# Architectures of Enmity in Andre Dubus III's The Garden of Last Days

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks, Islam and Muslims became the subject of representation in the American literary milieu. American novelist Andre Dubus III was one of those who have appropriated the attacks directly by characterizing 9/11 hijackers within his bestseller novel, *The Garden of Last Days* (2009). This paper sets out to investigate Andre Dubus' III demonstration of Islam and Muslims in line with their association with terrorism and intolerance towards non-Muslims. We also seek to contextualize Dubus' exemplification of the Muslim Other within pertaining geopolitical and Orientalist inferences. As post-9/11 literature has been highly immersed in the cultural, colonial and political ramifications of the attacks, both postcolonial and geopolitical concepts are incorporated into a geopolitical postcolonial approach. Geopolitical postcolonial approach is meant to illustrate the narrative's exemplification of Islam and Muslim in view of the geopolitical consequences of 9/11 attacks as well as the long established Western knowledge about the Orient, Orientalism. Architectures of enmity are the deliberated schemes exploited to shape the other into a differentiated and abhorred adversary to initiate violence against him/her. Dubus' architectures of enmity will be examined within four constructs, specifically, 'hatred,' 'Islamic agency,' 'clashing Islam' and 'Arabic antagonism.' In *The Garden of Last Days*, the Muslim Other is exemplified as the enemy of the West. Islam is illustrated as an antagonist ideology that leads Muslims to hate all non-Muslims. Through the geopolitical postcolonial lens we expose the circumstantial implications of these representations and relate them to their due context

**Keywords:** American novel; *The Garden of Last Days*; Andre Dubus III; Geopolitical postcolonial approach; 'Islamic' antagonism

## INTRODUCTION

The Garden of Last Days (first published in 2008), claims Irvine Welsh (2008), has proved Dubus' status as one of the finest writers in the United States. Dubus' novel is one of the few post-9/11 novels that have ventured to fictionalize the 9/11 hijackers. With most events taking place inside a strip club, Dubus presented terrorism executed by Muslims within an extremely sexualized setting. In Dubus' novel, Bassam al-Jizani is the major terrorist character who visits a strip club days before executing the terrorist attacks. In his 2009 novel, American novelist Andre Dubus III explores the problematics of cultural relations in post-9/11 America. Similar to Updike's Terrorist, The Garden of Last Days appropriates heavily

from the Quran and other religious sources to present its own rendition of 9/11 with regard to the Muslim Other. In comparing Dubus with fellow American novelist Don DeLillo, Linda Wagner-Martin (2013) contends that in *The Garden of Last Days* and *Falling Man*, Dubus and DeLillo "seemed to be compelled to create the Middle Eastern terrorist figure. Evil in these novels has a name and a face; it is not an abstraction" (p. 267). As one of the post-9/11 American novels, *The Garden of Last Days* has the impulse to approach the contemporary crisis by roundabout means, using indirection to find historical directions out (Gray, 2011).

Numerous studies have been conducted on post-9/11 American novels. Many of these studies were concerned with the traumatic repercussions of the attacks on the post 9/11 novels such as Pamela Mansutti's (2012) study on American fiction. While other studies sought to examine representations of Islam and terrorism as demonstrated in some American and non-American novels like Salim Al-Ibia's (2015) who examined Joseph Geha's *Alone and All Together*, Laila Halaby's *Once on a Promised Land* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Whereas, Riyad Manqoush, Noraini Md. Yusof and Ruzy Suliza Hashim (2011) applied a comparative approach in their analysis of the historical allusion in John Updike's *Terrorist* and Mohammad Ismail's *Desert of Death and Peace*. Some scholars problematized Updike's means of differentiating both Islam and Muslims in *Terrorist* by drawing on the politics of Orientalism and the psychology of perfectionism (Alosman et al., 2018). Mitra Mirzayee, Shamsoddin Royanian and Ensieh Shabanirad (2017) along with Muhamad Shahbaz Arif and Maqbool Ahmad (2016) inspected Updike's *Terrorist* and made similar conclusions about Updike's neo-Orientalist representation of the Muslim Other.

Post-9/11 American novel has embedded history, politics and culture in its tradition. However, the references are sometimes covert; the historical and political implications are not related directly to pertaining historical and political contexts. In the case of post-9/11 American writings, it is crucial to scrutinize historical, political and cultural aspects and their ramifications since 9/11 has been exploited to legitimize wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. It is imperative to investigate these designs or architectures. Since architecture is "the thoughtful making of space" (Quoted in Frederick, 2007), architectures of enmity are the deliberate creation of colonial spaces by means of imaginative otherness and geographies. Architectures of enmity are designed and manufactured with much consideration and deliberation. Furthermore, these architectures aim at implementing colonial ambitions and interests in both the other and the other's geographical space, land. Consequently, in order to colonize the man and space, colonial powers create imaginative otherness, i.e., Western imagined representations of the other, as well as imaginative geographies, the geographical spaces according to Western imagination. Thus, architectures of enmity function within both the human and the geographical dimensions so as to accomplish Western benefits in the Orient. This paper investigates Dubus' architectures of enmity in The Garden of Last Days; it examines representations of Islam and Muslims, especially with respect to issues on terrorism and intolerance towards non-Muslims. We also seek to contextualize his exemplification of the Muslim Other within pertaining geopolitical and Orientalist implications.

# THE MUSLIM OTHER WITHIN THE GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

Following the 9/11 attacks, Americans have begun to inquire about the motives behind such a catastrophe and about the hatred that may have led people to murder innocent civilians in such a large scale (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). There is a quest for the image of an unidentified enemy to shoulder the full responsibility. An imaginative enemy is restructured to quench the thirst for a recognizable foe (Gregory, 2004; Khan & Ahmad, 2014). American media has analyzed and demonstrated the far enemy in the Middle East by building on Orientalism (Said, 2003). In view of that, the Muslim Other is reproduced through new

structures of antagonism or rather architectures of enmity (Gregory, 2004; Khan & Ahmad, 2014).

Framing 9/11 attacks within the context of Huntington's clash of civilization hypothesis has paved the way for the construction of the Muslim Other as the enemy of the West (Gregory, 2004; Said, 2004). Huntington (1993) argues that future conflicts would be of cultural foundations rather than of ideological or economic grounds and that contact with other civilizations deepens feelings of difference within each civilization. He stresses the power of religion in forming cultural identity and that religious convictions have a more differentiating influence than ethnicity. He adds that as people begin to rely on religion and ethnicity to define themselves, the 'us' versus 'them' association would appear to differentiate them from those of other religions or ethnicities. As a consequence, the Muslim Other is viewed as immoral with a return to feudalism and is "incapable of reaching an accommodation with the modern world" (Gregory, 2004, p. 58). Gregory maintains that situating 9/11 attacks within the clash premise is "Orientalism with a vengeance, in which the progressive "West" was set against an immobile "Islam" that was, if not a barbarism, then the breeding-ground of barbarians" (p. 58). Thus, binary comparison between the West and 'Islam' is set to demonize the Muslim Other and present him/her as the perpetrator of 9/11 attacks, i.e., the enemy (Gilroy, 2003; Gregory, 2004; Said, 2004; Khan & Ahmad, 2014).

After the 9/11 attacks, the political demands declared in Mohammad Atta's note, one of the 9/11 hijackers, were concealed (Abrahamian, 2003). However, Bin Laden himself, in more than one occasion, video-taped or recorded, confirmed the fact that Al Qaeda's attacks on America on 9/11 were mainly motivated by political reasons, such as the American presence and interventions in the Middle East, yet he used his radical interpretations of "out-of-context" Islamic divine texts to support his actions (Bin Laden, 2002). This was in no way meant to advocate Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks but to illustrate the fact that in Islam, like in any religion, there were people who used their own sacred texts to support their violent acts which were mainly politically, rather than religiously or culturally, motivated.

In fact, Bin Laden and other Afghan *Mujahidin*, who fought the Soviet Union with the help of America, were received by President Reagan who called them, "[t]he moral equivalent of America's founding fathers" (qtd. in Ahmad, 2001, p. 1). Though known for their radical ideology, these fighters were supported and celebrated by the United States. Eqbal Ahmad (2001) adds, "[t]errorists change. The terrorist of yesterday is the hero of today, and the hero of yesterday becomes the terrorist of today" (Ahmad, 2001, p. 1-2).

Mostly in the American context, Muslims were portrayed as terrorists belonging to a violent religion to justify offensive attacks on Muslim countries (Kumar, 2007), to silence local and international criticism by claiming that they were fighting terrorists. Frantz Fanon (2008, p. 135) in problematizing the marginalization of the "Negro" Other once remarked, "There is a quest for the Negro, the Negro is in demand, one cannot get along without him, he is needed, but only if he is made palatable in a certain way". Similarly, "the other," Muslims in this context, more specifically, those labeled as "terrorists," play a role in western discourse given the financial and economic investment held by countries like the US in the Middle East (Jackson, 2007). "Islamic" terrorism is employed to paint all anti-colonial resistance that might oppose their interests in the region with terrorism (Jackson, 2007), in order to justify colonizing some countries like what they did in Afghanistan and Iraq (Gregory 2004).

Terrorism, as exemplified in the 9/11 attacks, is primarily a political rather than religious or cultural act (Ahmad, 2001). It does not represent a "clash" between "Islam" and the "West" but rather a consequence of consistent imperial interventions in the Muslim World (Gregory, 2004). Therefore, stemming the roots of terrorism necessitates reconsidering Western policies in the region and reconsidering its discourse on terrorism (Jackson, 2007).

Extinguishing terrorism could be reached through investigating political underlying forces (Žižek, 2002). In different histories and contexts, terrorism was done by Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists, but this was not to say that any of these religions was a terrorist religion; all religions breached love and peace, but there were some descendants who would bring their radical interpretations of out-of-context holy texts and make use of them to execute a rather politically motivated act (Bistrich, 2007).

Retrospectively, after the collapse of Communism, which has characterized the West's most lethal enemy after World War II, the West has tried to seek an appropriate "schematizations for the figure of Enemy," and that has been only reconstructed in 9/11 attacks with the images of Bin Laden and al-Qaeda (Žižek, 2002, p. 110). Slavoj Žižek contends that to identify the enemy, "one has to 'schematize' the logical figure of the Enemy, providing it with concrete tangible features which make it an appropriate target of hatred and struggle" (p. 110). Thus, the other enemy is more of a manufactured entity that is made in a systematic way and set visible to serve certain designs.

Thus, to further Western imperial projects in the targeted countries, imaginative representations of the Muslim Other have been reinforced and reestablished through means of American media and cinema. "[S]patial stories," hostilities, that took place in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine pivot around 9/11 and that there is a "complex genealogy" that reaches back to the colonial past and is used by governments "in Washington, London, and Tel Aviv to advance a grisly colonial present (and future)" (Gregory, 2004, p. 13). The War on Terror is an endeavor to create a novel global narrative employed within a pattern of power and knowledge in the United States of America (Gregory, 2004). Many people have been engrossed in 9/11 violence, not only the three thousand killed on September 11, but also the hundreds of thousands murdered and injured in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine, "under its bloody banners" (p. 16). As today's colonial present is shaped through geopolitics and geoeconomics, it is also put into action through cultural forms and practices that categorize other people as eternally 'other' and that, consequently, licenses the violence against them (Gregory, 2004).

American post-9/11 architectures of enmity have been heavily built on Orientalism, which has served as the foundational rationale behind presenting the Muslim Other as America's as well as the West's enemy. In fact, in the post-9/11 era, Orientalism still seems to overwhelm Western perceptions as well as representations of the Orient (Little, 2002; Said, 2003; Gregory, 2004; Smith, 2006; Kumar, 2012). It is still, Andrea Smith (2006) argues, an essential pillar of Western supremacy. Up to the present day, Orientalism is being reestablished mostly with the exaggerated fear of the Orient as well as the Orient's definite association with terrorism (Kumar, 2012).

Manifestations of the Orient are to be expounded in terms of Western architectures of enmity. Therefore, after 9/11, Gregory (2004) maintains, "Orientalism is abroad again, revivified and hideously emboldened - because the citationary structure that is authorized by these accretions is also in some substantial sense performative" (p. 18). Clearly, Western perceptions of the Oriental still create the effects that it names; they still shape "the practices of those who draw upon it," and actively constitute its object, the Orient (p. 18). Hence, representations of the Oriental have been invigorated and revived after 9/11 attacks to explicate the terrorist Other and make him more visible.

Not only Arabs, Arabic in the aftermath of 9/11 has become the source of suspicion and mistrust for many Americans. Like Muslims in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, Arabic has become more associated with terrorism and violence (DiMaggio, 2007; Suleiman, 2016). In fact, Arabic has been long used to endorse and emphasize Arabs' fixity and inability to change; Arabic plays a limiting role on the way Arabs think and reason (Said 1979).

Furthermore, Arabic is ascribed a human-like status to devalue Arabs' own human status rather than to celebrate the language. "The exaggerated value heaped upon Arabic as a language permits the Orientalist to make the language equivalent to mind, society, history, and nature. For the Orientalist, the language speaks the Arab Oriental not vice versa" (Said, 1979, p. 321). Similarly, in the context of the 9/11 attacks, Arabic has influence on Arabs as it endorses its particularities on them; it is more of an ideology that controls the Arabs' mentality than a language used to express Arabs thoughts and ideas (Suleiman, 2016).

In this paper, Dubus' architectures of enmity in *The Garden of Last Days* will be examined within four constructs, specifically, 'hatred,' 'Islamic agency,' 'clashing Islam' as well as 'Arabic antagonism.' These constructs have been derived from Said and Gregory's conceptualizing of Orientalism and architectures of enmity. The first construct, 'hatred,' functions within architectures of enmity, while 'Islamic agency' and 'clashing Islam' constructs have been developed from Said's elaboration on the role played by Orientalism to present Islam as in charge of Muslims' backwardness and antagonism towards the West as well as Gregory's more recent demonstration of Orientalism in relation to the post-9/11 geopolitical realities in the Middle East. The forth construct, 'Arabic Antagonism,' is derived from Said's elaboration on how Arabic has been antagonized throughout the last few decades.

# EXEMPLIFYING THE MUSLIM OTHER IN THE GARDEN OF LAST DAYS

In *The Garden of Last Days*, April works as a stripper in Puma Strip Club for Men. Days before the 9/11 attacks, she goes to work with her child, Franny, who is usually looked after by the landlord, Jean, who has a hospital appointment on that day. While April is engaged with customers in the club, Franny wanders outside the building. In the meantime, April meets Bassam al-Jizani from Saudi Arabia. April performs for him in a private room in the club, where he spends substantially. Later, Bassam prepares to take part in the 9/11 attacks with the other hijackers.

#### **HATRED**

In this section, we examine Dubus' exemplification of Muslims in line with their hatred towards non-Muslims. Bassam, one of 9/11 hijackers in *The Garden of Last Days*, enjoys imagining himself in Paradise as he observes how non-Muslims are kneeling and begging for forgiveness from Allah, on the Day of Judgment;

Allah willing, from the highest rooms he [Bassam] will witness what happens to these jinn [non-Muslims] on the Last Day. He will watch them beg for their souls. He will watch them kneel before the Judge and the Ruler and tear at their faces and prostrate themselves and beg and beg, but for them only will be the everlasting fire and what joy Bassam will feel, Allah willing, as he watches these whores fall from the bridge into the flames. As he watches them fall.

(Dubus III, 2009, p. 463)

Consequently, Bassam wonders about the number of years the prostitute, hired by him and his friend Tariq, another 9/11 hijacker, will live before she "will burn" in Hell (p. 453). For Bassam, the afterlife fire quenches his thirst for revenge and satisfies his unsurpassed hatred against non-Muslims. As illustrated above, Bassam's feelings of hatred are presented through his religious-based imagination of the Afterlife, Hell and Paradise. In fact, through Bassam's sadistic feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction with non-Muslims' humiliation and torture in the Afterlife, his hatred is highlighted and ascribed a definitive nature and his antagonism is illustrated through his religious-based hatred for non-Muslims. Thus, any other

geopolitical incentives behind Bassam's and the other 9/11 hijackers' deeds, such as their protest against the American intervention in the Middle East, are diminished and disregarded while the religious-based factors are exemplified and accentuated.

Likewise, while inside a private room in the strip club, Bassam tells April about his brother Khalid who died long ago in a car accident while driving and listening to American music in Saudi Arabia. Bassam also tells April that although Khalid is fascinated by American music and lifestyle, "[h]e hated the kufar, he hated all of you [Americans] but he wears a hat for baseball, he drinks Pepsi and Coca-Cola, he smoked only cowboy cigarettes" [Emphasis added] (p. 201). April wonders, "[w]hy's he hate us?" [Author's Emphasis] (p. 201). Bassam takes some time to answer, "[y]es, many of you are blind [. . .] You will never know [Paradise] [. . .] People like you go to hell, April" [Emphasis added] (p. 201, 202). Even though Khalid likes American culture, like Bassam, he hates Americans. Muslims' hatred of the Americans becomes a rather common trend in the narrative. Additionally, when April enquires about the reasons behind such hate, Bassam addresses the religious factor, that is, Americans' were non-Muslims. Thus, Muslims' hatred of the Americans is illustrated as the result of their being non-Muslims. In fact, accentuating the mainly religious background of Muslims' hatred of Americans undermines the validity and possibility of other geopolitical factors such as the American interventions in the Middle East and support for Arab rulers.

In addition, at the end of the novel, when interrogated after 9/11 attacks about Bassam's visit to the strip club, April tells the interrogator that "you could tell he [Bassam] hated us [...] all of *us*." [Author's Emphasis] (Dubus III, 2009, p. 524). Thus, Bassam's hatred for Americans is accentuated and magnified in the aftermath of 9/11 to illustrate the attacks as hate based. Moreover, Bassam is portrayed with his total hatred towards all Americans which highlights his antagonist nature.

As illustrated in Dubus' narrative, for Bassam, "churches and synagogues" in America are "of false idols," and in view of that, "Bassam would rig them with plastique and explode them to hell" (Dubus III, 2009, p. 62). According to Bassam, Islam is the only religion that would be allowed to be practiced while other religions are to be prohibited. In America, while Christianity and Judaism, churches and synagogues, live in peace, Islam is depicted as the new antagonist intruder and outsider. Correspondingly, in the strip club, although Bassam allows the Jewish owner of the club to pour some coffee for him, "he will no longer touch the cup touched by the Jew" (p. 252). Moreover, Bassam feels that this hatred of the Jew "gives him strength" (p. 252). Thus, being influenced by Islam, the Muslim Other is exemplified with his intolerance and antagonism towards non-Muslims.

In addition to Bassam, Amir, another 9/11 hijacker, is also portrayed through his apparent feelings towards Americans. Bassam describes how Western people have been kind to him while in Germany and the United States and how some of them used to smile at him and his friends. However, these people have not smiled at Amir; "[e]xcept Amir's. Their smiles changed then. They could see and feel his hatred for them, and Bassam had felt soft and weak and not worthy of the title shahid [martyr]; these people should fear him, too" (Dubus III, 2009, p.254). When Bassam compares himself with Amir, he feels inferior because of Amir's clearly distinguished animosity towards Westerners. Evidently, Bassam believes that the more hatred a Muslim shows for non-Muslims the more he becomes a true Muslim who is worthy of being a martyr. Thus, the Muslim Other is exemplified through means of his blind hatred and antagonism towards non-Muslims; the Muslim Other's hateful traits are being illustrated and assigned a space of visibility. In fact, by highlighting Muslims' total hatred towards Americans, 9/11 geopolitical circumstances are silenced and disregarded.

#### **ISLAMIC AGENCY**

In this part, the analysis examines how the religion of Islam is connected to the antagonistic acts executed by Bassam and the other 9/11-hijackers in *The Garden of Last Days*. In Dubus' novel, the relationship between Islam, as a religion, and Muslims' antagonism is demonstrated through Islamic religious sources, namely, Quranic verses as well as Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) sayings.

To explain the background of Bassam's thoughts and beliefs, in a flashback, the narrator recounts the days when Bassam began to change and how he has,

[...] turned back to holiness and the Book [...] visited the imam many evenings between the last two prayers [...] sat upon the carpet looking into the sheikh's eyes that shone with wisdom and the light of iman as he revealed the nothingness inside them [...] The imam pointed in the direction of the air base of the Americans, the air base Ahmed al-Jizani [Bassam's father] helped to build [...] "It is what they want. The further you fall from our faith, the stronger they become. The ways of the West, it is how Shaytan spreads confusion among the believers". (Dubus III, 2009, p. 90)

As illustrated above, Bassam's rediscovery of his faith is illustrated to result from the Book, the Quran, and an Imam, a religious mentor. By connecting the change in Bassam's life with his newly religious way of life, terrorism executed by Muslims is illustrated as the result of Islamic teachings. Thus, Bassam, the aimless young man is turned into a potential terrorist by means of Islamic influence. Furthermore, the imam's rhetoric assumes a dividing conspiracy language that draws clear-cut distinction between the West and Islam, 'us' and 'them.' Although the narrative has included the American air base in Saudi Arabia as the source of the imam's concern, the imam's worry is situated within a religious context, that is, Bassam's return to religious life and the imam's religious rhetoric. The geopolitical implications of the American air-base, as a sight of the American military presence in Saudi Arabia, are disregarded while the religious factors are accentuated. Representing the Muslim Other within a context of dissimilarity and difference provides a structured image of the Muslim enemy, who believes, according to the narrative, of the actuality of Western endeavors to distance Muslims from their religion. Evidently, Islam is illustrated as the major force behind Muslims' extremist and antagonist mentality.

Additionally, in Afghanistan, after being nominated to take part in the 9/11 attacks, the narrator describes how while performing the prayers behind his commander, Bassam has a feeling he has never experienced before; "he had never pronounced each word so clearly or with such intention, had never loved the Holy One so deeply, had never understood the teachings of His Prophet—peace be upon him—so fully" (Dubus III, 2009, p. 379). He describes how, "a warmth rose inside him from the soles of his bare feet through his legs and loins and chest, his eyes spilling for he had never felt so loved before by anyone" (p. 379). Therefore, he feels that he is a "child of the Creator who had fashioned each of them, the Creator who now called Bassam to fight and die for Him, to fight and die for them all" (p. 379). For Bassam, when assigned the 9/11 mission, the Quran and the Prophet's teachings begin to be more meaningful and achievable as if these teachings have been principally intended to enhance violence against non-Muslims which are exemplified in Bassam's repetitive imaginary scenes of slaughtering non-Muslims. Thus, Bassam's understanding, appreciation and passion for the Quran and the Prophet's teachings have dramatically increased after being chosen as a potential assailant who will kill thousands of innocent Americans. Clearly, the narration sets out to create a plausible cause to suspect that the transformation in Bassam to commit the acts of terror is due to his faith. The portrayal of Bassam's feeling of "warmth" and peace as represented in this excerpt illustrates how the narration demonizes the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH). Accordingly, 9/11 attacks are a

primarily religiously-influenced war where "the Creator" calls "Bassam to fight and die for Him" (p. 379). Thus, Islam is presented as the most effective incentive behind Muslims' violence against non-Muslims, which is nearly undistinguishable from other narratives of the genre including John Updike's *Terrorist*. As shown in the excerpt above, Muslims become more radical and violent the more they are attached to Islam. As a result, Islam is illustrated as the most influential force behind Muslims' terrorist acts against non-Muslims.

Correspondingly, just before committing 9/11 attacks with his colleagues, Bassam has the same frequent dream when he is still a child. In the dream, while his brothers and sisters are celebrating the Eid with their gifts, Bassam feels that his family is "celebrating him [...] through the Sustainer" (Dubus III, 2009, p. 476-477), as he has "done something to bring them all closer to Allah, that there were no gifts for him because he was a gift - To his family. To his clan. To his kingdom" [Author's emphasis] (p. 477). Foreshadowing the 9/11 terrorist attacks from the time he has been a boy, Bassam's dream of being celebrated is depicted as the ultimate motif for the atrocities he later commits. Moreover, the narrative tries to show that by murdering innocent Americans in the foreshadowed 9/11 attacks, his tribe and the kingdom would be very proud of him and that he would be considered a gift for them all. The juxtaposing of acts of terror and celebration further vilifies Muslims for their inhumane culture and choices. Moreover, elevating Bassam by celebrating his terrorist deeds and his being closer to Allah by these deeds implies Islam's responsibility and agency for Muslims' terrorist acts. Thus, the 9/11 attacks relate to Islam as a religion that promotes violence against the other. Accordingly, under the umbrella of Islam, all Muslims, at least in Saudi Arabia, are depicted as celebrating the 9/11 attacks and are proud of Bassam as one of the hijackers. Undoubtedly, the narrative placed Bassam's dream anecdote in the concluding pages of the novel to give it a conclusive and a final effect.

In Bassam's dream, while celebrating Eid al-Fitr with his family, a "baby camel" is being served by his mother and aunts, his father and uncles dance "to the beating" of local drums (Dubus III, 2009, p. 476). Children were given gifts; "knives and swords carved from wood" (p. 476). However, Bassam does not receive any gift, yet, he feels that he does not care for the gift, though he was still a child then. Thus, within Muslims' celebrations of a religious event, Bassam has such a special dream. In this religious event, Bassam's family members celebrate by serving a "baby camel" as their main dish (p. 476). Evidently, the narrative's choice of words, "baby camel," presents Muslims as merciless people driven by their religiously oriented habits to the point of slaughtering and eating a baby camel. Additionally, to lay more emphasis on the Muslim Other's religiously oriented and antagonist image, the narrative chooses wooden swords and knives as children's gifts in an Islamic celebration. Moreover, such a choice of children's toys illustrates the way Muslim terrorists are being prepared and nurtured by means of raising them with such toy weapons.

Similarly, before the 9/11 attacks, Bassam envisions redeeming his father's sinful deeds of building the air-base for Americans by executing the 9/11 attacks. The narrator relates how Bassam's "sacrifice will erase the sins of seventy members of his family [. . .] And yes, if Bassam is forced to slaughter, Allah willing, he must dedicate it to his father. He will dedicate the first spilled blood to Ahmed al-Jizani" (Dubus III, 2009, p. 489). Evidently, Bassam perceives non-Muslims as animals whose slaughter will redeem a Muslim of bad deeds. Accordingly, innocent Americans are meant to be slaughtered so that seventy of his family members' 'bad deeds' are to be redeemed. Americans are depicted as the victims of Muslims' violent religion and the scapegoats utilized for Muslims' redemption from their sins to increase the degree of enmity and antagonism towards them.

In a flashback, while in Saudi Arabia with his brother Khalid, Bassam recollects, "when the speeding Grand Am hit the sand blown onto the highway and perhaps Khalid jerked the steering wheel, the auto of *forbidden music* turning over once, twice, three times,

his body thrown so many meters to the west, away from Makkah, the American Jew still singing inside the crushed chassis" [Emphasis added] (Dubus III, 2009, p. 60). In view of that, for Bassam, music is turned into a deadly device which caused Khalid's death. According to Bassam, American music has distanced Khalid from Mekkah as it has sent him to the West, and eventually, has driven Khalid to such a sinful death. The narrator deliberates, "[t]his David Lee Roth, if there was time Bassam would find him and kill him - For he worries. At his death Khalid was living like the kufar" (p. 90). For Bassam, American culture in particular, and the West in general, are the source of his brother's dreadful destiny. Hence, Bassam blames the West for distancing him and his brother from their religion. By emphasizing the impact of Islam on Bassam, Khalid's death is narrated to illustrate Muslims' unreasonable religiously-based antagonism towards the West.

Consequently, Bassam recollects how he, Tariq and Imad, the other Saudi 9/11 hijackers from Khamis Mushayt, Saudi Arabia, have transformed their lives to be more religious. The narrator describes how Bassam has felt, "the purity of camp [in Afghanistan], where daily they had fought hand to hand, where they fired the AK-47 while running, where they wired plastic explosives while reciting from Al-Anfal and Al-Tawbah, where they fasted and cleansed themselves (Dubus III, 2009, p. 254). Bassam's training to fight and use explosives in Afghanistan relates to the Quran, "Al-Anfal and Al-Tawbah" (p. 254), and other Islamic religious rites including fasting and cleansing. Evidently, the religious background of Bassam's training is highlighted and ascribed a visible space. In fact, Bassam's training for 9/11 attacks is illustrated within a religious background where Islam is presented as accountable for these attacks.

However, Bassam recollects how the other friends, like Karim, have pursued their empty life; they have raced, smoked and gossiped, while Imad and Tariq have had "beards" (Dubus III, 2009, p. 254). Moreover, Imad and Tariq have also tried "to teach their old friends to stay away from these evils" (p. 254). However, Karim,

standing before them in his *Nike cap and T-shirt and jeans*, his shiny cell phone in his hand, he was already *lost*; for two years he had *studied in London*, something he was always boasting, and he showed them the photograph of the *Zionist girl from Jerusalem* who had loved him, *his mind soiled*, *his heart falling to the West*. Karim told them *they should not believe everything the Imams say*. "Read the Qur'an, my friends. It says Ahl al-Kitab, the People of the Book, *Christians and Jews, deserve respect* because they are fellow *monotheists*. Have you read all the suras? Because I have. Read 3:113–115: 'They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten in the emulation of all good works. *They are in the ranks of the righteous*." "And that is why they *enslave the Palestinians*?" Tariq said. "That is why they *occupy our* land *and kill our brothers in Iraq*? [...] You are not going where *we are going*." "Yes," Karim *laughed*. "Have a nice trip." And he turned and walked away [...] [Emphasis added]

As illustrated above, Karim dresses like a westerner. He has been educated in England, something he is obviously proud of. Furthermore, he is in love with a girl from Jerusalem, the Israeli occupied capital city of Palestine. Thus, the more-Western-like Muslim is presented as an example of the good moderate Muslim who is positively acquainted with the holy Quran, with the Quranic verses that promote mutual understanding and respect between Muslims, Christians and Jews. Moreover, through Bassam and the other hijackers, the narrative tries to present Muslims' hatred of the West within a religious framework of antagonism between Islam and the Judo-Christian West. Additionally, Karim tries to relate the misunderstanding and misuse of the Quran to the Imams, the religious preachers, to emphasize the role of Imams, as religious representatives, in creating the West as an enemy. Nonetheless, when Tariq, another 9/11 terrorist, reminds Karim of Muslims' accusations of

the West for maltreating the Palestinians and occupying Iraq, Karim "laughs [s]" (p. 254). Evidently, the geopolitical pre-9/11 context is reprimanded by three methods; firstly, by accentuating the primarily religious background of the 9/11 attacks and thus disclaiming other factors. Secondly, by trivializing the pre-9/11 geopolitical circumstances when introducing them by a terrorist, rather than any reliable character. Thirdly, by Karim's nonverbal reaction which designates the West's mocking the geopolitical context of the 9/11 assaults.

In fact, throughout the novel, Bassam calls the Americans "kufar," plural of "kafir," which means non-believer (p. 23, 25, 58, 59, 60, 90, 91, 114, 115, 201, 251, 252, 256, 258, 260, 282, 340, 377, 420, 430, 437, 462, 479, 508), to emphasize the role played by Islam, the religion, as the main source behind Bassam's feelings of hatred and antagonism towards Americans. At the heart of Bassam's extremism, Islam is shown to bear responsibility for such unimagined abhorrence and antagonism. Dubus' *The Garden of Last Days* is abundant with verses from the Quran and other religious prayers mostly associated with fighting enemies, jihad, martyrdom and Paradise. Relatively, Western interventions, colonialism and policies in Muslim countries, especially in the Middle East, are disclaimed. In Dubus' novel, the Muslim imam plays the role of a religious preacher and "commander" on ground (Dubus III, 2009, p. 379) and Islam, as a religion, holds the most operative and effective responsibility for Bassam's antagonism towards the West.

#### **CLASHING ISLAM**

This section inspects Dubus' exemplification of the religion of Islam as the architect for terrorist acts executed by Muslims within Huntington's premise of the clash of civilizations. Islam's clashing position with the West is to be examined and demonstrated through the Muslim characters, namely, Bassam and the other fictionalized hijackers, and their views of the relationship between the West and Muslim countries.

Correspondingly, before executing the 9/11 attacks, Bassam writes a last letter to his mother, which is intended to be read after the attacks are accomplished. He writes, "[m]other, what I have done, Insha'Allah, I have done for the Creator. This is a great honor. I hope you are well pleased [Author's emphasis] (p. 437). Through Bassam's letter, the religious motive behind the attacks is accentuated and made more visible. Accordingly, Al-Qaeda attacks on the United States of America on the eleventh of September 2001, is an Islamic holy war, an act for "the creator" (p. 437), against America. Thus, by underscoring the religious background of the attacks and presenting them as an Islamic holy war on America, the geopolitical context of the attacks is muted and made invisible.

Similarly, a day before the attacks, in order to calm and fortify himself, Bassam recites the Quranic verse,

[y]our Lord bade you leave your home to fight for justice, but some of the faithful were reluctant. They argued with you about the truth that had been revealed, as though they were being led to certain death while they looked on [Author's emphasis]

(Dubus III, 2009, p. 489)

However, Bassam instantly "sees Karim [Bassam's friend in Saudi Arabia], hears again his words defending the Zionist/Crusader alliance as if they truly are fellow People of the Book [...]" (p. 489). Bassam also recalls his father's illustration of jihad; "if it comes to fighting, it is only for defense, Bassam. A fard kifaya" (p 489). Nevertheless, Bassam reassures himself that, "jihad is *not* a collective duty, it is fard'ayn, a *personal* obligation. An *eternal* jihad against apostates near and far. And have they not read the words of Allah?" [Author's emphasis] (p. 489). Evidently, the use of a misquoted and misinterpreted verse

from the Quran lays more emphasis on Bassam's religious background for executing the terrorist acts against America and defines 9/11 attacks as an Islamic holy war against the Judo-Christian West. Furthermore, the narrative does not give the moderate interpretations of Bassam's numerous misinterpreted quotations from the Quran a due contextualization. Even though the narrative presents the moderate views of some Muslim characters, these views are presented either through Karim, the more Western and pro-Israel character, or through Bassam's father, the pro-American Saudi citizen who has helped build the American air base in Saudi Arabia. In fact, illustrating these moderate views through the characters of Karim and Bassam's father indicates the narrative's position at endorsing the Israeli and American colonial status quo in the Middle East. Thus, only those Muslims aligned with Western interests in the Middle East are employed to present the positive view of Islam. Additionally, Bassam's last question concludes the discussion about the meaning of jihad with an emphasis on it principally being a holy war against all non-Muslims and, simultaneously, rejects any other interpretation.

Additionally, on Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, a few hours before the attacks, while heading to the airport in the taxi, Bassam makes the prayer, "[i]n the name of Allah and all praise is for Allah. How perfect He is, the One Who has placed this transport at our service [. . .] and to our Lord is our final destiny" [Author's emphasis] (Dubus III, 2009, p. 501). Thus, with the original italics, the narrative reiterates the attacks as an Islamic holy war against the non-Muslim West that is mainly declared "in the name of Allah" (p. 501). Evidently, by illustrating the attacks as an essentially religious act, other geopolitical grounds and motives such as Western colonial presence as well as interventions in the Middle East and other Muslim countries are diminished and ascribed a space of invisibility.

Elsewhere, Bassam imagines how his father would be proud of him in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks after he knows that his son, Bassam, is involved in the attacks. He envisions that his fathers' eyes, "will shine brighter than ever before for the highest place in Jannah is reserved for the shahid [martyr]" (Dubus III, 2009, p. 92). Thus, by killing Americans, Bassam believes that he would make his father proud of him and attain the highest place in Paradise despite the fact that his father is presented as pro-American throughout the narrative. Once more, the narrative tries to present the 9/11 attacks from a religious perspective rather than contextualizing them within their due geopolitical circumstances; hence, 9/11 is merely interpreted as, a "fight" to die for "Him" (p. 379), that is, an Islamic holy war against the West. Clearly, to disclaim the validity of any geopolitical grounds behind the 9/11 attacks, the novel reemphasizes the agency of Islam behind Muslims' terrorist acts through Bassam visualizing the aftermath of the attacks.

Furthermore, while in a private room in the strip club with the almost-naked stripper, April, Bassam admits to her,

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"I should not like you, April."

"Why shouldn't you?"

[...] "Because then I would be like you. And I am not like you. Someday, Insha'Allah, you will know me."

[Emphasis added] (Dubus III, 2009, p. 202)
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For Bassam, Muslims are not permitted to like non-Muslims, and therefore they should hate them, in order not to be like them. Moreover, Bassam is laying emphasis on the ultimate difference and antagonism between Muslims and the followers of other religions, "I am not like you" (p. 202), to justify and rationalize this hate. Similar to Huntington's 1993 hypothesis, the crucial differences between the Judo-Christian West and the Islamic East are the foundations for future clash between these civilizations. In fact, through Bassam's radical exemplification of Islam, the narrative is trying to confirm the notion that the 9/11 terrorist

attacks have been the indisputable prove for Huntington's clash hypothesis between Islam and the Judo-Christian West.

## ARABIC ANTAGONISM

Though not addressed directly in *The Garden of Last Days*, Arabic language is illustrated through its influence on Muslims. Hence, after telling April his name, Bassam explains, "[i]t means for smiling" (Dubus III, 2009, p. 202), however, she retorts, "[y]ou don't smile much, though" (p. 202). Furthermore, while reading the supplications before carrying out the 9/11 attacks, Bassam feels that each word directly relates to Allah, "to the Compassionate and the Merciful, the Mighty and the Loving" (p. 472). Thus, while he is heading to murder thousands of people, he calls Allah, "the Compassionate," as well as "the Merciful," which are logically supposed to induce mercy, not mass murder of innocent people. Evidently, Arabic is demonstrated as a betraying language whose words signify the opposite meaning.

By the same token, while Bassam is lying with a prostitute, he recites the intercourse prayers which are said to protect married couples from the devil. While committing fornication,

He makes the du'a to be said before lying with a woman, one he has never made: *In the name of Allah. O Allah, keep Shaytan away from us and keep Shaytan away from what you have blessed us with.* [Author's Emphasis] (Dubus III, 2009, p. 453)

As illustrated above, Bassam's actions do not signify his religious convictions as he appears to contradict himself. Similarly, when given the final directions before executing the attacks, the hijackers are asked to make their knives sharp that they "must not discomfort your animal during the slaughter [. . .] The blood draining so quickly from the unbelieving brain, Insha'Allah" (Dubus III, 2009, p. 472). Thus, while pleasantly imagining slaughtering non-Muslims, the hijackers are asked to have mercy on their enemy. As exemplified above, clear-cut contradiction between the meanings and actions is illustrated by the narrative to suggest that what Muslims do is the opposite of what they say and that the 'seemingly' good teachings of Islam are to be understood conversely. In fact, throughout the novel, there is a consistent contradiction between what Bassam says in prayers and his deeds. Like Arabs, Arabic has been presented as a tricky and antagonist language which signifies the opposite of the overtly expressed meaning, which is an originally Orientalist view (Said, 1979).

## **CONCLUSION**

As revealed through the Muslim characters, specifically, Bassam and the other 9/11 hijackers, Muslims have been largely illustrated with their hatred and antagonism towards non-Muslims in *The Garden of Last Days*. Islam, as a religion, is depicted as the primary architect behind Muslims' antagonistic thoughts and terrorizing acts at the expense of geopolitical factors. Counter and positive views on Islam have been presented through terrorist characters to be repudiated and, hence, renounced. To create a more resounding effect, Dubus has built profoundly on decontextualized and misinterpreted Quranic verses, Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) sayings and other Islamic sources. Furthermore, Islamic religious texts have been utilized to explain Muslims' antagonism, i.e., Muslims' acts have been principally expounded within a religious rather than a geopolitical perspective. In addition, Islam has also been portrayed as clashing with other religions. The 9/11 attacks have been illustrated as an evidence of the clash between Islam and the Judo-Christian West as well as Islam's exclusive agency behind such a clash. Besides Islam and Muslims, the Arabic language is also ascribed an enmity status in *The Garden of Last Days*. Arabic is illustrated as an antagonistic language

that deceives non-Arabs and functions as a cover-up for terrorist acts. Moreover, Arabic is illustrated as a delusive and misleading language. Through Andre Dubus III's architectures of enmity in *The Garden of Last Days*, Muslims, Islam and Arabic have been situated within a framework of antagonism towards non-Muslims. Thus, the Muslim Other, his/her religion and language have been shaped as hostile and aggressive, an antithesis to Western civilization.

By illustrating Dubus' portrayal of Islam and Muslims within the post-9/11 geopolitical context, we have exposed the implications of these representations and related them to their due context. Through the lenses of geopolitics and post-colonialism, we uncover the contextual circumstances of the narratives' depiction of the Muslim Other. We expose the ongoing influence of Orientalism on Western fiction in post-9/11 era in order to deplore these negative representations.

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