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The rise of fundamentalist narratives - a post-9/11 legacy? Toward understanding American fundamentalist discourse

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Abstract: Why would a group of writers act in a way that appears to readers as literary fundamentalism, such as post 9/11 American writers? Most of the effective causes underlie superior behaviors, namely, neo-orientalist ideology and imperial interests quite enough to threaten the survival of scholarly literature on 9/11 attacks. Fundamentalist narratives have increasingly become the concern of critics and readers over the last two decades. This study aims to explore post-9/11 writers' fundamentalist tendencies that have increasingly become a part of contemporary narratives on a larger scale in political narratives. A central inquiry in the study is how adherence to fundamentals, perceived as a basic principle for a profession or a new feature in the literature, may develop into fundamentalism. It also investigates the ways in which fundamentalist narratives racialize a collective subject described as "Islam and the Muslims" in the aftermath of 9/11. This category became more prominent in fundamentalist narratives that are in harmony and solidarity with the state and its agenda, ignoring its imperial attitude toward the Middle East. Analysis refers to Updike's *Terrorist* as an example of fundamentalist text that manifestly identifies Arabs, their intentions, their culture, and their religion as barbaric and aggressive. The circumstances under which these narratives developed and influenced American writers' attitudes are also explored.

Subjects: Political Theory;; Politics; Philosophy; Cultural Theory

Keywords: fundamentalist narratives; Arab; post 9/11; the United States; Islam

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This study focuses on the rise of fundamentalist narratives, a new trend in post 9/11 American literature, and the factors that helped these narratives flourish. The study looks at this version of narratives from a scholarly perspective. As the context of fundamentalist narratives is under-researched, this manuscript scholarly and critically bridges the huge gap in existing knowledge, leading to a better understanding of this new trend in narratives. Most importantly, understanding this version of post 9/11 American literature contributes to solidifying our understanding of contemporary American literature, its formation and its transformation.

1. Introduction

Fundamentalism has become a part of many cultural discourses in the United States and is beginning to loom larger to dominate significant global issues. Whether it be religious, political or economic “fundamental code”, there is a common concern to be loyal to the fundamentals and beliefs without which there would not be a superior system and a distinct entity. Fundamentals, according to Cambridge Thesaurus Dictionary, is synonym to “essential and important” and described as “the most important facts, ideas, etc. from which something is developed” (Cambridge, 2019). American fundamentalism did not emerge as an opponent to Islamist fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism. Historically, American fundamentalism emerged in the 1790s with a strong Christian background as a “natural antagonist to the post-modern society, which casts doubt on the existence of any form of absolute truth” and more particularly as a point of reference for Protestant Presbyterians, who denounced the liberal interpretation of Biblical Scriptures and expressed commitment to the five Christian fundamentals: “divine, infallible ‘Biblical inspiration’; the Virgin birth; the Crucifixion as Christ’s atoning for humanity’s sin; his bodily resurrection and the objectivity of Christ’s miracles” (Johnson & Mabon, 2018, p. 196). Whether it be religious or cultural, fundamentalism strives to make convenient scapegoats in almost all norms, established truths, ideas and thoughts that contradict with or at least disagree with its beliefs.

As a revolt against modernity, fundamentalism spread throughout different countries to resist imperialism, hegemony and globalization. Gilligan (2017) reminds us of the religious fundamentalism when the churches felt the threat of science and knowledge on the concepts of “goodness”, “death”, “God”, and “beliefs”. According to Gilligan, churches succeeded in convincing the people and their fundamentalist supporters to resist the insights of the scientific revolutionists such as Freud, Galileo Copernicus, and Darwin: “they [churches] sensed—correctly—that the modern scientific mentality, whose motto is “take nothing on faith, believe only those propositions that can be confirmed or disconfirmed by means of observation (p. 176–177). The speed with which religious fundamentalism affects the people’s thoughts and causes them to change their behaviors reflects a strong connection between propagating and enforcing erroneous thoughts to establishing truths and fundamentals within the public.

All branches of knowledge set certain fundamentals to either describe or distinguish their approach including politics, economics and literature as well. Concerns with fundamentals of classic orientalist narratives have been introduced in several literary books and theories in the United States such as Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *The American Scholar* (1837), Washington Irving’s *Mohamet and his Successors* (1849) Leon Uris’s *Exodus* (1958), Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993), and Frederick Quinn’s *The Sum of All Heresies* (2007). In these works, fundamentals of American superiority over the Middle East are introduced and made evident, even if some of them appear controversial and critical. Quinn (2008) summarizes some of the basic cultural principles which are in line with the origin of American fundamentalist attitude toward Islam and are based on fear of deleterious effects on Christian beliefs: “Religiously, Muhammad was either the Antichrist or a fallen Lucifer ... Personally, he was a flawed human being ... Politically, he was either a major leader who united the desert tribes for the first time ever or a 10 greedy despot” (p. 26). Fundamentalist discourse in American culture, according to Shaheen (2003), has been the earliest stereotyped form of the American superiority over Arab Muslims. Shaheen (2003) addressed the main aspect of this fundamentalist cultural coverage of Arab character and showed how the negatively represented Arab was used as a basis in American writings: “He is what he has always been—the cultural ‘other’ ... Arabs look different and threatening. Projected along racial and religious lines—brutal, heartless, uncivilized religious fanatics and money-mad cultural “others” ... Arabs are brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women” (172). This study shows how cultural fundamentalism went through major transformations from visibility to high visibility after 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001.

2. Theoretical frame

The term “fundamentalism” is one of the most ubiquitous aspects of post 9/11 America narrative. Fundamentalism is not restricted to practices in religions; rather, it is a broad cultural tendency

that entails “a dogmatic attitude to the inviolability of a particular attitude or practice” (Spencer & Valassopoulos, 2010, p. 330). Fundamentalist narrative presents Islam and Arab Muslims in a neo-imperial manner as a sustained project of empirical knowledge and western intellectual engagement where there exists good vs. evil, peacefulness vs. terror and freedom vs. unfreedom. Knowledge of the Middle East is presented not only by the constant collusion of scholarly narrative but also by the more constructive attitude of how to support it with fundamentalist precepts. The essential position here is that “such fundamentalism is characterized by a deep commitment to national myths of America’s economic and political domination” (Haider, 2012, p. 217). This is not the point. None of post 9/11 American writers are aware of the fundamentalist attitude in its sharp criticism and culturally brutal images, and many are even against its moderate version. Such fundamentalist commitment to thoughts and ideas that covertly express the will of particular writers, in its division of the world into opposing poles of the good and evil is a method of understanding the world that is manifested in terror but explicitly gained by fiction (Brown, 2006; Semaan, 2014; Shaykhutdino, 2018). Examining fundamentalist thought is the principal theme of the study; in addition, the image of Arab Muslims will be examined as a consequence of fundamentalist thought of American writers.

This study could be part of a larger study on the ethical implications of 9/11 and the exposure to the American military and political retaliation for 9/11 terrorist attacks. There are some fundamental aspects this part of the study shall refer to, they represent the most important factors which facilitated the establishment of an autonomous narrative color and make the development of mainstream narrative discourse significant. The construction of any racial group is a part of a larger historical process characterized by the relationship between and interactions of power and knowledge (Dekel et al., 2016; Lake, 2018; Rane & Ewart, 2013; Waikar, 2018). In addition to power and knowledge, post-9/11 narrative construction of the Muslim identity as a “racial entity” is a product of the interaction between power, religion and knowledge resulting in the revival of the Christian fundamentalism and its expansion to the field of narrative discourse. Thus, a fundamentalist narrative has been developed due to the interactions of colonial agendas, hegemonic knowledge, the American values and the Christian beliefs. In this context, it was possible for post-9/11 narrative writers to write a discourse through a system made up of politics, imperialism and religion.

After World War I, psychoanalysts observed that personal attitudes have always been multi-determined, where political differences, personal animosity, ideological forces and societal factors have played a role alongside cultural rivalry (Bohleber et al., 2013). According to them fundamentalist attitude in its more malignant form has to do with commitment to the basics or fundamentals, whether such an attitude in itself is made for opposition or violence. Fundamentalism, according to the political philosopher John J. Gray (2003), is a contemporary malady to which the west and its citizens are hardly immune (p. 55). The point here is that a thought or a belief becomes fundamentalist when, whether representing the will of a segment of particular group or an entire culture, it claims to be compulsory or immutable:

Fundamentalism is both a product and an agent of globalisation, because it acknowledges without nostalgia the loss of pristine cultures, and sees as positive the opportunity to build a universal religious identity, delinked from any specific culture, including the Western one perceived as corrupt and decadent - a constant topic of fundamentalism literature. But maybe this is the last twist in the real victory of westernisation. (Roy, 2004, p. 25)

Narratives of any time are always a reflection of the national interests, wide horizons, and the state’s politics of that period. In quite recent history the United States could not change its fundamentalist attitude in all political, cultural and economic aspects of relationship with the Arab world to partnership, understanding and competition by fostering sincere political negotiations and intellectual debates (Al-Musawi, 2018; Colla, 2003; McLoughlin, 2007; Meer, 2014). In addition to fundamentalist attitudes, all these aspects were marked by hegemony and imperialism. Narrative work is no exception. Fundamentalist narratives after the 9/11 attacks have become

to a large degree an essential element in the formation of the national identity and national awareness about major security issues: “... the effect of the resurgence of American nationalism, also brought with its representations of a shift from hyphenated to a singular American identity (Grewal, 2003, p. 548). Fundamentalism in American novel has not only become a statement against Islamic terrorism, and so on, but also a reflection of the American foreign policies “that aim at maintaining an imperial kind of globalization (Eisenstein, 2004, p. 9). Then, the cultural concerns are how to continue holding the fundamentals without which there would not be a powerful hegemonic role in the Middle East. In the literature, adherence to fundamentals has led to fundamentalist principles and rigid commitment to contemporary roles usually set in a hegemonic context.

Two provisos are necessary to discuss the twenty-first American fundamentalist attitude toward the Middle East: Islamist fundamentalism and American hegemony. Critics need to understand that several neo-orientalist writers have embraced the same degree of fundamental attitude in their struggle to write as Islamist fundamentalists do (Stein, 2006; Varvin, 2017). A study of this area would be a broad one to include history, geography, political science and many more disciplines, however, and so for now I have limited it to narrative fundamentalism in relation to three objectives. First, it will sketch the rise of American cultural fundamentalism by focusing on the relationship between the literature and imperial agendas found in contemporary American novel and the literary response to the political agendas. The result of this relationship has shaped contemporary American novel on Arab Muslims, adapted various changes on the institution of American orientalism and made it more imperial than before: “American novel defines itself within the broader post 9/11 American cultural context which is based on the American political orientations as well as the relationship between politics and aesthetics, and between history and narratives” (Altwajji, 2019, p. 75). Secondly, this study will investigate how Islamists and Islamic fundamentalism are used to represent a wide range of Islamic values and Arab culture and believed to be intrinsic Islamic examples. In contemporary criticism, scholars refer to Islamism—to be distinguished from Islam—as totalitarian fundamentalist movement based on political Islam. It is an ideology of a transnational contemporary movement which has assumed the form of a new totalitarianism. Thirdly, the study will examine how Islamic terrorism became a necessary commodity in American novel on the orientals since its inception. It would be a mistake, though, to rest with any conclusion without referring to Islamic terrorism because the concepts of hegemony and war on terror are interlinked.

3. Fundamentalist narratives

Contemporary American narratives have appropriated “the language of national self-protection” that facilitates the promotion of neo-liberal agendas into a “defense of America’s ‘human rights’ universalism,” whereby the complexion of imperial interests changes (Jameson, 2000, p. 66). Several narrative works on fundamentalist Islam thematize a conflict neither of American modernism nor of Islamic fundamentalism but goes beyond the issue of the Muslim world and the Christian America, upon which readers and critics try to investigate the conflict so as to acquire the chimera of visible clash by the use of dichotomies. Such dichotomies in post 9/11 narratives ignore “the need to reflect on, criticize and put right not only Islamic fundamentalism but also a no less destructive and dogmatic faith in the rectitude of the ‘West’, in its social and economic structures, and in its entitlement to sermonize other people and rearrange their countries” (Spencer, 2011, p. 156). Not surprisingly, many narrative writers have ventured to represent the face-off between Islamic extremist groups and the United States as an equal affair between the fundamentalist beliefs of Islam and the righteousness and irreproachableness of American culture. The critique of Islamic fundamentalism and extremist groups, however, must also refer to a fact that there are also fundamentalist groups in other religions, cultures and political regimes:

The use of terror by radical Islamist groups has very little to do with traditional Islam and far more with the techniques of asymmetric warfare used by modern revolutionary movements. There is nothing peculiarly Islamic in suicide bombing. Until the Iraq war it was the Tamil

Tigers, a Marxist-Leninist group that recruits mainly in Hindu communities, that had committed more suicide bombings than any other organization, and the first suicide bombing on Israeli soil was committed in 1972 by the Japanese Red Army (J. Gray, 2003, p. 18)

When narrative writers associate Islam as a religion with concepts of fundamentalism, extremism, and an apocalyptic vision, they underline the existence of the latent violence in religion and its followers. It is a clash of Eastern and Western fundamentalisms, be it imperial vs. anti-imperial, a part of the hegemonic policy of the United States and the Jihadist reaction to it or a cultural interaction through nonviolent means: “Fundamentalism does not, however, necessarily imply violence. In fact, most people we call fundamentalists today are not violent and tries to pursue their goals by peaceful means” (Varvin, 2017, p. 95). Therefore, American novel has become a hot button concept for scholars interested in investigating the American neo-imperial interests in the Arab world though; American orientalist discourse has been existent for two centuries and boosted its approach using the techniques of the British and French Orientalisms. This strong relationship between narrative work and political agendas is indebted to both cultural hegemony theory and neo-orientalism where post 9/11 novel represents divergent agendas of the state and situates its interests in texts to rationalize exploitations and military retaliations abroad. These overt themes in post 9/11 American novel, according to Rubin and Verheul (2009), “led Americans to recast their perceptions of diversity and assimilation within a national framework, and at the same time to reevaluate the position of the United States in the world” (p. 7). This interesting feature clusters around Foucault’s concepts of knowledge and hegemony in which post 9/11 novel’s symbolic power and the new geopolitical realm reflect a strong relationship between state’s agendas and production of knowledge:

We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly *imply one another*; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (Foucault, 1980, p. 27 emphasis added).

The study of fundamentalist narratives complies with Bhabha’s assumption in *Terror and After* that “the decision to implement and administer terror, whether it is done in the name of god or the state, is a political decision” (Bhabha, 2002, p. 3). Fundamentalism, according to Gauthier (2015), is responsible for producing “persuasive” literature or an “authoritative form of discourse” in which writers failed to successfully face the challenging “coercive behavior” of the terrorists: “It was almost as though there needed to be a period of silence before novelists could recover their voices” (p. 11). Elaborating on this point further, Sherry Jones said in 2008 that Muslims, Islamic culture and the Middle East region were not known to her: “As a feminine, I was disturbed by these reports and I wanted to learn more. I knew very little about Middle Eastern culture or Islam at the time” (Jones, 2008). Within a year, she wrote two major contributions to post 9/11 American narrative about the Muslims: *The Jewel of Medina* (2008) and *The Sword of Medina* (2009), a sequel to *The Jewel*; both are on the wives of prophet Mohammed and Islamic culture. Such deployment of fundamentalist images serves to privilege a cultural and hegemonic war that is “imperialistic in nature and might even, so profound is its militant certainty and its sense of mission, be described as fundamentalist” (Spencer & Valassopoulos, 2010, p. 331). Post 9/11 American narrative, according to Spencer and Valassopoulos, is “one such dogma” that is “credited with the unimpeachable authority of divine scripture” (p. 331). Tariq Ali uses the term “clash of fundamentalisms” to refer to the particular relationship between American narratives and Islamic fundamentalism (Ali, 2002). According to Ali’s argument, narratives are also tainted by proliferation of radical images and by their openness to repetitive divergent interpretations. This influence of fundamentalist thoughts on texts always adheres tightly to classical scripts and sits easily with the classical orientalist agendas. Moreover, in a world in which neo-imperial practices are not criticized, it has become convenient for writers to situate narratives in the larger framework of the colonial project

and continue with the classical past which introduces the oriental as inferior, uncivilized and perpetrator.

Susan Buck-Morss (2003) indicates how similar literary fundamentalism is to the religious emphasis on the protection of the sacred (p. 92). In her *Thinking Past Terror* she argues against the divide between Islamic culture and American modernism, Islamic fundamentalism and American liberals and calls down a plague of such dichotomies. In addition to religious fundamentalism, Buck-Morss says, there are economic, political, and literary fundamentalisms; all constitute the neo-liberal dogma and credit it with an unimpeachable authority of scholarly texts and thoughts:

Those who deny these everyday realities of global immanence fuel fundamentalism, of which there are as many types [of fundamentalisms] as there are intolerances. The mark of fundamentalism is not religious belief but dogmatic belief that refuses to interrogate founding texts and excludes the possibility of critical dialogue, dividing humanity absolutely into pre-given categories of the chosen and the expendable, into 'us' and 'them.' And whether this is preached by a head of state, or in a place of worship, or at the IMF, no cultural practice- religious or secular, economic or political, rational or romantic - is immune to fundamentalism's simplifying appeal (p. 93)

Fundamentalist writers are those whose anti-Islamist thoughts permeate all aspects of their narrative work. Updike is one such "maximalists", whose narratives are provocative in the real sense and readers have to orient themselves to his style. Updike's *Terrorist* detects structural connections between imperial agendas of the United States in the Middle East and the resurgence of Christian fundamentalist attitude in order to establish a strong convergence between the scholarly and the Imperial by enacting Bhabha's relationship between "Political empowerment" and "enlargement of the multiculturalist cause" that results in "interstitial perspective" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4). Updike has successfully managed to situate *Terrorist* in the larger framework of the American neo-liberal agendas in a globalized world. Post 9/11 narratives, Richard Gray says, are fully interstitial; they invite readers to intervene in order to produce meaning and interact with fiction and so fiction becomes more informative, instructional and provocative literary texts than aesthetic and pleasant literature (R. Gray, 2011, p. 53). Gray points out that fundamentalist narrative positions critical issues "in an interstitial space" where "a discourse founded on either/or distinctions is interrogated and even subverted ... [in which] identity is open to constant negotiation and renegotiations" (p. 65). Critics and readers sometimes forget that narrative writers like Updike have always been unequal part pundits and consistently encouraged dissent and disagreement of "independence of mind" and rational anti-Islamism. Taking into account Rushdie's idea that "fundamentalism is a term born in the USA", American writers have endorsed precisely that fundamentalism and Islamic beliefs have much in common (Rushdie, 2003, p. 287). Further, American theorists have added the term "terror" in their reference to fundamentalism and equated the terms "terrorists" and "fundamentalists", thus making the comprehension of the term more sophisticated:

Most Muslims are not fundamentalists, and most fundamentalists are not terrorists, but most present-day terrorists are Muslims and proudly identify themselves as such ... For [Terrorists], this is a religious war, a war for Islam against infidels, and therefore, inevitably, against the United States, the greatest power in the world of infidels (Lewis, 2004, p. 151, xv)

Updike at the center of discussion on "fundamentalist narratives" as a modern term represents the American right to employ terms and expressions on fundamentalism. In his interview with Louise Witt, he says that his novel represents "a deeply convinced religious personality" that "clings very deliberately to Islamic fundamentalism" (Witt, 2006). The title of the novel "*Terrorist*" recalls 9/11 figures; its aim is to spell out the notion of Islamic fundamentalism and to give us "models of living human beings who may not agree with us and even be our enemies" (Witt, 2006). *Terrorist* is a frontal fundamentalist response to Islamist terrorism in which Updike mixes his Christian beliefs

and compares Islam with Judeo-Christian tradition in order to show a strong commitment to the concept:

Islam doesn't have as many shades of gray as the Christian or the Judaic faith does. It's fairly absolutist, as you know, and you're either in or not. So it's a good, plausible religious context for a sense that the world is alien, is something else, is something not paradise, is trying to take your faith and your companionship with God from you (Witt, 2006).

For Updike, scholarly narratives have an inbuilt aversion to Islamist fundamentalism. His *Terrorist* tells the tale of a Muslim terrorist who plans to blow up Lincoln Tunnel because he feels that materialist America makes him lose his faith in Allah: "*These devils seek to take away my God ... girls sway and sneer and expose their soft bodies ... Their bare bellies, adorned with shining navel studs and low-down purple tattoos ... America wants to take away my God*" (Updike, 2006, p. 3, emphasis added). The enormous popularity of Updike's approach can be explained by his excessive criticism of Islam and the prevailing preconceptions about it. However, Updike fails to question individual attitudes and avoid associating the whole religion with terrorism: "The Prophet said that eventually all unbelievers must be destroyed" (p. 68). Introducing Islam one can differentiate between scholarly narratives that offer aesthetic and pleasant literature from what is called fundamentalist narratives that offer informative and instructional literature. In addition, Updike advances the belief that narrative work is moral not when it delights the readers with virtuous characters but when it shocks them: "They [Christians and Jews] have no feelings. They are manifestations of Satan, and God will destroy them without mercy ... God will rejoice at their suffering" (p. 77). This vulgar repetition is a discrete form of narrative fundamentalism; it mixes between religion and individual attitudes. A reader does not hesitate to applaud this style precisely because he is as committed as Updike in defending the novel's ability to end uncertainties about the nature of terrorism, critics also must be equally keen to equip the readers with their thoughts about Western fundamentalism and ideology in narratives.

Fundamentalist narratives, not least because they are inevitable result of post 9/11 anti-Islamic sentiment, are parts of the inarguable "truths/facts" promulgated long ago before 9/11 by various types of fundamentalisms which can easily provide cultural alternatives to the fundamentalist attitudes that inspire terrorism. One such cultural alternative is highlighting the cultural differences. Muslim characters' devotion to religion is in large part a way of negotiating the problems of adolescence by addressing cultural issues and complexities such as sexuality that had long been repressed by religion as Ahmed comments on Joryleen's assertion about sexuality:

The way I feel it, the spirit is what comes out of the body, like flowers come out of the earth. Hating your body is like hating yourself, the bones and blood and skin and shit that make you ... He thinks of sinking himself into her body and knows from its richness and ease that this is a devil's thought. "Not hate your body," he corrects her, "but not be a slave to it either. You have a good heart, Joryleen, but you're heading straight for Hell, the lazy way you think. (p. 72)

Terrorist also countenances the possibility that Islamist fundamentalism is derivative of the American thought and the voguish exposure to modernity in a way that can change certain parameters of intellectual discussions set by the west. A simple aspect of such a change is that the existence of Islamist fundamentalism displaces or even relocates the critique of American modernity from the "totally administered world" in liberal and non-totalitarian states that Horkheimer and Adorno abhorred as a negative consequence of the Western enlightenment (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 232). *Terrorist* makes such a change possible and leads us to question what we take for granted as Updike says of his style: "I'm trying to get the terrorist out of the bugaboo category and into the category of a fellow human being" (Witt, 2006). This is precisely why narrative work is such a versatile, flexible, resourceful and occasionally serious opponent, particularly when it comes to dealing with readers' deeply rooted "ethics" and "absolutes".

No Arab, Muslim or Christian, is protected from criticism in *Terrorist*. In addition to demonizing the Muslims, Arab Christians are also misrepresented. Charlie Chehab, an Arab Christian, was born and raised in the United States which he describes as an “honest and friendly country” (Updike, 2006, p. 147). When he talks about the human rights of “*The Zanji*” and “African-Americans”, his father reminds him: “Whatever America’s problems, the United States cannot be compared to the tyrannies of the Middle East and Eastern Europe” (p. 148). However, the post 9/11 fundamentalist attitude, which by nature does not distinguish between Arab Muslims and Arab Christians, is contrasted with a type of hypocritical code that stresses the equality of human life. Charlie is described by Levy as a “loose cannon” and “stupid kid” (p. 292). *Terrorist* contextualises the most recent position of the incorrigibly demonized and violent “other”, Arabs, and shows most effectively that a reader has more need than ever of narrative capacity to defile the fundamentalist conceit that promotes such writings.

Terrorist is an appealing narrative response to a “moment of historical rupture” in which the symbolic power of the imperial world, the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, spoke both Islam-west historical antagonism and the problems inherent in American diplomacy in the Middle East: “The destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center also toppled the twin towers of Islam and the West as the most convincing binary oppositions constructed to sustain the colonial project of modernity” (Haider, 2012, p. 205). The obsolescence of the Europe-Islam binarism, Dabashi notes that “the historic rift between the USA and Europe [over the war on Iraq]” and “the rapid unification of Europe into a major global power quite independent and in fact in competition with the USA” have resulted in an “end to the idea of the West as a legitimate category” to be in confrontation with Islam (p. 205). In his essay *In the ruins of the future*, DeLillo (2001) describes fundamentalist narrative as a full-fledged dominant narrative on the altercation between global capitalist power and the growing Islamic theodicy:

These are the men who have fashioned a morality of destruction. They want what they used to have before the waves of western influence. They surely see themselves as the elect of God ... It is the presumptive right of those who choose violence and death to speak directly to God. They will kill and then die ... Allahu akbar. God is great. (p. 38)

As ideology and politics are essentialized in the novel’s themes and subject matters, the study lists four general observations highlighting the significance of socio-political and cultural influence on fundamentalist narratives. These observations/trends have been remarkably consistent from 2001 without significant disparities in narrative techniques:

- (i) Islam and Islamic culture have consistently been one of the main antagonists to American interests in the minds of U.S. policymakers, and the 9/11 attacks in 2001 cleared the way for Islamic thought to once again become the principal eschatological enemy of the United States inside and outside the country. Bush’s statement to the Washington Post (2001) is one of the many examples of a sharper attack against Arab Muslims in which he typifies his views as “true”, arguing that Arab Muslims hate the Jews and the Christians together: “They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom ... They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa ... They stand against us, because we stand in their way” (Washington Post, 2001). What do these configurations mean for fundamentals of post 9/11 narrative? It became clear that an intensified feeling of anti-Islamic sentiment was developed among narrative writers who perceived Islam as the personification of evil that can assault the United States at any times. In these narratives, we read the articulation of literary fundamentalism as defined both by imperial statements and public media. It is in novels’ titles. It is in intellectual discussions and political debates. It is reflected in public attitude toward Islam and other people who look like them.
- (ii) Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, a strong evangelical wave of fundamentalism emerged as a strong opponent of Islamist fundamentalism and sought to introduce Islam in

a peripheral setting. This criticism is supported by the evangelical Christian notion that Islam is not a monolithic religion; it is different from Christianity and Judaism. Franklin Graham, an American Christian evangelist and missionary, who was chosen by George W. Bush to conduct prayer services at his presidential inauguration on 16 November 2001, says: “The God of Islam is not the same God. He’s not the son of God of the Christian or Judeo-Christian faith. It’s a different God, and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion ... I believe the Qur’an teaches violence. It doesn’t teach peace, it teaches violence” (qtd. Ghazali, 2008, p. 21). As a result this threat to “Christian identity” is taken to usher literature out of the classical style introducing “a new wave of evangelical literature that sought to place Islam in an increasingly marginalized setting justified by the assertion of the representative role of radical Islam over all of Islam” (Robertson, 2014, p. 113). This evangelical perspective has further developed many characteristics of narrative discipline, constructing “discursive formation” both as a form of “fundamentalist constituted knowledge” on terrorism and as the basis for exercising symbolic power in fiction.

- (iii) The post 9/11 period has witnessed a rapid progress in Christian-Zionist understanding and a misuse of this association in forming perceptions and attitudes towards Arabs and Muslims (Bahramitash, 2005, p. 229). Several novels representing Arab Muslims’ eschatological hostility toward Israel assumed a confrontational tone and a battle of “good versus evil” in which Islamic beliefs promote hate, intolerance and aggression. Heidi Julavits’ *The Effect of Living Backwards* (2003), Philip Roth’s *The Plot Against America* (2004), Lorraine Adams’s *Harbor* (2004), Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and Amy Waldman’s *The Submission* (2011) are examples of such fundamentalist narratives. Fundamentalist thought in these novels plays a crucial role in promoting the Israeli alignment with the US war on terrorism and ensuring the American bias against Arab Muslims. This association has succeeded in forming a convenient ally able to produce apocalyptic warnings about Islamic threat to the world in several novels despite the absence of such harsh identifications in pre 9/11 American novel.
- (iv) Although socio-political and cultural cleavages within the American society have taken advanced positions and produced serious cultural inflection points, a fraction of American novel called Arab American novel has gained more acclaim and recognition and highlighted the symbolic relationship between the Arab world and the United States. This genre of Arab-American literature has been acting as representatives of the social solidarity in post 9/11 cultural climactic epoch after gaining a widespread readership after the attacks. Imagery and themes, for example, in Laila Halaby’s *Once in a Promised Land* (2007), Diana Abu Jaber’s *Crescent* (2003) dispelled the recurrent image of vicious and backward Arab Muslims and alleviated their alienation by presenting the Arab Muslims as a normal segment of the American society that includes good and bad people. Not only did they succeed in puncturing the stereotypical perceptions produced by fundamentalist narratives through what Said calls a “great deconstructive power”, counter-narrative discourse, but also elicited empathy from American readers.

In addition to the aforementioned trends, post 9/11 novel is further influenced by a multitude of hidden factors of individuals, political lobbies and organizations—classic orientalist discourses have been known for decades as a product of similar factors in Britain, France and the United States. These factors facilitated a “simplistic fundamentalist approach” of the representing “Islamic terrorism”. Ultimately, therefore, a scholarly responsibility of contemporary critics is the elucidation of fundamentalist narratives’ predilection for disputing the cultural tensions resulting from terrorist acts and retaliations.

4. Conclusion

This study had three objectives: studying the rise of American cultural fundamentalism, examining how Islamic fundamentalism is used to represent a wide range of Islamic values and investigating how Islamic terrorism became a necessary commodity in American fundamentalist narratives. The

discussion considered the societal and cultural contexts and used individuals' and groups' contributions to the rise of fundamentalism. The investigation has found indications that fundamentalist narrative is a more a symptom than a reason for the extremely dichotomous tendencies readers may notice in most of the post 9/11 novels on Islam. Fundamentalist narratives constructed a distinctive form of representations to articulate their approach in "post 9/11 American novel". These representations are symptomatic of a broader trend- the excessive use of political and religious imagery in characterization that has produced and continues to produce fundamentalist writers with biased attitudes. The language used by fundamentalist writers is grounded in a sociopolitical system characterized by absolutism and a religious outlook characterized by extremist expression and application. This study thus introduced the term "fundamentalist narratives" to describe the new fusion of political religion and narrative works that characterized post 9/11 American novel.

To borrow two sentences from *In the Ruins* used by DeLillo (2001) to describe the way in which narratives developed out of the sharper divide after 9/11 attacks, fundamentalist narratives are "stories of heroism" and "encounters with dread" and based on the culturally dichotomous categories: "We are rich, privileged and strong, but they are willing to die. This is the edge they have, the fire of aggrieved belief" (p. 34). One of the main responsibilities of the critics, therefore, is to amplify the ways in which fundamentalist narratives make a good use of this situation by entreating the readers to consider consequences resulting from such divide. Put simply, literary doctrines that reject coexistence with others are always problematic for contemporary societies and need constant efforts to counteract their inherently offensive tendencies. This need to restrain the hostile attitudes was the concern of Einstein on war when he asked Freud if it is "possible to control man's mental evolution so as to make him proof against the psychoses of hate and destructiveness?" Einstein meant both "the so-called uncultured masses" and "the so-called Intelligenzia". Freud's response was straightforward and simple affirming that the best way to confront man's "instinct for hatred and destruction" is to improve "emotional ties" between members (Freud, 1933, p. 201). Einstein's concern for de-escalation of hate, fundamentalism and aggression is more relevant today where deep-seated antagonism between countries and groups colors individuals' writings and leaders' speeches.

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