

## Factors Driving Young Men to Terrorism in Updike's *Terrorist* \*

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### Abstract

Despite the diversity of themes Updike numerously tackles in his novels, this paper concentrates on a unique theme, factors driving young men to terrorism whether inside America or outside America. Updike utilizes a home grown teenager, in *Terrorist*, to present these factors in a democratic country. The factors are numerous and various. For instance, familial factors such as a decamped father and a careless mother have tremendous weight on recruiting a son as a terrorist. Social and cultural factors, such as interreligious marriage, and single mothers are seen by Updike as factors that could rapidly drive a young man to become a terrorist. All these factors can work collaboratively or separately in order to help recruit a young man to commit a terrorist action against his nation and his people. Updike states that terrorism simply starts with the indoctrination of fundamental teachings and then turns to extremism and fanaticism. During such stages, a teenager or a young man inclines to adopting terror and later on develops as a violent person carrying out terrorist actions for the purpose of change.

### 1. Introduction:

Updike confesses that he is "trying to get the terrorist out of the bugaboo category and into the category of a fellow human being." (Richards, Omidvar 231) Updike, a very well-known American writer (1932 –2009), is considered as an author with multiple talents. He is not only a novelist, but a poet, a short story writer, an art critic, and a literary critic as well. This variety of talents has represented some type of real and authentic taste and richness in his life career as an author. In addition, this variety of art genres has extended to the themes Updike introduced in his diverse and rich writings. Updike's principal themes vary from religion, sex, consumerism and America to death as well. Naturally, the themes of terrorism, fundamentalism, ethnicity and jihad are connected to those of death and religion by one means or another. These various themes are well represented in Updike's *Terrorist* (2006). In his interview *John Updike: Holy terror*, Mudge argues that, in *Terrorist*, "Updike has often explored themes of religious faith and disillusionment. He links those themes to the legacy of fanatical violence." (Mudge 1) Housing such themes, the novel introduces numerous subthemes. Those themes have rendered the main theme support and strength that have continuously added to the popularity of Updike and his works.

As aforementioned, Updike, being concerned with themes such as death, religion, war, and America, will consequently be involved in the theme of terrorism. In her *Redefining Secularism: An Analysis of John Updike's Terrorist and Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist as Post-9/11 Novels*, Sheela sees *Terrorist* as "a departure from his usual themes, which include the cultural, socio political and religious history of the United States." (Sheela 80). Naturally, it is plausible, reasonable and convincing that the theme of terrorism is to the point and is strongly related to Updike's common themes. In this novel, he takes the reader into the heart and mind of family, friends and even the decamped father of a terrorist. For instance, Ahmad represents a homegrown threat to the security of homeland society. Haunted

by the evil teachings of Sheikh Rashid, Ahmad commences and concludes the novel thinking "Devils, Ahmad thinks. These devils seek to take away my God"(Updike 1-176). Convincingly, Updike suggests that violence can never be eradicated by mere violence; it is conversing, debating with those ideal young terrorists.

This paper explores Updike's attempt to look into the social, economic, and familial factors that could drive young men to be obstinate faithful terrorists. What terrorists commit is neither a dictation of the Holy Quran nor of the Islamic Shari'ah. Rather, it is the dictation of a handful of fundamentalists. Such fundamentalists like Sheikh Rashid and many others find plastic young men such as Ahmad Ashmawy a piece of dough that can easily be shaped, indoctrinated and recruited as terrorists who will willingly carry out any terrorist action without questioning those Imams and Sheikhs. They bring dreadful disasters and fearful scenes of blood to terrify others. It is fear and ignorance as Emerson explains, "Fear always springs from ignorance " (Tanushree N.P). Greenstein quotes Mr. Roosevelt, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself " (Tanushree N.P). Thus, terrorists carry out violence to kill few people and terrify the majority.

### **2. Familial Factors**

Among American fictions that relate terrorist attacks to family crises are *Helen Schulman's A Day at the Beach* (2007), *Don DeLillo's Falling Man*, John Updike's *Terrorist* among others. Being marginalized as a result of a decamped father and an indifferent mother, Ahmad seeks care and interest in the false treatment of Sheikh Rashid. The mother herself neglected her own education. Defending Sheikh Rashid, Ahmad says: "Sir, there are no resources for any college expenses. My mother fancies herself an artist; she stopped her own education at the level of nurse's aide, rather than invest two more years in her own education when I was a pre-school child "(Updike 21).

In addition to the poor education of his mother, Ahmad is complaining about the limited resources of their income which is a direct outcome of the low education of his mother. Therefore, it is financial shortages that could drive a young man to be an easy hunt for fundamentalist recruiters such as Sheikh Rashid. Ahmad has been looking for a model to follow, but he turns to be a failure. The father has decamped. He left his family after finishing his scholarship. The mother has not achieved the proper education that could introduce herself as a model to her son in his education and the career he wants to take for his life.

To show how careless the decamped father is, Updike sheds more light on the life of Ahmed's father for not being a proper Muslim. His father, the main pillar in his life, hardly goes to the mosque. Teresa Mulloy says:

'No, *in nomine Domini.*' Islam meant nothing to me—less than nothing, to be accurate: it had a negative rating. And it meant not much more to his father. Omar never went to a mosque that I could see, and whenever I'd try to raise the subject he'd clam up, and look sore, as if I was pushing in where I had no business. 'A woman should serve a man, not try to own him,' he'd say, as if he were quoting some kind of Holy Writ. He'd made it up. What a pompous, chauvinistic horse's ass he was, really. But I was young and in love—in love mostly with him being, you know, exotic, third-world, put-upon, and my marrying him showing how liberal and liberated I was. (Updike 47)

Teresa Mulloy is talking here about the status of Ahmed's father as a Muslim, as a husband, as a father and as a human. Being a Muslim, she never sees him going to the mosque. As a man, he is always boastful of his race and his manhood. He underestimates the role of his wife despite the fact that Islam concentrates on the issue of taking care of women and they have been described as being as fragile as glass and men should treat them gently and kindly. "Because of women's delicate constitution, Islam teaches men to be gentle with them" (Khan 47). On the contrary, he looks at her as a maid to serve him which is totally the opposite of the true understanding of the Holy Quran. Such exposing of the personal traits of Ahmad's father could justify the situation Ahmed in and explain this kind of affinity he has towards the fundamentalist teachings Sheikh Rashid has been inculcating in his mind. Teresa Mulloy and Omer Ashmawy have a collapsed home and a rootless family that have begot a deteriorated and distorted son. Such a young man is now up for grabs; he is left alone as an easy prey in the claws of terrorism.

Numerously, Updike refers to the role Ahmad's parents have played in the development of the status he has been in. Sarcastically and adopting the way of many postmodern writers use, Updike plays on the names of both Elizabeth and Teresa Mulloy:

'Elizabeth' is a pretty name. You can do so much with it. Liz, Lizzie, Beth, Betsy. All you can do with Teresa is Terry, which sounds like a boy.'

'Or like a male painter.'

'You noticed. Yeah, I sign that way because female artists have always seemed smaller than the male ones, no matter how big they painted. This way, I make them guess.'

"You can do a lot with 'Terry.' Terry cloth. Terri-ble. Terri-fy. And there's Terrytoons'. (48)

Comparing the two names, here, is significant. Updike mentions that 'Elisabeth' is a nice name while he derives the adjective 'terrible' and the verb 'terrify' as a way to direct the reader to the idea that Teresa as a mother could be considered as one of the factors that helps develop the character of the terrorist, Ahmed. It is not only the fundamentalist recruiter; Sheikh Rashid who is to blame for this, it is home, particularly his mother. Moreover, Ahmad himself, the son, has deprived himself of even looking at the photographs of his father.

Just this year, Ahmad took the photographs in his room of his father and put them face-down in drawers. He announced it was blasphemy to duplicate the image of a person God had made—a kind of counterfeiting, he explained to me. A rip-off, like those Prada bags the Nigerians sell on the street. My intuition tells me this terrible teacher at the mosque put him up to it. (48, 49)

Adhered to the teachings and instructions of the fundamentalist Imam, Sheikh Rashid, Ahmed has deprived himself of having even the photographs of his father. Such photographs could remind him of the role of his father as a model, a savior and a protector. Fundamentalists have claimed for ages that "it was blasphemy to duplicate

the image of a person God had made"(Updike 48). This claim has been rejected by very well-known scholars from reputable academic institutions.

Updike compares Ahmed's mother, as a single mother, to those black single mothers. "You see a lot of that in black families, the kids idealizing the absent dad and directing all their anger at poor old Mom, who's knocking herself out trying to keep a roof over their heads"(49). In fact, many single mothers are ideal mothers and are so proud of their successful sons and daughters. On the contrary, Teresa complains about Ahmed's father saying: " Ahmad has no illusions about his father. I've made it very clear to him what a loser his father was; an opportunistic, clueless loser, who hasn't sent us a postcard "(49). Teresa Mulloy, as a mother, has openly told Ahmed about his father. No communication between the decamped father and his family which supports the idea that single mothers with their sons can represent an easy prey for fundamentalists and terrorists.

### **3. Interracial and Religious Marriage or a Distorted Family?**

It has been very well-known in Islam and other religions that a well-balanced marriage is the cornerstone of any successful and long-lasting marital and familial life. It is the main source of mental and physical health for not only the spouse, but for all other members as well. Taking Updike's protagonist, Ahmad and the role of his parents, the base upon which his father takes the decision of marriage, the way his father "decamps" his family, and later on, the practices his "trashy" mother adopts would explain some of the reasons that have collaborated together to produce this project of a terrorist; Ahmad. Consequently, Updike claims that the distorted Ahmad is the fruit of such a disastrous transitional or interreligious marriage. Updike explains utilizing his protagonist; Ahmad, the victim of this fragmented family.

'I am the product of a white American mother and an Egyptian exchange student; they met while both studied at the New Prospect campus of the State University of New Jersey. My mother, who has since become a nurse's aide, at the time was seeking credits toward an art degree. She paints and designs jewelry in her spare time, with some success, though not enough to support us. *He-*' The boy hesitates, as if he has encountered an obstacle in his throat. Your father, Levy prompts.

Exactly. He had hoped, my mother has explained to me, to absorb lessons in American enterprise and marketing techniques. It was not as easy as he had been told it would be. His name was *-is*; I very much feel he is still alive-Omar Ashmawy, and hers is Teresa Mulloy. She is Irish-American. They married well before I was born. I am legitimate. (18, 19)

Updike portrays a fatherless young man raised by a queer mother who seems to be indulged in extra-marital affairs. Normally, a fatherless, an experienced young man is going to be the target of indoctrinators and the middle aged high school guidance counsellor, Jack Levy. Each one of them is very keen on using his own way, tools and goals for approaching him. Satirically, Updike makes the Muslim imam, Sheikh Rashid to be the destroyer and converter of Ahmad from a normal American Muslim to a terrorist soaked in the hatred of his country and worse than that seeking the destruction of America. On one hand, Levy works very hard for the future and welfare of his students; he loves his students and believes in the genuine care for them.

Therefore, he evokes and wins the reader's sympathy. More significantly, Updike makes him end up as the real hero of *Terrorist* by preventing Ahmad from blowing up the truck in the middle of Lincoln Tunnel. On the other hand, despite being a Muslim imam sharing Ahmad's same religion; Islam, he keeps pushing him towards accepting vocational education and not going ahead with getting a scholarship to resume his education at the university. Cunningly, he persuades him to accept the job of a truck driver and through this job he can carry out the terrorist action.

Updike continues explaining the consequences of a transitional marriage by letting Teresa Mulloy confess the merits and demerits of such marriage. She says: "He and I were crazy, thinking we ought to marry. We each thought the other had the answers, when we didn't even speak the same language, literally. Though his English wasn't bad, to be fair. He'd studied it in Alexandria....."(49).

Both Omer Ashmawy and Teresa are crazy; they both do not think of the differences and disputes that could rise between them. Omer is a student and Teresa cannot complete her higher education which leaves her without a proper financial support for her son to resume his college studies. Later on, as a nurse seeing doctors and how people respect them, she should have helped him to study medicine and become a doctor. Being a fatherless Muslim son, the mosque took Ahmad in as a child of eleven; it let him be born again. "He thought he might find in this religion a trace of the handsome father who had receded at the moment his memories were beginning"(49). Truly, Ahmad is in continuous search for his father; even for an image of that handsome father among the Muslims in the mosque. It is not only the mistake of his father, but it is his mother's as well.

One of the reasons why Ahmad resorted to Sheikh Rashid is the absence of his father and his strong need to have one. Mrs. Mulloy says "I resented that he cared so much about a father who didn't do squat for him. For us. But I guess a boy needs a father, and if he doesn't have one he'll invent one. How's that for cut-rate Freud?"(65) Psychologically, it is natural that the role of a father in the life of a son is very essential. Every son cannot sail safely in the troubles of life without his father. Updike mentions that "the lack of fathers, the failure of paternity to keep men loyal to their homes, is one of the marks of this decadent and rootless society"(81).

In *Terrorist*, Updike misinterpret transitional marriage represented in the story of Omar Ashmawy and Teresa Mulloy. In his *Metatextuality of Transnational Marriages in Updike's Terrorist*, Manqoush argues that Updike has anti-Arab and Muslim ideology when rejecting this kind of marriage. Manqoush has presented three reasons for the biased attitude of Updike towards the Arabs and Muslims. First, Updike's refusal of these types of marriages concentrates merely on American women who marry Arab and Muslim migrants. Second, Updike develops dialogues to expose the Arab Americans as having strong Islamic identities which, as he claims, provoke them to reject the US liberal life and oppose the US policy and history. His novel reveals that these matrimones result in confused American identities that live in-between spaces; they are neither Americans nor Arabs. Third, the novel questions the loyalty of those Arab Americans by claiming that their loyalties lie with the religion and culture of their Muslim fathers, not of the American mothers (Manqoush 10).

When Updike sees that the Arab and Muslim Americans as dangerous for the US security, I think he is wrong for a number of reasons. First, America's very success

is a result of the collaborated efforts of the immigrants and the Arabs and Muslims represent great numbers of them. Second, America, itself is the melting pot for all the immigrants. (Anderson N.P) Third, there are many successful interracial and interreligious marriages. There could be some failure that affects sons and daughters in the community. However, life goes on with many happy settled interracial and interreligious marriages. It is not as Updike claims. It is the consequences of the distorted family that resulted in such an easily recruited terrorist.

### 4. Cultural Differences

Culture leads, here, to raise the heavily asked controversial question. Is it nature or nurture that determines the personality of a person? In other words, is it nature or nurture that determines the character of terrorist? Updike seems to be with both theories. He introduces to us a home-grown terrorist enthusiastically searching for the face of his father in the mosque as people there look like him. Updike, artistically, introduces this via his protagonist, Ahmad Mulloy, an eighteen-year-old recent high school graduate whose intense Muslim faith, fostered by the Imam of the mosque, carries him toward homegrown-terrorist status. Omar Ashmawy deserted his family at the age of three. Yet, Ahmad still has a strong Islamic identity and not a Christian one like his mother. Therefore, it is both nature and nurture.

Apparently, in *Terrorist*, Updike is very clever at bringing a variety of different people so as to make a sort of racial differences, Ahmad's decamped father is Egyptian. Despite being away from his little family, an only son and a spouse, he plays an important role in Ahmad's failure to get involved in the melting pot; Americanization as Americans call it. Obviously, *Terrorist* introduces fundamentalist Muslims, Sheikh Rashid and Ahmad, a secular Jew, the counselor Mr. Levy and Mrs. Levy, a Christian. A combination of race relations as well as the loss of the American dream has become the center of Updike's novel. Artistically, Updike, in *Terrorist*, explains how a young protagonist who, at odds with family and society, could find the path paved in front of him and directly could lend his ears and heart to an Imam who certainly has bad ends from such false teachings and indoctrinations. Ahmad, naïvely, turns to terrorism to blow up his people and part of his dear country, the middle of Lincoln Tunnel, city of New Prospect.

### 5. Innate Traits of a Terrorist

Acting like a psychologist, Updike has depicted the character of Ahmad. Such image portrays the physical qualities, the mental and spiritual status. A newly recruited terrorist is always an isolated person, he is usually absent-minded, roaming, disinterested in the joys of life; an abnormal person that he does not even know how to smile. Examining the following discourse between Joryleen and Ahmad, a lot can be revealed about the nature of Ahmad's discourse:

You're looking way serious, 'she tells him. You should learn to smile more.'

Why? Why should I, Joryleen?

'People will like you more.'

'I don't care about that. I don't want to be liked. You care,' she tells him.'

Everybody cares. (Updike 4)

Terrorists are very queer people. They hate everything around them; they hate life, they adore chaos, they even hate their own lives. The conversation between

Joryleen and Ahmad sheds more light on both the personality features and character traits of Ahmad. "It makes no difference which President is in. They all want Americans to be selfish and materialistic, to play their part in consumerism. But the human spirit asks for self-denial. It longs to say 'No' to the physical world"(39). Similar to the many terrorist groups scattered all over the world, Ahmad knows nothing about homeland and the sublime feeling of patriotism. They are rootless creatures and satanic weeds. The loyalty of each one of them is to himself; to his Satan, not to a national leader or a president. One can neither trust them nor can they trust each other in their groups. The best remedy for society is to weed them out. Joryleen extends her fears saying:

It sounds like you hate life. "She goes on, revealing herself as freely as if she is singing, 'The way I feel it, the spirit is what comes out of the body, like flowers come out of the earth. Hating your body is like hating yourself, the bones and blood and skin and shit that make you you. (Updike 39)

A terrorist is sometimes a yes-man; he is a follower. He cannot argue; terrorists are on the track till either they explode others or explode others as well as themselves. Ahmad says: "I have money, and I just saw a couple movies, one with Tom Cruise and one with Matt Damon. They were both about professional assassins. Sheikh Rashid is right— movies are sinful and stupid. They are foretastes of Hell"(79).

It is through the eyes of Sheikh Rashid Ahmad can see the world. It is Sheikh Rashid who determines his taste of art and whether to see movies or not. Unbelievably, even his social affairs are determined by Sheikh Rashid. His manly inclination towards the opposite sex is decided by Sheikh Rashid. It has been detected that whether in *Terrorist* or in real life that most recruited terrorists lack their own ability to decide and think freely. In other words, they are mere followers of their recruiters or imams who have either brainwashed them or even cancelled their minds and they decide for them regarding even how to end their precious lives.

Terrorists hate life and adore blood and death. They want to take people to the life of the middle ages. They care about formalities not essence. They scorn beauty, ethics, progress and the construction and welfare on earth that God and prophets ask all humans to initiate and take care of. Islam encourages us to be encouraging and supportive. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said, "If the Day of Judgment erupts while you are planting a new tree, carry on and plant it"(Authentic Hadith). It is not just one religion that advises humans to work, construct and secure welfare for themselves and for the other generations to come. Simply, all religions and normal humans do so. Only the insane do their best to make destruction prevail.

Deceit, claim, and telling lies are the canoes of terrorists. They employ their false discourse as a bait to hunt and recruit plastic young men such as Ahmad Ashmawy and many others. Updike explains the deceit and claim in Sheikh Rashid's description of the appearance of the mosque:

Appearances can deceive. Though I know our mosque appears, to youthful eyes, shabby and fragile in its external trappings, it is woven of tenacious strands and built upon truths set deep in the hearts of men. The mosque has friends, friends as powerful as they are pious. The head of the Chehab family,

just the other day, told me that his prospering business has need for a young truck driver, with no unclean habits and firmly of our faith. (79)

It is quite true that appearances do not matter particularly when talking about a worshipping place. The mosque could look shabby and fragile. Still, it is deeply constructed in the hearts of pious friends. It is noticed, here, that Sheikh Rashid is paving the way to convince Ahmad to discard his scholarship and work as a truck driver for the Chehab family so that they can carry out their terrorist action by exploding the truck in the tunnel.

Fundamentalists, extremists, and Jihadists collaborate together to beget terrorists. Those groups, who in some other situations could call themselves as Islamists, are very well-known for their degraded look to women. It is totally different from the real evaluation of women given to them from the true Islam. They see women as beasts. "Women are animals easily led, Ahmad has been warned by Sheikh Rashid, and he can see for himself that the high school and the world beyond it are full of nuzzling— blind animals in a herd bumping against one another"(5). Islam raised the value of women more than fourteen centuries before. Every Muslim is fully aware of the treatment women received from true Muslims. Prophet Mohammed declares this in one of his authentic Hadiths that "women are as fragile as glass." They need to be treated delicately. True Muslims look at women as mothers, wives, sisters...etc. Thus, great value, respect and appreciation should be given to them.

A terrorist does not have any respect or appreciation for women. For example, Ahmad along with Sheikh Rashid humiliates females in general, his female class mates, his close friend Joryleen and his mother. For them, Joryleen is "unclean meat" (Updike 163). Astonishingly, Ahmad feels ashamed of his mother's clothing, behavior and flirtation at the driving license exam. He thinks he is not quite a man enough to disown his mother. Updike puts it this way "This was the sort of hopeless creature his mother lavished her flirtations upon, at the expense of her son's dignity"(79). This situation and many others show the nature of relationship between a son and his mother, his single parent. Such a relationship between Ahmad and his mother should be mutual enhancing, developing and integrating one another. The teachings of the fundamentalist Imam have led to Ahmad's degraded treatment of his mother. Similarly, it is the mother's degrading treatment of her own son. Likewise, the disappearance of the impact of his father has led Ahmad to choose Sheikh Rashid solely as a teacher, but a substitute for the fatherless child.

Terrorists degrade not only women but followers of other religions as well. Shaikh Rashid has taught Ahmad that other religions are bad, wrong and represent a form of atheism. Ahmad informs Tylenol that Joryleen's religion is the wrong one. The word *Kafir* is heavily used term in their fundamentalist diction. Ahmad and Sheikh Rashid use it repeatedly to describe followers of other religions, or even Muslims who do not embrace their thoughts. Terrorists' talk is the same everywhere; in Afghanistan, India, Egypt or even in America. Updike is presenting part of their talk in *Terrorist* via Ahmad's conversation with Tylenol. "It was she who brought up religion, inviting him so saucily to her church to sit with kinky-haired *kafirs*, the singe of Hellfire on them like the brown skin on barbecued drumsticks. It gets his devils to murmuring inside him"(9).



The terrorists are crooked people. Their logic is a type falseness clad in a layer of truth. Ahmed informs his academic advisor, Mr. Jack Levy that it is Sheikh Rashid, the imam of the mosque who suggests the truck driving job for him. Let's imagine if Ahmad Ashmawy were his son, would the imam suggest such a job for him? Undoubtedly, no, as this is the policy adopted by most of terrorist recruiters, the fundamentalists and extremist. They prefer to recruit sons of others and load them with explosives around their waists and send them for explosions to kill themselves and as many other humans "infidels" as possible. Such Imams inculcate and indoctrinate hostility and enmity towards others. In the discussion after the visit of the church, Ahmed tells Joryleen: "My teacher at the mosque says that all unbelievers are our enemies. The Prophet said that eventually all unbelievers must be destroyed"(37).

Furthermore, the type of language both the fundamentalists and terrorists use is the language of enmity, destruction, torture and hellfire. Mercy, forgiveness and tolerance are not available in their discourse despite the fact that mercy, forgiveness and tolerance are there in both the Holy Quran and the authentic Hadiths of Prophet Mohammed, but for the purpose of terrifying people, they interpret the language of Allah the way it serves their brutal ends. It is not just the language they use that is clashing. Their statuses and principles are contradicting. Joryleen invites Ahmed to visit the church and he spends a considerable time there following the practices and commenting. Unexpectedly, Ahmad answers Joryleen negatively when she asks to pay back the visit to the mosque. "You came to my church," she says. "I could go to your mosque with you." "That would not do. We could not sit together, and you could not attend without a course of instruction, and a demonstration of sincerity"(37). The duality of principles and opinions is quite clear here. Terrorists are free to act and behave, but when others try to act or behave in the same way, they prevent them and they look at them as "the infidels or the unbelievers". For receiving Joryleen at the mosque, he has a number of conditions that she must meet before allowing her to tread at the mosque.

Additionally, Updike utilizes every opportunity of the discussions taking place between Ahmed and the other characters in general and between Ahmed and Sheikh Rashid particularly. Considering the following discussion between the young man and the so-called teacher reveals a lot about them. "The cockroaches that slither out from the baseboard and from beneath the sink—do you pity them? The flies that buzz around the food on the table, walking on it with the dirty feet that have just danced on feces and carrion—do you pity them?"(41).

The fundamentalist, represented in the character of Sheikh Rashid is praising himself and his group indirectly. They are disdainful and haughty; they put themselves at a rank that is superior to other humans. Others are "cockroaches"; they can tread on them. Fundamentalist are clean and pure while others are dirty infidels. Updike, then, exposes to us the inner feelings of his true heart saying "Ahmad did, in truth, pity them, being fascinated by the vast insect population teeming at the feet of godlike men, but, knowing that any qualifications or signs of further argument would anger his teacher, responded, "No."(42).

Ahmed as an inexperienced man cannot give vent out to his real feelings towards the poor cockroaches. He finally answers negatively "No". Sheikh Rashid openly shows his satisfaction after Ahmed's answer. He adds:

You want to destroy them. They are vexing you with their uncleanness. They would take over your table, your kitchen; they will settle into the very food as it passes into your mouth if you do not destroy them. They have no feelings. They are manifestations of Satan, and God will destroy them without mercy on the day of final reckoning. God will rejoice at their suffering. Do thou likewise, Ahmad. To imagine that cockroaches deserve mercy is to place yourself above *ar-Rahim*, to presume to be more merciful than the Merciful. (42)

Fundamentalists and terrorists claim repeatedly all their discourses cope with the language of Allah, which is never true. Their discourse is full of lies. They claim that God wants to destroy the infidels despite the fact that God's language commences with mercy and forgiveness not torture. Sheikh Rashid here is trying to brainwash Ahmed and to convince him that when you have mercy on the dirty infidels, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, you are trying to be more divine and more merciful than God who is known to be the most merciful. In the presence of such a fundamentalist or a terrorist, Ahmed does not have the right to argue; all what he can do is to listen, learn and submit to his extremist teacher and to carry out what he has been instructed and inculcated.

### **6. Indoctrination and Terrorist Recruitment**

For ages, terrorism recruiters have been focusing on individuals who are needy, oppressed or fatherless such as Ahmad Ashmawy in Updike's *Terrorist*. It is the dominance and the siege laid on Ahmed by Sheikh Rashid. In his *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Amien Kacou states that

Sheikh Rashid's authority seems to emerge directly from the absence and shortcomings of Ahmad's parents; that is, by introducing Ahmad to Islam, he controls the channel through which Ahmad compensates (with pride) for his father's absence (and cowardice—as well as for his mother's lack of involvement in his life (or lack of focus, discipline and ultimate commitment in her own. (Kacou 176)

Psychologically speaking, in his *The Mind of the Terrorist*, Victoroff explains why recruiters select adolescents and young men such as Ahmad Ashmawy. In his *The Mind of the Terrorist*, Victoroff introduces two essential issues.

First, sensation and novelty seeking, a normative feature of adolescent development probably tied to expected changes in neural activity may play a role in the natural history of terrorist involvement. Second, the personality trait of novelty seeking—a measurable, non-normative, and probably genetically influenced characteristic that persists in certain individuals well into adulthood—possibly distinguishes those who are more likely to be terrorism prone. (Victoroff 28)

Consequently, Sheikh Rashid, as an experienced terrorist recruiter, is utilizing the fragile sides in the life of a fatherless young man, a ward of a careless mother. He lays his siege at Ahmad and isolates him from others. Such siege will make him helpless, away from the fatherly pride and the genuine love, care and support of

parents. Ahmad is looking for the genuine Islam. In contrast, Sheikh Rashid is fostering him false Islam. Sheikh Rashid's Islam is terrorism and hatred.

It is not the ordinary, community-centered Islam, which Ahmad derides at one point as a "lazy matter of ethnic identity. "It is not the tolerance that resides in the hearts of true Muslims. It is intolerance and the poisonous ideology that teaches Ahmad that modernity and secularism are evil; that non-Muslims are devils who must burn in hell and be destroyed without pity; and that good Muslims must reject deep social attachments and prepare instead—eagerly—for the ultimate purity of paradise. (176)

Clearly, in *Terrorist*, Updike highlights the character of the fanatic Imam and his student to overstate Islamic fundamentalism which, as he claims, prompts young Muslims towards terrorism (Manqoush 1). However, it is not fair to stain all Muslim Imams with fanaticism. This could be spotted in the practices of a number of Imams with very little knowledge about true Islam.

Updike diagnoses a teenager's status "You are at a point in your late teens when your hormones are very active and your idealism is at as high a pitch as it will ever be." (Gray 1) Updike goes on adding that he found similarities between being a terrorist and being a soldier in war. He illustrates that "Once you're enlisted, you can be asked to perform self-sacrificial acts which almost look crazy from the outside but make perfect sense from the middle of the battle" (Gray 2). Thus, the nature of teenagers and young men necessitates special care for this particular stage of life. Additionally, global efforts have to collaborate in order to overcome such a malady. There should be a type of solidarity against such cruelty from humans against humans. Don DeLillo has summarized it in a statement. He advises us. "We need each other. Just people sharing the air, that's all" (DeLillo 193). It is the true Islam which encourages sharing, but not monopoly.

### **7. Updike versus Sheikh Rashid**

A close investigation of both Updike, Sheikh Rashid, can easily scandalize their poor understanding of Islam. On one hand, Sheikh Rashid has employed deception and false teachings about Islam for some other personal, dogmatic, economic or political ends. Sheikh Rashid is promoting a false image of Islam. On the other, Updike's misunderstanding has been represented in the use of intertextuality in his novel about Islam. From a postmodern perspective, Updike utilizes all types of intertextuality; from mere quotations including Quranic verses and authentic Hadiths to historical intertextuality. In his *John Updike pens a Sympathetic, loving portrait of a Jihadist*, Spencer mentions that "Terrorist even includes some Koran passages in Arabic transliteration; Shady Nasser, a graduate student, helped Mr. Updike on those sections." (Spencer) In his *Muslims and American Popular Culture*, Richards conveys the viewpoint of Updike.

My conscience was pricked by the notion that I was putting into the book something that I can't pronounce," he said, but he added: "Arabic is very twisting, very beautiful. The call to prayer is quite haunting; it almost makes you a believer on the spot. My feeling was, 'This is God's language, and the fact that you don't understand it means you don't know enough about God.' (Omidvar, 224)

This is an honest and full confession from Updike himself that he quoted verses from the Holy Quran that he 'can't pronounce'. Such confession will strongly support the opinion mentioned above that Updike is fully mistaken when stereotyping the character of Imam Rashid and extends his viewpoint about Muslim Imams and sheikhs to readers. What Updike has introduced in *Terrorist* can be applied on Sheikh Rashid and on many other Muslims in reality. Such fundamentalist Imams like Sheikh Rashid are the starting points of terrorism. Optimistically, those deviated Imams are not the majority of Sheikhs and Imams among Muslims. In other words, Updike has summarized the malady (terrorism), its causes (Fundamentalism, misunderstanding of the language of God) and its remedy (tolerance and understanding the language of God). However, he could be seen as a biased author when stereotyping all Muslim Imams generalizes the personality of Sheikh Rashid (Hajji 1). In fact, he scandalizes the negative impact of the Imam's teachings on Ahmad, but he imposes another type of terror; the intellectual terrorism. He attacks interreligious marriage, confiscates freedom of thought where we can find Updike cutting the grass from beneath Sheikh Rashid and preaching intellectual terrorism. Subsequently, while eradicating terrorism, we have to be fully aware of the essence and genuineness of religions and their true followers.

### **8. Conclusion**

Drawing on the analyses carried out across the novel, it is recommended that teenagers and young people should receive the utmost care from both home and school. Likewise, various techniques should be adopted and numerous methods have to be followed so as to dry the sources and block out the locations where terrorists are recruited. First, it is not sufficient to use the military and security solutions; a blend of talk and negotiations with terrorists along with the military and security solutions have to be utilized. Second, educational deterrence should be implemented. Curricula at educational institutions should reinforce the principles of renunciation of violence, tolerance, and the normal coexistence in one country and reinforcing the feeling of belonging to one's nation. The renewal of religious discourse has become a must. That is fundamentalists and extremists have to reconsider their viewpoints regarding art, literature and the "Other". The degraded opinion about literature, women, art and the "Other" encourages young people to adopt extremism and violence. Third, areas, with disputes for years; if not decades, have to be settled and fighting there has to be ceased. If disputes are to be settled, claims by terrorist recruiters to enlist zealous young men will be renounced and appear futile when the term Jihad is abused.

In conclusion, insistence of parents not to decamp their domestic lives and to fix their familial problems will work as a preventive remedy for recruiting teenagers to terror. Perfecting the type of education rendered to generations and teaching them what is right; keeping them away from destructive ideas and inculcating in them constructive thoughts. Last but not least, people and government have not to be intimidated by terror (Bowden& Davis 11) as this fear is the real purpose of their explosions. Blocking the way and sieging them will certainly help eradicate that terror with neither stereotyping nor over generalizing people or their religions.

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