ISLAMOPHOBIA IN AMERICAN PROSE: A CONTRAPUNTAL READING OF *THE JEWEL OF MEDINA*, *FALLING MAN* AND *INFIDEL*

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2021

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by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

September 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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ABSTRAK

Kesan serangan 9/11 menyaksikan ledakan penerbitan sastera di Amerika dan Eropah mengenai Islam dan umat Islam. Kebanyakan karya prosa memuatkan gambaran dominan umat Islam sebagai ganas dan pengganas atau Islam sebagai agama yang misoginis dan tidak toleran. Amerika menyaksikan lonjakan Islamofobia di mana sastera, bersama media dan filem mudah dijangkiti. Sebilangan besar kritikan akademik yang muncul menempatkan karya-karya ini di bawah struktur Orientalisme Edward Said, telah memudahkan hujah implikasi Islamofobik mereka. Usaha ini telah dicela kerana menggunakan Islamofobia untuk melindungi diri dari pemeriksaan kritikal. Konsep teoritis tentang representasi oleh Edward Said itu sendiri dikritik kerana tidak konsisten dan tidak dapat mewakili dirinya sendiri. Justeru, kriteria untuk mencari teks pasca-9/11 sebagai Islamofobia dalam konstruksi teori dan analisis Orientalisme bermasalah. Oleh itu, intipati kajian ini adalah untuk membatasi Islamofobia yang berkaitan dengan pembinaan Orientalisme. Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat sama ada terdapat atau tidak, dan sejauhmana wujudnya, Islamofobia dalam prosa Amerika yang terpilih, iaitu *The Jewel of Medina* (2008) oleh Sherry Jones, *Falling Man* (2007) oleh Don DeLillo dan *Infidel* (2007) oleh Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Untuk mencapai objektif yang mendasar ini, kajian ini mencadangkan model bacaan dan tafsiran prosa yang menggabung kedua-duanya Orientalisme dan bacaan Kontrapuntal oleh Edward Said. Ini dapat mengesan representasi Oriental dan

membongkar perincian yang disembunyikan, kebenaran yang dipinggirkan dan sesuatu yang dibisukan di dalam teks. Usaha ini membantu memahami kecenderungan ideologi penulis. Dengan meneroka keterlibatan peribadi mereka dan keadaan kontekstual prosa, motivasi di sebalik representasi Oriental tentang Islam dan Muslim dalam teks-teks tersebut dapat dibongkar. Menyelidiki masalah yang dapat dilihat dalam novel-novel Amerika, kajian ini mendapati bahawa prosa Ali dan DeLillo adalah Islamofobik, kerana terdapat pengukuhan stereotaip Oriental orang Islam, tiada pemberitahuan tentang korban orang Islam dan menyokong Pertembungan Peradaban yang berada di bawah sistem pemerintahan negara. Bagi Ayaan Hirsi Ali, komunikasinya dengan kumpulan dan idea neo-konservatif menunjukkan agenda yang tersembunyi. Karya Sherry Jones, *The Jewel of Madinah*, walaupun menimbulkan kontroversi paling banyak pada saat awal penerbitannya, didapati mempunyai niat terapeutik, pengaruh feminis dan sedikit sahaja kesan Orientalisme. Oleh itu karya ini tidak dianggap Islamofobik. Kajian ini signifikan kerana ia menawarkan satu rekonsiliasi terhadap keterbatasan konsep reprsentasi Edward Said dan terhadap teori Islamophobia dalam kesusasteraan. Dapatan ini adalah kunci kepada interpretasi yang praktikal terhadap prosa pasca-9/11 yang lain.

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ABSTRACT

The aftermath of 9/11 attacks saw an outburst of literary publications in America and Europe about Islam and Muslims. Most of these novels reproduced dominant images of Muslims as violent murderers or terrorists and of Islam as a misogynist and an intolerant religion. Thus, America witnessed a surge of Islamophobia to which literature, alongside media and cinema, remain susceptible. A bulk of criticisms that followed situate these novels under Edward Said's structures of Orientalism, facilitating the argument for their Islamophobic implications. These endeavours have been reproached for using Islamophobia to shield away from critical scrutiny. Said's theoretical concept of representation is itself criticized for being inconsistent and unrepresentable of itself. Thus, the criteria for locating post-9/11 texts as Islamophobic within the theoretical and analytical construing of Orientalism is problematized. The crux of this study, therefore, is to delimit Islamophobia pertaining to the construct of Orientalism. The research aims to investigate whether or not, and to what extent, there is Islamophobia in the selected American proses, namely Sherry Jones' *The Jewel of Medina* (2008), Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) and Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel* (2007). To achieve this underlying objective, the study proposes a model of reading and interpreting the novels, which incorporates Edward Said's theories of Orientalism and Contrapuntal readings. This method of interpretation would be able to identify Oriental representations and to uncover the submerged details, the marginalized truth and what is forcibly silenced in the texts. By exploring

their personal engagements and the contextual circumstances of their novels, the motivation behind their Oriental representations of Islam and Muslims in the texts was revealed. Investigating the envisaged problem in these bestselling American proses, the study finds that Ali and DeLillo's novels are Islamophobic, for their reinforcing of Oriental stereotypes of Muslims, silencing of Muslim victimhood and strengthening of the clash of civilizations thesis which falls under the machinery of the state. Sherry Jones' *The Jewel of Medina*, although stirred the most controversy at its time of publication, is found to have a therapeutic intention, feminist influences and a mild subscription to Orientalism, thus, is not as Islamophobic. The proposed reading model offers a reconciliation to the limitations of Said's representation and to the theorizing of Islamophobia in literature, a key input to the practical interpretation of other post-9/11 novels.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, significance of the research as well as the scope and limitations of the study. It also provides an outline of the theoretical framework and methodology incorporated in the study, synopsis of the selected texts and their authors and an organisation of the thesis.

1.2   Background of the Study

The encounter between East and West has always been a significant attribute of modern world history, especially in recent decades, it has as well been the issue with literature in English. Islam, after the Rushdie affair and the Iranian revolution, has become the medium of identification of Muslims in the Western world – moving away from earlier identifiers like class or status (immigrant or colonial), ethnicity or race (Ghaneabassiri, 2012, p. 169; Zebiri, 2008, p. 12). More recently after the September 11 event in America, Islam became the subject of a revived Orientalism in the Western world, especially in political discourse, media and literature (Kumar, 2010, p. 255). Muslims have since then been demonised and dehumanised to justify the earlier Oriental claims that Islam advocates terrorism and intolerance, Muslim women are oppressed or that Islam is a backward and misogynist religion. These misperceptions about Islam are widely demonstrated in works of literature at both local and international levels. The consequence of these misrepresentations of Islam and

Muslims in all mediums is what is commonly known as Islamophobia; a phenomenon without which this research would not have been necessary.

The most cited definition of Islamophobia is from the report compiled by the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, titled; 'Islamophobia: A Challenge for us All'. This report defines Islamophobia as "a useful shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, the fear or dislike of all or most Muslims" (Runnymede Trust, 1997, para. 5). This old observation about Islamophobia highlights dread and hatred for Muslims, although the substantial analysis of the report is focused mainly on rationalised prejudice on Muslims in Britain, the definition is quite relevant to current situations of Islamophobia. Two decades after, the same commission published a 'Twenty Years Anniversary Report' where Islamophobia was redefined as "anti-Muslim discrimination or racism." This new definition was made to reflect the significant shift in anti-Muslim hostility after 9/11 and 7/7 events, respectively (Elahi & Khan, 2017, p. 6).

However, the term "Islamophobia" is more recently, often used in reference to a "religiously-motivated hostility directed at Muslims". Runnymede Trust's 1997 report popularised the concept of Islamophobia in Britain, and it became more widely accepted in Europe after the publication of the EUMC (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia) Islamophobia reports of 2001 and 2005 (Zebiri, 2008, pp. 12–13).

Although the precise definition of Islamophobia remains uncertain, this study will adopt an amalgam of the definitions here provided for the interest of the research analysis. Muslims have been criticised for "using cries of Islamophobia as a shield from critical scrutiny" (N. Malik, 2018, para. 24), thus, what is to be considered

Islamophobic and what is not, becomes the central focus of this research. This study will, however, endeavour to separate and acknowledge constructive criticism of Islamic related cultural practices from defamatory hate speeches directed at the generality of Islam and Muslims. While being engaged in the discussion and analysis of literary issues about Oriental representations of Islam, it does not approve of atrocities committed in the name of Islam. Thus, denouncing abuses like honour killings, female genital mutilation, suicide bombing or the death sentence for blasphemy and apostasy in an essentialist way – by making the religion and its whole adherent culprits in a defining manner – is at this moment considered Islamophobic.

1.2.1 Islamophobia in America

Islamophobia has existed for centuries in the West. Although not referred to as Islamophobia, its characteristics (stereotype, prejudice, and marginalisation) are apparent in the anti-Muslim sentiments which prevail in the Western disposition for a very long time. Looking back at the English history, there has always been a professed enemy on which English superiority and heroism must be demonstrated. Jo Carruthers (2011) sees Islamophobia as only an extension of "Englishness", a cultural civilisation which must demonise a group or the other (the French, Jews, Turks, Catholics or Protestants) to show its simplicity and civility, an observation very synonymous to that of Edward Said. Thus, this "[r]eformed constructions of Englishness" passed on to the Muslims in the later centuries, plays a vital role in contemporary Islamophobia. (p. 106)

The general American population who were mostly migrants from Europe conceived Islam as it was back then in the Old and Middle ages in Europe. This anti-Islamism has remained latent in American culture, politics, and discourse until it

heightened after the dramatic event of September 11, 2001[1]. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri[2] opines that "American Anti-Muslim attitudes are as old as the United States". Islamophobia has only recently been the branded name for anti-Muslim sentiments, but throughout American history, "large segments of American society have identified Islam with tyranny, intolerance, misogyny, violence, sexual promiscuity, and heathenism." (GhaneaBassiri, 2013, p. 53).

America's selection of her history in bits and pieces – to exclude the Muslims' existence from the core foundational structure of the nation – shows just how inherently anti-Islamic the nation is. America continues to venerate her openness to pluralism by presenting the Muslims as a recent addition to its populace. Whereas, Muslims have been in America since the first 300 years of European presence because of early Africans' slavery. According to Sam Haselby[3], "Muslims were part of Greater America from the start, including those parts of it that would become the United States." (2019, para. 8). This overlooking of Muslims in American history has maligned the Muslims today from belonging to America, and thus, they are perceived as recent strangers to America.

The extent of Islamophobia in America is seen in the level of hate crimes (physical attacks, vandalism, or verbal attacks) against innocent Muslims or Muslim looking Asians, especially after every terrorist attack – perceivably Islamic. A research

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[1] Hereafter referred to as 9/11.

[2] Prof. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri is a professor of religion at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. A Havard graduate and award-winning scholar. His study focusses on religion – Islam in America. He is the author of *A History of Islam in America* (2010) and *Competing Visions of Islam in the United States* (1997). He has also edited several other books.

[3] Sam Haselby is a historian and a journalist. He is currently a senior editor at Aeon. He was a junior fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows and an assistant professor of history at Colombia University, American University of Beirut and American University of Cairo. He authored the book *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism* (2016).

finding by Pew Research Centre reveals that: In 2016 reported hate crime incidents grew higher against American Muslims than it was after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The FBI statistics show these hate crimes grew by 67% in 2015 over the previous year (CNN Wire, 2016).

This spiteful despise of the Muslims grew based on the assumption that the Muslims engineered the 9/11 attacks, which were conceived as a war against the Americans (Baker et al., 2013). Whereas, America's participation in the design and funding of the attack(ers) is still under scrutiny since Hillary Clinton's candid acknowledgement "that America created and funded Al Qaeda as a terrorist organisation in the heyday of the Soviet-Afghan war." (Chossudovsky, 2018, para. 1). This development renders the involvement of Muslims in 9/11 attack and other subsequent Islamic terrorist attacks on America highly doubtful. The catastrophe of the event was further used to lure the Americans' loyalty to support (financially) and stand with the government against the Muslims terrorists especially with President Bush's anti-terrorism campaign rhetoric: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."[4] His other Islamophobic rhetoric "The axis of evil",[5] – a phrase that would become the hallmark of his foreign policies – further maligned the Muslims in general and created a margin between patriotic Americans (and the world) against Islam/Muslims (Baker et al., 2013, p. 269).

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[4] This statement of the former US President George W. Bush is known as his reaction to 9/11 attack. He made this statement at the launch of his anti-terrorism campaign addressing the globe. In full: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." First published by Voice of America 2001 (Klein, 2009).

[5] This phrase was also used by President Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address to describe foreign governments that sponsored terrorism and own weapons of mass destruction. It was subsequently used to rally the Americans' support for 'War on Terror' Particularly, Iran, Iraq and North Korea. (Glass, 2019).

Meanwhile, GhaneaBassiri (2013), argues that there is no clear-cut reason for the origin of Islamophobia in America. That, "anti-Muslim attitudes are complex and multifaceted. While public opinion scholars and researchers of Islamophobia agree that anti-Muslim attitudes are on the rise and politically significant, there is no clear explanation of its basis." He, however, attributes the lack of clarity of the origins of Islamophobia in America to the "complex nature of antagonistic relations between the general American population and the Muslim minority within it." (p. 56).

However, Islam became synonymous with terrorism and violence after 9/11; an inclination which is embedded in socio-political maneuvers. Considering the persistent surge of Islamophobia shortly after this catastrophic event, it becomes evident that the identification of Muslims/Islam with terrorism gained more credence with this occurrence. Nevertheless, Neil Gotanda (2011), on the other hand, argued that it had been the trend of the racialisation of Muslims in America long before 9/11. In his words: "the Muslim terrorist in our popular culture should not be seen as new, but within an established tradition of racialising Asian Americans" (p. 184). He further states that this racialisation of Muslims in America is the bedrock of US foreign policies. Discrimination against Muslims is as old as heterogeneity in America. Thus, the relationship between Islamophobia and racialisation of Muslim in America become intertwined. Erik Love, in his book *Islamophobia and Racism in America* (2017) observes that:

> American Islamophobia developed in very much the same ways as all American social structures that involve race. As a form of racism, Islamophobia is built into American institutions. White supremacy and Islamophobia stem from the same root, and they are both burrowed into the foundations of American institutions. (Love, 2017, p. 4)

This observation gives the basis for the consideration of Islamophobia in America as a new form of racism. It also foregrounds the argument of this study that Orientalism of Muslims, which is built on an exaggeration of difference (as Said maintains), fosters racism, thereby, maximises the fear and unjust treatment of Muslims in America. Having it that, anti-Muslim sentiments existed in America and only transformed after 9/11, this study goes with the argument that present-day Islamophobia in America is beyond the effects of 9/11 attack on the Americans (Mir & Sarroub, 2019, p. 298). It has more to do with the inherent racialisation of Muslims in America and a more significant political agenda (Chossudovsky, 2020).

Therefore, the Muslim as an individual entity continues to come under increased scrutiny not only as a result of racism but also as a response to acts of terrorism carried out by some Muslims (or would be Muslims), international conflicts (especially relating to matters of the Middle-East) and staged violence in the West. Islam and Muslims have become known as the focal point of so many anxieties pertaining to liberal values, gender equality, patriotism and religious fundamentalism. These tensions have subjected the Muslims to intense criticisms and intolerance, which consequentially result in racialisation, marginalisation, abuse and vandalism of religious places. "In America, the Muslim community as a whole is being targeted. Islam is described as "religion of war" … [they] are increasingly the object of routine discrimination and ethnic profiling" (Chossudovsky, 2010). Thus, Islam, as a religion (or culture in some cases) became continuously conceived as typically misogynist, backward and violent.

These perceptions of Muslims, as terrorists, misogynists and savage, were emphasized in America through various mediums like literature, the media, and the

cinema. The bulk of American novels published in the years after 9/11 were Islamophobic.

1.3   Statement of the Problem

To directly state the problem, in canonical literary works, Muslims are continuously misrepresented as terrorists, backward, misogynist or oppressed (for women) by both Muslim and non-Muslim writers, which give credence to the development of Islamophobia in some parts of the world, especially in America. Although these writers are mostly reproducing the dominant discourse about Islam – as literature is said to be the mirror of life – the identity carved for Muslims does not reflect the reality of 1.8 {now 2} Billion of Muslims around the globe (Diamant, 2019, para. 9). Much of these portrayals rest upon the misdeeds of less than one per cent of total Muslims in the world and the flawed cultural practices ascribed to Islam. Thus, Islamophobia persistently becomes a threat to the Muslims in America and beyond, and especially, to pluralism in America.

While the issue of misrepresentation, misperception and mistreatment of Muslims continues to gain attention worldwide, it, till today, remains a complex area of study. Muslims in America are increasingly discriminated (Hauslohner, 2017) and victimised in hate crimes (Kaplan, 2006; Underwood, 2018) which have been rising in numbers since 9/11. All of these point towards the Islamophobic racialisation of Muslims in America till today. (Beydoun, 2018; Ernst, 2013; E. Green, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2017). Although various studies have been done pertaining to the Oriental representation of Muslims in English writings and also Islamophobic attitudes of post 9/11 American novels, these studies do not read the novels critically from the contrapuntal perspective. Much of existing research are more inclined towards

theoretical analysis of the affiliations of the texts with Orientalism, Neo-Orientalism, Oriental Feminism, and Islamophobia but do not provide a counter-narrative of these texts to unveil the submerged details within it. This limitation is considered as a fallacy to the Muslims whose real identity has been misrepresented and will continue to be scrutinised if not duly addressed.

This study hypothesises that the misrepresentation of Muslims in novels contribute to the growing Islamophobia, given that the variety of responses to the wider readership of novels tend to reproduce existing ideological biases. Within the selected novels, Muslims are misrepresented mainly, and these efforts have not only contributed to the misperception of Muslims but also reduced them to objects of racial profiling as apparent in their marginalisation in the American society. Previous studies of the selected novels have explored the continuity of Orientalism in the texts. The multifurcations of Muslims becomes a hindrance to understanding the different outlooks of Muslims in America. However, the overgeneralisation of Muslims in the novels about specific stereotypes against Muslims remains mostly ignored.

This study sees Islamophobic representation of Muslims in literary works as a persistent problem that needs to be addressed. The study argues that there is more to the Muslim identity than what has been presented in the texts and that some real situations governing the dominant post 9/11 discourse are under-represented in these novels. However, engrained with this argument is a consciousness of the debates surrounding Said's Orientalism concerning terrorist acts supposedly perpetrated by Muslims and the branding of Said's supporters as apologists by his critics. Similarly, another dimension to this study's outlook of Orientalism is the resurfacing of Orientalism after 9/11 in a livelier manner. In that, it was openly used to justify war on terror especially through Bush's anti-terrorism campaigns and feminist Oriental

rants of rescuing the Muslim women in Afghanistan from the violent and oppressive men – a classical Orientalist trope. Nevertheless, critics have argued much about what should and what should not be perceived as Islamophobia.

That, if everything portrayed about Arab-Islamic people is considered Oriental, how would the real culture of the Arabs be anthologically documented or preserved in literature? Another troubling question that incites the theoretical efforts of this study is: where do we place real-life events of some misguided Muslims who have openly dominated, oppressed and terrorized the world's peace? Some, though of course not all, Muslim leaders in the Middle East even made the recurring production of Orientalism easier with their misogynist laws and actions. Adam Shatz maintains that:

> the rise of the Islamic State, or Daesh, and the resurgence of Salafism have helped restore the old prism, the Orientalism of rigid and immutable difference…[some] Arab and Muslim [autocratic] leaders also contributed to the reconsolidation of this distorting lens…Orientalism has long been a co-production, even though not all its producers have equal power (Shatz, 2019, para. 13)

All these scenarios have understandably influenced post 9/11 literary productions which make the Muslim other even more demonised and very different from the modern and secular Westerner. These attitudes toward Muslims and Arabs have "hardened and even strengthen the old Orientalist discourse" (Marandi & Tari, 2012) both in literature and real life. So, to what extent can a novel about Muslims be considered Islamophobic and to what extent will it be appreciated as an artistic piece of work?

1.4   Objectives of the Study

The fact that conceptualization of Islamophobia is still undergoing etymological scrutiny – considering other similar traits already in existence and the

root word 'phobia' – the academic efforts to effectively theorize it remain somewhat undermined. One of the reproaches that interest this study is from the outlook that the actions of some lunatic fringe among the Muslims confirm the old Orientalist assumptions of the misogynist and terrorist Muslims. However, the painstaking theorizing of similar representations in literature as Orientalism and consequently as Islamophobia, is as well criticized as the flagrant misuse of Orientalism. What then is Orientalism, without engaging in 'reverse Orientalism'? How much Orientalism makes Islamophobia, and on what parameters should a text be considered Islamophobic? Responsively, within the construct of Orientalism, this study aims to delimit Islamophobia in the selected texts while addressing the following objectives.

1. To identify the Oriental representation of Muslims in the selected works.

2. To outline, through a Contrapuntal reading of the text, the motivation behind the identified misrepresentations.

3. To evaluate the tendencies of Islamophobia in the identified Oriental discourse.

1.5   Significance of the Study

Although the construction of Muslim "otherness" – in both sociopolitical and literary discourses – has much been discussed in theory and practice, and the foundations for the structures of Islamophobia in America have as well been established, the silently ignored truth of the Muslims submerged within Islamophobic American narratives are yet to be given appropriate scholarly attention.

The aim of this research, therefore, is to enhance the efficacy of existing academic research on Islamophobia in America. The targeted beneficiaries for this study thus, include a wide range of stakeholders like policymakers, researchers,

community workers, activists, students or civil rights (or any other) organisations interested in questioning this global phenomenon – Islamophobia. Similarly, the incorporation of some of these Islamophobic texts into the American school curriculum will reproduce a distorted knowledge of the Muslims to countless generations to come. This study thus aims to provoke to some degree the monitoring of the canonisation of certain post 9/11 American fictions, their writers and their participation in the perpetuation of favoured ideologies

After due critical analysis of the selected texts for this study, their real position will be understood pertaining to the Oriental representation of Muslims. Similarly, people will get to understand the extent of Islamophobia in America. This study will contribute towards extending the coverage of postcolonialism to Islamic polemic discourses. It will as well contribute to raising the global awareness and objectivity on Muslims' identity and Islam in the context of International Literature; there will be a generation of original knowledge and understanding to make a substantial contribution to the discipline of literature.

1.6   Scope and Limitations of the Study

Islamophobia has existed in the West for ages, but a new wave of discrimination against Muslims and Anti-Muslim rhetoric surged right after the events of 9/11. This study will be limiting its discussion of Islamophobia to the post 9/11 era not to obscure further the long history of racial discrimination that has been affecting the Muslim immigrants of various non-White ethnicities in the United States, but to give prime focus to only a specific wave of Islamophobia and its relation to literature in this specified context. The study will consider a variety of post 9/11 discourses as

well as scholarly responses of America's foreign policies concerning the Muslims, especially her 'War on Terror', for a contextual study of the texts.

The present study will engage in analysing the Oriental representations of the Muslims in the selected texts drawing mainly from Said's theorisation of othering, binary opposition and stereotyping of the Muslim other. Furthermore, the study will engage in evaluating the tendencies of Islamophobia in the identified Oriental representation of Muslims; this inquiry will be made through the evaluation of Islamophobic discourse already undertaken by the available literature. The study will as well, examine the motivations behind the identified representations; this will endeavour to understand the underlying rationale of the authors' inclination to the respective ideological preconceptions reproduced. Overall, Edward Said's contrapuntal reading will form the theoretical basis for this study. As the main drive for undertaking this research is to discover marginally ignored and submerged details within the narratives.

Although there are quite a few perspectives of Said's theory of Orientalism, the notion of Orientalism debated within the postcolonial discipline is what will be applied in this thesis. Other relations of Orientalism in other disciplines, in meaning or practice, will not be solicited in this study.

There will be no data collection in the form of electronic or direct contact with anticipated readers of the selected texts, all data to be used for analysis would strictly be from the primary sources and secondary literature relevant to the research analysis. Similarly, only characters used to symbolise Muslims or events that denote Islamic practices would be utilised for the research analysis. Real-life events of demonisation

of Muslims and Islam in the Islamophobic context will be used to investigate the authors' convergence in promoting Islamophobia through these novels.

1.6.1 The Selected Authors and Texts

For this research, the three authors and their selected texts are carefully chosen to explore the Islamophobic extent of the Oriental assertions made of Muslims in the selected works such as: Sherry Jones' *The Jewel of Medina* (2008), Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) and Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel* (2007).

Sherry Jones is an American of Italian descent whose novel chronicles the history of Islam (during Prophet Muhammad's time) as narrated by the protagonist Aisha, the youngest wife of the Prophet. The novel captures the frivolities of Middle Age Arabia. The defamation of the religion of Islam, according to Norman Daniel (2000), reeled through historical documentation of Islamic history and cultural practices by Western writers from early Middle Age into Modern times. Therefore, Sherry Jones' representation of the Muslims in the novel *The Jewel of Medina* (2008) *is* a typical prototype of Occidental imaginations of the Orient since Jones never had any first-hand experience/knowledge of Islam until after 9/11. The result of her five years of studying about Islam is her first novel – a historical fiction about the history of Islam.

Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man* (2007) is a post 9/11 novel which narrates the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Centre (Twin Towers) in New York. Keith Neudecker is the protagonist in whose engagements we see the traumatic effects of the attack on the Americans. The framing of the Muslim terrorists is perfectly accomplished through the character development of Hammad; the central tool of the

attack, and that of Amir; the coordinator of the attack. This has been the trend with most post 9/11 novels (Alireza & Khademi, 2015; M. Altwaiji, 2011).

Ayaan Hirsi is an American and Dutch of Somali origin, an x-Muslim who assimilated in the West and through anti-Islamic Oriental writings. The text selected from her works is *Infidel* (2007), an autobiography which accounts her perspective and experiences of the horrors of Islam, its oppression of women and extreme backwardness. The text narrates her childhood experiences in Mogadishu, Somalia, where she was born, how she was raised Muslim, and how she spent her childhood in the harshness of Somalia. She recollects her life experiences in Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and Kenya as well as in Holland where she became an atheist, a parliamentarian and staunch critic of Islam, until she lost her Dutch citizenship due to false claims which led to her migration to America. Her work is one of those prominent memoirs by authors of Muslim background whose insider narratives attend to the post 9/11 increased global demands about Islam and Muslims. Writers of this genre usually "use their writing to critique Islamist extremism" (O'Gorman, 2018, p. 1). Ayaan Hirsi Ali's fervent criticism of Islam arose from her sympathy towards the miserable condition of Muslim women at home or abroad. Other works published earlier than *Infidel* such as *The Caged Virgin* (2004) highlights different trials and tribulation of Muslim women around her. Most migrant women from Muslim countries are maltreated by their husbands, families or in-laws and are denied access to education, normal life or basic healthcare. It is due to accumulated empathy for the despondent condition of such Muslim women that she makes much effort proposing and campaigning for a solution to their misfortune: through criticizing Islamic practices that empower Muslim men.

1.6.2 Canonization of the Selected Texts

The works selected for this study are all contemporary post 9/11 prose. All three texts are written by prominent American authors who have established a remarkable relevance to mainstream readers and academia at large. After 9/11, a series of literary works on 9/11 were included into the high school and undergraduate students' reading list. Zine et al.'s editorial raises a concern about ethicality in the inclusion of several post 9/11 works by female Muslim feminist writers in the school curriculum. Most of these works bear the imprint of contemporary forms of Islamophobia, which therefore, necessitates a critical look into the curriculum. They argued that, "new pedagogies of dissent are needed to counter the continuing miseducation within the [academic,] political and public sphere" (Zine et al., 2007, p. 274). The three works selected for this study are prescribed school readings; as such the findings of this study will hopefully be beneficial for both educators and policy makers.

Sherry Jones, despite being a new author began her career with the publication of a historical fiction that almost caused a catastrophe in the West, and despite the hurling controversies that surrounded the publication of her book, made it to the New York Times bestseller list and was translated into fifteen languages. It is the most recent book about Islam that incited so much controversy, receiving mixed reactions from readers, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Ayaan Hirsi, on the other hand, is a famous name in modern literary discourse. Her memoir, while being richly insightful, exposes the barbarism and oppressiveness of Islam. Against this background, she received Western sympathy for her victimhood. Her work has been translated into several languages and read widely across the globe. The third author, Don DeLillo is considered one of the greatest writers of this era whose long history of writing novels

that foretell terrorism in America made his novel *Falling Man* (2007) a much-awaited masterpiece. His status in the writing arena gives his novel credibility to the point of being the most read post 9/11 novel. The motivation behind the selection of these different yet similar texts is to foreground the various kinds of Oriental writings available; the ones from Westerners (of Western origin) and that of colonised 'other'-turned-Westerner – or better put as native informers – which garnered a wide readership around the globe.

1.7   Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The primary sources in this research are three fictional works of three American authors: Sherry Jones' *The Jewel of Medina* (2008), Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) and Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel* (2006). The secondary sources of this study consist of the authors' personal records in the form of speeches and interviews or other personal engagements, various scholarly articles, books, reviews of the selected works or issues related to the subject matters.

The main method of reading in this study is contrapuntal reading. Various discursive terms such as, 'Orient', 'stereotype', 'othering' and 'binary opposition' will be employed from Edward Said's theories of Orientalism and scholars' hypothesising of Islamophobia that caters for the subject of this analysis. The main concern of this analysis will be rooted in the problematic construction of Muslim identity through Oriental representations in fictional works as well as contextual realities that are potential factors of shaping the construction of Muslims as an ideological discourse. Thus, it will embark on a Contrapuntal reading to understand the authors' attitudes and ideological conjectures silently illustrated in the text. It will consider as well facts

'marginally silenced' for a contextual understanding of the texts' affiliation to Islamophobia.

In the second chapter of this thesis, more discussion on the theories, their significance and method of use will be elaborated. Edward Said's theory of Orientalism has been used in various disciplines, and its complexity cannot be emphasised any further. Hence, appropriate aspects of this theory, such as "otherness", stereotype and binary oppositions, will be employed. These concepts, along with his theory of Contrapuntal reading, will be employed to study the selected texts concerning their contexts and authorial intentions. The analysis chapters will, however, delve into the critical analysis of the themes of Islamic misogyny and that of Islamic terrorism in the selected novels. Each theme will be examined in one chapter. Thus, chapters four and five will focus on the application of the theories to the subjects of analysis.

1.8   Literature Review

Literature has continuously played a vital role in representations and interpretations of society. Such literature then goes a long way in influencing the opinions of society.

1.8.1 Islamophobia in American Literature

The scheme of framing Muslims is mostly fueled by media, political and journalistic discourses about the issues of lack of gender equality, integration, terrorism (or a tendency for fundamentalism) and other Islamic practices perceived to be non-conforming to the modern Western civilisation. It is safe to say, the mixed reactions of the Westerners to Socio-political issues surrounding the Muslim entity is

well manifested in the literary arena and mainly, reflected in the fictional works of American writers – whether American-born or migrant.

Although anti-Muslim representations in English writings have existed as early as the 16th Century – during the Early Modern Era (Daniel, 2000; Jenkins, 2007; Kalin, 2004), the debate on the clash of civilisations and on culture and difference which gave rise to a climate for Islamophobia in English writings was ignited again after 9/11. It is unclear to what extent the American empire and her conspiracies have influenced the contemporary writers in demonising the Muslim 'other', but certainly, there is a connection, and it remains acknowledged in this research inquiry. According to Peter Morey, "[w]hen it comes to literature and politics, the relationship between narrative and power is never straightforward." (Morey, 2018, p. 3).

The surge in anti-Islamic novels after 9/11 appears to have fed the development of Muslim stereotypes in America. This sudden overflow of anti-Islamic literature aimed at meeting the demands of the American literary market – the quest of Islamophobia, which has been "the hallmark of present-day mass fiction". This form of Islamophobia transmitted through literary works "is designed not so much to sow the seeds of misunderstanding as to sow the seeds of willful hostility" (Al-Shaikh-Ali, 2011, p. 160).

The success of Islamophobia in literature could be ascribed to the writers' engagement in exactly the type of Orientalist attitudes which Said's *Orientalism* (1978) sought to expose (Morey, 2018, p.9). This form of representation of the Muslims in American novels promotes a peculiar identity for the Muslims, which conforms with colonial attributes that place the colonised in an inferior position. Such Oriental representations of Muslims in literature – as with the Turks in Early Modern

English narratives – as tyrants, violent, or misogynists becomes synonymous with the real-life Muslims. (Akalin, 2001; Şahiner, 2008). To this, the Muslim figure becomes negatively overstated, resulting in bigotry and hate against the 'other' – the Muslim other. Identity formation and stereotyping (which practically is and leads to racism) of the colonised by the coloniser is what postcolonial studies rejects and still resists. However, sadly, the Muslims' identity has been formed literarily over time, especially in the aftermath of the September 11 misfortune, and today, they are/have been marginalised and racialised.

Most of the post 9/11 novels are according to analysts, written with an agenda to stir Islamophobic sentiment in America and consequently promoting the war on terror and other American foreign policies against the Muslims. Writers like: Azar Nafisi, Geraldine Brooks, Don DeLillo, Andre Dubus, Lorraine Adams, John Updike among others display Islamophobic tendencies in their treatment of Islamic fundamentalism, fanaticism and/or terrorism; a phenomenon which has been considered by many scholars as "Neo-Orientalism" (Alosman et al., 2018; Manqoush et al., 2014; Hossein Pirnajmuddin & Borhan, 2011). Another form of Islamophobic traits post 9/11 American writers demonstrate is Orientalizing the Muslim women. More appropriately put as "Oriental Feminism" or "Feminist Orientalism"; the practice of portraying Muslim women as oppressed, weak, subjugated and subordinate. This misogyny is ascribed to both Islam and Muslim men, and in most cases, the oppressed woman either desperately waits for an American to save her or flees from the torment of Islam (and the men around her) to the safe zone – America. (Bahramitash, 2005; Marandi & Tari, 2012).

More so, migrants and other American writers with Islamic background like Azar Nafisi, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Wafa Sultan, Asra Nomani among others, form a

different category of Islamophobic writers. These writers subscribe to the Orientalism of Muslims in their works to profit from the booming Islamophobic industry through the selling of horrible stories about Islam from an insider perspective – native informants[6]. American narratives after 9/11 witnessed a paradigm shift from sociopolitical issues to issues of national threat, identity and nationalism (M. Altwaiji, 2011, p. 2). Such natives always write in a "biased Western, liberal-humanist perspective". Through their oversimplified depiction of Muslim societies, they confirm the stereotypes of Muslim women as victims of an inherently misogynistic Islamic tradition. (Grogan, 2014; N. Malik, 2018; Shatz, 2003). A bulk of the literature produced in this challenging period "assumed that terrorism is now the nation's first priority" (Biddle, 2005, p. 5).

The war against terrorism formed the central discourse, which was influencing and shaping literature. The texts, on the other hand, contributed to shaping several discourses in America, which include the monolithic perception of Islam – the ideas that Muslims were all the same, Muslims are violent and promote violence, Muslim women are oppressed and that the Zionists are innocent. All these represented multiple voices in America, with the loudest voices promoting Islamophobia, and advocating not only war on terrorism, but also a war on Muslims, and in fact, Arabs in general. However, there are a few subversive weak voices which are not heard as loud as the loud voice (Alireza & Khademi, 2015, p. 11).

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[6] Borrowed from ethnography, the term was first used in Postcolonial studies by Gayatri Spivak in her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999). It gained more theoretical credence with Edward Said's criticism of Fouad Ajami, for his position on the American war in Iraq. Nesrine Malik's recent intervention on 'Islam's New Native Informant' describes it as "a derogatory description of an indigenous person considered a collaborator with the colonial or invading power, it sits too closely for comfort to slurs such as "house slave" and its derivatives." (N. Malik, 2018, para. 3)

After 9/11, American literature was filled with the latest reality of the time, the 9/11 event. In other words, the literature shifted from being pleasant and aesthetic, to become more informative, moral, functional, and instructional narratives. Literature took on a military job of trying to change the world by providing relevant information about the Muslim enemy. Post 9/11 literature was mostly counter-terrorist texts and centred on irrationality and the efficacy of terrorists. Novels such as John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006), Tom Clancy's *The Teeth of the Tiger* (2003), John Elray*'s Khalifah* (2002), *Zoe Ferraris' Finding Nouf* (2007), Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* (2006), Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Richard A. Clarke's *The Scorpion's Gate* (2005) among others, "deal with either prominent Islamic figures or Muslim Arab terrorists to satisfy the reader's curiosity about the enemy." (M. Altwaiji, 2011, p. 3).

Alireza and Abolfazl (2015) studied the representation of Islam in post 9/11 English novels. Seventeen out of thirty-one novels had contents negatively portraying Islam. In these novels, Muslims were described as terrorists, bloodthirsty, tribalists, inhumane, fanatics, among others. Only one of the novels selected, *The Attack* by Yasmin Khadra (2006), tried to hold a neutral position in her analysis of situations and consequences surrounding the 11th of September attacks. Whereas, six novels were eliminated for not meeting the language criteria, seven novels were found to illustrate the presence and persistence of Islamophobia in American society, and called for better and fairer treatment of Muslims in America and the world. (Alireza & Khademi, 2015).

The above discussion is an overview of the prevalence of Islamophobia in American novels mostly published within the first decade after 9/11. Majority of these novels accentuate the dominant stereotypes of Muslims as terrorist or misogynist, the same themes will be the central focus of this study.

Before proceeding to the discussion of the texts in the next section, I would like to highlight the role played by some radicalization and de-radicalization institutions in influencing Islamophobia in America.[7] Shortly after 9/11, several agencies with the support of the American government began devising a comprehensive counter-radicalization strategy, which mostly targeted American Muslims. Such strategies also included periodic awareness about radical Islam and efforts made to counter it. An example of such initiative is Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) established in 2014 by the Obama administration to monitor Muslims communities in America. Michel (2015) argues that the whole idea of CVE is "steeped in an unreasonable and unfounded fear of Islam and Muslims" (Amber Michel, 2015, p. 131) in that, the efforts of such agencies impacted negatively on the Americans whose contempt of the Muslims only grew worse. Amber added that CVE in the US, just like in the UK, created an environment of "fear and stigmatization" among its citizens (p. 134). As mentioned before, literature is a mirror of its society; as such the years after 9/11 in America witnessed a surge in Islamophobia which is reflected in the literature of that time.

1.8.2   Sherry Jones' *The Jewel of Medina* (2008)

The novel is now grouped with other works that have dared the Muslims' sentiment, misrepresented Islam or disrespected its sacredness such as, Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, the film "Fitna" by the Dutch filmmaker Geert Wilders, 'Danish Cartoon of Prophet Muhammad' (PBUH) and "Submission", the short movie about Islam. These works have stirred heated debates, protests and controversies at

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[7] More discussion on the effects of Radicalization and De-radicalization institutes on Islamophobia will be done in the third chapter.

their time of publication for their derogating presentation of Islam or its figures. This is why this study hypothesize that the misrepresentation of Muslims in the novel *The Jewel of Medina* partly contributes to the growing Islamophobia in the West. In affirmation to this argument, Taj Hashmi observes that: "Sherry Jones's controversial novel, *The Jewel of Medina*, an ahistorical depiction of Ayesha, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) 's wife, which is extremely offensive to Muslims is yet another addition to the Islamophobic literature." (Hashmi 2016, p. 5). Just as Hashmi has argued, this study also believes that much of Sherry Jones portrayal of Islamic history contradicts the reality of what Islam stands for. In contrast, Anushman Mondal extensively analysed her novel from a feminist Orientalist perspective. Like many Western works claiming to speak for the Orient, Jones' novel assumes the role of a reformer. Although written with care and respect for the religion, the feminist agenda is overt (Mondal, 2014, pp. 167–172).

However, it is arguable that Sherry Jones has done nothing different from what Orientalism explicates, she is said to have misrepresented Islamic history in this novel as other Orientalists do. As Denise Spelberg[8] remarked, "I don't have a problem with historical fiction. I do have a problem with the deliberate misinterpretation of history. You can't play with a sacred history and turn it into soft core pornography." (Nomani 2008, para 7). This blatant misrepresentation of history in Jones novel proves her inclination towards Orientalism which has been the trend in English writing by Western Orientalists. Thus, this study aims to build on what Edward Said in his *Orientalism* (1987) urges postcolonial critics to do – to counter-read.

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[8]   Denise Spelberg is a professor of Islamic history at the University of Texas, she has authored the book: *Politics, Gender and the Islamic past: The legacy of Aisha Bint Abi Bakr* in 2007.