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Tinges of Colonial Narrativity in Updike's Terrorist

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ABSTRACT

In most of the 9/11 American novels, Islam is presented as a warmongering religion and its adherents, as violent people. This study aims to examine Updike's attitude toward Islam and the Muslims through a postcolonial lens in *Terrorist*. The novel uses 9/11 as an impetus to map the course of events and emphasizes Islam, Muslims, and the Islamic doctrines. A postcolonial concept derived from David Spurr's rhetorical feature of 'debasement' serves as the conceptual framework. Through the study of the characters in the novel, debasement concentrates on the novel's colonial nuances. Referring to incorrect interpretations of Islam has led to a false picture of the Islamic doctrines resulting in Islam and Muslims' demonization. The conclusion reveals how Updike's hegemonic ideology about Islam has shaped a kind of discursive construction in his novel exposing *Terrorist* as Islamophobic that bears the tinges of colonial writings. This primarily results in the denigration of Islam and Muslims.

Keywords: John Updike; Narrativity; Postcolonial literature; Islamophobia; David Spurr; Debasement

Introduction

September 2001 has significantly prevailed over fiction, music, theater, art, poetry, and movies. The Western and non-Western, Muslim and non-Muslim writers and artists have projected their point of view of the occasion. While some have criticized Islam for being the cause of the entire tragedy, others have stood up to support Islam and accuse the extremists. Yet, the majority of Westerners have accepted the 9/11 incident as the work of a few Muslims. They refer to the attacks as rooted in the idea of Muslims' jihad which is one of the Islamic doctrines highlighting the old theory that introduces Islam as a religion of sword and violence. The authors of these literary works which have been written since September 2011, reveal their thoughts, inquiries, and criticisms in association with Muslims, Islam, and Islamic doctrines. For instance, John Updike asserts that he was able to write from a terrorist's perspective and that he could feel a Muslim believer's animosity toward the American system. His *Terrorist* is an example of such a perspective (1). Not only have the writers explored the post-9/11 themes in their literary creations, but the critics in postcolonialism have also sought theories to elaborate the works. David Spurr's rhetorical strategy of 'debasement' which he developed in his book *The Rhetoric of Empire* can be interpreted as relevant to



Updike's perspective on Islamic doctrines and Muslims. Updike's depictions of Islam, Muslims, and Islamic doctrines in *Terrorist* will be made clear by applying this lens.

Literature Review

Updike's *Terrorist* has been the focus of various scholarly works. Race, fiction techniques, religion, American culture, trauma, terrorism, identity, politics, and gender are among some of the major themes. Islam, theology, jihad, the Quran, neo-Orientalism, faith, and othering are, furthermore, among the related subtopics. Two distinct groups of scholars have commented on *Terrorist*, particularly on the Quranic verses and Islamic topics. The first group consists of the scholars who are either unfamiliar with Islamic studies and the Quran or understand it from an Orientalist perspective. The second group of commentators are the Muslims who are sufficiently conversant with Islam and the Quran, such as Safeer Awan, who has strongly criticized Updike for his inaccurate depiction of Islam and Muslims.

Islam is an undeniably major theme in Updike's *Terrorist*. In his interview with Charles McGrath, Updike discusses the background of *Terrorist* and the way his real-life experiences shape the book. He claims that the novel's main character was intended to be a young Christian but he ultimately decides to convert the protagonist to Islam. According to McGrath, he states that "I think I felt I could understand the animosity and hatred that an Islamic believer would have for our system" (1). What Updike means is that many contemporary Arabs have the same mindset as Ahmad and they believe that their religion is being threatened by others.

According to Price, Updike's fiction is "populated with characters who are religious through and through" (2). This refers to the fact that religion and theology are two distinct themes in his works. Price's review of *John Updike and Religion* depicts Updike as "bold" in writing about "the struggle of truth from a decidedly Christian perspective" (2). However, in contrast to Catholic authors, his works address issues of faith with a distinct Protestant tone. Price concludes that despite not classifying Updike as a theologian, James Yerkes' *John Updike and Religion* praises "the theological inspiration and challenges of Updike's work" (2).

Similarly, Banerjee (2008) refers to the religious discrimination in *Terrorist* and states that Updike's making of religious issues is more important than that of racial concerns when considering one's status as an American. Likewise, John Leonard (2006) in discussing Updike's *Terrorist* distinguishes radical Islam from genuine Islam. He claims that the protagonist, Ahmad, is a "radical loser" who commits suicide "on behalf of radical Islam." He also says that Ahmad wants to be "purer than the Koran" to talk about his radicalism (3). He believes that Updike has read the Quran "so attentively" as "among his godless peers."

In his article titled "Global Terror and the Rise of Xenophobia/Islamophobia," Muhammad Safeer Awan examines the stereotypical depictions of Muslims and Islam in several literary works, including *Terrorist*. He traces the origin of such a "stereotypical representation" back to Islamophobia after 9/11, which has led some novelists to lose their sense of "justice and balance" (4). He looks into why Updike might have used too many references to the Quran and Islamic sources and shows that the novel contains 33 verses from the Holy Quran as well as numerous references to other Islamic theological sources. He also admits that "the politics of cultural production in times of security panic that often leads to moral crises" is in line with Updike's excessive references to the Quran and Islamic sources. In this way he intended to misrepresent Islam and Muslims.

While some, according to Awan, "manipulated and multiplied" the public terror that resulted from 9/11, the US media and some novels, such as Updike's *Terrorist*, deliberately employ certain techniques to present "a violent

image of Islam" (4) and to link terrorism to the Islamic faith. Awan asserts that "an effective controlling structure of the corporate media to suppress and snub the dissenting voices" is to blame for the lack of "serious creative reflections about the events of 9/11" (4). The writer adds that Updike has failed to properly contextualize the Quranic verses which are mentioned in *Terrorist* while John Leonard claims that Updike has read the Quran carefully. Instead, he has portrayed Islam and the Quran as tools for terror and violence propagation. Awan argues that "the underlying reality of the *Terrorist*" is to point at all Muslims worldwide as "a threat to the world" (4).

According to Hartnell, Updike's Islam is, more or less, "a hollow stereotype," and even though he emphasizes religion in *Terrorist*, there is unquestionably and subtly a predominant political subtext. She furthermore explains that "a violent Islam" is Updike's central theme (5). Hartnell discusses Updike's views that Islam and the Quran negatively to the extent that he believes "the seeds of violence" are essentially present in "all religious traditions" (5). She also holds the belief that violence is far more prevalent in Islam than in Christianity and Judaism and introduces the evidence by Quranic verses that utter hostility toward nonbelievers (5). She goes on to argue that Ahmad has been affected by a misleading opinion of political Islam that led him to aggression and violence but in the end, his conscious played the role of a savior. Some other critics, like John Leonard, praise Updike for his mastery of Islamic subjects and Quranic verses, but the majority, like Tarloff, believe that Updike's excessive use of Quranic verses can be regarded as pretentious and that he has inadequately contextualized the verses (4).

Regarding *Terrorist*, Updike's critics discuss religion and fiction techniques, which reveal Updike's mentality regarding Islam and his skill in applying the techniques to show Islam as a religion of violence and its adherents as warmongers.

Postcolonial Issues and Spurr's Debasing

Abrams' definition of postcolonial studies is "The critical analysis of the history, culture, literature, and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers" (6). According to Praveen's definition of postcolonialism, the term is "largely used to refer to all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the time of colonization to our own time" (7). He further explains it as the ongoing matters which constantly takes place between East and West since the colonial time. Regarding the scope of postcolonial studies, scholars' perspectives diverge ranging from the Third World countries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean islands, and South America to other countries like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (6).

The Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said whose Orientalism is well-known, is a major contributor to postcolonial studies. Hamadi refers to Said as the one who "laid the cornerstone of this theory, despite the undeniable role of other leading figures," (8). According to San Juan, Said is "the originator and inspiring patron-saint of postcolonial theory and discourse" ((9). Said analyzes "cultural imperialism" through a kind of discourse critique in his Orientalism. Abrams presents the gist of Edward Said's concept of "cultural imperialism" as a compelling method "for dispersing in enslaved states a Eurocentric talk that expected the ordinariness and transcendence of everything occidental, correspondingly with its portrayals of the oriental as a colorful and substandard other" (6).

According to Said's Orientalism, Western Europe intentionally created the concepts of the 'Occident' and the 'Orient' as two poles which separates the world. As a result, the cultural representations that are created as a result of the binary relationship between us and them are very intertwined. Said asserts that Europeans successfully prevented their colonies from presenting themselves and their cultures as anything deserving of representation.

The accomplished this when they established the cultural concepts of 'the East' and 'the West'. According to the viewpoint of Orientalism, the non-Western world is downgraded and dwindles into an element known as 'the East'. While the West stands for rationality, progression, and civilization, the East means uncivilized people, backwardness, inferiority, and barbarians. Hamadi, moreover, alludes to the foundation of Said's hypothesis and its subsequent binary relation that Said considered the misleading picture of the Orient created by Western scholars as the crude 'other' conversely, with the enlightened West' (8).

Said's discussion of the binary relationship between power and knowledge is consistent with the Foucauldian idea that "Knowledge is not innocent and it is always operated by power" (7). According to Said, the Europeans were able to control, rename, and establish an imperial colony in the Orient by combining knowledge and power. He states in his *Orientalism*,

For several evident reasons, the Orient was always in the position both of outsider and of incorporated weak partner for the West. To the extent that Western scholars were aware of contemporary Oriental or Oriental movements of thought and culture, these were perceived either as silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by him, or as a kind of cultural and intellectual proletariat useful for the Orientalist's grander interpretative activity, necessary for his performance as a superior judge, learned man, powerful cultural will. I mean to say that in discussions of the Orient, the Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence; yet we must not forget that the Orientalist's presence is enabled by the Orient's effective absence (10)

As a result, the West tries to take over the East in terms of political power and knowledge.

Most importantly, in the field of postcolonial studies, the master narrative of Western colonialism is dismissed. Obviously, in such a narrative, the colonial other has no role whatsoever to express himself culturally which implies that the colonial other is more than subjected and underestimated. The master narrative in postcolonial studies is not just dismissed but additionally supplanted by a counter-narrative in which the colonial cultures will be driven back. The term hybridization in the book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* demonstrated that imperialists have essentially impacted colonial languages and cultures. Similarly, in postcolonial studies, the "master narratives" which are regarded as the hegemonic texts in which a Eurocentric rendition of colonial history is introduced are retaliated by postcolonial countertexts (6).

Furthermore, making the postcolonial and colonial subjects and the construction of categories that aid the subject in understanding himself and the world in which he lives is a persistent concern in the field of postcolonial studies. The European discourse, for example, has laid out a standard approach for the purpose of marking the colonial subject. The subaltern refers to this conventional approach. To combat the subordinate identity which is created by the colonizers, postcolonial studies intend to reassign such labeling in European discourse (6). Thirdly, it is Eurocentrism which is also present in literature and arts as a result of cultural imperialism. Consequently, efforts are being made in postcolonial studies to "expand the literary canon to include colonial and postcolonial writers" and eradicate Eurocentrism from art and literature (6). This movement has been successful, and many postcolonial authors, including V. S. Naipaul, Derek Walcott, and G. V. Desani, write in English.

It would appear that David Spurr was inspired by Edward Said. What he does in *The Rhetoric of Empire* is deriving twelve strategies that Western writers apply to their writings. The intention would be to assume 'the normality and preeminence of everything "occidental", correlatively with its representations of the "oriental" as an exotic and inferior other' as Said demonstrates in his *Orientalism* (6). Since Islam is viewed from the Western

perspective as belonging to the Orient, "its particular fate within the general structure of Orientalism has been to be looked at with a very special hostility and fear" (11). This is the connection between the two discussions of postcolonialism and Islam that are elaborated in this article. Said thinks that the fact that Islam is regarded as a "competitor" and a "challenge" to Christianity is one factor in the West's hostile outlook toward Islam (11). In addition, according to Said, those scholars who claim to be Orientalists would discuss the subject within the context of "passion, prejudice, and political interests" (11). Also, Orientalist scholars "use the authority of their standing as experts to deny, no, to cover, their deep-seated feelings about Islam with a carpet of jargon" whose purpose is to certify their "objectivity" and "scientific impartiality" (11). Spurr extracts twelve rhetorical features that define the Occident from the lens of the Orient, which are linked to Said's ideology.

It is important that Spurr selected colonial texts from the colonial era up to the present as well as the texts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, his primary area of interest is nonfiction, particularly journalism. He also made numerous references to works by T. E. Lawrence and Charles Darwin as well as the contemporary journalistic texts. He examined the colonial texts by determining the rhetorical characteristics of that discourse and their operation. Spurr tries to answer a major question in his research in the sense that in the non-Western world, a Western writer encounters bizarre and incomprehensible realities. How he interprets these oddities and how he portrays them are the concerning questions and Spurr seeks to answer them by tracing the discourse's tropes and compiling a genealogy of the various types of these tropes. In twelve chapters, Spurr discusses the following rhetorical modes: surveillance, appropriation, aestheticization, classification, debasement, negation, affirmation, idealization, insubstantialization, naturalization, eroticization, and resistance. The term "debasement" is the focus of the current research.

Spurr looks into a method of rhetoric that he believes Westerners use to look down on non-Westerners in chapter five of his book *The Rhetoric of Empire*. The rhetorical technique he refers to as debasement: filth and defilement is a device by means of which a Western writer downgrades and devalues non-Westerners in writing about the Third World, the colonized, the savage or primitive. Spurr makes thirteen significant points in his explanation of the rhetorical mode of debasement among which seven are selected.

Point number 3: Emphasizing fear, loathing, abjection, and misery

In the rhetorical technique of debasement, negative issues and features like fear, loathing, abjection, misery, disease, famine, superstition, and barbarous custom prevail. "Colonial discourse requires the constant reproduction of these images in various forms, a recurring nomination of the abject" (12). Spurr infers that "both as a justification for European intervention and as the necessary iteration of a fundamental difference between colonizer and colonized" (12). Therefore, he mentions two reasons why there is constant reference to the misery and abjection of the colonized in colonial discourse.

Point number 7: Low morality of savages

Spurr borrows from Darwin's discussion on the "low morality of savages" to make his seventh point about "debasement" (12). According to Darwin, the virtues of primitive peoples are limited to "social instinct" and their idea of good and evil does not extend beyond whatever which affects the welfare of the tribe. They have no sense of identification with the "self-regarding virtues" such as temperance, chastity, and physical decency (12). He further refers to Darwin's idea about the low morality of savages and acknowledges that "the savage has little power of self-command, for this power has not been strengthened" (12). Accordingly, the colonized are depicted as people deficient in modern civility.

Point number 8: Intelligence and religion at the service of violence

Similar to Darwin's idea about the low morality of the savages, Spurr refers to an excerpt by Winston Churchill in which he describes the degradation, atrocity, and cruelty of the native Mohmand tribes of the Indian Northwest Frontier. Those people used to exhume and mutilate the bodies of Imperial native soldiers in the battlefield. "Their intelligence only enables them to be crueller, more dangerous, more destructive than the wild beasts. Their religion, although fanatic, is only respected when it incites bloodshed and murder"(12). In this quotation, the primitives' intelligence and religion are utilized for showing more atrocity, wickedness, belligerence, barbarity.

Point number 9: Avoiding degeneration by obsessive reprehension

Spurr mentions another reason for the Colonizers' excessive repudiation and obsessive reprehension of the Other. "The supposed danger of the European's degeneration in the presence of the primitive", he contends, "becomes both the source and the pretext for an obsessive reprehension of the Other" (12). Europeans who have entered the land of the Other try to keep away from the Other's degradation. For this reason, they choose "obsessive reprehension" as a way of keeping away from the Other's debasement.

Point number 10: Elevation of the individual subject's crisis

Spurr's tenth point in clarifying the rhetoric of debasement is about a feature of colonial discourse that concerns the crisis of the individual subjects. He believes that in colonial discourse "the crisis of the individual subject is elevated to the level of ideology" (12). That is to say, elevating the problems and the issues of the individuals is a strategy to debase the Other. In other words, the writer's emphasis is on the conflicts of an individual. He is generalizing a micro problem that is idiosyncratic of an individual and is not extended to the whole community. And thus, he is debasing the entire community.

Point number 11: Warning against the dangers and threats of the savage

The eleventh point refers to the idea of warnings against the "seductive dangers of the savages" (12). Spurr takes such warnings as a rhetorical trope and refers to an excerpt from Ronaldshay, secretary of state for India and Burma, who sees the attractions of primitive life as a threat to civilization. Regarding such attractions as a threat, some colonial writers warned the Europeans that in case they did not keep their distance from the colonized, they might be afflicted with the same filth and defilement that exists in the primitive.

Point number 13: Preservation of limit for the fear of contamination and abjection

The thirteenth point that Spurr makes in shedding light on the rhetorical strategy of debasement is what he considers to be a recurring theme in colonial discourse. He states that in colonial discourse, the writer tries to preserve his limit, boundary, and difference which occurs in two notions of "abjection" and "the fear of contamination" (12). Furthermore, the fear of contamination can be in various biological, psychological, and social realms.

These seven points that Spurr clarifies in elucidating the rhetorical strategy of 'debasement: filth and defilement' exemplify the various strategies employed by Western authors to denigrate the Other. A Western writer attempts to denigrate and mock and demonstrate the imperial dominance over the Other by means of emphasizing negative features like fear, loathing, abjection, misery, disease, famine, superstition, and barbarous customs, reprehending obsessively, elevating the problems and the issues of the individuals, warning against the dangers and threats of the savage, and preserving limits for the fear of contamination and abjection.

Literary Analysis From Spurr's Lens Of Debasement

Seven of Spurr's thirteen points on the rhetorical strategy of 'debasement' could be applied to Updike's *Terrorist* characters. The novel's characters can be categorized as Muslim characters and non-Muslim characters. The analysis examines more than just the individual characters, such as Shaikh Rasheed and Ahmad. It also includes a variety of general characters, including Muslims, non-Muslims, American teenagers, Arabs, Muslim extremists, Muslim African Mullahs, and Muslim scholars. The twofold characters illustrate various aspects of Spurr's discussion of the rhetorical tactic of debasement.

Point number 3: Emphasizing fear, loathing, abjection, and misery

Spurr differentiates debasement from classification and allocates one specific chapter to each. Despite the overlap of the two tropes, he argues that in "debasement", ideas like fear, loathing, abjection, misery, superstition, barbarous customs, and so on are depicted more extensively than in "classification" (12). His discussion on this differentiation and clarification of the features of debasement can be illustrated in the following eight instances in the novel. These examples are primarily chosen and arranged based on Spurr's discussion about different aspects of the rhetorical mode of debasement which were mentioned above. Yet, they can be categorized into several other groups based on various factors. For instance, in examples number one, two, seven, and eight, a strategy is used that is called reverse debasement and that is when the writer sounds promoting the Other while in a deeper layer, he is debasing and ridiculing him. Examples number three and five talk about superstition. The idea of loathing is present in most of them especially numbers one, two, six, and eight. The idea of misery also exists in most of these instances.

An instance in *Terrorist* showing Ahmad's hatred and loathing towards the West is the part where he considers the Christians as his enemy and expresses the reason for attending the church ceremony as a way of knowing his enemy. He also states that he considers all unbelievers as his enemies. Updike reveals Ahmad's extremist thoughts which has even affected his behavior towards his Christian classmate who has kindly invited him to the Church in which she sings. However, he does not treat her well and tells her frankly and aggressively that she and the rest of the Christians are his enemies. In other words, Updike unearths the root of such a bad morality which is his extremist ideology as he regards all the unbelievers as his enemies. Updike even shows more extremism in Ahmad's ideology towards unbelievers when he further attributes a saying to the Prophet: "The Prophet said that eventually all unbelievers must be destroyed" (13). He depicts Ahmad's mentality and refers to the root of his immorality. Updike debases several things: firstly, by showing the high degree of Ahmad's loathing and hatred towards unbelievers, the Western reader would naturally see his debased status. Secondly, Ahmad's rude behavior towards his Christian classmate who has kindly invited him to the Church would add to his debasement in the novel. The other thing that is debased here is the source of Ahmad's immorality which is a saying attributed to the Prophet that regards killing unbelievers as compulsory. In other words, regardless of the authenticity of such an attribution, the Prophet and, consequently, Islam are also debased. Even though, at the surface, Updike is showing Ahmad's loathing towards non-Muslims, such a description would certainly lead the reader to hate Ahmad as an extremist and his ideology of Islam. Yet, on a deeper layer, what Updike is doing is to plant the seeds of hatred in the hearts of his readers about Muslims and Islam. It is because, on the one hand, the general Western reader is faced with Quranic verses and traditions which support extremism and, on the other hand, such a reader can rarely consider the right interpretation of such verses and traditions. Therefore, such a depiction would most probably make the reader feel hatred or at

least, feel uneasy towards Muslims and Islam and it would ultimately bring about Islamophobia in the Western audience. This is a strategy which is called reverse debasement referring to the primary usage of debasement which is to debase the Other, be it a savage, a primitive, or a Muslim. Yet, even though primarily it is the Westerners who are being loathed and reprimanded for not being on the 'Straight Path', in effect, it is Islam and Muslims who are being loathed for their violence and uncivilized actions. Another example that shows Ahmad's loathing towards non-Muslims in which the same strategy of reverse debasement is used, is when he thinks about his mother and ponders over a verse in which "houris" are described: "And theirs shall be the dark-eyed houris, chaste as hidden pearls: a guerdon for their deeds" (13). Rolling over this verse on the one hand and considering his mother who wears so immodestly and provocatively would render a conclusion in Ahmad's mind. According to the narrator Ahmad sees "his mother as a mistake that his father made but that he never would" (13). Ahmad's hatred towards his non-Muslim, Western mother is accompanied and endorsed by a verse from the Quran that would debase Ahmad in the first place because he is made to hate her mother who is supposed to be one of the sole fountains of love in one's life. On another level, the Quran and Islam are disgraced as the sources of breeding such hatemongering people.

Spurr argues that colonial discourse requires a constant reproduction of images that portray the Other's misery and abjection like disease, superstition, famine, barbaric custom, etc. Picturing such misery would, first of all, justify the colonizer's intervention and second of all, show the difference between the two sides (12). According to Spurr's discussion above, referring to beliefs of the Other which is superstitious in the eyes of the Western people is a way of showing the Other's misery and a way of disdaining them. One scene in which such a supposedly superstition can be mentioned would be where Teresa talks about a recently changed idea of Ahmad's which has made him take all the photographs he has of his father in his room and put them face-down in his drawers. "He announced it was blasphemy to duplicate the image of a person God had made, a kind of counterfeiting" (13). This belief which sounds odd for Teresa and Jack can also be a superstition for the Western audience. In other words, Updike pictures some of Ahmad's extremist beliefs which would lead him to commit suicide attack along with some other ideas that bear the tinges of superstition to show the difference between the West and the extremist Muslims as Other. However, since Updike takes the origin of such a violent and superstitious ideology in the Quran, he is disdaining Quranic verses and Islamic doctrines.

Another example in the novel that complies with Spurr's argument about the images of abjection and misery like famine and disease in colonial discourse is the polio in Africa and the idea that the mullahs in northern Nigeria forbid people from getting the polio vaccine for their children. But when the kids are paralyzed, they are taken to health-air clinics. "They wait until they're paralyzed to bring them in after they've gone all the way with the local mumbo-jumbo" (13). By referring to the polio and the ideas of mullahs which would lead kids to paralysis, Updike debases and humiliates mullahs who are in a way, representatives of Islam, and consequently, Islam is being humiliated.

One form of abjection and misery in colonial discourse which Spurr argues would be the description of superstitious beliefs (12). Such a superstitious belief can be traced in *Terrorist* where Teresa tells Jack about Ahmad's belief in wearing glasses. Even though his eyes have astigmatism, he would not wear glasses because he believes that "Allah would give you glasses if He wanted you to wear them" (13). Ahmad is so firm in this belief that he changes his spring sport from baseball to track because he has trouble seeing the ball in baseball. By picturing Ahmad as having somewhat superstitious beliefs, Updike is both belittling him and Islamic doctrines which seem to be the source of such beliefs. He is also showing the difference between the West and the Other as a

Muslim which is discussed by Spurr to be a reason for the constant debasement of the Other in colonial discourse (12).

According to Spurr's argument, one reason for showing abjection like fear and loathing in colonial discourse can be to show "a fundamental difference between colonizer and colonized" (12). This argument can be applied to *Terrorist* where Ahmad's opinion about his mother is mentioned. It presents Ahmad's amount of hatred and loathing towards Teresa who is supposed to be the most emotionally supportive figure in Ahmad's life. This is how Ahmad describes Jack and Teresa when they are busy talking about Ahmad's decision to avoid going to college: "The two adult voices had intertwined flirtatiously, disgustingly, two aged infidel animals warming to each other in the other room" (13). He uses the phrase "infidel animals" to refer to his mother and in this way, expresses his hatred towards her and her act of flirting with Jack. In fact, in this supposedly debasement of Jack and Teresa as infidels, Updike is debasing two other issues. First of all, it is Ahmad who is being debased due to having such feelings towards his mother. Secondly, it is Islam and Islamic doctrines that are humiliated as the source of such a hatred-arousing ideology. What matters is Ahmad's hatred towards his mother who is supposed to be the dearest figure in his life which is pictured in this part of the novel. According to Updike, it denotes that believing in Islam would make one even hate his mother is accusing Islam as the religion of violence and hatred.

As Spurr argues, one way of presenting the abjection and misery of Others in colonial discourse is by showing fear (12). It seems that there is no fear for Muslims and even for Muslim extremists when it comes to their jihad. However, this lack of fear which can be a positive feature and can be called bravery, has taken an extremist form of stubbornness. In this manner, it is the subject of humiliation in several parts of *Terrorist* like the part where Muslim extremists are the reminder of "Baptist fundamentalists" and then they are considered even worse than Baptist fundamentalists because "they don't care if they die" (13). It can be argued that although the Other is humiliated in colonial discourse due to his fear, Updike is taking the extreme form of fearlessness in the Other as the subject of ridicule. In other words, in this example, stubbornness is a substitute for fear; but both features are the means of debasement. This is another instance of a reverse debasement in which even though the Other is praised, he is meant to be humiliated and debased. Although Muslims like Ahmad do not have any fear of fighting on the battlefield, this fearlessness is considered stubbornness rather than bravery.

Showing the Other's "loathing", in Spurr's words, can be considered a way of depicting misery and abjection in colonial discourse (12). *Terrorist* begins with the description of Ahmad's loathing towards non-Muslims in his high school. He regarded them as "devils", "unclean", "not on the Straight Path", lacking "true faith", and "infidels" (13). This can be called a debasement done by Ahmad which is taken by Updike to debase Ahmad, himself. Although Ahmad is calling non-Muslims some names which shows their degradation in his mind, Updike is in fact degrading Ahmad as Others due to having such a negative mentality towards non-Muslims.

Point number 7: Low morality of savages

Spurr talks about Darwin's discussion regarding the "low morality of savages" (12). He enumerates some of the primitive people's features on their low morality. First of all, their virtues are limited to "social instinct" which means that what they considers good or evil is closely connected to the their tribe's demand (12). Secondly, they lack virtues like temperance, chastity, and physical decency which are called "self-regarding virtues" (12). Thirdly, they have little "power of self-command" (12). This argument is portrayed in the following four examples in the novel. For Ahmad, "the idea of good and evil does not extend beyond that which affects the welfare of the tribe" (12). That is, in many cases for Ahmad, "good and evil" is what his teacher, Shaikh Rashid dictates him and that is just for the

good of their “tribe” or their “ummah”. Shaikh Rashid tells Ahmad that his suicide attack bears a message to the West which is “We strike when we please” (13). For Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad, killing civilians is considered good because it is good for the welfare of the ummah. Although for Jack, killing civilians is considered evil, the same deed is good according to Ahmad's mentality and morality system. The “low morality” of Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad as representatives of Islam and the Quran are showed in different parts of *Terrorist*. For instance, Teresa tells Jack about Ahmad's religiosity which began to start when he was eleven. She complains of Shaikh Rashid's immoral behavior by stating that she used to encourage Ahmad to go to the mosque and used to pick him up at the mosque after school but “this imam of his rarely came out to say hello” (13). This act of Shaikh Rashid is defined to be his “low morality” in the eyes of Teresa though she used to take her son there to be taught by Shaikh Rashid. In fact, they are also regarded to be low in their doctrines and their morality due to Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad's attribution to the Quran and Islam. Therefore, according to Spurr, they also lack “modern civility” (12). Another instance of Ahmad's “low morality” which surprises Jack can be when he asks her mother to wear a scarf for his graduation ceremony and Teresa tells Jack how he said it: “He said if there was one thing he wanted for his graduation it was his mother not looking like a whore” (13). Using the rude word “whore” for his mother is what can be considered Ahmad's “low morality” which would also make Jack assert his surprise by saying: “My goodness”.

When Spurr argues about Darwin's discussion on the “low morality of savages”, one of the points he refers to is the “power of self-command” in a savage. He argues that this power is not strengthened in savages “through long-continued, perhaps inherited, habit, instruction, and religion” (12). Spurr's argument can be applied to a scene in *Terrorist* where Shaikh Rashid teaches Ahmad a verse from the Quran, the translation of which is: “O you who believe! Among your spouses and your children there is indeed an enemy unto you; so be wary of them. Yet if you pardon, forbear, and forgive, then truly God is Forgiving, Merciful” (64: 14). When Shaikh Rashid asks Ahmad about the reason why one's spouse and children may need forgiveness and what is an enemy, Ahmad states exactly what Shaikh Rashid has led him towards it: “maybe because they distract you from jihad, from the struggle to become holy and closer to God” (13). Ahmad's “self-command” is taken over by Shaikh Rashid's teachings for several years. So much so that he would conclude whatever his teacher wants him to. Shaikh Rashid has been leading him towards suicide bombing and when he asks about this verse, Ahmad would connect it to the idea of jihad which matches Shaikh Rashid's expectations. In Ahmad's perspective, it is incumbent upon one to stay away from or even leave his family to be able to do his duty of partaking in jihad. This answer satisfies Shaikh Rashid so much that he would call Ahmad a beautiful student. According to Spurr, Ahmad's “low morality” can be referred to as the lack of his “power of self-command” which means that his mind and thought are shaped by Shaikh Rashid's indoctrinations.

Point number 8: Intelligence and religion at the service of violence

Spurr refers to Darwin's theory regarding the source of a higher morality which regards him to be through evolutionary advancement and then converts his discussion to the idea that “the progress of civilization depends on the suppression or outright elimination of savage life” (12). Accordingly, he quotes an excerpt from Churchill in which he refers to the corruption and degradation of mind and body of the native Mohmand tribes of the Indian Northwest Frontier. He finds out that they have mutilated and disinterred the bodies of their enemies and then states that “their intelligence only enables them to be crueller, more dangerous, more destructive than the wild beasts. Their religion is only respected” and practised “when it incites bloodshed and murder” (12). The same reasoning can be pointed out in the two following examples. In *Terrorist*, Shaikh Rashid represents a religion which is Islam and his name suggests that too. Also this representation is because he is a teacher of the Quran and a teacher of

Islamic doctrines. When such a personality works hard for many years to foster terrorism and to make a youth like Ahmad both physically and mentally ready for committing a suicide attack, and provides the funds for such terrorism from the bank account of the mosque, it conveys that mosques are places of plotting against the West and they are also the sources of terrorists' funds. In this part of the novel, first of all, Shaikh Rashid's wickedness which in Spurr's words is a "weakness" can be elevated and generalized to all Muslim leaders. Secondly, a kind of cruelty is depicted against the West. A cruelty, whose source is the mosque, in the form of Ahmad's suicide bombing which targets the lives of many innocent civilians. As stated in Spurr's quotation from Churchill, Shaikh Rashid's "intelligence" can only add to this cruelty, and his "religion" is respected if it is about bloodshed (12). Since a mosque is regarded to be the source of funds for such terrorism, Updike is not only degrading Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad, but he is also debasing Islamic doctrines and Islamic centers like mosques.

Another instance in *Terrorist* that conforms to Spurr's argument is where the cruelty of the suicide attack is referred to by stating that the truck explosion would be so powerful that Shaikh Rashid hopes no "identifiable fragments remain" (13). Shaikh Rashid further explains that the explosion would be so powerful that "the physical clues will be obliterated, sunk, as the great Shakespeare puts it, full fathom five" (13). In another part of the novel where Ahmad receives the instruction on how to detonate the truck by pushing down a button and holding it, the details of this cruelty are explained: "Push button down and hold, boom. Four thousand kilos ammonium nitrate in back. Twice what McVeigh had. That much needed to break steel tunnel sheath" (13). The cruelty of the mission is further explained when Ahmad is informed that he is supposed to commit the suicide attack during the "morning rush" (13). By showing the power of the explosion and what it brings about, Shaikh Rashid's cruelty and barbarity are revealed. He is known to be a teacher of the Quran and Islamic doctrines which renders the conclusion that the root and source of such terrorism and cruelty is the Quran and Islamic doctrines. As Spurr puts it, "Their intelligence only enables them to be more cruel" (12). Shaikh Rashid's intelligence and his team's is that they would mark the detonation target to be a very congested tunnel so that they could take more casualties. Although Islam is the religion of peace and moderation which orders Muslims to cooperate peacefully even with non-Muslims, according to Spurr's argument, "their religion, fanatic though they are, is only respected when it incites to bloodshed and murder" (12). Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad's cruelty which is supposedly supported by their religion is pictured in this part of the novel.

Point number 9: Avoiding degeneration by obsessive reprehension

Spurr argues that when the colonizer is in the vicinity of the Other, the colonizer sees himself in danger of "degeneration in the presence of the primitive" which leads to "an obsessive reprehension of the Other" (12). This part of Spurr's discussion agrees with an instance in the novel where Beth talks about the mischief that American high-school and college kids make. Beth states they "call themselves Mohammedans just to annoy their parents" (13). Here, the American families are depicted to be hugely afraid of Islam. Spurr states that "the supposed danger of the European's degeneration in the presence of the primitive" can, in this text, be converted to "American's degeneration in the presence of Islam" (12). In this part of *Terrorist*, Islam can be regarded as "Primitive" that the Americans are afraid of being degenerated in its presence. Hence, they would obsessively reprehend and avoid it. American families are so afraid of such degeneration by Islam that their kids take advantage of it to annoy their parents.

Terrorists, Muslims, Islam, and the Quran can be taken as the 'Other' or the 'primitive' of whom the West is afraid. Since Muslims are terrorists and extremists in the mind of the West, if Updike depicts the good features of Islam

and the peaceful verses of the Quran, it would contradict the initial mentality of the West about Islam, and that mentality may change. In order to preserve that negative mentality of the West towards Islam, Updike continues with the obsessive reprehension of Islam and the Quran by focusing on supposedly harsh and violent verses of the Quran and by showing the extremism of Muslim extremists.

Another perspective towards applying Spurr's argument to *Terrorist* is that on the one hand, there have been some extremist activities among the Christians which have led to great slaughters in the history of Christianity. One strategy Updike takes to stay away from possible reproaches that come with such extremism is that he tries to focus on some supposedly violent Quranic verses and the extremism of some Muslim extremists so that he can apply obsessive reprehension on Islam and Muslims. In Spurr's words, the probable degeneration of the West would be due to the low culture of the Other. However, the "obsessive reprehension" of the Other or the scapegoat is done to cover the wickedness and the extremism of the other side which is Christianity. Not only would Updike perform "obsessive reprehension" of Islam and the Quran, but he also distorts the reality of the Quran and Islam. By focusing on sword verses of the Quran, the writer questions the entirely peaceful nature of Islam. Based on this analysis, 'Other' can be Islam itself and the Western writer is reversing its reality.

Point number 10: Elevation of the individual subject's crisis

Spurr mentions a feature of colonial discourse as an elevation of the crisis of the individual subject (12). This section of his discussion applies to three parts of *Terrorist*. One of the instances is when Tylenol addresses Ahmad an Arab for the sake of humiliating him and then adds to the fuel and debases Ahmad in front of other students by defining a phrase Ahmad does not know about: "flying fuck". "A flying fuck is when you do it to yourself, like all you Arabs do. You all faggots, man." (13). It is not only Ahmad who is humiliated in this part of the novel because based on Spurr's argument, by generalizing the act of masturbation to all the Arabs, Updike is converting an individual issue to a broader level. This brings with itself debasement and humiliation of Arabs and Muslims as the Others. Spurr's idea regarding colonial discourse in which "individual crisis" is elevated can be applied to an excerpt in *Terrorist* where all the Muslim scholars are taken to preach against the US. When talking about "imams", Hermione takes it for granted that "they all preach terrible things against America" (13). In other words, although not all Muslim scholars talk badly about the US and do not support violence against it, considering an individual's case, Hermione "elevates" his crisis and generalizes it and states that "but some of them go beyond that. I mean, in advocating violence against the state" (13). This in Spurr's words means that "the crisis of the individual subject is elevated to the level of ideology" (12). That is, the extremism of Shaikh Rashid is elevated to a higher level which implies that the West should take necessary precautions to be safe from such extremism. Based on what Spurr discusses, the elevation of the crisis of the individual as a feature in colonial discourse is significant. Updike conveys this idea that the majority of the Muslims are extremists because they all refer to the Quran and take their beliefs from it and since it is full of violence, the majority of Muslims would act violently.

Point number 11: Warning against the dangers and threats of the savage

Spurr argues that in every form of writing of colonial discourse, one can find "the warning against the seductive dangers of the savage" (12). He then quotes Ronaldshay who talks about the attractions of primitive life "as a threat to civilization itself" (12). In *Terrorist*, this warning against the dangers of Islam and Muslims can be understood in the following two examples. In an excerpt in the novel, already discussed, Muslim extremists resemble "Baptist fundamentalists" and the degree of the "warning" is even increased when Beth, Jack's wife, states that they are "only worse, because they don't care if they die" (13). This example can be highlighted as a warning against Muslim

extremists and their Islamic doctrines that the writer wants the Western audience to be wary of. Furthermore, an extremist version of Islam is depicted and is debased and humiliated in different ways and based on various aspects. Updike warns the West about the dangers of both Muslims and Islam according to certain justifications. First of all, killing civilians and innocent people of the West is justified and supported by applying the Quranic verses. Secondly, Ahmad is presented as a Muslim who is under the effect of such extremism whose root appears to be the Quranic verses. This influence might lead him to lose his common sense of judgement and to decide to commit a suicide attack. He is hugely affected by extremist doctrines and his conscience would not be awakened so easily by Jack's reminders on how wrong it is to kill the civilians.

Ahmad would recite Quranic verses in response to Jack's admonitions. In a more sincere voice, Levy says that "I can't believe you're seriously intending to kill hundreds of innocent people" (13). But Ahmad is not initially moved by Jack's admonition and replies: "Who says unbelief is innocent? Unbelievers say that. God says, in the Quran, Be ruthless to unbelievers. Burn them, crush them, because they have forgotten God" and the fact that these people think whatever they are or have would be enough and the other world would not be necessary even if it exists. (13). This is one of the modes of extremism and the "threat" of such an ideology to civilization in *Terrorist*. According to such a presentation, Islamic doctrines and the Quranic verses which are mentioned in *Terrorist* can be regarded as "the seductive dangers of the savage" (12).

Point number 13: Preservation of limit for the fear of contamination and abjection

Spurr writes about a recurring theme in colonial discourse and enumerates two reasons for the colonizer to preserve his limit, boundary, and difference from the Other which are first of all, "the notion of abjection" and second of all, "the fear of contamination" either socially, psychologically or biologically (12). Although in most cases of Spurr's arguments to *Terrorist*, Updike can play the role of the West while Ahmad, Shaikh Rashid, Islam, and the Quran can play the role of the Other or the colonized, this part of Spurr's discussion can be viewed as vice versa. That is, it is Ahmad who is trying to preserve his "limit, boundary, and difference" from the West out of the "fear of contamination" (12). He takes several steps to keep himself away from the Western culture and Western society in order to avoid contamination. For example, he does not attend the extracurricular activities which are held in his high school. He does not like to attend the church ceremony and when he is forced to attend it, he is so disturbed and agitated and desires to get out as soon as he can. In another instance in the novel, when he delivers some furniture to a house of a Shite Muslim in the US, he does not want to linger there to be away from contamination. Another example of Ahmad's fear of contamination is when he is offered an infidel girl to have intimacy, he sets two conditions for the sake of staying away from such contamination. One is that this relationship must be within the wedlock and the second one is that the girl must be a Muslim. The way Ahmad tries to preserve his limit from Western society to be away from its contamination is insulting and is accompanied by debasement. When he is offered a girl who is a "filthy infidel" for that purpose, he rejects her by saying: "I do not desire uncleanness" (13). In other words, Western society is humiliated by the idea of Ahmad's act of preserving the boundaries and keeping away from the people, and by insultingly making them equal to dirt and impurity. This presentation can be regarded as Updike's warning to Western society. It means that Updike may be addressing the West that in the same way that the West overcame the Other's land and as colonizers, tried to keep away from them to avoid contamination, now it is Muslims who have penetrated the Westerns' society and are doing the same thing to them. In other words, Muslims look down on the Westerns and try not to be contaminated by keeping their distance from us.

It is important to note that *Terrorist* demonstrates various aspects of Spurr's argument regarding the Debasement trope. The Quranic verses support the degeneration and extremism of a few Muslim extremists who would contribute to developing a negative perspective on Islamic doctrines and Quranic verses. The gap and difference between Ahmad and Shaikh Rashid, on the one side, and the West, on the other, is made clearer and the West is praised and elevated when Ahmad and Shaikh Rashid are degraded.

Also, Updike shows how Ahmad and his teammates try to avoid Western society, which they think is corrupt despite the fact that they live in. This shows that the West is in danger of being colonized by Muslim extremists. Conversely, however, Quranic verses, Islamic doctrine, and Muslims are blamed obsessively for terrorism though not explicitly. Through his use of numerous Quranic verses and Islamic terms, Updike establishes his dominance over Islamic issues in *Terrorist*. At this point, Updike would use Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad as scapegoats to berate Islam and the Quran. The Quran and Islamic doctrines are linked to Ahmad's and Shaikh Rashid's low morality and cruelty. In addition, both general and specific characters of *Terrorist* exhibit all of the mentioned various aspects of Spurr's discussion of debasement.

Conclusion

It is discussed how Updike, a Western writer who writes about Islam and Muslims as Others, exploits these strategies to degrade Islam and Muslims by explaining the rhetorical mode of 'debasement' based on the presentation of characters. It is inferred that Updike can be recognized as a colonizer who is firstly colonizing Muslims and Islam by zeroing in on and presenting fanaticism and radicals which prompts debasing Islam and Muslims, and secondly, he is colonizing the viewpoints and minds of the Westerners who are not familiar enough with the genuine Islam by conveniently showing a rough and violent image of Islam and Muslims. In *Terrorist*, the source of the terrorists' assaults and Muslims' violence are demonstrated to be in Islamic principles and Quranic verses. To put it another way, Updike is not only demonizing Muslims because of some extremists' atrocities but he is also referring to the Quran as the source of their violence. Based on the discussion, Updike's *Terrorist* reinforces the conventional Western theory and perspective which views and introduces Islam as a religion of sword and violence.

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Transparency of Data

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