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Islam and Terrorism in Post 9/11th Literature

Salim E. Al-Ibia[a],*

[a]English Department, Al al-Bayt University, Mafraq, Jordan.
*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Although it has been always difficult to provide an adequate and comprehensive definition of "Terrorism", Islam has been falsely and closely associated with this concept in post 9/11th literature. Focusing on Joseph Geha's *Alone and All Together* (2002), Laila Halaby's *Once on a Promised Land* (2007), and Mohsin Hamid's *the Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), I explain how Islam and the Arabic identity—which relates to Islam in one way or another—become responsible for the misery experienced by the Arab-American minority after the terrorist attacks of 9/11th. In the aforementioned works, Islam and the Arab ethnicity are entrapped under the strong feelings of patriotism and Americanism in post 9/11 United States. Islam falsely becomes the religion of terrorists who are referred to as radical Arabs and who are not recognized as patriotic citizens of the United States.

Key words: Islam; Terrorism; Arab-American identity

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INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is one of the most challenging concepts that might not be easily defined. Nevertheless, many people use the concept out of context to refer to Muslims as potential suspects of awful crimes in recent times. Thus, I do believe that the misconception of associating terrorism with Islam might be located in a larger continuum of religious discrimination against others. The laws of our own young century have failed to end religious bias and discrimination among religious groups and different religions and as a result against the other. I use the word "other" in a religious sense rather than racial or postcolonial ones. But because our contemporary laws prohibit the obvious discrimination of any type including the religious one, some hateful people cannot express their religious hatred of the other publically. Interestingly, people have developed some tricky concepts to avoid the legal responsibility of expressing religiously hateful ideas.

Such tricky concepts include the use of the word "extremist" or "fundamentalist" in front of the targeted religious group. For instance, we have recently heard of "extremist Muslims" or "extremist Christians" to refer to "terrorists" which is in turn another tricky concept. It is widely understood that the words "extremist" and "fundamentalist" have some negative connotations when associated with religious groups. In using these tricky concepts, we attempt to separate Christians from extremist ones and extremist Muslims from the Muslims. But these religious extremists or fundamentalists should never be religiously different from others in their religious group; if they are different from their religious group, they should not be referred to extremist or fundamentalist members of it. In other words, I do not believe in having extremist Christians and non-extremist ones. The same applies to Islam. I do not believe in having extremists and non-extremist Muslims. I wholeheartedly believe that these extremists neither belong to Christianity nor do they belong to Islam. But because some people still cannot have enough respect for the other who does not belong to their religious group and because they cannot coexist with others, and because the modern laws prohibit religious discrimination, they came up with the false classifications of extremists and non-extremist or fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist groups. These are hateful classifications,

and yet, they are legally justified to refer to evil people who falsely employ religions to justify their hatred of the other or to justify their crimes against others who do not belong to their religious groups. Thus, hating the other for being part of a different religious belief system is still a serious issue in today's world.

Terrorism, however, might be defined as a form of revenge, which might derive its impulse from various hybrid human sentiments that are falsely associated with theological or religious ones. If we use religions as an exclusive motive to justify terrorism, we falsely associate terrorism with these religions. In so doing, we forget how terrorists violate their own religions before they violate the targeted other's properties and lives. For instance, before we call the terrorists who carried the 9/11 attacks "extremist Muslims," we should know that these extremists have violated one of the basic commands of Islam according to verse 5:32 of the Quran which translates as; "If anyone slays a person, it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people." Thus, we should not refer to those terrorists as "fundamentalist" Muslims because they violate Islam before they committed their "terrorist" attacks. Muslim culture is just like any other culture in the world, which has both evil and good people as well. However, it is really sad how people falsely manipulate religions to justify their crimes. It is equally sad how we judge nations or religions only because some terrorists once belonged to those nations or religions.

It is unbelievable that hating the other for belonging to a different religion or faith is still a serious issue in the world today. For instance, Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims are ruthlessly killing each other in today's Syria and the only justification for these crimes is the same religiously false excuses Catholics and Protestants used to justify their crimes against one another around the 16th and 17th centuries. The horrible crimes against the other will continue in Syria unless people bring them to a closure, and this closure might never be attainable unless people from both dominations forgive one another.

Forgiveness, however, is not always a possible choice that people will grant to the other in today's world. On May 9, 2013, a *CNN* article described how a man from India had been beaten to death in jail in Pakistan a few days earlier. Interestingly, the day after the Indian man passed away, a Pakistani prisoner received a deadly beating in an Indian jail. Indian-Pakistani relationships have been always weighed on a scale of religious hatred. It is obvious that the Pakistani prisoner was killed in a vengeful beating. Thus, the Indians withheld forgiveness from the Pakistani before they cloaked their crime in false religious or national excuses. The diseased Pakistani prisoner had no other guilt than he was from Pakistan. This incident confirms my assumption that withholding forgiveness from the other on a religious scale is still a serious issue in the world today.

The obvious act of withholding forgiveness from the other seems to be a global tendency these days as long as people can legalize it. The Boston Bomb suspect, Tamerlan Tsarnaev—who was accused of planning the terrorist attack on the Boston Marathon on April 15, 2013—has received a hateful treatment after his death. According to a *USA Today* article, Tsarnaev was finally buried in undisclosed location after a long controversy over where to bury his body. The article explains that the "graveyards in the Boston area had refused to accept the body" (paragraph 5). It also speaks of many "flag-waiving protestors" who had signs that read, "'Do not bury him on U.S. soil'" (paragraph 7). In other words, the protestors have chosen not to forgive Tsarnaev even after his death. The protesters' request not to bury Tsarnaev's in the U.S reminds me of Ferneze's decision of throwing Barabas' body over the walls to be eaten by scavengers in act iv of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*.

Interestingly, Boston attacks were not considered terrorist attacks until the FBI accused the Tsarnaevs with planning the bombs used in the attacks. As soon as the Tsarnaev brothers' religious identity was revealed and people knew that they were of Muslim descent, the American Media started to describe the Boston attacks as the Boston terrorist attacks. Thus, they have associated with terrorism and legitimized it in a negative relationship to the other. In other words, because the Tsarnaev brothers are Muslims, people forgot that the suspected brothers are Americans who have been educated and raised in the US. The same applies to the two suspects of the terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo on January 7, 2015. Both suspects were born and raised in France and were killed in a similar way to the Boston brothers. Both American and French Media and public have chosen to express their hatred of the other publically according to the rhetoric of anti-terrorism which is in turn, measured or weighed on a religious hatred scale of the other who does not belong to the American and French, non-Muslim majority.

I do not attempt to justify extremism or fundamentalism here as much as I aim at explaining its emergence. I believe that extremism and fundamentalism are located within the legally modern continuum of the religious hatred of the other we see in 17th-century England for instance. If William Shakespeare or Christopher Marlowe lived today, they would not be able to present the falsehood of the other as openly as they did in the early modern time period. But they would be able to generate the most eloquent literary pieces of post 9/11 literature. The post 9/11 Shakespeare would have made sure to refer to Shylock as an "extremist" Jew and Antonio as a "fundamentalist" Catholic. The post 9/11 Marlowe would have made sure to refer to Ithamore as an "extremist" Muslim or a "terrorist," Barabas as

a "fundamentalist" Jew and Ferneze as an "extremist" Catholic. Interestingly, there is a growing body of post 9/11 novels which deal with the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the US on 9/11/2001 and "in which any kind of Arab label is suspect" (Corney, 2011, p.536). But what is most interesting is that "terrorism" has been closely and solely associated with Islam rather than the desperately suicidal criminals who carried out the terrorist attacks. These terrorists should not be called fundamentalists nor should they be called religious extremists because they are evil people who violate both the secular, religious and theological principles when they commit crimes against innocent people. The succeeding sections of this research deal with selected pieces of post 9/11th literature in which terrorism is closely and falsely associated to Muslims and Arabs.

1. ALONE AND ALL TOGETHER

In his short story *Alone and All Together* (2002), Geha's protagonist, Libby, watches the events of 9/11th on TV from Chicago while she is talking on the phone with her sister Sally in New York. Suddenly, Libby is distracted by the news strip at the bottom of the TV screen which indicates "that everything points to the hijackers being Middle Eastern extremists," Libby states, "I just wish they wouldn't say it's us until they're, like, sure." Although Libby seems worried about her Middle Eastern ethnicity refereeing to it in the "us," her sister, Sally, denies her ethnicity declaring her Americanism. We read, "Us? What us? We were born here, and so were Mom and Dad, right here in Chicago. What I want to know is when 'us' stops meaning ibn Arab (son of Arab) and starts meaning American!" (p. 53). Sally's rejection of her ethnicity does not only indicate to the difficulty of being Arab in the United States after 9/11th, but it also indicates to difficulty of recognizing Arab-American immigrants as fully patriotic citizens of the United states. Apparently, Sally has chosen to be American and, therefore, she cannot be Arabic anymore. Yet, Sally's choice of being only American rather than Arabic speaks her anxiety and her heritage and physical appearance.

Sally's physical appearance tells something about her Arab identity unlike her sister, Libby, who looks more like a typical American girl. We know this when the girls' father jokes that Libby with blue eyes and "almost blonde" hair is his American daughter while Sally with her "black, curly" hair is his Arab daughter (p.56). Before 9/11th, Sally with her Arabic look expressed her early interests in her Arabic background. These interests are manifested in helping her grandmother with cooking all the different kinds of Arabic food and by going to the local mosque with her Muslim friend Jamila "to learn to read and write Arabic" (p.57). Sally's interests in learning about Arabic cultures and language disappear in the wakes of 9/11th though. She also starts to reject her Arabic identity as we have seen in the aforementioned quotation.

Despite Libby's American appearance, she seems over-conscious about her Arabic identity even after the attacks. A few days after the terrorist attack, as Libby is waiting for the green light in the car with her mother, she says that she is "glad" that the people who are crossing the street in front of them "don't know us (them), what we (Libby and her mom) are." It is very clear here these pronouns such as "we" and "us" that she uses in the aforementioned quote refers to herself and her family as they come from Middle Eastern ethnicity. She feels guilty for not being recognized as an Arab because of her light complexion. But she gets over her guilt when she remembers the "incidents" of the past week as she drives by the Bridgeview where a large community of Arabs exists. She also feels the same way when she sees "three hundred people waving American flags and chanting 'USA! USA!' who tried to march on the Mosque foundation" and had "kids gathered outside (one) high school waving flags and shouting anti-Arab insults at passing cars" (p.58). Perhaps, Libby and Sally both wish if they had never been born Arabs by now since they know how difficult it is for them to be classified as fully patriotic Americans. The acts of marching in the Mosque foundation and the anti-Arab insults shouted by the crowds indicate the close association of Islam with Arabs rather than a religion followed by one fifth of the world's population. Such acts confirm my assumption of emerging Islam as an alternative definition of 'Terrorism' in the wakes of 9/11th.

Such anti-Arab incidents start to urge Libby to introduce herself as a white American girl rather than an Arab-American immigrant. She distances herself from any racial Arab markers that might question her patriotism or Americanism. For Libby, her fair complexion and her Christian religious background allow her to assert herself as the good Arab American unlike her Muslim friend, Jamila, who wears the head-cover which makes her vulnerable to racial and religious "Otherness." Thus, Jamila is easily recognized or defined as the enemy of the States or the bad Arab-American girl. We can see this idea in the scene where Jamila sits next to Libby in class. Here, Libby looks at her Muslim friend and wishes if "she (Jamila) would take off that thing (the hijab). Okay. She was born in Egypt, and she's a Muslim, but she's an American, too. She's in honors classes with me and her English is just about perfect" (p.58).

Libby's wish reflects her deeply contradictory state of mind. Although she recognizes her friend's right to her Arab and Muslim background, she wants her friend to give up her heritage when she hopes that Jamila will take off her head-cover. This head-cover becomes a reminder of Islam, which does not seem to be compatible with the American identity anymore. Conrey (2011) insists that the American policies of containment are responsible for

the sense of isolation Arabs such as Libby feels in the US; "such politics of containment have served to isolate Arab Americans from each other as well as from other minorities in the US, largely through a pervasive guilt-by-association logic that frames the post-9/11 mandate of vigilant citizenship" (p.535). Libby thinks that removing her friend's head-cover will make her more legible for being a fully patriotic American citizen. It is very clear than that Muslims cannot be recognized as Americans but rather as terrorists. Thus, Geha's story distinguishes two different types of Arab-Americans. The first type is the bad Muslim who is only bad because of his religious background. The second is the good non-Muslim Arab American who distinguishes himself or herself for being non-Muslims.

Although she tries hard to distance herself from her Arabic background, Libby is still over conscious of her Arab identity, which she thinks is deep-rooted in her character. We read, "Even though I don't look like her (Jamila), I still keep getting this creepy sense that people passing by are turning and noticing me, as if they can detect Arabic in my brain, or something." However, Libby's rejection of her Arab background does not last very long. Few days later and while Libby hangs out with her "American" friend Erin in the park, she sees Ahmad (Jamila's older brother), as he is being harassed by three guys in "shiny tight muscle shirts" (p.61). One of the three guys shouts at Ahmed, "So are you or aren't you?" When the situation gets bad, Libby steps in and prevents the guys from beating Ahmad as her fears and shame of her Arabic backgrounds disappears when she thinks of "Ahmed's olive skin, brown eyes and dark curly hair . . . Darker even than my sister's." When Ahmad is called ugly names such as "Raghead," Libby is ranged that she steps in and sides with him (p.60). The situation experienced by Ahamd echoes another situation experienced by Changez in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which we examine later in this paper.

Toward the end of the story, Libby recognizes that her Arabic background will always make her different from other Americans. Although she is a non-Muslim American, she still feels that she is displaced and lonely. When she calls her mother at the end of the story, Sally describes the candlelight vigil she attends in the city in honor of the 9/11th victims saying, "There were all nationalities. Muslim women. There were Asians. Lots of people with their children…We walked to the Promenade. People were praying. They held candles and pictures. Then everyone went quiet… Every one of us… I was alone, and we were all together" (p.63). Thus, it does not matter if you are a Muslim or non-Muslim American; Arab-Americans are usually associated with Islam which becomes an alternative definition of 'terrorism' in the wake of 9/11th. They are all terrorists by default and can never be considered fully patriotic citizens of the US.

2. ONCE IN A PROMISED LAND

The same sense of displacement and isolation—Libby feels by the end of Geha's story— is experienced by the Haddad family in Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*. The Haddad family, which comes originally from Jordan, is economically successful in the US. However, in the wakes of 9/11, the family starts to meet troubles on daily basis due to their religious and Arabic background. Salwa, Jassim's wife, was born in the US while her parents tried to follow the American dream before they eventually return to Jordan years before 9/11th. In a Human Resource Conference at University of Jordan, she meets Jassim as he visits from the US to present on the role of water in the regional politics of the Arab world. They get to know each other and eventually get married before they settle in Arizona where they get well-paid jobs. Thus, they decide to settle down in the US and live in happiness until 9/11th.

The Haddads' happiness quickly turns into misery soon after the terrorist attacks of 9/11th, which leaves them physically and spiritually broken and estranged from each other. The terrifying incident of 9/11 makes them deeply over-conscious of their Arab identities. They both feel ashamed while they try to cling to their American identity. The couples start to hide stuff from each other. For instance, Salwa lies to her husband about her pregnancy, which might come from her secret affair with a young coworker. Jassim, on the other hand, not only fails to tell his wife about the boy he kills in the car accident, but also does not tell her that he is fired from his job due to his ethnic and religious background.

Throughout the novel, there are various comparisons between the Arab world as the native homeland and the US as host-land, the novel characterizes the US as a "ghoula" (Arabic for female ogre) which tricks immigrants and makes them believe in the American dream. In so doing, the host-land gradually makes them abandon their values, culture, language, and religion, and their homeland. Therefore, just like Geha's story, Halaby's novel strengthens the idea that the Arabic ethnicity and the Islamic faith have become strong hateful markers that prevent the Arab-Americans from being fully patriotic citizen of this country. In both works, we see how it is clear that Arabs and Muslims are not welcome in the US even if they are born in the US.

The overt racism experienced by the Haddads after 9/11 not only makes them over-conscious of their Arabic identity but it makes them feel inferior when compared to other ethnic groups in the US. Salwa, for instance, has a sense of injustice and outrage at being discriminated against as an Arab Muslim. The Haddads also work hard to prove themselves as good Arabs and relinquish all that might make them experience racism. Hence, they

neutralize their political and religious identity to achieve social equality.

Despite the Haddads' helpless procedures to mingle with the American society, they are still discriminated against by the States. This official discrimination can be detected through the FBI's attitudes while investigating Jassim and their meeting with his boss. Before the FBI agents meet with Jassim, they visit his boss Marcus. Their questions about Jassim's "reaction to the war in Afganistan," his opinion "about Jordan's leadership," as well as his political activities outside the office revolve around his political beliefs, Muslim identity, terrorism and the US national security. However, his boss guarantees the FBI agents that Jassim is as "apolitical and unreligious a person as I (he) know" (p.224). Jassim's boss believes that Jassim is located in the good Arab American category. In other words, Jassim is a good Arab-American because he is not religious and because he does not get himself involved in any political arguments of any sort. Here Islam is again depicted as a hateful religion followed by a group of terrorist. It is also clear how Jassim's Arabic and religious background is responsible for his misery in a one way or another.

Jassim's apolitical dissent appears when his wife tells him that their Lebanese American friend, Randa, is worried about her children's safety after the 9/11th attacks. Being apolitical by nature, Jassim considers such worries unreasonable and extreme. Similarly, while wondering about the office staff's strange behavior toward him after the attacks, Jassim quickly dismisses the possibility that they are making any connection between him and the hijackers. We read, "He had as little connection to those men as they (the office staff) did, and there was no way he could accept that anyone would be able to believe him capable of sharing in their extremist philosophy" (p.23). In the wakes of 9/11, Jassim focuses only on his work with a great passion for studying water. Nevertheless, Jassim starts to avoid talking about the politics of waters in post 9/11.

After Jassim decides to settle and work in the US and because of 9/11, he gives up his political and humanistic zeal of water politics. In so doing, Jasim starts to feel that he has been "eaten by the West" and by "the easy American life" which does not have much appreciation to his ethnic group or religion (p.278). However, Jassim comes to realize how "he had walked away from the life he had planned," a life entrenched in the political role of water in the Middle East (p.219). The charges hurled at him and many other Arabs and Muslims in the US after 9/11 along with the fact that he has accidentally killed a boy in a car accident make Jassim realize his delusional and false sense of being an equally represented citizen of the US. On this idea, we read,

> It had taken killing a boy for his soul to awaken . . . he saw that the past nine years (and even more than that) had been a sabbatical from real life, a rich man's escape from the real world (p. 218). … In more than a decade of good citizenship, he had never for a minute imagined that his successes would be crossed out by a government censor's permanent marker, that his mission would be absorbed by his nationality, or that Homeland Security would have anything to do with him. Things like this aren't supposed to happen in America. (p.299)

Jassim's wife, Salwa, admits that her life in America "was the life she had chosen, but it was not the life she wanted." However, she is unable to resist the false appeal of the American dream (p.91). She is unhappy with her life that she starts cheating on her husband with a younger coworker. But this secret affair does not do her any good. Toward the end of the novel and after she breaks up with her lover, Salwa is left semi-conscious at the hospital while her husband who knows nothing about her affair sitting next to her. At this point we find out that Salwa has given up her American dream. We are sure that she does not belong to the US. It is strongly suggested rather than stated that she will return to settle down in Jordan. The Haddad's US citizenship does not provide them with any equal life opportunity to settle in the US. Apparently, The racial and religious discrimination against the Haddads turns their life into misery after 9/11. Thus, they decide to return and settle down in Jordan leaving behind their American dream.

3. THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST

The Haddads of Halaby are not the only Muslim-Americans who choose to leave the American dream and return to their homeland due to discrimination in post 9/11th literature. Hamid's *the Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) revolves around another Muslim character who experiences the same unfriendly life in the US in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11th. Changez has been a very successful character who leaves Pakistan to study at Princeton. Upon graduation, he becomes successful in his career as a decent firm. The success of Changez's life, however, starts to decline rapidly soon after the terrorist attacks of 9/11th, which takes place while he is on a business trip to Manila. During the trip, he turns the television on and watches the towers as they fall down. We read, "I stared at one—and then the other—of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center collapsed. And then I smiled. Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased." (p.73). Thus, he starts to isolate himself from Americans.

When Changes reaches Manila on a business trip, he goes through an identity struggle trying to locate his own identity, which oscillates between America and Pakistan. At the beginning of the trip, he seems to act just like Americans as he toughly orders men of his father's age. Intimidated by a driver's hostile look, Changez contemplates on its significance wondering if he has sacrificed his identity in pursuit of status. By the time

9/11th takes place, he has developed a skeptical point of view about his own identity. The political tension between Pakistan and India in the wake of 9/11th and the war in Afghanistan as supported by Pakistan at a time when Pakistan seems to be alone in confrontation with India while the US is caught up in patriotic shows are all reasons which make him doubt his own identity. Changez starts to look at America's patriotic actions as a dangerous form of nostalgia. As a result, he gradually loses interest in his work. For instance, when he is assigned to help a publishing company in Valparaiso, Chile, he spends his time hanging out with Neruda and lunching with the publisher who compares him to a janissary. Changez says that he has no such excuse. He was not at war with America; moreover, he was "the product of an American university… earning a lucrative American salary… infatuated with an American woman" (p.73). Later, he is forced to adopt negative attitude toward Americans due to the discrimination he experienced in the wakes of 9/11th.

At the airport and on the way back from Manila to the US, Changez is given a hard time as he goes through security checkpoints. He is strip-searched. He is the last person to board the flight at which his appearance seems to worry the other passengers. Changez feels self-conscious and guilty as he takes his seat on the plane, "uncomfortable in (his) own face" (p.74). At the New York airport, he waits in the line for foreign nationals while his coworkers to wait in the American line. When an officer asks him about the purpose of his trip to the US, Changez replies, "I live here." The officer finds his answer undesirable and keeps asking, while Changez continues to give the same answer. Eventually, he goes through a "secondary inspection" in a private room. The entry process takes so long that he ends up riding back to Manhattan without his colleagues and feeling "very much alone" (75).

The difficulty of the US entry is not the only bad experience Changez goes through as a result of 9/11th. His relationship with beloved Erica goes also toward a dead-end. At the beginning, Erica seems to keep the same friendly attitude toward her boyfriend. However, 9/11th has awakened her past affection to her x-boyfriend because her sadness inexplicably becomes pathological. When Changez comes back to the US for the first time after 9/11th, the two go on their first date since the Central Park picnic. The event was right in the wake of the attacks since they could smell the burning ruins of the World Trade Center wafting from downtown. Erica seems so sad and tells Changez that the event of 9/11th has reawakened her state of mourning for Chris and that she felt "haunted" (80).

Few weeks later, Changez pays a visit to Erica. When he arrives, Erica's mother tells him that Erica needs to avoid the drama of romantic relationships, begging him; "She doesn't need a boyfriend. She needs a friend" (p.110). After seeing Erica, he seems consumed with curiosity about her condition, although he feels that "she was disappearing into a powerful nostalgia, one from which only she could choose whether or not to return" (p.113). As the months go on and winter arrives, he forces himself to give up calling Erica. It seems to Changez that America, like Erica, is falling into "a dangerous nostalgia," as if 2001 had suddenly become the time of the Second World War (pp.114-15). He wonders whether he belongs to this version of America. Eventually, he visits Erica at the hospital where she apologizes for separating herself from him, claiming that she did so to protect him. She thanks him for helping her and bids him a final goodbye, saying, "Try to be happy, okay? I'm sorry about everything. Please take care of yourself" (p.136).

The impact of 9/11th on Chagez goes beyond the airport long procedures and losing love. He experiences the same situation experienced by Ahmad in Geha's short story. One day, a man approaches Changez in a parking lot and begins mocking him with nonsense words, which sound like Arabic. Changez does not realize that he is experiencing ethnic prejudice until the man shouts, "Fucking Arab" (p.117). The irony, of course, is that Changez is not an Arab. But Islam, Arabicism and terrorism are closely associated with one another in the context of 9/11th. The man yells, "Say it to my face, coward, not as you run and hide" (pp.117-18). The man keeps cussing until Changez removes the tire iron from his trunk. Finally, the man's friend takes the offender away. Afterwards, Changez sits in his car, too shocked to be able to drive. Later on, Jim asks what is wrong with him. Changez denies that his change in personality was related to the bombing of Afghanistan. Jim reminds Changez, "I know that it's like to be an outsider. If you ever want to talk, give me a shout" (p.120). Here Changez was similar to Jassim in Halaby's novel when the latter was asked about his political opinion of the Jordanian leadership. Both are associated with their homeland rather than to the American land.

When Changez arrives in Pakistan, he finds himself "observing" his home and homeland through the lens of foreign eyes. He seems ashamed of the house where he grows up, which looks underwhelming and humble for him this time. He is horrified to realize he has become an elitist American and resolved to "exorcise" himself of that attitude (p.124). Once he manages to adjust his attitude, he becomes able to see his house's historic charm once again. Changez's beard makes him vulnerable more to prejudice than ever. Wainwright advises him to shave it, because "This whole corporate collegiality veneer only goes so deep" (p.131). Changez ignores his friend's warning. The beard here becomes

a reminder of Islam. In other words, Changes is invited to leave his own religion so that he can fit into the American society. Changez eventually decides to return to his home country, Pakistan leaving behind his American dream.

CONCLUSION

All the Muslim and Arabic characters we have seen in the three works examined have been discriminated against because of their ethnic and religious background. Libby comes to realize that she will never give up her Arabic background and she will not be treated as a fully patriotic citizen of the US. The Haddads and Changez are discriminated against because of their ethnic and religious identity. Thus, they return to their native countries. In the three works, Islam, Arabicism and terrorism are closely associated with one another. The narratives vary but they are all about the difficulty of being an Arab-American or a Muslim-American citizen in the US in post 9/11th. Islam is unfortunate and falsely associated with terrorism.

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