: "when she picked out clothes in a department store, Mourad helped. "Beautiful," he said about an orchid dress. "Try this one," he said, carrying a filmy skirt no one at her law firm would wear. She [tries] them. In the mirror, she [looks] at herself in lavender" (Adams 165). This highlights Mourad's capacity to have a positive effect on her; his empowering potential.

Mourad's love has also drastically moved her from a state of loneliness and desperation to a life full of energy:

She couldn't sit around leafing through magazines. She couldn't stand watching television. She didn't want to go to lunch with her friends at work because she didn't want to talk about anything, so she ate at her desk, and eating usually turned out to be a Coke. She went in early so she could be hard at work, deaf to chitchat, when everyone else arrived. After a while, she even started staying late . . . (Adams 164)

Starting to stay late after such desperation is just the first sign of a life full of energy; this is not the only positive change which appears in her self: Heather "looks for ways to make things run more smoothly. She anticipates what her boss wants. Sometimes, she makes his travel arrangements so thoughtfully that he teases her about being a mind reader (Adams 164). More importantly, this energy does not only help Heather make her job perfect, but also allows her to go farther and attract the attention of the big boss. Consequently, he offers her a better salary as indicated in the novel: "Then one day a bigger guy at the law firm than her boss went to her boss and said he needed Heather to be his executive assistant. It was more paid. The guy had a corner office, and she even had her own office outside his" (Adams 165).

These examples reflect the way Mourad illustrates the meaning of the "constitutive good" in Heather's life. Mourad, the Muslim Other who is supposed to disturb the American Self in the 9/11 context, positively empowers Heather, the American character in *The Woman Upstairs*. This makes her very similar to Tassie and Reynaldo in *A Gate* and Nora and Skandar in *The Woman Upstairs*. Like Tassie and Nora, Heather wants to be close to the Muslim Other and in doing so, she paints a picture which stands in opposition to Delillo's metaphor of "organic shrapnel." This is generalized when Heather praises the immigrants she is in touch with saying: "They were normal people. They had a house, part of a house anyway; it definitely qualified as a two-bedroom apartment. They had jobs. Rafik had dabbled in hash and maybe some shoplifting, but that was a long way from something as out of this world as terrorism. Mourad was a security guard at the airport! Aziz, he was an angel" (Adams 280). Heather's depiction stands in total opposition to the image of the Muslim Other pointed by Luis N. Rivera-Pagán: that of the "shadowy sinister specter" indicated previously. Furthermore, the relation between Heather and the Muslim Other is neither "melancholic" nor "parasitic." Specifically, Adams depicts Heather who symbolizes the West and Mourad who symbolizes "the intruder" from the East to be "in agreement": "They were in agreement on everything that was important to accomplish in their relating. Mourad was solicitous about Heather on the street and near windows. He made a point to hold her hand anytime they were outside. In cars, they were particularly affectionate" (Adams 165). Adams's depiction

dismantles the conflicted closeness between the “East” and the “West” which Delillo’s “organic shrapnel” symbolizes as explained in the previous sections.

2. The American tormented psyche and the “terrorist” Other

The American characters in Delillo’s *Falling Man* are thus portrayed to suffer from the traumatic experience of the 9/11 attacks and the presence of the Muslim Other disturbs their psyche. In her article “9/11 and the Psychic Trauma Novel: Don DeLillo’s ‘Falling Man,’” Sonia Baelo-Allué observes that “what DeLillo does is offer something journalism and the media cannot provide, it reenacts the traumatic effects of the events in the mind of the survivors and the traumatic consequences of the attack in its aftermath” (68-69). These circumstances result in their search “for structure.” In the same article, Baelo-Allué comments:

Both Lianne and Keith are looking for structure, for a plot to shape their lives. Keith only finds it in poker, which has “structure, guiding principles, sweet and easy interludes of dream logic” (11-12). Lianne goes to church two or three times a week where she finds other regular congregants: “They’d established a pattern, these three, or nearly so, and then others entered and the mass began.” (75)

Interestingly, it seems that Hammad, the Muslim Other in the novel has got this “structure.” Baelo-Allué carries on explaining:

Strangely, the only life that seems to have a purpose and a clear structure is that of Hammad, one of the terrorists that hijacked the plane that crashed into Keith’s tower. He has a jihad narrative to follow: “there were rules now and he was determined to follow them. His life had structure. Things were clearly defined.” (75)

What concerns us here is not these American characters’ search for “structure”, but the reason behind this search: The reason why they feel the need to have “structures” in their lives lies in the 9/11 traumatic experience and the intrusion of the Muslim Other. Intriguingly, this stands in opposition to our analyzed novels. The American characters in the novels under study also feel the need to have “structures”; this is made obvious through their struggle with the meaningless lives they lead as argued previously. Yet, it seems that it is not the Muslim Other who is behind their troubles since he is the “constitutive good” throughout the novels’ events, so what can be the reason behind their meaningless life in post 9/11 America?

Charles Taylor argues that the concept of identity in general and people's "identity crisis" in the modern world specifically is bound up with the notion of "framework." One of the key points Taylor defends is that "human lives, first of all, are lived within frameworks of value..." (17). According to Taylor, the notion of "framework" is crucial because "a framework is that in virtue of which we make sense of our lives spiritually. Not to have a framework is to fall into a life which is spiritually senseless. The quest is thus always a quest for sense" (18). He argues that frameworks are absolutely necessary to identity to the extent that "persons who lost their frameworks would not exist anymore"(Campbell 76) as Katherine Galko Campbell mentions in her essay "Taylor's conception of persons and His theory of Personal identity." That is to say, people do need a "framework" in their lives. This "framework" helps people not only understand the world around them, but assess its worth as well.

In this sense, Taylor claims that religions represent an appropriate example of his notion of "framework" (18). According to Taylor, People are constantly struggling in a modern secular world. The contemporary society makes the moral framework invisible to people and that's why he sheds light on it.⁶ Intriguingly, the existential predicament of meaninglessness which defines our age according to Taylor (19) seems to be the case in the post 9/11 novels under study: the American characters in the analyzed novels seem to be an illustration of Taylor's notion of "framework," the fact which excludes the so-called "terrorist" Other from their suffering at all. Nora's, Heather's and Tassie's tormented psyche and meaningless lives in post 9/11 America is due to their lack of "framework," to their religious doubts; it has absolutely nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks and the Muslim/Arab Other.

2.1. Nora's religious doubts and the Arab Other

Messud's Nora seems to lack Taylor's suggested "framework" which can make her life meaningful. Her religion which is supposed to provide a "framework" according to Taylor, is but a weak element in her life. This is apparent throughout *The Woman Upstairs*. In this context, it is important to note that Taylor's basic argument is that the concept of the Self is linked to morality. His work stresses the link between identity and morality. One of the crucial points Taylor presents is that morality should be seen as a crucial part of human beings' search for self-identity. That is to say, Taylor's basic argument that the concept of the

Self is linked to morality entails how one thinks about oneself and this depends on what one considers to be the “Good” and how one relates to that “Good”:

there is something which seems to deserve the attribution [of goodness] in a fuller sense. To take Plato's theory as an example: the distinction between higher and lower actions, motivations, ways of living turns on the hegemony of reason or desire. But the hegemony of reason is understood substantively. To be rational is to have a vision of rational order, and to love this order. So the difference of action or motivation has to be explained by reference to a cosmic reality, the order of things. This is good in a fuller sense: the key to this order is the Idea of the Good itself. Their relation to this is what makes certain of our actions or aspirations good; it is what constitutes the goodness of these actions or motives. (Taylor *Sources of the Self* 92)

In Messud's novel, Nora is uncertain about her choices in life; “[she] thought for so long, forever, that [she] was strong enough or [she] misunderstood what strength was. [She] thought [she] could get to greatness, to [her] greatness” (Messud 17). She constantly thinks that she should have made true her dream to be an artist instead of devoting her time to her parents, but she is also uncertain about this.

It seems that Nora is not “rational”; she does not have “a vision of rational order,” to use Taylor's words. Even her motivations in life are not clear. Nora observes that “[she is] like the children: [her] motivations and [her] reasons aren't always clear” (Messud 18). She is doubtful about her choices in life, which makes her bewildered, anxious and lost. Indeed, Nora's life is an extension of her mother's deep anxiety. Nora talks a lot about her suffering mother, who is extremely dissatisfied with her life: “because of the bright flame of her, it took me a long time to realize that she, too, was . . . frightened of the unknown and so uncertain of herself...” (Messud 122). Unconsciously, she transfers her anxiety and pessimism to her daughter who finds herself in constant search for herself:

In those heady weeks it seemed clear that I owed it not only to myself, but also to my mother—that my fear (the fear that had kept me from pursuing my art more seriously, that had kept me in Boston, that had kept me employed, and surely had kept me single, also) was in fact just her fear, that I shouldered all her anxieties and disappointments, along with her basic good-Catholic-girl-ness, an inability, ironically, to have faithfully to believe in the value of my own efforts, in the uniqueness of my own soul. Oh

great adventure! Life there, before me, the infinite banquet lying in wait. (Messud 189)

It is true that Nora's individual goal is to be a famous artist and a mother and that she has not been able to realize it, but she is not a total failure after all: she is good and even perfect at her job, "great with kids" (Messud 1). More importantly, she "[held her] mother's hand when she died, after four years of holding her hand while she was dying" (Messud 1). She also speaks with her father every day on the telephone. Yet, even so she is not conscious of her being moral; she is tormented and thinks she should have led her life otherwise and falls into the trap of meaninglessness. In these circumstances, the Shahid family enter her life.

What is worth mentioning here is that the Shahid family (specifically in our concern Skandar and Reza) come into Nora's life at a very significant moment which seems like filling the spiritual gap that torments her. Bella, Nora's mother, undergoes a serious illness just two years before Nora meets the Shahids. To Nora, who was gradually and bitterly accepting her mother's death, this timing seems significant. This is apparent when she strongly links the two events in one of the passages of the novel:

My mother was only two years dead, that fall. It felt like an immense distance then, but now, in time's accordion folds, the two events—my mother, unable even to move her head, wheezing in her elephantine breathing machine, sliding her eyes to the light, then closing them a final time; Reza at the supermarket, leaning over the bench to laugh at my spilled apples (who has upset the apple cart? I have, I have!)—seem almost contiguous. As my wise friend Didi has more than once observed about life's passages, every departure entails an arrival elsewhere, every arrival implies a departure from afar. My mother left here for an unknown there; and then Reza and Sirena and Skandar came to me. (Messud 64)

Unlike its representation in Delillo's *Falling Man*, the Arab Other in *The Woman Upstairs* is not the reason behind the disruption of the American characters' personal lives, but seems to be the healer instead. Precisely, Nora's tormented psyche and disruption in the novel is due to her religious doubts as the coming lines will show.

Nora's religious doubt which marks the absence of Taylor's suggested "framework" and highlights the reason behind her bewilderment is clearly mirrored in her artistic work. Interestingly, throughout the novel, Nora admits that her art reflects her personality. Nora's

artistic project consists of little doll houses like constructions depicting small rooms inhabited by Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, Alice Neel and Edie Sedgwick. Significantly, these artists share a common point, religious doubts and troubles in their lives critically discussed in their works. Emily Dickinson is a poet who was highly troubled by religion. Marwan Alqaryouti and Ala Eddin Sadeq assert that her “poetry is influenced by the doubts she holds about Christianity, especially in relation with survival of the soul after death” (16). Likewise, Virginia Woolf, who is herself the subject of her works, is “in search of herself, always trying to probe deeper into her inner mind and soul” (Shahryar 23). Woolf’s “well established religious scepticism permeates her novels” as Alexandra Peat argues (2). The third artist Nora uses in her dioramas, which reflect her personality, is the painter Alice Neel whose paintings show no peace but agitated recognition of inevitable struggle, paintings that express religious doubt and search for truth (Jebian et al 150). And the fourth artist is Edie Sedgwick, an American actress known for the doubts she has about Christianity and the mad rush for pleasure and fame (Luft 214). She finally died over a drug overdose, a death which may be the best example of meaningless life under no “framework.”

Religious doubt is thus a common point between Nora and her chosen artists though distanced geographically and historically. In short, the actors of Nora’s dioramas reflect her religious troubles, the reason behind this American character’s tormented psyche in post 9/11 America with the presence of the so called “terrorist” Other. This fact reinforces the argument that Messud’s narrative dismantles the stereotype that displays the “terrorist” Other as the reason behind the Americans’ tormented psyche in the post 9/11 era. It also suggests a convincing reason that leads to their being so, that of the absence of “framework” in their lives.

2.2. Heather’s yearning for God and the Muslim Other

The Muslim Other in *A Gate* is depicted to be far from being the cause of the American character’s tormented psyche: like Messud’s Nora, Adams’s Heather shows religious doubts. Heather’s life is spiritually meaningless. Her religious doubts may be summarized in both her search for meaning discussed at length previously and more explicitly in the poster Ghazi finds when he once visits her at home. Heather is alone, the place is cleaner than he has ever seen it, carefully arranged, and it smells good. What is astonishing is the poster he observes over the bed entitled “One Day at a time” and which says:

Help me believe in what I could be
And all that I am.
Show me the stairway I have to climb.
Lord, for my sake teach me to take
One day at a time. (Adams 211)

Significantly, this is the beginning of the song lyrics of Cristy Lane. It is a Gospel song which reveals the weakness of the human being and its ultimate need for God's love and guidance.

Like Nora, Heather is uncertain about her choices in life; she is doubtful about her choices throughout the novel, the fact which leads to her bewilderment and anxiety. Yet, this does not mean that she is a failure. This is made obvious through the depiction of her relationship with her friend, her father, and the illegal immigrants. As regards her friend, "Heather had only ever done right by her . . ." (Adams 48). When it comes to the illegal immigrants, Heather's relation to them is portrayed positively; she helps them with their problems and also in their preparations to welcome their guests (Adams 71). More importantly, she does well to her father to the extent that he "was lit up shinning with being pleased at [her]" (Adams 64). Yet, like Nora, she is not conscious of this "Good" and falls into the trap of meaninglessness which is not depicted to be the consequence of the presence of the Muslim Other in her life. Within this atmosphere, Heather is close to some of *Harbor's* illegal immigrants who have a special positive touch in her life. Heather has love stories with these illegal immigrants. She falls in love with Rafik who treats her "at least in the beginning, like a story book princess" (Adams 169). Then, she falls in love with Mourad who makes her feel that she is a woman and lets her enter the world of love; he "had made her a woman who would forever be aware that such things and ways existed in the world" (Adams 171). To put it another way, these Muslim characters are totally free from being the cause of Heather's tormented psyche.

With Lahouri, Heather feels a different kind of love. She tends particularly to him as a mother. This makes her similar to Messud's Nora who plays the role of the mother with Reza. Heather's "innocent" love for Lahouri "was described as something of mothering," (Adams 75) in one of the passages of the novel. In another passage, Heather is said to love him like a brother: Aziz tells Louhari: "Heather, she loves you like a brother. In this country, that means many things" (Adams 257). Significantly, Aziz's comment might well allude to the post 9/11 atmosphere which considers the Muslim Other as "the enemy" who is not welcome in the US.

That is to say, this comment alludes to the fact that it is unexpected to love the so-called “terrorist” Other or “the intruder” like a brother in post 9/11 America. It seems to be a message of peace and reconciliation as well. More importantly, this may also allude to the idea that loving the Muslim Other as a brother implies that he is not a source of post 9/11 tormented psyche. Furthermore, Heather helps Lahouri get a social security number, and he is the only one who manages, thanks to her, to possess this number among the other immigrants. This makes him feel safe and prepares him to get the Green Card, everybody’s dream in his surroundings. In doing so, Adams makes her American character facilitate the presence of the Muslim Other in the American society. The presence of this so-called “terrorist” Other in the post 9/11 context is supposed to be the cause of Heather’s tormented psyche as explained previously; yet, Adams suggests religious doubt as the cause instead. In doing so, Adams draws a distance between post 9/11 American people’s bewilderment and distressed life in the U.S, and the Muslim Other.

2.3. Tassie’s ambiguous Jewishness and the Muslim Other

Like Nora and Heather, Tassie’s meaningless life and her tormented psyche have not been linked to the 9/11 attacks and to the Muslim Other at all. Instead, Tassie seems to lack Taylor’s “framework” that can make her life meaningful. To put it in another way, the reason behind this American character’s bewilderment in post 9/11 America is not the so-called “terrorist” Other, but seems to be her religious doubts. Noticeably, Tassie’s constant questioning about religion and her religious doubt and uncertainty pervades the story of the novel. Tassie experiences the ups-and-downs of life, asking terribly deep questions about the world, God and religion. This raises questions about her parents’ religion and the environment she lives in, and more importantly, the faith Tassie has grown up in. Indeed, both her parents show no interest in religion and consequently she is not raised in a particular faith.

Tassie, the half-Jewish protagonist, has a Jewish mother called Gail and a Protestant father called Robert. Yet, neither of them is particularly devout; Christmas, the feast which is almost a non-event in their home, is characterized with the badly decorated Christmas tree, the fact which reflects the family’s indifference to this religious event (Moore 45). Her father is a protestant with “low attendance at church,” (Moore 20) a largely passive father figure in the novel who is always busy with his work and never present for Christmas dinner (Moore 47). When it comes to her mother, Gail, Tassie remembers her saying “as long as the place was moderately fire resistant, I’d deposit you anywhere . . . I wasn’t going to worry and

interfere with you” (Moore 8-9). Then, Tassie comments: “She was the only Jewish woman I’d ever known who felt like that” (Moore 9). This is the first thing reported in her voice; strikingly, uncaring and “unJewish” as Tassie herself points out. This ambiguous and contentious parental religious atmosphere seems to back Tassie’s constant questions about religion as the coming lines will clarify.

What is worth mentioning and serves our argument is that Tassie describes her mother as a “spouse of indeterminate ethnicity” (Moore 20) rather than specifically Jewish. This phrase opens the doors of ambivalence as far as Gail’s Jewishness as well as her half-Jewish daughter’s are concerned. Tassie’s ambivalence towards her own Jewishness and her doubtful references to Christianity emphatically impose her lack of Taylor’s “framework.” As the novel unfolds, and precisely in her “Sufism class,” Tassie describes herself to Reynaldo, her classmate, as a “quasi-Jew” (Moore 143), an utterance which mediates deep questions of her Jewishness. Tassie does not really seem to understand the offense when her boyfriend tells her that he believes “[she] is innocent, especially for a Jew” (Moore 205). She does not only make innocent Hitler jokes, but fails to register when she hears a joke about the gas chambers. As regards Gail, she does not communicate any meaningful sense of Judaism to her daughter; her Jewishness is only awkwardly and broadly exposed in the novel through several scenes such as the writer’s description of Gail’s behavior in Christmas. Tassie admits that “[her] mother was never one for Christmas Eve, and so coming home for the holidays I was often greeted like a neighbor” (Moore 44). Moreover, when Tassie toasts Jesus, she “looked at [her] from a great and concerned distance” (Moore 44) with no details that may explain such a behavior. In fact, Gail’s ambivalent Jewishness may well be summarized in the “large tinsel Star of David, angled rakishly, like a geometry problem” (Moore 45) which she places at the top of the Christmas tree as Tassie points out.

In such an environment which lacks Taylor’s “framework” and offers a meaningless life, Tassie silently struggles to understand what belief in God means, through her questioning about the truth and God, a situation that leaves her always bemoaning the absence of proof. However, Tassie seems thoughtful when talking about God: “The first time I used a cell phone I felt so ashamed walking along talking. Talking to no one. Like a mad person. But God when He made this great world put everything in it. He knew what to put in it so we could someday have cell phones” (Moore 191). Similar passages, in which Tassie acknowledges God to be all knowing, display themselves throughout the novel.

Messud, Adams, and Moore thus do not only depict the Muslim/Arab Other as the “constitutive good” in their narratives as explained in the previous sections, but go further to free this Other totally from being the cause of the Americans’ disturbed Self. By suggesting the American characters’ lack of Taylor’s “framework” and offering a positive portrayal of the Muslim/Arab Other which dismantles the stereotype of “the intruder” who torments the American psyche in the post 9/11 context, the writers under study exclude this Other totally from the sphere of the Americans’ suffering in post 9/11 America. In a nutshell, it seems that the writers under study suggest religious doubts as the reason behind their American characters’ bewilderment, disruptions and meaninglessness in the aftermath of the 9/11 events instead of the presence of the so-called “terrorist” Other in their personal lives .

Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that the conflict between the American Self and the “terrorist” Other in the aftermath of the 9/11 events is dismantled in Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs*, Moore’s *A Gate at the Stairs* and Adams’s *Harbor*. Instead, a very positive relationship takes place. This conflict is highlighted in this chapter through Don DeLillo’s metaphor of “organic shrapnel” in *Falling Man*. Don DeLillo’s American characters in the novel are not able to develop a new sense of identity in relation to the new post 9/11 world. They suffer from the enduring traumatic effects of the 9/11 events and the presence of Muslims in their lives. This presence brings images of violence and terrorism anew and highly disturbs their psyche.

This chapter, has argued that the American characters in the novels under study are disturbed and experience meaninglessness and uncertainty in their lives; however, this is not due to the enduring traumatic effects of the 9/11 events and the presence of the Muslim/Arab Other in their lives, but it is due to their religious doubts. Interestingly, these characters have built their disturbed unbalanced identity through Muslims’/Arabs’ presence in their surroundings. Nora in *The Woman Upstairs*, Tassie in *A Gate at the Stairs* and Heather in *Harbor* are all portrayed as post 9/11 American characters who find their Selves in the company of the Muslim/Arab Other. This latter strongly provides energy and empowers them: the Muslim/Arab Other thus is an illustration of what Taylor calls the “constitutive good” and not of what DeLillo calls “organic shrapnel.”

In short, the Muslim /Arab Other in the novels under study strongly participates in the formation of the American self and not in its disruption. Unexpectedly, in a post 9/11 context

characterized by Islamophobia and strong stereotypical representations, the American characters discussed in this chapter experience a positive relationship with the so-called “terrorist” Other, a relationship which pulls apart the conflict between the American Self and the Muslim/Arab Other in the aftermath of the events.

General Conclusion

Islam has often been misrepresented in Western discourse which reinforces and perpetuates the stereotypical images drawn for Arabs/Muslims: they are portrayed as inherently violent, intolerant, fanatical, incapable of cross-cultural dialogue, and above all oppressors of women. Indeed, the misrepresentations of Arabs/Muslims have been ingrained in the West's conceptualization since the Middle Ages. The Orientalist stereotypes and myths have grown in intensity after the 9/11 attacks, the world-changing event. Noticeably, the post 9/11 world was governed by a discourse of Orientalism and Media have played an important role in intensifying Islamophobic stereotypes in post 9/11 American fiction. This is maintained by many scholars and writers.

After the 9/11 attacks, Islam and Muslims/Arabs came to be categorically equated with "terrorism." Fear of Islam and Muslims has been an enduring Western preoccupation, and post 9/11 writers took no pains to reproduce and reinforce the Orientalist stereotypical images spread mainly by mainstream media. In turn, many post 9/11 American novels reproduced and reinforced these clichés about Arabs and Muslims. Consequently, Arabs and Muslims were uncontestedly the most prominent frightening Other.

The 9/11 attacks are the most significant events which have drawn the contemporary relationship between the United States and the Islamic world. Post 9/11 American literature displays vigorous efforts directed to the examination and evaluation of Islam and the Arab/Muslim Other on the basis of the terrorist attacks. Therefore, the political atmosphere which was shaped after the attacks plays a crucial role in the analysis of the American literary discourse; the war on terror is fought on military, political, social, and literary fronts. Fighting "Terrorism" has been a post 9/11 Western preoccupation. The proactive campaign to combat this phenomenon by the United States of America in particular and the West in general has strengthened the misunderstandings between the East and the West. Noticeably, it has offered a precious opportunity to some to widen the gulf of stereotypes and misconceptions of Arabs/Muslims and Islam. This study has argued that this is not the case with the American writers we have selected for analysis. Their works seem to deliberately bridge the gap between the West and the East rather than widen it. While the available post 9/11 American fiction reinforces the stereotypes of Arabs/Muslims and invites the public to unquestionably reject both these peoples and their faith, the novels under study propose a new landscape that urges the public to think and consider this issue objectively.

This thesis has focused on the positive representations of Arabs/Muslims and the relationship between these Arabs/Muslims and the American Self in the aftermath of the 9/11 events in three post 9/11 female American writings: Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs*, Lorraine Adams's *Harbor* and Lorrie Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs*. This has been fulfilled by bringing into light some prominent post 9/11 American fictional narratives which have contributed to the vilification of Arabs/Muslims— novels such as Sherry Jones's *The Jewel Of Medina*, Homa Pourasgari's *The Down of Saudi*, John Updike's *Terrorist*, and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*. All these post 9/11 texts have been studied in the light of different theories, particularly Edward Said's *Orientalism* and its feminist responses: Reina Lewis's *Gendering Orientalism* and Billie Melman's *Women's Orients*. These theories have provided a suitable lens to highlight the Orientalist post 9/11 depiction of Arabs/Muslims and display Messud's, Moore's and Adams's challenge of post 9/11 stereotypical images. The three literary pieces discussed in this thesis seem to be intended to correct the Westerners' perceptions of the Muslim/Arab Other, the so-called "terrorist" Other. They offer the readers multiple examples of positive qualities which stand in opposition to the stereotypes that are pervasive in post 9/11 era. Since 9/11 and even before, Arabs/Muslims have been depicted as evil, uneducated, dirty, oversexed, death lovers and other myriad stereotypes. However, the novels under study show them as peaceful, intelligent and ordinary human beings who have an optimistic view of life. This portrayal of Arabs/Muslims thus challenges the negative images which continue to predominate the post 9/11 era.

The chapters of this thesis have discussed the most prevailing stereotypical images about Arabs/Muslims in post 9/11 American fiction. The representation of Arabs/Muslims in the selected novels reveals an unexpected positiveness which noticeably replaces the extremely negative depictions in post 9/11 American fiction. The stereotype of the veiled/Muslim woman, for instance, is widely and negatively used in post 9/11 American fiction. The veil is considered the symbol of oppression or "terrorism", and the woman who wears this piece of clothing is depicted as either oppressed and deprived of her rights or as a "terrorist." The portrayal of the veil and Muslim/veiled woman in *The Woman Upstairs* and *A Gate at the Stairs* stands in opposition to such stereotypical images. The veil is depicted as a positive piece of clothing which does not reveal oppression or "terrorism" and the veiled characters in these novels who, whether they are Muslim or not, are shown to wear the veil, dismantle the stereotype of the veil as an Islamic symbol imposed on women. More

importantly, these women are neither oppressed nor prejudiced against by any male character throughout the narratives.

Adams, on the other hand, dwarfs the veil issue in her *Harbor*. She displays the values and qualities that characterize the Muslim woman regardless of her being veiled or unveiled. In addition, by displaying good Muslim male/female relationships in her novel, Adams opposes the stereotype of the patriarchal Islamic society which causes the plight of the Muslim woman as firmly instilled in Western imagination. Interestingly, Messud devotes a considerable number of pages to highlighting the image of the oppressed Western woman instead of the oppressed veiled/Muslim woman. In the same vein, Moore and Adams reveal a different image of the Western woman who, though not oppressed by patriarchy, does live unhappily within her family, a fact which makes her no better than the stereotyped Muslim/Arab woman in post 9/11 American fiction. Messud's, Adams's, and Moore's veiled/Muslim characters stand in opposition to the Western constructed and Orientalist worldview which vilifies the realities of the Orient.

The novels also challenge the demonization of Arabs/Muslims and their religion in the aftermath of 9/11. Messud's *The Woman Upstairs*, Moore's *A Gate* and Adams's *Harbor* offer images of Muslims/Arabs which are noticeably different from the stereotypes prevailing in post 9/11 American fiction. The writers' Muslims/Arab male characters are portrayed as non-misogynist, sexually balanced, intellectual, optimistic, generous and emphatically peaceful. Peaceful Arab/Muslim characters in the selected novels do not leave any room for the "terrorist Other" who is considered as a threat to the Americans. Indeed, these Muslims/Arabs have never ever thought to harm the American characters: they live peacefully, side by side with the American characters. Interestingly, the writers portray violent Western characters who harm Arabs/Muslims in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. This highly destabilizes the stereotype that associates violence with the Islamic East.

While post 9/11 American fiction emphatically mirrors the strongly established stereotypes – mainly that of the oppressed Muslim/veiled woman and the "terrorist" Muslim/Arab Other who oppresses women, and those which convey the idea of Western superiority and Oriental inferiority– the novels under study dismantle these clichés, thus, causing instability in the Western superiority versus Eastern inferiority logic. Furthermore, the conflict between the American Self and the so-called "terrorist" Other in the aftermath of the 9/11 events is replaced by a very positive relationship in Messud's *The Woman Upstairs*,

Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs* and Adams's *Harbor*. While American characters in post 9/11 American fiction suffer from the enduring traumatic effects of the 9/11 events with the presence of Muslims/Arabs in their lives constantly bringing images of violence and "terrorism" anew and disturbing their psyche, the presence of the Muslim/Arab Other with the American characters in the novels under study causes no disturbance at all. Rather, it helps build the American Self's unbalanced identity; the Muslim/Arab Other is depicted as a source of energy and power for the American characters. The Americans thus experience a positive relationship with the so-called "terrorist" Other.

Messud's, Moore's and Adams's fictional narratives can be considered to be efforts to re-represent Islam and Muslims/Arabs in the modern time and therefore change the West's view. They seem to indirectly reveal post 9/11 American writers' failure as humans, a failure which is conveyed through the rejection of the Muslim/Arab Other apparent in the harsh stereotypical images they reproduce and thus reinforce in their writings. The writers' fictional narratives seem to be a direct response to post 9/11 Islamophobia and Orientalist myths; the novels are a response to the biased representation of Arabs/Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11. The writers' rejection of the inferiority of the Muslim/Arab Other as has been argued in this thesis and their recognition of this Other's full humanity suggest the creation of a wider universal community where equality and non-biased relations are possible to evolve. This wider community is aimed by the writers to be inclusive of the Muslim/Arab Other. Throughout the novels, the American characters and the Arab/Muslim Other draw a nice picture of peaceful co-existence. The relations they forge are those of love and mutual acceptance. The writers seem to inject the idea that the Westerners and the Muslim/Arab Other (and by extension their culture) can flourish side by side peacefully.

Putting an end to post 9/11 stereotypical images of Arabs/Muslims is certainly hard to fulfill because they are established deeply and firmly in the Western imagination. Yet, reducing the strength of these images and their effect on the Westerners seems to be a possibility suggested by the writers under study and whose novels are intended to foster positive changes. The stories of Arabs/Muslims portrayed in the three novels discussed in this thesis have the potential to build a form of reality which calls for a fundamental need to challenge the offered stereotypes about Arabs/Muslims in the post 9/11 era. Whether the West's misconceptions about the Muslim World spring from a lack of understanding of or an unwillingness to understand the Muslim/Arab Other, the writers' step to offer a nice picture of Arabs/Muslims is intended to establish a new bridge between the East and the West. The

positive portrayal of Arabs and Muslims promotes cross cultural dialogue because it avoids the unilateral view of the East, a view which is instilled in the Western mindset. The novels are thus post 9/11 narratives that can be considered a response to the harsh resurgence of Orientalist stereotypes after 9/11. Challenging post 9/11 stereotypes, these literary works encourage cross cultural dialogue between the East and the West.

Messud's *The Woman Upstairs*, Adams's *Harbor*, and Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs* offer the possibility to engage with the Arab/Muslim Other in a positive sense, an idea which was impossible in the post 9/11 era. This goes in opposition to the Western mode of thinking that departs from the misconception that all Muslims/Arabs are but the violent threatening Other. Instead of providing a negative image of the so-called "terrorist" Other, the reader ends the novels with a positive image in mind, an image which may well correct or lighten the effect of the distorted images spread in the aftermath of 9/11. That is to say a biased Western reader may come out with different conclusions from the ones he has in mind. This may lead him/her to search and extent his knowledge about Arabs/Muslims instead of unquestionably accepting the stereotypes available in media and within post 9/11 fictional narratives.

Notes

1. See Edwards and Gaonkar 284; Shubhi et al.2
2. This is revealed through the discussion between Muhammad and Umar about the veil mentioned previously (Jones 163). In *The Jewel*, the veil acts as a mask, preventing Muslim women from engaging in sexual activities. Throughout the novel, the connection between Islamic dress and sexual freedom is explained through some of “the oppressive Quran revelations” which force the prophet’s wives to wear a headscarf in addition to a proper unshowy dress and to hide themselves from all men other than the relatives. It is forbidden for Aicha, for instance, to interact with boys of her age or to look at elder men.
3. It is a state on the southwestern Malabar Coast of India in which Islam is the second largest practised religion (26.56%) next to Hinduism (Engineer 2).
4. A Hassan Sheheryar Yassin is a wedding dress named after its Pakistani fashion designer Hassan Sheheryar Yassin known as H S Y (Sibtain).
5. The Hayden Planetarium is the American Museum of National History which developed The Digital Universe, the most complete and accurate 3-D atlas of the Universe (Werner 119) .
6. “In an older age, Taylor states, we most feared God's wrath and condemnation; but today, when God is dead for many of us (though Taylor rightly points that, despite the disdain of intellectual elites, God is alive and well for many) (19), the "existential predicament" of "meaninglessness . . . perhaps defines our age" (19).

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Résumé

L'objectif de cette thèse est de faire la lumière sur les représentations positives des Arabes/musulmans dans trois romans féminins américains post 11 septembre : *The Woman Upstairs* (2013) de Claire Messud, *Harbor* (2004) de Lorraine Adams et *A Gate at the Stairs* (2009) de Lorrie Moore. Les attentats du 11 septembre aux États-Unis ont complètement changé le monde en établissant un lien fort entre l'islam et le «terrorisme»: les enseignements de l'Islam encouragent les effusions de sang et la violence et les musulmans/arabes sont systématiquement appelés «terroristes» par les Occidentaux. L'après 11 septembre a également été fortement marqué par le discours orientaliste qui renforce la supériorité de l'Occident et l'infériorité de l'Orient comme le soutient Edward Saïd dans son *Orientalisme*. Cette période a été témoin de représentations dures d'Arabes/musulmans ou de toute personne qui leur ressemble. Plus important encore, les images stéréotypées sur les Arabes/musulmans sont allées au-delà du discours ou de l'écriture abusivement dégradants pour atteindre une violence et une discrimination palpables et extrêmes aux États-Unis.

La fiction américaine postérieure au 11 septembre reproduit et renforce les images stéréotypées sur les Arabes/musulmans. Des romans tels que *The Jewel Of Medina* (2008) de Sherry Jones, *The Dawn of Saudi* (2009) de Homa Pourasgari, *Terrorist* de John Updike (2006) et *Falling Man* de Don DeLillo (2007) offrent une représentation orientaliste des Arabes/musulmans et prennent part à la diffamation de ces personnes et de leur religion : l'Islam est dépeint comme une source de violence et d'oppression pour les femmes et les Musulmans/Arabes sont appelés « terroristes » dont la présence parmi le peuple américain n'est pas seulement une menace à la sécurité nationale, mais aussi une source de traumatisme personnel et de troubles psychiques.

Dans un tel contexte, offrir une représentation étonnamment positive des Arabes/musulmans au lendemain des événements du 11 septembre semble être un défi. Messud, Adams et Moore remettent en question la diabolisation de l'Autre soi-disant «terroriste» et substituent à ce stéréotype des portraits de personnages arabo-musulmans pacifiques qui vivent avec le peuple américain sans lui causer de préjudice, ni physique ni psychologique. Leurs personnages masculins arabes/musulmans traitent les femmes de manière appropriée et affectueuse sans aucune sorte de misogynie. De même, les femmes voilées/musulmanes dans les romans sélectionnés semblent être représentées de manière positive. Ce sont des femmes ordinaires ni opprimées ni soumises. De manière inattendue, le

patriarcat associé à l'Orient dans le discours orientaliste et dans les romans américains parus après le 11 septembre, semble être lié à l'Occident dans les romans étudiés ici. Messud, Adams et Moore étendent le fil de leur description positive des hommes et des femmes arabes/musulmans à leur relation avec les personnages américains. Cette relation est censée être remplie de troubles psychologiques, comme le décrit la fiction américaine postérieure au 11 septembre; pourtant, les écrivaines injectent de nouvelles images positives d'une coexistence pacifique en mettant l'accent sur l'influence positive de l'Autre musulman/arabe sur l'Américain.

Mots clés : Romans Américains post 11 Septembre, représentations positives, Arabes, Musulmans, Edward Said.

المخلص

الغرض من هذه الرسالة هو إلقاء الضوء على التمثيلات الإيجابية للعرب / المسلمين في ثلاث روايات أمريكية بعد 11 سبتمبر: المرأة في الطابق العلوي لكثير ميسود، ميناء للورين آدمز، وبوابة على السلام للوري مور. أحداث 11 سبتمبر في الولايات المتحدة غيرت العالم تمامًا من خلال إقامة صلة قوية بين الإسلام و "الإرهاب" اذ يقال بشكل قاطع أن تعاليم الإسلام تشجع على إراقة الدماء والعنف ، ويطلق الغربيون على المسلمين / العرب اسم "الإرهابيين".

تميزت فترة ما بعد 11 سبتمبر بالخطاب الاستشراقي الذي يعزز بشكل كبير تفوق الغرب ودونية الشرق كما يشرح إدوارد سعيد في كتابه الاستشراق. شهدت هذه الفترة صورًا قاسية للعرب / المسلمين أو أي شخص يشبههم. والأهم من ذلك، أن الصور النمطية للعرب / المسلمين قد تجاوزت الخطاب أو الكتابة المسيئة ووصلت إلى عنف ملموس وتمييز شديد في الولايات المتحدة.

يعيد الأدب الأمريكي بعد 11 سبتمبر إنتاج وتعزيز الصور النمطية عن العرب / المسلمين. تقدم روايات ما بعد الحادي عشر من سبتمبر، مثل رواية جوهرة المدينة لشيري جونز ، ورواية فجر السعودية لهوما بوراسغاري، وإرهابي لجون أباديك ، والرجل الساقط لدون دبليو، تصويرًا استشراقيًا للعرب / المسلمين وتشارك في تشويه سمعة هؤلاء الناس ودينهم : يصور الإسلام على أنه مصدر لعنف واضطهاد النساء والمسلمين / العرب يُزعم أنهم "الإرهابيون" المهددون الآخرون الذين لا يمثل وجودهم بين الشعب الأمريكي تهديدًا للأمن القومي فحسب، بل إنه مصدر صدمة شخصية ونفسية واضطراب للامريكيين.

في مثل هذا السياق، يبدو أن تقديم صورة إيجابية للعرب / المسلمين في أعقاب أحداث الحادي عشر من سبتمبر يمثل تحديًا. مسعود وادمز ومور يزعمون استقرار الصورة الشيطانية لما يسمى بالآخر "الإرهابي" ليحل محل هذه الصور النمطية شخصيات عربية / مسلمة مسالمة تعيش مع الشعب الأمريكي دون التسبب في أي أذى لهم، لا جسديًا ولا نفسيًا. شخصياتهم من الرجال العرب / المسلمين تعامل النساء بشكل لائق ومحبة دون أي نوع من الكراهية. وبالمثل، يبدو أن النساء المحجبات / المسلمات في الروايات المختارة يتم تصويرهن بشكل إيجابي. هن شخصيات عادية ليست مضطهدة ولا خاضعة يعشن بحرية دون أي إخضاع من قبل الذكور المسلمين / العرب "الأبويين". بشكل غير متوقع، يبدو أن النظام الأبوي المرتبط بالشرق ضمن الخطاب الاستشراقي والذي تم تعزيزه في الروايات الأمريكية بعد 11 سبتمبر، مرتبط بالغرب في روايات ما بعد 11 سبتمبر قيد الدراسة حيث وسع مسعود وادمز ومور خيط تصويرهن الإيجابي لكل من الذكور والإناث العرب / المسلمين إلى علاقتهم بالشخصيات الأمريكية في الروايات. من المفترض أن تكون هذه العلاقة محفوفة بالاضطرابات النفسية كما صورت في الروايات الأمريكية بعد 11 سبتمبر. ومع ذلك، فإن الكتب قيد الدراسة عرض أفكارًا إيجابية جديدة للتعايش السلمي بين الشخصيات العربية / الإسلامية والشخصيات الأمريكية مع التركيز على التأثير الإيجابي للآخر المسلم / العربي على الذات الأمريكية.

الكلمات المفتاحية الصور النمطية ،العرب ،المسلمين، التمثيلات الايجابية ، ادوارد سعيد، الادب الامريكي ما بعد 11 سبتمبر.