John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) and Yusuf Idris's *al-'Askari al-Aswad* (1982): A Psycho-comparative Study(*)

Usama Raslan

Lecturer in English Department, Higher Institute for Specific Studies

Abstract

This paper attempts a comparative psychoanalytic study of *Terrorist* (2006) by the American novelist, John Updike (1955-2009), and *al-'Askari al-Aswad* (1982) by the Egyptian novelist, dramatist, and short-story writer, Yusuf Idris (1927-1991). Although Updike and Idris represent different cultural milieus, they adopt Jacques Lacan and Alexandre Kojève's theory of desire in order to explore how this concept is best reflected in the major characters of the selected narratives. To accomplish such an objective, both novelists highlight the necessity of developing a new realistic vision, an artistic form in terms of which desire and its interpretation can best be demonstrated. That is why both novelists choose the same thematic structure; a schema which shows how the characters endeavour to bridge the psychological gap resulting from the lack of existence. Not only does this lack highlight the reasons behind the central desire that attacks Updike's and Idris's characters, but also provides the framework by which one can probe into the psychological realities of these characters. The formalization of the dynamics of desire implies that both Updike and Idris are professional writers with a critical sense of creative structures in a school established by Lacan and Kojève.

Keywords:

Updike – Idris – psychoanalysis – Lacan – Kojève – psychoanalytic criticism – desire – Terrorist – Black Policeman – existence – being – lack – psychological reality

(*)John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) and Yusuf Idris's *al-'Askari al-Aswad* (1982): A Psycho-comparative Study**,** Vol.7. Issue No.4,Oct. 2018, pp.159-199.

الملخص

يقدّم هذا البحث قراءةً نفسية تحليلية مقارنة لرواية "الإرهابي" (٢٠٠٦) للكاتب الأمريكي جون أبدايك (١٩٥٥-٢٠٠٩) و "العسكري الأسود" (١٩٨٢) للروائي المصري يوسف إدريس (١٩٢٧-١٩٩١)، وتؤكد القراءة النقدية التحليلية لتلك الروايتين أنه على الرغم من أن أبدايك وإدريس يقدمان سياقين ثقافيين مختلفين كلياً وجوهرياً، إلا أنهما يشتركان في تبنِّي أدبيات وجماليات التحليل النفسي اللتين قدمهما المحلل النفسي الفرنسي جاك لاكان (١٩٠١-١٩٨٠) والفيلسوف الروسي الفرنسي الجنسية أليكساندر كوجيف (١٩٠٢-١٩٦٨)، حيث أدت فلسفة هذين المفكرين إلى ميلاد نظرية " الرغبة النفسية (theory of desire)" التي كان لها التأثير الأكبر على أبدايك وإدريس، ومن ثم بلورة الدور الجمالي الذي تلعبة الرغبة النفسية في تحديد وتوجيه السلوك النفسي للشخصية البشرية، حيث تجلى عبر الدرس أن أبدايك وإدريس أكدا على ضرورة تدشين رؤية (vision) واقعية / نفسية توضح دور الرغبة النفسية في تحديد الواقع النفسي للشخصيات الروائية؛ ولهذا السبب سخّر كلا الروائيين إبداعهما لأبراز الأنماط والأعراض النفسية التي أجبرت الشخصيات الروائية على الشعور بغياب الوجود البشري (lack of being)، وقد مثّلت ظاهرة الغياب التيمة الأساسية التي اعتمد عليها كلا الكاتبين؛ تأثير غياب الوجود الإنساني على الشخصية البشرية. ونصوص الكاتبين "جون أبدايك ويوسف إدريس" تجسد إنتماءهما إلى مدرسة التحليل النفسي (psychoanalytic criticism) التي أنشائها لاكان وكوجيف.

الكلمات الدالة:

أبدايك – إدريس –لاكان – كوجيف – الرغبة – التحليل النفسي – الغياب – الأرهابي – العسكري الاسود – الواقع النفسي – الوجود

Introduction

This paper offers a comparative psychoanalytic study of the American novelist and short-story writer, John Updike (1955-2009), and the Egyptian novelist, dramatist, essayist and short-story writer, Yusuf Idris (1927-1991). It investigates how both writers apply psychoanalytic criticism, particularly the Lacanian concept of desire, to their pivotal characters. The novels under study are Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) and Idris's *al-ʻAskari al-Aswad* (1982 [translated into English as *The Black Policeman* by Catherine Cobham]). Both novels are analyzed in the light of psychoanalytic criticism, particularly Lacan and Kojève's theory of desire in order to explore how such a concept is reflected in the major characters of the selected narratives. These characters are preoccupied with a burning desire for existence that engenders a psychological state. In it, the characters experience a psychological imbalance that stems from their lack of being. To unfold this lack, both writers delve deeply into human character to reveal how the repressed desires are the root cause of any psychological disorder that befalls the fictional characters. Such a disorder is the main reason behind the sense of lacking that gives rise to inevitable desire.

Desire, as this paper contends, does not refer to the study of sexual drives. Rather, desire is the study of any diagnostic material that forms the psychological structures of a human character. This assessment arises from the belief that desire is not a direct expression of the subject's will to satisfaction nor the demand for love, but the lack that stems from the separation of the subject from his/her reality. Such a subtraction causes deep, psychological injuries that lead to the emergence of lack of being. This lack urges the subject to be captivated with a central desire for being loved and recognized as a human value within the limits of existence. If the subject fails to fulfill his/her desire, he/she will be obsessed with a strong psychic feeling because "Man's humanity comes to light" (Kojève 6) only in satisfying the driving force of the desire for existence.

When comparing Updike's *Terrorist* to Idris's *al-'Askari al-Aswad*, one can discover that although each of them belongs to a different cultural background, both reflect identical attitudes regarding the psychoanalytic

portrait of their fictional characters. This portrait reflects not only the structures of desire, but also the psychological symptoms responsible for the birth of desire and its interpretation. To achieve this portrait, both novelists adopt the same thematic structure; a schema which shows how the characters endeavour to bridge the psychological gap resulting from the lack of existence. This lack generates within Updike and Idris's characters a central desire to be recognized as human values within the borders of human existence, psychological reality that dehumanizes them. It also motivates both writers to formalize the dynamics of desire. The formalization of this dynamics implies that desire is the *leitmotif* of Updike and Idris's *oeuvre*.

To novelize the *leitmotif* of desire in *Terrorist*, Updike concentrates on telling the story of Ahmad, the protagonist of the novel. Inspired by the 9/11 attacks on New York, Updike deploys an unnamed narrator−the technique of third-person narration to represent the story of an eighteen-year-Arab-American boy called Ahmad Ashmawy. His father decamps to his country, Egypt, after finishing his studies, leaving Ahmad with the Irish-American secular mother. Despite the absence of the father, Ahmad is much controlled by his father's Arab-Muslim identity. That is why he considers himself a Muslim, not a Christian like his mother. The absence of the father provides Shaikh Rashid, a Yemeni Imam, and Charlie Chehab, a Lebanese-American, with a chance to brainwash him to be a suicide bomber in Lincoln Tunnel. Fortunately, Jack Levy, the Jewish counselor of Ahmad's Central High School, discovers such a terrorist conspiracy. The conspiracy is foiled by Levy who persuades Ahmad to stop driving the truck that is prepared for blowing up the tunnel. This thematic structure enables Updike to "get inside the mind of his Ahmad—to deliver the young man's devotion as well as his fear, uncertainty, and malleable innocence" (Caldwell 2).

In similar ways, Idris, motivated by the oppressive "police state" that prevailed in Egypt during Gamal Abd-al-Nasser's regime, employs an unnamed narrator—the first-person narration technique to psychoanalyze the story of Shawqi, the protagonist of the novel. The plot revolves around the relationship between Shawqi, a political activist who once belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood, and Abbas al-Zunfuli, the executioner who is

discovered to be the Black Policeman. The first-person narrator, Shawqi's colleague at the faculty of medicine, realizes that Shawqi's character and behavior have changed tremendously since he was released. Thus, the narrator tries to play the part of a psychoanalyst, who delves into the mind of Shawqi in the hope of discovering the psychogenic agitations that hanged over Shawqi when he was in custody. The reasons for these agitations are best illustrated when Shawqi confronts Abbas who is no longer a strong figure. Rather, he is a psychotic cannibal that devours himself. Such a narrative thread motivates one to figure out that in depicting the psychology of both the executioner and the victim, Idris argues that force and violence "are double-edged weapons. Their effect will turn against the executioner and he will be punished by his own conscience" (Rudnicka-Kassem 50).

To dramatize the *leitmotif* of desire in their fiction, particularly *Terrorist* and *al-'Askari al-Aswad*, both Updike and Idris develop a new realistic vision for representing the dynamics of desire, or rather the psychogenic trauma that befalls the characters. This vision places both of them among the makers of psychoanalytic criticism, simply because they show a creative talent in dramatizing the characters' desire. Updike's genius consists in making an aesthetic attempt to say the unsaid. When asked about the relationship between fiction and reality, his answer implies that he devises a new method for representing human reality. Such a method stems from his belief that human reality is not a clear icon. Rather, it is "a strange thing" (*Updike in Conversation with Goldberg* 26). To hammer this idea home, he contends that literature, particularly the novel, should be more existential by tackling the problems of being a human in a world gone mad. His contention indicates that the mission of the novelist is not to depict reality as it is, but to delve into the psychological realities of the characters so as to reveal the tensions, paradoxes, and unspoken agony that prevent a human being from enjoying a psychological balance. To fictionalize these realities, the writer should highlight the appetites, the imperatives, and the boundless desires that force the characters to experience the lack of existence. This vision is the central thesis that Updike does his best to dramatize in all his fiction:

> I seem to feel that fiction ought to be a little more existential than that, it should be about being human, the tensions and paradoxes and unspoken agony of being a thinking animal. To be a human being is to be intrinsically under some stress between the appetites, the imperatives, our desires—our virtually boundless desires—and the real bounds that being a social animal creates. So . . . this tension is always . . . what I try to dramatize in my fiction. (*Updike in Conversation with Goldberg* 15)

Like Updike's, Idris's gift for novel-writing relies greatly on composing a new realistic vision. This vision enables him to penetrate deep into the human psyche in order to "grasp the hidden, unconscious impulses which have their roots in the biological basis of sense perception" (Rudnicka-Kassem 51). Such a penetration can be traced back to the fact that Idris is much concerned with the existential function of literature. He holds that the very objective of literature is to fictionalize the psychic problems that prevent any character from being conceived as a human value within existence. In an interview with Ghali Shukri, he lays heavy emphasis on the aesthetic value of the human race as the main source of artistic inspiration. He argues that "objective ideas do not represent the essence of human reality that can only be depicted by unfolding the inner structures of a human character. These structures are the crux of human existence" [1](18 [trans. mine]). To dramatize such a crux, Idris does his best in order to formulate a new realistic vision. His vision hinges on an authentic approach to reality that drives him to reveal the problems of humanity—human psyche is in conflict with itself as well as existence. This vision is the outcome of Idris's effort to mix the techniques of objective realism with those of subjective realism in order to depict the unknown regions of the narrative characters. His depiction denotes that human experience does not consist of a series of discrete phenomena. Rather, it is the direct result of one key phenomenon. The task of the writer is to highlight such a phenomenon to produce an aesthetic literary canon. This canon enables the novelist to combine the objective and subjective vision of reality to create an

internal artistic representation of reality, a psychological portrait in which the psychic dysfunctions that attack human existence can be best illustrated. Idris puts this idea as follows:

> I deploy my previous literary practice to engender a new realistic comprehensive vision; a vision in terms of which all disparate phenomena of reality can be reconciled to formulate one single artistic medium that has one central canon. This literary canon transforms my old conception of reality into a more general artistic creed that can be likened to a literary practice. Such a practice constitutes the starting point in which the objective and subjective representation of reality are coupled. In combining such two forms, I can easily compromise a substitute artistic tool that can replace the objective vision of reality. This new vision effaces the dead tablets of objective realism because it has its own internal aesthetic values and traditions. [2] (qtd. in Abo Oaf 13 [trans. mine])

Although Updike and Idris represent different cultural milieus, both seem to share the view that literature should be more existential. To accomplish this objective, both novelists highlight the necessity of developing a new realistic vision, an artistic form in terms of which desire and its interpretation can best be demonstrated. It would, therefore, be absurd to examine the two novels under study without introducing Lacan and Kojève's theory of desire. Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) is a nontraditional French psychoanalyst who emphasized the necessity of a return to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the father and founder of psychoanalysis. He calls upon writers and psychoanalysts to reread and "rewrite Freudianism" (Eagleton 142), mainly because Freud's legacy has been misread by many psychoanalyst thinkers. His re-reading of Freud culminates in a new psychoanalytic theory that illustrates "the structures of desire" (Wright 155) as reflected in human characters. In *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan VI: Desire and its Interpretation* (1977), Lacan outlines his theory of desire. He defines psychoanalysis as a therapy, or rather a psychical treatment that

aims to discover the psychological disorder as well as painful experiences that befall an analysand. Thus, psychoanalysis deals with psychological symptoms, including "marginal or residual phenomena," e.g. dreams and parapraxes, which are responsible not only for the formation of desire, but also for the split of a human personality. This indicates that desire is the main reason behind a character's psychogenic trauma. In psychoanalytic terms, such symptoms are nothing but a diagnostic material that led to the emergence of "neuroses or neuro-psychoses," psychological structures that help the psychoanalytic critic show why a human being cannot satisfy his/her desire:

> An analysis is, it is said, a therapy; let us say a treatment, a psychical treatment which relates at different levels of the psyche, at first this was the primary scientific object of its experience, to what we call marginal or residual phenomena . . . which modifies structures, these structures . . . are called neuroses or neuro-psychoses. . . . The psychoanalyst intervenes in order to deal at different levels with these diverse phenomenal realities in so far as they bring desire into play. (2)

The study of the psychical structures manifests that the primary objective of psychoanalysis therapy is to enable the psychoanalytic critic, including Updike and Idris, to delve deeply into the inner of the fictional characters. In so doing, the critics register "phenomenal realities" that generate desire—a signifying desire which helps the critics conclude the psychological structures responsible for the birth of desire. These structures explain why the human characters are fired with a strong will to mask and unmask simultaneously their desire. In a word, the task of the psychoanalytic critic is to psychoanalyze the characters, so he/she can reground and illustrate the mechanism of desire. The illustration of this mechanism paves the way for the literary critics to hold that desire is "a constant search for something else, and there is no specifiable object that is capable of satisfying it, in other words, extinguishing it" (Fink 90).

Nevertheless, many critics misunderstand Lacan's concept of desire. This misunderstanding results from Lacan's statement that the representation of phenomenal realities should be "eroticized" (*Seminars of Lacan VI* 3). Such a statement tricks many psychoanalyst critics into analyzing the concept of desire in terms of lust. To guide the critics to the exact meaning of desire, Lacan calls upon psychoanalysts and literary critics to think of desire away from the idea of lust. His call drives the critic to formulate a new definition of desire: "Desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from subtraction of the first from the second" (*Ecrits* 287). The subtraction of the subject from reality denotes that a human being suffers greatly from lack of existence, a feeling of lack which ascertains that "man's desire is the desire of the Other" (*Seminars of Lacan II* 235).

This Lacanian formula can be traced back to the philosophies of the Russian-born French philosopher, Alexandre Kojève (1902-1968), whose philosophical investigations motivate Lacan to provide an existentialist conception of man's desire as the desire of the Other. This conception proceeds from the notion that all humans are weighed down with a burning desire to be treated peacefully and humanely within the system of existence. In fulfilling this desire, the analysand forms a relationship between psychology and existence, which urges one into holding that the constitution of a human desire springs from the subject's eternal pursuit to be recognized by the "other" as an independent "being." To reach such an aim, the "subject" should risk the peace and purity in a struggle for satisfying his/her desire of the Other/existence. In this regard, human behavior can only be interpreted in terms of actions perpetuated by the subject to achieve his/her desire because human existence and reality result from the history of desired Desires. Kojève argues:

> Desire is human only if the one desires, not the body, but the Desire of the other; if he wants "to possess" or "to assimilate" the Desire taken as Desire−that is to say, if he wants to be "desired" or "loved," or, rather, "recognized" in his human value, in his reality as a human individual. . . .

> Such a Desire can only be a human Desire, and human reality, as distinguished from animal reality, is created only by action that satisfies such Desires: human history is the history of desired Desires. (6f)

Lacan and Kojève's postulation on human desire motivates one to believe that the major duty of any psychoanalytic thinker is to tackle the diverse phenomenal realities that drive a subject to be preoccupied with a desire for recognition. This postulation is translated more and more in Updike's *Terrorist* and Idris's *al-'Askari al-Aswad*. A close reading of *Terrorist* indicates that Updike's primary concern is to portray the mind of a devout teenager, who is "lured into the dark tunnel of radical Islam" (Azzam 64). Thus, Updike's main intention is to examine the psychological reasons that spur Ahmad to adopt a strict vision of Islam. This investigation starts from the very beginning of the novel in which Ahmad criticizes the American society, colleagues, and teachers. His criticism stems from his belief that they seek to take away his God. That is why he describes them as devils, not humans. He disdains the girls who "sway and sneer and expose their soft bodies and alluring hair." He also humiliates the boys for gazing at "bare bellies" with a dead-eyed look. Besides, Ahmad's satire of the American society is extended to include the teachers as well. He argues that they are "weak Christians and non-observant Jews," who never consider the enormous benefits of directing the students to virtue and righteous self-restraint path, mainly because they suffer from the lack of true faith that exists only in Islam. This negative viewpoint of the Americans can be traced back to Ahmad's remark that they are not only unclean infidels, but also slaves, or rather crabs full of lust, fear, and infatuation with empty materialism. Although these crabs are paid to instill virtue and democratic values within the American society, they spread nothing but impurity and atheism:

> *Devils*, Ahmad thinks. *These devils seek to take away my God*. All day long, at Central High School, girls sway and sneer and expose their soft bodies and alluring hair. . . . The teachers, weak Christians and non-observant Jews, make a

> show of teaching virtue and righteous self-restraint, but their shifty eyes and hollow voices betray their lack of belief. . . . They lack true faith; they are not on the Straight Path; they are unclean. (1)

Ahmad's statement that "these devils seek to take away my God" helps one decode the coded desire that dominated his character throughout the novel. It also composes the central point in psychoanalyzing this character: it unfolds the depth of such a desire as well as the serious alienation inflicted upon him. His alienation results from the fact that he loathes the American society because its members lack true faith, belief, and purity. In loathing this society, Ahmad, to borrow Kirshner's terms, represents an expression of lack inherent in his character whose "incompleteness and early helplessness produce a quest for fulfillment beyond the satisfaction of biological needs" (38). This expression denotes that Ahmad lays an emphasis on using the psychoanalytic mechanism of projection, which can be defined as "a defence mechanism in which an internal desire/thought/feeling is displaced and located outside the subject, in another subject" (Evans 154). Such a mechanism is the rationale behind Ahmad's fury at American society as well as the lack embodied in his character. In accusing the Americans of being unclean infidel crabs that lack true faith and purity, Ahmad projects his lack of true faith and purity onto the Americans to defend his psychological existence. This lends the readers a hand to recognize the truth about his desire, a central desire which proceeds from the lack of true faith and purity.

In projecting the feeling of lack onto the Americans, Ahmad does not only name desire, but also creates what Lacan calls "a new presence in the world" (*Seminars of Lacan II* 229). This presence exposes one to the fact that the essence of Ahmad's desire for faith and purity consists in the absence of the Egyptian father. It is a psychological absence that helps Ahmad change the law of "Oedipus complex" because it provides him with a chance to identify with any figure that can replace the absent father. This identification results from the notion that Ahmad provides a new conception of father-child relationship. In it, the father, to cite Evans's words, is not a

rival with whom Ahmad competes for obtaining the mother's love. Rather, "he is the representative of the social order as such, and only by identifying with the father in the Oedipus complex can [Ahmad] the subject gain entry into this order"(62). In this regard, the absence of the father stands for the marginal reality, which not only forms the keystone of Ahmad's desire, but also forces him to associate with any psychological symbol that can act as a surrogate father.

By identifying with the memory of the absent father, not only does Ahmad modify the law of Oedipus complex, but also explains the reasons behind his lack of existence. Indeed, such lack leaves him no choices but to long for the absent father in the hope of filling the void of the lack of being. When asked by Levy, the school counselor, about his biography, Ahmad speaks with "a pained stateliness." His tone encourages Levy to sympathize with the boy as he figures out that the boy is a formal talker who is obsessed with the absence of his father. In answering Levy's question: who is Ashmawy? Ahmad argues that he is the outcome of a white American mother, and an Egyptian exchange student. His mother was a nurse aid who met Ashmawy at the New Prospect campus of the State University of New Jersey. When he sheds light on his father, he stumbles over some material regarding the father as if he were referring to a repressed experience, which tries to find a vent. Whenever he mentions the name of the father, he hesitates as if he were attempting to conceal any memory about the father. He says his name "was—is" Omar Ashmawy. Such a hesitation clarifies that even though nobody knows whether his father is alive or not, Ahmad is confident that his father is still alive:

> 'He–' The boy hesitates, as if he has encountered an obstacle in his throat. . . . '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.' (32)

The data provided by Ahmad concerning his family implies that he is "a hybird who lives in constant psychological limbo" (Manqoush 13). To fully grasp this limbo, one should take into account the fact that he is weighed down with a desire for the father, which Lacan calls "the symbolic father" (*Seminars of Lacan IV* 48). This symbolic father is not only the root cause of the lack of being that befalls Ahmad's character, but also the symbol of social order, the American society that forces Ahmad to experience the lack of existence. The absence of the symbolic father opens up a psychological gap that deepens the lack of existence, as well as forcing Ahmad to live in a total seclusion from the social order. To end this isolation, Ahmad, to cite Lacan's terms, longs for the symbolic father that is not a real being but a position; a function which aims at "imposing the LAW and regulating desire in the Oedipus complex" (*Seminars of Lacan IV* 161). In this regard, Ahmad is much attracted to the discourse of the father. Consequently, when he refers to the absent father, he uses the present and past form of verb to be: "His name was—is." These forms are no more than a defence mechanism invented by Ahmad to unfold not only his unconscious, but also his desire for the symbolic absent father. The presence of this father enables the subject (Ahmad) "to unite (and not to set in opposition) a desire and the Law" (*Ecrits* 321) of Oedipus complex in which Ahmad desires the parent of the same sex, not the opposite one.

Moreover, Ahmad's hesitation over providing any information about the father composes the starting point in terms of which one can understand the psychogenic trauma that obsessed him. This trauma springs from a psychological disorder, which Lacan calls "Name-of-the Father" (*Ecrits* 67). In applying such a disorder to Ahmad's psychological reality, one can discover that Ahmad's father represents "the lack of a particular signifier" that Ahmad struggles to hide. His attitude can be traced back to the belief that he fears the consequences of Oedipus Complex, or rather the Oedipal law which ascertains the prohibition of the mother, Teresa Mullloy. Thus, the name of Omar Ashmawy, Ahmad's father, is no more than "an essential signifier" within Ahmad. In avoiding the father's name, Ahmad is conceived to be a psycho-pathetic character, who exerts himself tirelessly to repress the

desire for the absent father (the essential signifier). This leads Ahmad to experience a sort of psychological dispersal that occurs only in psychosis. Lacan writes:

> That is what the name of the father is, and as you see, it is an essential signifier within the other, it is around this that I tried to centre for you what happens in psychosis, namely how the subject must make up for the lack of this signifier, for the essential signifier which is the name of the father, and it is around this that I tried to order for you everything that I called the chain reaction, or the dispersal which occurs in psychosis. (*Seminars of Lacan V* 129)

To face the lack of the essential signifier/father, Ahmad expresses his desire in a direct way. His desire is to find the absent father to talk with him as two Muslim men: "I would like, some day, to find him. Not to press any claim, or to impose any guilt, but simply to talk with him, as two Muslim men would talk" (34). In voicing such a desire, Ahmad motivates one to hold that his lack of being is transformed into "a finite desire" (*Seminars of Lacan X* 18) that involves some void, a psychological wound that stems from the absence of the father. To fill this void, he, to use Herzig's words, searches for a substitute father, simply because fatherless children "gravitate toward just about any man around . . ., trying to satisfy and explore a fantasized relationship with their father that they are unable to have due to his absence" (qtd. in al-Ghamdi 5).

Motivated by a desire to talk with the absent father as two Muslim Men, Ahmad fantasized a relationship with Shaikh Rashid, the Yemeni Imam of the mosque. As an Imam, Rashid deploys the ethics of Islam to "become something of a father figure to Ahmad" (Aly 43). This is best demonstrated when he interprets for Ahmad a verse from the Quran that reads:

> "Let not the Unbelievers think that our respite to them is good for themselves: We grant them respite that they may grow in their iniquity: But they will have a shameful punishment" (3: 178).

Ahmad believes that this verse offers a sadistic aspect of Islam. His belief stems from the fact that the main message of Islam is to convert the infidels into Islam by showing them mercy, not leading them to a shameful chastisement. The Imam reinterprets the verse to Ahmad. His interpretation is a radical one in which he likens the infidels to harmful insects, particularly cockroaches that disturb and spoil the believers' existence. He asks Ahmad whether he feels pity towards such cockroaches that creep out from the baseboard and from beneath the sink. To convince Ahmad that the infidels are not humans, Rashid introduces another example in which these infidels are compared to flies that spoil human food. Although Ahmad pities such insects, he tells Rashid that he never feels pity over them. This urges Rashid to inform Ahmad that the only solution available before the believers is to destroy such insects/disbelievers, otherwise they will pollute human existence with their uncleanness. He warns Ahmad of showing any mercy to these infidels. Such a warning implants in Ahmad a belief that if he sympathizes with the unbelievers, he will be atheist as he places himself above Allah:

> Ahmad . . . ventured 'Shouldn't God's purpose, as enunciated by the Prophet, be to convert the infidels? In any case, shouldn't He show them mercy, not gloat over their pain?' The Imam . . . asked, ' 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?' Ahmad did in truth pity them . . ., but, knowing that any qualifications or signs of further argument would anger his teacher, responded, 'No. No'. (74)

Ahmad's No's mentioned above indicate that Rashid succeeds in becoming "an alternate father figure" (Al-Gamadi 6). This father employs the teachings of Islam to reduce Ahmad's psychological pains that proceed from the lack of purity by convincing him that the Americans are dangerous impure insects that ought to be burnt and erased without pity. To convince

Ahmad of this radical view, Rashid plays the role of a psychoanalyst, or rather a father whose very objective is to modify Ahmad's superego. Such an attempt proceeds from the psychoanalytic tradition that the superego compromises "the moral precepts of our minds as well as our ideal aspirations" (Brenner 38). These precepts prevent Ahmad at first from holding that Allah enjoys gloating over the unbelievers' pains, but later on he is totally convinced that they are cockroaches and flies that should be killed. In changing Ahmad's superego, Rashid shows that he not only has a strong authority over Ahmad, but he also is his legal father. In Kacous' eyes, Rashid's authority springs from Ahmad's feeling of lack of the father who decamps to Egypt. To narrow the gap of the absent father, Rashid "controls the channel through which Ahmad compensates (with pride) for his father's absence (and cowardice)" (176). In this respect, Rashid is a substitute father as well as a symbol for "an intolerant ideology" which originates in Ahmad the psychic seeds of becoming a terrorist.

In forcing Ahmad to embrace a radical vision of Islam, Shaikh Rashid asserts his presence as a paternal figure. This figure changes Ahmad's superego "to such an extent that he is ready to sacrifice his life in a suicide mission" (Arif and Ahmed 599). This means that Ahmad's superego, to cite Lacan, is no longer a source of censorship; rather, it becomes an "obscene, ferocious Figure" (*Ecrits* 256) which imposes "a senseless, destructive, purely oppressive, almost always anti-legal morality" (*Seminars of Lacan V* 102) on Ahmad's psychic life. His oppressive morality is best clarified when Charlie tells Ahmad that Shaikh Rashid wants to meet Ahmad to offer him an opportunity. In it, he will be a suicide bomber. To persuade Ahmad to carry out such a terrorist mission, Rashid praises him for his strong belief in Islam, a belief sustained by Ahmad's creed that he lives within an infidel dead society. Rashid seeks to increase the feeling of hatred and disgust towards the American society by highlighting the evil aspects inherent in that society. This society is characterized by poverty, misery, injustice, inequalities of wealth and power, futility, despair, and lassitude. To wipe out these social ills, Rashid attempts to convince Ahmad to die for *jihad*, or rather to be *a Shahid*. To accomplish this mission, Ahmad should drive a

bombing truck to Lincoln Tunnel and make a simple mechanical connection to explode the Tunnel. In accepting to be a suicide bomber, Ahmad will never feel any lack nor psychological pain because he will be in *Janah*, in paradise where God will treat him as His son. Hence, when Rashid declares that many other Muslims are eager to be martyrs, Ahmad protests against him, stating that this mission is his own:

> 'You will already be in Janah, in Paradise, at that instant, confronting the delighted face of God. He will greet you as His son. . . . Ahmad, listen to me. You do not have to do this. Your avowal to Charlie does not obligate you, if your heart quails. There are many others eager for a glorious name and the assurance of eternal bliss. . . . 'No,' Ahmad protests, jealous of this alleged mob of others who would steal his glory. 'My love of Allah is absolute. Your gift is one I cannot refuse.' (233f)

In the process of turning the innocent Ahmad into a suicide bomber, Rashid plays the part of what Lacan names "the imaginary father" (*Seminars of Lacan V* 220). This father reinforces the fantasies established by Ahmad around the figure of the absent father, Omar Ashmawy. In this respect, Rashid is not only an imaginary father, but also a God-figure who gives orders that should be blindly obeyed by Ahmad. This assessment stems from Lacan's notion that "the father is God or every father is God" (*Seminars of Lacan IX* 98). Infatuated by Rashid as a God-figure, Ahmad is bent on becoming a suicide bomber without taking into account the suffering he will inflict on innocent victims. His acceptance, to borrow Franco's words, can be traced back to the belief that these victims are the main reason for the intense emotional suffering that he has experienced. To get rid of this suffering, Ahmad shows a strong wish for self-annihilation to satisfy the desire for absent father as well as the lack of being. Such psychic experience disables "the functions that serve the continuity of existence, thus reinforcing the urge to self-destruction" (61).

Nevertheless, Ahmad's urge for self-destruction and Rashid's psychological position as a father figure vanish with the appearance of

Levy. This critical view emerges from the fact that Levy disrupts the terrorist plot engineered by Rashid. In so doing, he presents himself as a powerful father figure who succeeds in dissuading Ahmad from bombing the Tunnel by reminding him that Islam is built on glorifying creation and life, not destruction, "the fact that Ahmad as an extremist Muslim had ignored" (Salehnia 786). Thus, he accompanies Ahmad into the Lincoln Tunnel, demonstrating his best to persuade Ahmad not to bomb the Tunnel. To accomplish such an objective, he hinges on four tactics. First, he flops into the cracked black seat of the truck assigned to carry out the terrorist attack; he warns Ahmad of touching the button of the drab metal box located in the space between the two seats. Second, he shocks Ahmad by informing him that Charlie is beheaded by Islamic fundamentalists because he worked with CIA: "My point is, Ahmad, you don't need to do this. It's all over. Charlie never meant for you to go through with it. He was using you to flush out the others" (288). Third, he reminds Ahmad of the negative consequences of the terrorist mission on his mother who will be known as a mother of a devil: "She'll not only lose you but she'll become known as the mother of a monster. A madman" (289).

Fourth, he tries to convince Ahmad that radicalism is not only associated with Islam, but also with Judaism. He, thus, recites many verses from the Torah in which Allah asks the Jew to blow up all people who convert into Christianity: "Tribes that weren't lucky enough to be chosen−put them under the ban, show them no mercy. They hadn't quite worked out Hell yet, that came with the Christians" (290). For all that, Ahmad insists on carrying out the terrorist action without considering the four tactics invented by Levy to stop him from destroying the Tunnel. His insistence forces Levy to employ the very tactic in terms of which he asserts his psychological function as a substitute father that can fill up Ahmad's psychic gap of the absent father. Hence, when Ahmad asks him to jump out of the track because he will detonate the bomb, Levy refuses to obey this order. Instead of getting out of the truck, he is bent on dying with Ahmad, addressing him as his own son. In return, Ahmad protests against him stating that Levy is not his father, threatening to make the bomb explode at

the traffic jam where a plenty of innocent people will pass away. This negative attitude does not frustrate Levy. Rather, it instills in him a dogged determination to stop Ahmad from devastating the Tunnel. His determination results from the fact that Ahmad is so merciful that he cannot kill a bug:

> 'I don't think I'll get out. We're in this together, son.' His pose is brave, but his voice is hoarse, weak. 'I'm not your son. If you try to get anyone's attention I'll set off the truck right here, in the traffic jam. It's not ideal but it'll kill plenty.' 'I'm betting you won't set it off. You're too good a kid. Your mother used to tell me how you couldn't bear to step on a bug.' (292)

In addressing Ahmad as his son, Levy empowers his psychological function as a father. His acquaintance with Ahmad motivates one to infer that he plays the role of what Lacan names "the real father" (*Seminars of Lacan VII* 210) who can be described as "the one who effectively occupies the mother, the Great Fucker" (*Seminars of Lacan VII* 307). Motivated by a desire to be the great fucker that replaces the absent biological father of Ahmad, Levy tells Ahmad that he has an illegal relation with his mother: "Listen. There's something I need to say to you. I fucked your mother. . . . We were sleeping together all summer" (296). This sexual relationship imposes the presence of Levy as a real father on Ahmad's psychological existence. Such an aesthetic view can be traced back to the Lacanian notion that the real father is "an effect of language, and it is in this sense that the adjective real is to be understood here: the real of language, rather than the real of biology" (*Seminars of Lacan I* 147f). In acting as a real father, Levy reshapes Ahmad's desire for the absent biological father. This is best demonstrated when he deploys the power of the real father to force Ahmad to give up the terrorist action. Such a psychological power helps Levy achieve two targets: in that, he firstly disrupts the terrorist attack, and secondly, he effaces the psychological imbalance that attacks Ahmad from the beginning of the novel. This imbalance generates in him a desire for peace and purity, but Levy's heroic reaction and authority as a real father

reconcile his split character with the devils (Americans). That is why Updike changes the key sentence that "*these devils seek to take away my God*" (1) to be "*these devils*, Ahmad thinks, *have taken away my God*" (305).

Therefore, Ahmad's psychogenic trauma is grounded in the absence of the father. This absence brings on many psychological wounds that led Ahmad to be preoccupied with a central desire for the father whose absence causes him to experience the lack of faith and purity. To efface this lack, he associates with the psychological power of any figure that can help him satisfy the desire for the absent father. Such a figure should enjoy a psychic authority over the subject (Ahmad). That is why Ahmad identifies with Shaikh Rashid and Jack levy. While the former convinces him to be a suicide bomber, the latter dissuades him from the evil idea of being a suicide bomber. These interlinking consequences result from the notion that they both have a psychological position that provides them with a chance to practice paternal authority over Ahmad. It is a psychological authority that enforces not only the role of Shaikh Rashid as an imaginary father, but also the power of Levy as the real father. This father enables Ahmad to feel that he is a positive subject within human existence.

Unlike Updike's *Terrorist* that draws greatly on the absent father, Idris's *al-'Askari al-Aswad* deploys the first-person narrator to clarify the different structures of desire as reflected in Shawqi and al-Zunfuli. This technique of narration enables Idris to represent what Abd al-Monaim calls "the psychological realism [al-waq' al-Nafsi]" [3](83 [trans. mine]) of the fictional characters. The representation of such realism can be taken back to the fact that Idris is considered one of the forerunners in depicting the social, political, and psychological aspect of the characters. His character portrayal provides a psychological portrait of the psychic trauma that forces a human being to experience alienation, a psychological state that arises from the lack of existence. This alienation indicates that human existence is no more than a constant battle between man and his/her psychic realities. The fundamental reason for such a battle springs from the belief that man has a permanent desire to be treated as a free subject within the borders of

existence. For all that, Idris does not privilege the subjective vision of reality over the objective one. Rather, he adopts psychological realism as a method of bringing into play the psychogenic trauma inflicted upon the characters. To achieve this goal, he draws greatly on dramatizing the double motif of fear and oppression as the rationale for the psychological dysfunctions that hang over Shawqi and al-Zunfuli. Abd al-Monaim argues:

> Yusuf Idris is a master at portraying the social and psychological dimensions of a human character. This talent helps him probe too deeply into the inner structures of his characters to reveal moments of alienation as well as isolation that bring into prominence the constant struggle between the characters and their existence. Such an assessment maintains that he is one of the forerunners of psychological realism. In a sense, he elucidates not only the psychological world of his characters, but also the social and political realities. [4](83 [trans. mine])

Hence, *al-ʻAskari al-Aswad s*hows that Idris's Shawqi and al-Zunfuli, like Updike's Ahmad, suffer from lack of existence. This lack is the outcome of the authority that deprives these characters of thinking of themselves as normal subjects within the social order. Such a deprivation drives one to believe that "fear and oppression not only remodel Shawqi's psychological reality, but also bestow on him a psychic fear that destroys his character psychologically" [5](Abd al-Monaim 85 [trans. mine]). The destruction of Shawqi's character motivates the narrator to try to find out the factors behind Shawqi's odd behavior and depressive state of isolation. In examining this behavior, the narrator assumes three crucial traits that not only interpret Shawqi's character, but also contend that Shawqi has "a strange something," which he tries to conceal. First, Shawqi produces a famous smile, a facial expression that reflects nothing but a mask used by Shawqi to hide the psychogenic trauma that obsessed him; therefore, he smiles whenever he wants to evade people. Second, his eyes contain opaque lenses that hinder anyone from penetrating deep into them to know the unknown. This "opaqueness" makes one believe that he is an alienated

character who thinks that people will grasp his mystery and comprehend what is wrong with him if they look at his eyes for a second. Finally, in "social gatherings," he behaves in a strange way that astonishes the people, particularly when one of the attendants speaks about a public issue. Instead of expressing his views about such an issue openly, Shawqi abandons the social gathering with "sudden outbursts of emotion", providing a false excuse for leaving. His reaction flows from the notion that Shawqi suffers from a hidden psychic dilemma, which the narrator attempts to disclose:

> There was the famous smile that didn't express anything, but was like a mask put on when he wanted to hide from people, or the opaqueness in his eyes that was there to deflect your gaze and prevent your eyes meeting his even for a second. . . . There was his strange behavior in social gatherings when he would astonish people with his sudden outbursts of emotion at a world let slip by one of those present; and then a few seconds later, he would be on his feet and out of the door. (53)

Shawqi's famous smile, the opaqueness in his eyes, and strange behavior in social gatherings bring into prominence the psychogenic trauma that hangs over him. His trauma is grounded in the lack of existence, or rather what Lacan calls "lack of being" (*Seminars of Lacan II* 223). This lack, to cite Fink's terms, drives Shawqi to feel alienation, which brings on "a pure possibility of being, a place where one expects to find a subject, but which nevertheless remains empty" (52). To fill up the emptiness of being, Shawqi makes up his mind to work at the regional medical office, selecting to "be on duty in the afternoon." His choice can be ascribed back to the fact that the office hours of the chief medical officer are only in the mornings. This means that Shawqi will be the employer and employee who enjoy psychological power, which gives him a chance to be in charge of the office, as well as sitting in the boss's chair. In so doing, he feels existence as a higher power that receives the greetings and respect of the employee and those who visit the office to finish their medical documents. This endows him with a sort of psychological relief, which satisfies the pride of any

young doctor. If he works in the morning, he will be a secondary character who never experiences authority or social prestige:

> He was working in the regional medical office and had chosen to be on duty in the afternoon, perhaps because at this time of day he could be his own boss. The chief medical officer only worked in the mornings, and being in charge of the office, sitting in the boss's chair, acknowledging the greetings of the office employees and those who came on business there, were pleasures that could not fail to gratify the pride of any young doctor. (54)

In choosing to be on duty in the afternoon where he will replace the chief medical officer, Shawqi highlights his lack of existence as well as the psychic consequences of such a lack. This lack, to borrow Fink's words, causes him alienation which engenders "a place in which it is clear that there is, as of yet, no subject: a place where something is conspicuously lacking" (52). His alienation denotes that his ego has "a paranoiac structure" (*Ecrits* 20) that results from the notion that he lives within a paranoiac alienation, a psychological limbo like that of Updike's Ahmad. This limbo leads Ahmad to be attracted to any figure that can act as a surrogate for the absent father. As for Shawqi, that limbo causes him to suffer from the psychological disorder of paranoia. It is a psychic disorder which, to employ Evans's terms, implies that alienation is not an accident that befalls Shawqi. Rather, alienation is the essential constitutive feature of Shawqi's psychogenic disturbance that forces him to be fundamentally a split-tormented figure. Such split makes him realize that he is "alienated from himself, and there is no escape from this division, no possibility of 'wholeness' or synthesis" (9).

In his attempt to help Shawqi escape from the above-mentioned division, the narrator, reminding one of the roles played by Levy in *Terrorist*, delves into the history of Shawqi's past. His attempt stems from the view that "of all the characters, the narrator establishes a strong relationship with Shawqi, depending on the experimental data he had on such a character. The source of this material exists within the narrator's memory, social interaction with Shawqi, and relationship with him as

comrades in political, revolutionary, and medical fields" [6](Afifi 135 [trans. mine]). Hence, the narrator makes many flashbacks that carry one from the past of Shawqi to his present. His flashbacks asserted that Shawqi was one of the prominent political leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood who was put to prison because of the political upheavals that shook Egypt during the 1940's. That is why when Shawqi is released, the narrator, and other doctors at the hospital where Shawqi worked receives him with "a hero's welcome." This warm welcome can be traced back to their belief that he is a "returning hero" who is expected to play a prominent political role in Egypt. Unfortunately, he fails their expectations. This failure stems from the fact that the prison creates a new Shawqi, a creature who harbors nothing but psychological agitations. These agitations motivate the narrator to realize that Shawqi's eyes bear "an imprint of something," a strange gloomy mark that never existed before. In the past, those eyes used to shine with an energetic power and deep conviction that prevailed all over his face. This power is now vanished; what remained of it is "a dull glimmer" that only gives people an impression that he is still alive. His voice is also changed to the degree that he talks "in a whisper" as though he were a speaker who expects his requests to be refused. He spends his life like "a blinkered beast" /horse that is isolated from existence:

> His [Shawqi's] eyes bore a mark, an imprint of something that had not been there before. Before, there had always been a light in his eye. . . . That light had died, and all that was left was a dull glimmer, a mere indication that life was present. . . . I began to notice that his voice had changed, and he only talked in a whisper, the polite subdued mumblings of one who always expects his requests to be turned down. He moved through his life like a blinkered beast, looking only at what was right under his nose. (60)

In describing Shawqi as a blinkered beast whose eyes have nothing but a dull glimmer, the narrator plays the part of a psychoanalyst. His psychoanalysis implies that the prison had a negative impact on Shawqi's psyche as it transformed him to a psychic character, a creature that speaks in

a whisper as if he were afraid of talking. This psychogenic imbalance, which results from the excruciating torture he faced while being arrested, creates a new Shawqi. His "psychological reality is changed so much that psychic fear and anxieties dominate his character. Such a disturbance enforces his feeling of oppression and injustice, as well as the alienation from existence, leaving him no options but to become a depressed character who is afraid of being" [7](Abd al-Monaim 98f [trans. mine]). That is to say, Shawqi is merely a psychotic character who suffers from a depression that compels him into moving through his life like a blinkered beast. The reasons for this dehumanization flow from the view that society negates Shawqi's desire to be recognized as a human value within human existence. This negation along with his behavior as a blinkered beast, to borrow Kojève's terms, outline that Shawqi's desire for existence can be maintained within an "animal life," a biological reality that composes the "sentiment of the self." In this respect, Shawqi's lack of existence disquiets him, leaving him no choices but to behave in an animal way whose "I of Desire is an emptiness that receives a real positive content only by negating action that satisfies Desire in destroying, transforming, and assimilating the desired non-I" (4). If Kojève's conception of desire is carried a step further, one can sum up that Idris's Shawqi and Updike's Ahmad suffer from a conflict between the I of desire, lack of existence, and the desired non-I, existence itself. This conflict spurs both characters into living within the limits of "a 'thingish' I, a merely living I, an animal I" (4).

Since Shawqi and Ahmad are thus presented as a "thingish I" each, one may conclude that both characters are victims of a society that dehumanizes them. While the prison leads the former to acquire a set of evil morality like lying and thieving, the absence of the father forces the latter to be a suicide bomber. Shawqi's evil morality stems from the notion that "harsh torture practiced in prisons oppressed the prisoner to the degree that the arrested will never be able to regain his psychological balance. Moreover, different forms of torture assassinate the prisoner psychologically as well as ethically" [8](Abd al-Ghani 2 [trans. mine]). This assassination leads him to be a psychotic person. Hence, he makes petty deals to be given

the "hernia operations" to prove that he is more professional than his colleagues. He also flatters the consultant to lend him some books and give him a chance to be his assistant during the medical examination of a patient. He used to tell lies where possible. His evil morality reaches the fore when the narrator sees him tricking the patients who visit the hospital to dress their wounds into paying him a few coins; in return, he will take a special care of them. He never takes into account whether or not they have money. Besides, the narrator is much astonished when the doctors living in the hostel with Shawqi complain that whenever Shawqi goes into any room of the hostel, something disappears, whether it is expensive or not:

> And he lied, lied continually and without reason, in such a naïve way, easily discovered and arousing only scorn. I didn't believe the rumors which the staff nurse spread about him until I saw with my own eyes how he would attend patients in the cubicle where the dressings were changed and made despicable cheap bargains with them, undertaking to take special care of them, and accepting in exchange a few coins. . . . We also noticed, living in the hostel with him, that every time he went into one of our rooms, something would disappear, even if it was only an old toothbrush. (61)

The irregularities of Shawqi's behavior induce other doctors to have their say on such a character. They state that "If Shawqi shakes your right hand, keep hold of your wallet with your left" (61). This statement urges one to sum up that Shawqi's lack of being forces him to be sick with "kleptomania." According to psychoanalytic tradition, kleptomania is a psychological illness "characterized by compulsive stealing in which the person feels a pressure to steal and a combination of relief and pleasure during and immediately after the theft" (Matsumoto et al. 274). In applying this definition to Shawqi, one can infer that he is not a natural born thief, but the lack of being forces him to steal trifle objects like an old toothbrush in the hope of feeling a psychological relief. In this regard, Shawqi's kleptomania, to use Lacan's words, offers "a mythical representation" of

Shawqi's desire for being which forces him to steal anything from his colleagues' rooms. This attitude denotes that Shawqi searches for something that he needs in the name of something else that he also needs, "but which would be more easily admitted as a pretext for the demand; if necessary, if he does not have that other thing he can purely and simply invent it"(*Seminars of Lacan V* 84).

To understand the hidden motives that drive Shawqi to be a kleptomaniac, "the narrator goes deeper and deeper into Shawqi's inner world. His very objective is to illustrate the layers of behaviors that transform Shawqi into a phenomenon that never belongs to humanity. . . . To achieve this objective, the narrator breaks up the covers that fold Shawqi's personality" [9](Afifi 135 [trans. mine]). The more he penetrates into Shawqi's character, the more he discovers the enigmatic desire that obsessed Shawqi. This desire is best demonstrated in three situations. First, as a government health inspector, Shawqi receives an order to examine Abbas Mahmoud al-Zunfuli whom the authority decides to retire early because of his psychotic state. On looking into Abbas's medical file, Abdullah, the orderly of the office, warns Shawqi of completing such a mission, mainly because Abbas is a mad dangerous person who "makes noises, barks like dogs, howls like wolves" (54). To persuade Shawqi of the accuracy of his warning, Abdullah confirms that Abbas is the Black Policeman on whom horrible myths of torture are established. Thus, it is better to eschew that mission and leave it to the boss: "when he [the boss] comes in the morning, he'll know what to do with him" (64). For all that, Shawqi insists on achieving the medical examination.

Second, when the narrator, Shawqi, and Abdullah are on their way to perform the medical examination on al-Zunfuli, Abdullah recites to them the history of al- Zunfuli known as the Black Policeman. His recitation contends that the Black Policeman is a terrifying person who is given more glory than Farouk, king of Egypt. All the employees at the county hall, including the officers, receive him with a welcome hero to avoid his violence. People are even afraid of looking at him because he has a strong bodybuilding. His violence is best clarified when the officers shut him up

with one of the political activists whom al-Zunfuli beats from the very morning until the evening:

> Once I swear I saw them with my own eyes shutting him up with one of the political prisoners in the room on the second floor of the county hall−the one directly opposite the medical office. He stayed in there from first thing in the morning beating him up, and the lad was screaming, but he wasn't bothered. And when we went home at five o'clock we left them there still at it. (76)

Finally, Abdullah's description of the aggression and inhumanity of the Black Policeman carries Shawqi to a sort of psychological revelation as he asks Abdullah to stop talking about the Black Policeman in an abnormally loud voice. His voice motivates the narrator to ask him about what he thinks of, at that moment, in the hope of enjoining Shawqi to uncover the psychic disruptions that hang over him. Fortunately, he surprised the narrator by suddenly asking "Do you know whom the Black Policeman was hitting there from morning till the night?. . . It was me" (77). These three situations pave the way for the narrator to explore the layers of pain and the strange state of isolation caused by the Black Policeman.

After realizing that al-Zunfuli is the main reason behind Shawqi's psychogenic trauma, the narrator starts to document the details of the confrontation between the executioner, al-Zunfuli, and the victim, Shawqi. This confrontation reminds one of the final encounter between Levy and Ahmad, the dramatic moments in which Levy accompanies Ahmad into the tunnel, using his psychological position as a real father to persuade Ahmad not to detonate the bomb. Like Updike's Levy, Idris's narrator is interested in the confrontation that takes place between al-Zunfuli and Shawqi. His interest can be traced back to the central question: "will this orchestrated encounter finally heal Shawqi" or not (DiMeo 7)? From the beginning of this encounter, the narrator notices that Shawqi returns to life gradually because his shining smile replaces the old dazzling one. As soon as he sees Abbas, Shawqi revolts against him vehemently as if he were crying out in pain, stating in an aggressive way: "What is the matter with you" (92)?

When Abbas keeps silent refusing to answer any questions addressed by Shawqi, Shawqi roars at him again in a manner never used before. His roar forces the narrator to intervene, reminding Shawqi of the ethics of a doctor treating a patient, but Shawqi shows no mercy.

To enjoin Abbas to talk with him, Shawqi recalls many flashbacks that introduced one to the dirty job made by Abbas—physical and psychological torture launched on Shawqi when he was under arrest. Thus, he reminds Abbas of the tools used by the latter in whipping the victims like "the rods," "whip," "the blood," "the five o'clock beatings," and above all "the boots with the metal toe-caps." When the Black Policeman gives no reaction, Shawqi bursts out again warning him against forgetting the crime perpetuated by him, mainly because they are carved into the body and psyche of all political prisoners. To force al-Zunfuli to heed such a warning, Shawqi throws off his jacket, offering his bare back to the audience where the narrator observes signs of healthy unbroken skin and an ugly deep scar. This scar shows Shawqi's psychological state as well as the destructive agenda of the savage authority that acts out as if it were a wolf or a demon responsible for Shawqi's psychological wounds:

> 'Look at me and say something. Shout like you used to. Let's hear your voice. Shout, Black Policeman. Look at me and say something. Don't act as if you've forgotten, or I'll do something that'll make you remember. Now. I'll make you remember.' In that split second Shawqi's jacket and shirt were off and his vest raised to show his bare back. Nowhere on it was there any sign of healthy unbroken skin. An ugly scar ran the length and breadth of it sometimes erupting in raised sores, and in other places gaping wide and deep. (93)

The psychological confrontation mentioned-above justifies Shawqi's agitations throughout the novel. It also brings into prominence the lost cause behind Shawqi's lack of existence. This cause is discovered to be Abbas al-Zunfuli, the Black Policeman, whose violence and oppression transformed Shawqi into an animal I, a merely living I. The reaction of such an I to al-Zunfuli implies that the latter represents what Tyson calls "object petit a"

(28), the reason that generates desire, not desire itself. This object (al-Zunfuli), to use Tyson's terms, refers to "the lost object of desire," known by Lacan's scholars as object petit a, or "object small a." It is an object that results from the separation of Shawqi from human existence, a psychotic subtraction that transforms Abbas (the object of desire) into an other, completely different from Shawqi (the subject). This traumatic alienation enables the latter to compose a new experience that shapes his psychological attitude towards the others. Thus, Shawqi perceives Abbas as the object petit a, the "little other" that belongs "only to me, that influences only me" (28). In this regard, al-Zunfuli is the *objet petit a* that refers to anything that puts Shawqi in touch with the repressed desire for "lost object" (28).

In addition, the psychological humiliation caused by al-Zunfuli, motivates Shawqi to avenge the psychological humiliation he experienced as well as its maker. His motivation springs from the fact that in beating the prisoners, "the executioner does not torture them. Rather, he beats himself; moreover, he will never reach psychological or physical relief" [10](al-Faisl 31 [trans. mine]). This denotes that Shawqi's lack of existence vis-à-vis psychological disturbance leaves him no options but to become an executioner of executioners that oppressed him. His attitude towards al-Zunfuli disquiets the narrator and forces him to transfix at the sight and behavior of Shawqi whose shouting and howling against al-Zunfuli compose one single shriek like that of "a contorted dog." This shriek makes al-Zunfuli fix his dead eyes on him, behaving as if he were a stone. In behaving as a stone, al-Zunfuli gives one an impression that Shawqi is the Perseus sent by gods to behead the monster Medusa, the Black Policeman. When Shawqi's shouting is transfigured into a howling, al-Zunfuli is terrified, withdrawing to the bed. The more he draws back, the more he shrinks and curls up; he almost vanishes. In a sense, he becomes "a little ball of humanity" that stops existing. His terror and withdrawal encourage Shawqi to keep coming at him with a heavy heart, climbing on the bed to terrify al-Zunfuli as well as asserting his victory over him. In his attempt to defend himself against Shawqi, al-Zunfuli screams at Shawqi, producing a howling that is merged into a baying like a contorted dog. His mouth is

stretched out to bite Shawqi's shoulder. When he fails, he fastens his gaping mouth on his own skinny arm, clenching between his lips "a piece of bloody flesh" taken from his arm:

> Never would I have imagined that a person could make himself so small: it was as if, had he continued at the same rate, he would have disappeared altogether, a little ball of humanity that had simply ceased to exist. . . . It was then that Abbas, staring at us with wild burning eyes, brought his jaws together on the flesh of his own skinny arm. . . . Although Abbas had raised his face from his arm, blood fell from his mouth mixed with saliva: his lips were drawn back to reveal his teeth and clenched between them was a piece of bloody flesh that he had torn from his arm. (94f)

In making al-Zunfuli a cannibal that devours himself, Idris ends the novel without helping Shawqi satisfy his central desire for being recognized as a subject within an existence. That is why the narrator is much convinced that "Shawqi, having once lost his sense of security as a human being, could never retrieve it and become one of us again" (96). This tragic end confirms the view that the victim will remain so forever and so will also the victimizer. In addition, the end drives many critics to attack Idris for three reasons. First, he does not take into account the psychological reality imposed by the 1952 Revolution. Second, he never shows the psychological consequences of the revolution on Shawqi and al-Zunfuli. Finally, he does not give the revolution a chance to punish criminals like al-Zunfuli for their dirty political crimes. In so doing, Idris prevents victims from the old political system of their natural right to reconcile their lack of existence or even avenge their victimizer. What is axiomatic is that he makes the Black Policeman experience a fatal end in which he eats his own flesh, without giving the revolution an opportunity to bring him to court. Samr al-Faisal argues:

> The Revolution neither participates actively in healing Shawqi's psychogenic trauma nor carries him from fear to security. Moreover, the novel punishes the executioner by

> making him behave like a doggy wolf, mainly because his superego returns to life and starts whipping him, without giving the revolution an opportunity to bring him to justice.[11] (32 [trans. mine]).

Conclusion

Having thus psychoanalytically read both Updike's *Terrorist*, and Idris's *al-'Askari al-Aswad*, with special emphasis laid on the concept of desire, four conclusions can conveniently be made. First, both Updike and Idris are professional writers with a critical sense of creative structures in a school established by Lacan and Kojève. Both authors manipulate Lacan and Kojève's thoughts on desire in order to compose a critique of desire, not as the study of sexual drives, but as the study of any diagnostic material that arises from the subtraction of the subject from his/her social order. This subtraction produces psychological structures, or rather residual phenomena that are responsible not only for the birth of desire, but also for the psychogenic trauma that befalls a human character. Such an assessment indicates that the characters of Updike and Idris are infatuated with a central desire for being recognized as human values within the social order that desocialized them.

Second, by employing Lacan's conception of desire, both novelists contend that literature should be more existential. However, both writers adopt a different realistic vision to reflect the existential aspect of literature. Updike insists that the very aim of literature is to tackle the unspoken agony that flows from the characters' lack of being. This agony implies that human reality is a strange phenomenon devoid of any objective data, mainly because it encompasses nothing but the appetites, the imperatives, the boundless desires that spring from the characters' subjectivity. The dramatization of these psychic tensions is the project that Updike undertakes to accomplish in all his novels. Unlike Updike, Idris develops a realistic vision that depicts the objective as well as subjective account of the hidden unconscious impulses responsible for the birth of desire. His account does not proceed from the characters' subjectivity or objectivity. Rather, it is the

result of an aesthetic relationship between the subjective and objective dimension of the narrative characters. In a word, whereas Updike portrays a pure psychoanalytic picture of his characters, Idris dramatizes the psychological realism of his characters.

Third, Updike's and Idris's *leitmotif* of desire is best illustrated in *Terrorist* and *al-ʻAskari al-Aswad*. In comparing such two pieces, one can infer that both novels revolve around the psychogenic trauma caused by the characters' lack of being. Updike's *Terrorist* represents the psychic pains that hang over Ahmad Ashmawy because of the absence of his father. This absence generates in Ahmad a desire for peace and purity, a central desire that motivates him to identify with any figure that can act as a surrogate for the absent Egyptian father. His attempt to find that father illustrates the depths of his desire for being as well as the serious psychic alienation imposed on him. Such alienation forces him not only to rely on the psychoanalytic mechanism of projection, but also to change the law of Oedipus complex by sympathizing with any figure who can perform the function of the symbolic, imaginary, and real father. Unlike Updike's novel, Idris's *al-'Askari al-Aswad* is devoid of the psychic consequences of the law of Oedipus complex. This remark flows from the fact that though Updike and Idris are identical in fictionalizing the psychogenic pains proceeding from the lack of existence, Idris chooses a different framework to highlight these pains. It is a narrative technique in terms of which he employs the first person narrator to tell the tragedy of Shawqi whom the narrator attempts to investigate the reasons behind the psychological dysfunctions that obsessed Shawqi after being released. His investigation leads one to figure out that Shawqi suffers from psychic fears and oppression that not only deepen his lack of being, but also spur him into a depressive state of alienation. This alienation forces him to experience paranoia, odd behavior, kleptomania, and above all to live as an animal I.

Finally, the characters presented by Updike, particularly Ahmad and Rashid, share some common psychological features and experiences with Idris's Shawqi and al-Zunfuli. All the characters are victims of the social

order that dehumanizes them. This dehumanization forces both Ahmad and Shawqi to experience the same psychological imbalance that results from their lack of existence. That is to say, the lack of being changes the superego of Ahmad to such an extent that he receives the evil idea of becoming a suicide bomber with open arms. His acceptance of this idea can be related back to the psychological position of Rashid who misinterprets the teachings of Islam to convince Ahmad that the Christians and Jews are harmful insects that should be erased because they disturb and pollute the Muslim's existence. In this respect, Rashid stands for the intolerant ideology that eggs Ahmad on becoming a terrorist.

In similar ways, Abbas al-Zunfuli, like Rashid, represents the intolerant ideology that assassinates Shawqi's superego. This assassination, which stems from the excruciating torture launched by al-Zunfuli against Shawqi, transforms the latter from a political activist into a blinkered beast that lives within a paranoiac alienation. His alienation springs from the belief that his superego is no longer a source for censorship; rather, it is an obscene figure that leaves him no options but to adopt anti-legal morality. Such morality forces him to be a split kleptomaniac Machiavellian character that harbors nothing but psychological agitations. This indicates that the lack of being compels Updike's Ahmad and Idris's Shawqi to live as if they were a thingish I, or rather an animal merely living I. That is why both characters act as if they were the Perseus sent by the gods to behead the Medusa, social order responsible for their lack of being.

Notes

All translations from Arabic are mine.

١- الافكار ليست جوهر الانسان الأعمق، وانما انسانية الانسان (التي تعتبر الأفكار احدي عناصرها) هي جوهر الانسان. فكل خصائص الأنسان غايات في حد ذاتها، وفي نفس الوقت يمكن اعتبارها وسائل لتحقيق الظاهرة الانسانية ككل.

٢- انني أبحث عن رؤية جديدة، غير أنها في الحقيقة امتداد لرؤياي السابقة– الي مدي ربما أبعد، ربما أعمق، ربما أشمل، ذلك الامتداد الذي ربما جعل من الظواهر المتفرقة ظاهرة واحدة مرتبطة ذات قانون، وربما جعل من الظاهرة التي كنت أراها محدودة ظاهرة أشمل وأعم، حتي لتأخذ شكل القانون العام، معني ذلك هي مرحلة يلتقي عندها الواقع الخارجي كما أحسه بالفلسفة الداخلية كما تبلورت من خلال تجاربي . . . لتكون ما أسميه بالعالم الفني الموازي للعالم الموضوعي ولكنه لا يخضع لقوانين لأنه يملك قوانينه الخاصة وقيمه الخاصة.

٣- منهج الواقعية النفسية.

٤- يعد يوسف إدريس من الكتاب الذين اهتموا بتصوير الشخصية الانسانية علي مستوييها: الاجتماعي، والنفسي. فكشف عن الأزمة الدخلية لها، وما يتبعها من لحظات الشرود، والغياب عن الوعي وكذلك كشف عن صراعها المستمر مع الواقع المحيط بها. وهذا يعني أنه قد التزم منهج الواقعية النفسية، فلم يغال في تصوير الجانب النفسي للشخصية، بلا مبرر قوي يؤهله لذلك، حيث كان يبدع مواقفها، واتجاهتها، وانفعالاتها في حدود محيطها الاجتماعي والسياسي.

٥- فالقهر قد شكل الواقع النفسي لشخصية شوقي مما أكسبها نوعا من الخوف، لازمها حتي دمرها نفسيا.

٦- يمارس الراوي لعبته السردية . . . وأكثر الشخصيات التي حاول خلق علاقة حميمة معه هي شخصية شوقي، مستندا في ذلك علي ما لديه من معلومات عنه، من الذاكرة أحيانا، ومن المعايشة العملية معا ومن علاقة الزمالة في العمل السياسي والثوري والطبي.

٧- فشوقي بطل الرواية . . . اعتقل بعد مظاهرات الجامعة، وعذب تعذيبا شديدا في المعتقلات، حتي تغير واقعه النفسي، وأصبح الخوف مسيطرا عليه، يحيطه القلق، ويحرك داخله الاحساس بالظلم والقهر، ولهذا نجده يتجه إلي السلبية الخالصة في تعامله مع الأخرين . . . ليصبح انطوائيا، لا يتكلم إلا جوابا علي سؤال.

٨- إن السجين الذي يقهره التعذيب بوحشية لا يعود كما كان قبل تعذيبه لأن التعذيب قد يأخذ ألوانا وأشكالا تقتل المعذَب نفسيا وتؤذيه معنويا.

٩- يحاول الراوي اختراق شخصية شوقي بحثا عن السر الكامن في أعماقه، والذي حوله الي مجرد كائن غير ادمي لا يمت للبشرية بصلة . . . فقد حاول ان يكسر القشرة الصلدة التي تغطي ملامح شوقي.

١٠- فالجلاد حين يعذب المساجين، إنما يعذب نفسه، وأنه لن يجد الراحة الجسدية، والاستقرار النفسي طوال حياته.

١١- فالثورة لم تفعل في نفس الدكتور شوقي شيئا، ولم تنقله من الخوف إلي الاطمئنان، كما أن الرواية جعلت الجلاد ينتهي هذه النهاية الذئبية الكلبية، لأن ضميره استيقظ وبدأ يعذبه، ولم تترك للثورة فرصة النيل منه.

Works Cited

A- English

Al-Ghamdi, Alaa. "Terrorism as a Gendered Familial Psychodrama in John Updike's *Terrorist*." *Modern Spark* 5:1 (2015): 1-12. Web. 15 June. 2017.

Aly, Abd Almoneim. "John Updike's Good *Terrorist*: A View on Islamist Mind." *Journal of Faculty of Education* 12:3 (2006): 29-49. Print.

Arif, Muhamad, and Maqbool Ahmad. "Exploring John Updike's Terrorist as a Neo-Orientalist Narrative of the Arabo-Islamic World." *Journal of Advances in Humanities* 4:5 (2016): 554-562. Print.

Azzam, Raneem. "Updike's *Terrorist*: An(other) American Folly." *Q-News: The Muslim Magazine* 368 (2006): 64. Print.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *John Updike: Modern Critical Views*. New York: Chelsea House, 2010. Print.

Caldwell, Gail. "God's and Monsters: In *Terrorist* by John Updike." *The Boston Globe* August 8, 2017. Web. 10 Sept. 2017.

Cobham, Catherine. "Sex and Society in Yūsuf Idrīs: "Qā al-Madīna"". *Journal of Arabic Literature* 6 (1975): 78-88. Print.

---. "Introduction." In *Rings of Burnished Brass*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1990. Print.

DiMeo, David. "Egypt's Police State in the Work of Idris and Mahfouz." *Comparative Literature and Culture* 14:2 (2012): 1-10. Print.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. London: Minnesota, 2003. Print.

Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. Routledge, 1996. Print.

Fink, Bruce. *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. New Jersey: Princeton U P, 1995. Print.

Franco, De Masi. *The Enigma of a Suicide Bomber: A Psychoanalytic Essay*. New York: Karnac, 2011. Print.

Idris, Yusuf. "The Black Policeman." In *Rings of Burnished Brass*. (Trans) Catherine Cobham. In Catherine Cobham (1990), 53-97. Print.

Kacou, Amien. "John Updike. Terrorist." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6:5 (2012): 174-183. Print.

Kirshner, Lewis. "Rethinking Desire: the Object Petit a in Lacanian Theory." *Japa* 53:1 (2017): 83-103. Print.

Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. (Trans) James H. Nichols Jr. New York: Basic Books, 1969. Print.

Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits*. (Trans) Bruce Fink. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007. Print.

---. *Formations of the Unconscious: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book V*. (Trans) Russell Grigg. London: Macmillan, 1996, Print.

---. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI*: *Desire and its Interpretation*. (Trans) Cormac Gallagher, 1977. Web. 18 June 2017. < http://www.lacanianworks.net>

---. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X*: *Anxiety*. (Trans) Cormac Gallagher, 1980. Web. 5 June 2017. < http://www.lacanianworks.net>

Manqoush, Riyad. "Metatextuality of Transnational Marriage in Updike's *Terrorist*." *International Journal of Literature and Arts* 2:1 (2014): 10-15. Web. 22 May 2017.

Matsumoto, David, et al. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology*. London: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

Rudnicka-Kassem, Dorota. *Egyptian Drama and Social Change: A Study of Thematic and Artistic Development in Yusuf Idris's Plays*. Diss. McGill University, 1992. Web. 8 August. 2017.

Salehnia, Maryam. "Political Zionism and Fiction: A Study of John Updike's *Terrorist*." *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 3:3 (2012): 484-488. Print.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. London: Rutledge, 2006. Print.

Updike, John. "John Updike in Conversation with Jeffrey Goldberg." *The New York Public Library* (2006): 1-26. Web. 5 Dec 2017. < http://www.nypl.org.>

---. *Terrorist*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2006. Print.

Wright, Elizabeth. "Modern Psychoanalytic Criticism." *Modern Literary Theory A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Ann Jafferson and David Robey. London: Batsford Ltd, 1986. Print.

B- Arabic

أبوعوف، عبدالرحمن. يوسف إدريس وعالمه في القصة القصيرة والرواية. القاهرة: مكتبة الاسرة، ٢٠٠١.

إدريس، يوسف. فقر الفكر وفكر الفقر. القاهرة: دار المستقبل العربي، ١٩٨٨.

---. العسكري الاسود. القاهرة: مكتبة مصر، ١٩٨٢.

الحضري، أحمد. "العسكري الأسود." 5 Dec 2017. < http://www.blogspot.com.>

شكري، غالي. د. يوسف ادريس: فرفور خارج الصور. القاهرة:٢٠٠٥.

عبد المنعم، عبد المنعم أبوزيد. شخصية البطل في روايات يوسف إدريس: دراسة أدبية فنية. رسالة ماجستير: جامعة القاهرة، ١٩٩٥.

عبدالغني، خالد محمد. "التحليل النفسي للضحية شوقي في قصة العسكري الأسود ليوسف ادريس." جريدة النداء المصرية، ٢٠١٦.

عفيفي، مجدي. البناء السردي في روايات يوسف إدريس. رسالة دكتوراه: جامعة القاهرة، ٢٠١٣.

الفيصل، سمر روحي. السجن السياسي في الرواية العربية. دمشق: اتحاد الكتاب العرب، ١٩٨٧.

APPENDIX

Transliteration System

Description	Transliteration	Name	Letter
voiced bilabial stop	/b/	ba	ب
voiceless alveolar stop	/t/	ta	ت
voiceless dental fricative	/th/	sa	ث
voiced palato-alveolar affricative	/j/	jim	ج
voiceless pharyngeal fricative	/h/	ha	ح
voiceless uvular fricative	/kh/	kha	خ
voiced alveolar stop	/d/	dal	د
voiced dental fricative	/d/	zal	ذ
voiced alveolar roll	/r/	ra	ر
voiced alveolar fricative	/z/	za	ز
voiceless alveolar fricative	/s/	sin	س
voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	/sh/	shin	ش
voiceless alveolar fricative	/s/	sad	ص
voiced alveolar stop	/dh/	dad	ض
voiceless alveolar stop	/t/	ta	ط
voiced dental fricative	/Z/	za	ظ
voiceless pharyngeal fricative	/'/	ain	ع
voiced uvular fricative	/gh/	ghain	غ
voiceless labio-dental fricative	/f/	fa	ف
voiceless uvular stop	/q/	qaf	ق
voiceless velar stop	/k/	kaf	ك
voiced alveolar lateral	/l/	lam	ل
voiced bilabial nasal	/m/	mim	م
voiced alveolar nasal	/n/	nun	ن
voiceless glottal fricative	/h/	ha	هـ
voiced bilabial semi-vowel	/w/	waw	و
voiced palatal semi-vowel	/y/	ya	ى

voiced glottal stop	/’/	alif	ء (همزة)
Vowels			
front open short	/a/		---َ--
front close short	/i/		--ِ---
back close short	/u/		--ُ---

A sequence of two identical consonants or vowels= length.