The Burden of Valour

The Hero and the Terrorist-Villain in Post-9/11 Popular Fiction

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents .............................................................................................................. 2
List of Abbreviations: Titles of Primary Sources ............................................................... 5
Declaration ......................................................................................................................... 6
Abstract .............................................................................................................................. 7
Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................. 9
Chapter One: Introduction ............................................................................................... 10
  1. Primary Sources ........................................................................................................ 11
  2. Context of Primary Source Production .................................................................. 18
  3. An Overview of Secondary Literature and Concepts ............................................. 22
     a. Said’s *Orientalism* ............................................................................................... 22
     b. The Discourse on Terrorism and Its Implications ............................................. 27
     c. Media Representations of Terrorism ................................................................. 36
     d. The Entertainment Industry and Popular Fiction ............................................ 44
  4. An Overview of Methodology and Chapters ......................................................... 48
Chapter Two: Masculinity and Action-Thriller Archetypal Heroes ............................ 52
  1. Heroic Masculinity and War .................................................................................. 57
  2. Archetypes and Masculinity .................................................................................... 71
  3. The Archetypal Hero in Practice ............................................................................ 80
     a. An Introduction to the Heroes .......................................................................... 84
     b. Courage and Heroism ....................................................................................... 98
     c. Honour and Duty ............................................................................................. 102
     d. Loyalty, Patriotism and Reward .................................................................... 107
     e. Individualism and the Institution ................................................................... 113
     f. Justifying Violence and War .......................................................................... 121
     g. Female Characters ........................................................................................... 129
  4. Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 137
Chapter Three: Fictional Terrorists and the Obverse Archetype

1. Portrayals of a Glorified Self ................................................................. 142
2. The Construction of the Other ................................................................. 161
   a. Who Is the Other? .................................................................................. 162
   b. Backwardness and Anti-Civilisation ..................................................... 171
   c. A Religion of Hatred and Fanaticism ................................................... 182
   d. Madness and Terrorism ....................................................................... 190
   e. Revenge as Motive ................................................................................ 192
   f. Unjustified Violence ............................................................................ 195
   g. Archetypal Terrorist Traits ................................................................... 200
   h. Chameleon Terrorists .......................................................................... 208
   i. Terrorist Characters and Women .......................................................... 212
   j. The Terrorist Humanised? .................................................................... 214
3. Conclusion ............................................................................................... 216

Chapter Four: Alternative voices? Case Studies of John Updike and Yasmina Khadra

1. *Terrorist* .................................................................................................. 220
   a. Islam as a Religion of Hatred ............................................................... 221
   b. Alienation of the (Anti)Hero ................................................................ 223
   c. Islam as Father Figure ......................................................................... 228
   d. The Terrorist and His Role-Models ...................................................... 232
   e. An Orientalist View of Islam ............................................................... 236
   f. The ‘Clash’ of the Self and the Other ..................................................... 237
   g. Ahmad’s Final Act ............................................................................... 242
   h. *Terrorist*’s Inconsistencies and Problems ......................................... 246
2. *Les Sirènes de Bagdad* .......................................................................... 248
   a. Establishing a Background .................................................................. 251
   b. A Reversal of the Self and the Other ................................................... 255
   c. Hopelessness and Violence as Motives of Terrorism ........................... 262
List of Abbreviations: Titles of Primary Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author’s Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>Protect and Defend</td>
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<td>Frederick Forsyth</td>
<td>The Afghan</td>
<td>TA*</td>
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<td>Yasmina Khadra</td>
<td>The Attack <em>(L’Attentat)</em></td>
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<td>The Sirens of Baghdad <em>(Les Sirènes de Bagdad)</em></td>
<td>TS</td>
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<td>Danil Koretskiy</td>
<td>Atomniy poezd</td>
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<td>The Secret Servant</td>
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* The abbreviations for these novels do not occur in the same chapters or sections. *The Afghan* is analysed in Chapters Two and Three, while *The Attack* is addressed exclusively in Chapter Four. I also clearly reference the author in every instance a particular novel is discussed.
**Declaration**

I confirm that all the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work except where indicated, and that I have clearly referenced/listed all sources as appropriate, referenced and put in quotation marks all quoted text, given all sources of all pictures/data that are not my own, not made any use of any report(s) or essay(s) of any other student(s) either past or present, not sought or used the help of any external professional agencies for the work and complied with any other plagiarism criteria specified in the course handbook. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:
Abstract

My research is a literary study which primarily examines previously unstudied best-selling action-thriller fiction primary material from the US, Britain and Russia (published in the decade following the 11 September 2001 attacks) in the contexts of hegemonic masculinity and Self and Other stereotyping. I analyse thirteen works by the following popular fiction authors: Vince Flynn, Daniel Silva, Nelson DeMille, Frederick Forsyth and Danil Koretskiy. Drawing on masculinity studies and archetypal psychology, I formulate the model of the archetypal hero – a character type which the above authors’ works capitalise on. I trace the employment of this model in these primary works within the framework of constructing a positive and heroic image of the Self, of which the action-thriller hero is the chief representative. The archetypal hero’s principal traits include courage, honour, individualism and just violence among others. Heroes such as Mitch Rapp, Gabriel Allon, John Corey, Mike Martin, Max Kardanov and Alexei Mal’tsev embody this archetypal model and confirm it as positive and dominant in their respective narratives. The authors also utilise a variety of framing strategies to enhance their heroes’ authoritativeness and characterisation. Among these strategies, the use of historical facts and figures to anchor the narrative, enemy acknowledgement of the hero’s qualities and female characters’ fulfilment of traditional gender roles are the most prominent. First-person narration also plays a role in enhancing authenticity, such as in DeMille’s novels. While the heroes and the side they represent are characterised as inherently positive and superior, their terrorist antagonists fulfil the role of the essentialised and diametrically opposite Other. I demonstrate through further analysis how these characters are positioned as archetypal terrorists, embodying traits which are antithetical to the hero’s: backwardness; hatred of modernity and ‘civilisation’; religion (Islam) as their source of hatred; desire for arbitrary revenge and unjustified violence; hypocrisy and disloyalty. Having analysed the main archetypal heroes and villains in the primary action-thriller works, I proceed to examine two mainstream literary authors: American John Updike and Algerian Francophone Yasmina...
Khadra. I study those of their novels which foreground terrorist characters instead of archetypal heroes, thus analysing one novel by Updike (Terrorist) and two by Khadra (Les Sirènes de Bagdad and L’Attentat). I find that, despite an increased focus on the character of the budding teenage suicide bomber from New Jersey, Updike’s characterisation follows a pattern similar to the archetypal terrorist in the action-thriller sources. On the other hand, Khadra achieves a more balanced and complex portrayal, presenting his terrorists as human beings motivated by their various personal, social and political grievances rather than blind religious hatred. In sum, only Khadra’s narratives transcend stereotypical views of terrorism, while the other post-9/11 primary works (including Updike) focus on perpetuating binary oppositions of the Self and Other, masculinity and emasculation. My original contribution to knowledge is the identification, definition and comparative textual analysis of archetypal hero and terrorist characters in post-9/11 action-thriller and mainstream fiction in three languages (English, Russian and French) within a framework combining several elements: aspects of the system of representation of the terrorist Other, masculinity studies and archetypal psychology as well as the context of political and media post-9/11 views of Arabs and/or Muslims in the US, Britain and Russia.
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Marilyn Booth, for her invaluable academic guidance, unwavering support in all aspects and kind friendship which she has given me throughout the years of this PhD project.

Special thanks should be given to my husband, Paul Aylott, for the help, encouragement and confidence in me even when my own faith waivered during this final year.

I would also like to deeply thank my parents for their constant support and interest and for dedicating themselves to helping me get where I am now.
Chapter One: Introduction

The critical study of literature often overlooks popular fiction in favour of more ‘literary’ and canonical works, but best-selling novels such as action-thrillers garner importance as cultural and commercial products which are consumed by large readerships. This thesis contributes to filling this gap with a comparative study of best-selling American, British, Russian and French novels’ representations of heroes and terrorists, produced within the decade following the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington. I analyse how these works’ portrayals fit into the larger discourse on terrorism and the ‘war on terror’, especially in the United States. I also construct a framework based on the concepts of hegemonic and archetypal masculinity, within which I evaluate the protagonists and antagonists of these novels. Close textual analysis allows me to draw parallels between political and cultural discourses and these works’ representations of distinctly Orientalist and polarised ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ camps. In this study, I find that both heroes and terrorists are depicted by these authors as mostly stereotypical and essentialised, with the exception of Yasmina Khadra. My original contribution to knowledge is thus the examination of the hero and the terrorist-villain characters in these previously unstudied English- and Russian-language action-thriller sources in the context of the dichotomy of the Self and Other and the theory of archetypal masculine heroism; I also apply these analytical frameworks to English- and French-language literary mainstream novels, which distinctly foreground the character of the terrorist over the action-thriller hero. My work falls into the field of comparative literature as well as cultural studies, which is why it is important that I analyse popular fiction works in three different languages and study the originals.¹ As I explain below, these works share a historical and thematic context.

¹ In the main body of this study, I quote Russian and French sources in English translation. These Russian novels have not been translated into English, so the translations are my own. I quote from the published translations of the French works. All original direct quotations are provided in the appendix. Note also that
In this introductory chapter, I first present my primary sources and briefly outline their success as best sellers. I then discuss the historical and political context within which these novels were produced in their respective countries, mainly addressing the impact of 9/11 and the ensuing increased global concern with terrorism. In the third part of this chapter, I give a brief overview of secondary literature and concepts which informed my analytic approach to the topic. Lastly, I delineate the methodology and structure of the analysis and explain the content of the subsequent chapters.

1. Primary Sources

I selected the principal body of primary works for analysis based on three criteria: belonging to the action-thriller genre, commercial success and post-9/11 context of production. As I explain shortly, John Updike and Yasmina Khadra conform only to the latter two criteria, while their novels are better categorised as mainstream literary fiction. The selection of the 11 September attacks as a starting date is significant, as I explain in the historical context section below, due to the reintroduction of terrorism as a global concern and the announcement of a ‘war on terror’. The primary works necessarily revolve around a masculine protagonist, who is a virile embodiment of heroic masculinity. Updike and Khadra are once more an exception, as their novels centre on principal terrorist characters, and I approach these as narratives which potentially subvert the terrorist stereotype evident in the selected action-thrillers.

I would like to first introduce the concepts of popular and thriller fiction, which underscore the action-thriller’s relevance as a carrier and reproducer of stereotypical representations. Popular fiction is a form of literature designed to be more accessible and appropriate for mass consumption. In his seminal study on the topic, Ken Gelder indicates that “two key words for understanding popular fiction are industry and...
entertainment.”² This is why success in this field is determined by sales figures rather than critical reception; I utilised such data to narrow my selection of primary sources.³ The thriller as a genre of popular fiction evolved from a sub-genre of crime fiction into a varied category of its own, which includes such types of novels as action-thrillers, spy-thrillers, historical thrillers, suspense-thrillers and political thrillers among others.⁴ The action-thrillers I discuss are fast-paced and conflict-driven narratives often grounded in factual references and historical events, which enhance their verisimilitude (I elaborate on these techniques later in the thesis). “The thriller […] is popular fiction at its purest, soliciting the reader’s belief as it unfolds and using its sheer pace to carry that belief along intact,” Gelder maintains.⁵ The action-thrillers’ swiftly developing plots confirm them as the quintessential thriller sub-genre and make their study in the post-9/11 context especially important.

The first category of primary sources – action-thriller novels by Vince Flynn, Daniel Silva, Nelson DeMille, Frederick Forsyth and Danil Koretskiy – predominantly addresses a lone masculine hero facing and defeating a series of terrorists. Flynn, Silva and DeMille are American authors who serialise their works starring the same lead hero throughout. Flynn’s and Silva’s works in particular tend to follow a consistent formula whereby the heroic protagonist pursues nefarious terrorists (with slight differences in names, locales or planned attack specifics) in order to prevent disaster, ultimately succeeding in his mission and vanquishing the antagonists at the end of the novel. DeMille’s novels adopt a more investigative rather than pursuit-based pattern but equally foreground a lone hero battling characters with villainous intents. The novels of Forsyth and Koretskiy (British and Russian authors respectively) under analysis are standalone works, depicting different heroes but developing along similar lines. In Forsyth, the hero goes undercover and joins an al-Qaeda cell to prevent a large-scale

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³ For an elaboration, see Gelder 24. I indicate each author’s success levels below.
⁴ Gelder 61-62.
⁵ Gelder 61.
attack. Koretskiy’s works follow Flynn’s and Silva’s formula with the exception of one novel which I describe below. In total, I scrutinise thirteen action-thriller novels in two languages in detail, while briefly referring to additional novels from Flynn’s and DeMille’s series where relevant. It is necessary to emphasise that my primary interest does not lie in the detailed description of the general plots of these works (as they are overwhelmingly similar and formulaic) but in the characterisations and framing techniques of the hero and the terrorist-villain, especially in the light of my dual conceptual framework. As I noted above, action-thrillers are fast-paced action-driven narratives designed for quick and easy consumption, and the characters’ representational value is greater than the plot’s; where a plot point is essential to the character analysis, I explain it in its respective section of the study. In the terrorist-centric literary works of Updike and Khadra plots hold greater importance, and I summarise them where relevant in chapter four.

Vince Flynn (1966-2013) was a prolific and successful American action-thriller author, who published thirteen novels featuring the CIA’s secret counter-terrorism hero Mitch Rapp. Flynn reached the top of the New York Times best seller list with four novels, while the rest of his Mitch Rapp series have all been in the top ten of this list and sold consistently well. In my study, I focus on three novels in particular: Memorial Day (NYT number seven), Protect and Defend (NYT number one best seller) and prequel American Assassin (NYT number one). Mitch Rapp is the epitome of a hyper-masculine loner hero, displaying all the classical traits of archetypal heroism which I establish in chapter two. Opposing Rapp in these novels are Arab and/or Muslim terrorists with a

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6 Flynn’s series began with the publication of Transfer of Power (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999). The last novel he authored for the Rapp series is The Last Man (London: Simon & Schuster, 2012). After his death, the series is to be continued by another author.


burning desire to harm the USA and its innocent citizens. This opposition is the focus of my study, and I argue in the analysis that it is modelled on Orientalist essentialist notions of the Self and the Other, vesting the hero and the terrorist with antithetical traits. Many of these characteristics draw on the notion of heroism and its opposites, and all the selected action-thriller novels display such dichotomisation in varying measures. Although Updike and Khadra’s focus on the terrorist character as protagonist distances them from the rhetoric of heroism, they nonetheless negotiate the dichotomy of the Self and the Other as a central theme in their novels.

Daniel Silva (b. 1960) is another successful and NYT best-selling American author. His Gabriel Allon series numbers fourteen instalments to date. Three post-9/11 novels in particular focus on Israeli secret operative Allon combatting Arab and/or Muslim terrorists: Prince of Fire (NYT number three), The Messenger (NYT number three) and The Secret Servant (NYT number two). Similarly to Rapp, Allon is a quintessential hero whose job is to defend the world from terrorists. Similar Self and Other dichotomies are also observed in these novels, as I elaborate in subsequent chapters.

Former US Army Lieutenant and Vietnam veteran, Nelson DeMille (b. 1943) has been a best-selling thriller writer since 1974. Post-9/11, he published four John Corey novels, two of which I discuss at length: Night Fall (NYT number one) and Wild Fire (NYT number two). The first novel is set in the two months running up to 9/11 and incorporates the World Trade Centre attacks into the narrative’s denouement. Corey is an agent in the FBI’s Anti-Terrorist Task Force and investigates his cases with great passion. With a background in the New York Police Department (NYPD), Corey differs slightly from Rapp and Allon: he is not a spy or super-agent but rather a detective at heart. His masculinity and heroic character are, however, described in similar terms.

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Although Arab and/or Muslim terrorists do not directly participate in the narratives, these works are replete with the Self and Other rhetoric.

British author Frederick Forsyth (b. 1938) is a former pilot in the Royal Air Force and journalist, who has been an international success since the publication of his first thriller in 1971. He is popular in both the UK and US, where he has enjoyed significant NYT success. *The Afghan*, which I analyse in this study, reached the number four position in *NYT*.\(^1\) It is a standalone novel which tells the story of a British intelligence operative Mike Martin.\(^2\) Martin is undercover in an al-Qaeda cell, which allows him to observe terrorists at close range and provides the analysis with a wealth of material on the Self and Other dichotomy. Martin is also the definitive lone hero, who operates among the antagonists with no support network and ultimately sacrifices his life to prevent a terrorist act.

On the Russian action-thriller scene, Danil Koretskiy’s name (b. 1948) in particular stands out. He has written thirty-five books with a combined print run of twenty million copies, which attests to his immense popularity.\(^3\) Although it is difficult to gauge his individual works’ popularity due to the unavailability of authoritative best seller lists such as *NYT*, his large print runs confirm Koretskiy as a major Russian action-thriller author. Koretskiy is a former police (Russian ‘militsiya’) investigator who subsequently obtained a PhD in law and taught at the Rostov Institute of Jurisprudence. I study the following of his novels: *Kod vozvrascheniya* (*The Code of Return*), *Atomniy poezd* (*The Nuclear Train*) and *Mech’ Nemezidy* (*The Sword of Nemesis*) in detail and


\(^2\) Note that although Forsyth’s *The Fist of God* (London: Corgi, 1994) does feature Mike Martin as the protagonist, *The Afghan* is not its sequel due to the discrepancy in Martin’s backstory: in *The Fist*, the author indicates that Mike Martin was born in 1953 (74), but *The Afghan* contradicts this by giving the birth year as 1962 (76). The rest of the background is similar, but it is clear that the author changed the hero’s age and timeline of his biography in order to fit him into a post-9/11 storyline. *The Afghan* should be treated as a standalone novel rather than part of a series.

briefly reference *Peshka v bol'shoy igre (The Pawn in a Big Game)* in chapter three. The first three novels feature masculine protagonists whom I compare with Rapp, Allon, Corey and Martin in chapter two. *Atomniy poezd*’s plot differs from the Flynn and Silva pattern and, instead of an already heroically masculine protagonist pursuing terrorists, depicts the young lead character’s gradual development into one through his military service on the nuclear warhead-carrying train. The hero’s masculinisation culminates in his decisive actions in the novel’s finale – the moment he prevents the start of a globally annihilating nuclear war. All four works comprise terrorist characters most often portrayed as Muslims of Chechen or Arab origin. These novels, produced and received in a post-9/11 context share the other action-thrillers’ concerns with a Self under attack by a predominantly Muslim and/or Arab terrorist Other.

In chapter four, I turn to two authors whose work is more ‘literary’ than the above action-thriller novels. John Updike (1932-2009) was a celebrated American writer and critic, recognised by prestigious awards such as the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. He penned over twenty novels as well as numerous other fictional and non-fictional works. Unlike the action-thrillers of Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Forsyth and Koretskiy, his post-9/11 *Terrorist* (also best-selling at NYT number five)foregrounds the would-be teenage terrorist Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy rather than an archetypal hero. Bob Batchelor, who authored Updike’s biography, goes as far as labelling this work a “literary thriller” aspiring to “outline the new America that emerges post-9/11.” The narrative follows the young man’s involvement in a suicide terrorist plot following his

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16 Among Updike’s awards: twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction (1982, 1991); twice winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction (1981, 1990); National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism (1983); PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction (2004); and American Academy of Arts and Letters Gold Medal for Fiction (2007) to name but a few.


high school graduation in a sleepy New Jersey town. Like the previous novels, *Terrorist* mediates a Self and Other dichotomy between Ahmad, his peers and the American society at large, which makes this work relevant to the comparison at the heart of this study.

Yasmina Khadra is the pseudonym of retired Algerian army officer and Francophone writer Mohammed Moulessehoul (b. 1955), whose novels have been translated into forty-one languages. His *Les Hirondelles de Kaboul* was shortlisted for the IMPAC Prize, while *L’Attentat* won him the Prix des Librairies, both in 2006. He has penned six literary mainstream novels since 2001, the most notable of which is his trilogy addressing the issue of Islamic fundamentalism: *Les Hirondelles de Kaboul (The Swallows of Kabul)*, *L’Attentat (The Attack)* and *Les Sirènes de Bagdad (The Sirens of Baghdad)*. In my analysis, I focus on the latter two novels, as *Les Hirondelles* – although written in the wake of 9/11 – is set prior to these events, during the post-Soviet Taliban rule of Afghanistan. This work also primarily addresses this regime’s harsh policies and their impact on Kabul’s population rather than terrorism.

*L’Attentat* and *Les Sirènes de Bagdad* approach the principal terrorist character differently but both explore her (in the former) and his (in the latter) backgrounds and motives. These novels subvert the notions of the Self and the Other found in the previous works and expose their relativity. Both Sihem Jaafari (in *L’Attentat*) and *Les Sirènes*’ unnamed narrator perceive themselves as the Self opposing the Israeli or Euro-American Other, which in their eyes renders them innocent victims who have no choice but to turn to terrorism. Sihem’s posthumous story traces her motives back to the daily tragedies of the Palestinian territories, while the narrator of the second novel chronicles
the shattering of his peaceful life in a remote village in Iraq, setting him on a quest for revenge and terrorism. Both instances of terrorism in Khadra are shown to be politicised and personalised, as opposed to the depoliticised and religion-driven terrorism which all the above authors depict.

In my textual analysis, I study the action-thriller novels described above together, concurrently comparing their heroes and terrorists within the framework of archetypal heroic masculinity and the dichotomy of the Self and the Other. Due to their shifted focus towards a main terrorist character, I examine Updike’s and Khadra’s novels as a second group, albeit maintaining the links to the theories of masculinity and dichotomisation which I establish for the first category. These primary sources share similar themes and create or deconstruct heroic and terrorist character types; they also share a similar context of production, being written and published in the decade following the 9/11 attacks.

2. Context of Primary Source Production

Although the USA, the UK, Russia and France had experiences with terrorism prior to 11 September 2001, these attacks mark a shift in terrorism discourses through the intensification of anti-terrorist policies and rhetoric. It is important to understand this as a context in which terrorism has become part of the public discourse primarily in the US but also in the other countries, partly through the political and cultural dominance of US-led globalisation processes. I give a brief overview of post-9/11 responses – the framework within which these novels were produced and are being received – but the primary concern of my study remains the literary analysis of hero and terrorist characters. I refer back to this context in the following chapters to draw parallels between character representations and actual discourses on terrorism, particularly political discourses.

The events of 9/11 undoubtedly had the most severe effect on American public consciousness as well as Americans’ political attitudes towards terrorism in the context
of US government rhetoric and policy. In the introduction to his edited volume on American responses to these attacks, William Crotty expresses the sentiment shared by the volumes’ contributors, asserting that the events fundamentally transformed most Americans’ worldview and launched the previously unfathomable US war against terrorism. Immediately after 9/11, citizens’ confidence in the American government surged, and the George W. Bush administration took radical steps to improve security and prevent further attacks: the USA Patriot Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism), granting the country’s security agencies unprecedented powers of suspect detention and surveillance, was legislated on 26 October 2001. Thereafter, the Guantánamo Bay prison in Cuba was established for the imprisonment of terrorist suspects without granting them legal rights. Through his speeches, President Bush announced his government’s intent to wage a ‘war on terror’, presenting it simultaneously as a uniquely American experience due to the attacks and as a worldwide obligation. This official discourse therefore crystallised the perception of terrorism as an evil Other to be defeated at all costs. US and coalition forces subsequently engaged in high-profile military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq in the name of protecting the world from Arab and/or Muslim terrorists and their networks.

Although the United Kingdom had previously sustained multiple terrorist attacks, the most prominent of which were perpetrated by the IRA as well as Libyan terrorists responsible for the Lockerbie bombing, threats of “Islamist terrorism” rose

26 Jack Holland, Selling the War on Terror: Foreign Policy Discourses after 9/11 (New York: Routledge, 2012) 76.
significantly following 9/11. The British Terrorism Act, passed in 2000, predated the events of 9/11 and the ensuing USA Patriot Act and “provided for a proscription regime based on secret intelligence, with offenses that made it a crime to be a member of or even identify with a proscribed organization.” However, the al-Qaeda threat rose exponentially after the attacks on the US and Britain’s announcement of political and military support of the ‘war on terror’, culminating in the 7 July 2005 attacks in London. This reinforced focus on Islam as the originator of terrorism (and a hostile Other entity) was not only prominent in Britain but shared with the United States, France and Russia among others. Thus, for these countries as well as the US, 9/11 marked the beginning of a ‘new era’ of terrorism and the fight against it.

Having experienced Algeria-related Islamist terrorism and a surge of attacks by al-Qaeda affiliated organisations prior to 2001, France already had “draconian legal and operational response” protocols in place. Following 9/11, France allied itself with the US and participated in their ‘war on terrorism’ by joining the invasion of Afghanistan. This involvement contributed to the mounting menace of al-Qaeda attacks, especially between the years 2002 and 2005, and emphasised the policymakers’ opinion of their country being a “designated target at the heart of a Europe under threat.” Thus, the discourses and concerns of terrorism in France, as well as in the other countries I discuss, became more urgent following 9/11. This, I argue, resulted in a heightened public interest in the topic and spurred the appearance of an increased number of novels addressing it.

Post-Soviet Russia had also sustained multiple terrorist attacks prior to 9/11, especially in the context of its involvement in the Chechen conflict (the First Chechen

29 Foley 29-30.
30 K. Roach 22.
31 Foley 19-21: 5.
33 Foley 32-33; 1.
War was fought between 1994 and 1996; the Second Chechen War started in 1999 and is arguably still intermittently ongoing). The attacks on the US, however, legitimised and became symbolic of Russia’s struggle with terrorism, allying it with America’s policies to support the global ‘war on terror’. As John Russell argues in his study of the Russo-Chechen conflict, 9/11 also had a tremendous effect on Russian self-perception: “In the perception of many of its citizens, Russia has been restored to its predestined role as the first line of defence in the ‘clash of civilisations’, defending the Western way of life against the threat of, traditionally the ‘Yellow’ but now, the Islamic ‘Green’ Peril. Since September 11 this claim is no longer dismissed in the West.” The multiple terrorist attacks on Russia were thus contextualised as acts of international terrorism rather than results of an internal conflict. 9/11 created a common enemy discourse and allowed for Russia’s inclusion in the broader concept of the ‘West’ as opposed to its previous Cold War status as an Other. Indeed, George W. Bush’s 20 September 2001 speech which called for a ‘war on terror’ “presented almost the same ideological package” as Cold War rhetoric, terrorism replacing the former communist state as the enemy. The attacks of 2001 initiated the increased acceptance of Russia as a nation equally threatened by the common enemy of terrorism, while post-9/11 attacks on Russia began to be framed as related to the global context.

The impact of 9/11 on terrorism perceptions and discourses worldwide are hard to underestimate and difficult to fully detail in this brief section, and the wide range and popularity of my primary sources, produced in the decade following the attacks and within their context, are indicative of an increased interest in the topic. As the US were the subject of these attacks and the most vocal advocate of the ‘war on terror’, I focus on drawing parallels with aspects of American discourses in the textual analysis below. Considering the vast ideological support which Britain, France and Russia provided the US with in the wake of 9/11, their shared political and anti-terrorist context, as well as

35 Russell 91.
the similar representational themes of terrorist characters in the novels, placing emphasis on American discourses on terrorism and their ramifications is justified.

3. An Overview of Secondary Literature and Concepts

A brief overview of the concepts and secondary literature which informed my study and approach to the topic of representations of heroes and terrorists is necessary prior to the textual analysis. I first address Edward W. Said and his study of Orientalism and representations of the Other, as this directly relates to the theme of dichotomisation which I discuss in the textual analysis. Secondly, the analysis of fictional terrorist characters necessitates an understanding of the complexity of terrorism’s definition and the context of its debate in terrorism studies and media spheres. Lastly, I review relevant studies of representations of terrorists, especially in entertainment (cinema and television). This review of secondary sources contributes to the definition of my textual analysis themes, and I refer to these concepts in later chapters.

a. Said’s Orientalism

Edward Said’s Orientalism, a seminal work on the representations of the non-Western Other, is a natural starting point for my discussion as the work which inspired and focused my study.37 While I do not comprehensively review Orientalism, I outline pertinent arguments which Said introduced. Although there was prior interest in and debate on Orientalism, Said was the first to meticulously review, comment on and describe it as a coherent and strong discourse on the Orient (or, for Said, the Arab and Muslim components of it). Said does not write a narrative history or offer an exhaustive catalogue of representations of the East formulated in the West but studies Orientalism as an authoritative system of ‘knowledge’ about its subject. The author explains early in his study that “Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for

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dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing
views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as
a Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”

In this sense, Orientalism is inextricably linked to power – the power of
definition and imperial rule. Through the Western gaze and representation, what is
‗known‘ to be the Orient is no longer a real place but becomes an idea, a myth
outweighing any other knowledge or opinion about it. At the same time in response to
critics, Said insists that he has “no ‘real’ Orient to argue for.” Instead, he calls for a
humanistic and compassionate kind of knowledge of the East as opposed to one with
imperialistic designs. The system of knowledge which describes the Orient also creates
it by virtue of description, imposes that image on both its Western subject and Eastern
object, and empowers the side with the authority and resources to define the region to
dominate it. The Orient is transformed into a mythical place, where irrationality and
excess predominate. These apparent ‘weaknesses of Oriental character’ become the
raison d’être for the civilising colonial mission, which professes that it comes to ‘help’
the primitive or the ‘less-developed’. However, the myth of the Orient is not a centrally-
enforced authoritarian discourse; it is a network of representation which is inherently
self-referential and self-perpetuating in the sense that those discussing the region rely on
previous representations and cite each other in their work instead of citing ‘native’
options and descriptions. Thus, in a Saidian understanding, Orientalism is a closed
circuit of ideas about the Other, to which no foreigner (Oriental) can contribute and
which no outsider can amend. Said elaborates on the notion of myth-formation and
persistence: “In the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than
a topos, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in
a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone’s work on the Orient, or
some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these.”

38 Said, *Orientalism* 3.
40 Said, *Orientalism* 177; emphasis in the original.
Most significantly, this system of knowledge gains increasing influence and empowerment as a discourse through the reiteration of similar notions, which in turn lends it even more credibility every time it is referenced. As Conor McCarthy posits in his discussion of *Orientalism*, the discourse thus achieves a “quasi-material density and persistence, and [the] capacity thereby to monopolise the field of representation of the Oriental”; therefore, “the very concept of that [Oriental] region […] [becomes] a cultural construction.”

The construction of the myth of the Orient also essentialises it. Said bases his analysis on the binary opposition of the Self and the Other, both being what he calls “supreme fictions [that] lend themselves easily to manipulation.” These narrative constructions are equivalent to the Occident and the Orient, or the West and the East. In Said’s opinion, these categories are vital to the identity politics of the West. The construction of the Orient as an essentially opposed and negative Other (weak, passive, violent, sensual, feminine, exotic etc.) is key to the production of the myth of the Self. The readily available superficial entity of the Other provides the context within which the Western Self defines itself. Said insists that this is not an unnatural process, despite the undesirable and biased outcomes it entails: “The construction of identity – for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction – involves establishing opposites and ‘others’ whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from ‘us’.” Therefore, in order to define itself positively and powerfully, the Western system of knowledge enforces certain ‘truths’ about the Orient, which could then be contrasted favourably with the narrative of Occidental identity.

Edward Said’s argument relies heavily on Michel Foucault’s concepts of discourse, power, knowledge and truth. Said borrows his understanding of discourse as

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42 Said, *Orientalism* xii.
43 Said, *Orientalism* 332; emphasis in the original.
an authoritative system and discipline from two major philosophical works by Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*. Due to space limitations, I cite instead McCarthy’s handy summary of these principal concepts:

For Foucault, a discourse is a body of statements – spoken and written in a language, though discourse can also encompass other forms of representation – that can be, and are, made about a specific matter. Authoritative discourses acquire, by means of their links to institutions such as the legal system, the state, the academy and the sciences, the status of ‘truth’. Foucault called this nexus *power/knowledge* – in this formulation, knowledge, or truth-statement, is a form of power, and, equally, power can be understood in its capacity to produce effects or ‘regimes’ of truth. 

Similarly, in a more recent study of Orientalism, Zachary Lockman also elaborates that in Foucault’s opinion, “what we take to be truth is in fact always really the product of a certain way of depicting or representing reality, of a certain ‘discourse’ – a structured system of meaning which shapes what we perceive, think and do.” For Foucault, as other poststructuralist critics, objective reality does not exist. Discourse does not depict absolute notions but is merely their representation – one of many possible representations – which, if institutionalised and backed by authority, may become a ‘truth’. Thus, the relation between knowledge and power is reciprocal and dynamic: when knowledge is invested with power, it becomes an official, predominant discourse, which, in its due course, exercises power by reducing the significance and influence of other discourses. Power therefore penetrates all knowledge about the Orient; as Melani McAlister indicates in her study of American cultural representations of the Middle East, “the production of a discourse about the Middle East comes to be understood as authoritative, as ‘common sense. […] [C]ertain meanings can become naturalized by repetition, as well as the ways that different sets of texts, with their own

45 McCarthy 70-71; emphasis in the original.
interests and affiliations, come to overlap, to reinforce and revise one another.\textsuperscript{47} This idea comes full circle to the founding premise of Said’s argument: that Orientalism is a citational, self-referential, and authoritative discourse about the Orient, imbued with power to impose a myth about the region and its people and ultimately serving imperialistic agendas.

Said’s arguments in \textit{Orientalism} provide the underlying premise for my textual analysis. The dichotomies of the Self and the Other which I find in my primary sources reveal that these novels build on this system of representation despite (or, indeed, because of) its essentialising of the West and the East. As the analysis chapters demonstrate, post-9/11 contexts discussed above are cited and reiterated in the selected works, linking the representations of heroes and terrorists to overarching actual discourses on terrorism. Characterisations created within the context of these discourses are imbued with increased authority and become more solidified through repetition and mutual citations (series of novels by Flynn and Silva are a good example of such citational systems), similar to the larger Orientalist discourse Said examines. This system of representation does not go completely unchallenged. Although the discourse describing Arabs and/or Muslims as terrorists is dominant and exceedingly powerful, as my study illustrates, voices attempting to debunk the myth of the Other and humanise it do exist. Khadra is one such example; yet, in comparison with the other fourteen novels I discuss, Khadra’s two novels deconstructing the dichotomy of the Self and the Other represent a statistical minority.

The inflexibility of these two categories is one of the major criticisms of \textit{Orientalism}. Prominent reviewers of Said’s work note his tendency towards overgeneralising and essentialising the West in nearly the same way, ironically, in which he accuses the Orientalist discourse of doing with the Orient.\textsuperscript{48} Critics add that Said’s argument would not have been possible had it not been built on the very same binary

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distinctions of the Self and the Other, the West and the East, the powerful and the weak that the author laments. Although I am aware of this limitation and – just as the critics who challenged Said’s analysis – critical of the notion of the impermeability of Orientalist discourse and its effects, the genre I analyse does uphold this dichotomisation, using it as a foundation for the construction of the hero and terrorist-villain characters. Because my primary sources operate within the framework of the distinct and opposing categories of the Self and the Other, I demonstrate in the analysis how these are employed in characterisation and overall thematic undertone of the novels – whether to sustain the dichotomy or (more rarely) question it. The Saidian understanding of these notions thus remains strongly relevant to my analysis, and I utilise these terms throughout the study to criticise the primary sources’ reliance on them.

Said acknowledges and explains another significant delimitation following from the previous point in the introduction to *Orientalism*: he chooses to focus his analysis exclusively on Anglo-American and French Orientalism and does not incorporate other European (and non-European) Orientalist scholars, such as German, Russian, Portuguese and Arab. Despite limiting himself to discourse on the Orient produced in only three countries (France, Britain, and later the United States), Said does speak of a more general European stereotyping of the Middle East, European imperialist power and domination. Despite these criticisms (and self-criticisms), Said’s analysis provides my study with an understanding of the stereotypical notions of the Self and the Other, illuminating one of the principal frameworks within which the primary sources are constructed.

**b. The Discourse on Terrorism and Its Implications**

While Orientalist discourse is one of the more significant threads informing my argument, the discourse on terrorism is another cornerstone. It encompasses many

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disciplines: from international law and political theory to psychology, media studies, criminology, ethics and human rights. As noted above, although it had long been a subject of study and discussion, terrorism became a much more urgently debated topic after 9/11. As well as reigniting political and security debate, these attacks marked a turning point in terrorism studies, generated an unprecedented degree of attention, discussion and world-wide media coverage and fuelled further public rhetoric and commercial products such as action-thriller novels. It is in this context that the United States led by the Bush administration, along with its international allies, launched the ‘pre-emptive’ war on terror.

A great number of ‘expert’ opinions, interviews, and publications ensued: the field of terrorism studies alone (not taking into account television appearances, programs and magazine and newspaper articles) saw an increase of 300% in the number of peer-reviewed articles published, whilst throughout the seven years following 9/11 four new books concerning terrorism were published daily.\textsuperscript{50} Common criticisms (on which I elaborate shortly) as voiced by the contributors to \textit{Critical Terrorism Studies}, a volume evaluating the state of the field, comprise the speculative nature, superficiality and bias of much post-9/11 terrorism research. They make the case for rigorously researched, documented and evidence-based terrorism studies instead. The poor quality of terrorism research is illustrated by Magnus Ranstorp through many examples of recent work on the topic; he concludes that “there is little self-conscious, sophisticated engagement with theoretical developments elsewhere [in other disciplines] and even less rigorous application of explicitly visible methodologies by the terrorism research community as a whole.”\textsuperscript{51} Marie Breen Smyth indicates that terrorism is often studied ahistorically, as if it “began on September 11 2001 and the historical experiences of numerous countries and the already burgeoning literature in ‘terrorism’ published prior to 2001 [are


\textsuperscript{51} Ranstorp 24.
ignored].”52 Also surveying the output of terrorism studies, Richard Jackson echoes Ranstorp’s reservations: “[M]uch of the accepted knowledge about terrorism in the field is highly contestable and open to debate.”53 He adds, “[W]hat is accepted as unproblematic ‘knowledge’ in terrorism studies is actually of dubious provenance.”54 While Ranstorp, Smyth and Jackson question the validity of much of the research on terrorism, Katerina Dalacoura criticises its lack of contextualisation and readiness to implicate religion as a primary motive (as opposed to economic and political grievances): “[T]errorism specialists who deal with the Middle East terrorist actors often do so in a superficial manner, ignoring the specificities and realities of the region or assuming that the causes of their action can be reduced to ‘religion’.”55 This simplification of terrorism motives is not unique to terrorism studies but also features prominently in my primary sources (except Khadra). These novels tend to place the blame for violence singularly on Islam and, as I demonstrate in the textual analysis, depict it as an arbitrary, irrational and vengeful faith.

In the decade after 9/11 and as the above scholars indicate, much polemical work on terrorism was produced. It bears strong biases against Arabs and/or Muslims and subscribes to Samuel Huntington’s notion of a “clash of civilizations.”56 Works of such authors as Daniel Pipes, Robert Spencer, Brigitte Gabriel and Steven Emerson tend to demonise the Middle Eastern and/or Muslim Other and fully endorse America’s ‘war on terror’ as just and necessary.57 These are only a few examples of the abundant terrorism-

52 Qtd. in Ranstorp 23.
54 Jackson, “Knowledge” 77.
related literature which appeared in the US following 9/11. They strengthen the dominant (negative) discourse on terrorism and inhabit the same representational universe as the action-thrillers I study: the American Self is presented as an innocent and heroic victim of a hateful Muslim Other. These images feed into the cycle of stereotyping and mutual referencing, contributing to dominant discourses on terrorism. In his essay, Jackson argues that central terrorism studies notions continue to conform to such discourses; he comments on their hegemonic interconnectivity:

[I]t can be argued that the core terrorism studies ‘knowledge’ persists and is continually reproduced because its nature and form reflect (and simultaneously construct) dominant values and existing cultural narratives. On the one hand, it provides a coherent and familiar discursive frame for internal policy debate; it confirms state perspectives and approaches and simplifies a set of complex challenges to an identifiable ‘problem’. For the wider public, the narratives of the discourse construct a broad common sense understanding of terrorism and counterterrorism, or a ‘grid of intelligibility’ through which to interpret and make sense of events and actions. This is another of its key hegemonic or ideological effects, as this common sense ‘knowledge’ predisposes the public to accept and acquiesce to particular kinds of counterterrorism policies.\(^{58}\)

The promotion of security practices and counterterrorism tactics restricting civil and human rights is exemplified by the abovementioned USA Patriot Act or the UK’s Terrorism Act. Dominant terrorism discourses help legitimate such radical measures as necessary and justified. Such justifications of violence against the Other are also depicted as common-sense and inevitable in the action-thrillers I study, as I explain in chapters two and three.

The legitimation of stringent measures benefits from studies on terrorism emphasising the universality and veracity of dominant discourses without providing

\(^{58}\) Jackson, “Knowledge” 80.
political and historical context. In an essay on the impact of terrorism scholarship on the US ‘war on terror’, Sam Raphael suggests that there is an “aura of objectivity surrounding the terrorism ‘knowledge’ generated by academic experts,” as well as a pervasive “positivist assumption […] that the research conducted is apolitical and objective.”

Raphael’s criticism is similar to Dalacoura’s, and he underscores the wrongful approach to terrorism as a politically insulated phenomenon. Raphael adds: “There is little to no reflexivity on behalf of the scholars, who see themselves as wholly dissociated from the politics surrounding the subject of terrorism,” while “the research output can be seen to serve a very particular ideological function for US foreign policy […] primarily through legitimising an extensive set of coercive interventions in the global South undertaken under the rubric of various ‘war(s) on terror’.”

Discourses on terrorism can thus benefit from the subjectivity and frequent ideological bias of the field, while studies’ inaccuracies and lack of context transform them into contested narratives.

An aspect of the mutual exchange between terrorism studies and the state is the reliance on terrorism ‘experts’ in policy-making, judicial systems and the news media. Ranstorp details two prominent US cases where such experts served as witnesses in terrorism trials. According to the author, some alleged professionals are “outright fraudsters, often masquerading behind a thin façade of privileged access to secret sources, often unverifiable in contravention to standard academic praxis.” Such ‘authoritative’ figures are thus often unreliable and biased, presenting a skewed view of terrorism and its causes. The post-9/11 explosion of demand for information about terrorism was fertile ground for a “new breed of ‘embedded expertise’ that exploits crevices in the undergrowth of terrorism studies field that provide them with enough grip

60 Raphael 50-51; emphasis in the original.
61 Alexis Debat (former Director of the Terrorism and National Security Program at the Nixon Center, Washington DC) and Evan Kohlmann (author of *Al-Qaeda’s Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network* and expert witness in numerous federal terrorism trials in the United States). See Ranstorp 28.
to push forward effectively various duplicitous agendas under the guise of ‘honest’ social scientific projects.”⁶³ These individuals belong to the category criticised by Dalacoura, presenting unfounded conclusions and ignoring the context within which terrorist acts occur. This phenomenon is paralleled structurally in the fiction I study. With a similar degree of authoritativeness, the action-thriller hero defines and discusses the terrorist Other. The hero’s status, masculinity and significant field experience render him the ultimate ‘expert’ on the topic. Such are Mitch Rapp and Gabriel Allon which I elaborate on in the textual analysis: the hero’s expertise contributes to the veracity of his opinions and strengthens the dominant political discourse circulating in the society of novel-readers within the narrative itself.

In light of these polemics in the field of terrorism studies, the very definition of the term ‘terrorism’ is highly debated, contested and subjective. Roger Woddis’ popular poem illustrating the difficulty of its definition is much quoted by terrorism scholars:

Throwing a bomb is bad,
Dropping a bomb is good;
Terror, no need to add,
Depends on who’s wearing the hood.⁶⁴

The very meaning of terrorism depends on the party defining it and its ideology: more authoritative and hegemonic discourses exercise more power on the definition of ‘common’ knowledge, Foucault’s earlier argument suggests. Subjective political, economic and social settings also influence this definition. Among my primary sources only Khadra’s narratives acknowledge political and personal motives of terrorism; the remaining works, including Updike’s, depoliticise terrorism and depict it primarily as an inevitable product of a violent and vengeful religion: Islam.

Despite the differing approaches, terrorism scholars do agree on a set of characteristics defining the concept. Terrorism is a deliberate act which entails the use of violence against non-combatant individuals or groups in order to influence the actions or policies of a certain group or government and which results in moral or physical

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⁶³ Ranstorp 25.
damage. Dalacoura qualifies the concept of terrorism as distinctive from acts of violence committed during times of war. If committed within a context of a war, they become acts of (clandestine) warfare. There is an ongoing debate whether terrorism is exclusively a brand of non-state violence or whether states can also commit terrorist acts against other groups or countries. Raphael and Jackson argue that there is a trend in the field disregard ing the ability of states to engage in acts of terrorism and instead focusing the definition of the concept exclusively on non-state terrorist acts. Raphael posits that the “definition [of terrorism] clearly encompasses states as well as non-state acts of terror and could easily be applied to many aspects of US-led ‘counterterrorism’.”

Predominantly, however, terrorism remains a concept associated with non-state groups committing (arguably unprovoked) violence. As the analysis of my primary sources demonstrates, action-thriller novels utilise primarily this definition of terrorism, even when states (such as Iran in Flynn’s Protect and Defend) aid and rely on terrorist organisations. Terrorism thus becomes a justification for any retaliatory violence and the heroes’ unorthodox methods of exacting it.

The American ‘war on terror’ discourse in the wake of 9/11 highlighted terrorism as a threat to ‘civilisation’, democracy, modernity and the Western world at large. This is evident in my action-thriller primary sources, whereby the Western (American, British, Russian) Self is opposed to a terrorist threat from a fanatical and arbitrary Other desiring to extinguish the ‘civilised world’. Jackson defines this as a ‘new terrorism’ discourse, which differs from the ‘old’ assumptions of an ideologically and politically motivated terrorism, and successfully argues against it. Citing The Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism and studies by Robert Pape, Marc Sageman and Stephen Holmes, Jackson indicates that “the assertion that the ‘new terrorism’ is primarily motivated by

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66 Jackson, “Knowledge” 70.
67 Raphael 58.
68 For the analysis of this rhetoric, see Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005) 54; 67; 78.
69 Jackson, “Knowledge” 71-72.
religious concerns is largely unsupported by the evidence” and that “a number of major empirical studies have thrown doubt on the broader assertion of a direct causal link between religion and terrorism and, specifically, the link between Islam and terrorism.”70 Similarly to the dominant discourses Jackson seeks to subvert and as I explain in detail in chapter three, my primary sources endorse the view of terrorism as ‘new’, apolitical, and an expression of the Other’s inherent backwardness, madness, fanaticism and illogical desire for vengeance against ‘civilisation’.

In an exploration of terrorist motives, Martha Crenshaw criticises such representations:

The wide range of terrorist activity cannot be dismissed as “irrational” and thus pathological, unreasonable, or inexplicable. The resort to terrorism need not be an aberration. It may be a reasonable and calculated response to circumstances. To say that the reasoning that leads to the choice of terrorism may be logical is not an argument about moral justifiability. It does suggest, however, that the belief that terrorism is expedient is one means by which moral inhibitions are overcome.71

In chapter four, I demonstrate how Yasmina Khadra illustrates in his novels the varying and irreligious reasons which prompt his characters to engage in terrorism: from The Sirens’ narrator’s personal trauma and injured honour to Sihem Jaafari’s inability to overlook the daily plight of her people (Palestinians) while she enjoys a comfortable life in Tel Aviv, these characters refute the notion that ‘new terrorism’ is motivated by Islam and the hatred it allegedly promotes.

In the US predominantly but also in Britain, France and Russia, dominant state discourses on the ‘war on terror’ relied specifically on the definition of terrorism as ‘new’, fanatical and arbitrary. They helped justify ‘pre-emptive’ counterterrorist actions (such as the invasion of Afghanistan by coalition forces or Russia’s continued aggression in Chechnya) and framed these within the context of a legitimate response to

70 Jackson, “Knowledge” 76.
attacks. As in my action-thriller primary sources, such justifications help distinguish a heroic, innocent and wronged Self from a terrorist Other. These discourses also carry neo-imperialist connotations of protecting ‘civilisation’ from fanatical madmen and trying to extend the ‘gift’ of democracy to more backward (Arab and/or Muslim) countries. Examining ‘just war’ discourse construction, Colin Flint and Ghazi-Walid Falah note:

Reference to a moral mission becomes one of the tools by which the hegemonic power can justify its extra-territorial mission in a world of sovereign states. The hegemonic power’s moral claims are simultaneously universal and addressed at the scale of the individual. By speaking for ‘all’, the hegemonic power attains a global reach while appearing to avoid the language of inter-state politics.\(^72\)

In a speech made on 11 September 2001, George W. Bush described the attacks as acts of “evil, the very worst of human nature” and America as “the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world.”\(^73\) The former President thus praised his country’s innocence and superiority and upheld these as the reason for such barbaric attacks. His rhetoric invokes an image of the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘just war’ against the backward and jealous Other aiming to destroy all the ‘good’ of the Western world. Such rhetoric serves as an example of “[t]he US hegemonic project […] [as] imposing a tyranny of justice,”\(^74\) in the context of which “the notion that responding to terrorism requires force and counter-violence, and sometimes even war and torture, has come to assume a form of widely accepted ‘knowledge’.”\(^75\) Such ‘knowledge’ justifies the US-led ‘crusade’ on terrorism as a proportionate response to the threat the latter poses to the nation’s security and well-being. As I explained in the context section above, other countries supported and endorsed this vision. For example, in a telephone conversation with Bush in the wake of 9/11, Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed sympathy with and support for the American struggle with terrorism: “[W]e well understand your grief and pain

\(^73\) Qtd. in Jackson, Writing 67; 54.
\(^74\) Flint and Falah 1395.
\(^75\) Jackson, “Knowledge” 74.
The exposure to terrorism and the ‘just’ struggle against it thus transcend borders by means of the two countries’ shared experience of ‘Islamic’ terrorism. Similarly, this view of the Self waging a ‘just war’ against terrorism features prominently in the action-thrillers I analyse.

The myths and realities of terrorism combine in these discourses and are perpetuated in ‘expert’ opinions and political rhetoric, as well as in my primary sources. As I have demonstrated, scholars of terrorism criticise the field’s inundation with “a cabal of virulent myths and half-truths whose reach extends even to the most learned and experienced.” It is also often characterised as the avenue where alleged experts “sell a toxic brew of cultural stereotypes and pop psychology packaged in pseudo-academic jargon.” Thus, Orientalism-inspired stereotypes are perpetuated in a cycle of political speeches, the news media and popular culture. All these areas are participants in and contributors to hegemonic discourses on and the system of ‘knowledge’ about terrorism.

c. Media Representations of Terrorism

In an overview of studies of representations of Arabs and/or Islam in the media, Edward Said’s Covering Islam is perhaps one of the key works which set the trend. In this work, Said predominantly voices his scepticism about fair media depictions: “It ought to go without saying that the media are profit-seeking corporations and therefore […] have an interest in promoting some images of reality rather than others. They do so within a political context made active and effective by an unconscious ideology, which the media disseminate without serious reservations or opposition.” The author thus

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76 Qtd. in Margot Light, “Russia and the War on Terrorism,” Understanding Global Terror, ed. Christopher Ankersen (Cambridge: Polity, 2007) 95.
77 Andrew Silke qtd. in Jackson, “Knowledge” 77.
78 Muhammad Idrees Ahmad qtd. in Ranstorp 30.
79 Edward W. Said, Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World (London: Vintage, 1997) 49; emphasis in the original. For a similar approach to British print media’s coverage of Islam as the Other, see: Elizabeth Poole, Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002). A more recent study focusing on the post-9/11 and post-7/7
emphasises the media’s political and ideological subjectivity. While Said focuses on politics, other researchers such as Thomas Roach underline the news media corporations’ commerciality. Examining the links between news discourse and power, Roach emphasises: “Essentially, the currency of public deliberation in the United States is news, and news is first and foremost a commodity subject to the forces of a market.”

In a foreword to the same volume, George Gerbner makes a similar criticism of large news companies’ capitalist ideological drive and the resulting perpetuation of stereotypes:

Big mainstream media are trapped in the same global system of finance, marketing images for sale to the highest bidders at the least cost, perpetuating rather than challenging conventional stereotypes, and thereby imposing an effective screen between us and a realistic understanding of new forces being unleashed as the old order disintegrates. Images of conflict, violence, and terror, presented without historical perspective and balance, evoke irrational fears and fuel fires of vengeance and repression, further exacerbating the invisible crises upon us.

Gerbner primarily points these criticisms at giant US media companies resulting from decades of mergers. According to data, eight corporations control the largest share of American news production and dissemination: Disney, AOL-Time Warner, Viacom, News Corporation, NBC Universal, Google, Yahoo and Microsoft. Media conglomerates have ties to large businesses; NBC Universal, for example, is owned by an even bigger giant, General Electric – a company involved in energy, technology,

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London attacks representations of Muslims in British political discourse and media has also found that they are overwhelmingly stereotypical and Orientalist: Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11* (Cambridge, MT: Harvard UP, 2011).


transportation, health and finance spheres. The overlap of interests between the media and business sectors is labelled “interlocking directorates” by FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, the American national media watchdog). Said’s, Roach’s and Gerbner’s concerns about media objectivity being limited by political or business interests are thus not unfounded.

In such a way, the media may regulate their content in accordance with their business interests or dominant discourses. Robert McChesney argues in favour of such a critical view in an article on the global media:

The global commercial-media system is radical in that it will respect no tradition or custom, on balance, if it stands in the way of profits. But ultimately it is politically conservative, because the media giants are significant beneficiaries of the current social structure around the world, and any upheaval in property or social relations – particularly to the extent that it reduces the power of business – is not in their interest.

In the specific example of the United States, the media wield significant influence over the public’s perception of events and social groups, as is amply illustrated by research and public opinion surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C. This think tank conducts regular studies of American public attitudes towards the media and politics. It also regularly investigates the performance of the press and its impact in the context of international and domestic events. Statistics show that potential or actual terrorist threats dominate other topics in news coverage reporting, becoming more important than other issues such as the economic crisis of 2007-2010 or natural and urban violence.

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84 “Interlocking Directorates,” FAIR: Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, 2010, FAIR, 17 November 2010 <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=2870>. This article also presents the list of media giants and companies in which they are directly involved; the latter include such global corporations as Boeing, Ford, IBM, Sun Microsystems, Texaco, Shell Oil, Unilever Pfizer, New York Stock Exchange, Continental Airlines and United Airlines to name but a few.

environmental disasters as the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in spring-summer 2010.\textsuperscript{86} Another 2010 study shows that nearly half of American respondents (44\%) believed that the media present the terrorist threat truthfully and with no bias, while 28\% considered the terrorist threat exaggerated by the news media and 17\% thought that newsmakers underplay the danger of terrorism to the US.\textsuperscript{87} These results underscore the influence which the media bear on representations of terrorism and the power of the discourses they broadcast.

A detailed and meticulously documented analysis of media portrayals of Arabs and Muslims, Said’s \textit{Covering Islam} focuses on the media coverage of the Iran hostage crisis of 1979-81 and allows one to infer that post-9/11 rhetoric is built on earlier representations. Said’s observations of biased news reporting are valuable to my study because they trace a pattern of representing the Other outside Orientalist literature – in broadcast and print media – thus marking it as an inherently interdisciplinary discourse. I frequently observe such representations of an essentialised hostile opposite in my primary sources. Drawing on his documentation of news media representation, Said argues:

It is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, and apprehended either as oil suppliers or as potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Islamic world. What we have instead is a limited series of crude, essentialized caricatures of


the Islamic world presented in such a way as, among other things, to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.\(^{88}\)

Instead of providing contextual insight, these media (similarly to much of terrorism studies output criticised above) paint a stereotypical, dehumanised and alienating portrait of Arabs and/or Muslims. Both these and the body of ‘expertise’ on terrorism contribute to short-sighted representations of the Other (and, by extension, of the positive Self) and reaffirm dominant discourses. Roach elaborates on their negative impact, arguing that “the dependence of journalists on elite news sources [a small community of experts] and the tendency of those sources to represent a narrow view of foreign policy restrict news coverage and subject it to manipulation by nonjournalists.”\(^{89}\) Said discusses the dangers such ‘experts’ pose and explains that the media “give consumers of news the sense that they have understood Islam without at the same time intimating to them that a great deal in this energetic coverage is based on far from objective material.”\(^{90}\) Expert opinion lends authority and veracity to news media representations, just as the action-thrillers’ protagonists’ masculinity and heroic qualities confirm the hero’s stereotypical view of terrorists as the truth. All these representations thus contribute to strengthening overlapping discourses on terrorism and form part of the system of stereotyping.

Said’s argument also highlights the subjectivity of some news media outlets in the US, which at the time of the Iranian crisis chose to report selectively, favouring American foreign policy rhetoric. The author exemplifies this at length and indicates that the media intentionally reported more negative aspects of Arab Muslim societies, such as “Islam’s ascendency and the medieval attributes of its punishments, jurisprudence, and conception of women.” At the same time, they failed to mention opinions of Israeli rabbis or Arab Christians in Lebanon who shared the same conservative ideas as Muslims.\(^{91}\) In a post-9/11 example, Brigitte Nacos reveals in her essay on terrorism news reporting:

\(^{89}\) T. Roach 29.
\(^{90}\) Said, *Covering Islam* li.
\(^{91}\) Said, *Covering Islam* 75.
There were signs of bias that were especially upsetting to Arab and Muslim Americans who felt, for example, that the scenes of Palestinians rejoicing over the news of the [9/11] attacks in New York and Washington were over-reported and too often replayed. In contrast to Palestinian celebrations, anti-American outbursts in Europe received little or no attention. For example, when fans of a Greek soccer team at the European Cup game in Athens jeered America during a minute of silence for the terrorism victims of September 11 and tried to burn an American flag, no television news programs and only a handful of American newspapers (publishing only a few lines in reports about the soccer game on the sports pages) mentioned the incident.92

This exaggerated focus on negative aspects of Arabs or Islam is therefore not exclusive to the early 1980s discussed by Said but is a wider trend reflecting the stereotyping of these communities in the Western media, as exemplified by the studies of the British media landscape by Poole as well as Morey and Yaqin cited above. Similarly to these news media representations, the predominant focus of my primary material (except Khadra) is on negative representations of the Arab and/or Muslim Other: as I detail in chapters three and four, the novels consistently reiterate the danger, disloyalty, backwardness and fanaticism of the Arab and/or Muslim terrorist-villain.

According to Evelyn Alsultany’s essay on post-9/11 television drama representations of Arab Muslim Americans as well as her more recent monograph on the topic, media rhetoric encouraging this group’s “racialization” (or “post-race racism”) helps desensitise the public to discrimination against them, their deportation from the US and unlawful imprisonment in a period following “an exceptional moment of crisis.”93 Alsultany also maintains that the occasional appearance of diverse and positive Arab and/or Muslim characters in these television shows does not signal an end of stereotyping but rather that these “have only become covert,” whereby screenwriters feel

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the need to prove a “good” Arab and/or Muslim character different from a terrorist (the internalised stereotype). Media discourse on terrorism and the Bush administration’s ‘war on terror’ augment constructions of Arabs and/or Muslims as the Other and justify violence against them utilising analogous discursive techniques. As Rubina Ramji argues, “Islam came to be seen as the embodiment of evil, tyranny and oppression, in comparison to the good, righteous and democratic United States.” The novels which I analyse distinguish the Self and the Other in similar terms. This central dichotomy is then used by the narratives to justify the hero’s often disproportionate violence against antagonists and characterise it as positive and necessary, thus employing and further solidifying dominant discourses already in circulation in the political, ideological and media spheres.

The cycle of stereotypical representation in these overlapping discourses strengthens through repetition and consistency. Supporting Said’s argument on the power of citational systems of knowledge, Paul Lester and Susan Ross suggest in their introduction to a volume on stereotypical images in the media that stereotypes become part of a society’s cultural memory through constant repetition:

> [B]oth textual and visual media messages that stereotype individuals by their concentrations, frequencies, and omissions become a part of our long-term memory. And when certain individuals or ethnicities appear only as criminals, entertainers, and sports heroes, we forget that the vast majority of people – regardless of their particular cultural heritage – have the same hopes and fears as the rest of us.

Confirming this view, Alsultany illustrates such deeply-ingrained stereotypes in action in post-9/11 television dramas. She finds that “even when seeking to resist hegemonic racist configurations of the monolithic Arab Muslim terrorist, [the dramas in question] participate in reworking U.S. sovereignty through narrating ambivalence about racism in

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the case of Arab and Muslim Americans.” Drawing on the work of Giorgio Agamben, Alsultany explains that “ambivalence [...] means regarding the same act as concurrently unjustifiable and necessary.” This implies that although racism is widely acknowledged as negative and undesirable, it is necessarily applied by these cultural products to Arabs and/or Muslims as an inevitable consequence of their Otherness.

A similar logic justifies such phenomena as the ‘war on terror’. A rhetoric popularised by the Bush administration, it justified and glorified the United States’ involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq as a noble mission and ‘crusade’ against terrorism. The justification of violence by the Self (the hero’s side) as necessary for survival and a proportionate response to terrorism is a key component of the constructions of the discourse on heroism and terrorism in the action-thrillers. Similar rhetoric is employed by political discourse, as Rosalind Morris explains in her article on the history of the ‘war on terror’: “The Bush administration’s repeated (if oftentimes retracted) reference to the present war as ‘a crusade’, called momentarily by the name of ‘Infinite Justice’, stages this war as a religious war, and even as a holy war. It justifies this rhetoric through reference to the principle of self-defense.” Labelling violence as an act of justice exempts the Self from being scrutinised under the same category as the Other and emphasises key characteristics which distinguish the Self – innocence, just cause and heroism. This polarisation constructs the Arab and/or Muslim Other as fanatical, sadistic, arbitrary and an enemy to ‘civilisation’. These neo-Orientalist state, media and cultural discourses facilitate the construction of the notion of a “just war.” The post-9/11 ‘war on terror’ is thus presented as the moral duty of the USA and its allies to defend the ‘modern world’ from the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. In brief, the discourses I delineated above and which dominate my primary sources perpetuate stereotypical dichotomies of the categories of the Self and the Other and limit the scope of their balanced representations.

97 Alsultany, “Plight” 207.
99 Flint and Falah 1380.
### d. The Entertainment Industry and Popular Fiction

Alongside the political and media discourses, the entertainment industry (mainly cinema and television) also plays a significant role in the cycle of stereotyping. Jack Shaheen made an immense contribution to the research of the entertainment media, documenting the representations of Arabs on US television and in Hollywood films for over three decades. In *Reel Bad Arabs* and *Guilty* he meticulously documents and analyses both pre- and post-9/11 stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims in the American film industry, spanning the period between 1896 and 2008. Shaheen rigorously exemplifies the recurrent negative images of Arabs: he reviews almost eleven hundred feature films for these two books. The results of Shaheen’s research are disheartening, as the overwhelming majority of the entertainment products in question consistently depict Arabs and/or Muslims as negative stereotypes. Shaheen concludes, “[A]lmost all Hollywood depictions of Arabs are bad ones.” This is consistent with his earlier findings that “billionaires, bombers and belly dancers […] are virtually the only TV images of Arabs viewers ever see,” and since “Hollywood films preserve traditional stereotypes and television shows follow Hollywood’s lead […] the TV Arab becomes a rerun of a rerun.”

As I have argued above, there is a continuous circulation of perceptions and ideas between dominant discourses of politics, the news media, the entertainment industry and popular fiction. This system of stereotyping, like the discourses of Orientalism set out by Said, is self-referential and citational, empowering and confirming the veracity of the rhetoric of an innocent Self and terrorist Other. Ramji emphasises these discursive ties:

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101 Shaheen, *Reel 11*; emphasis in the original.

102 Shaheen, *TV* 4-5.
Not only are perceptions assimilated from television news and the newspaper industry, but they are also strengthened through popular film. The commercial film industry creates cultural products that often reflect societal norms. Film scripts are frequently informed by the news, and the resulting movies can reinforce the images portrayed through news media outlets. In short, stereotypes can be recycled through different media.¹⁰³

These stereotypes are clearly reflected in my primary sources. Jack Shaheen adds that “[a]nti-Arab and anti-Muslim stereotypes help support the views of those who believe that Arab Muslims are a violent people [and] as a result, the mythology […] persists.”¹⁰⁴ The myth resulting from repetition becomes ingrained in the cultural memory. It completes the cycle of stereotyping, whereby “certain meanings […] become naturalized by repetition.”¹⁰⁵ The flow of information between the television and film industries on the one hand and their audience on the other is not one-sided but draws on mutual political and cultural concepts.

The September 2001 events do not mark the beginning of negative stereotyping of Arabs and/or Muslims in popular culture but rather a resurgence of such representations, inundating public discourse at new levels. These ethnic and religious groups have long been the villains of choice, as Jack Shaheen amply illustrates: starting as early as 1903 (The Unfaithful Odalisque), films have portrayed Arabs as lustful and sadistic Others.¹⁰⁶ These American cinema and television stereotypes are especially powerful due to their wide dissemination. As Ella Shohat argues in her article on imperialist representations, “dominant cinema not only inherited and disseminated colonial discourse, but also created a system of domination through monopolistic control of film distribution and exhibition in much of Asia, Africa and the Americas.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Ramji 68.
¹⁰⁴ Shaheen, Guilty 10.
¹⁰⁵ McAlister 8.
¹⁰⁶ Shaheen, Reel 512.
American cinema and television are important carriers of stereotypes whose influence spreads around the globe through export.

Popular fiction, of which my primary action-thriller novels are part, is intimately related to the entertainment industry and functions along similar lines. As noted above, Gelder suggests that it is an industry – “popular fiction is not just a matter of texts in themselves, but of an entire apparatus of production, distribution (including promotion and advertising) and consumption.” Genre fiction, thus, functions similarly to film or television: it is created for mass consumption and designed to meet a certain audience demand. Like cinema and television, popular fiction capitalises on stereotypes already present in social and political discourses and provides yet another avenue for their reproduction. As my primary sources show, this rhetoric is rarely contested within the narratives and thus contributes to the circulation and reinforcement of these images.

Despite the existence of many rigorous studies on the stereotyping of Arabs and/or Muslims in the news and entertainment media (the most important of which I cited above), there has been significantly less focus on their equivalent in popular fiction, especially in action-thrillers. After extensive research, I found one recent and similar study, albeit focusing on slightly different aspects of representation. In Post-9/11 Espionage Fiction in the US and Pakistan: Spies and “Terrorists,” Cara Cilano examines a body of fiction by English-language authors of Pakistani origin: Mohsin Hamid, Nadeem Aslam, Kamila Shamsie and H. M. Naqvi. She compares their representations of terrorists to the characters of the spy and his proxies in the works of such US authors as David Ignatius, Alex Berenson, Colin MacKinnon, Michael Gruber, Ben Coes and Dalton Fury. Cilano finds that the terrorist character in the Pakistani writers’ works puts established discourse into question and is presented as “a new way of seeing, a new way of reading, a new way of knowing.” Whereas this is partly true of Yasmina Khadra’s representations in my study, my remaining primary sources

108 Gelder 2.
110 Cilano 3.
instead depict terrorist characters as stereotypical and antithetical Others. My study thus offers an analysis of a body of works previously unexamined from this angle.

The action-thrillers I study utilise historical fact and personalities to enhance the narratives’ verisimilitude and discursive power, which is not an uncommon trait of the thriller genre. As I elaborate in chapter two, authors often contextualise and ground their works in specific descriptions of places, technologies and historical events. These novels’ fictional rhetoric draws on actual media and political discourses. Kathleen Christinson underlines the importance of this technique:

> Novels and films allow their audiences to probe an issue with a depth that television news shows and most newspapers do not provide, and without seeming to provide news or news analysis that the audience probably does not want. Novels in particular flesh-out and crystallize the media’s general impressions by giving them substance. The impact of novels is greater both because they are geared to the widest possible audience and because they are dramatic presentations – they tell stories that hold one’s interest.¹¹¹

Through their portrayals of strong masculine heroes representing the Western Self and antithetical terrorists standing for the Arab and/or Muslim Other, these action-thrillers perpetuate and reinforce dominant discourses. As I will illustrate, their use of historical fact and allusions to actual political debate are among the methods which increase stereotypically-rendered characters’ veracity and contribute to the circulation of these representations.

In the post-9/11 decade of the ‘war on terror’, such cultural imagery is especially powerful in justifying and perpetuating neo-imperialist anti-terrorist policies and practices. As a result, in Begona Aretxaga’s words, such widespread and pervasive discourses “often serve the purpose of diverting social tension [so that] [n]ot only are deeply entrenched inequalities within the U.S. obscured by patriotism, but the surge of

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nationalist passion has elevated the popularity of an administration whose legitimacy before September 11 was doubtful.”

Action-thriller fiction thus contributes to the system of stereotyping of terrorism. Aretxaga elaborates on the power which popular culture wields over these representations: “[T]he discursive and military construction of Terrorism with a capital T, [is] a political figure that was in the making for some time, but which has finally made its world debut after September 11; it is an absolutized enemy with a phantasmic character, rapidly becoming, in the midst of the anthrax scare, mystery and thrill, something like the figure of the ‘Joker’ in the film ‘Batman’.” Modern preconceptions about terrorism could not exist without the continuous exchange of stereotypical images circulating between the discourses I have discussed, and my primary sources are indicative of popular fiction’s influential role in this cycle.

4. An Overview of Methodology and Chapters

Having presented my primary sources, the criteria for their selection and the secondary material informing my research, I would now like to briefly clarify my approach. I study the primary sources using the method of close textual analysis, within which I employ two frameworks: conceptual and narrative. The conceptual framework relies on the secondary sources I reviewed above as well as the discussion of archetypal masculinity which follows in chapter two. The Saidian understanding of the Self and Other dichotomy is central to the comprehension of how these novels’ characters are defined and inspires the way this study is structured; I compare the construction of the heroic Self to that of the terrorist Other in the action-thrillers and apply the same method to the analysis of Updike and Khadra. The definition of Arab and/or Muslim terrorism as essentially ‘new’ and irrational, which Jackson critiques, is an important antagonist’s

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113 Aretxaga 145.
trait in all primary sources except Khadra: the notion of depoliticised insanity features prominently in these novels’ characterisations. Two other elements of my conceptual framework are the ‘just war’ rhetoric and authoritative (‘expert’) opinions on terrorism. Both of these are manifest in the analysis: the justification of the Self’s violence is a running theme, and the hero is framed as the definitive specialist on terrorism and its perpetrators. The hero’s authoritiveness as a character is largely defined by his strong masculinity. The concept of hegemonic masculinity drawn from masculinities studies and the work of R. W. Connell in particular, which I combine with the notions of the archetypal image and heroism in order to arrive at archetypal heroic masculinity, constitutes the final element of this conceptual framework. Archetypal heroic (or warrior) masculinity establishes the traits which define the action-thriller hero and his terrorist diametrical opposite: honour, courage, individualism and loyalty among others.

The second framework informing my close textual analysis is narrative. Within this context, I look at narrative techniques which the authors employ to enhance characterisation and veracity. I pay particular attention to narrative voice, point of view, referentiality (such as the text invoking dominant political discourses) and strategies of character and verisimilitude framing. All these elements are integral to the close reading of the primary texts, which in turn is fundamentally necessary for the analysis of the purchase of archetypal masculinity and Self and Other stereotypes continuously reproduced by popular fiction.

The textual analysis of the primary sources is divided into three core chapters, each focusing on different characters or novel types. Chapter two begins with a theoretical discussion of gendering and hegemonic masculinity as defined primarily within masculinities studies. I link the concept of hegemonic masculinity to its heroic manifestations of militarism and stoicism, which in turn leads to the association between masculinity and war. I discuss action-thriller fiction as a platform for writing idealised heroic masculinity. Honour, justified violence, nationalism and patriotism are all shown to be heroic characteristics. I then review the notions of the Jungian archetype and
archetypal images, arguing that the action-thriller hero is an embodiment of archetypal warrior masculinity, while the archetypal terrorist is his binary opposite. I also link the notion of individualism and the American dream to the construction of the archetypal hero and discuss the enhancement of the veracity of the action-thriller hero through his anchoring in historical fact as well as other strategies of framing. The chapter then discusses the textual illustration of the archetypal hero model and his various traits in the primary action-thriller works of Vince Flynn, Daniel Silva, Nelson DeMille, Frederick Forsyth and Danil Koretsky. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of these novels’ female characters and their stereotypical representation, as well as a summary of the various framing strategies exemplified in the analysis (such as the abovementioned historical contextualisation, non-archetypal traits strengthening the stereotype, first-person narration, antagonists’ recognition of heroic qualities and female characterisation confirming the hero’s masculinity).

In chapter three, I analyse the action-thrillers’ representation of the dichotomy of the Self and Other as well as their depictions of terrorist characters within the same archetypal masculinity framework. Similarly to the framing strategies above, narrative mechanisms alienating fictional terrorists are at work in these action-thriller novels. Through the positive hero characters, these works construct a positive Self, which is essentially opposed to the Other. In the second major section of the chapter, I demonstrate how terrorists’ negative traits (such as their Other ethnic and religious identity, backwardness, ahistoricity, hatred of modernity, sadistic and violent religion, arbitrariness and treachery among others) contribute to their construction as archetypal villains. I also examine their interactions with female characters, which are overwhelmingly construed as negative.

The primary objective of chapter four is to determine whether John Updike’s and Yasmina Khadra’s more literary portrayals of terrorist characters and their foregrounding as protagonists render these characters in a less stereotypical light. This chapter analyses each of the three novels in detail, thus prescribing its division into three
main sections. Within these sections, the subsections are divided by major character traits, similarly to the previous two chapters. My analysis illustrates Updike’s representation of Islam as a violent and hateful religion and Ahmad Mulloy as its ardent follower. Ahmad is systematically alienated and troubled by the absence of a father. Masculinity themes elaborated in the previous chapters play a key role for Updike’s and Khadra’s characters. Ahmad’s religiosity exclusively drives him to terrorism, and the Western Self and the Arab and/or Muslim Other are equally juxtaposed in Updike’s novel as in the action-thrillers. The second section studies primarily Khadra’s narrator in *The Sirens* in what I argue is a more humanised and contextualised rendering of a terrorist character. I detail the protagonist’s extensive back story and illustrate Khadra’s inversion of the notions of the Self and the Other. The author repeatedly demonstrates the relativity of these concepts as well as the concept of terrorism, which he shows to be motivated by a complex network of drives. In *The Attack*, a posthumous investigation of Sihem Jaafari’s suicide bombing also exposes the unequivocal nature of terrorism. Similarly to *The Sirens*, the Self and Other dichotomy is destabilised. Khadra shows that Sihem’s terrorism is the result of her multiple political and social grievances rather than irrational religious hatred. The motifs of masculinity, loyalty and honour also appear in this novel in the character of Amin Jaafari. Ultimately, the author demonstrates that terrorism is not a stereotypical category easily explained by religious hatred but a heterogeneous act often resulting from personal, political or social trauma.

In the conclusion, I sum up my findings and reiterate my argument in light of the textual analysis of the action-thriller novels by Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Forsyth and Koretskiy, as well as in the mainstream literary works of Updike and Khadra.
Chapter Two: Masculinity and Action-Thriller Archetypal Heroes

Following the overview of primary sources and secondary concepts, this chapter establishes the framework within which the primary texts are analysed: the novels illustrate the contrast between the terrorist (Other) and the hero (Self) through their masculinity or lack thereof. The primary sources emphasise the virility and the idealistic (or hegemonic) masculine qualities of the hero, while the terrorist is presented as the protagonist’s diametrical opposite. I first discuss masculinity studies’ development of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, the idealised attributes of heroic masculinity and the archetypal approach to its nurturing. I then synthesise these notions into a theoretical model of heroic masculinity and apply it to the textual analysis of the hero in the works of Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Forsyth and Koretskiy. Among the traits I include in this model of archetypal heroic masculinity and elaborate throughout this chapter are honour, courage, intelligence, self-reliance, anti-institutionalism and righteous violence.

Masculinity as a socially-constructed gendered behaviour came to the attention of scholars following the development of feminist theory and gender studies. While feminism’s primary focus is the state of women in particular, gender studies question the immutability of the notion of gender generally and introduce the concept of the gendered/sexed body. The discipline proposes that gender is a social, political and ideological construct; it is not biology which defines the distinctions between the masculine and the feminine but rather the gendered conditioning which the individual undergoes and chooses to practice throughout life.1 In the mid-1970s, inspired by and in response to the feminist movement, masculinity studies2 emerged to shift some of the

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1 Simone de Beauvoir, one of the most significant and widely-known first-wave feminists, opens the debate in The Second Sex (London: Vintage, 2010; first published in French in 1949); Michel Foucault’s three volumes of The History of Sexuality (London: Penguin, 2008 [1976]) especially influenced the development of gender studies and the theory of socialisation of gender; Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 1990) not only emphasises the social construction of gender but also introduces the idea of gender as performance.

2 Key theorists of masculinity studies include R. W. Connell, Michael S. Kimmel, Harry Brod, Jeff Hearn, and Judith Kegan Gardiner.
gender discussion’s focus to masculinity and to provide a more critical and nuanced study of its features and variability.³

In parallel, if not necessarily in conjunction with or in reaction to the academic study of masculinity, the mythopoetic men’s movement (inspired by Carl Gustav Jung’s psychoanalytic theories of the archetype) culminated in the early 1990s with the work of the poet Robert Bly.⁴ R. W. Connell, a leading masculinities scholar, aptly (if quite ironically) characterises this movement and the resulting pop-psychology as one that nostalgically looks back to “a pre-industrial past (a mythical one, in fact), when men knew how to be men, women knew how to be mothers, and there was no homosexuality or equal opportunity legislation to muddy the waters.”⁵ The very term ‘mythopoetic’ indicates a return to and a romanticisation of a fictionalised and idealised past. This movement spurred on the appearance of a wide array of popular self-help and personal growth books aimed at the restoration of masculinity to its former ‘glory’; they taught their audiences that ‘perfect’ masculinity can be achieved through the embodiment of mythological and fairy-tale archetypes.⁶ One of the contributions to mythopoetic psychology which is of particular interest to the argument of this chapter is the joint work of Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette.⁷ In their book, they offer an extremely romanticised vision of the ‘mature masculine’ psyche as the summit – the culmination – of the pyramid of four principal masculine archetypes, namely, the King, the Warrior, the Magician and the Lover. Although Moore and Gillette’s perception, as well as the ‘spirituality’ of the mythopoetic movement in general, is more sentimental and exaggerated than academically credible, these arguments inhabit the same

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representational world as popular thriller fiction with its virile heroes, and they are thus relevant to this analysis. In fact, it is Moore and Gillette’s archetype of the Warrior that is especially interesting in conjunction with the analysis of the protagonists and antagonists in my primary sources: the heroes represent the epitome of warrior masculinity.

Although there are no major studies which specifically analyse the target audience of action-thriller fiction, other research has shown the appeal of films and television shows of this genre to a predominantly masculine viewership. The results of several case studies aimed at discerning the demographics of film audiences have demonstrated that male viewers prefer films of the ‘masculine genre’: in a sample of undergraduate students at a large university in the American southeast, men expressed a preference for “presentations focusing on action, crime, and sex” and found it more “‘natural’ for them to prefer action-packed films over romantic ones simply because they were of the ‘masculine’ gender.” Another more recent study by Smita C. Banerjee et al. found that the action-thriller is a primarily masculine genre and that “male viewers [from the sample] reported a greater preference for high arousal films,” which is “consistent with prior research.” One of such previous studies is the survey of a gender- and racially-varied USA-wide sample of 560 respondents by Stuart Fischoff, Joe Antonio and Diane Lewis. They find that “a gender bias such that males would be partial to ‘men’s films’” focusing “more on action, sex (rather than romance) and competition” is consistent with their results, too.

Following this evidence and keeping in mind the genre similarities and the frequent crossovers between popular fiction, television and the film industry as discussed in the previous chapter, it is possible to extrapolate these research results to

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8 Mary Beth Oliver, Stephanie Lee Sargent and James B. Weaver, “The Impact of Sex and Gender Role Self-Perception on Affective Reactions to Different Types of Film,” *Sex Roles* 38.1-2 (1998): 47.
include action-thriller fiction. These novels contain narrative and linguistic elements perceived to be more stereotypically masculine: the language is more clipped and the sentences shorter; there is an abundance of military acronyms and vocabulary; weapons, vehicles and lethal gadgets are often described in meticulous detail; and the names/nicknames of many characters (especially the lead ones) are curt and masculine – Mitch Rapp, John Corey, Mike Martin. The books in Flynn’s Mitch Rapp series overflow with descriptions of categories of weapons, their names, specifications and military jargon, such as in the following example: “Coleman moved away from the rope, bringing his suppressed MP-10 up and sweeping the banks of the stream, his NVGs piercing the dark recesses of the area. Over his earpiece, he heard each of his men call out as they hit the ground, announcing they were clear.” These books address a ‘masculine’ individual whose interests may lend the knowledge of military speak and instil a keen fascination with weaponry and technology. The female reader is ‘masculinised’ by this type of fiction, and it may also socialise her into a certain vision of ideal masculinity through the portrayal of the ubiquitous action-thriller hero. Weaponry and the military have traditionally been chiefly male domains, and the texts studied here capitalise on this stereotypical view and seem to assume a masculine reader.

In the context of the discourse on the war on terrorism, military jargon and references as well as the eroticisation of weaponry and violence emerge as secondary themes to the ultra-masculinity of the hero; yet they play an equally important part in defining the novels as masculine. As indicated above, Vince Flynn’s novels provide some of the best examples of the implementation of militaristic vocabulary, as it is emphatically manifest in the following passage: “He [Rapp] lifted the lid and revealed his personal arsenal: a 5.56mm rifle with a suppressor, a spare .45, and a Glock 17 with a suppressor, all sitting in foam cutouts. The M-4 was made by Sabre Defense. It was a

Massad Ayoob special broken down into a lower and upper receiver.”

To a reader unfamiliar with weapons and their characteristics such a description may read as unintelligible. Importantly, such language may construct readers as those who are assumed to understand these shorthand references. Although language like this only constitutes a smaller part of the novels analysed here, it cannot be disregarded, as it is an unambiguous indication of the expected reading audience: a predominantly and stereotypically masculine reader.

As I elaborate in the sections to follow, such linguistic properties of the novels as well as the eroticisation of weaponry and violence are attributes of hegemonic masculinity and archetypal warrior models. These characteristics highlight the works’ masculine orientation, which manifests itself above all in the narrative’s focus on a strong, brave, honourable, independent and wilful male hero. His heroism is pseudo-military (as he fights a personal battle against the evils of the world), thus embodying a revered type of hegemonic masculinity, synonymous with honour, success and power.

Military tools serve as phallic extensions and symbols of such heroic power, and they play prominent roles in the action-thriller novels. Relationships between weaponry and heroic masculinity can be taken to the extreme, such as the unhealthy affinity which Danil Koretskiy’s hero, Alexandr Kudasov, feels towards his weapon of choice – the mobile strategic nuclear missile, with the potential launch of which the young officer is entrusted. Kudasov’s romantic and intimate view of the weapon personifies it as “a part of his own being, an element of his soul and the foundation of the thrilling sensation of his own superhuman might.”

The hero also holds imaginary conversations with the instrument of his work and attributes to it human feelings, such as joy and arrogance. There is also something to be said about the physical shape of the rocket – a phallic extension of the hero’s ego, the instrument of his self-aggrandisement and the means by which he elevates his own feelings of self-importance, linking it to hegemonic masculine

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13 Flynn, *Protect and Defend* 217; henceforth: *PAD*. For another noteworthy example, see *Memorial Day* 78; henceforth: *MD*.
15 Koretskiy, *AP*, vol. 2 152.
sexual drives. Although Kudasov is the most extreme example of the hero-weapon relationship, other heroes, such as Daniel Silva’s Gabriel Allon and Nelson DeMille’s John Corey, also maintain the hero-weapon correlation by refusing to be separated from their guns and by taking pride in using them (Fredrick Forsyth’s Mike Martin is forced to be stripped of weapons on his undercover quest to help him earn the terrorists’ trust). These linguistic attributes and narrative themes in the novels establish them as part of masculine popular fiction.

So long as the action-thriller genre addresses a predominantly male reader and seeks to construct a purely masculine hero, it is important to reflect on what makes up the idealised male figure at the genre’s centre. The embodiment of ideal masculinity is often linked with war, and it is one of the main themes of the action-thriller. Whether it is actual war on the ground in current hot spots around the world, covert international operations meant to sway the scales of power one way or another or tactical war between law enforcement, intelligence operatives and whatever form the enemy forces may take, the concept of ‘war’ is at the heart of the novels I analyse. As a masculine-oriented genre, the action-thriller provides its audience with characters who could act as models of ‘ideal’ masculinity and virility – a model to imitate if you are a man and to seek as a potential partner if you are a woman. The next section examines how ‘ideal’ hegemonic masculinity is constructed from a social, psychological and political perspective, while the subsequent part of the chapter applies this model to the action-thriller texts.

1. **Heroic Masculinity and War**

Parental input, education, peer milieu as well as the media have all been shown to be significant contributors to the construction and re-construction of masculinity from a young age into adulthood. As Connell argues in *The Men and the Boys*, “Masculinities and femininities are actively constructed, not simply received. Society, schools and peer milieu make boys an offer of a place in the gender order; but boys determine how they
take it up.” Individual agency is not unimportant in the construction of gender identity because the masculinising cues given by social and educational institutions can be accepted, negotiated or rejected in different ways by individual persons. Yet, while studies of personal constructions of masculinity focus predominantly on the sociological and psychological reception of institutional gender norms, my analysis benefits more from the understanding of the system of what Connell dubs “masculinizing practices.”

Such institutions as the family, education and – most importantly for this analysis – entertainment (which includes popular fiction) implement these practices by emphasising specific traits of desirable masculinity. Not only is a person of masculine gender in Euro-American societies dominantly expected to be heterosexual but also to display ‘masculine’ qualities of power, intelligence, honour and independence. As I explain in this section, such attributes are attached to the perception of hegemonic masculinity, the most prominent manifestation of which is the model of the hero.

With the advent of globalisation and the wide dissemination of Western media products and the Internet, the ideals of American and European dominant masculinities have also gained broader audiences. Alongside local and national perceptions of gender elsewhere, imported masculine images simultaneously complicate some local concepts and are reproduced in others; this occurs “as more and more forms of masculinity are brought into contact, and some of them interact.” Western forms of masculinity are exported through idealised cultural images, for example, Hollywood action film heroes or – as Connell interestingly suggests – the “Marlboro Man,” an embodiment of “frontier masculinity” representing the strong and independent man of the Wild West in an advertising campaign. While reiterating conventional masculine values, such cultural exports contribute to “an increasingly coordinated, increasingly visible global

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16 Connell, Men 162.
17 Connell, Men 155.
19 Connell, Men 185.
gender order,” and establish “European/American gender arrangements [as] hegemonic.”

The concept of hegemonic masculinity came into circulation in the early 1980s and was popularised by Connell. She defines the concept as “the culturally idealized form of masculine character (in a given historical setting), which may not be the usual form of masculinity at all” but is often represented by “quite specifically fantasy figures.” The action-thriller hero is one of such embodiments, combining in his character the key traits of hegemonic masculinity – power, courage, honour, assertiveness and independence. The “very public” nature of hegemonic masculinity (it is widespread, institutionalised and authoritative) presents individuals with an image to define oneself against or an unattainable ideal to aspire to – a model of dominant heterosexual success and power.

Alongside dominant ideas of masculinity, it is the familial, educational and peer environments that provide some of the most influential avenues for the negotiation of masculinities. Some of a child’s gendering occurs in the early years through parental interaction – one of the factors which may replicate and instil (whether deliberately or unintentionally) the dominant interpretations of manhood and womanhood. In a commentary on the upbringing of boys in American society, Michele Adams and Scott Coltrane explain how the dominant gender order can, in many cases, be perpetuated by the family: “[A]s gendered parents and grandparents, we expect and encourage boys to pursue our cultural ideals of masculinity. From early in their youth, we teach them (through, for instance, toys and sports) to symbolically correlate competition, violence,

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23 Connell, *Gender* 184.
24 Connell, *Gender* 185.
power, and domination with masculinity.”

Connell echoes this finding and reiterates the importance which the combination of school, family and mass media representations bear on the construction and replication of the gender order.

In addition to parental influence, other core gendering factors include education and peer pressure. A significant portion of a child’s life from around the age of five (sometimes even younger) is spent away from the home – in educational institutions such as nurseries, kindergartens and schools, where children enter the gendered structure of an institution or peer group. According to Connell, there are several ways in which educational institutions are gendered. First, “male staff predominate in higher education and in school administration,” while “women predominate in kindergarten and elementary teaching.” Second, the curricula and “knowledge conveyed to children is legitimated by patriarchal institutions, and some parts of it (technical education, for instance) virtually segregate youth on gender lines.” Third, “[m]ost educational authority is masculinized, and so are parts of the non-academic curriculum, such as competitive team sports.”

David Whitson makes a similar argument by suggesting that “in contending that our sense of who we are is firmly rooted in our experience of embodiment, it is integral to the reproduction of gender relations that boys are encouraged to experience their bodies, and therefore themselves, in forceful, space-occupying, even dominating ways.”

Sport provides the hierarchical framework within which strong embodiments of masculinity are encouraged and rewarded through tough competition and awards only for the top performers. This, in turn, confirms the dominant

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28 Connell, Men 28.
gender order and links masculinity as a concept with bodily strength and superiority. This is one of the ways whereby boys and young men are surrounded by cues and practices forcing them to negotiate their own gender identity vis-à-vis the tenets of hegemonic masculinity.

Peer groups which form in schools and in organised sports are also crucial masculinity negotiation sites. Although scholars of masculinities are not unanimous on whether it is educational institutions, peer relationships, family or the mass media that bear more influence in gender construction, there is a general consensus that the combined effect of any of these is crucial to the establishment of gender. In the case of peer cultures, scholars agree that “they have a fundamental influence on the construction of masculine identities” via the “constant pressures on individuals to perform and behave to the expected group norms.” Interestingly, such group norms are often inspired by the mass media which relay hegemonic masculine ideals through television programs, films and the Internet. “Peer culture is now closely linked with mass communication,” Connell argues, “Mass culture generates images and interpretations of masculinity which flow chaotically into school life and are reworked by the pupils through everyday conversation, ethnic tensions in the playground, sexual adventures and so on.” The contemporary peer group, then, relies on multiple sources to define gender; it is a complex negotiation of values brought forth by the family, the school hierarchy and curricula and the cultural cues acquired through the exposure to mass communications. The latter often promote a culturally idealised model of masculinity – hegemonic masculinity – popularised by celebrity sportsmanship or heroic male specimen on television, in film and literature.

30 Connell, for instance, suggests that education may not be the predominant factor in the formation of masculinities – rather, she deems family (for the children) to be more important (Men 146); Kimmel, on the other hand, maintains that education plays an equal – if not a more important – role in the gendering of children to family and entertainment (Society 153; 156); Jon Swain argues that – for boys – school “plays a relatively more prominent role in the construction of identity” (“Masculinities in Education” 213).
32 Connell, Men 161-162.
Hegemonic masculinity is characterised by heroism, strength of body and spirit, courage, honour and (positive) violence among others. Despite its glorification in dominant Euro-American cultures, this model of masculinity is not the most common in real life. Instead, it is a rarely attainable fantasy. Moreover, heroism as a concept is increasingly linked to domination in violent exploits, such as military campaigns or law enforcement operations. These provide an avenue for heroic displays and the proving of one’s physical, moral and psychological superiority over others. Paul Highgate and John Hopton discuss the behavioural implications of hegemonic masculinity in their work on militarism and masculinities, concluding that the former “is characterized by the interrelationship of stoicism, phallocentricity, and the domination of weaker individuals, competitiveness, and heroic achievement. […] By publicly demonstrating that he has at least the potential to conform to this model of masculinity, a boy or man may have his masculinity affirmed.”

Not all men agree with the standards of hegemonic masculinity, but the cultural exaltation of it, as well as peer and institutional hierarchy, puts more pressure on individuals to demonstrate their conformity with at least some of the hegemonic values.

The romanticisation and sexualisation of war and military institutions are closely related to the cult of heroism as the arenas where it can be realised. Popular culture is rife with representations of heroes and soldiers (think, for instance, of Bruce Willis’ character in the Die Hard film series or fantastical figures like Iron Man or Superman in comic books and on the screen), and they are the perfect embodiments of hegemonic masculinity. Violence and its narratives are eroticised, and “strength and valour on the battlefield [are linked] with masculine sexual virility.”

Highgate and Hopton also note a reciprocal and erotic relationship between hegemonic masculinity and militarism: “[M]ilitarism feeds into ideologies of masculinity through the eroticization of stoicism,

risk-taking, and even lethal violence […] [in fact, it] is the major means by which the values and beliefs associated with ideologies of hegemonic masculinity are eroticized and institutionalized.“\(^{35}\) The definitions of this idealised model of masculinity thus simultaneously inspire and draw on military successes, thereby imbuing each other with greater ideological power.

War and warriors have been customarily revered as honourable embodiments of masculinity. Studying the relationship between the concept of war and masculinity, Leo Braudy – in concordance with the above views on militarism and masculinity – observes that “[d]efining masculinity itself […] must interweave with defining masculinity in relation to a multitude of factors, including the context of war, which for so much of human history and in the vast majority of human cultures has been the prime place to define oneself as a man.”\(^{36}\) Wars are fought to conquer, liberate, protect or prevent, and a masculine man is culturally expected to be capable of violent and often self-sacrificial actions in the name of his nation, region or community. War is an important context in the novels I analyse in this chapter: the ‘war on terrorism’ is an essential and distinctly post-9/11 backdrop to the action-thrillers of Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Forsyth and – in a lesser measure – Koretskiy.

It is not only that the idea of war as an act is important for imagining the masculine warrior; the concepts of dominance and honour attached to war are also intrinsic to idealised masculinity. On a general level, war involves the prospect of victory and the proving of physical, economic, political or moral supremacy for one of the sides, therefore affirming the masculinity of the victor and the unmasculinity of the defeated. On the individual level, in every war there is an opportunity for a few select men to distinguish themselves through exceptional bravery, intelligence and success on the battlefield in order to be celebrated as heroes. Within the framework of hegemonic masculinity, heroism is a man’s prerogative. Yet, very few men have the opportunity for

\(^{35}\) Highgate and Hopton 434; 436.

such heroic displays in their day-to-day realities, especially if their professional lives do not revolve around institutions customarily associated with heroism, such as law enforcement or the military. In an in-depth study of a small but varied sample of American men, Douglas Holt and Craig Thompson find that the entertainment industry provides ordinary men with vicarious experiences of idealised heroic masculinity through popular culture (television, film, books) “man-of-action” protagonists. The action-thriller falls squarely into the category of such masculine dreamscape avenues, which further solidifies it as a predominantly masculine-oriented genre of popular literature: the heroes of Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Forsyth and Koretskiy embody the ultimate male fantasy of the self and provide highly desirable (or, rather, what is socially expected to be desirable) models of masculinity.

Upholding and defending one’s honour are central to the construction of the ideal masculine personality, especially in times of war or political and social instability. Honour is the ruler by which the masculinity of a man is measured: if he is honourable, then he is also – in the collective imagination, though not necessarily in reality – courageous, morally upright and reliable. Action-thriller heroes such as Flynn’s Mitch Rapp or Koretskiy’s Max Kardanov perpetually find themselves in a state of conflict whereby they bravely avert nuclear disaster (Rapp saves the seat of the American government in MD, while Alexandr Kudasov prevents worldwide nuclear war in AP) or rescue a woman from a harrowing fate (Gabriel Allon delivers Sarah Bancroft in The Messenger and Elizabeth Halton in The Secret Servant from terrible treatment at the hands of terrorists). All of these heroes do what is honourable despite the riskiness of their ventures; at the same time, the enemy is emasculated by his general lack of honour – one of the gravest sins against hegemonic masculinity.

Honour is thus defined through difference from and in opposition to the individuals and groups who possess none: the hero and his allies – the Self – are honourable (American, British and occasionally European or Israeli by nationality in

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Flynn’s, Silva’s, Forsyth’s and DeMille’s work; Russian in Koretskiy’s writings). On the other hand, the antagonists – the enemy Other – are stripped of positive and masculine traits (radical Muslim fanatics of predominantly Middle Eastern backgrounds). In these fictional embodiments of hegemonic masculinity, honour is not relative but absolute: the character can only be completely honourable or dishonourable. Moreover, an ideal masculine personality is defined in opposition to the enemy Other’s unmasculinity; as I demonstrate in chapter three, such contrasting characteristics include: brave vs. cowardly, just vs. arbitrary, intelligent vs. insane or civilised vs. backward. In a war, however, both the Self and the Other are alike simply by virtue of their employment of violence, so to a neutral observer both sides are similarly motivated and guilty of indiscriminate violence. The distinguishing and subjective characteristic of this violence, though, is the motivation for such cruelty: from the point of view of the Self and in the discourse of the positive and ideal masculine, aggressive behaviour is rationalised as honourable and justified. The Other, negative and undesirable masculine of the enemy, on the other hand, is arbitrary and unjustified. The start of Gabriel Allon’s career described in Daniel Silva’s The Secret Servant is an apt example of the contrast between justified and unjustified violence: the historically accurate attack of a Palestinian group on Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympic Games is juxtaposed with the hero’s fictional revenge on these terrorists as his first assignment.\textsuperscript{38} The violence of the Other is vilified while the Self is exalted and honoured. Braudy offers a useful comment on the opposition and the double standards of honour of the Self and the Other:

There’s a tremendous legalism in male honor behavior, turning on fine points, at odds with the definitions of other groups, almost as if honor itself and its definition were a prime mode of differentiating our values, the values of truth and nature, from their values – the distortions of ignorance. In whatever warped or inappropriate way, all violence can thus justify itself as being connected to some issue of male honor, just as every issue of honor is rooted in some question of individual and social identity.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{38} Silva, The Secret Servant 24. Henceforth: TSS.
\textsuperscript{39} Braudy 53; emphasis in the original.
The absolutist nature of the definition of honour in the context of war and violence emphasises the difference between the Self and the Other. Such conflict creates the perfect foundation for the development of idealised warrior masculinity such as that of the action-thriller hero. The existence of the hero necessitates an antagonist, whose presence strengthens and sharpens the heroic masculine character. Such coexistence encourages binary oppositions; the line between the Self and the Other is anything but porous.

Women’s honour, their femininity and bodies are all traditionally viewed as directly correlated with masculine honour and the patriarchal nation-state. Indeed, in many cultures, women are seen as symbols of their husbands’, sons’, fathers’ or brothers’ honour: a woman’s divergence from the moral and social ‘norms’ results in the ‘shame’ and dishonour of the men related to her. The question of gendered honour is inextricably tied to nationalism and militarism, as women come to embody not only the personal honour of the man but also the honour of the nation as a whole. In an essay on gender and nation, Joane Nagel maintains: “Women’s sexuality often turns out to be a matter of prime national interest for at least two reasons. First, women as mothers are exalted icons of nationalism. [...] Second, women’s sexuality is of concern to nationalists because women as wives and daughters are bearers of masculine honor.”

Indeed, since the nation – the *motherland* – is often regarded as feminine and therefore in need of protection by her men, individual women in the society are perceived as the nation personified. Nagel’s earlier work on masculinity and nationalism builds on Cynthia Enloe’s work to argue that “women are relegated to minor, often symbolic, roles in nationalist movements and conflicts, either as icons of nationhood, to be elevated and defended, or as the booty or spoils of war, to be denigrated and disgraced.” Nagel adds that “[i]n either case, the real actors are men who are defending their freedom, their honour, their homeland and their women.”

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41 Nagel, “Masculinity” 244.
nation, women are relegated to traditional roles, such as reproduction and nurturing. Such nurturing rather than active female roles is present in my primary sources: the action-thriller hero often has a wife or romantic interest who is usually kept in the background of violent action. For example, Flynn’s Mitch Rapp has girlfriend and later wife Anna Rielley, while Silva’s Gabriel Allon has lover Chiara Zolli, a fellow intelligence operative who, despite her apparent equal training and skills, does not join him on his dangerous missions. Rielley, similarly to Koretskiy’s Alexandr Kudasov’s and Max Kardonov’s wives, does not take part in the action either but is rather associated with the domestic sphere. She stays at home (the house and the country are both symbols of it) while Rapp travels the world in search of terrorists. These female characters are not active agents; instead, they are recipients of actions initiated by the hero or other masculine characters, as I will discuss further below.

As a bearer of masculine honour, the female body must not be violated during a conflict if masculine honour is to remain intact. Due to the sexualisation of war, violence inflicted on the nation is equated to metaphorical sexual assault on or rape of the feminine land; likewise, the actual rape of the nation’s women by the enemy is a confirmation of the latter’s masculinity and an emasculation of the vanquished men. The result in both cases of the violation of the feminine is the detraction from masculine honour. In the novels, the masculine honour of the hero is confirmed time and time again via his defence of his nation against terrorist violators. The hero also finds himself saving female characters from actual rape: in Protect and Defend, Rapp rescues his kidnapped CIA boss Irene Kennedy from suffering a gang rape by the terrorists in the nick of time. Flynn’s hero thus safeguards his honour through preserving Kennedy’s and reaffirms his masculinity. The very title of this novel is symbolic; it alludes to ‘protecting and defending’ the honour and security of both the feminine nation and the

43 Kaufman and Williams 39; Nagel, “Masculinity” 257-258.
feminine individual. Joshua Goldstein’s argument effectively sums up the premise of gendering and sexualising of nation and violence: “The nation is often gendered female, and the state male. Women in some sense embody the nation. […] Rape of ‘our’ women sometimes becomes a dominant metaphor of the danger to the nation from enemy males.”

Another way of masculinising war is the metaphorical use of sexual and penetrative terms to describe military equipment and campaigns. Nagel indicates that one “sexualized aspect of militarized conflict is the use of the masculine imagery of rape, penetration, and sexual conquest to depict military weaponry and offensives.” An especially apt example of this is the earlier discussed erotic relationship which Alexandr Kudasov has with the nuclear missile in AP. The missile itself is phallic in shape, and so it serves as a metaphoric extension of Kudasov’s male sexual organ: it is the instrument which gives him the power to penetrate another’s land across great distances. The weapon imbues the hero with the ability to violate the femininity of the Other and to diminish the Other’s masculine honour. In this scenario, masculine honour exists through its linkage to national, feminine and military honour.

Like the question of honour and as I have briefly noted above, violence is also usually divided into absolute categories in the novels. It can be ‘good’ – justified – or ‘bad’ – unjustified – depending on who is inflicting it. On the one hand, there is the malicious terrorist Other capable of unspeakable cruelty and indiscriminate violence against innocents, committed for profit or out of warped beliefs but seldom motivated rationally or politically. A good example is the vicious attack on the Vatican and an attempt on the Pope’s life (from which Israeli super-spy Gabriel Allon is able to protect him) in The Messenger. In the aftermath of a triple-suicide bombing and multiple-missile shooting during a pilgrim event in St. Peter’s square, Allon tells the Pope that although they haven’t managed to assassinate him, the terrorists are probably satisfied with the results because of their love of destruction:

44 Goldstein 369.
45 Nagel, “Nation” 406.
Once they [terrorists] set their sights on a target, they usually don’t stop until they succeed. But in this case, they managed to kill seven hundred pilgrims and several cardinals and bishops – not to mention the commandant of the Swiss Guard. They also managed to inflict severe physical damage to the Basilica itself. In my opinion, they will regard their historical account as settled.46

On the other hand, the hero protects his nation and its allies from harm by inflicting similar violence in the name of a greater cause. The hero’s violence is thus characterised as positive due to his noble goals and honourable intentions of safeguarding the feminine. On the very first page of Flynn’s *Pursuit of Honor*, Mitch Rapp is authorised by his superiors to employ any means necessary for the apprehension and punishment of the terrorists who staged an attack: “Just six days earlier a series of explosions had torn through Washington, D.C., killing 185 and wounding hundreds. Three of the terrorists were still at large, and Rapp had been ordered, unofficially, to find them by any means necessary.”47 In this case, the violence inflicted by the protagonist is justified as honourable and necessary. Such violence is desirable, as it enhances the model of hegemonic masculinity instead of diminishing it (as in the case of arbitrary and dishonourable violence of the enemy). In other words, “[i]n terms of masculinity, the invocation of personal honor – with its links to family, tribe, and nation – gives eternal justification to an act of immediate violence,”48 and this is demonstrated at length in the textual analysis part of the thesis.

In sum, hegemonic masculinity, honour and the nation are all interrelated concepts. Honour as a major trait of hegemonic masculinity needs to be associated with a higher purpose, such as positive violence and the nation. Discussing nationalism, Nagel explains:

Contemporary nationalist politics remains a major venue for “accomplishing” masculinity for several reasons. First, […] the national state is essentially a masculine institution. […] Second, the culture of nationalism is constructed to emphasize and resonate with

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48 Braudy 49.
masculine cultural themes. Terms such as honor, patriotism, cowardice, bravery, and duty are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculine because they seem so thoroughly tied both to the nation and to manhood.\textsuperscript{49}

Although women are becoming increasingly more visible in governments, they remain largely outnumbered in governing institutions around the globe.\textsuperscript{50} Men (and sometimes women) tend to construct and govern nations according to notions perceived as masculine values, thus reinforcing the link between nationalism and masculinity. As discussed above, the hegemonic masculine ideal is frequently that of a warrior operating within the framework of a nation’s military or law enforcement. This closes the representational circle which interlocks the concepts of militarism, nationalism, honour and hegemonic masculinity.

Patriotic feelings are usually heightened in times of conflict or threat to the nation, and the male warrior/soldier/super-agent becomes the defender of national honour at all costs. Frederick Forsyth’s hero in \textit{The Afghan}, Mike Martin, is a retired SAS colonel who is deep undercover in an al-Qaeda cell. The hero destroys the vessel which is meant to sink a cruise ship carrying the participants of a G8 conference and sacrifices his own life in the process. Martin protects the world’s political leaders aboard the other ship, thus choosing honour and his country’s interests over self-preservation.\textsuperscript{51} In this instance, under the pressure of a military or a terrorist threat, the obligations of the hero’s personal honour evolve into their ultimate form – national honour. Braudy observes the supremacy of national honour: “Honor is […] the willingness to behave openly, immediately, and decisively on the basis of a moral belief that is felt internally as part of a general code. […] Honor […] always involves a policing of boundaries: personal, familial, national. At the level of the nation it seems to stop.”\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{49} Nagel 402.
\textsuperscript{50} According to a December 2011 worldwide statistics by the United Nations Statistics Division, only 13.7\% of countries have 30\% or more of women in parliament (the biggest presence of women being in Rwanda, at 56\%), while around over a quarter (25.9\%) of the world has less than 10\% or no women at all in their parliaments.
\textsuperscript{51} Forsyth 450-452. \textit{The Afghan} is henceforth TA.
\textsuperscript{52} Braudy 52.
Alongside the hero’s personal sense of honour, national honour in particular becomes the ultimate legitimation of violence against the Other, often through a conflation of national and sexual honour. The hero’s violence is presented as an inevitable response to the enemy’s viciousness. In these novels, terrorist attacks such as (or similar to) the 9/11 attacks in the USA provide the justification for retaliation. The Self’s vengeance is just and justified, therefore not diminishing one’s personal masculine honour by the use of aggression but rather boosting it. The claim to honourable violence necessitates the existence of a (real or perceived) threat, while arbitrary and unprovoked actions discredit honour and masculinity. For, as Braudy infers from his analysis of war and masculinity, “the implicit analogy between man and state, individual and national honor, seems more fragile than ever before […] except when facing a threat from the outside.” Thus, the discussion of nationalism, as well as honour, is an essential context for the discussion of the hero as the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity in the action-thriller novels.

This section outlined the theory of hegemonic masculinity, the concepts related to it and its broad influence. Idealised heroic masculinity is not necessarily enacted in everyday life; it rather is a hegemonic model disseminated through Western cultural images and practices. It idealises the notions of war, heroism, just violence and honour; it also provides a useful system for the analysis of the protagonists and antagonists in the novels of Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Forsyth and Koretskiy.

2. Archetypes and Masculinity

The prominent Swedish psychologist and Freud’s contemporary, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), is the originator of the concept of the archetype. Although much
critiqued for his not altogether ‘scientific’ methods, theology and a rather romantic attachment to mythology, Jung contributed valuable insights not only to the psychological sciences but also to literary studies and critical theory. One of Jung’s most famous theories proposed that the human psyche has not one but two levels of unconscious (personal and collective), and that the collective unconscious is “the reservoir of human experience both actual and potential.”

For Jung, the collective unconscious is not just another layer of the psyche but a “deeper layer […] which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn.” The images that populate this deeper layer are archetypes – subpersonalities, or patterns of behaviour, which are based on collective human experiences and symbolism and are, in Jung’s and the classical Jungians’ opinion, intrinsic to a person’s psyche from birth. There is not one but countless archetypes, but Jung himself identifies several that he considers principal universal archetypes: the Self, the Shadow, Animus (masculine subpersonality within the feminine psyche), Anima (feminine subpersonality within the masculine psyche) and the Persona. According to Jung, the archetypes are essential to a person’s relationship with the outside world. In her overview of Jung’s contributions, Sherry Salman explains that

> [a]rchetypes are both biologically based patterns of behavior and the symbolic images of these patterns. As transpersonal structures, they are transcendental “essences” or quintessential distillates of imagination and meaning. […] The archetypes circumscribe how we relate to the world: they manifest as instincts and emotions, as the primordial images and symbols in dreams and mythology, and in patterns of behavior and experience.

Although archetypes reside in the unconscious, they can be activated into the conscious level and become more relevant to current reality through their association with an individual’s personal experience: “[t]he archetype proper is a skeleton which

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57 Salman 63.
requires personal experience to flesh it out.”58 Since archetypes are part of the collective unconscious (a shared human repository), it is legitimate to propose that having undergone similar personal experiences (such as being members of the same society or being readers of the same literature) some people may share analogous interpretations of the archetypes they encounter. These interpretations become shared images, which, in turn, can grow into shared stereotypes. For instance, readers of action-thriller fiction – who encounter similar archetypal images of the villains on a regular basis – may be more likely to transfer their fictional perceptions onto their real-life experiences and interactions. I demonstrate in the next chapter that Muslim and/or Arab characters in the novels are associated with negative characteristics, such as backwardness, fanaticism and a penchant for unjustified and indiscriminate violence. These traits, ascribed repeatedly to similar characters, reinforce the stereotypes already present in dominant political discourses or on the screen, such as those Jack Shaheen studies in Hollywood films. Concurrently, the protagonists are brave, decisive and masculine, embodying the heroic ideal of hegemonic masculinity. The contrast between the hero and the terrorist makes the negative stereotypical representation more vivid and believable. I argue that the characters of the hero and the terrorist-villain are archetypal in the sense that they are stable images which establish themselves through repetition and are actualised into stereotypes through encounters and interactions with the stereotypical system of representation of terrorism which I described in the first chapter. In the context of my discussion, post-Jungian developments on the original theory, such as James Hillman’s (discussed below), are especially relevant to the analysis of my primary sources. Yet, it is necessary to first outline Jung’s original contribution further in order to understand the ways in which it evolved.

In the Jungian notion of the archetype, the image is central to the psyche: it is “the world in which experience unfolds. Image constitutes experience. Image is

58 Salman 64.
psyche.” However, Jung makes a distinction between the archetype and the archetypal image. For him, they are not the same – the archetype itself is the potential of an image in the collective unconscious, but the archetypal image is what is experientially realised in the conscious mind. Therefore, personal experience relatable to a particular archetype is essential to bringing it into the conscious mind. It is only then that the archetypal image has the potential to impact an individual’s attitudes and interactions with the external world. As archetypes reside in the collective unconscious and archetypal images are in a person’s consciousness, the concept of the archetypal image is more relevant to this analysis than the more general archetype. The archetypal image, then, has the potential to evolve into and interact with social and cultural stereotypes.

Jung’s work inspired several new directions in modern analytical psychology, the three most prominent and well-defined of which are known as the Classical School, the Developmental School, and the Archetypal School. The latter is a post-Jungian psychological approach whose principal theorist was James Hillman; it proposes an understanding of the archetype different from that of Jung’s. According to Hillman, archetypes are “axiomatic, self-evident images.” Hillman moves beyond the term ‘archetype’ altogether and proposes using the qualifier ‘archetypal’ for the metaphoric (fantasy) images in which the psyche operates instead. In this instance, the image is a key element which acquires the quality of an archetype through a process of archetypal psychologising – “examining our ideas […] in terms of archetypes.” Hillman’s view advocates that “any image may be considered archetypal.” It is therefore the job of the individual’s psyche (rather than the collective unconscious) to assign a typically

61 This classification is proposed by Andrew Samuels in Jung and the Post-Jungians (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985) 12.
62 For Hillman’s principal work on archetypal psychology, see Re-Visioning Psychology.
64 Hillman 127.
65 Qtd. in Adams 109.
occurring image the status of archetypal. This logic is of particular value to my argument because it allows for a broader definition of the archetype and thus enables the categorisation of the protagonists and antagonists in the novels I examine as archetypal: specifically, the archetypal hero and the archetypal terrorist characters. According to the theory of archetypal analytical psychologists, fictional (fantasy) images can be ‘archetypalised’ by the reader’s psyche. Archetypal characters in the novels may evolve into stable categories by which one judges the standards of heroic masculinity, unmasculinity and otherness of the antagonists in literature as well as cultural discourses and social interactions. To further clarify Hillman’s approach and how it relates to my discussion, I turn to Michael Adams’ essay on the Archetypal School:

For archetypal psychologists, any and every image, even the most apparently banal, can be considered archetypal. […] [They] believe that the archetypal, or the typical, is in the eye of the imaginer – or the imagination’s eye. In a sense, the archetypal is in the eye of the beholder – the subject who beholds an image – but it is also, in another sense, in the eye of the imagination, a transcendent dimension that archetypal psychologists regard as ultimately irreducible to any faculty immanent in the subject.  

Consequently, it is possible for the reader of the novels to ‘archetypalise’ the action-thriller hero as an ideal of masculinity and the antagonist as the archetypal terrorist or villain. These models reside primarily in the readers’ imagination, in the space between one’s consciousness and the text. Yet, when correlated with other characters and personalities from the entertainment media or political discourses, fictional archetypal images may become increasingly credible and – overlaid on other similar images – create a potent stereotypical lens through which the world is perceived.

Another direction in popular psychology that relies on Jung’s archetype and is strongly influenced by the mythopoetic men’s movement is neo-Jungian psychoanalysis, such as that of Robert Moore. Connell describes this group as “a school of pop psychologists who offer a highly simplified view of the problems of men. Their central idea is that modern men are suffering from a psychological wound, being cut off from

66 Adams 110.
the true or deep masculinity that is their heritage." Moore – along with co-author Douglas Gillette – developed a theory of mature (deep) masculinity, which proposes that in order for the masculine psyche to achieve wholeness and balance, it must consolidate four principal masculine archetypes. Moore calls them the King, the Warrior, the Magician and the Lover. Moore and Gillette’s book is more a spiritual self-help manual than a formal academic treatise, similar in spirit to the aforementioned works of Steve Biddulph, Michael Meade and Sam Keen; yet popular psychology inhabits the same representational world as popular fiction, and it heavily relies on myth, fictionalisation and romanticisation of masculinity. I find the schematic explanation of one of Moore’s and Gillette’s archetypes – the archetype of the Warrior – particularly interesting and relevant in relation to the discussion of heroic and antiheroic archetypal images (see fig.1).

![Diagram of the Warrior in His Fullness](http://tinyurl.com/6nokh5t)

Fig. 1. The Warrior in His Fullness, Robert Moore, “The Human Self,” Dr. Robert Moore, PhD, Home page, 2012, 17 February 2012 <http://tinyurl.com/6nokh5t>.

As the schematic representation above demonstrates, Moore’s archetype of the warrior – one-fourth of the mature masculine personality – is achieved through the synthesis of the active and passive negative characteristics of the Sadist and the Masochist. It seems that, according to Moore, in order to reach a balanced (‘perfect’) version of this archetype, a

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67 Connell, Men 5.
man has to find the point of equilibrium between two undesirable extremes. This process is a notion Moore borrows directly from Jung – the process of individuation. Explaining this aspect of Jung’s theory, Salman notes that individuation (psychic synthesis) is the only way to a mentally healthy individual: “Psychological health is a process of continuous psychic integration, always preceded by stages of dissociation.”

Moore uses this valid Jungian notion to corroborate his own romantic theory of masculinity. From his perspective, a wholesome warrior must overcome his excessive impulses to inflict or experience pain in order to achieve the peak of his personality. The warrior who has achieved the ideal balance renounces self-serving violence and only inflicts it for a noble goal. Moore elaborates on the honourable nature of the mature Warrior: “The mythic images of the Warrior […] represent both the capacity for aggression and the ability to serve a cause.” Thus, the perfect warrior is one who possesses such heroic characteristics as honour and just cause, which is reflected in the archetypal heroes of the action-thriller.

This archetype of the warrior, therefore, links back to what Braudy describes as idealised and militarised masculinity. It is a prerequisite for a man’s warrior alter-ego to be strong and honourable and to be able to inflict pain, but only in a measured and justified way. As discussed earlier, the sentiment of national(ist) honour is also central to the rationalisation of violence committed by the fighter. For, if there is no ‘good’ or ‘just’ reason for the aggression apart from the personal satisfaction it brings, the balanced warrior archetype degenerates into its unhealthy, sadist extreme. In the action-thriller genre, the hero – the mature and balanced warrior personality – often has to confront exactly this type of warped warrior – the sadistic super-villain who has no regard for innocent human life and will stop at nothing to destroy what the hero holds dear. Therefore, the hero’s ultimate justification for any and all measures of violence

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68 Salman 73.
against the antagonist(s) is the defence of the people and places he is affiliated with or the revenge for their destruction.

The plots and characters of these action-thriller novels provide the assumed masculine reader with the possibility of vicariously experiencing hegemonic masculinity without necessarily adopting it. In their article on the everyday consumption of man-of-action heroic models and their success with consumers, Douglas Holt and Craig Thompson indicate that the “American mass culture idealizes the man-of-action-hero – an idealized model of manhood that resolves the inherent weaknesses in two other prominent models (the [nurturing] breadwinner and the [institution-defying] rebel).”

As discussed in the introduction, this holds true across other societies, especially those considered in this thesis – Russian, French and British – through the global dissemination of American cultural and media products and, as a result, their models of hegemonic masculinity. What is true for the American entertainment industry is equally true for popular fiction: there is a clear affinity between the themes and characters of Hollywood action films, television series and fiction of the same genre due to the circulation and adaptation of analogous motifs across these spheres. Not only is the man-of-action hero or, more simply put, the heroic archetypal image an embodiment of idealised hegemonic masculinity, but it is designed to appeal to audiences well beyond the USA, where it is most consistently and strongly produced.

Holt and Thompson further suggest that some men consume bulk products of mass culture containing “man-of-action” characters as a vicarious experience or compensation for the lack of heroism in their social environments:

[T]he gap between this atavistic ideal masculinity and the modern breadwinner role produces an identity crisis that men have tried to resolve through consumption. In other words, men whose work lives are structured by conditions of hierarchy and organizational

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70 Holt and Thompson 425. Their work does not examine a wide sample of the American population but rather discusses more focused, interview-based case studies of a core group of fifteen class-, education- and age-diverse men. It is nevertheless insightful in terms of the consistent findings regarding attitudes towards “man-of-action heroes” and their impact on the surveyed men’s everyday lives.
dependence now compensate for their resulting masculine anxieties and unfulfilled yearnings through consumption and leisure.\(^\text{71}\)

Without these archetypal points of reference – heroic models that abound on television, in film and in books – it is hard to conceive of the figure of the warrior. In this respect, the models of masculinity popularised by mass culture have pervaded the collective imagination and become important to the construction of some masculine identities. I have argued that heroic masculinity must define itself through difference from the Other, and popular culture obliges by supplying an endless reel of antagonists, who are increasingly acquiring darker skin, beards, bombs in their hands and strapped to their torsos and the word ‘Allah’ on their lips, similar to those documented by Jack Shaheen in *Reel Bad Arabs* and *Guilty*. The idealised masculine of the Self is thus essentially opposed to the sadistic, self-serving and fanatical Other – the terrorist.

The synthesis of opposing aspects of personality is at the core of both psychological and social understandings of the archetypal hero. Just as psychic individuation is to Moore the only road to the mature warrior archetype, the integration of the breadwinner and the rebel models of masculinity is the embodiment of the heroic man-of-action according to Holt and Thompson: “the most potent masculine model in American culture is neither the breadwinner nor the rebel, but their synthesis, embodied in the narrative of the man-of-action hero.”\(^\text{72}\) The qualities that such a hero must possess are also combinations of opposites:

- He must be adventurous, exciting, potent, and untamed, while also contributing to the greater social good. He must be perpetually youthful, dynamic, and iconoclastic, while at the same time fulfill duties of a mature patriarch. He must continually defy the social status quo, while he enjoys a considerable degree of status and respect. He must be an unreconstructed risk taker, be dangerous, and yet be utterly indispensable to the integrity and functioning of the social order.\(^\text{73}\)

Thus, no matter how independent, individualist, distinguished through bravery, honour and intelligence, a hero ultimately needs to serve a higher cause – his people and his

\(^{71}\) Holt and Thompson 426.

\(^{72}\) Holt and Thompson 436.

\(^{73}\) Holt and Thompson 429.
country – and to ensure their safety from adversaries. As I prove below, the means of achieving this goal may be unorthodox and, at times, unaccepted by society, but the end justifies them as well as redeems and elevates the status of the hero.

3. The Archetypal Hero in Practice

Having put forth my definition of the archetypal warrior and his antithetical Other through the synthesis of the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and archetypal images, I illustrate them below with the analysis of characters found in the range of action-thriller novels I study. It is important to note that whereas traditionally there is only one hero in a novel or a series of novels, terrorist characters tend to operate within groups or networks; due to that fact as well as the relegation of terrorists to secondary roles, much less time and narrative space is dedicated to the detailing of their characters. It highlights the general flatness of terrorist characters and their frequent dehumanisation, which will be explored in chapter three. This section focuses on the archetypal hero and analyses the ways in which these primary characters conform to or diverge from the model proposed above.

Archetypal heroes are not difficult to identify in the works of Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Forsyth and Koretskiy. The lead character, such as the very prominent Mitch Rapp, is often the protagonist of several books (frequently serialised) of one author. Opposite the protagonist, a multitude of antagonists is required for the development of the narrative. These characters are usually little more than literary devices utilised to propel the hero’s story. The villains are easily eliminated by the archetypal hero, and subsequent narratives introduce new terrorists for the hero to reckon with. The archetypal warrior’s heroism, intelligence, skill and superiority over the Other are

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74 To reiterate what I explained in the introduction, my American primary sources – the works of Vince Flynn, Daniel Silva and Nelson DeMille – are serialised. Frederick Forsyth’s novel is a standalone work; Danil Koretskiy’s novels Kod vozvrascheniya and Atomniy poezd are part of two different loosely-connected ‘cycles’ of works which detail different aspects of the same fictional universe. Mech’ Nemezidy is a standalone work.
confirmed by this effortless vanquishing. Delineating such distinguishing heroic characteristics in the works of Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Forsyth and Koretsky, I address these principal points in the following order: the background and history of the heroes (when they are given in a novel); the establishment of the masculinity of the heroes as well as their intelligence, courage and honour; the qualities of decisiveness, individualism and dissatisfaction with authority and bureaucratic institutions; patriotism and national pride; and the application of ‘justified’ violence. The chapter is concluded with an analysis of female characters in the novels and the strategies of framing the masculinity of the hero.

At the outset, a definition of ‘individualism’ as applied to this literary study is important. It is a personal behavioural tendency, mostly evidenced by self-reliance, independent thinking and ability to make one’s own decisions as well as the hero’s drive for action. In a specifically American setting, individualism has long been considered an integral quality for a person’s realisation of the ‘American dream’, the idea that anyone is capable of creating a successful future for him- or herself as long as they work hard enough. Coincidentally, some of the integral attributes of the archetypal hero figure – self-reliance and good decision-making skills among them – are also prerequisites for the fulfilment of the American dream. Commenting on perceptions of the ‘American Dream’, Wilber Caldwell explains, “Americans came to believe that hard work, self-denial, endurance, initiative, thrift, patience, industry, sobriety, moderation and self-discipline paved a road to a better life, and that this road was open to all Americans. At the end of it stood a new American hero, the self-made man.”75 This is not to say that the archetypal hero in the thriller novels discussed here is actively seeking to establish himself as a “self-made man” by means of his heroic actions. On the contrary, the main characters of these works have often already achieved it and are widely acknowledged as successful in their respective vocations. Many of the qualities listed by Caldwell, such as self-denial (and, indeed, self-sacrifice), endurance, initiative, industry and self-

discipline, are essential to their personalities. Furthermore, the prominent American transcendentalist and advocate of individualism Ralph Waldo Emerson cites another fundamental element of such self-made masculinity – self-reliance – which these archetypal heroes have aplenty.\[76\]

Archetypal thriller heroes such as Flynn’s Mitch Rapp, Silva’s Gabriel Allon, Forsyth’s Mike Martin, DeMille’s John Corey and Koretskiy’s Vitaliy Karpenko, Alexei Mal’tsev, Alexandr Kudasov and Max Kardanov are easily imagined as culminations of the individualist ideal. They each have their own interpretation of it, but many (Rapp, Corey, Mal’tsev) are individualist to the point of being anti-institutional and anti-authority. As previously mentioned, this corresponds well with Douglas and Holt’s definition of the man-of-action hero, whereby the character is aggravated by institutional practices and any other authority but his own. This fictional characteristic resonates with actual right-wing attitudes and phenomena in contemporary United States.\[77\]

In recent American history of the 1980s-2000s, some far right groups such as the Patriot movement, the Promise Keepers, Posse Comitatus and the militia movement among others demonstrated adherence to radical interpretations of masculinity and voiced a harsh critique of the American government.\[78\] The case of the militia movement is particularly interesting as it combines the ultra-masculine orientation and anti-government tendencies which the heroes of these novels also display. In an essay on right-wing militia phenomena and masculinity, Michael Kimmel and Abby Ferber argue

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\[76\] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Essays* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2005) 34-36.


that the emergence of such movements is the result of and response to “a crisis of masculinity” and a destabilisation of its values brought on by the empowerment of women.\textsuperscript{79} It is a male, white and Christian movement with “small numbers of women [...] involved with Internet discussions and websites, and less likely to be active in paramilitary training and other militia activities.”\textsuperscript{80} “Antistatism” is a core principle of the militia ideology, branding the state and its apparatuses as inherently corrupt, feminine and emasculating.\textsuperscript{81} Such extreme anti-government sentiments run in parallel to a great emphasis on individualism and the enactment of heroic masculinity. The militia movement idolised the “militarized manhood of the heroic John Rambo”\textsuperscript{82} and regarded itself as “a vigilante force and [...] heroes – defending God and country, kith and kin, hearth and home, family and faith.”\textsuperscript{83} Although the movement’s popularity declined towards the end of the 1990s, some of its beliefs found resurgence with other far-right movements, especially following the events of 9/11. Paleoconservatives, the Christian Right and the neo-Nazis are among such American political movements that criticised the actions and policies of the government and placed emphasis on an idealised masculinity.\textsuperscript{84} Far-right movements also stress patriotism despite the apparent paradox which their antistatism presents: they are patriots of the country and the people but not the politicians who govern it. The archetypal hero is thus consistent with such far-right ideologies, displaying exaggerated masculinity, vigilante mind-set and intense individualism verging on anti-government sentiments. Most of the heroes in the novels follow this pattern – some, like Mitch Rapp, take it to the extreme by frequently

\textsuperscript{79} Michael Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber, “‘White Men Are This Nation’: Right-Wing Militias and the Restoration of Rural American Masculinity,” \textit{Rural Sociology} 65.4 (2000): 585-586. See also Berlet and Lyons 293; 298; 328. More moderate right-wing organisations such as the Republican Party are similarly associated with masculinity as opposed to the Democrats who are perceived as feminine: Winter 587-588; 591; 597.
\textsuperscript{80} Kimmel and Ferber 588-590.
\textsuperscript{81} Kimmel and Ferber 593; 595; 597.
\textsuperscript{82} Kimmel and Ferber 601.
\textsuperscript{83} Berlet and Lyons 292.
\textsuperscript{84} Lyons 398-404; 406-411; 413-415.
verbalising their severe critique of state apparatuses while others (Max Kardanov, for instance) make more subtle comments about such disenchantment.

**a. An Introduction to the Heroes**

One of the most prominent representatives of the archetypal hero is Flynn’s Mitch Rapp. Although the present thesis spans the timeframe of the decade following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, it is worth mentioning that Rapp was first introduced to audiences in *Transfer of Power*, which precedes this period. By the time the events in this novel unfold, thirty-two-year-old Mitch Rapp had already become an established anti-terrorist operative of the CIA’s top secret group, the Orion Team, with a decade of hard-won experience under his belt.85 Therefore, Rapp’s narrative begins when he is already an expert in his field and one of the most successful agents of the clandestine CIA-governed organisation. The hero has by then realised his American dream by becoming exceedingly successful at his job and embodies all the features of the individualist hero.

Mitch Rapp and the other heroes’ profiles and backstories are integral to their presentations in these fictions. A prequel to the Rapp saga, *American Assassin*, recounts the story of the hero’s recruitment by CIA agent Irene Kennedy. On order from the agency’s director Stansfield, she invites Rapp to join the group assigned to fight terrorism following the 21 December 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103.86 As the following recap in *MD*, the fifth instalment in the Rapp series, effectively summarises, the loss of Rapp’s “high school sweetheart” in the Lockerbie tragedy was the biggest reason behind the hero’s quest for revenge against all terrorists:

The twenty-two-year-old Rapp had been Stansfield and Kennedy’s prized recruit. An international business major fluent in French, Rapp was an All-America Lacrosse star for the Syracuse Orangemen. During

86 Interestingly, Flynn and other authors like Forsyth, DeMille and Koretskiy all explicitly utilise historical events and references in order to anchor their narratives in contemporary reality. This is one of the strategies of framing which I summarise in the conclusion of the chapter.
his junior year thirty-five of his fellow classmates were killed while returning from a semester abroad. The Pan Am Lockerbie terrorist attack had changed Rapp’s life irrevocably. His high school sweetheart, the woman he planned on marrying some day, had been on the plane.

The pain from that tragedy had fueled Rapp’s motive for revenge, and over the next decade he was honed into the most effective counterterrorism operative in America’s arsenal.\(^87\)

Rapp’s loyalty to the memory of his girlfriend is part of his heroic personality; it is a testimony to his honour and the just cause of his retaliation. The “dark-featured, athletic, capable of violence” protagonist is noticed by Kennedy following his success as the college’s star lacrosse player and the tragedy which ignites his resentment towards terrorists.\(^88\) As discussed above, sport is another avenue for the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, and it is also, according to Sabo and Jansen, a vehicle for the realisation of the American dream and a stage for success and individualism.\(^89\) Rapp’s athletic accomplishments further confirm his masculinity and heroic status. It is fascinating that Flynn indicates in the same passage that Rapp and his fellow initiates in the Orion Team “all hovered near that critical six o’clock position on the mental health pie chart. That thin line that separated law enforcement officers from career criminals.”\(^90\)

Such a characterisation of their mental state indicates their ambivalence towards the law and the potential to break it in the name of the pursuit of terrorists. This is consistent with the principle of extreme self-reliance, whereby the hero creates his own rules and is not defined by law.

It is also possible to conclude from this passage that it is only by virtue of his hatred of terrorism and moral value of his cause that Mitch Rapp finds himself on the ‘right side’ of the struggle. His psychological make-up is not too different from a criminal’s – or a terrorist’s: Mitch Rapp, as further commentary demonstrates, is not averse to violence and is fully prepared to employ methods of extreme cruelty against

\(^{87}\) Flynn, MD 123.
\(^{88}\) Flynn, American Assassin 16; 142. Henceforth: AA.
\(^{89}\) Sabo and Jansen 181.
\(^{90}\) Flynn, AA 16.
terrorists. As an illustration, it is useful to consider one of the many instances where Rapp commits murder (always in the name of the greater good): in PAD the hero hunts an American traitor who had given terrorists access to high-standing officials in a bid to eliminate them. On this occasion, Rapp is unperturbed by the harm inflicted on another person, except for momentary physical reactions:

His heart was moving at a pretty good clip. Between his pounding heart and with the water in his ears it was difficult to hear anything. He hovered quietly, taking deeper and deeper breaths. His head was the only thing out of the water. His heart rate quickly recovered and he shook the water from his ears. He listened for any sign that Garret’s wife had woken up, but there was nothing. After another minute he gathered his swim bag from the anchor line and started for shore. With any luck, he’d be back in Washington by noon.

For Rapp, there is no room for remorse for what he sees as just treatment of a criminal and traitor, and he exhibits similar detachment in dealing with his other enemies.

Mitch Rapp is not a man of gentle or delicate appearance or character. At thirty-something years of age, the hero’s grey-flecked hair stands testament to the toll his job has taken on him. Rapp possesses an athletic and manly physique: he is tall, broad-shouldered and moves with grace. An Iranian minister who provides this description of Rapp also notes that the latter’s presence is truly awe-inspiring. As opposed to simply reading about Rapp in dossiers, Minister Ashani likens the actual meeting with the hero to “looking at a photo of a lion as opposed to standing only a few feet away from one of the Creator’s most efficient predators.” The enemy’s recognition of Rapp’s qualities and reputation strengthens his characterisation as a model of hegemonic masculinity and archetypal heroism. Such endorsement by the antagonist is another of the framing strategies by virtue of which the stereotype (archetypal image) is made more realistic. I elaborate on the implications of these strategies at the end of this chapter.

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93 Flynn, *PAD* 394.
To add to his impressive looks, Flynn’s hero also has “great instincts” and is always supremely confident in his assessment of political and security situations. A notable example is Rapp’s discussion with Irene Kennedy and the President of the United States concerning Israel’s involvement in an attack on an Iranian nuclear facility; Rapp is emphatically “One Hundred Percent” positive that this was the case, and when challenged further, he concedes, “All right… ninety-nine point nine, nine, nine [percent sure].” Rapp’s assessment proves to be true, by which his intelligence and analytical skills are emphasised.

Rapp is similarly self-assured in most situations, and he is unafraid of getting into confrontations with the highest-ranking people in the country – from the Attorney General and his deputy to the President himself. His ultra-confident behaviour is tolerated because Flynn’s hero is the only person who is shown to achieve positive and quick results. If an attack occurs, Rapp adheres to his motto “to bite back […] [and] to hunt down every single one of you [terrorists] fuckers that had anything to do with this.” His tendency towards drastic action is not something acquired in the process of working as an anti-terrorist operative for over a decade but is an intrinsic aspect of his character. The hero manifests the same tendencies through the series, but most notably in the prequel in which young Rapp is recruited. In AA, Rapp has no qualms about vocalising his future job description, unlike “some people in Washington” who are anxious to admit to supporting initiatives such as the Orion Team:

“You [Irene Kennedy] told me there are people in Washington who think that we need to take a more aggressive approach with these terrorists.”
“Yes.”
“But they don’t have the courage to say so publicly.”
“It would be foolish for them to do so. We live in a civilized society. They would be thrown out of office.”

94 Flynn, MD 303.
95 Flynn, PAD 113.
96 Flynn, MD 343.
97 Flynn, PAD 316.
“And a civilized society would never condone assassination, even in instances where it involved national security.”
“Not unless we were at war, and even then it would be tricky.”
Rapp digested that for a moment and then said, “I’m not into semantics. Private contractor, hired gun, operative...” he shook his head, “killer... The point of all of this is to go out, find the enemy, and put a bullet in his head. Right?”
“I suppose that is an accurate definition. I suppose the answer is yes.”
“So I’m an assassin.”

As Rapp disregards political correctness and others’ opinions of him, he is unafraid to call himself an assassin. On the contrary, Rapp enjoys his title of assassin as much as pursuing terrorists and inducing their awe of his heroic reputation. Indeed, Rapp treasures his unparalleled skills which permit him “to kill cleanly, and make it look like an accident” because they make him into “the rare, tested assassin” without whose assistance the United States would be obliterated. In such a way, Rapp positions himself as the protector and acquiescent patriarch of the (feminine) country/nation, but he is at the same time a rebel against the government as an institution; Flynn’s hero is a “man-of-action,” negotiating the breadwinner and rebel models to be established as the archetypal hero.

In Silva’s novels, Gabriel Allon is just as uncompromising in his methods and is similarly recruited in the wake of a famous tragedy. Rapp and Allon are of different nationalities, which have them serving different countries: Allon is an Israeli master spy whose main battlefield with terrorism is Europe. It is also in Europe that the hero carries out his first assignment. As a fresh-faced student of the arts at Jerusalem’s Bezalel Academy, Gabriel Allon is recruited by the secret service senior operative Ari Shamron.

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98 Flynn, AA 175.
99 Flynn, MD 472.
100 Flynn, PAD 6.
in 1972; his mission is to hunt down members of the Black September organisation responsible for the 1972 Munich Olympics attack on Israeli athletes:

Gabriel had been a promising young painter; Shamron was a brash operations man who had just been ordered by Prime Minister Golda Meir to hunt down and kill the members of Black September, perpetrators of the Munich Massacre. The operation was code-named Wrath of God, but in reality it was the Wrath of Gabriel. Of the twelve members of Black September killed by the Office, six were dispatched by Gabriel at close range with a .22 caliber Beretta.

Although Allon is more artistic than Rapp – his hobby is restoring art – he nonetheless expresses similar sentiments of rightful wrath and revenge to justify his initiation into the ruthless world of counter-terrorism. His artistic sensitivity is an attempt to distinguish Allon from the stereotype, but the hero’s choice to persevere in his highly violent job proves otherwise. Indeed, that sensitivity heightens by contrast his adherence to the archetypal masculine.

Having committed himself to life as an agent of the Special Operations division of Israel’s foreign intelligence service (or, as Silva terms it, the Office), Gabriel Allon has given up any pretence at a ‘normal’ life. Allon exists under a series of aliases and cannot settle anywhere or be truthful about his life with anyone outside the Office. For example, at the beginning of TSS, Allon returns to his flat in Israel after a prolonged absence and does not see any sign that anyone sought him out during that period: “Despite his long absence he didn’t bother to check the postbox. He never received mail, and the name on the box was false. As far as the bureaucracy of the State of Israel was concerned, Gabriel Allon did not exist. He lived only in the Office, and even there he

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102 Although there is no concrete evidence of its deliberateness, it is hard to ignore Silva’s striking selection of character names which invoke prominent historical figures. In the case of Ari Shamron, his name is conspicuously analogous to the late former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s. The traitor and false informant Mahmoud Arwish’s name (who appears very briefly in Prince of Fire and whose character I reference in chapter three) is reminiscent of the famed Palestinian poet and national icon Mahmoud Darwish’s. Alongside these barely-disguised names, I explain in the conclusion to this chapter how Silva and other authors use real historical figures (in Silva’s case, Yasir Arafat appearing further into the novel) as a strategy of framing their narratives’ and heroes’ authenticity. It is hard for a historically-informed critic not to notice these almost-anagrammatic character names, and although speculative, this verisimilitude-enhancing technique is interesting to note.

103 Silva, TSS 24.
was a part-time resident.” Despite his significant and constant contributions to the security of Israel and many other countries, this passage gives the distinct impression Gabriel Allon accepts his solitary and anonymous existence in the name of his job; it is a sacrifice a self-reliant lone hero is willing to make.

Although Allon’s physique is slightly less impressive than Rapp’s, he is no less talented at inflicting pain on his enemies. This hero is of a smaller stature – “five-eight, perhaps, a hundred and fifty pounds fully clothed” as opposed to Rapp’s six feet of height and broad shoulders. Yet, Allon’s power lies in his chameleon face and linguistic talent, which allow him to blend in anywhere:

The face came into focus – long, high at the forehead, narrow at the chin. The nose looked as though it had been carved from wood, the cheekbones were wide and prominent, and there was a hint of the Russian steppes in the green, restless eyes. The black hair was cropped short and very gray at the temples. It was a face of many possible national origins, and Gabriel had the linguistic gifts to put it to good use. Isherwood never quite knew who to expect when Gabriel walked through the door. He was no one, he lived nowhere. He was the eternal wandering Jew.

Allon’s friend and fellow Office operative Julian Isherwood’s assessment echoes the sense of wonder with which Ari Shamron thinks of his prized recruit’s talents in TM:

“He had always been mystified by Gabriel’s ability to imitate the brushstrokes of the Old Masters. To Shamron it was something of a parlor trick, just another of Gabriel’s gifts to be utilised, like his languages or his ability to get a Beretta off his hip and into firing position in the time it takes most men to clap their hands.” As such, Allon operates with artistic precision and superior skill while restoring famous paintings as well as when he transforms into multinational aliases and exacts his own brand of justice.

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104 Silva, TSS 20.
105 Silva, Prince of Fire 28. Henceforth: POF.
106 Silva, POF 28-29.
107 Silva, TM 11-12.
on his enemies. He is a superior marksman and receives constant praise on this talent which enables him to eliminate terrorists quickly and efficiently.108

The one major change to Gabriel Allon’s personality occurs at the time of his first mission and first kill: he transforms from an artistic young student into a grey-haired (therefore more authoritative even in appearance) instrument of vengeance. The following passage clarifies that fighting terrorists with their own methods does not leave the hero unaffected. On the contrary, violence hardens him for life, and he can never go back to the “boy angel” he had once been:

Now he looked into the mirror and saw himself as he had been that night, a boy angel in a leather jacket, an artist who had no comprehension of how the act he was about to commit would forever alter the course of his life. He had become someone else. He had remained someone else ever since. Shamron had neglected to tell him that would happen. He had taught him how to draw a gun and fire in one second, but he had done nothing to prepare him for what would happen afterward. Engaging the terrorist on his terms, on his battlefield, comes at a terrible price. It changes the men who do it, along with the society that dispatches them. It is the terrorist’s ultimate weapon. For Gabriel, the changes were visible as well. By the time he’d staggered into Paris for his next assignment, his temples were gray.109

Allon may regret being changed by his experience of engaging with terrorism at the same low moral level, but it is also to the hero’s advantage. This makes him the perfect candidate for being ruthless and efficient in his counter-terrorism activities. By presenting Allon’s struggle with his altered personality as a divergence from the stereotype, Silva paradoxically makes the hero more convincing to the reader as the archetypal hero. Introducing archetype-defying traits in the character is one more strategy of framing the narrative and enhancing its verisimilitude; it offsets the otherwise archetypal character and enhances his relatability.

Frederick Forsyth’s Mike Martin leads an isolated lifestyle as a retired British military officer in the serene English countryside by the time TA opens. At forty-four, he

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108 For examples, see Silva, TSS 407; TM 413.
109 Silva, POF 216-217.
is middle-aged, dark of hair and skin and masculine of figure; due to such appearance – similarly to Rapp and Allon – he is capable of successfully operating undercover in Middle Eastern settings. However, at the outset, it appears that Martin has had his fill of and has no desire to go back to active undercover duty.\textsuperscript{110} Martin knew that he wanted to serve in the Parachute Regiment of the British Army from the age of fifteen, when he fell in love with the idea of military service.\textsuperscript{111} When Martin was twenty, he experienced his first real action during the Falkland Islands conflict with Argentina in 1982.\textsuperscript{112} He continued his illustrious military career in the Special Air Service (SAS) and eventually chose his job over his marriage, deciding to return to service when invited rather than conceding to his wife’s requests otherwise.\textsuperscript{113} Martin’s loyalty to his duty supersedes his personal relationships; in a way, it is the romance with and protection of his (feminine) country which lure him away from family life. At the start of the novel, Martin is shown to be a self-reliant retired officer who mostly prefers solitude and manual labour: he is single-handedly restoring his converted barn just outside a village in Hampshire and is respected by the locals for his politeness and religious devotion despite his reclusiveness.\textsuperscript{114} The protagonist’s attachment to the pursuit of such traditionally masculine work as manual labour stresses his personification as a self-reliant masculine hero; he is the ideal man of the village.

Martin’s best asset for the covert mission he is offered is his ability to pass for an Arab. He is therefore invaluable to reconnaissance activities in the Middle East, and he used these skills before: Martin’s looks and knowledge of Arabic enabled him to live as a local and communicate critical intelligence from inside Saddam Hussein’s Iraq during the Gulf War.\textsuperscript{115} Personal attributes such as appearance, linguistic abilities, self-reliance and loyalty make Martin the perfect candidate for the mission of saving the world from

\textsuperscript{110} Forsyth 19.
\textsuperscript{111} Forsyth 94.
\textsuperscript{112} Forsyth 99.
\textsuperscript{113} Forsyth 142.
\textsuperscript{114} Forsyth 48-50.
\textsuperscript{115} Forsyth 135.
another al-Qaeda-conceived attack, similar in magnitude to 9/11. For this, Martin is approached by the British Secret Service (in coordination with the CIA) to penetrate the core of al-Qaeda by impersonating an Afghan Taliban commander named Izmat Khan, who is imprisoned in the Guantánamo Bay detention facility. By definition, Martin’s undercover task requires him to act strictly on his own without a support team, and he exhibits awe-inspiring courage and initiative to ensure the success of his mission, solidifying his status as the archetypal hero.

In Nelson DeMille’s John Corey series, the hero is not of a military background but a former law enforcement officer and current FBI employee: Corey is a retired New York Police Department (NYPD) homicide detective who at the time the novels take place is employed as an agent of the FBI’s Anti-Terrorist Task Force (ATTF). Unlike in the other works, the narration is entirely in first-person in Night Fall and predominantly so in Wild Fire. The projected perspective of the hero is thus more intimate and personal, with the reader allowed into his innermost thoughts. The employment of this narrative device results in a much less omniscient and more self-aware and satirical tone. It is a framing device specific to this author, which makes the hero seem more authentic and believable.

Although John Corey first appears in the novel Plum Island as an injured detective unofficially pulled into a murder investigation while recovering from his wounds, the first novel in which Corey actually joins the ATTF and battles terrorists is The Lion’s Game. It is there that John Corey meets his nemesis, Libyan terrorist Asad Khalil, and it is also when he meets his future wife, FBI and fellow ATTF agent Kate Mayfield. It is largely through the dynamic relationship with Mayfield – who, interestingly, is his superior in the ATTF – as well as his solitary investigative adventures that Corey manifests his ultra-masculine tendencies, or, as his wife brands it,

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116 DeMille, Night Fall 19-20; Wild Fire 5. Henceforth: NF and WF.
118 Note that The Lion’s Game is not included in this analysis due to it being written and published outside the post-9/11 decade, which is the timeframe this thesis spans.
“the male macho bullshit.”

John Corey likes to keep his “alpha male” status clearly broadcast to those surrounding him, and he is supremely confident in his intelligence, not being too modest to take credit for it. The hero’s personality is rough around the edges (“bad cop”); he absolutely loathes apologies, which implies that he is also unlikely to admit his mistakes. These protagonist’s traits place him perfectly within the tough and masculine archetypal model, and the introduction of his wife as a superior at work serves as another strategy of framing. It showcases and confirms Corey’s hegemonic masculinity, as it stands undaunted even under a woman’s leadership.

Koretskiy’s *Mech’ Nemezidy (The Sword of Nemesis)* is the novel of the author’s closest in style and characters to those of Silva’s and Flynn’s. This work features not just one but a whole group of heroes who make up the titular anti-terrorist black-ops group. The head of the Sword of Nemesis is the middle-aged and retired major-general Vitaliy Karpenko. The former national security officer’s special assignments took him around the world during his service: among other accomplishments, he facilitated key operations during the Soviet-Afghan War and headed the fictional Soviet anti-terrorist group ‘Zeta’. Like Rapp or Martin, Karpenko’s appearance exudes strength and masculinity, despite his age:

Karpenko was a genuine [intelligence operative] in all respects, and this was evident to those around him just as one may unmistakably determine the pure breed of a racing horse or a fighting dog.

He had just turned fifty; while most people of this age are called ‘aging’ or ‘old’, these descriptions certainly did not fit Karpenko. Not only did his heavy gaze radiate the authoritative confidence of a man accustomed to lead but it also demonstrated his sheer physical strength, which could only have been achieved by long years of training and constant action. His broken nose and scarred left eyebrow indicated that this man had been through the wringer. He was a man

119 DeMille, *WF* 274. I comment further on the Corey-Mayfield relationship later in the chapter when I address the interrelationships between female characters and heroes.
120 DeMille, *WF* 501.
121 DeMille, *NF* 478.
122 DeMille, *NF* 255; 226.

possessing a well-trained and heavy-set body, a proudly-raised angular chin and lithe and powerful movements.\textsuperscript{124}

Although Karpenko is by far the oldest of the heroes described in this chapter, he is nonetheless on a par with them in terms of masculine appearance and a long history of involvement in anti-terrorist operations. Indeed, it may be that Vitaliy Karpenko’s experience and self-confidence somewhat surpass Rapp’s, Allon’s or Martin’s: as Koretskiy remarks, Karpenko is a man who “carried the burden of power on [his] mighty shoulders [and was] accustomed to issuing orders and deciding the fates of many.” By virtue of these responsibilities, the retired foreign intelligence officer “emanated imperious confidence and sheer physical superiority.”\textsuperscript{125} Karpenko is perhaps one of the heroes who most conforms to the archetypal hero model, and he is not humanised with any specific narrative framing devices to make him more relatable to the reader.

While on active duty during the Soviet period, Karpenko was considered an expert on emerging terror threats, especially in the Caucasus region. What is more, the operative is extremely proud of his past work which resulted in the obliteration of underground organisations such as the (fictional) “Triumph of Islam” and the “Green Banner.”\textsuperscript{126} These past accomplishments of Karpenko’s are precisely the reason he is asked to head the Russian division of the multinational covert anti-terrorist group that is the Sword of Nemesis. Karpenko recruits a number of similarly heroic individuals to serve under his command.

One of these operatives – a former member of a SWAT-like antiterrorist division Major Alexei Mal’tsev – is fired from his position for failing to follow orders.\textsuperscript{127} This does not destroy his chances in the Sword of Nemesis. On the contrary, Karpenko recruits Mal’tsev as much due to his self-confidence and ability to make independent

\textsuperscript{124} Koretskiy, MN 136.
\textsuperscript{125} Koretskiy, MN 172.
\textsuperscript{126} Koretskiy, MN 162.
\textsuperscript{127} Due to similarities of character among the members of the Sword of Nemesis, I will focus only on Alexei Mal’tsev as a representative example of a member of the group and on the leader of the group, Vitaliy Karpenko.
decisions as for his “heroic biography.” Mal’tsev’s self-reliance proves an integral trait of the archetypal hero.

Koretskiy’s other notable hero is Max Kardanov, a former “special envoy of the Special Division of the CC CPSU [Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union].” Kardanov is another character not keen on participating in anti-terrorist operations at the outset of the narrative. This successful spy had not retired by choice but was rather forced to flee his country due to unfair accusations of treason. He leads a comfortable life with his wife and son in London and does not express any desire to go back to active duty when approached by a Russian intelligence officer there. Yet, because Max Kardanov is the only person who knows the true face of terrorist Vakhit Bekmurzayev (the antagonist plans to detonate a nuclear bomb in the centre of Moscow), the hero is forced to return to his home country by the activation of an embedded subconscious command. This mental order had been implanted in his psyche through the process of ‘zombification’ (hypnotic programming) and was designed to operate as a failsafe in the case of this high security clearance officer going rogue. Under this ‘spell’, Kardanov – unlike the other heroes described above – is initially drafted into assisting the Russians in capturing Vakhit Bekmurzayev unwillingly and almost unconsciously. This is not to say that Kardanov lacks heroic qualities – once he gets past the confusion of the multiple personalities awakening in his mind and understands the nature of his mission, Kardanov determinedly pursues his task of preventing the terrorist attack. The fact that Kardanov’s heroic personality prevails in the end attests to its desirability as the ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

Kardanov is the quintessential spy with multiple aliases and no real name (much like Gabriel Allon), and he is extremely well-trained for the job he is forced into once again. The hero possesses a “heightened intuition,” the strength and skills to disable

128 Koretskiy, MN 154.
129 Koretskiy, Kod vozvrashcheniya (The Code of Return) 63. Henceforth: KV.
130 Koretskiy, KV 128-129.
multiple opponents and the ability to inflict injury with precise control.\textsuperscript{131} Even Bekmurzayev begrudgingly respects Kardanov’s heroic qualities, especially as he sees his own subordinates appallingly lacking in comparison: Max Kardanov is level-headed in the most dangerous of situations, well-trained, confident, disciplined and professional.\textsuperscript{132} The antagonist’s acknowledgment of Kardanov’s qualities strengthens the archetypal image of the hero and acts as a strategy of framing. The protagonist further solidifies his hero status and self-reliance when he is cut off from backup and faces the prospect of single-handedly disabling the terrorist plot. Kardanov emerges from the confusion of his implanted split personalities as the “cruel and unstoppable predator” he used to be:

He did not have a plan. However, he sensed that his muddled mind was beginning to clear. He did not feel any more headaches, nausea or that unrelenting ringing in his ears. Max was returning to his former self: not the slightly foolish and intimidated Lapin or the spoilt by his easy British life Thompson but the well-trained Kardanov. He was becoming the cruel and unstoppable predator whose specially-honed reflexes adapted well to the law of the jungle: the survival of the fittest, deftest, quickest and most professional.\textsuperscript{133}

Max Kardanov reaches the epitome of archetypal heroism by the end of the novel, when his skills are most needed. This proves that despite the unconventional start to the hero’s story, he comes into his full archetypal heroic glory by the end of it.

In the novel \textit{Atomnyi poezd (The Nuclear Train)}, Koretskiy creates another unlikely hero in the young military academy student Alexandr Kudasov. An important quality the protagonist possesses from the outset of the narrative is his superior intelligence and success in his studies. Alexandr Kudasov is a fresh graduate from the Missile Troops Academy, and not only does he leave it with excellent grades and commendations but he is also branded a genius.\textsuperscript{134} Kudasov is assigned to service on the so-called ‘nuclear train’, a top-secret train travelling all across Russia with a strategic

\textsuperscript{131} Koretskiy, KV 81; 188.
\textsuperscript{132} Koretskiy, KV 352; 391.
\textsuperscript{133} Koretskiy, KV 449.
\textsuperscript{134} Koretskiy, AP, vol. 1 16; 26.
nuclear missile on board designed to avoid detection and destruction by the enemy. Koretskiy’s hero’s intelligence and academic excellence cause him to progress quickly in the ranks – much to the jealousy and dismay of his more senior colleagues – and boost his self-confidence. Following this swift promotion, Kudasov begins to develop individualism, pride and self-reliance fit for the archetypal hero: “He felt inspired and proud. In fact, something had changed within him. The confidence placed in him [by superiors] flooded the young man’s insides, and he felt he was leaving Bulatov’s office a different person to the absolute newbie who had entered it. He had been recognised as a greatly talented missile launch officer! This swelled him with pride.” Indeed, Kudasov’s self-assuredness and quick thinking help him single-handedly prevent nuclear war with the United States, which would have erupted had the hero’s suicidal commander been able to complete the launch of the train’s nuclear missile. Kudasov’s evolution from an ordinary young man into an acclaimed hero confirms his potential as a model of archetypal masculinity.

b. Courage and Heroism

Having introduced these characters, I now turn to further features which make them into archetypal masculine heroes. Courage and perseverance are the first key attributes of the hero and idealised heterosexual (hegemonic) masculinity. Gabriel Allon is one of the best examples of these qualities, as, according to his mentor Shamron, he possesses extraordinary “boldness” and “audacity.” Allon is hero-worshipped by his colleagues, and he recognises that he had been attributed the status of a legend who “had crossed the line between mortal and myth.” This indicates that Silva’s hero is aware of his fame among intelligence servicemen and women, and this reputation is not

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135 Koretskiy, AP, vol. 1 309.
137 Due to space restrictions, I do not give examples from each author and novel for every point made. Most of the traits discussed are applicable to these heroes unless otherwise specified; I provide the most pertinent quotations and passages for this analysis.
138 Silva, TM 17.
139 Silva, POF 68.
undeserved. As Allon’s friend at the Vatican, the Pope’s Secretary Luigi Donati, stresses, “You’ve seen the terrorists up close. And you’ve seen the look in a man’s eyes as he was about to press the button on his detonator.”140 Needless to say, the hero’s stoicism and skills enable him to systematically defeat the terrorists and live to tell the story.

Gabriel Allon’s numerous successful close encounters with terrorists serve as testaments to his courage and determination to succeed. Even in the direst of situations, Allon never gives into the demands, bullying and torture which his enemies unleash on him. When the hero is captured by the kidnappers of Elizabeth Halton (daughter of the US ambassador to the UK) in TSS during an attempt to free the young woman, he impresses even his enemies. The leader of the terrorist cell, Ishaq Fawaz, is baffled by Allon’s ‘unnecessary’ self-sacrifice: “Surely you knew this would be your fate. Why would you do such a thing? Why would you be willing to trade your life for another – for the spoiled daughter of an American billionaire?”141 It is made clear in the narrative that it is not in the nature of terrorists to be selfless or brave, but it is in Gabriel Allon’s: from the hero’s standpoint, his sacrifice is justified when it is made in the name of saving an innocent’s life. This is another example of the framing strategy whereby the antagonist’s awe strengthens the hero’s characterisation. Later in the same novel, Allon refuses to yield to the terrorists’ demands to record a scripted message betraying the Office even under the threat of execution:

Ishaq made a few minor changes to the arrangement of his props, then stepped from behind his camera and handed Gabriel his script. Gabriel looked down. Then, like an actor unhappy with his lines, he tried to hand it back.

“Read it!” Ishaq demanded.

“No,” replied Gabriel calmly.

“Read it or I’ll kill you now.”

Gabriel let the script fall from his hands.142

140 Silva, TM 43.
141 Silva, TSS 377.
142 Silva, TSS 381.
The hero’s courage is largely complemented by his determination and will for success and survival. Allon does not capitulate or halt his missions because of injury or risk of death. On the contrary, Silva’s protagonist has an almost supernatural will of steel which allows him to overcome pain and carry on with his duties. In the culmination of *POF* and repeating the pattern of the example above, Allon knowingly goes into the elaborate trap set by terrorist Khaled al-Khalifa (the son of the Black September member whose death had been Allon’s first assignment) in order to save his mentally ill wife, Leah. The hero is once again fully aware of the dangers awaiting him on the path the terrorist had designed, but his tenacity and resolve to live in order to reckon with al-Khalifa boost his strength and courage:

Khaled had dropped a trail of clues and wound the clock, so that Gabriel had no choice but to desperately pursue them. Mahmoud Arwish, David Quinnell, Mimi Ferrere – they’d all been a part of it. Gabriel saw them now, silent and still, as minor figures at the edges of a Bellini, allegorical in nature but supportive of the focal point. But what was the point? Gabriel knew that the painting was unfinished. Khaled had one more coup in store, one more spectacular of blood and fire. Somehow Gabriel had to survive it. [...] He would survive it, he thought, and someday he would come back to Khaled on his own terms.

In the end, the hero’s courage and determination are rewarded, and the antagonists receive the retribution they deserve. Allon’s impermeable dauntlessness, underlined by his knowledge of the traps set for him, attests to his archetypal heroic masculinity.

Similarly to Allon, Mike Martin is unafraid of sacrificing himself for the survival of innocents. The terrorist plot in which the undercover Martin (as Izmat Khan) is nominated to participate targets a cruise ship hosting a G8 conference, an attempt to eliminate some of the most influential world leaders along with four thousand civilians as staff in one blow. The terrorists get dangerously close to achieving their goal, aiming to sail an exploding giant fireball of a fuel tanker into the ship, but Martin foils this plan by setting the explosion off at a safe distance instead. He thus kills all terrorists on board.

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143 Silva, *TSS* 392.
144 Silva, *POF* 279.
along with himself. This self-sacrificial act shows that no price the hero pays is too high if it prevents the loss of civilian life. More importantly, Martin does not have a shade of doubt regarding his sacrifice; the only question he asks himself in the moment is how to do so best:

A soldier is trained to estimate chances and do it fast. Martin had spent much of his life doing that. On the bridge of the Countess of Richmond, enveloped in her own death cloud, there were only two: go for the man; go for the button. There would be no surviving either.

Some words came into his mind, words from long ago, in a schoolboy’s poem, “To every man upon this earth Death cometh soon or late . . .” And he recalled Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Lion of the Panjshir, talking by the campfire. “We are all sentenced to die, Angleez. But only a warrior blessed of Allah may be allowed to choose how!” Colonel Mike Martin made his choice…  

Mike Martin’s death at the end of Forsyth’s novel is an act of extreme courage, willpower and individualism. It is the ultimate heroic sacrifice made in the name of the most honourable of causes, and it fully conforms to the archetypal hero characterisation pattern.

In what seems like a departure from the heroic pattern at first glance, Koretskiy’s Kudasov demonstrates fear and a certain measure of self-preservation and narcissism in an encounter with a gang of Northern Caucasian thugs. Alexandr Kudasov is ashamed by the feelings he experiences and convinces himself that as an officer who may one day be charged with launching nuclear missiles on another country, he must not be afraid of a few bullies. The hero quickly overcomes his weakness and, conforming to the archetypal hero model, turns around and faces his fears. Kudasov challenges his attackers despite his slim chances of winning. This inner struggle certainly transforms Alexandr Kudasov into the one officer who is brave, sensible and decisive enough to go against his commander at the end of the novel, gaining him recognition as a true hero. Non-archetypal qualities such as Kudasov’s cowardice or Allon’s artistic sensitivity

145 Forsyth 451.
146 Koretskiy, AP, vol. 2 63.
147 Koretskiy, AP, vol. 2 64-65.
paradoxically strengthen the image and are a strategy of framing, whereby conflicting aspects of character are ultimately overcome and evolve into the full archetypal hero.

c. Honour and Duty

A further essential quality of the archetypal hero is honour, and Gabriel Allon is again one of its most effective embodiments. Allon is loyal on two levels – personal and professional. He is devoted to his wife Leah, a victim of a car bomb attack ordered by Yasir Arafat himself to eliminate the hero. Unfortunately, Allon’s wife and son suffered the consequences instead – his son died in the attack and Leah suffered grave physical and mental injuries. Silva’s hero serves his penance to his family by hesitating to divorce Leah and delaying marriage to his long-term lover and fellow Office employee, Chiara Zolli. An acute sense of duty and honour prevent Allon from moving on and from what he sees as abandoning Leah to a lonely life in a care facility, and it takes Allon a long while to convince himself he does not “owe it to her” anymore. Soon after he finally decides to proceed with the marriage to Chiara, Allon’s wife is kidnapped by terrorist Khaled al-Khalifa, which leads to the resurfacing of his feelings of guilt and loyalty towards Leah and the delay of his proposed wedding:

“I do want to marry you, Chiara” – he hesitated – “but I can’t. I’m married to Leah.”
“Fidelity, right, Gabriel? Devotion to duty or to one’s obligations. Loyalty. Faithfulness.”
“I can’t leave her now, not after what she’s just been put through by Khaled.”

Leah is the symbol of Allon’s honour and the honour of the nation; he cannot forsake her without losing his self-respect. At the same time, the hero maintains the relationship with Chiara while retaining his claim to ‘fidelity’. Chiara thus represents the hero’s sexual prowess, while Leah is his dignity; the two co-exist without negating each other.

148 Silva, POF 37.
149 Silva, POF 381; emphasis in the original.
The hero therefore preserves both aspects which are integral to the archetypal hero’s image – manifest heterosexuality and honour.

Gabriel Allon is also “a loyal soldier” in his job.\textsuperscript{150} He is steadfastly honourable even when dealing with his enemies. This is not to be mistaken for mercy, however, as Allon does not hesitate to physically eliminate known terrorists. His nobility and conscience manifest themselves during such operations: Gabriel Allon always requires undeniable proof of guilt and confirmation of the identity of his targets and would never knowingly harm an innocent. In the passage below, Yasir Arafat (Allon’s proclaimed nemesis) grudgingly acknowledges the hero’s honourable personality:

“You murdered my wife and son,” Gabriel said, deliberately misleading Arafat over Leah’s fate. “I’m not sure we’ll ever be able to ‘clear the air’, as you put it.”

Arafat shook his head. “No, Jibril, I didn’t murder them. I ordered Tariq to kill you to avenge Abu Jihad, but I specifically told him that your family was not to be touched.”

“Why did you do that?”

“Because you deserved it. You conducted yourself with a certain honor that night in Tunis. Yes, you killed Abu Jihad, but you made certain no harm came to his wife and children. In fact, you stopped on the way out of the villa to comfort Abu Jihad’s daughter and instruct her to look after her mother. Do you remember that, Jibril?”

Gabriel closed his eyes and nodded. The scene in Tunis, like the bombing in Vienna, hung in a gallery of memory that he walked each night in his dreams.\textsuperscript{151}

Here is further evidence of a strategy of framing which reaffirms the stereotype – the adversary confirms the hero’s essential qualities, giving him more substance.

Gabriel Allon’s adherence to a strict code of honour during his missions and sympathy towards innocents who get caught up in the fray also confirm the archetypal image. One might argue that Allon would not have had to comfort Abu Jihad’s daughter had he not murdered him in his own home and in front of his family, but this is another device to display the hero’s ‘sensitivity’. Like Allon’s passion for art, his compassion

\textsuperscript{150} Silva, \textit{TM} 89.

\textsuperscript{151} Silva, \textit{POF} 148.
seemingly distinguishes him from the stereotypical hero; yet, he remains a highly successful killer despite his ‘humanising’ traits, and this emphatically reaffirms his role as the archetypal hero. Similarly, in both *TM* and *POF* Allon manifests the other aspect of his honour code: in the latter novel, the hero demands absolute proof that the man he is hunting is in reality the terrorist Khaled al-Khalifa; in the former, he brings his friend and colleague Eli Lavon along to positively identify Ahmed bin Shafiq, the terrorist who orchestrated two deadly attacks on the Vatican, before Allon detonates a bomb planted on bin Shafiq’s balcony. His honour is a heroic strength which allows him to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. Allon’s rigour and sensitivity enhance the possibility for the readers’ sympathetic identification with the hero.

Mike Martin and Max Kardanov have a different way of manifesting honour – by initially saving the terrorist’s life. In a departure from the character pattern, they ultimately confirm it. Both of them risk themselves in order not to abandon the antagonist to certain death. During his previous employment by the USSR, Kardanov saves Vakhit Bekmurzayev’s life, a ‘freedom-fighter’ the likes of whom the country was financing at the time. During a money hand-over gone wrong in Honduras, the terrorist is fatally bitten by a rattlesnake in the course of a shoot-out with an enemy party in the desert. Yet, instead of leaving Bekmurzayev and getting himself to a safer place, Kardanov gives him the only anti-venom injection in his possession and subsequently airlifts him out of further danger on his personal mini hot-air balloon. Needless to say, such nobility comes as completely unexpected to Bekmurzayev, who is amazed that the hero would deign to save anyone’s life but his own: as opposed to the honourable and selfless Kardanov, the terrorist is selfish, dishonourable and unaccustomed to acts of kindness (whether given or received). That such a negative character would confirm the hero’s qualities is further testament to his archetypal model status.

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152 Silva, *POF* 225.
154 Koretskiy, *KV* 102-104.
Similarly to Kardanov, Mike Martin saves the very man he is tasked with impersonating almost two decades later – the young Izmat Khan. Charged with covertly delivering two Blowpipe missiles to Shah Massoud in 1987, Martin is accompanied on his journey through the mountains by fifteen-year-old Khan when a Russian fighter jet attacks them. The hero uses one of his precious missiles to shoot the plane down and then delivers the wounded Pashtun teenager to the care of an Arab doctor some distance away; the doctor who treats Khan is Ayman al-Zawahiri, and he is in Afghanistan with his close associate Osama bin Laden.\(^{155}\) The use of historical figures and events on the author’s part is also a strategy for strengthening his narrative’s believability and, consequently, the hero’s character.

Mike Martin’s honourable deed is repeated in late 2001 when the colonel participates in the battle of Qala-i-Jangi and saves Izmat Khan’s life again (although this time the Pashtun fighter is unaware of Martin’s involvement), which leads to Khan’s capture by the CIA and his subsequent incarceration at Guantánamo Bay.\(^{156}\) For both Martin and Kardanov, these are acts driven by noble intentions. These indicate a deep-seated sense of personal honour in an archetypal hero character and contribute to his construction as such.

For Koretskiy’s Kudasov and Karpenko, the concept of honour is linked to their current or former military duty and, for the latter, to nationalism. After he is assigned to the nuclear train, Kudasov’s fickle wife Oksana is approached by an undercover CIA agent intending to bribe the hero into selling information about the ultra-secret facility. However, even as a woman who does not harbour much affection or respect for her young husband, Oksana Kudasova admits that he is not the type of person to betray his job or his country. On the contrary, “he is morally upright and would never disobey orders for money.”\(^{157}\) For young Kudasov, service on the nuclear train precedes anything or anyone else, and his dignity is inextricably tied to his ability to perform his duty well;

\(^{155}\) Forsyth 125-127; 130.
\(^{156}\) Forsyth 178.
\(^{157}\) Koretskiy, AP, vol. 2 207.
his wife’s acknowledgement of it reiterates his loyalty. In short, Kudasov is an idealist who believes in the military code of honour rather than the materialistic attitude by which Oksana lives.\textsuperscript{158}

Head of the Sword of Nemesis Karpenko is well-known for being a “man of his word, of duty and of honour.” In addition to these noble characteristics, Vitaliy Karpenko does not lust after power and is therefore not addicted to it.\textsuperscript{159} Most importantly, the retired officer’s sense of honour is closely tied to his nationalistic sentiments: even after he had left the military and started his private business, the safeguarding of order remained the focus of his work. The secretive organisation which Karpenko headed before becoming involved in the Sword of Nemesis employed both “current and former special operatives and law enforcement officers who were unhappy with the chaos, lawlessness and the inefficiency of formal law in the country” and thus decided to privately take matters into their own hands.\textsuperscript{160} The self-proclaimed goal of this organisation is to rid the ‘motherland’ of criminals and corrupt officials by any means possible. Karpenko’s sense of honour is thus part and parcel of his national pride and is the reason why he readily accepts the post of commander of the Sword of Nemesis. This is not to say that the other members of this antiterrorist group do not associate their job with national honour. After successfully completing the mission of freeing Russian hostages from the Saudi Arabian-headed terrorist organisation “For the Worldwide Triumph of Islam,” the rescued men praise the special operatives’ actions as the touch of the caring “hand of the Motherland.”\textsuperscript{161} The officers’ honour and duty are hereby linked to the national sentiment, which they acknowledge, and their heroic status is confirmed.

\textsuperscript{158} Koretskiy, \textit{AP}, vol. I 60-61.
\textsuperscript{159} Koretskiy, \textit{MN} 160; 159.
\textsuperscript{160} Koretskiy, \textit{MN} 139.
\textsuperscript{161} Koretskiy, \textit{MN} 337.
d. Loyalty, Patriotism and Reward

Noticeably, national pride and patriotism play a significant role in the psychological make-up of several of the heroes. The initially unwilling Kardanov is identified early on as a “true patriot of his Motherland” despite what the accusations of treason might suggest.\(^{162}\) Although it is possible that patriotism is partly the result of his brainwashing and subconscious conditioning at the hands of his former Soviet intelligence employers, the sentiment is present in all three of his alter-egos. Another result of this conditioning is that Kardanov’s mind houses three distinct personalities, completely separate from and unaware of each other; yet, each of the aliases equally loves his country. Upon the return to his home city of Tikhodonsk (a fictional city possibly modelled on the actual city of Rostov-on-Don) and despite the confusion which the transition between personalities is causing him, there is one fact the hero is certain of: “Lapin loved this city. Therefore, so did Kardanov. Max Thompson loved this city equally, as well.”\(^{163}\) The novel’s ending proves that love for his country is not simply imposed on Kardanov through subconscious programming – the hero decides not to go back to London but to stay home, in Russia, where he feels he belongs and where his skills are needed for the protection of the country.

Although Mitch Rapp is sometimes harshly critical of and frustrated with the workings of the American government and its various appurtenances, he is nonetheless loyal to his country. This is coherent with some of the right-wing ideologies described above, whereby loyalty is not measured by one’s devotion to governmental institutions but rather to the land and people themselves. In the following passage from MD, Rapp expresses his exasperation with America’s tendencies towards narrow definitions and idealistic expectations:

> His was a nation that loved to distinguish itself from the less refined nations of the world. A democracy that celebrated individual rights and freedom. A state that would never tolerate the open recruiting, training, and use of one of its own citizens for the specific purpose of covertly

\(^{162}\) Koretskiy, KV 64.

\(^{163}\) Koretskiy, KV 193.
killing the citizens of another country. But that was exactly who Rapp was. He was a modern-day assassin who was conveniently called an operative so as to not offend the sensibilities of the cultured people who occupied the centers of power in Washington.

If those very people knew of the existence of the Facility they would fly into an indignant rage that would result in the partial or complete destruction of the CIA.\textsuperscript{164}

Rapp sees himself as the sole defender of the nation, an individual capable of abandoning idealism and acknowledging that the only way to reckon with terrorism is by employing harsh and unsavoury methods. In Flynn’s hero’s opinion, decisive and uncompromising action should be part and parcel of US national security policy. Thus, when Rapp demands immediate retaliation upon the kidnapping of Irene Kennedy by a Hezbollah terrorist in Iraq, the Attorney General reminds him that such a response does not correspond with the tenets of the USA’s founding document, the Declaration of Independence. Mitch Rapp responds by ridiculing the politician’s words and affirming that his primary concern is the well-being of American people, Irene Kennedy among them: “You may have been thinking about defending a piece of paper when you took your oath, but I was thinking about protecting and defending American citizens from the type of shit that just happened.”\textsuperscript{165} He derides the very document upon which the society he defends is founded – being a man of action rather than words, his patriotism is also based on action. Rapp reaffirms that his nationalistic loyalties lie with the safeguarding of the innocents in his country instead of its bureaucratic apparatuses. Rapp’s patriotism thus questions other types of patriotism and problematises them. This passage also alludes to ideological and political splits in modern American society, such as the antistatist far-right political and militia movements; this reference is another instance of grounding fiction in real political and historical context as a strategy of framing the narrative and the character.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[164] Flynn, \textit{MD} 3.
\item[165] Flynn, \textit{PAD} 283.
\end{footnotes}
Gabriel Allon’s biggest motivation for his job is the protection of his people and his land, which are perceived to be under constant attack. Allon’s nationalistic sentiments are part and parcel of his sense of duty, and in the following excerpt, the hero associates it with his sense of honour and dedication to the safeguarding of innocents:

“Duty,” said Gabriel. “I feel an obligation to protect my people.”
“The terrorists would say the same thing.”
“Perhaps, but I don’t murder the innocent.”

Here, Allon makes a vital distinction in moral value between himself and the terrorists: both allege the protection of their respective people as their intent, but their targets are different. Hence, those who harm innocent individuals do not deserve a claim to integrity and loyalty. This highlights the diametrical opposition in character between the hero and the terrorist.

In contrast to these heroes, John Corey’s take on nationalistic idealism is highly cynical. Like the other heroes, DeMille’s protagonist is concerned with the negative consequences of terrorism on American freedoms and lifestyle and wants to be part of the solution to this problem. Yet, despite these beliefs, Corey remains a hero who does not investigate crimes and incidents out of idealistic notions of duty and patriotism but rather because he believes investigative work to be his calling. Corey elaborates on his feelings about “truth, justice, and country” in the following conversation with his wife Kate Mayfield:

She didn’t like that and said to me, “You need to believe in what you’re doing, and know why you’re doing it.”
“Okay, then I’ll tell you – I do detective work because I like it. It’s interesting, and it keeps my mind sharp and makes me feel smarter than the idiots I work for. That’s the extent of my commitment to truth, justice, and country. I do the right thing for the wrong reasons, but bottom line, truth and justice get done. If you want to do the right thing for the right reasons, go right ahead, but don’t expect me to share your idealism.”

166 Silva, TM 31.
167 Silva, TSS 291.
168 DeMille, WF 201.
169 DeMille, NF 182.
Like Rapp, Corey does not have much regard for the American bureaucratic machine or for his superiors at ATTF, who he sees as a threat to his initiative and self-reliance. Similarly to the other heroes discussed, John Corey does not go about his job “by the book” and tends to bend or completely ignore the law in order to achieve his desired results. Moreover, DeMille’s hero does not seek approval from his superiors and the only reward which truly satisfies him is proving them wrong. This anti-establishment attitude contributes to the construction of the hero character by highlighting his superior masculinity and independence from others. After all, action heroes are not made of office clerks who follow the rules but rather of the rebels who break them.

This shunning of official recognition and rewards is not an uncommon theme also for Allon and Rapp. Silva’s character is the hero who is by far the least showered with accolades and compensation for his work, but this does not dishearten him from doing his job. On several occasions, Allon is in fact persecuted by foreign governments and media for unauthorised activities on their soil, despite the fact that those actions usually save scores of innocent lives. Despite lacking public recognition, Allon is famous and appreciated in the limited circle of top government officials and security services. Thus, in TM, the American President himself asks the hero to do him the favour of discreetly eliminating terrorist Ahmed bin Shafiq, which indicates Allon’s solid reputation for his work and personal acquaintance with one of the most influential leaders in the world. When rewards are in fact offered him, the protagonist prefers to refuse if given the chance: when former ambassador Halton compensates him with a ten-million-dollar-check for the rescue of his daughter, Allon declines. When queried about the reason, the hero explains that rescuing innocents is part of his job and he does not require additional compensation for it. Thus, Allon’s refusal is based on his view of his work as an honourable pursuit rather than a business transaction.

Back in his own country, Gabriel Allon is regarded by Shamron as well as the Israeli Prime Minister as the most obvious and suitable candidate for the leadership of

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170 Silva, POF 352; TSS 98-99; 418-419.
171 Silva, TM 126-127; 210.
the Operations department of the Office. This is a reward Allon finds difficult to refuse under the immense pressure of his superiors and colleagues, but he is not elated by the promotion when it becomes inevitable:

She raised her glass. “Mazel tov.”
“Condolences would be more appropriate.”
“You don’t want the job?”
“Some men have greatness thrust upon them.”\(^{172}\)

The hero is not in his field of work for the sake of rewards and career advancement but rather for the moral satisfaction in the knowledge that he contributes to making the world relatively safer. Selflessness and refusal of rewards contribute to the construction of Allon as an ultimate hero.

Mitch Rapp’s refusal of praise and awards stems from a different source: Flynn’s hero sees his job as a struggle against sluggish governmental institutions, and when recognition does occur, he is unhappy to receive it from the very people who only recently opposed him. Mitch Rapp is a hero who tends to fall in and out of the American Presidents’ and their administrations’ favour: President Alexander accepts and respects Rapp’s unruly reputation at the outset of *PAD*;\(^{173}\) whereas in *MD* the hero has to go against President Hayes and his staff’s opinions and act independently. In this exchange with FBI Special Agent Skip McMahon, Rapp’s frustration becomes apparent:

“Someone’s got to hang around and tell them how it is.”
Rapp tilted his head and asked, “Weren’t you at the White House yesterday?”
“I’ll never forget it.”
“Well, I don’t know if you noticed, but they don’t seem to be listening to me.”\(^{174}\)

Those who, like Rapp, tend to engage with the enemy face-to-face understand his annoyance better than those in governing positions. Even when Rapp prevents nuclear disaster in Washington against all odds, he does not take kindly to the praise and recognition which are granted him. On the contrary, the hero proclaims that he is “fed up

\(^{172}\) Silva, *TSS* 242; emphasis in the original.
\(^{173}\) Flynn, *PAD* 85.
\(^{174}\) Flynn, *MD* 370.
with the whole mess” of politics and is “sick of working with people who have no idea how to fight this battle.” Characterising the government as incompetent and positioning himself above such inexperience brings Rapp’s rhetoric in line with that of such right-wing American factions as the militia movement and emphasises his skills, intelligence and masculinity.

Koretskiy’s heroes like Kardanov and Kudasov are less averse to praise and reward. On the one hand, Max Kardanov refuses both the mission to stop Bekmurzayev and its potential compensations when he is initially approached by a recruiter in London, which in turn prompts Russian security officials to authorise the activation of his subconscious ‘return program’. However, Kardanov’s “prevention of a terrorist act with the intention to employ nuclear weapons [which] had a massive [positive] political significance worldwide” does not at all go unrewarded at the end of the novel – Max Kardanov is decorated for his heroic actions and gifted a flat in Moscow, which he accepts. On the other hand, although Alexandr Kudasov is at first nearly arrested for what is perceived as an act of treason for preventing the launch of a strategic nuclear missile, it soon becomes clear that were it not for the young officer, World War III would have erupted due to the suicidal commander of the nuclear train. Kudasov is instead praised for his actions by superior officers: “If it were not for Kudasov, we, along with half the planet, would have been radioactive dust by now! […] Kudasov is a hero!” Neither Kudasov nor Kardanov find the praise misplaced or are frustrated by it – in fact, as there is no further comment on their acceptance of the rewards, it is safe to assume that these heroes are not averse to recognition and the governmental institutions it comes from. This demonstrates the Russian author’s differing attitude towards heroic characterisation: his heroes are usually rewarded for their previously unpopular decisions, and reward acceptance does not detract from their masculinity. On the contrary, Flynn and Silva emphasise the hero’s rejection of praise to confirm his

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175 Flynn, MD 536.
176 Koretskiy, KV 88.
177 Koretskiy, KV 507-508.
178 Koretskiy, AP, vol. 2 284.
superiority over ‘feminine’ bureaucrats and his masculinity and individualism in an embodiment of the American dream of self-reliance.

e. Individualism and the Institution

By far the most defining characteristic of the archetypal action-thriller hero is individualism, which manifests itself in the hero’s independent decisions, frequent insubordination, disgruntlement with authority and the propensity to solve all problems single-handedly, with no support network. Forsyth’s Martin is the definition of the loner hero, as he is fully aware that there would be no help forthcoming on his undercover mission no matter the riskiness of the situation. As mentioned earlier, Mike Martin makes an executive decision to sacrifice his life: it is a one-man decision and therefore a one-man solution to preventing the terrorist plot.\textsuperscript{179} The hero does not falter even when he finds himself in a hopeless situation. Although he is positive he “had lost” and “was too late” to prevent disaster, his quick thinking saves scores of lives in the end.\textsuperscript{180} Unlike with other heroes, there is no evidence to show whether Martin usually chooses to follow the orders of his superiors or has problems with authority; this is largely due to the plot’s focus on his undercover mission rather than his pre-retirement active duty years, so in this respect there is no point of comparison between Martin and Rapp or Allon, for example.

The two heroes who are the most vocal about their disgruntlement with institutionalised power and law enforcement are John Corey and Mitch Rapp. In both cases, recurrent discontent with their superiors tends to stem from the heroes’ self-assuredness and egotism. Throughout \textit{NF} and \textit{WF}, Corey repeatedly and purposefully shuns the directives he is given by the heads of the ATTF, but he sees his behaviour as completely justified because of being routinely kept in the dark about key intelligence and sometimes even being regularly distanced from the cases which interest him. “My

\textsuperscript{179} Forsyth 419: 445-446.
\textsuperscript{180} Forsyth 449-450.
problem is with supervisors who bullshit me and expect loyalty in return. The essence of loyalty is reciprocity. If you’re loyal to me, I’ll be loyal to you. Bullshit me, and I’ll bullshit you. That’s the contract,” the hero explains.\textsuperscript{181} Needless to say, Corey’s bosses are often less than appreciative of his taking such initiative; for instance, the hero is punished for his ‘improvisation’ in \textit{NF} by being sent on a three-month assignment to Yemen.\textsuperscript{182} Moreover, Corey does not work well with others and tends to disagree with most efforts which require his cooperation with colleagues from the ATTF, intelligence or law enforcement. He is a “loner” and has “a reputation for being difficult and not a team player”;\textsuperscript{183} the hero is thus strongly encouraged to “rejoin the team” – an advice which he certainly does not heed.\textsuperscript{184}

At the core, John Corey is a highly cynical and disenchanted hero, which leads him to the belief that there is nobody he can rely on but himself and which fundamentally severs him from any potential team environment. His scepticism towards authority stems from having been witness to many law enforcement indiscretions and failures over the years of active duty at NYPD:

Enter John Corey – skeptic, cynic, realist, and bubble-burster. I’d been around fourteen years longer than Kate Mayfield, and I’d seen a lot – maybe too much – and I’d been disappointed too many times as a cop and as a man. I’ve seen murderers go free and a hundred other crimes go unsolved or unpunished. I’ve seen witnesses lying under oath, sloppy police work, inept prosecutors, incompetent forensic work, outrageous defense attorneys, imbecilic judges, and brainless juries.

I’ve seen good stuff, too – bright shining moments when the system worked like an oiled clock, when truth and justice had their day in court. But there weren’t many days like that.\textsuperscript{185}

From this account, it is not difficult to understand Corey’s disillusionment and his tendency to bend or even break the law on multiple occasions, as long as this aids him in

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\textsuperscript{181} DeMille, \textit{WF} 276.
\textsuperscript{182} DeMille, \textit{NF} 294.
\textsuperscript{183} DeMille, \textit{NF} 399; 34.
\textsuperscript{184} DeMille, \textit{WF} 541.
\textsuperscript{185} DeMille, \textit{NF} 180-181.
\end{flushleft}
achieving his desired results.\textsuperscript{186} The hero (quite arrogantly) considers himself the only person capable and trustworthy enough to solve the most despicable crimes, and he thus trusts no one but himself with this job: he is the hero who prefers working on his own to eliminate the possibility of failure. Like Flynn, DeMille’s characterisation leans to cynicism towards authority, which resonates with some American right-wing rhetoric. Corey’s rebelliousness against hierarchy and conformism strengthens the archetypal image – the model of a unique, strong and masculine rebel.

Corey is a self-admitted “man of action” and is not afraid of going into dangerous situations “without backup.”\textsuperscript{187} Luckily for him, he never fails to extricate himself from such predicaments with minimal losses. For instance, Corey succeeds in single-handedly disabling the crazed billionaire Bain Madox and his associates who are planning on detonating nuclear bombs in San Francisco and Los Angeles. This plan is designed to provoke the American-led obliteration of the Muslim world in response (the retaliation is code-named Wild Fire and pre-programmed to automatically wipe out those countries which are stereotypically associated with terrorism).\textsuperscript{188} In addition to these tendencies towards self-governance and initiative, Corey’s main motivation for doing his job is not nationalism (as I have explained above) but rather a much more personal sense of excitement and fulfilment upon defeating “the bad guys”:

\begin{quote}
We’re not in this business for the money. We’re in it for the excitement, and for moments like this.

Duty, honor, country, service, truth, and justice are good. But you can do that from behind a desk.

In the end, you carry the gun and the shield out into the field for the sole purpose of confronting the bad guys. The enemy. There is no other reason to be on the front lines.\textsuperscript{189}
\end{quote}

This is highly consistent with the psychology of a warrior hero who lives for the excitement of combat, the satisfaction of victory and thus the reaffirmation of his male ego. Another key source of John Corey’s professional gratification lies in proving his

\textsuperscript{186} For illustrations of this, see DeMille, \textit{NF} 250; 274-275; \textit{WF} 224; 304; 439; 536.
\textsuperscript{187} DeMille, \textit{NF} 502; 358; \textit{WF} 625; 574.
\textsuperscript{188} DeMille, \textit{WF} 619.
\textsuperscript{189} DeMille, \textit{WF} 571.
superiors wrong, which is also a device for the reassertion of the hero’s ego and intelligence.\textsuperscript{190}

Mitch Rapp’s motives for insubordination may lack Corey’s loquacious commentary, but they share similar values. Flynn’s hero feels that his intelligence, expertise and methods are vastly superior to “those pricks in Washington [who] have no idea how ugly it is over here”; so it is impossible for special operatives on dangerous foreign assignments “to act like we’re cops [and do] everything by the book.”\textsuperscript{191} Rapp therefore has no tolerance for politicians and administrators who work from their desks and vastly prefers to “cut through all the bureaucratic BS and get things done in a more expeditious manner.”\textsuperscript{192} The cumbersome political apparatus is a source of perpetual frustration for the hero, and it is Rapp’s preferred pretext for breaking the law and acting of his own accord.\textsuperscript{193} In fact, the hero considers due process, human rights and respect for authority entirely optional when it comes to the pursuit of and reckoning with terrorists. Such sentiments echo some far-right American ideologies described above, whereby the government is perceived as inept and independent action is thus required.

Once again similarly to Corey, Rapp is a loner and a man of action rather than deliberation. From as early as the time of his recruitment by Kennedy in \textit{AA}, Rapp naturally distances himself from the people he is close to and becomes a loner on a deep, psychological level – he trains himself to not be dependent on anybody but himself:

Of all the changes Rapp had to make over the six months of his training, adjusting to the solitude had been the most challenging. As he became increasingly immersed in his new trade, he drifted further and further away from his friends. The big change was not that he did not see them as much. It was a mental detachment. With each new level of training they had less in common. His new life was far from social.\textsuperscript{194}

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\textsuperscript{190} DeMille, \textit{NF} 352; 533.
\textsuperscript{191} Flynn, \textit{MD} 129.
\textsuperscript{192} Flynn, \textit{AA} 180.
\textsuperscript{193} Listing all the specific instances of Rapp’s grievance with governmental institutions would take up several pages. See for example: Flynn \textit{MD} 327; 341; 364; 457; 492; \textit{PAD} 72; 249; 259-260; 280-281.
\textsuperscript{194} Flynn, \textit{AA} 157.
\end{flushleft}
This loner mentality is, perhaps, a defensive mechanism meant to help Rapp adjust to a future of complete self-reliance and solitary work in hostile environments. Rapp’s lack of family or friends exacerbates the hero’s reclusive and self-governing tendencies: he does not have anybody to account to and therefore does not appreciate any opinion but his own. Life had not been very kind to him as he had lost all of the people he loved: “His father had died of a heart attack when he was young, his high school sweetheart had perished in the Pan Am Lockerbie tragedy, and his wife had been murdered just two short years ago. Add to that his inherent lack of trust in people, and you were left with a person who was better suited for bachelorhood.”

Rapp’s only solid conviction in life is his “commitment to a cause in which he truly believed” – the cause of protecting the world from the evil of terrorism. He is a man of action who throws himself in the middle of the riskiest of situations with little hesitation and emerges victorious. As Mitch Rapp himself points out, “sitting and waiting for reinforcements to show up […] simply wasn’t in his programming,” and this is why he is usually able to make incomparable “contributions […] in the fight against terrorism.” Rapp does not seek “medals or public accolades” for this work; his preferred reward is “to be listened to and taken seriously” and, ideally, to be “left to apply his skills autonomously through a combination of stealth and brutal, efficient force, if needed.” Despite frequent bureaucratic opposition, Flynn’s hero accomplishes his desired results in the manner of his choice whether he was authorised to do so or not: his individualism and loner mentality prevail over bureaucracy and its theoreticians, and this strengthens him as the archetypal hero.

Gabriel Allon is an equally individualistic character when it comes to serious anti-terrorist action. However, Allon does not shun his colleagues entirely like Rapp or Corey: Silva’s protagonist works closely with his team from the Office (Yaakov, Yossi,
Dina and Rimona) to research his targets. When it comes to on-the-ground action, Allon usually prefers to execute the missions on his own. Oftentimes, he goes against pre-arranged plans and orders and improvises a new course of action: when Khaled al-Khalifa kidnaps Leah, Allon agrees to sever communications with his colleagues and follow the instructions of the terrorist’s associate who calls herself Palestina. The hero then successfully rescues his wife and many other civilians from a triple suicide bombing in Paris’ Gare de Lyon despite his superiors’ disgruntlement. Predictably, Gabriel Allon does not heed the warning issued to him personally by the head of Operations at the Office directly preceding the events with Leah and al-Khalifa:

“It’s been my experience that field agents don’t take well to the discipline of headquarters. In the field, they’re a law unto themselves, but in here, I’m the law.”

“I’ll try to keep that in mind, sheriff.”

“Don’t fuck this up,” Lev said as Gabriel headed toward the open door.

Similarly, Allon fails to consult his superiors for orders when he decides to single-handedly liberate the captive Elizabeth Halton from the terrorists’ hands in TSS. The hero’s initiative goes unappreciated by mentor Ari Shamron, who feels that Allon had “left us with no choice but to proceed” and fulfil the promise of help which the hero made to the Americans. Besides exhibiting tendencies towards insubordination, Allon is also a hero who is thoroughly unaccustomed to negotiations and prefers decisive action. In addition, he openly declares that he is not a team player and vastly prefers to carry out missions on his own: “I don’t play well with others,” he says, and this is consistent with the other heroes’ individualistic and loner tendencies. Allon is the definition of the individualist loner hero, fully conforming to the archetypal model.

The traits delineated above are also evident in Koretskiy’s characters. Alexei Mal’tsev, a member of the Sword of Nemesis, is fired from his elite police division for

199 Silva, *POF* 261-262; 317.
200 Silva, *POF* 64.
201 Silva, *TSS* 345.
202 Silva, *TSS* 153.
203 Silva, *TSS* 17.
the failure to follow orders. Yet, it is precisely because of it that Vitaliy Karpenko decides to recruit him. Mal’tsev was participating in the efforts to resolve a hostage situation in a bank when his partner and he received the order to abort the mission. However, the hero makes the decision to proceed on his own (with his partner passively endorsing it but not joining in), and Mal’tsev’s improvisation results in the death and capture of all the criminals and the injury of several civilians.204 Were it not for civilian casualties, Major Mal’tsev might only have faced a formal reprimand for insubordination, but he is instead punished by his superiors. He is extremely defiant in defending his decisions:

“You have violated a direct order of your superiors, Major […]. As a result, two hostages are dead and two are wounded…”

“The first hostage had been killed before I even got involved,” said Alexei, glaring at his commander.

[…] “In fact, had I followed the order, there would have been many more casualties!” continued Mal’tsev stubbornly. “The terrorists would have begun to systematically gun the hostages down until no one was left!”

Mal’tsev’s indignation does him a disservice with his superiors on the police force, but the hero is too individualistic, free-thinking and insubordinate to meekly seek penance and stay in his job. In one final outburst before he is fired, Alexei Mal’tsev loses control and yells at the superior officers that he is not “a heartless, soulless and mute robot” who would unquestioningly carry out even the most senseless orders but an experienced officer who has the right to see things differently when on the ground (as opposed to sitting behind a desk at an institution).205 Despite costing him the job, individualism and self-reliance prove to be Mal’tsev’s biggest advantages: he is rewarded for his opinions, as these are the qualities Vitaliy Karpenko looks for in candidates for the Sword of Nemesis. Similarly to the American narratives, anti-establishment rhetoric and rebellion against the system contribute to the characterisation of Mal’tsev as an individualist hero.

204 Koretskiy, MN 33-34.
205 Koretskiy, MN 84-85.
206 Koretskiy, MN 85.
Such rebelliousness distinguishes him from other (non-heroic) characters and strengthens the image of the archetypal hero.

While being tested for appropriateness for service on the nuclear train, Alexandr Kudasov demonstrates clear potential for insubordination and free thinking. Kudasov is asked whether he would carry out any and every order of his superiors, and although he replies affirmatively, the polygraph records insincerity. The officers administering the test explain this as a positive tendency towards critical and independent thinking, thus endorsing the hero’s individualism. At the end of the novel, when precisely this skill is required of Kudasov, he is the only member of the team who does not hesitate to act, and his actions prove to be justified and appreciated. In such a way, Alexandr Kudasov proves himself as a self-reliant loner hero despite how implausible (cowardly, weak of character) a heroic protagonist he seemed at the beginning of AP.

Koretskiy’s Max Kardanov appears equally unlikely – at first – to become the hero who would eventually save Russia’s capital from a devastating attack but turns out to be a loner hero, as well. There is not much evidence of Kardanov’s tendencies towards insubordination, as the hero does not follow any verbal orders throughout the narrative but rather those subconsciously pre-programmed. Nevertheless, Max Kardanov feels it to be his duty to stop the group of terrorists whatever the cost, and he is at the same time acutely aware of the fact that he will be forced to do this without relying on anybody else’s help: “Judging by the fact that the terrorists had not been apprehended at the institute, the mission failed. Security operatives have lost the terrorists’ trail. It seemed that the responsibility of stopping them was entirely his now. He could not allow the terrorists to reach Moscow with the nuclear device in their possession; he had to prevent this from happening.” The hero’s superior skills and initiative later allow him to seize the opportunity and succeed at thwarting Bekmuzayev’s and his associates’

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207 Koretskiy, AP, vol. 1 236.  
208 Koretskiy, AP, vol. 2 269.  
209 Koretskiy, KV 425.
Initiative, individualism and insubordination are thus demonstrated to be some of the key traits in the construction of the archetypal hero. Perhaps paradoxically, these characters’ rebellious qualities make them the perfect instruments to further the dominant Self-Other paradigm of the government-led ‘war on terror’. Indeed, part of their strength as heroes is their prescient recognition of its necessity.

f. Justifying Violence and War

As I indicated earlier, there is an inextricable link between the concepts of heroism and war. Due to the nature of their work, these heroes view themselves as soldiers in a war against terrorism, and this is especially true for Rapp, Allon and Corey. Allon deems himself one of the few to have been fighting terrorism in Israel and outside it – mainly in Europe – for thirty years; although he wishes he could have lived out his life peacefully as an art restorer or an artist, he is convinced that this would have to remain a hobby as long as the world is plagued by terrorism and his primary calling continues to be in demand.211 The heroes are certain that the world is not aware or appreciative enough of the gravity of this global conflict or the lengths special operatives have to go to regularly in order to safeguard this blissful ignorance. John Corey is especially critical of the tendency to underestimate terrorism. In his opinion, prior to 9/11 the American government erroneously did not give this threat enough credit: “The bottom line on international terrorism was, as I said, that no one wanted to give it the status of a war. Compared to the Cold War and nuclear Armageddon, terrorism was a gnat on an elephant’s ass. Or so they thought in Washington.”212 Corey is proven right at the end of NF, when the 9/11 attacks occur and the world ‘awakens’ to the threat which terrorists pose. Mitch Rapp is equally uncompromising about branding his struggle against terrorism a ‘war’. The very methods which Flynn’s hero employs against terrorists (torture, executions without trial and covert assassinations among others) are

210 Koretskiy, KV 501.
211 Silva, TSS 18.
212 DeMille, NF 229.
consistent with his belief that he operates in a permanent war zone. The war on terrorism is Rapp’s ultimate justification for ignoring basic human rights in his job and acting contrary to his orders.

In fact, the argument for justifying violence within the framework of the war on terrorism dominates the narratives under analysis in this section. Furthermore, there is a trend of classifying the attacks in these novels under two polar opposites: the warranted aggression on the part of the hero and his country as opposed to the unwarranted brutality of the terrorists. Interestingly, both sides display similar attitudes: this is a war in which any violent methods are allowed.

Vince Flynn meticulously constructs this discourse in his works through the character of Mitch Rapp, who is the most vocal advocate of justified violence on his own part as well as on the part of the USA in general. From early on in his formative period towards becoming America’s most skilled assassin, not only does Rapp lack reservations about becoming a killer, but he also welcomes it. Moreover, the hero views his fantasies about killing terrorists as righteous and justified in view of the personal loss he had experienced in the Pan Am Lockerbie attack. In Rapp’s opinion expressed below, whether murder is a crime depends entirely on the context, and the elimination of those who commit atrocities should not be considered psychologically unhealthy:

“It’s all in the context.”

[...] Rapp thought about it for a moment and then said, “If I’m lying awake at night thinking about killing the guy who broke into my car and ripped me off, it’s probably safe to say that I have some anger issues, and a poor grasp of what constitutes just punishment.” Rapp put his tanned arm over the back of the chair and looked out the window for a second, wondering how much he should admit. “But if I lie awake at night thinking about sticking a knife through the eye socket of a terrorist who’s killed a couple hundred innocent civilians,” Rapp shrugged, “I think that’s probably not so far out there.”

213 Flynn, AA 107.
214 Flynn, AA 108.
It is with this mind-set that Mitch Rapp sets out on his decades-long quest to avenge the loss of his high school sweetheart and all the other innocent victims of terrorism. However, the hero does not call his sentiments ‘revenge’ but rather ‘retribution’: he defines the latter as “a punishment that is morally right and fully deserved,” which perhaps is an interpretation stemming from his personal religious beliefs (as a Catholic).²¹⁵ It is important to note here that although Flynn clearly states Rapp’s religious affiliation in AA, the author does not elaborate further on this in relation to the hero’s profession or motives. Apart from this brief reference to Rapp’s faith, it does not become a constant theme in justifying his violence against terrorists.²¹⁶ His own practices are thus explained in terms of collective and political rather than personal and religious motives. The terms ‘moral’ and ‘immoral’ derive from religious vocabulary, and they are consistently used to describe the ‘war on terrorism’. As discussed in the first chapter, “new terrorism” is central to this discourse, and it is branded irrational and immoral.²¹⁷ Such labelling helps legitimise the war on terror of recent (one may argue, contemporary) history. In the case of the fictions analysed, the same reasoning applies, coupled with the archetypal hero’s sense of honour and duty. Justified violence against terrorists enhances the hegemonic masculine model of the hero, while the Other’s masculinity is diminished by his resort to arbitrariness. The hero’s violence is always characterised by its secularism, while the terrorists’ is based on religion, emphasising the contrast between the reason of the Self and the fanaticism of the Other.

For a more mature Mitch Rapp, justice and violence become inextricable concepts, the connection between which is not open for debate. Rapp firmly believes that the best method of countering aggression is by using the same means as the enemy instead of political debate and sanctions.²¹⁸ More importantly, the hero sees himself as the defender of his nation against the “zealots who would stop at nothing to impose their

²¹⁵ Flynn, AA 110.
²¹⁶ For further examples of Rapp’s righteous statements on the subject of eliminating terrorists in AA, see pages: 182-183; 198-199; 212-213.
²¹⁷ Jackson, “Knowledge” 71-72.
²¹⁸ Flynn, PAD 86; 88.
narrow interpretation of the Koran, and that included the detonation of a nuclear warhead in the center of a civilian population.” Rapp does not elaborate on how, in his opinion, bombing a major city would help with the popularisation of an extreme version of Islam, but he certainly takes this as an ultimate justification for hunting down terrorists. The pretext of war remains a central and constant concept for Rapp’s noble battles in Flynn’s narratives:

Rapp held no illusions about who he was, or what he did. He’d been at war with radical Islam a good ten years before the country even knew there was a war. He’d threatened, beaten, tortured, and killed so many men it was hopeless to even attempt a tally. During all of that, though, he’d clung to the conviction that he was very different from the enemy. As strange as it would seem to many in a civilized society, he was able to live with what he did because of whom he did it to. Unlike the people he hunted, Rapp made every effort to make sure noncombatants stayed exactly that. Women and children were strictly off-limits. Thankfully, in the chauvinistic world of radical Islam, this was far easier to accomplish than one would think. The men Rapp hunted, however, made no such distinction. In fact, they sought out the innocent to amplify their terror.

Flynn’s hero is unapologetic about the cruel acts he had committed throughout the years of his employment as the CIA’s top secret assassin, and he sees himself as a morally upright warrior in a conflict spanning decades. Rapp makes a clear moral distinction between himself and terrorists despite their similar approaches: the hero, unlike his enemies, only kills the guilty. Rapp is fighting this war on the side and on behalf of the good and morally upright, and therefore his means are entirely justifiable. His strength of character, ‘morality’ and ruthlessness towards the enemy solidify him as a representative of archetypal heroic masculinity.

Although Rapp’s violence is presented as an instrument of justice, this does not prevent him from taking an almost sadistic satisfaction in torturing and murdering the subjects of his ‘righteous indignation’. Given the time and opportunity, the hero enjoys

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219 Flynn, *MD* 123.
220 Flynn, *PAD* 329.
221 For further evidence, see: Flynn, *PAD* 87-88; 301; 303; *MD* 135; 204; 265; 537.
nothing more than tormenting the terrorists he captures; while the same actions on the part of the villains are thoroughly condemned (as aimed against civilians), Rapp’s violence is seen as positive and proportionate:

Rapp would never tell one of the shrinks this, but he had found almost nothing more satisfying than tracking down a man who had the blood of innocent people on his hands and punching his ticket. If it had to be a head shot from a half a mile, so be it. If it meant painting a target with a laser so an American jet could drop a 500-pound bomb on the idiot’s head, fine, but if he had his choice he preferred close proximity. Rapp wanted to look them in the eye while it dawned on them that their pathetic life was coming to a painful conclusion. His victims were thugs and bullies who thought of themselves as brave because they loaded a car with explosives and then conned some delusional teenager with a death wish into driving it into a building or crowded market.

[…] These were the animals Rapp hunted. Men who had no respect for human life and consequently would be afforded none in return.\(^{222}\)

The justification for such sadistic treatment of terrorists lies largely within the rationalisation that they are beyond humanity: indeed, the villains in these novels are systematically dehumanised as characters and are therefore fair game for the heroes’ acts of ‘retribution’. This is a theme which is elaborated on in the following chapter, but it is also important to note here in the context of justified violence. Needless to add, since Rapp sees the “thugs and bullies” as inhuman, he does not hesitate to inflict great suffering on them: in various instances across the series, the hero has the terrorists physically mutilated, beaten to a pulp, intimidated and executed without qualms.\(^{223}\) Rapp’s moral self-image does not suffer as a result of these actions, nor does he “feel the slightest bit of regret or guilt.”\(^{224}\) On the contrary, Rapp’s uncompromising enforcement of justice is one of the key features of his status as a hero.

Like Rapp, Gabriel Allon believes in achieving justice by killing the perpetrators of terrorist acts. In Shamron’s words, the hero is “Israel’s avenging angel of death” who

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\(^{222}\) Flynn, *PAD* 184-185.

\(^{223}\) Flynn, *PAD* 273; 264; 392; 402-403; *MD* 117; 149; 440.

\(^{224}\) Flynn, *MD* 139.
does not question the morality of counterterrorism as long as it doles out what he sees as proportionate justice.\textsuperscript{225} For Allon, no viable alternative in the form of peace exists; the only solution is to safeguard the security of his country by any means possible, which include the hunting down of those deemed a threat.\textsuperscript{226} Moreover, Silva’s hero freely admits that he is mostly motivated by sentiments of vengeance and that he does “hold grudges.”\textsuperscript{227} On his famous first assignment following the Munich Olympics, the murder of Sabri al-Khalifa is not simply an execution for Allon. On the contrary, the feelings with which he carries out his mission are deeply personal, and this becomes all the more evident due to the fact that the terrorist is shot more times than is strictly necessary. Allon explains, “I put ten shots in him, then released the magazine and rammed my backup into the butt. It had only one round, the eleventh. One round for every Jew Sabri murdered at Munich. I put the barrel into his ear and fired.”\textsuperscript{228} For such a skilled marksman as Allon, one bullet from close range would have sufficed to eliminate al-Khalifa, but the hero is determined to make a symbolic statement of revenge to serve as warning to others planning terrorist attacks.

In the context of the war with terrorism, Allon suggests that neither he nor his country ever “have a choice” but to fight back – or risk being obliterated.\textsuperscript{229} This echoes the Israeli government’s oft-repeated legitimation of its military aggression as self-defence and a foundation of its very existence. Thus, violence on the part of Gabriel Allon, like in Rapp’s case, is positioned as ultimately morally justified; in fact, it is a question of survival. Unlike Flynn’s hero, Allon does not have a tendency towards torture unless it is absolutely necessary. The Israeli secret operative believes that employing physical and psychological torture puts him and his colleagues on a par with the terrorists as well as with undemocratic Arab states like Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, which are described as operating merciless security apparatuses designed to

\textsuperscript{225} Silva, \textit{TSS} 281; \textit{TM} 225.
\textsuperscript{226} Silva, \textit{TM} 31.
\textsuperscript{227} Silva, \textit{TM} 108; 429.
\textsuperscript{228} Silva, \textit{POF} 96.
\textsuperscript{229} Silva, \textit{TM} 408.
keep the population in check. Eliminating terrorists swiftly and efficiently, however, is a necessity, and it sows fear within the enemy ranks: “I’m afraid killing is our only recourse. We have to kill the monsters before they kill us. And not with boots on the ground [...] because that only gives the terrorists another moral victory when we invade their territory. The killing has to take place in the shadows, where no one can see it. We have to hunt them down ruthlessly. We have to terrorize them.”230 Once again, this passage urges the reader to believe that the persecution of terrorists is not a willing choice on the hero’s part but an unfortunate necessity, and Allon and his colleagues are repeatedly provoked into ruthless action as a preventive measure; the only way of stopping the enemy is to utilise their own methods against them and to inspire profound trepidation. The necessity and ‘grudging’ acceptance of violence confirm Allon’s honour and emphasise his archetypal heroism.

John Corey becomes a very strong advocate of justified and preventive violence after he is personally affected by the events of 9/11. He did not have a definitive opinion on the matter in NF, but from the outset of WF, Corey begins outspokenly promoting the attitude that in the fight with “Islamic terrorism” no holds should be barred: “[S]ince 9/11, a lot of people in law enforcement have adopted the Corey Method, meaning the ends justify the means.”231 If targeted assassinations can prevent a large number of deaths, then this is the most logical course of action, according to DeMille’s hero. Discussing the topic of the looming war with Iraq, Corey’s opinion is that both the conflict and the inevitable ensuing loss of life could easily be prevented by the elimination of key Iraqi figures: “I think we can avoid a war by taking out Saddam and his psychopathic sons with a sniper team or a few cruise missiles” and “save the wars for when we need them.”232 This could be seen as another instance of rebellious critique of US policy, but John Corey proves to ultimately have a similar attitude towards justified

230 Silva, TSS 198-199; emphasis in the original.
231 DeMille, WF 308.
232 DeMille, WF 166-167.
violence to Allon and Rapp, confirming it as a common sentiment among archetypal action-thriller heroes.

In Koretskiy’s MN, the heroes share the profession as well as the attitude with the protagonists of Flynn’s, Silva’s and DeMille’s works. The counterterrorist group as a unit as well as the individual members of the Sword of Nemesis are unconditionally licensed by the authorities (here, the group is a joint initiative of the heads of states and governments of Russia, the USA, the UK, Spain and France) to utilise any means necessary to combat terrorism. This includes the common acceptance of the knowledge that members of this group would be routinely bending or breaking the law on their missions. The delivery of justice by means of frequently disproportionate violence is fully approved: “Officially, the Sword of Nemesis would not exist. Strictly speaking, the group’s activities would not fit within the bounds of international law. Or local law, for that matter…” The methods employed by the Sword of Nemesis are even more aggressive than those of Israeli intelligence in Silva, but they occur at a temporal juncture when “everyone was fed up with empty words”; hence the solution to the problem of terrorism “must be radical and inherently innovative.”

During the course of the novel, members of the group employ kidnapping, torture, intimidation, humiliation and murder in order to secure their victories: the Sword of Nemesis are lauded and rewarded for successfully assassinating a suicide bomber on a commuter bus in southern Russia and freeing a group of Russian hostages from the grip of a brutal terrorist organisation in the Middle East. In such a way and across the works of all the authors, justice and violence are combined into one essential attribute for the hero. The heroes thus embody Moore and Gillette’s “warrior in his fullness,” combining their sadist (inflicting violence on terrorists) and masochist (extremely brave and self-sacrificial) tendencies into a morally just and honourable archetypal model.

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233 Koretskiy, MN 163.
234 Koretskiy, MN 76.
235 Koretskiy, MN 344.
g. Female Characters

In relation to the masculine archetypal image crafted by these works, it is important to address the female characters’ representation relative to the heroes. Across this body of works, women’s participation in the plot and the progression of the narrative varies, but the focus remains primarily on the male hero. Most often, the female characters are relegated to the role of the hero’s romantic partner, or – more rarely – they could also be portrayed as the protagonists’ colleagues and/or superiors. Despite or perhaps because of such ‘non-traditional’ characterisations, they confirm the hero’s masculinity and fail to advance their own narrative, instead complementing the protagonist’s story. They tend also to buttress a traditional patriarchal and heterosexualised gender system based on clear assignments of duties and spaces to females versus males, which may further underpin the radically conservative outlook discernible in some of these fictions.

Firstly, career and family life are presented as polar opposites for women characters: success in one aspect usually leads to deterioration in the other. A prime example of this is Irene Kennedy, the director of the CIA and Mitch Rapp’s direct supervisor. Kennedy is a strong-willed middle-aged woman with impressive credentials (“Ph.D. in Arabic studies”), and “[s]he also happened to be the youngest person to ever run the American spy agency and the first woman.”

Kennedy also has direct personal experience in living in the Middle East, as she had lived in Beirut – where her father had been killed in the 1983 US Embassy bombing – as a young woman. It is, therefore, more than a little surprising to see such a motivated and qualified young woman (here, at the beginning of her career when she recruits Rapp in the prequel, AA) satisfied with being a desk CIA officer who researches new recruits like Rapp instead of working in the field. In addition to this, Kennedy does not challenge the opinion voiced in her

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236 These novels contain few women characters, so I address all of them at once instead of focusing on only a selection.
237 Flynn, PAD 201.
238 Flynn, AA 19.
presence by a colleague that field work “is pretty much an exclusively all-men’s club,” but she seemingly accepts it by “smil[ing] to let him know she wasn’t offended.”

More tellingly, the future director of the CIA freely admits that emotions are a weakness and that she should be more skilled at controlling them. Despite the author’s attempt at including a female character in a position of power in his series, he fails to avoid the incorporation of feminine stereotypes in the construction of the character. The employment of such traditional gender descriptions solidifies Rapp’s masculinity and hero status. It also confirms that the ‘war on terrorism’ is a man’s prerogative; the woman, even one in a position of power, necessarily remains at home (the feminine motherland/private sphere) while the hero goes outside (abroad/the public sphere) to protect her.

Irene Kennedy’s professional career always stands in opposition to her family life. Kennedy has a son, Tommy, whom she fails to see regularly due to the obligations of her high-profile position. It is thus unsurprising in the context of this narrative that the director of the CIA is a divorced single mother who has trouble finding time to spend with her son, and it routinely results in failed plans and broken promises:

> Kennedy was running on a few hours’ sleep. After landing at Andrews Air Force base the day before, she had hopped a helicopter out to Langley, where she worked until 11:00. Her driver took her home. She thanked her mother for watching her son, Tommy, kissed the sleeping boy on the forehead, and then grabbed five hours of sleep, before waking up, kissing her still-sleeping son on the forehead again, and then heading back to the office, all before the sun was up. This was, unfortunately, more common than she would have liked. The director of the CIA didn’t mind the work, but she did mind being away from her son.

In order to maintain her position in what is typically perceived to be a masculine work environment, Kennedy works “sixty hours a week minimum” and is often forced to sacrifice planned family time for duty: “She and Tommy and her mother had plans to

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239 Flynn, AA 190.
240 Flynn, AA 217.
241 Flynn, PAD 124.
visit cousins at the shore. It would be a weekend of sun, surf, and fun. The perfect way to kick off the start of summer. At least she hoped it would be, even though she knew there was a good chance duty would call and her mother and Tommy would spend the weekend at the shore without her.”

This is not to say that Kennedy is not proud of her achievements, as she firmly believes that “in the old days they would never have let [women] out of the secretarial pool.” Indeed, Rapp’s boss considers the women of her culture to be much more fortunate than their peers in “the Muslim extremist culture […] dominated by bigoted men stuck in the Middle Ages.” In short, Kennedy professionally succeeds in Flynn’s narrative, but it detracts from her traditional gender role as a mother. This emphasises that a female character is incapable of being simultaneously successful at home and work, so she must choose one at the expense of the other. At the same time, her profile serves as a convenient point to distinguish the Self’s gender practices from those of the enemy which I refer to in the next chapter – long a feature of Western rhetoric on Arab- and/or Muslim-majority societies.

Despite her purportedly strong character, Irene Kennedy does not avoid being portrayed as a damsel in distress in need of rescue by the hero. When Kennedy is kidnapped by Hezbollah terrorists during a visit to Iraq (a dangerous venture outside the ‘home’ sphere of her own country for which she pays dearly), her only hope of salvation lies in the certitude that Mitch Rapp is doing all that is in his power to find and free her. Her hopes are realised towards the end of the novel – Rapp powers through a multitude of enemies just in time to save Kennedy from being brutally gang-raped by terrorists. Instead of writing a balanced female character, Flynn resorts to stereotypical gender roles to offset and strengthen his male character and depicts Kennedy as the passive symbol of Rapp’s honour.

Rapp’s strongest relationship with a woman may be his relationship with his immediate superior, Irene Kennedy, but his romantic relationships are generally not as

243 Flynn, *PAD* 143.
244 Flynn, *PAD* 140.
245 Flynn, *PAD* 289.
successful. As a woman who has more (theoretical) power than Rapp, Kennedy is never shown to be a potential romantic interest. The hero prefers relationships in which he can exercise authority and thus emphasise his masculinity in a hierarchized patriarchal mode. Rapp’s wife, Anna Rielly, whom he meets in the series opener, *Transfer of Power*, only significantly appears in this one work and is later relegated to the back scenes of the narrative until she is killed by Rapp’s enemies in *Consent to Kill*. Rapp is a loner hero by definition and although he sometimes admits to his loneliness, he is convinced that “he had been a fool to think he could settle down and have a family” due to the nature of his job.246 Rapp’s short-lived romantic involvement with former Secret Service agent Maria Rivera is also only very briefly addressed in *PAD* when the pair is on assignment together. Rivera is supposed to be the primary operative on the mission, but, despite her being described as a perfectly capable law enforcement agent, her leadership is swiftly undermined by Rapp’s lack of trust in her ability to efficiently execute the assassination.247 The hero hijacks the plan and secretly performs the killing himself without Rivera’s knowledge. These examples do not indicate balanced or healthy relationships with women on Rapp’s part. Such female characters, seen to be successfully dominated by the hero, serve to reaffirm his masculinity, individualism and loner status. The privilege of dominant masculinity shows in the hero’s assumption that he need not ever provide information or share knowledge with his female counterpart.

Another – arguably more successful – portrayal of a strong woman is found in DeMille’s John Corey series. The character in question is Corey’s second wife, Kate Mayfield. Mayfield is her husband’s superior in the ATTF and has a higher security clearance (and hence credibility).248 Furthermore, the power dynamics in the Corey-Mayfield relationship are more balanced due to the characters’ more equal and similar personal characteristics: by the hero’s own admission, “Kate Mayfield is about as

246 Flynn, *PAD* 2.
248 DeMille, *WF* 19.
emotional as I am, which is to say not very.” However, the author’s necessary reference to Mayfield’s lack of emotionality simply to distinguish her from other, ‘traditional’ women seems to be an endorsement of traditional gender roles and feminine stereotypes. It claims the inferiority of such a trait as emotionality and implies that masculinity (here, Mayfield is allowed to relate to it) is superior in its assumed disinclination towards sentimentality. In addition to her tempered emotions, Corey describes his wife to be as competitive as he is and also, perhaps, more intelligent: “I think we’re both very competitive, and this is what keeps our relationship so interesting. Also, one of us is an immature idiot, and the other is not, so we sort of complement each other, like an alpha male baboon and his female trainer.” Kate Mayfield is also higher on the career ladder than the hero and carries a bigger weapon. Corey comments on this, “Hers is bigger than mine, but I’m a very secure guy, so it doesn’t bother me much.” Once more, Mayfield’s purported masculinisation is not deemed a threat to the hero precisely due to his own exaggerated masculinity, which solidifies his archetypal hero status. On the surface, the couple’s relationship seems to be fairly symmetrical, and John Corey is devoted to Kate Mayfield who is “in no particular order, my wife, my partner, my lawyer, my immediate supervisor, and an FBI agent.” Yet, the hero still oftentimes resents being managed by his wife and prefers to be her equal partner: for instance, Corey becomes confrontational when he finds out that Mayfield had been discussing his assignments with the heads of the ATTF without the hero’s knowledge. The hero wants to be in control despite his wife’s higher job status.

John Corey – a self-admitted macho and alpha male – is not immune to stereotyping women in general and his wife in particular. In the following passage, Corey comments on the unerring ability of ‘womanly’ items to attract even Kate Mayfield’s attention:

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249 DeMille, NF 31.
250 DeMille, WF 119.
251 DeMille, NF 145.
252 DeMille, WF 426.
253 DeMille, WF 173-174.
We entered the building, which was the resort office and also a gift shop selling Adirondack artwork and some pricey-looking apparel, which caught Kate’s attention.

Women, I’ve noticed, are easily distracted by clothing stores, and I was certain that the ladies on the Titanic stopped at the ship’s apparel shop for the Half-Price Sinking Sale on their way to the lifeboats. Although such comments are infrequent in DeMille’s works, they temper his characterisation of ‘strong’ women through repeated gender stereotyping and once again buttress the figure of the ultra-masculine hero.

Romantic partnerships with women in these novels confirm the hero’s heterosexuality and masculinity. The protagonist is necessarily the dominant partner in the relationship, which strengthens his hero status. There is less focus on Gabriel Allon’s personal relationships with female characters in Silva’s series of novels. As indicated earlier, throughout the three examined works Allon remains married to his wife Leah, who was critically injured during the attack aimed at the hero and ordered by Yasir Arafat many years prior to the events of the novels. Allon continues to be dutiful to Leah by refusing to divorce or abandon her, but, at the same time and due to the requirements of his job, he keeps her at a remote care facility. Gabriel Allon remains married to his wife largely because of feelings of guilt regarding his family bearing the brunt of the consequences of his job. At the same time, the hero is romantically involved with a colleague of his, an Italian Jewish woman named Chiara Zolli. Due to their similar occupations and his lover’s almost constant absence to perform assignments, it is fair to assume that their relationship is somewhat on an equal footing, but there is little narrative space devoted to elaborating it. Despite the delay, Allon and Zolli’s relationship eventually leads to their marriage at the end of TSS.

Another recurring female character in Silva’s novels is Sarah Bancroft, an American CIA agent who helps Allon and his team find Ahmed bin Shafiq in TM.

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254 DeMille, *WF* 347.
255 Silva, *POF* 40-41.
256 For examples of exchanges between Gabriel Allon and Chiara Zolli, see: Silva, *TM* 87; 177.
257 Silva, *TSS* 431-432.
Bancroft starts out as an inexperienced museum curator who had been personally affected by terrorism. Her college boyfriend had been a passenger on one of the planes which were flown into the World Trade Centre in New York on 9/11 (another instance of anchoring the narrative in historical fact). Following these events, she decides to apply to the CIA in order to join the war on terrorism but is rejected for being “[t]oo independent-minded” and “a bit too smart for her own good.”

However, when Allon later interviews her as a potential candidate for an operation involving undercover work in the entourage of Saudi Arabian businessman and supporter of terrorism Zizi al-Bakari, the hero finds her uncompromising belief in the world being “a bit too black and white” instead of “shades of gray” an asset in his fight against terrorism. Moreover, Bancroft shares Allon’s opinion that terrorists “should be dealt with harshly” – by means of “[m]en in black. Special forces. A Hellfire missile fired from a plane without a pilot.”

Sarah Bancroft is trained by Allon and his team of advisors and analysts to work undercover and becomes fairly successful due to her positive identification of the target, Ahmed bin Shafiq. Despite her training, Bancroft is not skilled enough to maintain her cover identity and is soon detected. She becomes the abused captive of bin Shafiq, thus requiring Allon to come to her rescue. Similarly to Flynn’s Irene Kennedy, the characterisation of Sarah Bancroft as an empowered woman is undermined by the necessity of being delivered from her predicament by the hero. The damsel in distress scenario is once more consistent with the traditional gender roles assigned to Bancroft and Allon.

By far the most stereotypically negative portrayal of a woman character among these novels is Alexandr Kudasov’s love interest and subsequent wife, Oksana Monachkova. At the beginning of Koretsky’s AP, Kudasov is naively and blindly in love with Monachkova, who is routinely cheating on him with a wealthy businessman older than her father. She is physically attractive and is nicknamed “Barbie” by her elderly

258 Silva, TM 187-188.
259 Silva, TM 194.
260 Silva, TM 195.
lover: “Oksana Monachkova was twenty-two and looked very appetising. She was of medium height and had a neat slim figure: a flat tummy, small breasts with pink nipples, round hips, pert bottom and flawless legs.”

To add to this derogatory description from an entirely masculine and voyeuristic perspective (the description is made as the naked Oksana admires herself in the mirror), the hero’s love interest is a shallow woman who chooses a marriage of convenience based on the consideration that Kudasov is a reliable and trustworthy young man with potential. Later in the novel, when Kudasov’s service on the nuclear train takes priority over his wife, she becomes petulant and irate and returns to the arms of her elderly businessman lover. Finally, Oksana’s newest lover, a CIA undercover agent seeking to gain access to information about the nuclear train, incites her to use her ‘womanly wiles’ to extract information from the hero. Needless to say, when Alexandr Kudasov finds out about his wife’s betrayal, he leaves her, and she flees her hometown in distress to face an unknown and possibly unfortunate fate. The disloyal housewife is punished for her indiscretions, while the hero remains unperturbed and is vindicated. The blame for the infidelity and the dissolution of the marriage is laid squarely on the female character, showing her to possess stereotypical traits of a femme fatale: she is calculating, manipulative, unfaithful and utterly unlikeable.

Koretskiy briefly mentions another female character, Max Kardanov’s wife, and it is an equally stereotypical portrayal. Anna Thompson, a British-born woman of Russian heritage is attractive, tall, blonde and a model housewife who runs Kardanov’s household in London and mothers his child. In her spare time from traditional wifely duties, the wealthy Anna spends her time and her husband’s money shopping for luxury fashion items and groceries in London’s Harrods. After this brief appearance at the beginning of the novel, Anna Thompson does not have any apparent involvement in

261 Koretskiy, AP, vol. 1 129-130.
262 Koretskiy, AP, vol. 1 256.
263 Koretskiy, AP, vol. 1 185; vol. 2 120.
264 Koretskiy, AP, vol. 2 27.
265 Koretskiy, KV 67-69.
Kardanov’s fate, and she only reappears at the end of the narrative in order to dutifully concede to the hero’s decision to uproot their London life and move to Moscow. By this, Koretskiy confirms his stereotypical and utterly unimaginative portrayal of women in these novels and relegates his female character to traditional gender roles. This analysis suggests that such stereotypical characterisations are common and, indeed, necessary to the genre of these works. For, the women characters discussed above are necessarily written to solidify the hero’s status and masculinity, rather than challenge it: the protagonist is thus empowered and rendered more believable as the archetypal hero.

4. Conclusion

Throughout the analysis, I have indicated how descriptions of the hero, his actions and speeches that strengthen his image are further enhanced by various framing strategies. The authors utilise these to make their narratives more believable and solidify the archetypal hero model. These strategies include the detailing of non-archetypal traits and weaknesses which simultaneously contradict the stereotype and, paradoxically, make it stronger and more believable. For example, Allon’s artistic sensitivity and Kudasov’s initial fear and weakness of character render their otherwise consistent displays of heroism much more striking and remarkable – as if their overcoming of these ‘unmasculine’ vulnerabilities is a heroic act in itself. Another strategy of framing is the recognition of heroic qualities by the antagonist, as in the cases of Rapp, Kardanov and Allon detailed above. When even the enemy acknowledges the hero’s worth, the protagonist’s characterisation is reinforced and made more real. The fact that heroic masculinity is unthreatened by women characters in a higher/more powerful position is one more strategy. In the specific case of DeMille’s works, first-person narration also serves as a device to render the hero more authentic and relatable.

But perhaps the most pronounced framing strategy is the authors’ systematic grounding of their fictional narratives in real historical facts, events and figures. Just as Flynn ties Rapp’s story to the catalyst represented by losing his high school sweetheart
in the Lockerbie bombing or Silva has Allon assassinate the perpetrators of the real Munich Olympics attack, Forsyth begins TA by recounting the facts of the 7 July 2005 London bombings.\textsuperscript{266} He also alludes to Ayman al-Zawahiri being the surgeon who saves young Izmat Khan’s life and inserts a conversation between the two and Osama bin Laden into the novel.\textsuperscript{267} Not only does Silva give his characters names strikingly similar to real historical figures, but he also incorporates real personalities into the narrative, such as Yasir Arafat in POF. To give further examples, Danil Koretskiy gives genuine quotes by Donald Rumsfeld and a news media source as his epigraph to MN, both of which emphasise the importance of fighting and exterminating terrorists on their own soil.\textsuperscript{268} Not only does Nelson DeMille incorporate the 9/11 World Trade Centre destruction into John Corey’s fate as a major plot point in NF, but he also makes the crash of TWA flight 800 on 17 July 1996 the subject of Corey’s investigation in the novel.\textsuperscript{269} In WF, DeMille takes his claim to authenticity one step further by including real New York Times headlines and facts about “government security procedures” in the narrative, as the author declares in the preface.\textsuperscript{270} Moreover, some chapters in WF are preceded by anti-American quotes of Suleiman Abu Ghaith (spokesman for Osama bin Laden), which serve to reinforce the justification of anti-Muslim sentiment in the novel.\textsuperscript{271} This selective factual grounding is, then, an important component of the establishment of the novels’ authenticity and credibility. This framing strategy also validates the hero’s character by increasing the verisimilitude of the story; the protagonist is made more real, convincing and relatable as the archetypal hero model.

In sum, this chapter outlined the theoretical aspects of the construction of the archetypal image and its potential to influence the readership’s imagination in the space between the consciousness and the text. The model of the archetypal hero which I have

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{266} Forsyth 10.
\item \textsuperscript{267} Forsyth 130.
\item \textsuperscript{268} Koretskiy, MN 3.
\item \textsuperscript{269} DeMille, NF 571-573; front matter.
\item \textsuperscript{270} DeMille, WF 1-2.
\item \textsuperscript{271} DeMille, WF 123; 161.
\end{itemize}
traced across the works of Vince Flynn, Nelson DeMille, Frederick Forsyth, Daniel Silva and Danil Koretskiy displays this theory in action. Heroic character traits, such as individualism, honour, nationalism and justified violence, as well as their largely stereotypical relationships with women, all contribute to confirming the theory of the archetypal hero as a powerful and viable cultural image. Consequently, this archetypal image aids in the creation of a stereotype of the action-thriller hero, which is fundamentally opposed to the villain in these works. The following chapter builds on the points made above to discuss how the Self of the hero is opposed to the Other of the terrorist. Chapter three explores the characteristics of terrorists as they are depicted in the novels and tests the argument that the hero and the terrorist-villain are framed in binary oppositions which echo and serve the Self-Other dichotomised vision of these fictional worlds.
Chapter Three: Fictional Terrorists and the Obverse Archetype

If archetypal heroes are the main focus of these popular action-thriller novels, these highly masculine protagonists are not functional or viable without the conflict and contrast which the antagonists provide in the narrative. The negative characters in these instances are usually terrorists – Arab, Chechen or South Asian of origin and Muslim of religious persuasion. The traits such racialised characters exhibit are by and large diametrically opposed to those of the heroes, thus rendering them in a severely negative light which serves to further enhance the heroic masculinity of the main characters: the terrorists are backward while the heroes are progressive and civilised; the former are senseless and dumb while the latter are intelligent and self-reliant; the antagonists’ violence is arbitrary, sadistic and unprovoked while the protagonists’ responses are justified, righteous and necessary. This is not by far an exhaustive list of traits, and there is much to be said in regard to this extremely distinctive binary representation in the works of Flynn, DeMille, Silva, Forsyth and Koretskiy.

The argument I make in this chapter is that terrorist characters – as underrepresented as they are in these works – serve as the antithesis to the portrayals of the heroes. The analysis demonstrates how the heroic Self and terrorist Other are dichotomised by addressing the following points: the construction of the Self as a superior, courageous and resilient victim of terrorism, forced into just violence against the Other; the identification of the Other as Arab and Muslim – both outside the Western countries and within them; and the characterisation of the Other as backward, hateful, unjustifiably cruel, bordering on insane, hypocritical and disloyal. This analysis demonstrates how the construction of terrorist characters emphasises the archetypal hero’s masculinity and offsets it by providing a demonised Other.

At the outset, it is essential to note the linguistic and narrative framework within which terrorist characters are represented in these novels. As the passages analysed below overwhelmingly demonstrate, terrorist characters rarely represent themselves through their own dialogue and point of view. These antagonists are more often spoken
about by the hero and his associates or described by the third-person narrator sympathetic to the hero.\textsuperscript{1} There are few instances of direct dialogue where terrorists express themselves; rather, they are given voice through the third-person narrator whereby they appear to have twisted and violence-fixated minds.\textsuperscript{2} While the hero’s physique and actions are described at length, the terrorist’s physical appearance is mostly referred to when it alludes to his ethnic origin, indicates a disfigurement or refers to his dangerous mimicry of the West. Silva’s Ahmed bin Shafiq, for example can be distinguished by his withered right hand – a consequence of a shrapnel wound from a trip to Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{3} On the other hand, upon his first meeting with Sarah Bancroft, bin Shafiq poses as a refined and wealthy Lebanese man raised in France, whom an uninformed person would not suspect of being a ruthless terrorist.\textsuperscript{4}

There is indeed a focus (if not an obsession) in these novels on the image of a terrorist being able to pass for a ‘civilised’ Westerner – a chameleon terrorist. I explore this at greater length later in this chapter, but I note it here in relation to language and point of view. The depictions of such characters in the narratives imply a Western (Self’s) gaze, preoccupied with the penetration of its societies by an alien, hostile and undetected Other. Such characters are exemplified by Forsyth’s Ali Aziz al-Khattab (lecturer at Aston University), Flynn’s Imad Mukhtar (attempting to deceive Irene Kennedy into trusting him by putting on a friendly façade), Silva’s Ishaq Fawaz (Amsterdam-born and raised) and Koretskiy’s Saleh Kaiwan (supporter of Triumph of Islam residing and conducting business in France). These chameleon antagonists are all portrayed from the point of view of the hero as the most dangerous adversaries precisely due to their uncanny ability to appear almost indistinguishable from the Self, echoing the “mimic man” whom Homi Bhabha has described as a feature of colonial discourse. He,

\textsuperscript{1} For example, in passages analysed below Ahmed bin Shafiq is exclusively talked about by Gabriel Allon and Adrian Carter (Silva, \textit{TM} 116); in Flynn, the description of “Islamists” like Mustafa al-Yamani is monopolised by Rapp and his associates (\textit{AA} 144; \textit{MD} 100).
\textsuperscript{2} See Flynn, \textit{MD} 18; \textit{PAD} 356; Silva \textit{TM} 58; Forsyth 12-13.
\textsuperscript{3} Silva, \textit{TM} 131.
\textsuperscript{4} Silva, \textit{TM} 293.
like the chameleon terrorists appearing in these action-thrillers, is an Other who “is almost the same [as the coloniser], but not quite.”

The dangerous and subversive intentions of these terrorist-villains are exacerbated by their mimicry of the Self.

Such an indirect and wary representation is an alienating mechanism which contributes to the stereotyping of these characters. They are seen through the eyes of the ultimate winner – the hero with a righteous perception of the Self. The lack of their own representational voice renders terrorist characters little more than devices which frame the hegemonic masculine hero and endorse his authority to describe them. The antagonists’ negative actions also confirm the hero’s veracity as a judge of character and deliverer of due retribution, by which his characterisation is strengthened and his masculinity affirmed. The sections below illustrate this by analysing the relevant narrative points and character traits, while first returning to the broader construction of the Self.

1. Portrayals of a Glorified Self

In order to understand the framework within which terrorist characters exist in these thriller novels, it is important to first clarify how the heroes and their sense of Self as part of the Western ‘civilised world’ are constructed through the contextualisation of the narrative. Such a discourse uses factual as well as fictional information to emphasise the technological and moral superiority of the Self – American, Russian or Israeli – and the threatened state of ‘civilisation’ as a whole. Furthermore, these novels tend to lionise the ‘civilised world’ in general and the countries from which the heroes hail in particular, which in turn reinforces and feeds into the rhetoric of neo-imperialism discussed earlier. None of the authors are immune to the tendency towards Self-aggrandisement in order to further diminish the heroes’ opponents and the cultures from which they hail. Therefore, this section further elaborates on the descriptions and

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5 Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004) 122.
characterisations of the Self as they appear in the works of Vince Flynn, Daniel Silva, Nelson DeMille, Frederick Forsyth and Danil Koretskiy before moving on to the analysis of the depictions of antagonists.

As mentioned above, one of the most striking aspects of the discourse of the Self and the Other is the former’s idealisation and glorification. Whether it is Americans, Israelis or Russians, the depiction of the side of the ‘good’ lauds its overall superiority, whether it is in terms of morality, innocence, intelligence, self-reliance and heroism or technology and weaponry. Silva’s novels contribute an abundance of material to support this argument, which may largely be due to Gabriel Allon’s home country – Israel – being at the centre of these books. Silva’s discourse is structured in such a way as to present Israel as a mighty and self-reliant country whose existence is threatened, however, by Palestinians and whose plight is largely misunderstood even by their allies. This is consistent with some contemporary discourses, such as the dominant politics of the United States and the self-depiction of the Israeli government as righteous. In the following excerpt from POF, Allon’s mentor Ari Shamron argues that Israel and its people have historically been victimised and that they have been forced to inflict violence in order to ensure their own survival:

“Let me explain,” he said. “History dealt us a losing hand. In 1947, the United Nations decided to give us a scrap of land to found our new state. Remember, four-fifths of Mandatory Palestine had already been cut away to create the state of Transjordan. Eighty percent! Of the final twenty percent, the United Nations gave us half — ten percent of Mandatory Palestine, the Coastal Plain and the Negev. And still the Arabs said no. Imagine if they’d said yes. Imagine if they’d said yes in 1937, when the Peel Commission recommended partition. How many millions might we have saved? Your grandparents would still be alive. My parents and my sisters might still be alive. But what did the Arabs do? They said no, and they aligned themselves with Hitler and cheered our extermination.”

“Does that justify expelling them?”

“No, and that’s not the reason why we did it. They were expelled as a consequence of war, a war they initiated. The land the UN gave us contained five hundred thousand Jews and four hundred thousand
Arabs. Those Arabs were a hostile force, committed to our destruction. [...] They had to go.”

The rhetoric of historic Jewish plight is established through reference to facts such as that Israel was only given “ten percent of Mandatory Palestine,” but this passage fails to explain that Palestine was at the time governed by the British Empire or that it was not the Palestinians themselves who consented to this ‘land donation’. Even as Shamron states that the territory which Israel occupies at present was ‘given’ by the UN, he neglects to acknowledge any rightfulness of the land’s original inhabitants’ outrage. It is thus that the Self is legitimised as the blameless victim of the Arab Other.

Although Allon seemingly challenges Shamron’s point of view in this exchange, he nonetheless fully agrees with his superior elsewhere. Both the hero and his mentor see Israel as victimised for taking over a pitifully small area of land, and there seems to be no end in sight for the country’s woes. At the outset of the same novel, Allon contemplates a map of the world which shows the last known locations of Israel’s enemies – they are spread across the Middle East, Europe and North America – and feels somewhat overwhelmed and dejected when faced with the reality of the ceaseless fight he is but a participant in. Allon feels as if neither he nor his country can achieve definitive victory in this conflict: “Gabriel felt a sudden weight of depression pushing down against his shoulders. He had given his life to the protection of the State and the Jewish people, and yet here, in this frigid room, he was confronted with the stark reality of the Zionist dream: a middle-aged man, gazing upon a constellation of enemies, waiting for the next one to explode.”

Thus, the hero is depicted as the protector of the nation – a lonely and brave masculine figure safeguarding the feminine land and its people. This categorisation only further confirms Allon’s heroic status and establishes him as a masculine ideal.

The victimisation rhetoric is emphasised by Shamron’s lamentation for the “civilized world” which sides with Palestinians instead of Israelis, despite the former

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6 Silva, POF 387-388; emphasis in the original.
7 Silva, POF 70.
being a source of incessant terrorising of Israel.\(^8\) Importantly, Palestinian arguments are neither acknowledged seriously nor given any legitimacy in *POF*. On the contrary, Palestinian parties and authorities are repeatedly compared to the Nazi regime, as Allon’s assistant Dina Sarid claims that “[t]he only difference between Hamas and Hitler is that Hamas lacks the power and the means to carry out an extermination of the Jews. But they’re working on it.”\(^9\) Projecting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict onto the background of Nazism and the Holocaust invokes the victimisation of the Jews as the pretext and real-life justification of violence against Palestinians (read – terrorists), whose persecution is thus positioned by Silva’s narrative as a morally right and proportionate response by the more progressive Israeli Self.

As, according to Silva’s narratives, Israel is a nation besieged by enemies and possessing few allies, self-reliance becomes their ultimate “motto” and “belief system.”\(^10\) Gabriel Allon is thus the hero and paragon of self-reliance and individualism who is instrumental in upholding the nation’s superiority on the foreign intelligence and counter-terrorism scene. In an exchange with CIA agent Adrian Carter, Allon affirms Israel’s supremacy over the USA in matters of intelligence and security. What is more, Silva’s hero claims that it is precisely his country’s precarious position which is the biggest incentive for the creation of an exceptional security apparatus: “[W]e’re better than you, Adrian, especially in the Middle East. We’ve always been better and we always will be. You have your unquestioned military might and the power of your economy, but we have a nagging fear that we might not survive. Fear is a far more powerful motivation than money.”\(^11\) The discourse of survival found in these thriller novels is not inconsistent with real-life debate in some Western political rhetoric concerning the urgency to protect the Western civilisation and values against the onslaught of immigration and terrorism by launching a pre-emptive war against the

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8 Silva, *POF* 126-127.
9 Silva, *POF* 236.
10 Silva, *TM* 94.
11 Silva, *TSS* 151.
perceived enemies. These novels adhere to portrayals of the Self as an innocent victim of irrational aggression.

On an even more significant note for the insistent division of Silva’s fictional world into two camps – of the Self and the Other – Gabriel Allon fully subscribes to Samuel Huntington’s much-criticised “clash of civilizations” doctrine, although its author goes unmentioned in the text. Allon sees evidence of this in the aftermath of the assault on American diplomats in London’s Hyde Park and the kidnapping of Ambassador Halton’s daughter, which the hero had tried to prevent:

As he crossed Hyde Park, he paused briefly at the place where on the morning of the attack he had come upon the body of Chris Petty, the American Diplomatic Security agent. A few yards beyond lay a pile of wilted memorial flowers and a crude cardboard placard of tribute to the fallen Americans. Then, on the spot where Samir al-Masri had died in Gabriel’s grasp, there was a second memorial to the “Hyde Park Martyrs,” as the terrorists had become known to their supporters in London. Here was the coming clash of civilizations, thought Gabriel, played out on a few square yards of a London park.

Not only does Allon see a cultural and religious conflict between Western and Muslim ideologies as dangerous to ‘the civilised world’, but he also abhors the West’s seeming acceptance of the various Others in its midst. This is reminiscent of American right-wing rhetoric voiced by the neo-Nazis in the US; movements with similar ideologies also exist in the other countries, such as the English Defence League in the UK and the Russian National Socialist Party. In the novel, Muslim immigrants from various countries seem to have transformed the British capital into “Londonistan” and converted it into “a breeding ground, a spiritual mecca, and a safe haven for Islamic terrorists of every stripe”; most importantly, these migrations are, according to Allon, “a threat to us

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12 Examples of this can be found in George W. Bush’s speeches following the events of 9/11 as a representative of American Republican rhetoric. For speech transcripts, see Martin Medhurst and Paul Stob. PresidentialRhetoric.com, 18 February 2014, 6 April 2014 <www.presidentialrhetoric.com>.

13 Huntington 270.

14 Silva, TSS 354.

15 See Lyons 413-416.
It is not difficult to infer that the “us” Allon alludes to here encompasses ‘the civilised world’ of the West, in which Israel is certainly included. However, the Israeli Self is positioned as a more discerning and farsighted state than its American and European allies: Israel is not a country which would allow large immigrant Muslim communities to take root in its territory and will protect its national integrity at any cost. Indeed, even CIA man Adrian Carter admits to Allon the admiration which he harbours for the backbone and decisiveness of the Israeli security apparatus and its number one man, Gabriel Allon. Thus, the overreaching superiority of the Self is definitively established in Silva’s Gabriel Allon saga.

Although Daniel Silva’s work may provide the most extended examples of the representation of the glorified Self, Flynn, DeMille and Koretskiy also make significant contributions to the establishment of the Western civilisation as superior to its enemies in their respective narratives. For instance, in Flynn’s PAD the President of the United States makes a strong and clear statement regarding the moral and military advantage which he and his country have over the Iranian nemesis in addressing the press at the White House and – by extension – the American nation: “I want to be very clear on something. I will not negotiate with terrorists, and I will not get drawn into a debate with a man who is so desperate to hold on to power that he would kill his own people in order to drum up support.” Although this is one of many of Flynn’s allusions to American all-encompassing supremacy, I believe that this particular quote most effectively summarises the similar rhetoric throughout the author’s other works. The above statement by the fictional President Josh Alexander is consistent with the ‘no negotiations with terrorists’ proclamations of many American administrations, most notably those of the George W. Bush administration following 9/11. The message

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16 Silva, *TSS* 426.
17 Silva, *TSS* 155-156.
18 Flynn, *PAD* 353.
which Flynn’s fictional president delivers demonstrates America’s unwavering ability and ample resources which provide the country with the means to eliminate its enemies without having to submit to negotiations. President Alexander’s superior moral values also distinguish him from his Iranian counterpart, who, in the novel, does not hesitate to destroy his own country’s military vessels in a ploy to blame the USA and begin a war between the two countries. Therefore, the US president is elevated to a pedestal and so are, by extension, the people he addresses in what is, effectively, a reaffirmation and glorification of the Self.

Nelson DeMille employs slightly differing strategies to express the same idea: most of the Self-glorifying statements are made by the less credible ultra-far-right madman and home-grown terrorist Bain Madox. Similarly to the Iranian administration above, Madox is willing to cause damage to his own country and people in the name of the ‘higher purpose’ of provoking American nuclear retaliation on the entirety of the ‘Muslim world’. On the contrary, according to the insane billionaire, this sacrifice is necessary to protect the future of the “Western Civilization, save our families, our nation, and our God.” Madox furthers his argument by claiming that the millions of his compatriots whom he is intending to murder would be killed by the “Islamic terrorists anyway,” so Madox’s own move is pre-emptive and necessary. Undoubtedly, the antagonistic Madox is not intended to be a credible or morally upright character, so his views cannot be taken as the norm and are open to criticism and subversion. Yet, although John Corey verbally disagrees with his extremist compatriot, he nonetheless admits to himself the uneasy truth of inwardly agreeing with parts of Madox’s philosophy. In the following exchange with his wife, Kate Mayfield, John Corey has just succeeded in aborting Madox’s planned bombings of Los Angeles and San Francisco, but Mayfield questions the hero’s resolve and attitude towards Bain Madox’s plot:

After another minute of silence, she asked me, “Do you believe this? Do you believe what Madox was going to do?”

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20 DeMille, WF 95.
21 DeMille, WF 96.
I looked at the electronic console and said, “Desperate times call for desperate measures.”

She didn’t respond for a second, then said, “John… for a minute there… I thought you were… wavering a little [about whether to abort the detonation].”

I thought about that. “Honestly?”

“Don’t answer.”

But I had to say something, so I said, “It’s going to happen anyway.”

It is by virtue of this simple admission to the temptation of Muslim genocide as an easy solution to the problem of terrorism that the credibility of Madox’s opinions is partially re-established. For, how could the superiority and the entitlement of the American Self previously articulated by Madox be in doubt if the authoritative hero endorses them at the end of the narrative? Moreover, Mayfield comments in *WF* on the fact that Corey and Madox are alike in being extremely opinionated and confident male macho types. This further serves to boost the reliability of Madox’s character by drawing similarities to the series’ positive hero. In short, the opinions expressed by the antagonist Bain Madox cannot be immediately discarded as irrelevant, but they should be analysed within the context of the novel and of the veiled endorsements which other characters provide, such as the above example of John Corey.

Not dissimilarly, Koretskyi offers the civilised Self as representative of all things good and as a precious entity to be protected. In *MN*, during the secret summit between the leaders of Russia, the USA, the UK, Spain and France, all the presidents and prime ministers are in agreement that “Islamic” ‘new terrorism’ is “a new threat to the civilised world” and that drastic measures are required to protect the Self. Most importantly, in his (fictional) speech, the unnamed American President expresses his outrage over the events of 9/11 and proclaims that in these uncertain times everybody’s priority should be the upholding of “our core values” by “preserving the ideals of world civilisation.”

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22 DeMille, *WF* 639; emphasis in the original.
23 DeMille, *WF* 274.
25 Koretskyi, *MN* 100.
definition of “world civilisation” is limited here to the five participants of the summit, implying that they constitute the Self against which the terrorist Other exclusively directs its attacks.

In order to protect the ideal civilised Self, these narratives justify the employment of any means necessary, even if these means do not differ greatly from those of the terrorists. When drastic measures are applied in the name of protecting ‘civilisation’ in general – and unwitting innocent civilians in particular – no holds are barred. Consequently, when the leaders at the aforementioned summit come to an agreement that negotiations with terrorists could only lead to the ultimate destruction of world ‘civilisation’, the solution becomes self-evident:

“The answer to violence must be even greater violence,” enunciated the President of the USA sternly. “The response to deception and trickery must be to become more cunning! Their devilment must be met with exceeding cruelty! In order to combat terrorism we must adopt the same methods which the terrorists apply to unarmed and innocent civilians! Now that would be logical, reasonable and just!”

The American leader’s counterparts share these opinions, and they successfully agree to establish the counter-terrorist group the Sword of Nemesis in each of their respective countries. The group’s aim is not to negotiate with terrorists or non-violently resolve conflict; on the contrary, “the predominant objective of the members of the group will be assassinations [of terrorists]. Only assassinations.” Despite the outspokenly drastic methods, the Russian group’s leader Vitaliy Karpenko does not find recruiting for the Sword of Nemesis a challenge: none of its members feel the slightest of qualms regarding what they view as an entirely justified course of action.

This, in turn, reopens the discussion of one of the most central themes in the novels under examination – that of justified violence on the part of the Self as opposed to the inexcusable methods of the Other. As I mentioned in the introduction, contemporary political and military responses to terrorism in the decade following 9/11

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26 Koretskiy, MN 100.
27 Koretskiy, MN 101.
28 Koretskiy, MN 119.
(especially the American and coalition forces’ ‘war on terror’) have employed methods which would otherwise be deemed inappropriate, such as the 2001 Patriot Act authorising extreme counter-terrorism measures, the establishment of the Guantánamo Bay detention facility in Cuba and human rights violations perpetrated during military involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq and Chechnya among others. According to the logic of the Self vs. the Other, these actions were taken in retaliation for or in pre-emption of terrorist acts, which ultimately serves to justify them and make the employment of severe methods morally acceptable and even celebrated.

Returning to DeMille’s WF, whilst the loudest advocates for the ‘end justifies the means’ argument are Bain Madox and his co-conspirators, as explained above, their arguments are not invalidated due to their endorsement by the hero. Not only does John Corey seem to privately agree with Madox’s rhetoric, but Corey’s colleague Harry Muller (whose murder by Madox at the beginning of the novel originally prompts Corey’s involvement in the investigation) also lends a somewhat sympathetic ear to his captors and recognises the validity of some of their claims. Muller initially describes the powerful group’s plans to have “Sandland turned into a sea of molten glass” as “bullshit” and “[r]ight-wing loony fantasy talk that probably gave these guys hard-ons.” Yet, Corey’s ATTF colleague is unable to deny the long list of offences which the “Islamic terrorists” have committed, and Muller – similarly to his captors – soon begins to feel enraged with these crimes:

Bain Madox began with the Munich Olympics Massacre, and then rattled off a list of thirty years of airplane hijackings, bombings, kidnappings, executions, and mass murder by Islamic jihadists.

The men in the room remained silent, but a few nodded in remembrance of one or another terrorist attack.

Harry Muller, too, recalled almost every attack that Madox mentioned, and what surprised him was how many there were over the

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29 The Patriot Act’s approval created a wide range of negative commentary following its ratification on 26 October 2001, and it continues to generate controversy. For an example of a discussion of how this law violates numerous civil rights and liberties, see Michael Welch, “Trampling Human Rights in the War on Terror: Implications to the Sociology of Denial,” Critical Criminology 12.1 (2004): 1-20.

30 DeMille, WF 80.
last thirty years. He was surprised, too, that he had forgotten so many of them – even the big ones, like the car bomb attack on the Marine barracks in Lebanon that killed 241 Americans, or the bomb on board Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie that killed hundreds of people.

Harry felt himself getting angrier as each attack was chronicled, and he thought that if a terrorist – or any Muslim – were brought into the room, the guy would be ripped apart by everyone there. Madox knew how to inflame the crowd.31

As a result of Madox’s engaging speeches as well as his own beliefs, even Harry Muller – “an average American in most respects” – begins to consider the nuclear obliteration of the Muslim world a blessing and a justifiable act: “Somewhere, deep down in his heart, Harry Muller agreed that 122 nukes exploding across Sandland might not be a bad thing. It was the 4 nukes in America that really bothered him.”32 In such a way, a ‘moderate’ American character is shown to condone radical action against the Other, which implies that the narrative voice (these events occur in Corey’s absence, so the novel alternates between first- and third-person narration) also expects its average reader to agree with these notions. Muller, presented as an ‘average’ American, uses such stereotypical Orientalist terms as “Sandland” to describe the Other; the novel thus suggests this as a ‘correct’, ‘unbiased’ and common opinion. It establishes the doctrine of justified violence as opposed to that of the Other: even if the Self murders its enemies indiscriminately, it is to be seen as a positive action intended to protect the ‘civilised world’. If destruction of the same proportion is, however, caused by the Other, it is immediately deemed unacceptable and indefensible and provokes ‘justified’ retaliation as above.

The views expressed by Bain Madox suggest that the hostile Other as represented by “Islamic terrorists would [not] have any moral or ethical qualms about obliterating an American city and killing a million innocent men, women, and children” and that they have not yet perpetrated such an atrocity only due to being cowed into

31 DeMille, WF 76.
32 DeMille, WF 80; 150.
inaction by a brutal retaliation protocol such as the eponymous Wild Fire. The author suggests in the preface that a similar plan might exist in the USA albeit under a different code name and later in the novel that the protocol is to be implemented within thirty minutes of an attack on the country. For such a defence protocol to work smoothly and swiftly, there needs to be a significant assumption of responsibility in order to direct the reprisal strikes accordingly. Indeed, Madox gleefully tells Harry Muller that “the beauty of this [protocol] is that the government doesn’t even have to be certain that the nuclear attack on America has come from Islamic terrorists. There exists a very strong presumption of guilt toward Islamic jihadists so that conclusive evidence is not required to launch Wild Fire. Brilliant, isn’t it?” Given that the country’s current perceived enemy number one – whether it is in fiction or reality – is “Islamic” terrorism, “especially since 9/11,” it is therefore unsurprising that “we shoot first and ask questions afterward. If we were wrong about the source of the attack, we’ve still accomplished a worthwhile goal [by obliterating the ‘land of Islam’].” As established above, Bain Madox’s extremely far-right radical views are not completely discredited; on the contrary, they are validated on several occasions by John Corey, the positive hero, and Harry Muller, his ill-fated “average American” colleague. Most importantly, the author himself legitimises some of the attitudes expressed by Madox by admitting in the preface that “if it [retaliation protocol similar to Wild Fire] doesn’t [exist], it should.” The author’s and his characters’ beliefs are not inconsistent with what has transpired from the American involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq in the decade following 9/11. The assumption of guilt and fabricated intelligence on weapons of mass destruction, for example, were indeed pretexts for the war in Iraq, as it emerged years after the fateful coalition forces invasion in 2003. In such a way, DeMille’s verisimilitude gives

33 DeMille, WF 82.
34 DeMille, WF 1; 132.
35 DeMille, WF 84.
36 DeMille, WF 132.
37 DeMille, WF 1.
38 For one of many accounts and analyses of the motives for the Iraq War, see Peter Taylor, “Iraq War: The Greatest Intelligence Failure in Living Memory,” The Telegraph, 18 March 2013, 6 April 2014
narrative weight to the view that violence against the Other is justified even when the Self’s aggression is pre-emptive and based on patchwork evidence.

Not dissimilarly to DeMille, Silva’s novels consistently refer to Arabs (especially Palestinians) and/or Muslims as a perpetual threat to the Israeli Self. Ari Shamron reaffirms emphatically that the ‘war on terror’ ‘is a war without end […]. It is forever.’39 From the point of view of the Self in the Allon saga, immigration and ‘Islamisation’ of Europe have been recognised by Israel to be a danger early on, but the liberal European governments refused to heed the ‘besieged’ nation’s warnings:

Shamron tilted his head back and blew a stream of smoke toward the ceiling before answering. “Back in the midnineties, during my second tour as chief, we began to realize the Netherlands was going to be a problem for us down the road. The demographics of the country were changing rapidly. Amsterdam was well on its way to becoming a Muslim city. The young men were unemployed and angry, and they were being fed a steady diet of hate by their imams, most of whom were imported and funded by our friends in Saudi Arabia. There were a number of attacks against the local [Jewish] community. Small stuff, mostly – a broken window, a bloody nose, the odd Molotov cocktail. We wanted to make sure those small incidents didn’t turn into something more serious. We also wanted to know whether any of our more determined enemies were using Amsterdam as a base of operations for major attacks against Israeli targets in Europe.”40

The Israeli Self is thus portrayed as the only proactive community prepared to defend the world from those ‘angry Muslim young men’ indoctrinated with irrational hate against Jewish and European populations. Because Israel is perceived to be vulnerable due to “half the world’s Jews liv[ing] in this tiny strip of land,” the country is forced to actively engage with and obliterate the enemy before the Other gets an opportunity to make a move against them.41 This rhetoric is thus crucial to the justification of Israel’s pre-emptive attacks and the country’s possession of one of the most ruthless and least

39 Silva, TSS 22.
40 Silva, TSS 22-23.
41 Silva, TM 17.
scrupulous security apparatuses – “an intelligence service that showed little compunction about liquidating its enemies, even on the streets of foreign capitals.”

This ruthlessness is not unfounded, however, according to the novel’s spokesman for the Israeli Self, Ari Shamron; on the contrary, there is no satisfying the vindictive Other, and their Palestinian enemies are forever ungrateful and planning vicious acts against Israel:

Shamron lapsed into a momentary silence and listened to the wind. “It’s quiet now, isn’t it? Tranquil almost. It’s tempting to think it can go on like this forever. But it can’t. We gave them Gaza without demanding anything in return, and they repaid us by freely electing Hamas to be their rulers. Next they’ll want the West Bank, and if we don’t surrender it in short order, there’s going to be another round of bloodletting, much worse than even the second intifada. Trust me, Gabriel, one day soon it will all start up again. And not just here. Everywhere. Do you think they’re sitting on their hands doing nothing? Of course not. They’re planning the next campaign. They’re talking to Osama and his friends, too. We now know for a fact that the Palestinian Authority has been thoroughly penetrated by al-Qaeda and its affiliates. We also know that they are planning major attacks against Israel and Israeli targets abroad in the very near future.

One of the main goals of justifying violence against the Other is to extrapolate the danger it poses to the rest of the world, thus adding the nobility of defending greater entities like ‘the modern world’, ‘the Western civilisation’ or humanity in general from the maliciousness of ‘Islamic’ terrorism. This rings true with the earlier analysis of Koretskyi’s MN as well as Bain Madox’s statements claiming that the entire world would be better off without “Sandland” – aggression against the Other is validated by a cause greater than mere self-preservation and political interests but by a higher and more idealised purpose – that of the protection of humanity at large – instead.

In Vince Flynn’s works, violence against potential and proven terrorists alike on the part of the Self is presented as self-evident, rationalised and the only possible response to terrorism. As I have detailed in the previous chapter, Rapp is an idealised archetypal hero (not unlike the other authors’ heroes) prone to equating justice with

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42 Silva, TM 8.
43 Silva, TM 16.
extreme violence against terrorists. On a bigger scale, the greater American Self is equally glorified as the most important country in the fight against the terrorist Other, especially following the events of 9/11: the USA’s military engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq were “to send a very clear message that America would not tolerate the slaughter of 3,000 of its citizens.” This is, once more, not inconsistent with actual rhetoric and actions taken by American administrations from autumn 2001 onwards.

Furthermore, Flynn’s novels express the same “presumption of guilt” attitudes as DeMille’s narrative delineated above. In a description of an anti-terrorist raid on a Pakistani village bordering with Afghanistan and suspected of providing support to al-Qaeda, Flynn argues that no Muslim in that region can be presumed innocent. On the contrary, “virtually everybody carried a weapon of some sort, even the young boys. A farmer was rarely a simple farmer. […] The brutal reality of war in this violent, fanatical region was that every child over the age of ten was a potential threat, as were their mothers.” This wide-scale assumption of guilt and hostility provides the American troops in the novel with the ultimate justification for the blanket murdering of civilians, including women and children: if an innocent subsequently lost their life, then there is little chance that the military would even admit their mistake and offer a half-hearted apology (as it occurs on two life-altering occasions – for the protagonist – in rural Iraq in Yasmina Khadra’s Les Sirènes de Bagdad discussed in the next chapter). The lives of American soldiers far outweigh those of suspected terrorist supporters, and thus the indiscriminate annihilation of the Pakistani village is thoroughly validated in the following passage:

The loss of innocent life was to be avoided if possible, but not if it meant risking the life of a Ranger. Quick and decisive force on the front end would save lives in the end. It was Captain Guerrero who had pushed for the battle’s more traditional rules of engagement. Anyone seen running toward the battle carrying a weapon, man, woman, or child, was to be considered hostile and engaged, and any house or

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44 Flynn, *MD* 54.
45 Flynn, *MD* 84.
structure that was used to fire upon American forces was to be pulverized.\textsuperscript{46}

Flynn’s narrative proposes a striking and unbalanced comparison between the value of an American life and anybody else’s: the vilest of atrocities can be justified as long as they are perpetrated in the name of protecting the Self. Under such a pretext, any action on the part of the country could be seen as proportionate, such as a retaliation plan like Wild Fire. In fact, Mitch Rapp expresses similar sentiments to Bain Madox’s in proclaiming that should terrorists succeed in their designs to detonate two nuclear bombs in New York and Washington (the premise of \textit{MD}), “the United States of America will end this war in one fell swoop. We will nuke your beloved kingdom all the way back to the stone age. Mecca, Medina, all the holy sites gone just like that.”\textsuperscript{47} The impression which both DeMille’s and Flynn’s books create is that the USA only needs a significant enough provocation in order to obliterate the Muslim world altogether, thus assuring its own and the ‘civilised’ world’s safety. More importantly, as this genocide would be ‘justified’, it would place the assaulting Self on the pedestal of heroism.

The Self is not only glorified as the representative of modernity and civilisation but also as heroic in its stance against the terrorist Other. Flynn describes America as a country whose courage and resilience are underestimated by terrorists, repeatedly surprising villains with its decisive response: “They thought America lacked the courage and resolve to take them on. They were bullies and thugs blinded by their misguided righteousness. War was the only thing that would ever dissuade them of their ways, and they’d picked a fight with the wrong enemy.”\textsuperscript{48} The country is personified and made into a hero not unlike Rapp himself – courageous, determined and (unlike the “bullies and thugs”) morally upright; the Self is as heroic as the protagonist and, just like him, unafraid to face the enemies head on and with remarkable ruthlessness. This echoes the words used by several US administrations, not least of which are speeches by George W.

\textsuperscript{46} Flynn, \textit{MD} 85.
\textsuperscript{47} Flynn, \textit{MD} 442.
\textsuperscript{48} Flynn, \textit{MD} 92.
Bush proclaiming the country to be a “great nation” with “strong American values.”

Both real and fictional political rhetoric refers to the Self as heroic, as opposed to the villainous Other.

Mitch Rapp not only considers his own country (with the exception of the bureaucrats whom he detests) a great nation worthy of his efforts to protect it, but he also admires the resilience and determination with which Israel and its security services defend themselves. Ahead of his meeting with the Mossad chief in PAD, the hero reflects on the unrepentant and inflexible stance which Israel had adopted towards all its detractors:

> He had known Ben Freidman for a long time and had worked very closely with the Mossad on at least a half dozen operations. Freidman would do whatever it took to protect his beloved Israel. He was unapologetic in his belief that Israel should be the one that benefited at every juncture of their relationship. Rapp respected the man’s abilities and tenacity, but he never lost sight of the fact that Freidman would sell him down the river if it meant giving his country the slightest edge.

Indeed, the preservation of the Self is a top priority in Silva’s narratives. As I have delineated above, Israel in the Allon series is perceived to be a victimised country surrounded by enemies and frequently betrayed by its allies; yet, this is precisely the incentive for the nation to employ any means possible to preserve itself. The fact that Israel is portrayed to be fighting an endless war on its own approximates it with the idealised character of the archetypal loner hero, who is able to consistently and single-handedly defeat multiple enemies and ensure his and the world’s survival. In order to achieve that, any means are justified without detracting from the heroism of the character or the nation but, on the contrary, confirming it:

> Making promises they [members of the Israeli security apparatus] had no intention of keeping was what they did best. They abused the passports of other nations, recruited agents from allied security and

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50 Flynn, *PAD* 74.
intelligence services, and routinely ran operations on foreign soil forbidden by long-standing accords. They did this, they told themselves, because they had no choice; because they were surrounded by enemies who would stop at nothing to ensure their destruction; and because the rest of the world, blinded by their hatred of Zionism and the Jews, would not allow them to fight back with the full force of their military might. They lied to everyone but each other and were truly at ease only in each other’s company.\footnote{Silva, TSS 29.}

This passage of Silva’s is consistent with the abovementioned characterisation by Rapp: the Israeli Self is not above deception and bending of moral principles as long as this helps them achieve their desired results. Once more, this rendering of the greater Self is not dissimilar to some of the key features of the archetypal hero discussed in the previous chapter, nor is this at odds with the actual policies of national security which Israel, the USA or their allies employ in the contemporary world. This further serves to prove that, as I argued in the first chapter, popular thriller fiction models its themes and attitudes on what is broadcast by political institutions of the countries in question as well as by the mainstream news media.

Although the cynical first-person narration of DeMille’s novels does not always glorify the Self as heroic, John Corey nonetheless firmly believes that his country’s fight against terrorism is justified and morally righteous (especially after Corey’s own close encounter with the 9/11 events, as discussed earlier). In the events running up to Corey and Mayfield’s Twin Towers experience, the hero strongly felt that “the government agencies […] needed to rally the troops, or some event needed to be loud enough to wake up everyone” to the fact that “there was a war going on.”\footnote{DeMille, NF 149.} Indeed, the September 11 attacks which occur at the end of the novel deeply shake the American government and society and spur them into action in Afghanistan and a proposed invasion of Iraq which I have previously shown as being discussed at the beginning of the following John Corey instalment, WF. However, even before these events transpire, both Corey
and his wife are in agreement that the American nation truly comes into its own under hardship:

She looked at me and said, “We’re good people. You know? We’re selfish, self-centered, and pampered. But when the shit hits the fan, we’re at our best.”
I nodded.\textsuperscript{53}

It is the tragedy of the massive loss of life in these terrorist attacks which encourages individual as well as collective American heroism, and the Self is further elevated as heroic, morally justified and uncompromising.

In Koretskiy’s works, Russia is largely represented as the only country capable of dealing with terrorists in a decisive manner and as alienated by Western countries for this very reason. This attitude undoubtedly springs from the wide range of criticism which Russia has received regarding its internal as well as foreign politics and especially on its actions in the Northern Caucasus region in general and Chechnya in particular. In \textit{MN}, the Sword of Nemesis chief Vitaliy Karpenko elects to conduct the Russian hostage-rescuing operation in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia without the help of other countries’ Sword of Nemesis divisions: countries such as France, for instance, are described as too ‘principled’ to violate human rights in the name of security and ‘justice’.\textsuperscript{54} The Russian side is therefore shown to be self-reliant and self-sufficient in its heroic battle with terrorism. Moreover, not only do other countries obstruct Russian counter-terrorist operations, but they also sometimes conspire with terrorists in order to gain access to Russian state secrets and penetrate its security barriers in an almost Cold-War-like conspiracy by the USA in Koretskiy’s \textit{AP}. In this novel, the CIA enlists al-Qaeda’s help to destroy Russia’s strategic nuclear train and weaken the rival country’s defences: the US are not prepared to provoke war by openly and brazenly bombing the train carrying nuclear missiles, but they are fully willing to covertly recruit terrorists for

\textsuperscript{53} DeMille, \textit{NF} 54.
\textsuperscript{54} Koretskiy, \textit{MN} 322.
This, in turn, also contributes to the narrative’s solidification of the Russian Self as the loner hero and sole nation prepared to combat terrorism at any cost.

Before proceeding to the discussion of the Other and the terrorists’ characteristics per se, there is a question which must be asked: Is the Self, given its ruthless pre-emptive and defence techniques, ever represented as terrorist in the novels of the authors in question? The overwhelming evidence in these works suggests that this is not the case, except for one instance – DeMille’s WF and the insane billionaire Bain Madox who is bent on the genocide of the Muslims. Madox’s character centres around “hate, like it always is with these guys, like it was with bin Laden, Hitler, Stalin, and all the people Harry had interrogated and arrested since he’d gotten into anti-terrorism.”

Yet, as demonstrated earlier in this section, even such a hateful and crazed character is never completely discredited because he belongs with the Self: even though John Corey disagrees with Madox’s methods, he does not entirely reject the principle and the idea of destroying the enemy so fully that it is unable to ever rise again. Madox’s radicalism is depoliticised and ‘excused’ by his insanity, as opposed to terrorist-villains whose insanity further condemns their actions. This section has shown how the Self is consistently portrayed as superior, moral, heroic and justified. The next section examines the depictions of the terrorist Other and explains how it is usually opposed and contrasted to the characterisations of the heroes and the Self.

2. The Construction of the Other

As demonstrated above, the Self in the thriller novels of Flynn, DeMille, Silva and Koretskiy is presented in an exceedingly positive light; this part of the chapter deals with the depictions of terrorists in these books – the Other. I demonstrate here how these characters are written to be essentially different from the heroes and the Western

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56 DeMille, WF 155.
57 I did not mention Forsyth in relation to the Self because most of his novel, TA, revolves around the hero carrying out an undercover mission disguised as an Other. I discuss this in more detail below.
world by virtue of numerous characteristics, such as ethnicity, religion, level of 'civilisation' and negative personal traits which are diametrically opposed to those of the protagonists. And while the hero is enframed by narrative techniques which enhance his portrayal as heroic, the villains are framed and limited by techniques of distancing, silencing and lack of individuality and context.

a. Who Is the Other?

One of the first and central questions for the analysis of representations of the Other in these novels is how terrorist characters are described in general terms: their ethnic origin, religious affiliation, supporters and attitudes towards the West. Unsurprisingly, most of the terrorists in Silva’s Gabriel Allon series are of Arab origin and background and are most often supported by wealthy Saudi Arabian businessmen and clerics. Ahmed bin Shafiq is the devilish Saudi Arabian mastermind behind the large-scale attack on the Vatican carried out by a mixed group of Arab terrorists (Tunisian, Jordanian and Egyptian) and three European Muslim converts.58 The hero’s side and their American allies have the monopoly over providing the detailed biography of bin Shafiq. The terrorist is repeatedly described and discussed by this third party, which leaves little room for self-expression – a typical device, as we shall see. Allon’s enemy is – not unexpectedly – a follower of Wahhabism popular in his country, comes from a family of radical Muslims and allegedly loathes the Western world because of his religion:

“You’re asking what drove him over the edge?” Carter shrugged and stirred his tea mournfully. “It didn’t take much. Ahmed bin Shafiq is a true Wahhabi believer.”

“Grandson of an Ikhwan warrior,” said Gabriel, which earned him an admiring nod from Carter.

“[…] Ahmed bin Shafiq is a believer. Ahmed bin Shafiq hates the United States, the West, and Christianity, and he would be much

58 Silva, TM 69-70.
happier if your country [Israel] no longer existed. It was why we [the USA] insisted that His Majesty shut down his little shop of terror.”

A former security service officer in his home country, bin Shafiq was driven “over the edge” by the loss of his job due to American pressure on the Saudi government and went on to orchestrate a brazen and symbolic attack on the heart of Catholic Christianity at the Vatican. However, bin Shafiq’s motives of hatred are not contextualised beyond the suggestion that he is a fanatical Muslim believer. The text thus implies that the main impetus behind terrorism is indeed the religion of Islam. This, in turn, strengthens the larger stereotypical correlation between the two found in the political and news media spheres, despite some attempts on the part of the former to make a distinction between Islam as a multifaceted religion and its radical interpretations at the hand of terrorists.

The thriller novels studied here tend to overlook the possibility that terrorist acts are not simply motivated by religious hatred as opposed to certain political and economic agendas. The remark made in the above excerpt from Silva suggests that hatred and religious extremism run in Ahmed bin Shafiq’s blood, and they are the sole reasons why he had made it his life’s mission to terrorise Christians, Jews and Westerners in general. Defining his adversaries as belonging to these categories solidifies the terrorist-villain’s identity as above all ‘Muslim’ and Other.

If the adversary is not first and foremost motivated by ‘Islam’, he is portrayed as driven by pathological or inherited personal vengeance, in contrast to the hero’s patriotism. Another notorious terrorist of Silva’s is Khaled al-Khalifa, a descendant of three generations of perpetrators of organised violence against the Israeli Self. Al-Khalifa is Palestinian by origin and French by nationality, but his main reason for organising the bombing of the Israeli embassy in Rome and subsequently luring Gabriel Allon into a suicide-bomb trap at the Parisian Gare de Lyon is deeply personal. No Palestinian political or territorial claims are acknowledged in Silva’s novels as understandable (if not legitimate) motives for disgruntlement with Israel. In al-Khalifa’s

60 Jackson, *Writing* 64.
case, personal family history propels his desire for revenge against Israel as a country and as a symbol: the terrorist’s grandfather was a notorious Palestinian bandit, Asad al-Khalifa, hunted and killed by Ari Shamron; more importantly, Khaled al-Khalifa’s father, Sabri, worked for Fatah and Yasir Arafat and subsequently served as leader of the Black September group which carried out the Munich attack on Israeli Olympians, leading to him being targeted and executed by Gabriel Allon himself on the streets of Paris.\(^{61}\) Khaled al-Khalifa is denied any political agency and is instead portrayed as Arafat’s protégé who is overcome by hatred, malice and desire for revenge. Once more, the Other is made to be Arab and Muslim; but as well, he is deeply disturbed and largely driven by hostile and vengeful sentiments.

In *TSS*, Silva complicates the map of terrorist Otherness further and includes Egypt, the UK and Western Europe in general (liberal and allegedly complacent countries like the Netherlands) alongside Saudi Arabia as festering hotbeds of dangerous Muslim groups. Cairo’s poor neighbourhoods are depicted to be unprivileged to such an extent that radicalism becomes their only hope: “The children of Imbaba wear rags, drink from cesspools, and live in fear of being eaten alive by the rats. There is little running water, only brief interludes of electricity, and even less hope. Only Islam. Radical Islam. It is written on the crumbling walls in green spray paint: ISLAM IS THE ANSWER…ONLY THE SWORD CAN SAVE US…”\(^{62}\) Furthermore, radical Islamists “have penetrated every level of Egyptian society and government, including the security services,” which allegedly contributes to the permeation of the country by extremism and terrorist organisations.\(^{63}\) Most significantly, the universal post-9/11 bogeyman, al-Qaeda, is portrayed as having deep roots in Egypt and as the leading organisation which supports a network of other terrorist groups.\(^{64}\) In the novel, one such group affiliated with, supported and trained by al-Qaeda is the Sword of Allah, a cell of which is subsequently responsible for the slaying of several American diplomats and the

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61 Silva, *POF* 73-103.
62 Silva, *TSS* 172.
63 Silva, *TSS* 158.
64 Silva, *TSS* 130.
kidnapping of the American ambassador’s daughter in London’s Hyde Park.\textsuperscript{65} The universal correlation between al-Qaeda, Islam and terrorism concurs with the larger discourse on terrorism in the post-9/11 decade; the only difference is that the fictional rhetoric is exceedingly more uncompromising and scathing.

Arabs and Muslims do not only actively engage in terrorism in their home countries, but, in Silva’s novels, they import radicalism alongside large-scale immigration to Europe. They create communities which are enclosed on themselves, providing fertile soil for religious hatred. To ‘prove’ this, Silva opens \textit{TSS} with the murder of a Jewish professor in Amsterdam at the hand of a volunteer from the local Muslim community. The perpetrator proudly states in a video recording that the day he murders the outspokenly anti-Muslim Professor Solomon Rosner “would be the day he killed his Jew,” thus evidencing that even an ordinary Muslim workman “Muhammad Hamza, a housepainter from north Amsterdam,” is capable of a heinous act out of sheer disdain for Jews and anybody daring to promote anti-Muslim rhetoric.\textsuperscript{66} Another terrorist who is notably a member of the Dutch Muslim immigrant community is the cell leader of the Sword of Allah – the coordinator of the Hyde Park attack – Egyptian Samir al-Masri. Al-Masri is a young man who “claims to have connections to the mujahideen in Iraq. He tells our boys it is their sacred duty to go there and kill the infidels who have defiled Muslim lands. He lectures them about \textit{takfir} and jihad. At night they gather in his apartment and read Sayyid Qutb and Ibn Taymiyyah. They download videos from the Internet and watch infidels being beheaded.”\textsuperscript{67} Silva sounds through these novels the idea that radical Islam is a dangerous and self-multiplying subculture, buttressed by realistic references to Arabic terms and authors.

However, the hotbed of hatred and intolerance is located not only in al-Masri’s Amsterdam apartment but also at a radical London mosque. When Allon meets with the MI5’s Deputy Director General, Graham Seymour, to warn him of the looming attack by

\textsuperscript{65} Silva, \textit{TSS} 132.
\textsuperscript{66} Silva, \textit{TSS} 26-27.
\textsuperscript{67} Silva, \textit{TSS} 50; emphasis in the original.
al-Masri’s cell, the British intelligence official scoffs at the Israeli agent’s suggestion to take precautionary measures:

“Just one cell?” Seymour quipped. “I’m sure they’ll feel right at home.”

“That bad, Graham?”

Seymour nodded his gray head. “At last count we were monitoring more than two hundred networks and separate groupings of known terrorists. Half our Muslim youth profess admiration for Osama bin Laden, and we estimate that more than one hundred thousand supported the attacks on the London transport system, which means they have a very large pool of potential recruits from which to draw in the future. So you’ll excuse me if I don’t sound the alarm just because another cell of Muslim fanatics has decided to put ashore.”

What one inevitably surmises from the above exchange is that the ‘Muslim threat’ is widespread on European soil due to both first- and later-generation immigrants’ participation and that it is no longer possible to contain it. Silva’s characters propose that a large proportion of local European Muslims – if not the majority – are supporters of terrorism despite appearing moderate or assimilated. This contributes to the stereotypical and large-scale association of Islam as a belief system with terrorism, emphasising the actual political and media discourse on the topic. More broadly, it associates immigrant populations with violence. Following the attacks in TSS, London’s entire Muslim community falls under suspicion as the British police and intelligence conduct sweeping house searches and interrogations. This is not dissimilar to the immediate real-life post-9/11 response of the US security agencies, when immigrants and foreign nationals associated with Arab ethnicity or Islam (or both) fell under blanket suspicion and were discriminated against. It is not difficult to surmise that such generalising narratives of the Other cannot but contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes, both in fiction and reality.

Forsyth’s novel is not exempt from these negative portrayals. Through third-person narration, the author describes Islam as the conniving successor to the Soviet

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68 Silva, TSS 61.
69 Silva, TSS 96.
Union which generated a new phase of the Cold War: “The end of the Cold War in 1991 led to the asinine presumption among politicians on both sides of the Atlantic that peace had come at last and come to stay. That was precisely the moment that the new Cold War, silent and hidden in the depths of Islam, was experiencing birth pangs.” This “new Cold War” remained significantly invisible until it drew the world’s attention and America’s rage following the attacks of 9/11. Brazen acts of terrorism purportedly spur on the conversion and recruitment of masses of new believers to the perpetrators’ cause and so does a political vacuum. Later on in his novel, Forsyth indicates that the void the failure of communism left behind became an accommodating field for the propagation of radical Islam: “there are […] a hundred and fifty million Muslims [in India and] […] the radicalization of Indian Muslims has been just as vigorous as in Pakistan, or that Kerala, once the hotbed of Communism, has been particularly receptive territory for Islamist extremism.” Yet, the author fails to mention the historical fact of the Western Self initially providing material and military aid to such groups. Mike Martin, under the alias of Izmat Khan, is accompanied and aided on his journey towards a large-scale terrorist attack by Muslim men of various nationalities – Indian, Indonesian, Pakistani, Afghan and, inevitably, Arab terrorists. These are members of hostile and essentially Othered (to the Western Self) ethnicities and religion, and the doctrines they subscribe to are, consequently, antithetical to those of the ‘civilised world’: the biggest danger this Other poses is its ability to permeate European and American borders and garner the support of local Muslims.

In DeMille’s John Corey novels, Muslims and generally people of Middle Eastern origin are viewed negatively not only by the aforementioned far-right

70 Forsyth 20-21.
72 Forsyth 346.
73 Such as the Kuwait-born British resident Ali Aziz al-Khattab, a lecturer of chemical engineering at Aston University in Birmingham and a zealous supporter of al-Qaeda. See Forsyth 213-214; 279-280.
businessman Bain Madox but also by the narrator, the hero. In *NF*, the narrative which culminates in Corey and Mayfield’s first-hand experience of the destruction of the World Trade Centre towers explicitly indicates at the very outset that terrorism in the modern world has a distinctly Middle-Eastern character. As I mentioned earlier, *NF* in its entirety and most of *WF* are novels narrated by the hero himself, so the opinions they express are John Corey’s. When Corey contextualises the inception of his current employer, the ATTF, he explicitly associates the phenomenon of terrorism predominantly with the Middle East, at the same time enhancing the narrative’s historical credibility:

> The FBI started this joint task force back in 1980 as a response to bombings in New York City by the Puerto Rican group called the FALN as well as bombings by the Black Liberation Army. The world has changed, and now probably ninety percent of the Anti-Terrorist Task Force is involved with Mideast terrorism. That’s where the action is, and that’s where I am, and where Kate is.\(^74\)

The entire novel is built around the anticipation and foreboding of the 9/11 attacks, and terrorism is at a gut level linked with Islam, the Middle East and Osama bin Laden. The attacks the latter had perpetrated prior to 2001 are meticulously listed towards the beginning of the narrative by Kate Mayfield; what is more, she insists that she has “this feeling that there’s an imminent threat out there” and tells Corey in reply to his joking question about whether bin Laden is retired not to “bet on it.”\(^75\)

The painstakingly constructed foreshadowing throughout DeMille’s work creates a sense of urgency and casts suspicion on any and all Muslim characters appearing in the novel, no matter how minor. For example, an immigrant New York City taxi driver Abdul is readily cast as a spokesman for the Muslim and/or Arab community and is queried by his sarcastic passenger Corey on Middle Eastern attitudes regarding terrorism and the Israeli state:

> We’re not supposed to talk about anything sensitive in a taxi, especially if the driver’s name is Abdul, which was this guy’s name on

\(^74\) DeMille, *NF* 24-25.

\(^75\) DeMille, *NF* 56-57.
his hack license, so, to pass the time, I asked Abdul, “How long have you been in this country?”

He glanced back at me, then replied, “Oh, about ten years, sir.”

“What do you think happened to TWA Flight 800?”

Kate said, “John.”

I ignored her and repeated the question.

Abdul replied hesitantly, “Oh, what a terrible tragedy was that.”

“Right. Do you think it was shot down by a missile?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“I think the Israelis shot it down and tried to make it look like it was the Arabs. What do you think?”

“Well, that is possible.”

Corey openly ridicules the immigrant driver and criticises Arabs for their dislike of Israel and complacency towards the loss of Western lives—notice how Abdul only “hesitantly” regrets the 212 people who perished in the 1996 accident which Corey is at the time investigating. Therefore, this taxi driver, who is taken to represent the Arab and Muslim Other, is implied to be insensitive, indifferent to Western tragedies, deeply opposed to and paranoid about Israel and hesitant, undermining his masculinity in comparison with Corey’s self-confidence. Such a portrayal paves the way to the wave of confusion and wrath against Muslims and/or Arabs which overwhelms American society after the concluding events of the novel—9/11. Notably, in the next Corey novel, the hero alludes to precisely such post-attack discrimination in confirming that the US security apparatuses did indeed carry out sweeping operations aimed at the country’s Muslims at large: Corey explains that, post-9/11, most of his “Task Force does stakeouts and surveillance of Persons of Interest, which, in politically correct speak, means the Muslim community.” In such a way, the Other is represented as a legitimate target of wide-scale suspicion and security drills solely by virtue of being affiliated with the religion and/or ethnicity of known terrorists.

Vince Flynn takes this rhetoric one step further by referring to the “radical Islamists” as a contagious disease. In the prequel to the Rapp series, which takes place

76 DeMille, NF 146-147.
77 DeMille, WF 7.
around the time of the hero’s clandestine recruitment into the CIA in the late 1980s, Irene Kennedy’s mentor and CIA director Stansfield insists that “these Islamists aren’t going away […] they’ve been a minor irritation until now, but I sense something bigger. They are organizing and morphing and spreading like a virus.” Interestingly, Stansfield’s almost ‘feminine intuition’ echoes Kate Mayfield’s prescience that terrorism is not a phenomenon which can be easily overcome, despite the best efforts of heroes such as Corey and Rapp. There is an overwhelming consensus in these thriller novels that terrorism exists largely due to the ideological export and the material support of powerful Arab and Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia. Thus, it is not unforeseen that some of the most dangerous and fanatical terrorist characters have deep ties of one kind or another with the conservative kingdom in the Arabian Peninsula. Mustafa al-Yamani is one such character of Flynn’s – a terrorist from “the al-Baha Province of Saudi Arabia” who trained in South Asian regions and whose exploits took him around the globe, such as when he “helped transfer his martyrs on the Caspian Sea from Northern Iran to Kazakhstan” and then smuggled his unstable nuclear bounty into the United States for the planned destruction of two major American cities. Flynn’s terrorist Other is firmly associated with Arabs and Muslims, and this contributes to the overall portrayal of the Other as essentially alien and hostile in the novels under examination.

The distinctive feature of Koretskiy’s terrorist Other is, more often than not, the antagonists’ affiliation with Chechnya. In KV, for instance, the mastermind behind the nuclear bombing of Moscow plot, Vakhit Bekmurzayev, is a Jordanian of Chechen descent and is therefore connected to both the North Caucasus region and the Middle East. Moreover, Max Kardanov’s extremist nemesis has deep ties with such a ubiquitous terrorist organisation as al-Qaeda and is one of its senior operatives. In Koretskiy’s other novel, which centres on the worldwide anti-terrorist efforts of the Sword of Nemesis group, a passage which alternates between the descriptions of the

78 Flynn, AA 144.
79 Flynn, MD 100.
80 Koretskiy, KV 78.
81 Koretskiy, KV 214.
Moscow metro and the London tube suicide attacks erases the borders and differences between the perpetrators of the bombings and moulds them into one face and one identity: that of the dark-skinned (immigrant in London, North Caucasian in Moscow) Other who speaks an unintelligible foreign language abundant with Muslim religious references and carries bags packed full of explosives. This narrative device, therefore, strongly suggests that terrorists are all of the same face and faith and are overwhelmingly dangerous to the Western social order (which includes Russia). Such representations from all the authors in question attest to an overall tendency to essentialise the character of the terrorist, make it conform to stereotypical perceptions of the Other and alienate such characters from the context of the hero and the Western ‘civilised’ Self.

b. Backwardness and Anti-Civilisation

Consistent with the Orientalist depictions of the Other which I laid out in my discussion of Said, one of the key features of such representations in these novels is the positioning of the Other as hostile and backward. Consider, for instance, the following passage from Silva’s POF describing the landscape on the road from Jerusalem to Ramallah:

On the opposite side [of the road] lay the Kalandiya refugee camp – ten thousand Palestinians piled into a few hundred square yards of breeze-block apartments. To the right, spread over a small hill, were the orderly red roofs of the Psagot Jewish settlement. Rising above it all was an enormous portrait of Yasir Arafat. The inscription, in Arabic, read: ALWAYS WITH YOU.

A contrast is implied between the order and ‘civilisation’ of the bright-roofed Jewish settlement and the cramped unseemliness of the Palestinian dwellings: the Self is elevated over the barbaric Other. The portrait of Arafat, Gabriel Allon’s great nemesis, seems to threaten what fragile and uneasy co-existence the two communities have

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82 Koretskyi, MN 72-74.
83 Silva, POF 134.
managed to achieve, as if to say that Palestinian backwardness and hostility are an ever-present threat to civilisation. In another notable example, Silva points out the many benefits of advancement and civilisation which Palestinian Arabs have reaped following Israel’s takeover of the West Bank in 1967, such as “access to a vibrant economy, running water, electricity, and education.” Other advantages include a reduction of “infant mortality rates, once among the highest in the world” and a soaring of “literacy rates, among the world’s lowest.” Yet, such abundance showered on the backward Arabs (the narrative points out that Jordanian rule was ‘Arab’, yet did not make any positive impact on the lives of West Bank Palestinians) by the benevolent Israeli Self is met with severe ingratitude and rejection, just as “[r]adical Islam and the influence of the PLO would eventually turn the West Bank into a seething cauldron and place IDF soldiers in daily confrontations with rock-throwing children.” It is ironic that the very positive development which Allon claims Israel has given Palestinians (lower infant mortality rates) is now also seen as carrying a rock-wielding threat to the Israeli army.

According to the narrative, the Other’s outright rejection of ‘civilisation’ only led to the transformation of Arabs and/or Muslims into extremists whose fundamental goal is the destruction of Israel and the Western world as the locus of corrupt values. In a discussion on terrorism with the Pope, Gabriel Allon scoffs at the ‘civilised’ world’s fallacious belief that “terrorism could not be defeated by more terrorism but only through social and economic justice”; on the contrary, the Other is so overcome by hatred and rejection of “our” civilisation that they want nothing more but to destroy it:

You seem to believe that the problem of terrorism and radical Islam can be swept away if they were more like us – that if poverty, illiteracy, and tyranny weren’t so prevalent in the Muslim world, there would be no young men willing to sacrifice their lives in order to maim and kill others. But they’ve seen the way we live, and they want nothing of it. They’ve seen our democracy, and they reject it. They view democracy as a religion that runs counter to the central tenets of Islam, and therefore they will resist it with a sacred rage. How do we

84 Silva, POF 136.
85 Silva, POF 136.
deliver justice and prosperity to these men of Islam who believe only in death? Allon draws a clear line between “us” and “them” in the above passage and argues that the Other is essentially different – not only particular extremist groups and organisations but the “Muslim world” in its entirety. Muslims are thus so thoroughly fanatical and irrational in their hatred that they blindly rage against all the positive values (“justice and prosperity”) which the democratic Self wishes to deliver to them. According to Silva’s hero, “[o]nly when Islam reforms itself will there be social justice and true prosperity within the Arab world” – until then, the Other will remain backward and unaccepting of the modern ‘civilised’ world. It is also telling that the Other is described in overwhelmingly religious terms, making its politics inextricable from Islam. Religion is, then, their source of backwardness and evil.

Silva’s narratives depict the Arab Other not only as backward but also as stricken by severe nostalgia and living in the past. According to Ari Shamron, “the Palestinian way” is to be “trapped in their narrative of loss and exile,” which therefore leads to their inability to reconcile with the existence of the Israeli state, persistent hatred and terrorism. Not only does an Israeli character affirm this Arab trait, but so does the Egyptian receptionist of an expensive Cairo hotel, where Allon stays on one of his undercover operations: living in the past is “the Arab disease,” a definitive characteristic which he claims is intrinsic to the entire ethnicity. The only method the Other uses to assuage its fear of modernity and Western way of life is escaping it by living in a primitive fashion. In another example, Silva provides a description of the Palestinian village of al-Makr as a striking testimony to the Arab Other’s utter detachment from ‘civilisation’:

They sat in silence for a moment, sipping their tea and listening to the buzz of cicadas in the surrounding fields. A goat trotted into the courtyard and gently butted Gabriel’s ankle. A child, robed and

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86 Silva, TM 38; emphasis in the original.
87 Silva, TM 39.
88 Silva, POF 386.
89 Silva, POF 197.
barefoot, shooed the animal away. Time, it seemed, had stopped. Were it not for the electric lights coming on in the house, and the satellite dish atop the roof, Gabriel would have found it easy to imagine that Palestine was still ruled from Constantinople.  

This village scene suggests an anachronistic existence of its inhabitants: the landscape is rural and tranquil, but it is a picture of the past which greatly contrasts with Gabriel Allon’s expectations of what a modern village should look like. The Palestinian village is frozen in time in its traditionalism and backwardness, and the only signs of ‘civilisation’ are electricity and satellite television. This portrayal rings true with Said’s criticism of the Orientalist notion that the East has no historical time and is instead frozen into one temporal state.

Even when Muslims are inducted into the modern and advanced Western countries as immigrants, they are shown to remain steadfastly attached to their backwardness, hatred and refusal to assimilate into their newly-adopted societies. “For the most part the Muslims of Europe are ghettoized and seething with anger,” proclaims Allon’s friend and colleague Eli Lavon. He further explains that the ‘civilised’ world had made a mistake by allowing communities from developing countries into their territory, mistakenly assuming that “[t]he Europeans […] could take in millions of immigrants from the poorest regions of the Muslim world and turn them into good little social democrats in a single generation.” Thus, the hostile Other has seeped through the European borders and infected its societies with pockets of backward communities which persist in their rigid traditions and extremist religion. It is, however, not just post-independence migration from former colonies which allegedly created this societal problem but rather the European countries’ liberal (if not ‘lax’) policies in the last quarter of the twentieth century. As mentioned above, the UK in particular is portrayed as the most affected country – it is the “epicenter of European Islamic extremism”:

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90 Silva, *POF* 356.
92 Silva, *TSS* 52.
The crisis facing Britain was many years in the making and, to a large degree, self-inflicted. For two decades, beginning in the 1980s and continuing even after the attacks of 9/11, British governments both Labour and Tory had thrown open their doors to the world’s most hardened holy warriors. Cast out by countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria, they had come to London, where they were free to publish, preach, organize, conspire and raise money. As a result, Great Britain, the land of John Locke, William Shakespeare, and Winston Churchill, had unwittingly allowed itself to become the primary incubator of a violent ideology that sought to destroy everything for which it had once stood. The British security and intelligence services, confronted by a gathering storm, had responded by choosing the path of accommodation rather than resistance. Extremism was tolerated so long as it was directed outward, toward the secular Arab regimes, America, and, of course, Israel. The failure of this policy of appeasement had been held up for all the world to see on July 7, 2005, when three bombs exploded inside the London Underground and a fourth tore a London city bus to shreds in Tavistock Square. Fifty-two people were killed and seven hundred more wounded. The perpetrators of this bloodbath were not destitute Muslims from abroad but middle-class British boys who had turned on the country of their birth.93

The author’s use of real events enhances the believability of the ideas this narrative is presenting: that the overwhelming majority of the Muslim community in Europe (the UK in particular) are a danger to the very existence of the Western Self. The use of such historical fact contributes to the veracity of a narrative told from the point of view of the hero. As a positive and authoritative character, his version of history becomes preferred to any other. Thus, the narrative claims that it is not simply underprivileged foreigners who so viciously attack the ‘civilised’ world but immigrants who have been nurtured by these countries yet now seek their destruction from within. The Muslim Other is constructed as an alien element within Western societies, whose essential backwardness and irrational attachment to the past have become inbred and significantly intensified within the framework of a smaller group perceiving itself to be surrounded by what is presented as the greatest enemy of Islam – democracy.

93 Silva, TSS 58-59; emphasis in the original.
Similarly to Silva’s depictions of the Other’s character and nature, Flynn describes terrorist characters as fundamentally rejecting modernity and the West as represented by the USA. In *MD*, Ahmed al-Adel is a Saudi Arabian native who, despite having lived in America for some time, feels that “America was a disgusting, decadent place” where even his fellow Muslims were easily “corrupted by […] its vices.” Al-Adel despises that women are allowed more freedoms in America than in his home country and disdainfully criticises his female relations for appearing “in public unaccompanied by male relatives and [making] no effort to cover their faces. Many of them had even taken to driving.” Here, a minority view among Muslims – a Wahhabi outlook – is implied to be the general Muslim attitude, all the while the narrative lacks alternative and more moderate voices to contradict this. Also, the status of women in al-Adel’s home country suggests its low levels of ‘civilisation’, echoing the popular colonial notion emphasising women as an important criterion or measure of ‘civilisation’. The political use of gender as a passive measure of ‘progress’ permeates these primary works. There is also a dichotomy between Western women who are seen in positions of power and as ‘progressive’, active, single mothers despite their gender-biased depictions and Arab and/or Muslim women who are oppressed, invisible and only talked about by heroes and such Othered characters as Saudi Wahhabi male terrorists, al-Adel being a prime example.

Imtaz Zubair, a Pakistani scientist who helps the al-Qaeda senior member, Mustafa al-Yamani, assemble the nuclear devices intended to destroy New York and Washington, views the USA with similar contempt. Despite his fascination with readily-available electronic devices at the shops, he rejects these materialistic temptations because “[h]e had finally seen with his own eyes just how corrupt America was”: not only are women scantily clothed in public but they also openly communicate and flirt with men, which contributes to Zubair’s unyielding conviction that this place “was a

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94 Flynn, *MD* 166.
country firmly in the grip of Satan himself, and if something wasn’t done, the Americans would drag the rest of the world down with them.”  

Similar connotations of opposition to women’s liberation underscore the character’s implied backwardness. It is thus established that these terrorist characters are deeply and essentially opposed to the Western Self, and their exposure to ‘civilisation’ and the democratic achievements of the latter only serve to reinforce their hostility and attachment to primitivism. Channelling an analogous ideology, a Hezbollah senior member in *PAD*, Imad Mukhtar, bemoans the temptation which Western education, economy and media present to his potential terrorist recruits:

> The Internet, TV, radio, cell phones, and travel were all blurring the lines of race and ethnicity, and every day the American war machine stayed in the region more youths were lost to the seduction of capitalism and commercialism. Economic prosperity was spreading, as were the effects of decades of immigration from Lebanon and Palestine to Europe, America, and Canada. This new prosperity was bleeding them of the angry young men they needed to sustain the fight. A contented youth was not about to offer himself up as a suicide bomber. Fortunately in Iraq the Saudis and Pakistanis had been able to provide a steady supply of youths who had been brainwashed in Saudi-sponsored madrasas. This slow yet persistent trickle of suicide bombers was the only thing that was preventing the Americans from peace and stability.  

In order to counteract the siren call of the West, poverty and religious indoctrination are used and abused to “brainwash” deprived communities. The terrorist Other, then, preys on the people (especially the young and impressionable) who are struck by hardship. The radicalised religion of Islam provides such individuals with a purpose and an ideological framework which serve as a platform for the fight against the Western Self. Islam as a faith is presented here as a tyrannical set of beliefs which are highly successful, particularly due to the powerful support of Saudi Arabia. This country is a paradox for the American Self: on the one hand, the USA is in need of the former’s investments and natural resources in order to support its economy; on the other hand, the

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conservative kingdom’s values and morals are essentially opposed to America’s founding tenets, and Saudi Arabia is vastly described in these novels as the sole most powerful supporter of terrorism – the very phenomenon seeking to annihilate the ‘civilised’ world and impose backward and conservative values on it.

Backwardness can be a virtue when considered from the point of view of the terrorist Other. As illustrated above, Imad Mukhtar views modernity as a distraction for the younger generations and therefore utilises primitive ideology and religion to rectify that perceived damage.\textsuperscript{98} Similarly, in \textit{MD}, the al-Qaeda cells are shown to be shunning the latest technological advances in favour of outdated modes of electronic communication for the coordination of their operations.\textsuperscript{99} Moreover, an American retaliatory strike on the Muslim world for the destruction of Washington and the ensuing collapse of world economy would, according to the crazed Saudi terrorist Mustafa al-Yamani, be beneficial to his compatriots and co-religionists: “Muslims were used to hardship. They would flourish in a global recession, whereas the fat, lazy Americans would not. They would be seen for who they were in the face of such hardship, and resentment for them would continue to grow.”\textsuperscript{100} In such a way, the throwback of Muslims to primitive existence is not seen as a threat because the underlying message of this excerpt suggests that this would be the natural state for them; more importantly, the fact that an alleged representative of this hostile Other is expressing such an opinion only serves to confirm it as ‘true’, as opposed to the Self’s gaze from the outside.

Although DeMille’s novels do not directly incorporate major Muslim and/or Arab antagonists, the narratives nonetheless address the Muslim communities in America as well as abroad in general descriptive terms. One significant example is John Corey’s depiction of Yemen, where he is sent on an assignment to investigate the USS Cole attack in punishment for repeated insubordination. Corey the narrator cannot contain his disdain for the Arab country upon his long-awaited return to New York and

\textsuperscript{98} For another example, see Flynn, \textit{PAD} 152-153.
\textsuperscript{99} Flynn, \textit{MD} 302.
\textsuperscript{100} Flynn, \textit{MD} 482.
juxtaposes the American city with Yemen’s major population centre: “The weather guy said it was another beautiful late summer day in New York, with more of the same in the days ahead. Good. Aden was a furnace. The interior of Yemen was hell. Why do people live in these places?”¹⁰¹ Not only does nature render the Other’s territory an uninhabitable (for a white, ‘civilised’ man like Corey) hell but so do its society, traditions and way of life. John Corey is extremely relieved “to be back in civilization” after the nightmare of Yemen:

It seemed strange to be back in civilization […]. The sights, sounds, and smells – which I’d never noticed before – were jarring.

Aden, as it turned out, was not the actual capital of Yemen – some shit-hole town called Sana’a was […].

Aden, where I was stationed, was the port city where the Cole had been blown up, and it, too, sucked. The good news was that the Sheraton Hotel where the team stayed had a gym (the Marines had to show the staff how to put the equipment together) and a swimming pool (which we had to teach the staff how to clean).¹⁰²

Yemen is thus presented as a startlingly backward country where even two of the major cities cannot measure up to the standards of “civilization.” Even the ‘outpost of Western modernity’ – the Sheraton Hotel – is staffed by unqualified local personnel who do not understand how to run it and need to be taught these most basic concepts by their ‘civilised’ guests.

The hero highlights the fact that Westerners cannot mix with Yemeni locals and thus need to rely on one another for social interaction “because there was no one else to talk to in that godforsaken place.” Corey continues his account of the backwardness, incompetence, corruption and violence of the Yemeni people by recounting his experience with the local intelligence and law enforcement:

My duties in Aden consisted of working with their corrupt and stunningly stupid intelligence people to get leads on the perpetrators of the Cole attack. Most of these guys spoke some kind of English, left over from the British colonial days, but whenever my teammates and I got too nosy or aggressive, they forgot their second language.

¹⁰¹ DeMille, NF 325.
¹⁰² DeMille, NF 324.
Now and then, Yemen intelligence would round up the usual suspects and drag them down to police headquarters so we could see some progress in the investigation. About once a week, five or six task force guys would be taken to the police station to question these miserable wretches through inept and lying interpreters in a fetid, windowless interrogation room. The intelligence guys would smack the suspects around a little for our benefit and tell us they were getting close to the “foreign terrorists” who blew up the Cole.

Personally, I think these suspects were hired for the day, but I appreciated the police interrogation techniques. Just kidding.¹⁰³

The characteristics which Corey ascribes to the Yemeni Other are evidently and irredeemably negative, as evidenced by the above passage. Not only are they lazy (or purposefully unwilling to seriously pursue the case the hero is supervising) but they are also violent, deceitful and exceedingly unintelligent. As Yemen is hostile territory for Corey and his colleagues, they “always traveled with bulletproof vests and armed Marines or SWAT guys,” “didn’t mix much with the locals” and Corey himself “slept with Mrs. Glock every night” to protect himself from the dangers of this locus of the Other, which resonates perfectly with some of the Saidian Orientalist themes which I discussed in the first chapter.¹⁰⁴ Corey forms such an uncompromising opinion solely by virtue of external observation, as he considers interaction with locals too unsafe. Therefore, his views – which claim a deep understanding of the Other – are in fact significantly skewed. The Other is portrayed as antithetical to the ‘civilised’ West and not worthy of a hero’s (and, by extension, any Westerner’s) time and effort.

Koretskiy’s terrorist characters as well as the countries and ethnicities which have spawned them are written as equally savage and scornful of modernity. The officers of the Sword of Nemesis group are full of contempt for the women they had encountered during their operation against the “Triumph of Islam” organisation in Saudi Arabia. These women were nurses at the clinic from which al-Hakatti senior (the father of the head of the terrorist group) was abducted; the Sword of Nemesis operatives thus decide to ‘save’ them by evacuating them to a ‘safe’ location in avoidance of the

¹⁰³ DeMille, NF 326-327.
¹⁰⁴ DeMille, NF 327.
vengeful wrath of al-Hakatti junior. However, instead of the gratitude Karpenko’s group are expecting, the women only persist in silently and steadfastly wearing their heavily veiled clothing, which is taken in the following passage as the definitive manifestation of their primitive and oppressed lifestyles:

“No, I can’t understand their broads,” said Kulakov. “Why do they insist on hiding their figures and faces in swaths of fabric? What are they so ashamed of? We put the nurses and the doctor in the van when we were springing them from the clinic – the overheated metal, the sweltering heat! – they were still swaddling themselves despite that. One of them fainted but not even then did she uncover herself. Why? Didn’t the doctor see them without their muzzles? Or us – we were only with them for an hour and then gave them money for the road and bade them farewell, so why suffer from the heat? My impression is that they are ugly and that’s why they are embarrassed…”

“No, that’s what their customs are like. These ‘binladens’ have been covering their females with filthy rags since the beginning of time…”

The Other is therefore a community of oppressive and conservative men who perpetuate the backward customs of their ancestors. They have not evolved since “the beginning of time” and continuously refuse to allow progress and civilisation into their societies. The Other’s women are objectified as voiceless dark-clad apparitions who do not have a say in their own fate and are so severely indoctrinated by their backward culture that, like the men, they spurn any and all opportunity to develop. This, in turn, only confirms the stereotypical view of the Muslim and/or Arab Other as essentially alien and opposed to progress.

In another novel of Koretskiy’s – Peshka v bol’shom igre (The Pawn in a Big Game) – terrorists are portrayed as tribesmen from a distant age. The author likens a group of contemporary Chechen and Central Asian terrorists who name themselves the “Squadron of Islamic Liberation” with their ancestors from the beginning of the twentieth century, who were fighting against Russian dominance after the communist

105 Koretskiy, MN 339.
106 This novel was not previously mentioned in connection with the discussion of the hero due to its lack of a central protagonist, but it is relevant to this chapter in connection with terrorist characters. Koretskiy, Peshka v bol’shom igre; henceforth: PVBI.
revolution. The group is described as identical to its ‘savage’ predecessors save for their possession of modern arms such as the Kalashnikov automatic rifle, the American M-16 and various grenade launchers: “the clothing, appearance and facial expressions of the armed men were indistinguishable from those of the age-old Basmach gangs.”107 In such a way, the author demonstrates that the hostile Other is a stagnant entity which has not changed within a century and – it is implied – is unlikely to ever develop. These novels insist on describing the Other as backward, uncivilised and rejecting of the Self’s modernity and enlightenment.

c. A Religion of Hatred and Fanaticism

As well as being characterised as essentially alien, hostile, backward and resistant to progress, the Other is also shown to be thoroughly obsessed with the religion of Islam, which, in turn, is the implied source of illogical hatred towards the Western Self. The aforementioned Mustafa al-Yamani is a Saudi Arabian who sacrificed his own health on the toxic nuclear testing fields of Kazakhstan in order to obtain volatile nuclear material and personally escort it into the USA for a terrorist attack on New York and Washington. More importantly, al-Yamani sees his mission as a holy act on behalf of Islam as a religion, thus confirming the implied preconception that Islam is indeed the main motivator of terrorism:

The physical journey to this part of the world had taken only five days, but in a metaphysical sense the journey had taken a lifetime. The forty-one-year-old Saudi Arabian had been preparing himself for this mission since the age of nine when he had been sent to a madrasa in Mecca to study the Koran. By the age of fifteen he was fighting in Afghanistan against the godless Soviets and honing his skills as a mujahid, a warrior who fights for Islam. Every cause needed its fighters, its mujahideen, and for al-Yamani there was no more noble cause than that of Islam.108

107 Koretskiy, *PVBI* 303.
108 Flynn, *MD* 18.
Noticeably, it is assumed by this passage that just by virtue of studying the Qur’an al-Yamani would become an extremist. No specific radical religious rhetoric is mentioned, yet the “warrior who fights for Islam” seems to be indoctrinated from the young age of nine and is depicted as an individual who is preconditioned for his attitudes and actions by Islam. The author addresses his readers’ expectations, based on dominant political and media discourses, that Islamic education is necessarily extremist and uses an Arabic word rather than its English equivalent (“madrasa” instead of ‘school’) to suggest nefarious extremism. As a consequence of his ‘religious education’, the lead terrorist of MD believes himself to be the ambassador of a noble cause and a participant in the “ongoing battle between his people and the nonbelievers […] [which] had been waged for more than a thousand years.”\(^\text{109}\) This suggests that Islam had been the originator of violence and hatred since its inception as a religion, and this is what propels the Other towards terrorism. It is this faith alone which keeps the radiation-sick al-Yamani steadfastly on track towards his target – he does not allow himself to capitulate to the pain as long as he has a purpose to fulfil. In the terrorist’s own words, “A few days of agony were nothing when compared to the struggle of his people. He was on a crusade, a continuation of the thousand-year-old battle between the Arab people and the infidels. […] It was time to ignite a true global jihad and show the other believers that America could be brought to her knees.”\(^\text{110}\) This emphasises that the hostility which Islam purportedly harbours towards the Western Self is not a new development but a historical constant ever since the Crusades. Interestingly, the term “crusade” is misapplied by the author to signify al-Yamani’s struggle: it is not a term such a fanatical person would use, especially since the Arabic translation of ‘crusade’ – ‘al-harb al-salibiyya’ – is ‘the war of the Cross’. Al-Yamani as a radical Muslim would not attach this notion, which is associated exclusively with Christianity in his language, to his own actions. Although this may not be a significant element in the portrayal of Islam as an extreme and hate-

\(^{109}\) Flynn, MD 101.
\(^{110}\) Flynn, MD 357. For further examples of obsessive faith and religious hatred displayed by Flynn’s terrorist characters, see MD 45; 58-59; 126; 137-138; 373.
promoting religion, it is nonetheless indicative of the influence which the political and news media rhetoric in general and the utilisation of the term ‘crusade’ (or allusion to it) in George W. Bush’s speeches in particular have had on the post-9/11 vocabulary.\textsuperscript{111}

Flynn’s other terrorist mastermind, Imad Mukhtar, displays similar tendencies towards obsessive religious belief and an exaggerated sense of his own divine purpose. The senior Hezbollah operative is “[c]old, calculating, and full of hatred, [and] there was nothing he wouldn’t do for the cause”; he also believes in his immunity from harm because, as he says, “Allah has plans for me.”\textsuperscript{112} Mukhtar is therefore as dangerous an adversary as al-Yamani, especially because this antagonist is well-informed about his enemy. His fanatical and brazen faith-based actions make him more daring than the regular American forces normally allow themselves to be.\textsuperscript{113} It is thus unsurprising that the only person capable of defeating Imad Mukhtar is the equally (if not more) audacious hero Mitch Rapp. While torturing one of Mukhtar’s accomplices following the Mosul kidnapping of Irene Kennedy, Rapp sees a confirmation of the blind fanaticism of the terrorists. Having been maimed by the hero, terrorist accomplice Abbas deliriously fantasises about his ascendance to paradise and thus reveals the deep-seated religious mythology with which he had been indoctrinated as a Muslim:

The terrorist’s train of thought bounced from one subject to the next, and the only common thread had to do with a comment Rapp had made about the seventy-seven virgins that were supposedly awaiting Abbas in paradise. Abbas had been rambling on and on about how he was not afraid to die. Allah had a special place for him. He would have his pick of the finest seventy-seven virgins. Rapp told Abbas it was too bad he wouldn’t be able to have sex with them. When Abbas asked why, Rapp told him because he was going to cut off his dick. This one comment sent the thirty-some-year-old terrorist into a fit of blubering tears. Some twenty minutes later he was now trying to engage Rapp in


\textsuperscript{112} Flynn, \textit{PAD} 13; 241.

\textsuperscript{113} Flynn, \textit{PAD} 238.
a theological debate over whether or not his penis would magically reappear when he reached paradise.\textsuperscript{114} Abbas had been brainwashed into believing that violence against the West would earn him entry to paradise, where heavenly rewards await him. His sanity broken by torture, the terrorist reveals his far-fetched and sexually-obsessed religious beliefs, which the author provides as evidence of the absurdity of the Other’s religion and its fanatical nature even as he threatens to emasculate the adversary, who is presented as weak and ‘feminine’.

In one instance, Flynn’s narrator makes a feeble attempt to distinguish between extremist Muslims and their more moderate co-religionists by indicating that terrorists are “always chauvinistic, bigoted men, devoted to a perverted interpretation of Islam” but they are also “frightened to read the entire Koran because they knew they would be confronted with the words of a prophet who would never condone their actions.”\textsuperscript{115} However, the overwhelming majority of Muslim characters in Flynn’s novel only serve to confirm the worst alleged attributes of Islam, thus characterising an entire religion as the mainspring of terrorism. The narrative is designed to ultimately undermine any redemptive statements about the Other: whereas the hero may initially recognise positive aspects of Islam, his authoritative masculine actions against fanatical terrorists dismantle all positive perceptions and confirm the Other’s general depravity.

In Forsyth’s TA, Islam is not represented as a benevolent religion either, and it is made evident through Mike Martin’s undercover immersion in terrorist networks. The eponymous and original Afghan, Izmat Khan, was educated at a relatively temperate religious school in Pakistan as opposed to his peers who experienced “years of Wahhabi brainwashing” in other schools and whose education “concentrated only on the ultra-aggressive passages from Verses of the Sword.”\textsuperscript{116} The schools were based in Pakistan’s refugee camps and were staffed, “salaried and funded by Saudi Arabia”; moreover,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{114} Flynn, \textit{PAD} 356. \\
\textsuperscript{115} Flynn, \textit{PAD} 184-185. \\
\textsuperscript{116} Forsyth 143.
\end{flushleft}
“[t]he imams of these madrassahs […] brought with them the only version of Islam permitted in Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism, the harshest and most intolerant creed within Islam,” with the help of which “a whole generation of young Afghans was about to be brainwashed into fanaticism.” Like in Flynn, Muslim religious schools are represented here as loci of extremism rather than educational institutions. Although Khan himself had initially been amenable (by virtue of his father’s influence) to “singing, dancing, sports and some tolerance of others” and used to be appalled at the torture and murder of men and the beating of women, the loss of his family and entire village extinguished his moderation and propelled him onto the path of becoming a Taliban commander. As Forsyth’s hero’s mission is to convince hardened extremists of his identity as the Afghan, Mike Martin immerses himself in the world of fanatical terrorists and seeks to comprehend their motives:

In a career in special forces he had never actually met a suicide bomber before the act. Now he was surrounded by them, had become one of them.

At Forbes Castle he had read copiously of their state of mind; of their total conviction that the deed is being done in a truly holy cause; that it is automatically blessed by Allah himself; that a guaranteed and immediate passage to paradise will ensue; and that this vastly outweighs any residual love of life.

He had also come to realize the level and depth of hatred that must be imbued in the shahid alongside the love of Allah. One of the two alone will not work. The hatred must be like a corrosive acid inside the soul, and he was surrounded by it.

He had seen it in the faces of the dacoits of Abu Sayyaf who relished every chance to kill a westerner; he had seen it in the hearts of the Arabs as they prayed for a chance to kill as many Christians, Jews and secular or insufficient Muslims as possible in the act of death.

Martin’s reflections on the nature of terrorism indicate that key elements of it include unshakeable beliefs in such tenets of Islam which emphasise ‘heroic’ death and its heavenly rewards as well as the overwhelming hatred of anybody whose faith is at odds

117 Forsyth 113-114; emphasis in the original.
118 Forsyth 143-144.
119 Forsyth 336; emphasis in the original.
with the terrorists’. The fanatic’s mind easily reconciles the paradox of “the love of Allah” existing alongside and, indeed, hand in hand with the overwhelming hatred towards those who do not subscribe to their ideology. The most common trait of the terrorists is thus their “shared hate and fanaticism,” which does not reflect well on the religion of Islam as a whole. Martin makes further observations about his fanatical co-passengers on the lengthy journey on the ill-fated vessel designed to destroy the G8 conference cruise ship. The hero notes that “[o]nly constant prayer and the obsessive reading of the Holy Koran enabled them to stay calm and true to the belief in what they were doing”; this is to say that religion helps numb suicide terrorists’ minds and assuage their potential doubts about their missions – Islam is an instrument of brainwashing, the doctrines of which do not allow for independent thinking. Therefore, Islam is depicted as a faith which consistently propagates hatred and violence rather than peace.

Silva’s novels identify the mosque as the definitive locus of extremism and the transmitter of intolerance for the “Wahhabi-inspired terrorists of al-Qaeda and its affiliates [who] regard everyone who doesn’t adhere to its brand of Islam as kafur and mushrikun, worthy only of death.” As the focus of the Gabriel Allon series is terrorism in Europe, the highest concern is raised about the import of extremism into Western European countries via Saudi Arabian funding and clerics, as represented by the North London Central Mosque in the UK. In the Netherlands, Ishaq Fawaz, the cell leader of the Sword of Allah, is also indoctrinated at his mosque, the al-Hijrah in downtown Amsterdam. The most important point the author makes by introducing these two mosques as hotbeds of terrorism is that they are frighteningly located at the heart of the ‘civilised’ world – in capitals of Western European countries. According to Ishaq Fawaz’s father, Ibrahim, the only refuge for the alienated and discriminated against children of immigrants is Islam:

120 Forsyth 337.
121 Forsyth 411.
122 Silva, TM 28; emphasis in the original. Note the author’s misspelling of the transcription of the word ‘kuffar’ – ‘heretics’.
123 Silva, TSS 63.
“Our children heard all the insults that were hurled at us by our Dutch hosts, too. They spoke better Dutch than we did. They were more attuned to the subtleties of Dutch culture. They saw the way the Dutch treated us and they were humiliated. They became angry and resentful, not only at the Dutch but at us, their parents. Our children are trapped between two worlds, not fully Arab, not quite Dutch. They inhabit the ghurba, the land of strangers, and so they seek shelter in a safe place.”

“Islam,” said Gabriel.

Ibrahim nodded his head and repeated, “Islam.”

This “safe place” is, however, a mosque full of “[y]oung men whose minds are filled with images of jihad and terror. Young men who speak of martyrdom and blood. Young men who look to Osama bin Laden as a true Muslim.” Instead of positioning the mosque as a space of peace, tolerance and reflection, the value of the place of worship is subverted and utilised as an ideological and militarised space. Throughout his novels, Silva repeatedly emphasises the hateful and violent nature of Islam, which he presents as even more hostile when located within the Western Self – the constant presence of their perceived enemy drives Muslim extremists towards conceiving more brutal and atrocious plans against ‘civilisation’. Silva’s use of Arabic terms in this and other passages is also notable as a strategy of framing the authenticity of his novel’s point of view, which is a consistent trend across these action-thrillers.

As I have indicated, Saudi Arabia is largely positioned as the most dangerous supporter of terrorism across all these novels. Terrorist organisations are shown to acquire their power and funding precisely from this wealthy kingdom, and Wahhabism is blamed for all brands of terrorism. In Forsyth, it is Saudi-established “madrassahs” which indoctrinate the youth, and in Flynn it is “Saudi-funded religious schools” which foster terrorists out of lost young men. Similarly, Silva affirms through his characters’ dialogues that not only do hard-line members of the Saudi royal family sponsor terrorism but also Saudi-founded charities. They collect funds around the globe in form

124 Silva, TSS 47; emphasis in the original.
125 Silva, TSS 48.
126 For further evidence, see Silva, TSS 44-45; 218.
127 Flynn, MD 142.
of “zakat” – charity acts required of Muslims by the Qur’an – and then “give money directly to terrorists.”

There are also prominent businessmen in Silva who hail from Saudi Arabia and support terrorism, such as Zizi al-Bakari. He wields significant power worldwide and is virtually untouchable, especially in America where he exerts influence even on the President by controlling the price and flow of oil. Due to these deep economic and political ties between the two countries and despite the American officials’ awareness of Saudi sponsorship of terrorism, official US powers are helpless and unable to break this circle, which is why they are forced to secretly enlist foreign agents like Gabriel Allon to covertly resolve their problems. Flynn’s America is equally unable to publicly antagonise its alleged ally in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, due to American oil interests in the region. Thus, once again, it is up to the nation’s secret hero, Mitch Rapp, to improve (but never completely resolve) the situation by assassinating scores of terrorists and their leaders. In Koretskiy’s MN, the Sword of Nemesis covertly disrupts the operation of a group based in Saudi Arabia and led by a Saudi man: “Daud al-Hakatti was rich and powerful and his abode on the shores of the Red Sea in Jazan more closely resembled a palace than a cottage. His son Said headed the group which controlled a territory sweeping the Gulf of Aden to the Suez.” Koretskiy also implies that al-Hakatti’s influence reaches even farther than that – it spreads around the globe. All in all, the authors of the novels under analysis are all in consensus over the disproportionate influence and support of terrorism – whether political, financial or religious – which Saudi Arabia seemingly exerts worldwide.

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128 Silva, TM 119; 23; TSS 246.
129 Silva, TM 93; 125-126.
130 Silva, TM 94-95; 344-345; 385; 436.
131 Flynn, MD 41.
132 Koretskiy, MN 328.
133 Koretskiy, MN 329.
d. Madness and Terrorism

Alongside being filled with religious zeal and hatred and being empowered by entire Arab states in their purported holy missions, terrorist characters are often depicted as tittering on the brink of insanity and psychopathy. Their animosity, merged with their extreme Islamic beliefs, consumes what remaining reason these characters may possess and turns them into madmen. For instance, Flynn’s Mustafa al-Yamani is a paranoid villain whose inevitable death from radiation drives him to commit unspeakable atrocities in the name of “strik[ing] a glorious blow for Islam.” The very fact that terrorists do not have any qualms about murdering scores of American people regardless of their faith or ethnicity leads to Rapp’s exasperated branding of terrorism as “sheer lunacy” – an insanity, or mental illness, which allows the hostile Other to justify the unjustifiable. Forsyth describes his lead terrorist Yusuf Ibrahim as possessing “hate-filled eyes,” within which one could clearly see the man’s deranged resolve to inflict as much death, destruction and suffering as possible.

It is not surprising that the Other is associated with insanity and mental illness because depicting these villains as possessing sound reasoning would amount to an implication of justified actions on their part. Therefore, insanity discards any and all political or economic motives which terrorists might have. Instead, they are a depoliticised Other who is unreasonable, illogical and hateful as opposed to the just, rational and benevolent Self. The binary opposition between the hero and the terrorist (the Self and the Other) is reaffirmed to the extent that the terrorist’s insanity can no longer serve as an excuse for his acts but rather becomes their essential component. The psychopathic terrorist is both outside of his society and religion and a representative of it: insanity thus encompasses the Other as a homogeneous entity and alienates it from the reasonable and mentally sound Self.

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134 Flynn, MD 102.
135 Flynn, MD 145.
136 Forsyth 408.
Similarly to the above authors, Koretskiy’s narratives utilise the insanity rhetoric in order to thoroughly discredit and dehumanise terrorist characters. In *KV*, Vakhit Bekmurzayev reveals his true psychopathic personality towards the end of the book as he prepares to detonate a nuclear device in the centre of Moscow: “Something in his voice rang false to Max, and the very appearance of Gepard [Bekmurzayev’s code name] with his stone-hard face and frenzied eyes stirred deeply unsettling dread. Had he gone insane?” A later passage following the foiling of Bekmurzayev’s plan confirms Max Kardanov’s suspicions and formally labels the terrorist as psychotic: “There was an outright madman standing in the middle of the room. A deranged fanatic with a rage-distorted face, ferocious grin and angrily squinted eyes.” Not only is Bekmurzayev a confirmed psychopath but he is also a delusional megalomaniac who believes in his chosen status as outside any moral economy and expects to rule the planet with the ruthless tenets of Islam upon his operation’s success. These negative characteristics of Kardanov’s enemy contribute to the overwhelming disparagement of the terrorist Other; they also substantiate his portrait as a lacking, almost animalistic individual.

In another of Koretskiy’s works, the Sword of Nemesis group’s trial run as a counter-terrorist unit happens when a young Chechen extremist takes a passenger bus hostage and threatens to detonate his explosive suicide vest if not given the ransom he demands. Isa Aslambekov is a solitary home-grown fanatic unassociated with any known terrorist organisations, yet he somehow single-handedly procures explosives and assembles them into a weapon. This isolated terrorist is overcome by insanity and violent hysteria as he takes over the commuter bus and threatens the passengers. The theme of madness, which can be traced across this body of works, is a major component in the construction of antagonists’ characters as hostile terrorist Others.

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137 Koretskiy, *KV* 449.
138 Koretskiy, *KV* 500.
139 Koretskiy, *KV* 254; 258-259.
140 Koretskiy, *MN* 211-212. For a further example of Koretskiy’s representation of terrorism as madness, see *AP*, vol. 2 212.
e. Revenge as Motive

Many fictional terrorists in these works are motivated by what is explained as disproportionate revenge desires for injuries which the Western Self is perceived to have inflicted on Muslims and/or Arabs. As I described above, Forsyth’s Izmat Khan can initially be considered a moderate conservative Muslim with a healthy measure of antagonism towards the former British colonists, though not excessively hostile. However, in 1998 a life-altering event occurs: an American missile gone off-course destroyed Khan’s entire village along with his family. The Afghan’s sense of loss, rootlessness and desire for vengeance are what propels him towards the Taliban and terrorism:

When Izmat Khan reached the mountain there was nothing to recognize. The entire valley had been buried. There was no stream any more, no farm, no orchards, no stock pens, no mosque, no stables, no compounds. His entire family and all his neighbours were gone. His parents, uncles, aunts, sisters, wife and child were dead beneath millions of tons of granite rubble. There was nowhere to dig and nothing to dig for. He had become a man with no roots, no relatives, no clan.

In the dying August sun he knelt on the shale high above where his dead family lay, turned west toward Mecca, bowed his head to the ground and prayed. But it was a different prayer this time; it was a mighty oath, a sworn vendetta, a personal jihad unto death and it was against the people who had done this. He declared war on America.\(^\text{141}\)

The depth of Khan’s personal tragedy urges him to seek revenge against the perpetrators and, most importantly, to extrapolate this blame onto the entire American nation. The Other is thus depicted as predisposed towards unhealthy measures of hatred, vengefulness and exaggeration, which in turn provides the motive for the slaying of innocents by means of terrorism.

When the Vatican is ruthlessly attacked in Silva’s *TM*, the terrorists make a declaration justifying this aggression as revenge for the West’s policies. The link they establish between politics and Christianity (as represented by the Catholic Pope) as

\(^{141}\) Forsyth 150-151.
equally responsible for the discrimination against Muslims is superficial and provides only a perfunctory justification for the deadly attack:

We declare war on you, the Crusaders, with the destruction of your infidel temple to polytheism and the death of your so-called Supreme Pontiff, this man in white who you treat as though he were a god. This is your punishment for the sins of Iraq, Abu Ghraib, and Guantánamo Bay. The attacks will continue until the land of Iraq is no longer in American bondage and Palestine has been liberated from the clutches of the Jews. We are the Brotherhood of Allah. There is no God but Allah, and all praise to him.\footnote{Silva, \textit{TM} 58; emphasis in the original.}

The terrorists’ declaration utilises Bush’s term of the ‘war on terror’ in addressing the Western Self and provides some political gripes as reasons for the attack (Iraq, Palestine, unlawful detention of Muslims). The statement is also filled with hate-speech and ridicule directed at Christianity as a religion inferior to Islam. Another of Silva’s characters, Ibrahim Fawaz (Ishaq Fawaz’s father), confirms that the Arab desire for revenge is an innate and essential trait of the entire ethnicity: “It is something you [Israelis] and the Americans never seem to fully comprehend about us […] When we are wronged, we must seek revenge. It is in our culture, our bloodstream. Each time you kill or torture one of us, you are creating an extended family of enemies that is honor bound to take retribution.”\footnote{Silva, \textit{TSS} 217.} Revenge is thus seen as inextricable from a vague Middle Eastern concept of honour; but, while the vengeance the terrorist Other seeks seems to stem from the same roots, it is significantly more violent than acceptable and encompasses entire nations as its legitimate targets. Another example of this is the case of Silva’s \textit{POF} head terrorist, Khaled al-Khalifa, who – in the name of revenge for his father’s death at the hands of Gabriel Allon – orders an attack on the Israeli embassy in Rome and orchestrates the triple suicide bombing at Paris’ Gare de Lyon. In fact, both al-Khalifa and Yasir Arafat have personal vendettas against Allon which inevitably escalate to
massive loss of innocent lives. Thus, Palestinian resistance to Israel is depoliticised and branded as terrorism.

Interestingly, despite a generally negative portrayal of the Other, DeMille subverts the above pattern and introduces revenge as a strong motivator for representatives of the Self – John Corey, Kate Mayfield and Bain Madox. Because of their close encounter with the 9/11 World Trade Centre attacks, Corey and Mayfield cannot remain as ‘unbiased’ towards the Other as they used to be prior to the tragedy, when “memos were more carefully worded so as not to appear that we disapproved of Islamic terrorists or that we were upsetting them in any way.” On the contrary, post-9/11 American politics and retaliation against terrorism fundamentally change the workings of the ATTF and the lives of Corey and Mayfield:

When political correctness was the order of the day, you would have thought the Anti-Terrorist Task Force was a social service agency for psychopaths with low self-esteem. Now, everyone talks about killing Islamic fundamentalists and winning the war on terror – grammatical correctness would be “the war on terrorism,” but this is a newspeak word. Ms. Mayfield, a good government employee, has few politics of her own, so she has no problem hating the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and UBL [Usama bin Laden] one day, then hating Saddam Hussein even more when a directive comes out telling her who to hate that day.

But perhaps I’m not being fair. And I’m not totally rational on the subject of bin Laden and Al Qaeda. I lost a lot of friends on 9/11, and but for the grace of God and heavy traffic, Kate and I would have been in the North Tower when it went down.

Having experienced the horror which terrorism inflicts first-hand, Corey is utterly unapologetic in his stance against both the confirmed and purported patrons of terrorism. The hero does not deny the irrationality of this hatred and desire for retribution, and he is well-positioned to carry it out at the earliest opportunity. Not unlike Corey, the insane billionaire Madox longs for revenge against the entire Muslim world. Although Madox

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144 Silva, *POF* 46-47.
145 DeMille, *WF* 10.
146 DeMille, *WF* 19-20.
argues that “[r]evenge is very healthy, but it doesn’t have to be personal revenge [, as] any enemy combatant will do,” his judgement is partly discredited by his repeated description as a madman.\(^{147}\) Thus, dissimilarly to the other authors, DeMille portrays all revenge as irrational but does not deny that even his protagonist harbours it. The other novels make a clearer distinction between the rightful and justified vengeance of the Self (the hero) and its senseless equivalent brought about by the Other, thus confirming their binary opposition.

\textit{f. Unjustified Violence}

Directly correlating with the theme of revenge is the overarching theme of unjustified violence enacted as a result of the Other’s cruel, inhumane and animalistic nature. Continuing with the analysis of DeMille, it is necessary to reiterate that no fictional terrorists make a direct and significant appearance in the two novels which I discuss here, but the author does refer to the real head of al-Qaeda and the face which was put to the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden, on several occasions. The notorious terrorist is represented as the leader of a ‘new type’ (once more invoking the concept of “new terrorism”) of “terrorist groups who don’t take credit for an attack […] [and who are instead] just into death and destruction.”\(^{148}\) It is thus made evident that the main motivation for such terrorists is the purely sadistic pleasure which they gain from the suffering of others; it also contributes to the deconstruction of such attacks as politically-motivated acts. The utilisation of actual historical figures and events as a strategy of framing also contributes to the solidification of the verisimilitude of DeMille’s narrative, making the opinions expressed more believable and relatable.

The authors often specify religion- and irrational hatred-based grudges as catalysts for the Other’s unwarranted acts of violence, and Forsyth does not diverge from this trend. Although Izmat Khan is initially described as a man who “had no taste

\(^{147}\) DeMille, \textit{WF} 487; 489.

\(^{148}\) DeMille, \textit{NF} 120. See also 159-160.
for cruelty for its own sake” and who “was fighting […] to unite his homeland once and for all,” he becomes more driven by violence and vengeance following the destruction of his village.\(^\text{149}\) Khan allies himself with ruthless fanatics, such as those who later accompany the disguised Mike Martin on his fatal journey. Yusuf Ibrahim, the mastermind of the mission to destroy the G8 cruiser, is not only the right-hand man of fellow Jordanian and prominent al-Qaeda member al-Zarqawi but also a sadist who “had hacked off heads on camera and loved it” and so earned himself the nickname of “Butcher of Karbala.”\(^\text{150}\) Thus, the main reason for such brutality is his perverted enjoyment of it, which characterises the Other as inclined towards violence for its own sake, unlike the Self whose acts of aggression are unconditionally justified as proportionate and necessary. Again, the terrorist character is grounded and made more realistic by his association with an actual historical figure, which further attests to the veracity of the Other’s characteristics in the narrative.

Koretskiy also portrays terrorists in \(MN\) as sadistic and senselessly cruel. When Said al-Hakatti’s terrorist group captures Russian hostages in Beirut in a ruthless and swift operation, the Russian President’s advisor and the direct supervisor of Vitaliy Karpenko declares that the terrorists’ “actions are irrational” because they kill their prisoners instead of putting forth demands.\(^\text{151}\) The operatives of the Sword of Nemesis retaliate by kidnapping al-Hakatti senior and several of the important members of the terrorist organisation, and confusion within the ranks of the Triumph of Islam ensues. These terrorists do not expect resistance from the Russians; when the Self’s ‘just’ retaliation occurs al-Hakatti viciously punishes his own security employees for the breach, attempting to gain information as well as to intimidate his subordinates.\(^\text{152}\) The fact that Russian anti-terrorist operatives are willing to adopt their adversaries’ brutal methods of torture utterly shocks the terrorists and contributes to the disintegration of the Triumph group:

\(^{149}\) Forsyth 148-149.
\(^{150}\) Forsyth 339. For another example of the terrorists’ sadism, see 335; 407-408.
\(^{151}\) Koretskiy, \(MN\) 315-316; 318.
\(^{152}\) Koretskiy, \(MN\) 332-334.
There is a man in a Russian military uniform sitting in an armchair and flanked on both sides by the hostages. He is wearing a black mask, and only his fiercely shining eyes are visible through the holes.

“Well, Said, how do you like your own methods? When, instead of you killing another’s father, your own is being murdered? Listen to me carefully, you rabid dog: the Russian hostages must be released immediately. All three of them. Safe and sound. And you would only get these two back three hours later. If you don’t comply, I’ll send you their heads tomorrow morning and then feed the rest of them to the pigs and the dogs…”

Not only does Karpenko – for it is him behind the mask – threaten the terrorists in the same cold-blooded and sadistic manner they tend to use, but he then seemingly breaks his word by misinforming al-Hakatti that the captives were killed regardless, even following the due handover of the Russian hostages. Al-Hakatti’s authority and grasp on the organisation falter despite his father later being found alive and well, and the Triumph of Islam disbands amidst disputes over its vulnerability exposed by the Russians. However similar the Sword of Nemesis’ methods appear to be, they are essentially distinguished from the terrorists’ by the noble and important purpose they serve – the Self does not torture or maim out of sadism but rather does so in order to maintain order and protect the innocent. Therefore, the contrast between the two sides is sustained in this narrative.

Flynn’s terrorist characters are similarly portrayed to be remorseless, ruthless and sadistic. As evidence of the latter, the aforementioned Mustafa al-Yamani cold-bloodedly murders an elderly man in whose house he and his accomplices hide from the police: “Al-Yamani watched this with the detachment and moral clarity of a true believer. He’d had seen plenty of people die during his life, and compared to what he’d witnessed on the battlefield this was mild. […] They left the old man on the floor in front of his wife and went into the living room.”

Al-Yamani is thoroughly unperturbed and rather accustomed to people’s violent ends, and he is therefore unrepentant in this and other instances of deadly violence which he inflicts. In fact, the

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153 Koretskiy, MN 335.
154 Flynn, MD 399-400.
only justification which Flynn’s terrorist swears by is his untamed desire to make Washington “suffer Islam’s fiery vengeance” by nuclear bomb,\textsuperscript{155} as long as al-Yamani is on track towards this goal, he is willing to sacrifice the lives of other innocents as well as those of his own comrades who waver about the mission.

Another of Flynn’s main villains, the “highly reclusive leader of Hezbollah’s security section” Imad Mukhtar, is a terrorist with an impressively violent and diverse résumé and a man who always “sought out the innocent to amplify their terror.”\textsuperscript{156} “Mukhtar was not some mindless bureaucrat trying to cover his backside”; on the contrary, the list of attacks in which he had participated is what makes him a terrorist with such a ruthless reputation:

At the young age of fourteen the man had joined the Palestinian terrorist group Force 17. By the time he was twenty, he recognized Yasser Arafat for the corrupt megalomaniac that he was and broke from the PLO. He formed a little-known group called Islamic Jihad that eventually spun off another organization called Hezbollah. That next year he changed the landscape of the Middle East by successfully using car and truck bombs to level the U.S. Embassy, the marine barracks, and the French barracks in Beirut. After those three gruesome attacks, Mukhtar and his men went on a kidnapping spree that turned the international political landscape on its ear for the rest of the decade. Mukhtar was a man of action who did not shrink from violence. He did not hesitate to kill those who did not share his all-or-nothing vision of jihad. Even if they were fellow Muslims.\textsuperscript{157}

Mukhtar’s description as “a man of action who did not shrink from violence” is extremely reminiscent of that of the hero, Mitch Rapp. Yet, the author draws a line of distinction between the two in the sentence which immediately follows: whereas Rapp only kills those guilty of perpetrating or enabling terrorist acts (thus making his violence ‘good’), Mukhtar’s targets largely consist of any innocent in disagreement with his extremely narrow-minded views, thus encompassing most of the world’s population as potential victims. This emphasises the juxtaposition between the heroic Self and the

\textsuperscript{155} Flynn, \textit{MD} 481.
\textsuperscript{156} Flynn, \textit{PAD} 330.
\textsuperscript{157} Flynn, \textit{PAD} 50. See also 42; 54; 154-155.
terrorist Other in terms of the moral value of the violence they tend to inflict and elevates the hero’s righteous characterisation as the archetypal model.

When the Vatican is viciously attacked in Silva’s *TM*, not only are the terrorists portrayed as inflicting unwarranted violence on innocent Christian worshippers but Muslims in general are vilified as universal supporters of such bloodshed. Ahmed bin Shafiq’s group, which calls itself the Brotherhood of Allah, organised an attack which (unsuccessfully) aimed to assassinate the Pope and resulted instead in the death of “seven hundred pilgrims and several cardinals and bishops” as well as the “severe physical damage to [St. Peter’s] Basilica.” These acts immediately resonate throughout the Muslim world: “The attack on the home of Christendom had reignited the fires of the global jihadist movement. Wild street celebrations erupted in Tehran, Cairo, Beirut, and the Palestinian territories, while intelligence analysts from Washington to London to Tel Aviv immediately detected a sharp spike in activity and recruitment.” The narrative implies that the majority of the – if not the entire – population of predominantly Muslim countries are supporters of terrorism; even if these Muslims are not immediate members of terrorist organisations, they wholeheartedly endorse and take pleasure in the brutality and violence which the latter inflict on the West.

Silva further solidifies this point of view and allegorises it through a character called Muhammad, “a very skilled interrogator” whom bin Shafiq assigns to the torture of Allon’s American undercover agent Sarah Bancroft. Muhammad is to take Bancroft on a “Night Journey,” which is a reference to the night during which “God revealed *Quran* to the Prophet,” and it is under the threat of Muhammad “carving the flesh from your bones and cutting off your head” that the American agent is to “make a revelation of […] [her] own.” Bin Shafiq’s subordinate does uphold this promise, and the resulting face of Muhammad – and, by extension, of ‘Islam’ in general – which Bancroft beholds is that of merciless cruelty and indifference to the suffering of others. Hence,

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158 Silva, *TM* 73.
159 Silva, *TM* 70-71.
160 Silva, *TM* 373.
Silva reinforces the stereotypical equation of the Muslim Other to unwarranted violence and terrorism, and portrays Muslims and/or Arabs as irredeemable sadists.

In similar spirit, Gabriel Allon tells an Arafat administration insider collaborating with the Israeli intelligence that Palestinians (and Arabs by extension) are only capable of endorsing and celebrating the tragedies inflicted on others instead of creating something positive for themselves: “Celebration of death is what you’re good at these days […]. Sometimes it seems to be the only thing. Offer your people something instead of suicide. Lead them instead of following the most extreme elements of your society. Build something.”¹⁶¹ To this the informer Mahmoud Arwish replies, “Yes, we celebrate death, […] [a]nd some of us collaborate with our enemy. But that’s the way it always is in war, isn’t it?”¹⁶² Although Arwish attempts to justify his own and his people’s negative actions and sentiments, his character is already discredited as a traitor to his own people as well as to the Israelis (it later emerges that the Palestinian was feeding Allon’s colleagues false information on Arafat’s orders) and is subsequently executed by Yasir Arafat’s security detail. In summary, all the authors discussed here make a strong argument throughout their narratives that the Muslim Other is backward, fanatical and sadistic in its infliction of suffering on the Western Self. Thus, despite the employment of violence by both sides against the other, the two are diametrically opposed in regard to their moral justification or lack thereof.

**g. Archetypal Terrorist Traits**

Moving on to the more specifically personal qualities of terrorist characters, I discuss below whether or not these characters possess such key hero-ascribed traits as intelligence, honour, courage, loyalty or moral uprightness. When it comes to the first attribute, terrorists are generally depicted as unwise; for instance, Flynn’s Westernised Iranian minister Azad Ashani indicates that instead of rational thought his compatriots

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¹⁶¹ Silva, *POF* 159.
¹⁶² Silva, *POF* 160. For further examples of the Other’s propensity towards unjustified violence, see *POF* 99; 254-255; 315; *TSS* 84; 94-95; 225-227.
are usually driven by their emotions and an exaggerated and often unfounded sense of “national pride.”\footnote{Flynn, \textit{PAD} 122.} The Iranians are, therefore, easily swayed by their hatred of the West to protect “the fragile Persian ego” which “relied on accomplishments that were thousands of years old.”\footnote{Flynn, \textit{PAD} 79.} Because such a critical viewpoint is put forward by an ‘insider’, a native of the Persian Other, it is designed to be read as more authentic, legitimate and convincing. Silva utilises a similar narrative device for the characterisation of the Other as unintelligent: Ishaq Fawaz’s father who cooperates with Gabriel Allon describes fellow Arabs as irrational and gullible by telling the hero that “[t]he willingness to believe outlandish things is an Arab disease.”\footnote{Silva, \textit{TSS} 221.} Such a ‘disease’ renders the Arab Other susceptible to extremist ideologies and allows it to rationalise indiscriminate violence by means of religion.

However, if there is one avenue where the Other is admitted to have a certain measure of skill, it is the terrorists’ knowledge and ability to manipulate modern technology to avoid detection. Graham Seymour, the head of the MI5, admits to Allon that “[u]nfortunately, there is no shortage of jihadists in our local telecommunications industry. They’re damned clever when it comes to covering their tracks with phones.”\footnote{Silva, \textit{TSS} 361.} Not dissimilarly, Forsyth’s narrative grants terrorist masterminds a measure of recognition for their “meticulous research, regardless of time and expense,” education and has the British and American counter-terrorism specialists admire “their mastery of very high technology, and especially the computer sciences.”\footnote{Forsyth 318; 275.} Yet, at the same time, the author depicts the more lowly executors of terrorist plans as extremely ignorant and detached from modernity, such as the Waziri extremist who unwittingly alerts the British intelligence to the location of al-Qaeda’s head of finance. The young man belongs to a group devoted to religious extremism:

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item[163] Flynn, \textit{PAD} 122.
\item[164] Flynn, \textit{PAD} 79.
\item[165] Silva, \textit{TSS} 221.
\item[166] Silva, \textit{TSS} 361.
\item[167] Forsyth 318; 275.
\end{itemize}}
All were raised from the gutter in a madrassah, or Koranic boarding school, of extreme orientation, adhering to the Wahhabi sect of Islam, the harshest and most intolerant of all. They had no knowledge of, or skill in, anything other than reciting the Koran, and were thus, like teeming millions of madrassah-raised youths, virtually unemployable. But, given a task to do by their clan chief, they would die for it.168

One of these tribesmen is Abdelahi, an uneducated young man “from the gutter” – the purported lowest of the Othered low – who cannot even understand why his mobile phone would not work without charging and needs one of his associates to explain this to him. Following this, the young extremist decides to turn on and use the spare phone of the Egyptian al-Qaeda senior, the number of which is on the British intelligence watch list as one of the devices purchased by the perpetrators of London’s 7 July 2005 bombings.169 Thus, a seemingly innocent but extremely unwise act on the part of the terrorist results in a raid on their location and the demise of the members of the organisation present there. Despite according a certain amount of credit to the terrorist Other’s technical savvy, Forsyth at the same time debunks this by anecdotes about the terrorists’ lack of intelligence, such as above. The only potentially positive trait of the antagonists is discredited by the rest of the narrative and is shown to be used to exclusively nefarious ends.

Although terrorist characters are sometimes accredited entitlement to honour, it is usually shown to be hypocritical in these narratives. The aforementioned Azad Ashani acts as a highly self-critical spokesperson for the Persian people, and he makes a strong connection between the Persian (ironically unwarranted) sense of pride to their notion of honour. Following the destruction of the Isfahan nuclear facility, the Iranian government’s sense of pride “demand[s] that they hit back” at the perceived perpetrator of the attack – the United States.170 It is precisely this national pride which inclines the Iranian Other towards extreme self-aggrandisement and meaningless declarations of a necessity to defend their honour against the hostile Western Other.

168 Forsyth 12-13; emphasis in the original.
169 Forsyth 13-14.
170 Flynn, PAD 105; 203.
The lead terrorist in the same novel, Imad Mukhtar, possesses a limited measure of honour. This manifests in his unexpected demonstration of a personal code of conduct when he spares Ashani’s life in Iraq: “In most cases Mukhtar thought people expendable, but not this time. He owed Ashani for saving his life [at the Isfahan facility]. If it weren’t for the minister he would have followed that idiot Ali Farahani down into that pit of radioactive waste.” Nevertheless, Mukhtar’s singular act of mercy and honour is undone by later events which emphasise that the Hezbollah security leader is a merciless killer. He subjects his hostage, Irene Kennedy, to extreme cruelty (discussed in the previous chapter), which makes it impossible to reconcile a character authorising a gang rape of a captive woman with the notion of honour.

In DeMille, Bain Madox and his accomplices in the plot to annihilate the Muslim world recall the Soviet Union with fondness as a worthy former nemesis and berate Muslims’ fanaticism and lack of honour: “The Russians, at least, had some honor and a healthy fear of death, and it would have been a shame to destroy their cities and their people. These other bastards – the Islamics – deserve everything they’re going to get.” Madox’s high-powered club of conspirators takes their low opinion of Muslims’ honour as a pretext and justification for the planned nuclear destruction of Other’s countries. The Other does not possess honour in an equal measure or of a comparable moral value to the heroic Self, which renders it a dubious and contested concept in relation to these novels’ terrorist characters.

Koretskiy’s Chechen Other is represented in MN by minor character Isa Aslambekov, the suicide terrorist who seizes a commuter bus in southern Russia. Aslambekov’s brother alerts him to his forsaking of the “Caucasus laws of family honour,” which shames his family. The young terrorist, however, believes he would be able to buy his family’s respect back with the large ransom he demands. He also claims that the terrorist act would instead “ennoble [his] clan” and the “relatives would

171 Flynn, PAD 231.
172 DeMille, WF 100.
173 Koretskiy, MN 230; 231.
be proud” of him.\textsuperscript{174} Any such ambition of Aslambekov’s is subverted by his ignoble death at the hand of the Sword of Nemesis snipers. The above examples clarify that even on the rare occasion when the concept of honour is mentioned in relation to terrorist characters, any claim to dignified behaviour or mentality of the Other is immediately invalidated by their brutal and irrational actions. This voids the antagonists’ claim to honour.

The question of whether the terrorist Other is courageous or cowardly in these novels is not a complex one; they are characterised either as cowardly or courageous, but their only courage stems from fanaticism rather than a strength of masculine character. The two most prominent examples of such ill-motivated courage are Flynn’s Imad Mukhtar and Mustafa al-Yamani. The former is brash, fearless and unafraid to provoke his enemies even at the risk of death, which, in a way, renders him similar to the hero of the novel, Mitch Rapp: “All I have been doing my whole life […] is daring. Daring myself to go into battle. Daring my men into battle. Daring the Israelis to kill me. The French. The Americans. The list goes on and on.”\textsuperscript{175} Yet, what makes Mukhtar essentially different from Flynn’s hero is his fanaticism and sadistic inclinations to inflict suffering on the innocent despite his rudimentary sense of honour and almost-frenzied courage. Ashani is convinced that Mukhtar is “a true believer, with a martyr complex,” which makes his promises to release the CIA director extremely unreliable.\textsuperscript{176}

The desire to be a martyr is also a key factor in al-Yamani’s extreme displays of fearlessness, especially since the Saudi terrorist already faces certain death from radiation exposure at the outset of the novel. His looming death makes al-Yamani lose all inhibitions and urges him to persevere unconditionally towards the completion of his final terrorist mission: “Mustafa al-Yamani looked forward to dying with each passing mile of road. There wasn’t an inch of his body that didn’t hurt, and more and more his thoughts turned to giving up – to letting the others see it through to the end. He couldn’t

\textsuperscript{172} Koretskiy, MN 232.  
\textsuperscript{173} Koretskiy, MN 232.  
\textsuperscript{174} Koretskiy, MN 232.  
\textsuperscript{175} Flynn, PAD 156.  
\textsuperscript{176} Flynn, PAD 362.
quit, though. There was still too much to be done.”

Al-Yamani’s courage – a rare quality for terrorists – in part originates from his extreme fanaticism, for the terrorist “had come to America to die, and he was going to take with him as many infidels as possible” in his final act of martyrdom. Although in this novel Flynn’s chief terrorist is mainly motivated by his imminent death, he is also described by a fellow ‘mujahid’ with whom he had fought in the Soviet-Afghan war as “a true believer” (the same phrase Flynn uses for Mukhtar). It is precisely al-Yamani’s fervent faith which made him “unstoppable” and “[t]he most fearless man he [the comrade] had ever known,” even before the deadly illness enhanced his determination.

As opposed to Mukhtar and al-Yamani’s fanatical bravery, the remaining terrorist characters of Flynn’s routinely display cowardice, lack of endurance and weak allegiance to their missions – the obverse of idealised heroic masculinity. Al-Yamani despises Pakistani physicist Imtaz Zubair’s gutlessness and excessive tendency towards self-preservation instead of focusing his efforts and thought on the nuclear bombing plot. Unsurprisingly, once the scientist serves his purpose of activating the nuclear device, Mustafa al-Yamani orders his execution. The terrorists tortured by Rapp and his FBI colleague McMahon also fail to display courage and instead reveal themselves as individuals who are emasculated by their inability to withstand pain.

Forsyth’s Yusuf Ibrahim is jealous and afraid of the Afghan’s (the disguised Mike Martin’s) legendary reputation as a Taliban commander, and despite the terrorist’s imminent death by his own design, he cannot suppress his fear of “the mountain man.” Ibrahim, unlike al-Yamani, is not capable of summoning increased courage from his resolve to become a “martyr” for the terrorist cause.

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177 Flynn, *MD* 357. See also 241.
178 Flynn, *MD* 312.
179 Flynn, *MD* 378.
180 Flynn, *MD* 483.
181 Flynn, *MD* 173; 298.
182 Forsyth 412.
Similarly, in Koretskiy’s *KV*, Vakhit Bekmurzayev’s accomplices cannot escape their fear of death and, most of all, of capture by Russian security forces when their plan comes to a head towards the end of the novel. If Bekmurzayev’s fanatical and nearly-insane resolve to annihilate Moscow with a nuclear device and to “shake the world with this unrivalled reckoning with infidels” contributes to his determination, his men feel doomed and utterly afraid.\(^{183}\) The terrorist Other is thus characterised as an opposite to the courageous, determined and heroic Self (the archetypal hero) in these novels, and this adds another layer to the binary opposition between the two as well as to the stereotypical depiction of the Other.

Directly related to the characteristic of cowardice is that of the highly treacherous and disloyal nature of terrorist characters. This underlying theme permeates the narratives in question and serves to enhance the contrast between the terrorist-villain and the hero (loyal to his country and his moral values). Al-Yamani proves to be a paranoid villain who does not trust anyone but himself – not even his closest allies and ‘friends’. At the novel’s every turn, the Saudi terrorist murders his colleagues at the mere suspicion of betrayal and only allows them to survive as long as they are useful to him.\(^{184}\) Al-Yamani thus does away with scores of associates, beginning with the unnamed (and ultimately innocent of betrayal) Kuwaiti student and sleeper agent to the physicist without whom al-Yamani’s entire plot would not have been possible.\(^{185}\) Neither the terrorist nor the country in which he had trained for his ‘missions’, Afghanistan, possess any sense of honour, moral obligation or loyalty towards those who aid them: “Al-Yamani loved the bitter irony that it was the Americans with their shoulder-launched Stinger missiles who had helped them to beat the godless communists. To al-Yamani it was further proof that Allah was on their side.”\(^{186}\) The terrorists thus celebrate their own duplicitous nature and proudly reaffirm their untrustworthiness.

\(^{183}\) Koretskiy, *KV* 466.  
\(^{184}\) Flynn, *MD* 106.  
\(^{185}\) See Flynn, *MD* 187-188; 247; 348; 425; 427-428; 463.  
\(^{186}\) Flynn, *MD* 346.
In a more general characterisation of the Other, Flynn portrays Iraq and its people as treacherous and hard to understand, and it is precisely this which enables Mukhtar to easily bribe the local Mosul police into assisting with Irene Kennedy’s kidnapping and later “act[ing] as if […] [they] knew nothing.”\footnote{187} The Other’s treachery and disloyalty are jarringly unapologetic in Flynn’s novels but not inconsistent with depictions by the other authors.

Daniel Silva adheres to Flynn’s pattern and characterises his terrorists in most negative terms. Khaled al-Khalifa is ruthless with his allies and prefers to dispose of them before they gain an opportunity to betray him, so he betrays them first – not unlike Flynn’s al-Yamani. Al-Khalifa is the mastermind behind the attacks on the Israeli embassy in Rome and later the Parisian Gare de Lyon, but his disposable proxies do not live to see the results of their ‘efforts’. Abu Saddiq is one of such associates who is unaware of the fate which al-Khalifa has planned for him: “When it was over Abu Saddiq would suffer the same fate as all those Martineau [al-Khalifa’s alias] had used. He had learned from the mistakes of his ancestors. He would never allow himself to be undone by an Arab traitor.”\footnote{188} Al-Khalifa reiterates the same sentiments later in the novel, by which he – as an insider and an Arab prone to distrusting and betraying others – confirms the validity of such an opinion. Another of Silva’s lead antagonists, Ishaq Fawaz commits the ultimate act of betrayal by murdering his own father for the ‘crime’ of collaborating with Gabriel Allon and the purported forsaking of Islamist ideals.\footnote{189} A more general demonstration of Arab and/or Muslim treachery and a figurative patricide is recounted via the story of Anwar al-Sadat’s assassination:

He [Sadat] allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to operate openly and encouraged them to spread their fiery brand of Islam abroad, especially into the newly occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. He also encouraged and funded the creation of groups that were even more radical than the Brotherhood. One was al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya, or the Islamic Group. Another was al-Jihad. In October 1981, al-Jihad turned

\footnote{187}{Flynn, *PAD* 186; 230.} \footnote{188}{Silva, *POF* 208. Sentiment repeated on 267.} \footnote{189}{Silva, *TSS* 312-313; 375.}
on the man who had helped bring it into existence, assassinating Sadat as he stood on a military reviewing stand outside Cairo. In the eyes of the Islamists, Sadat’s sins were many, but none so egregious as his peace treaty with Israel. This passage underlines the Other’s duplicity as an integral and inextricable part of Arab and/or Muslim character: these individuals pose a danger even to those who help them or provide endorsement. Not even such an extreme form of betrayal as patricide is beyond the Other’s propensity towards disloyalty. The terrorists’ treacherous nature is juxtaposed to the archetypal hero’s loyalty and dedication to the protection of innocents.

Koretskiy’s terrorist characters follow the same pattern: they are distrustful, suspicious and prone to merciless treachery. For instance, Vakhit Bekmurzayev’s life philosophy is to distrust absolutely everyone and to be wary of betrayal, as he believes that “the closer the person is to you, the more likely are they to stab you in the back.” The terrorist reiterates on another occasion that the reason why he does not trust anybody is because this is the best method of avoiding disappointment. When the Sword of Nemesis employ the terrorists’ own methods against Said al-Hakatti’s organisation, the terrorist leader’s reputation is irreparably damaged and he is subsequently murdered by his own people, which effectively destroys the Triumph of Islam once and for all. The terrorist Other’s biggest enemy and weakest point is therefore their disloyalty, inability to trust each other or sustain viable relationships; it is their ultimate vulnerability.

**h. Chameleon Terrorists**

By far the most unsettling ability of the Other in these novels is the terrorist’s skill to blend in within Western countries and remain hidden in them. Rather than labelling them as aforementioned ‘mimic men’, I designate these terrorist characters

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190 Silva, TSS 129.
191 Koretskiy, KV 99. See also 349; 351-352.
192 Koretskiy, KV 449.
193 Koretskiy, MN 342.
‘chameleon terrorists’ due to their – undoubtedly intended by the authors to be uncanny – skill to hide their extremist ideologies and appear as ‘regular’ citizens in their chosen countries. By the virtue of this very ability, these characters are portrayed to be some of the most dangerous in the novels of Forsyth, Flynn, Silva and Koretskiy. They symbolise the fear of the heroic Self of being unable to identify such individuals and thus of being unable to eliminate them. In support of this point, one of Mike Martin’s mentors preparing him for the undercover mission as the Afghan, Tamian Godfrey, explains that it is not the immediately identifiable extremists who are the most dangerous but rather the chameleons:

“But some will adopt every single custom of the West, however much they may loathe them, in order to pass as fully westernized and therefore harmless. All nineteen of the Nine/Eleven bombers slipped through because they looked and acted the part. The same with the four London bombers: apparently normal young men, going to the gym, playing cricket, polite, helpful, one of them a special needs teacher, smiling constantly and planning mass murder. These are the ones to watch.

“Many are educated, barbered, clean-shaven, groomed, dressed in suits, with a good degree. These are the ultimate; prepared to become chameleons against their faith to achieve mass murder for their faith”194

It is indeed such chameleons who do the most damage and forward the plan of the attack on the G8 cruise ship the most because they have access to countries and organisations which their visibly extremist colleagues cannot reach. A representative of this class of terrorists in Forsyth, for instance, is the aforementioned Dr. Ali Aziz al-Khattab, a lecturer at Birmingham’s Aston University and a well-respected academic.195 Another example is a member of Jemaat Islamiya, Ahmed Lampong, who poses as a legitimate and refined Indonesian businessman and thus procures the vessel which Yusuf Ibrahim later utilises as his floating bomb: “He was fluent, urbane and charming; more to the point, he brought the prospect of business. There was nothing to suggest he was a

194 Forsyth 213-214.
195 Forsyth 279-280.
fanatical member of the Islamist terrorist organization Jemaat Islamiya, responsible for a wave of bombings in Bali.”

True to Godfrey’s word, Lampong can indeed “pass as fully westernized” and is thus difficult to identify as a terrorist.

The deceit which Flynn’s Imad Mukhtar employs in order to manipulate his hostage, Irene Kennedy, also falls into the category of chameleon terrorists. Mukhtar orders the beating and torture of the American woman while he is not present and then pretends to be the negotiator who had come to save her from her captors. The terrorist intends for his pretend kindness, alternated with the brutality, to be the key to breaking Irene Kennedy’s spirit. However, the chameleon Mukhtar does not succeed and reveals his true face when Kennedy refuses to submit to his wishes.

The author introduces a character similar to Forsyth’s al-Khattab in MD: Ahmed al-Adel is “a Saudi immigrant, and owner of a trucking company” based in Atlanta, whose services Mustafa al-Yamani enlists for the transport of his nuclear devices within America. Despite having previously “attracted the attention of the FBI,” al-Adel is able to exploit the American civil rights and, with the help of a prominent attorney, to “outsmart the Americans.” When the terrorist is stripped of his shield of civil rights by Mitch Rapp – who does not hold due process in high regard – he shows his true nature and gives into his cowardice. However, al-Adel manages to significantly aid al-Yamani prior to his arrest, and this therefore confirms the danger which chameleon terrorists pose to the security of the American Self. The implication of the reliance of the authors on these characters is that the worst stereotypes are confirmed, such as those which view all Muslims as a threat and all such immigrant communities as essentially suspect and guilty of supporting terrorism. These narratives thus enhance the fear and suspicion of the Other within the Self’s societies, such as what occurred in the US in the wake of 9/11 and the abovementioned Patriot Act. Also, in their deceit these terrorist-

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196 Forsyth 188-189.
197 Flynn, PAD 296; 344.
198 Flynn, MD 271-272.
199 Flynn, MD 433.
villains once again overturn the heroic masculine image and strengthen the obverse archetypal characterisation.

Silva’s characters which fit the template of the chameleon terrorist are too numerous to allow the discussion of more than the most prominent of them. To begin with, Ishaq Fawaz of the Sword of Allah is a chameleon who had the opportunity to grow up in the West – in Amsterdam, to be precise – and to learn how to blend in first-hand. His appearance does not betray the nature of his activities or the extremism of the ideology he subscribes to. On the contrary, Fawaz appears to be an innocent and friendly passer-by rather than a terrorist: “A single man entered his cell. He was no more than thirty, slightly built and dressed in a collared shirt with a burgundy V-necked pullover. He gazed at Gabriel quizzically for a long moment through a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, as if he had been looking for a library or bookshop and had stumbled onto this scene instead.” The mastermind behind the attacks which Fawaz and his men carry out is Dr. Yusuf Ramadan, only known to Israeli intelligence as the Sphinx. Ramadan is an academic researcher who is well-known in the French media as a commentator on Middle Eastern affairs and terrorism because of his ‘moderate’ views. Ramadan’s cover is carefully crafted, and only intelligence operatives can ever find out the truth about him: “He was in Paris for the last year working on a book at something called the Institute for Islamic Studies. It’s a well-known front for jihadist activities, funded in part by Prince Rashid. He left Paris the day after Christmas and came back to Cairo, where he resumed his teaching duties at the American University.” Notably, this passage implies the association of Middle Eastern and/or Muslim political or religious scholarship with extremism, similarly to the earlier allusions to Muslim religious schools as hotbeds of terrorism. Although the professor’s identity is later discovered by Allon and his colleagues, Silva highlights the fact that the terrorist mastermind was able to evade justice for as long as he has by virtue of his chameleon abilities. In TM, the aforementioned Zizi al-Bakari and Ahmed bin Shafiq are two main

200 Silva, TSS 368.
201 Silva, TSS 440. See also 134; 138. For another example of a chameleon terrorist, see 161-162.
antagonists who are both shown to be wealthy and powerful chameleon terrorists. Silva’s repeated utilisation of such characters emphasises the danger they pose to the Western Self’s order. They are terrorist Others who are able to go virtually undetected in European and American societies.

Danil Koretskiy also introduces chameleon characters into his novels, albeit on a smaller scale than Silva. The brother of one of the Triumph of Islam leaders, Saleh Kaiwan, leads a comfortable and respectable life as a businessman in Paris and, at the same time, helps finance this terrorist organisation. Another character which follows a similar pattern is Isa Harkhoev, an ethnic Chechen who lives in the fictional city of Tikhodonsk and successfully manages an oil business but also secretly supports terrorists. Chameleon terrorists thus appear to be a consistent pattern across these novels, and they function to confirm the preconceptions against Muslims in general by indicating that supporters of terrorism are virtually indistinguishable from the peaceful followers of this religion. Such rhetoric thus strengthens the legitimacy of sweeping anti-terrorist (anti-Muslim) measures which have been taken in the name of counter-terrorism, such as the previously discussed Patriot Act in the USA.

i. Terrorist Characters and Women

As part of the characterisation of the terrorist Other, it is also interesting to explore the interactions these characters have with women. Perhaps tellingly, there are only two notable interactions, and both contribute to the negative characterisation of these antagonists. The first of these encounters is that of Imad Mukhtar and Irene Kennedy, while the latter is being held hostage by the sadistic Hezbollah terrorist and his men who relish the torture and taunting of a helpless woman. Mukhtar is especially enraged when Kennedy refuses to bow to his will:

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202 Silva, *TM* 121-122; 160; 222; 293. For similar characters, see 4-7; 19-20; 55; 420-421; POF 40; 109.
203 Koretskiy, *MN* 325-326.
204 Koretskiy, *AP*, vol. 2 94. For another example, see 45.
205 Flynn, *PAD* 243; 342.
The man moved with great speed from behind the camera. He slapped Kennedy across the face three times, knocking the hijab off her head. He grabbed a handful of hair and yanked her head back. Looking down at her he yelled, “You have exactly one hour to change your mind, and if your answer is still no, I will leave you to your fate. Do you want that to happen?”

“No,” Kennedy answered.

“Twenty men!” he screamed. “They will line up to rape you for a week straight. Is that what you want?”

Yet, despite Mukhtar’s threats, which he would not be hesitant to carry out, the CIA director resists the chauvinistic terrorist and is rescued by Rapp shortly thereafter, as discussed in the previous chapter. Both his lack of honour and lack of success in breaking her as well as his ill treatment of Kennedy undermine Mukhtar’s masculinity and solidify him as a terrorist (Muslim and Arab Other) stereotype.

Silva’s Ahmed bin Shafiq is no more delicate in his treatment of Sarah Bancroft when the latter is discovered to be an Israeli-affiliated undercover agent. After experiencing abuse at the hands of bin Shafiq and being forced into heavily veiled clothing, which she characterises as “[t]he Saudi woman’s view of the world,” Bancroft declares that “[h]is cruelty is limitless.”

All in all, the American woman’s experience with the terrorists convinces her that physical abuse is the way Saudi Arabian men usually “treat mutinous women,” which is with extreme cruelty and sadism. These terrorist Others’ treatment of women once again attests to their lack of ‘civilisation’. Although the other authors give little evidence of their terrorist-villains’ direct interactions with women, it is not difficult to imagine that such universally violent, unrestrained and negatively masculine (antithetical to the positive heroic masculinity) characters could not treat the other sex significantly differently from the abovementioned Mukhtar and bin Shafiq. The terrorist’s unmasculinity is thus contrasted to the archetypal hero’s hegemonic masculinity and solidifies the latter’s positive qualities.

206 Flynn, PAD 347.
207 Silva, TM 367; 370.
208 Silva, TM 355.
j. The Terrorist Humanised?

The remaining and, perhaps, most urgent question to ask in this chapter is whether any of the terrorist characters in these action-thrillers are humanised instead of being simply flat counterweights for the character of the hero. Do any of these characters have a history, traumas or significant and genuine relationships with others? There are two characters I would like to explore in relation to these questions, first of whom is a woman going by the alias of Palestina in Silva’s *POF*. Palestina is Khaled al-Khalifa’s accomplice who informs Gabriel Allon of the kidnapping of his wife Leah from her care facility in England and compels him to become her prisoner in order to save Leah. Palestina is no less violent than other terrorist characters described above; she organises and participates in the beating and torture of Allon simply as an outlet for her hatred of Israel.\(^209\) She is therefore portrayed as a sadistic fanatic of her cause – the liberation of Palestine. Yet, she is the only antagonist of Silva’s who is allowed the time to tell the story of how she had arrived at terrorism. The aptly-nicknamed Palestina thus recounts the story of her family’s loss of their ancestral village, Sumayriyya in the Western Galilee, by being driven out of it. She also tells Allon of growing up in the refugee camp of Ein al-Hilweh in Lebanon with the stories of her village being a constant reminder of Palestine. However, Gabriel Allon’s commentary is quick to dismiss the young woman’s story: “*Listen to her, thought Gabriel as he drove. We... Our...* She was born twenty-five years after Sumayriyya was wiped from the face of the map, but she spoke of the village as though she’d lived there her entire life.”\(^210\) Palestina claims that Jews and Zionism left her with “no choice but to fight,” especially after the 1982 destruction of the Ein al-Hilweh camp by the Israeli military.\(^211\) Despite this brief background story, Gabriel Allon’s highly critical reception of her narrative undermines her legitimacy as a character as well as the legitimacy of her proclaimed cause. In such a way, the apparent

\(^{209}\) Silva, *POF* 269-270; 274-275.

\(^{210}\) Silva, *POF* 292.

\(^{211}\) Silva, *POF* 299.
attempt on Silva’s part to contextualise this particular terrorist character (he does not contextualise terrorism as a phenomenon elsewhere in his novels) is ultimately unconvincing, especially when compared to the decontextualised and flat characterisation of all his other terrorist characters discussed earlier. Interestingly, just as these other terrorist-villains, Palestina is an unmasculine (female) character, which reiterates the emasculated ‘nature’ of an archetypal terrorist character.

Frederick Forsyth’s original Afghan, the actual Izmat Khan whom Mike Martin meets as a young boy, is given a much more detailed background by this author. Khan’s history begins with his childhood in a small Pashtun tribe in the Tora Bora Mountains, where he grew up under the guidance of his “devout but not fundamentalist and certainly not fanatical” father. He received rudimentary education, mostly by learning certain verses from the Qur’an, and was also raised to uphold and respect “the rules of the Pukhtunwali, the code by which a Pashtun must live. Honour, hospitality, the necessity of vendetta to avenge insult.” By the time young Izmat Khan meets Mike Martin and the latter saves his life, the youth had already been schooled at a conservative religious school in Pakistan, but he remains tolerant of the Englishman and feels indebted to him according to his code of honour. Khan is moderate enough to recognise the dangers of radicalism and even warns Martin following their encounter with bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, “These Arabs are not like us. You are kafir, unbeliever. They are like the imam in my madrassah. They hate all infidel [sic].” After the war with the Soviet Union had ended, Khan carved out a calm and comfortable life for himself, fell in love, got married and had a child. More importantly, “Izmat Khan had no quarrel with the West” and was against the budding terrorist camps which were being set up in his country at the time, nor did he approve of the conservative ways in which the Taliban were transforming Afghanistan, who “[f]rom being liberators […] became the new

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212 Forsyth 103.
213 Forsyth 105.
214 Forsyth 130; emphasis in the original.
215 Forsyth 137; 139-140.
tyrants.” Khan is thus portrayed as a traditional and conservative Pashtun, but he is not yet an extremist such as the members of the Taliban or al-Qaeda. As indicated above, Khan only begins to hate the West and ascribe legitimacy to these two organisations following the traumatic destruction of his village along with all of his loved ones. This is when the deranged Izmat Khan does join with the Taliban and adopts their ideology. A tragedy becomes the turning point for Khan’s transformation into a supporter of the terrorists; yet, he personally only briefly participates in the post-9/11 fighting against the American forces before he is captured and transferred to the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. It is thus possible to suggest that Forsyth’s character – designed to provide the hero with an alias and cover for the anti-terrorist operation – is by far the most fleshed out of all terrorist characters I have analysed in these novels. Perhaps it is precisely for the reason that his identity is to be adopted by the hero that Khan’s character is more detailed. Although Khan does not serve any significant narrative purpose besides providing a believable alias for the hero’s convenience, he is nonetheless afforded a more convincing (but no more justifiable) reason for his actions and perhaps adds a more humanised character to these narratives of stereotyping.

3. Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, the overwhelming majority of terrorist characters in the novels of Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Forsyth and Koretskiy are portrayed as dehumanised diametrical opposites of the archetypal hero and the heroic Self. In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the positive image of the Self is constructed: the heroes, their associates as well as narrators all affirm the West’s (the USA’s, Israel’s or Russia’s) superiority over the Other. The hero’s side is the purported victim of the Other’s unprovoked hostility (such as in Silva’s depiction of the Israel-Palestine relations); it is also self-reliant and, like the hero himself, able to defend itself single-
handedly against its multiple enemies. The Self is thus identified with the personality of the hero and exhibits heroism, courage and resilience while exercising its right to justified violence against the Other (the hero’s policy of no compromise or negotiation with terrorists applies here, completing the masculinisation of the Self). In contrast with the Self, the Other (overwhelmingly identified as Arab and/or Muslim) clings to the past in its backwardness and ahistoricity. The terrorist Other – as opposed to the masculine archetypal hero – is unintelligent, disloyal, hypocritical, dishonourable and arbitrary. He is maniacally attached to his religion of hatred and violence – Islam – which serves as the vehicle of the Other’s irrational revenge against the ‘civilised’ world. Chameleon terrorists who are able to masquerade as ‘civilised’ are deemed the most dangerous type of Other, as they are able to operate undercover and undermine the Self from the inside. Terrorist characters represent the negative masculine – the sadistic extreme of Moore’s and Gillette’s warrior archetype, a manifestation of ‘imbalance’. Not only do these terrorist-villains embody traits antithetical to heroic masculinity but also frame and emphasise it, rendering the Other as weak and feminine (unmasculine). There are few attempts to humanise these antagonists or give them their own voice on the part of the authors; when this does occur, as in the cases of Palestina and Izmat Khan, the contextualisation does not necessarily enhance the character.

Such representations, which almost point by point reverse the depiction of the archetypal hero, constitute the archetypal image of the terrorist. This image is a confirmation of the stereotyping of Muslims and/or Arabs as the terrorist Other in these novels, which resonates with dominant political discourses discussed in this chapter and the introduction. The archetypal image of the terrorist also correlates with Jack Shaheen’s analysis of the representations of Arabs on television and in film, also reviewed earlier. The repetition and recycling of stereotypes across the different discursive spheres of politics, media reporting, television, cinema and popular fiction suggests the importance of best-selling action-thrillers as another widely-consumed
conduit in the circulation and reinforcement of stereotypes such as the ones examined in this chapter.

The following chapter addresses three successful and critically-acclaimed literary mainstream novels by John Updike and Yasmina Khadra, which take up the terrorist as their main focus instead of the hero. In light of the archetypal representations of heroes and terrorists in the heretofore analysed works, the next part of the thesis explores whether the shift in character focus and narrative voice necessarily provides a more balanced and less stereotypical representation. Updike in *Terrorist* and Khadra in *L’Attentat* and *Les Sirènes de Baghdad* both choose a terrorist (or a relative of one) as the protagonist and shift the axis of the narrative. Chapter four examines these three works in detail to determine whether such characters are thus humanised.
Chapter Four: Alternative voices?
Case Studies of John Updike and Yasmina Khadra

“I think there are enough people complaining about the Arab menace that I can be allowed to try to show this young man as sympathetically as I can,” reveals John Updike in an interview about his novel *Terrorist*, “He’s my hero. I tried to understand him and to dramatize his world.” Updike’s self-announced objective to make the terrorist more relatable through his (anti)hero Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy seems to indicate a shift in perspective: that some post-9/11 authors are willing to try to break from and move past the dehumanising stereotypes detailed in the previous chapter.

During an interview, Yasmina Khadra expressed similar sentiments about his trilogy on fundamentalism. As an author of Arab (‘Other’) heritage, he does not seek to understand the terrorist Other but rather to contextualise it and counter stereotypes. Written in French, his works address a predominantly Western reader and introduce the possibility of underlying human and political motives for his characters. Although the trilogy consists of *Les Hirondelles de Kaboul*, *L’Attentat* and *Les Sirènes de Bagdad*, I focus only on the latter two novels. This is due to the first work’s historical setting (Taliban rule in Kabul following the war with the Soviet Union) and lack of focus on terrorism per se but rather on an exploration of the four principal characters’ (Mohsin, Zunaira, Atiq and Musarrat) lives in the shadow of radical fundamentalism. Although *TA*, unlike *TS*, does not make explicit reference to a post-9/11 timeframe, it is assumed to occur within this period and its focus remains firmly on the investigation of a terrorist attack.

In this chapter, I explore whether John Updike and Yasmina Khadra succeed at weakening the stereotype through their writing in light of the findings of the previous

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218 Yasmina Khadra is the pseudonym of Mohamed Moulessehoul, a French writer of Algerian origin.
220 *The Attack (L’Attentat)* is henceforth *TA*; *The Sirens of Baghdad (Les Sirènes de Bagdad)* – *TS*. 
analysis and whether they do, in fact, give more humanised and multi-dimensional renderings of terrorist characters. Do they make it possible to fully move beyond the stereotype and to explore the political, social and mental environment of the (would-be) perpetrators of terrorist acts, or are these still portrayed as violent and fanatical Others? Are Updike’s and Khadra’s depictions likely to cultivate more resentment or empathy with and discernment of the difference between terrorism, Arabs and Islam instead? This chapter answers these questions through the analysis of terrorist characters in Updike’s *Terrorist* and Yasmina Khadra’s *TS* and *TA*. I first study the character of Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy and then compare him to *TS*’s narrator and Sihem Jaafari (in *TA*). I examine these portrayals through the previous chapters’ lenses of the Self and Other dichotomy, construction of heroic masculinity and archetypal terrorism.

1. Terrorist

Updike’s *Terrorist* belongs – unlike the action-thrillers – with what critics categorise as literary mainstream rather than genre fiction. Due to John Updike’s general critical acclaim referenced in the introduction chapter, the author’s post-9/11 novel on terrorism comes with an expectation of higher analytical and canonically literary quality. Yet, is Updike’s literary prominence an asset or a hindrance to the dismantling and contextualisation of stereotypes, or does it endorse similar portrayals to the action-thrillers analysed earlier? As I find in this section, the novel’s repetition of archetypal terrorist character tropes ultimately undermines Updike’s self-declared goal of fostering understanding and suggests the ‘veracity’ of dominant stereotypes of Arabs and/or Muslims.

The story of Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy, a young Arab American man turned suicide bomber, received diverse reviews, especially regarding the quality and depth of Updike’s characterisation. While some reviewers lauded Updike’s “humane and
balanced” narrative style and character rendering, others were much less approving and positive. In her essay on racial profiling in *Terrorist*, Mita Banerjee criticises the author for “pretending to provide us with the psychology of a Muslim terrorist, [but instead] leav[ing] us with mere racial profiling.” She also adds that “John Updike’s writerly ability and aesthetic mastery, slips into its absence, degenerates into a mere gesturing at what may indeed be obvious, even stereotypical facts about what the war on terror calls ‘Muslim identity’.”

**a. Islam as a Religion of Hatred**

Indeed, the novel highlights such ‘aspects’ of the Muslim faith and its holy text, the Qur’an, as irrational and overwhelming hatred for ‘unbelievers’ and desire for their punishment and annihilation. This is consistent with the previous chapter’s argument that Islamic fanaticism and cruelty are the archetypal terrorist’s central traits. Through his hero, Updike takes the framing device of verisimilitude to a new level by making multiple references to and giving selective quotations from the Qur’an (sometimes even in transliterated Arabic), implicitly suggesting that Islam is a religion of intolerance and violence. A striking example of this is one of the many lessons which Ahmad receives from his religious mentor, Shaikh Rashid, at the unremarkable two-room mosque “above a nail salon and a check-cashing facility.” Its lack of appeal is emphasised by its location in an unattractive neighbourhood consisting of “a row of small shops that includes a dusty-windowed pawn shop, a secondhand bookstore, a shoe-repair man and sandal-maker, a Chinese laundry down a little flight of steps, a pizza joint, and a grocery store.

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221 As, for instance, in this passage from Jem Poster’s review in *The Guardian*: “Updike remains one of contemporary literature’s most enviable stylists, the lucid economy of his prose often disguising, but never betraying, the remarkable complexity of his thought. And he also remains one of American society’s most humane and balanced critics, his exasperation tempered by an undeniable love.” (par. 8)

222 See the *Publishers Weekly* and *New York Books* reviews. The latter, by John Leonard, describes Updike’s *Terrorist* as “sketchy, and the action perfunctory, and the stereotyping wearisome.” (par. 5)


224 M. Banerjee 25.
specializing in Middle Eastern foods." As this description elucidates, the mosque itself is unappealing and unremarkable as a place of worship, with Ahmad being the only remaining student of the Shaikh’s. One of the latter’s lessons distinguished by its intolerance makes reference to a Qur’anic verse (one of many, as Updike helpfully supplies) prescribing merciless punishment for infidels:

This past week the imam showed a short temper with his pupil in a discussion of a verse from the third sura: *Let not the infidels deem that the length of days we give them is good for them! We only give them length of days that they may increase their sins! and a shameful chastisement shall be their lot.* Ahmad dared ask his teacher if there wasn’t something sadistic in the taunt, and in the many verses like it. He ventured, “Should’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?”

[…] “You want to destroy them. They are vexing you with their uncleanliness. 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.”

The “God” depicted in this passage is a sadist unfettered by any tendencies towards benevolence or mercy. By selectively quoting the Qur’an Updike highlights the stereotypically-perceived ‘brutality’ and ‘absolutism’ of Islam; there is little in *Terrorist* to suggest otherwise. A further example of this is found in the denouement of the novel, whereby Ahmad reaffirms the perception of Islam and its central text’s implicit cruelty: “Who says unbelief is innocent? Unbelievers say that. God says, in the Qur’an, *Be ruthless to unbelievers. Burn them, crush them, because they have forgotten God.*” By providing similar references throughout the novel and alluding – albeit through his characters rather than directly in the third-person omniscient narrative voice – to the connection between violence and Islam (and/or Arabs), Updike fails to render a balanced

225 Updike 96.
226 Updike 98.
227 Updike 73-74; emphasis in the original.
228 Updike 289-290; emphasis in the original.
representation. The author puts words exposing Islam’s ‘hostility’ in the mouths of Muslim characters, which endorses this view of the religion and its adherents as ‘natural’ and essential.

This feature of Updike’s novel has been noted by critics. Samuel Thomas suggests in his elaboration on Slavoj Žižek’s *The Plague of Fantasies* that

> [i]n decorating the narrative with reverential borrowings from the Qur’an and conspicuously knowing references to Arabic culture more generally, it could be argued that *Terrorist* projects “a patronizingly liberal respect for the Other’s spiritual depth” – channelling the kind of “understanding,” kiss-and-kill rhetoric perhaps best embodied by a figure like Tony Blair, apparently a longtime student of Islam’s holy book, and one of the key architects of the post-9/11 War on Terror.\(^\text{229}\)

This superficial demonstration of knowledge of the Arab world and its culture does indeed detract from Updike’s claim of offering a sympathetic portrayal of a terrorist. Instead of fostering understanding of the Other through its lead character, the novel reasserts all the reasons why the Other should be feared and why the war on terror was the correct (and only) way to proceed following the attacks of 11 September. Rather than showing the “spiritual depth” of Islam, *Terrorist* instead implies that the teaching and propagation of hatred, violence and intolerance are central to this religion. It thus provides a one-sided depiction of Islam emphasising primarily negative rhetoric and contributes to the circulation and reinforcement of stereotypes. The narrative is also designed to alienate Ahmad, his Arab heritage and religion from the novel’s audience through his negative characterisation.

**b. Alienation of the (Anti)Hero**

Alienation is one of the key aspects of Ahmad’s character and a major reason for his resort to suicide terrorism: he rejects the society in which he lives and is in turn rejected by it. While the author presumes superior knowledge and understanding of

Muslims, his characterisations prove the opposite. In another interview, Updike declares, “I think I felt I could understand the animosity and hatred which an Islamic believer would have for our system. Nobody’s trying to see it from that point of view.”

The very utilisation of terms like “Islamic believer” and “our system,” coupled with the reference to ‘inherent’ hostility, invoke the stereotypical juxtaposition between the imperialist Self and the Other discussed by Edward Said and applied in the earlier chapters. This dichotomisation undermines Updike’s purported objective. For, how does a character as thoroughly estranged through religion from the country he was born in as Ahmad help foster mutual acceptance between Arab Muslims and the American society (“our system”)?

As the high school guidance counsellor Jack Levy describes him, Ahmad “is a kind of minority’s minority” due to his mixed parentage and religion. Ahmad’s identity is not that of a typical eighteen-year-old American high school student: he was born to an Egyptian father and an Irish-American mother and was abandoned by the former at the age of three. Brought up by a single mother of Christian background, Ahmad longs for a father figure and finds a strong link to one – God and Shaikh Rashid – through Islam. Ahmad’s desire for a father stands for his quest to establish a masculinity of his own, which is especially common for a teenager seeking to forge his ‘adult’ personality. Instead of relying on education, parents and peer groups as possible conduits of hegemonic and ‘authoritative’ masculinity (as explained in chapter two), Ahmad turns to what he sees as a strong masculine religion personified by his imaginary father and his religious mentor. Due to his mother’s liberal principles and inclination to grant Ahmad freedom of choice, the boy gets to learn about Islam with Shaikh Rashid from the age of eleven.

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231 Updike 81.
232 Updike 97.
By the time the reader is introduced to Ahmad seven years into his study of the religion, the radical imam of the second-storey mosque has already thoroughly indoctrinated the youth against the ‘evils’ of the capitalist West. The vices of what Ahmad sees as “an imperialist economic system rigged in favor of rich Christians” are many: besides being ‘infidel’, the American society is “lacking strong convictions” and suffering from the “American religion of freedom.” Individualism – the cornerstone of American society, which the archetypal action-thriller hero is the embodiment of – is to Ahmad one of the definitive signs of its depravity. The teenager laments, “There is no ummah here, […] no encompassing structure of divine law that brings men rich and poor to bow down shoulder to shoulder, no code of self-sacrifice, no exalted submission such as lies at the heart of Islam, its very name.” What Ahmad expects and desires from a society is an idealistic cocktail of clarity, cohesion and uniformity, and the visible lack of these in his surroundings give rise to his separatist behaviour.

An additional grave shortcoming of American society which Ahmad feels he is directly affected by is the inadequacy of family ties and values. That which is reputedly perceived by the average person in America to be an enlightened manner of parenting is to Ahmad an abominable distortion of what a ‘decent’ family should be, especially compared to what the teachings of Islam stipulate:

> The American way is to hate one’s family and flee from it. Even the parents conspire in this, welcoming signs of independence from the child and laughing at disobedience. There is not that bonding love which the Prophet expressed for his daughter Fatimah: *Fatimah is a part of my body; whoever hurts her, has hurt me, and whoever hurts me has hurt God*. Ahmad does not hate his mother; she is too scattered to hate, too distracted by her pursuit of happiness.

This general observation on the lack of family values in American society is not made by Ahmad casually; on the contrary, it is a very personal expression of frustration with the only parent he had ever truly known. The teenager feels more wronged by the lack of...

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233 Updike 78.
234 Updike 164-165.
235 Updike 165.
236 Updike 165; emphasis in the original.
attention from Teresa Mulloy, his mother, than by the American society at large. There is a conflict between Ahmad’s disgruntlement with his mother and the respect and love that the principles of Islam demand from the believers. Prohibited by Islam to hate his parent, Ahmad projects his family grievances onto objects he can hate remorselessly – the values and conventions of a Western social system. Despite what religion extolls, the reality of Ahmad’s nearly-independent existence (his Irish-American mother devotes more time to her love of art and quest for romantic relationships than him) breeds profound discontent with his mother. Ahmad’s inner conflict thus centres on the difficulty to reconcile his duty as a son and a Muslim with his resentment of Teresa and the Western way of life she symbolises. He projects his familial grievances on society at large, which deepens his alienation.

Ahmad is an only child who feels all the lonelier for being largely ignored by his mother and being left to his own devices from a young age. Teresa Mulloy is a middle-aged nurse with artistic aspirations who looks for fulfilment in her paintings and her brief relationships rather than her son. As it becomes apparent in an early conversation with Jack Levy, Ahmad is wary and “pained” when speaking about his family: he is acutely aware of his father’s abandonment and his mother’s lack of devotion. The uncomfortable reality that Ahmad has no siblings or friendly peers makes him feel doubly ignored. Being side-lined by his own mother does not help Ahmad’s integration into society, and his lack of communication with Teresa precipitates the thorough isolation he simultaneously subjects himself and is subjected to. Ahmad explains later in the novel:

We have never communicated well. My father’s absence stood between us, and then my faith, which I adopted before entering my teen years. She is a warm-natured woman, and no doubt cares for her hospital patients, but I think has as little talent for motherhood as a cat. Cats let the kittens suckle for a time and then treat them as enemies. I

\[237\text{ Updike 32.}\]
am not yet quite grown enough to be my mother’s enemy, but I am mature enough to be an object of indifference.

Not only does Ahmad feel overlooked by his mother, but he is also often embarrassed by her behaviour in public. Teresa is a diametrical opposite to her son: she is not religious, strict or reserved; she dresses in a “bohemian” way and flirts with most men she meets. Ahmad, on the other hand, is always conservatively dressed in a white shirt and trousers, has a very solemn way of bearing himself and does not indulge in emotional or sexual relationships with the opposite sex. Teresa stands for the progressive and easy-going Self, while Ahmad represents the repressed and religious Other.

What aggravates Ahmad’s disconnect from Teresa further is that, in her pursuit of her own happiness, she seems to be genuinely ignorant of the extent of Ahmad’s faith (or fanaticism) and the lengths he is prepared to go to in its name. She in fact believes that Ahmad’s naïveté – which she could clearly discern in his young age but which Ahmad has since learned to hide under a mask of solemnity – is mostly behind him and that he is no longer as “easily led.” However, Ahmad’s unwavering acceptance of all the dogmas dispensed by Shaikh Rashid and his later trust in his employer and undercover CIA operative Charlie’s rhetoric invalidates Teresa’s perception of her son. Charlie Chehab poses as sympathiser of Islamic fundamentalism and is the one to introduce Ahmad into suicide terrorism in an attempt to capture a terrorist cell red-handed; Charlie’s outspokenly negative opinions about ‘unbelievers’ ring true with the protagonist’s own beliefs and reinforce them. Teresa does not understand why Ahmad decided to embrace Islam at the tender age of eleven: Ahmad’s father Omar was not a practising Muslim and neither was he a good husband or father, so, in Teresa’s opinion, the boy had no positive example of masculinity to model himself on. She does not question her son’s fervent faith enough due to her own lack of religious belief, which

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238 Updike 209.
239 Updike 138.
240 Updike 86; 236.
241 Updike 83; 87.
she thinks strips her of any entitlement to criticism: Teresa rather admires Ahmad’s enthusiasm with a detached confusion.

c. Islam as Father Figure

Teresa Mulloy insightfully associates Ahmad’s religious fervour with his fatherlessness – the de facto foundation of his recourse to Islam – but underestimates the extent of the religion’s role in his construction of a father figure. She is not overly concerned about this pivotal issue in the below conversation with Jack Levy (with whom she has a brief affair); Teresa rather appears as a disgruntled and bitter ex-wife than a caring mother:

He’s asked so little, really, over the years, and now he’s leaving. He’s always seemed so alone. He did this Allah thing all by himself, with no help from me. Less than help, really – 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?242

It is due to the lack of a father, more than out of sheer loneliness and lack of human contact that Ahmad turns to his absent father’s purported religion for a masculine example. During his visit to the church upon Joryleen Grant’s – his (reluctant) romantic interest’s – invitation, Ahmad makes a telling observation, “The mosque was a domain of men; here, women in their spring shimmer, their expansive soft flesh, dominate.”243

This insight into Ahmad’s innermost thoughts demonstrates the gender associations which he assigns to the religions in question: Christianity is associated with his mother and the women at the church, making it a feminine (weak, in the teenager’s understanding) religion, while Islam is masculine and is thus the locus of the longed-for father figure. Similarly to the action-thrillers discussed earlier, Terrorist focuses on the issue of masculinity and its construction. Updike’s (anti)hero associates it with conformism and extreme ideologies of Islam. Ahmad constructs his masculinity through

242 Updike 115.
the religion; when his conviction falters and Islam is undermined at the end of the novel, the quest for positive masculinity is re-actualised and must take a new (yet unknown) direction. All of this also demeans Islam by suggesting that it is not a locus of sincere belief but rather a means of compensating for a personal or emotional lack.

In the process of searching “in this religion [for] a trace of the handsome father who had receded at the moment his memories were beginning,” Ahmad inextricably ties his identity to Islam.²⁴⁴ Even in his imaginary encounters with the estranged father, the youth visualises a meeting where he would talk to Omar “as two Muslim men would talk.”²⁴⁵ There is no place for Teresa or the feminine in this fantasy meeting – only a masculine space in which Ahmad would reacquire a paternal figure. Yet, as long as such an encounter remains unattainable, the teenager has to resort to his lessons of the Qur’an with Shaikh Rashid to find himself a father. Notably, though, it is not the Shaikh who replaces the parent: his pale-skinned and grey-eyed teacher is far too different from Ahmad’s barely-remembered picture of a “warm, dark shadow” that was his father.²⁴⁶ Rather, the young man finds a father in God: “Ahmad in his fatherless years with his blithely faithless mother has grown accustomed to being God’s sole custodian, the one to whom God is an invisible but palpable companion. God is ever with him.”²⁴⁷

The youth feels very protective of his father/God and is aware that integration into American society with all its ‘vices’ and amoral values may cause him to lose this precious connection. As alienated as Ahmad is by those around him, he also consciously distances himself from his environment to “protect his God” from “America [which] wants to take [him] away.”²⁴⁸ Accordingly, when he is recruited into the bombing plot towards the end of the novel, he sees his upcoming death as a reunion with his father – the ultimate goal he implicitly strives to achieve. He thinks that “[w]hen he pushes it [the bomb trigger], he will join God. God will be less terribly alone. He will greet you as

²⁴⁴ Updike 97.
²⁴⁵ Updike 34.
²⁴⁶ Updike 33.
²⁴⁷ Updike 37.
²⁴⁸ Updike 36-37.
Ahmad’s word choice reminiscent of Christian messianic rhetoric is interesting, especially as the notion of God as a father (or fathering of Jesus) is not present in Islam. This may indicate Updike’s inability to immerse himself fully in a Muslim worldview or his desire to show that Ahmad is not unaffected by Christian ideology which he witnesses upon his church visit. This could also be another of the novel’s inconsistencies, which I address further below.

The construction of God as his father is at the centre of Ahmad’s religiosity, and he is anxious about losing his surrogate parent throughout the novel. Updike opens his work with the following line, “Devils, Ahmad thinks. These devils seek to take away my God.” Ahmad is later dissuaded from the suicide bombing partly by Jack Levy’s arguments against it as well as the protagonist’s realisation upon seeing a happy African American family in the car ahead of him that God should celebrate life instead of death. The narrative comes full circle and concludes with Ahmad’s dejected realisation of his permanent separation from God after abandoning the plot and the faith: “These devils, Ahmad thinks, have taken away my God.”

Ahmad’s relationship with religion is clouded – albeit very briefly and uneventfully – by his attraction to classmate Joryleen Grant. She is the temptation which has the potential to sway him from the “Straight Path,” but Ahmad never relinquishes control over his desires sufficiently for the young woman to pose any threat to his purity and devotion. For a teenage boy, Updike’s Ahmad is remarkably and almost unnaturally unaffected by the girl he likes. There are only three encounters between Joryleen and Ahmad in the novel, and the youth does not fail to notice Joryleen’s physical attractiveness on each occasion. Updike describes her with vivid imagery throughout, but Ahmad is unswaying in his faith:

> Feeling the sun on one side of him makes him conscious of the warmth on the other, the warmth of Joryleen’s body moving along, a system of overlapping circles and soft parts. The bead above her nostril-wing

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249 Updike 301; emphasis in the original.
250 Updike 1.
251 Updike 305.
gleams a hot pinpoint; sunlight sticks a glistening tongue into the cavity at the center of her scoop-necked blouse. He tells her, “I am a good Muslim, in a world that mocks faith.”

Ahmad is not seduced by this infatuation, which is symbolic of his desire for a masculine father figure (religion) outweighing his sexuality. The masculine (God) thus prevails over the feminine (Joryleen and her feminine body) and is reaffirmed.

Ahmad’s final meeting with her occurs when his employer Charlie Chehab hires Joryleen, who had become a prostitute in the few months following high school graduation, to “devirginate” Ahmad and give him something pleasant to remember ahead of his suicide mission. Yet, instead of taking advantage of this chance (however fleeting) to be with the girl he finds attractive, Ahmad refuses to participate in ‘sin’ with a mixture of desire, disgust and pity.253 He swiftly overcomes any and all lustful thoughts and emerges on the other side of temptation even stronger in his religious conviction and, as a result, his masculinity.

Ahmad chooses to transfer his ‘unclean’ sexual urges into a ‘pure’ love for the delivery truck he drives for Excellency Home Furnishings (the Chehabs’ furniture store where he is employed following high school graduation). After an apparent bout of interest and research, he concludes that women are “unclean,” but there is no depravity in loving his vehicle: “He had consulted the Qur’an for sexual advice in vain. It talked of uncleanness but only in regard to women. [...] Ahmad feels clean in the truck, cut off from the base world, its streets full of dog filth and blowing shreds of plastic and paper; he feels clean and free, flying his orange box kite behind him in the side mirrors.”254 This ideological compromise provides Ahmad with a safe and morally ‘sound’ outlet for his undeniable sexual desires and, at the same time, helps preserve and enhance his faith and connection with father/God.

The only ‘sinful’ attributes of Ahmad’s character which stay with him throughout the novel are the love for and the satisfaction with his appearance. He is

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252 Updike 66-67.
253 Updike 214-225.
254 Updike 153-154.
young, fit, attractive and a little narcissistic, but he is convinced that even self-love stems from his adoration of God and God’s creation. Ahmad thus elevates vanity above self-criticism and protects himself from the torments of religious conscience. The youth’s narcissism is not entirely unfounded. As Jack Levy notes upon his first meeting with Ahmad, the latter “is a tall, lean, dun-colored boy in black jeans and a strikingly clean white shirt. [...] There is something Levy likes about the kid – an unblinking gravity, a wary courtesy in the set of his soft, rather full lips and the careful cut and combing of his hair, a wiry crest that seeks to rise straight up from his brow.” Ahmad’s appearance and presence make a good impression on those he meets; he is serious and courteous beyond his age and bears himself like a mature adult rather than an eighteen-year-old teenager.

Yet, despite Ahmad’s adult bearing, he is still quite naïve and easily manipulated. As Teresa’s role in Ahmad’s life is considerably limited due to her encouragement of the boy’s independence from a young age and her dedication to her personal and artistic life, she does not function as a role model for her son.

**d. The Terrorist and His Role-Models**

By far the most influential figure in Updike’s development of this protagonist is Shaikh Rashid. The Yemeni imam had lived in the United States for many years and had always been radically opposed to Western capitalist social and political systems. His hatred and history remain unexplained by Updike save for the fact that he comes from Yemen, which is widely perceived to be one of the hotbeds of Muslim fundamentalism and al-Qaeda. Having been Ahmad’s sole source of knowledge about Islam since age eleven, Shaikh Rashid wields great influence over the youth despite Ahmad’s conviction of his own superior faith. It is the Shaikh who manipulates Ahmad’s religiosity to

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255 Updike 15-16.
256 Updike 31-32.
257 Updike 88.
258 Updike 5.
cultivate the abhorrence towards America and its society which ultimately convinces Ahmad of his suicide mission’s rightfulness. The imam teaches Ahmad about the abomination of unbelievers and the proportionality of wielding violence against them. On the several occasions mentioned above – prior to Ahmad’s agreement to the terrorist plot – Shaikh Rashid utilises the Qur’an to justify and even prescribe violence. When Ahmad’s “willingness to die for jihad” is confirmed, the imam further contributes to Ahmad’s fervent determination by repeated praise of the teenager’s “self-sacrifice” which would be rewarded by “the glory of Paradise.”259 Similarly to the authors discussed in chapter three, Updike uses Shaikh Rashid’s religious rhetoric to connect Islam in general to the concept of a violent, hateful and arbitrary Other.

It is worth noting that during his last encounter with the Shaikh Ahmad “knows he is being manipulated, yet accedes to the manipulation.”260 At this late stage, this knowledge does not sway Ahmad’s resolve. For him, his faith and decision to become a suicide bomber are cures for the alienation which had plagued him in all aspects of his life: “After a life of barely belonging, he is on the shaky verge of radiant centrality.”261 This is Ahmad’s answer to the teenage crisis of identity and masculinity. He is not unaware that religiously-motivated terrorism is his means of differentiating himself from peers who go on to become criminals, pimps and prostitutes in the slowly-unravelling and ironically-named town of New Prospect: “Was his own faith, he had asked himself at times, an adolescent vanity, a way of distinguishing himself from all those doomed others, Joryleen and Tylenol and the rest of the lost, the already dead, at Central High?”262 Ahmad’s narcissistic tendencies re-emerge in this passage: he believes in his superiority over his peers because of his religious devotion. Although he is on the verge of committing a suicide attack, the (anti)hero paradoxically feels that he is not as lost as his former classmates. His planned act centres him and gives him a sense of purpose which they are not seen to possess.

259 Updike 230-233.
260 Updike 234.
261 Updike 230-231.
262 Updike 267.
Sheikh Rashid remains the most influential adult in Ahmad’s life until the novel’s finale, when Jack Levy’s improvised speech stops Ahmad from triggering the booby-trapped truck he is driving. Levy is a disenchanted school guidance counsellor and a non-practising Jew sixty-three years of age. Despite being sarcastically unenthusiastic about everything in his life (which is, perhaps, as much a stereotypical Jewish trait as Shaikh Rashid’s radicalism is a stereotypical Muslim one), Jack is extremely perceptive and becomes the unlikely hero who averts the disaster. The counsellor is the most prominent voice of reason, which has its plausible doubts and shortcomings. When Jack manifests distrust of Shaikh Rashid or suspects Ahmad’s preoccupation with the job at the furniture store, he shows every sign of conviction and is eventually proven right.\textsuperscript{263} This tinges Levy’s opinions with authority and power, so when he concludes that “Arabs all pressure each other with Islam: how can you say no to the will of Allah?” he confirms the stereotypical identification of Arabs and Islam with terrorism.\textsuperscript{264}

Given how easily influenced Ahmad seems to be, especially by the male figures around him, the question arises: how much agency can be attributed to Ahmad in his choice of religion and course of life? I have already mentioned that Teresa’s opinion regarding her son’s character tends to fluctuate but generally deems Ahmad naïve and possessing a “conformist streak.”\textsuperscript{265} By his own admission, Ahmad is completely submissive and resigned to his religion. He does not have any apparent ambitions or desires in life; he feels “terror at the burden of having a life to live” and fatalistically considers life “a gift from God that He chose to give, and can choose to take away.”\textsuperscript{266} In his resignation to religious zeal and upon the urging of Shaikh Rashid, Ahmad refuses to further his education at college in fear of it undermining his faith. Reflecting on the dangers of higher education, he concludes that “[m]ore education […] might weaken his faith. Doubts he had held off in high school might become irresistible in college. The

\textsuperscript{263} Updike 34; 201-205.
\textsuperscript{264} Updike 287.
\textsuperscript{265} Updike 114.
\textsuperscript{266} Updike 181; 183.
Straight Path was taking him in another, purer direction. This passage puts Islam and education on the opposite hands of the scales, therefore suggesting that the two are inherently antithetical and indicating that an enlightened person could not sustain such unwavering faith in Islam. It is as if Updike offers this as proof of the ‘irrationality’ of this religion, a creed which cannot withstand the test of logic and critical thinking that education instils. Another aspect of refusing further education is Ahmad’s fear of losing his acquired masculinity. He sees education as a weakening and feminising institution, while single-minded religious devotion is a masculine trait.

Although Ahmad’s submission to religion and fatalism may indicate a lack of agency, his attitude towards other American Muslims as inferior for inheriting the religion implies that he had made a conscious decision in this regard. For Ahmad, his choosing of Islam rather than being born with it is a sign of his superior judgement and intelligence:

Ahmad feels his pride of isolation and willed identity to be threatened by the masses of ordinary, hard-pressed men and plain, practical women who are enrolled in Islam as a lazy matter of ethnic identity. Though he was not the only Muslim believer at Central High, there were no others quite like him – of mixed parentage and still fervent in the faith, a faith chosen rather than merely inherited from a father present to reinforce fidelity.

Ahmad looks down on those Muslims to whom “Islam is less a faith, a filigreed doorway into the supernatural, than a habit, a facet of their condition as an underclass, alien in a nation that persists in thinking of itself as light-skinned, English-speaking, and Christian.” Unlike them, he does not consider his religion a symptom of inferiority. Conversely, it is a means of distinguishing himself from the white, Christian and more privileged American population. Once he makes the choice to become Muslim, however, Ahmad resigns himself to it completely and elects to leave everything to God’s will, thus leaving little room for decisions independent of Islam. Ironically, his

267 Updike 212.
268 Updike 75; 239.
269 Updike 174.
270 Updike 240.
relinquishing of his agency in favour of prescribed religious rhetoric renders him similar to the passive Muslims he despises.

e. An Orientalist View of Islam

Ahmad’s principal point of resentment towards American society revolves around its non-adherence to Islam. Any political, social or economic grievances, therefore, stem from the conflict between his everyday environment and religion. To Ahmad, the society he lives in is nothing but a community of infidels: “no people is more distant than the American people from God and piety […] and [this] makes them legitimate targets for assassination,” along with those Muslims who he sees as not devoted enough.271 The young man despises the consumerism and loose morals of America, primarily due to his opinion that “Western culture is Godless. […] And because it has no God, it is obsessed with sex and luxury goods.”272 Updike presents Islam as the main culprit behind Ahmad’s hostility; it is shown as an implicitly intolerant religion discouraging the development of any positive values. This is an extremely stereotypical portrayal of Islam and its adherents, which, similarly to the action-thrillers and post-9/11 political discourses discussed above, characterises the Other as hostile, fanatical, afraid of progress and averse to social and ideological liberties. That Ahmad holds a stereotyped and generalised view of American society simply confirms this point.

Instead of respecting other people and their religions, Ahmad is disgusted by them on every occasion: in church he sits next to “kinky-haired kafirs”273 and witnesses “black unbelievers at worship of their non-God, their three-headed idol.”274 The youth makes his escape from the Sunday service as quickly as possible because he cannot stand to be among Christians who “worship a God known to have died – the very idea

271 Updike 297-298.
272 Updike 35-36.
273 Updike 14.
274 Updike 59.
affects Ahmad like an elusive stench, a stoppage in the plumbing, a dead rodent in the walls. In the same way, Ahmad is repulsed by Jack Levy’s “Jewishness, Godlessness [and] unclean scent,” which further implies the narrow-mindedness and racism of the teenager’s religion. Ahmad tries to find redeeming qualities in American society later in the novel by searching national television offerings for traces of God but fails to unearth anything to dissuade him from his opinion and therefore continues to feel righteous about carrying out the suicide bombing. Ahmad’s exercise is stereotypical in itself, as he considers local American media outlets representative of the entire Western world.

f. The ‘Clash’ of the Self and the Other

Through Ahmad’s indictments and other characters’ counteracting proclamations, Updike structures a very distinct conflict between the Self and the Other: on the one side are Ahmad, Charlie Chehab and Shaikh Rashid, on the other – Jack Levy, his sister-in-law Hermione Fogel and her boss, the Secretary of Homeland Security Haffenreffer. Who the Other is depends on the side which is speaking, so, for the Muslims, it is America and the Western world in general who are the arch-nemeses, while the ‘defenders of America’ view Arabs, Muslims and immigrants as the enemy. Updike writes his literary “clash of civilizations” through statements condemning one side or the other.

On the one hand, Muslim (or Arab) characters in *Terrorist* are overwhelmingly of the same mind about the West. It is, to them, a resource- and identity-stripping evil “empire that sustains Israel and inflicts death every day on Palestinians and Chechnyans, Afghans and Iraqis.” Notably, Charlie pronounces this “hurriedly, as if reciting,” which hints at the revelation towards the end that Charlie Chehab was an undercover

275 Updike 47.
276 Updike 48.
277 Updike 193.
278 Updike 184.
CIA agent and probably did not genuinely believe these statements. Ahmad’s ready and eager concurrence with Charlie’s opinions and Shaikh Rashid’s similar disposition send an unambiguous message of resentment and intolerance. Contrary to his claim of a sympathetic and humanised portrayal, Updike leaves no doubt of the malevolence of his Arab and Muslim characters; he does not decorate them – not even his hero, Ahmad – with any redeeming qualities. Ahmad single-mindedly presumes that “all unbelievers are our enemies,” and Charlie’s propaganda-ridden speech reaffirms the youth’s convictions:

“The enemies around us, the children and fat people in shorts giving us their dirty little looks – have you noticed? – do not see themselves as oppressors and killers. They see themselves as innocent, absorbed in their private lives. Everyone is innocent – they are innocent, the people jumping from the towers were innocent, George W. Bush is innocent, a simple reformed drunk from Texas who loves his nice wife and naughty daughters. Yet, out of all this innocence, somehow evil emerges. The Western powers steal our oil, they take our land –”

“They take our God,” Ahmad says eagerly, interrupting his mentor.

Charlie stares for a second, then agrees slowly, as if this had not occurred to him.
On the other hand, the Secretary of Homeland Security and his aide Hermione Fogel’s perception of the Self – the United States – is largely and decidedly idealistic. It is similar to the previously discussed narratives, which glorify the Self and diminish the Other. Haffenreffer is perplexed by the Muslims’ and Arabs’ (who he does not distinguish between) animosity towards his country and wonders,

“Those people out there… Why do they want to do these horrible things? Why do they hate us? What’s to hate?”

“They hate the light,” Hermione tells him loyally. “Like cockroaches. Like bats. The light shone in darkness,” she quotes, knowing that Pennsylvania piety is a way to his heart, “and the darkness comprehended it not.”

This passage utilises Christian rhetoric of superiority to depict the Other’s irrational hatred of the West: instead of acknowledging American agency through policies towards the Other, the Self is portrayed as a victim. Updike’s America stands for an innocent “open society” and “the modern free world” whose achievements need to be defended from “fanatic Arabs.” The Other thus symbolises violence and oppression. The Secretary exclaims in frustration, “I love this damn country so much I can’t imagine why anybody would want to bring it down. What do these people have to offer instead? More Taliban – more oppression of women, more blowing up statues of Buddha.” He sees “these people” as inherently evil and intolerant, and they are enemies seeking to undermine the West’s enlightened capitalist system, plunge it into the “Dark Ages” and replace it with “an ascetic and dogmatic tyranny.” As in the previous novels analysed, Updike’s narrative offers a positive view of the Self, seen as more just, progressive and libertarian than the backward Other.

Updike’s American characters proceed to refer to Arabs and/or Muslims in severely unflattering terms. Jack Levy’s New Prospect is “an old-time industrial burg dying on its feet and turning into a Third World jungle” due to Arabs who “love the

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282 Updike 45; emphasis in the original.
283 Updike 129-130.
284 Updike 253.
285 Updike 45.
“desert” and reject American modernity.\textsuperscript{286} To him, an imam speaking at the Central High school graduation ceremony is nothing but a “man embodying a belief system that not many years ago managed the deaths of, among others, hundreds of commuters from northern New Jersey.”\textsuperscript{287} This is a reference to the attacks of 11 September 2001, in which Levy inextricably links any and all representatives of Islam to terrorism. Similarly to previous framing strategies, this reference to historical fact grounds the narrative and enhances its verisimilitude and representational authority. The guidance counsellor is a very sarcastic and disenchanted character and therefore is not as idealistic about America as his sister-in-law and her boss, but even he views Muslims stereotypically as alienated Others who can never fully be integrated into American society.

Arabs are only called American by other characters reluctantly and as an afterthought. Secretary Haffenreffer proclaims that New Prospect is “full of Arabs – Arab-Americans, so-called,” while Levy only adds them to his list of members of the American society in the last place, saying that in the country there are “Irish-Americans, African-Americans, Jewish-Americans; there are even Arab-Americans.”\textsuperscript{288} The latter are treated by these characters (who Updike also depicted considerably stereotypically) as enemies and conspirators against the United States rather than an equal community. They are to be viewed with suspicion and not to be trusted – not even CIA recruits like Charlie, who, despite working against the Other, are still part of it. The Other is considered to be stereotypically (and this echoes one more terrorist trait described in the previous chapter) backward and lacking in intelligence. Even the Arabic language does not make sense to the Secretary, and he observes that “[t]here’s something weird about the language – it makes them feeble-minded, somehow.”\textsuperscript{289} Utilising such negative terms, Updike clearly establishes the dichotomy of the Self and the Other. Through Ahmad’s poor decision to become involved in a terrorist plot, Arab and/or Muslim exaggerated intolerance is ‘confirmed’ and the Other’s argument invalidated. The Self

\textsuperscript{286} Updike 30; emphasis in the original.
\textsuperscript{287} Updike 109.
\textsuperscript{288} Updike 256; 296.
\textsuperscript{289} Updike 255.
emerges as the superior and misunderstood victim, as it does in the previously discussed novels.

The only characteristic of American society that both sides seem to agree on is the lack of cohesion between its multiple ethnicities and minorities. Reminiscent of Ahmad’s lament about the lack of unity in the United States, the Secretary proclaims it his duty to protect America from itself:

   His task is to protect in spite of itself a nation of nearly three hundred million anarchic souls, their millions of daily irrational impulses and self-indulgent actions flitting out of sight just around the edge of feasible surveillability. This mob’s collective gaps and irregularities form a perfect rough surface whereupon the enemy can grow one of his tenacious, wide-spreading plots.290

The loosely-bound and consumerist Self is positioned as a danger to itself due to its self-centredness and lack of social cohesion. This plays into terrorists’ hands and enables their concealment and conspiracies. Haffenreffer’s argument advocates more stringent and freedom-limiting measures in terrorism prevention, which is reminiscent of justifications of actual policies such as the Patriot Act discussed in the previous chapters. This rhetoric ties Updike’s narrative with its contemporary political and media discourses and their accompanying systems of representation.

Despite partly placing the blame for the unwitting facilitation of terrorism on the West, Islam remains the main culprit in *Terrorist*. Updike’s rendering of this religion makes it very unattractive; from the Qur’anic quotations referring to violence to the sadistic tendencies of actual Muslim characters, the religion appears as thoroughly monstrous. Muslims are portrayed as servants of a God who is a “supreme torturer,” and the unbelievers’ suffering is their ultimate joy.291 When Ahmad is introduced to the terrorist cell (four men who had built the bomb into the truck he is to drive), one of the terrorists praises the youth’s imminent ‘sacrifice’, gleefully insisting that

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290 Updike 41.
291 Updike 290.
“It’ll do a ton of damage, minimum. It’ll deliver a statement. It’ll make headlines all over the world. They’ll be dancing in the streets of Damascus and Karachi, because of you, Madman.”

The older unidentified man adds, “Cairo, too.”

The message this exchange powerfully delivers is that Arabs (in Damascus and Cairo) – and Muslims elsewhere (Karachi) – universally revel in the murder of American innocents. It echoes a similar passage from Silva quoted earlier, which shows the attack on the Vatican to be received with great jubilance in Arab and/or Muslim countries. Resonating with behavioural patterns of archetypal terrorists discussed in chapter three, Updike’s attempt at purportedly delivering a different and more insightful rendition of Islam and terror falls short. The sadistic side of Moore and Gillette’s archetype of the warrior is apparent in Updike’s characterisation of these terrorist-villains, portraying them as arbitrarily violent, vengeful and unjustified – all that an archetypal hero is not. Their only motivation for terrorism is the perverse joy the death of Westerners arouses.

g. Ahmad’s Final Act

The plot centred on the bombing of the Lincoln Tunnel, which connects New Jersey to New York, comes together very swiftly in the last third of Terrorist. Ahmad’s first encounter with the members of the terrorist cell supported by Charlie and his uncle Maurice occurs when he unwittingly makes a delivery of funds to a quiet New Jersey town. Ahmad’s suspicions are aroused when his covert observation reveals the money is delivered to a group of Arabs, and he confronts Charlie about it. The latter admits that the money comes “from those who love Allah, both within the U.S. and abroad. Think of those four men as seeds placed within the soil, and the money as water to keep the soil moist, so that some day the seeds will split their shells and bloom. Allahu akbar!”

Upon hearing this, Ahmad shortly requests to be involved in the cell in exchange for his silence. After a long exposition, the climax of the novel comes about quickly and not

292 Updike 245.
293 Updike 196; emphasis in the original.
entirely plausibly: Ahmad does not have any apparent reason to agree to terrorism except for his zealous faith. Updike fails to credibly flesh out the character and his motives and falls prey to stereotypical associations of Islam as a religion in general with indiscriminate and irrational violence. The author thus implies the veracity of the diametrical opposition between the Self and the Other.

Once Ahmad sets foot on the road to his apparent self-destruction, he realises that the other four terrorists regard him as little more than a tool for the implementation of their plan. At this stage, Ahmad has already resigned himself to both his fate and his “thirst for Paradise,” which for him signifies a metaphorical reunion with his father/God. The young man is unswayed by their overt objectification of him but rather finds finally having a purpose a relief from not belonging. To the four unnamed terrorists, he is “soon to be a martyr, [so] already a ghost” and simply a necessary part in the suicide plot:

On one side of the detonator – for such it must be – there is a yellow contact lever, and in the center, sunk a half-inch in a little well where a thumb would fit, a glossy red button. The color-coding smacks of military simplicity, of ignorant young men being trained along the simplest possible lines, the sunken button guarding against accidental detonation. The man explains to Ahmad, “This switch safety switch. Move to right” – snap – “like this, device armed. Then push button down and hold – boom. Four thousand kilos ammonium nitrate in back. Twice what McVeigh had. That much needed to break steel tunnel sheath.”

The comparison between Ahmad and Timothy McVeigh, the far-right American perpetrator of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, demonstrates Ahmad’s integral difference from the foreign members of this terrorist cell: he is an entirely home-grown terrorist, having been born in America to an American mother and never having left the borders of his state. He was certainly indoctrinated by a foreigner, but the person who introduced him to the plot – Charlie – is also American-born. This seems to confirm the

294 Updike 104.
295 Updike 242.
296 Updike 244; emphasis in the original.
Secretary’s observation that the American society itself is ripe ground for terrorism due to its freedoms and lack of cohesion. The key factor which turns Ahmad into a terrorist is his religion; the narrative singles out Islam as more influential than any other aspect of the protagonist’s heritage or upbringing. It is thus the Other’s religion which acts as a corrupting force for this American teenager. Without Islam, Ahmad would have been expected to turn out similarly to the classmates at Central High he looks down on – drug dealers, petty criminals and prostitutes with little hope for escaping the decaying city of New Prospect.

When the day of the bombing arrives, Ahmad is determined to carry it out against all odds. By now, Charlie had been discovered as a CIA agent and murdered by the terrorists for betraying them, and the latter were captured by Homeland Security. This motif of treachery and disloyalty among terrorists is another trait which resonates with the previous chapter’s analysis. Without Charlie, Ahmad is entirely alone; “[h]e has become the surviving lone instrument of the All-Merciful, the Perfect.”

The teenager’s determination supersedes all arising difficulties and is fuelled by his longing for Paradise and the desire to transcend his unhappy life in New Prospect. His extreme religious devotion culminates in his self-image as a “true believer” who “know[s] that Paradise awaits the righteous.” As he drives off in his ‘new’ truck which is filled to the brim with fertilizer explosives, Ahmad’s eagerness to join his father/God prevails over his nerves: “Now he, the fatherless, the brotherless, carries forward God’s inexorable will; Ahmad hastens to deliver Hutama, the Crushing Fire. More precisely, Shaikh Rashid once explained, Hutama means that which breaks to pieces.”

The people in the Lincoln Tunnel find their unlikely saviour in Jack Levy. He hears about the intended bombing from his sister-in-law and preternaturally realises that it is Ahmad who is to carry it out. With improbable shrewdness, Levy determines the precise point where Ahmad would be passing in his truck and waits for him there. If

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297 Updike 279-280.
298 Updike 171.
299 Updike 282; emphasis in the original.
anything, Jack’s sudden appearance unsettles Ahmad, who senses that “[t]his abrupt intrusion has confused him; his thoughts feel like bumblebees, blindly bumping at the walls inside his skull.” Levy’s lengthy and jumbled speech, which takes up the entire drive between New Prospect and New York, includes ramblings about Jack’s life in general and an admission to the affair with Teresa. Despite its shortcomings, Levy’s spiel miraculously makes Ahmad doubt himself and negates his seven years of biweekly schooling in the extremities of Islam. The epiphany which finally and completely dissuades Ahmad upon seeing the happy children of the African American family in the car in front is that God “does not want us to desecrate His creation by willing death. He wills life.”

At the very end of the novel and what seems to be a new beginning for Ahmad, he finds a new guide to replace Shaikh Rashid – Jack Levy. If the former had completely given up any responsibility for Ahmad by abandoning him to his fate on the eve of the planned bombing and going into hiding from American security agencies, the latter is there for Ahmad, prepared to champion his case and reminding him that “you were set up by a CIA operative, in a sting operation of very dubious legality. You’re a victim, Ahmad – a fall guy.” Ahmad “lets himself be guided, […] [t]he path is straight.” Ahmad thus joins the ranks of the victimised Self by forsaking his dreams of Islam as a father figure. Levy’s giving the young man a way out elevates him in Ahmad’s eyes to the status of a person worthy of following, now that he has lost every other father figure in his life, including God. Ahmad’s abandonment of Islam does not abort his quest for a father and masculinity; it instead offers a promise of the (anti)hero’s shift from the destructive influence of the Other to the freedom-loving and forgiving Self.

300 Updike 285.
301 Updike 302.
302 Updike 304.
To conclude this section of the chapter, I turn briefly to the character of Charlie Chehab, which problematises Updike’s “understanding” of Islam and Arabs. It is important to note that, according to the narrative, Charlie’s father Habib and uncle Maurice immigrated to the United States from Lebanon in the 1960s. Shaikh Rashid explains:

They are Lebanese, non-Maronite, non-Druze. They came to this country as young men in the ‘sixties, when it looked as if Lebanon might become a satellite of the Zionist entity. They brought some capital with them and put it into Excellency. Inexpensive furniture, new and used, for the blacks, was the basic idea.\footnote{Updike 142.}

This description is problematic in its implication that Charlie and his family are Muslims. The Chehab family is identified in negative terms as not belonging to two of the prominent Lebanese religious sects, but Updike does not explain what their religion really is. While their support of terrorism implies they are probably Muslim (as per the stereotypical representations of the novel), the names Maurice and Charlie as well as the surname Chehab are traditionally Christian names in Middle Eastern societies. This confuses their identity, and it is unclear if these discrepancies are intended by Updike or are indicative of the author’s poor research and/or understanding of his subject. Charlie is American-born and married to a Lebanese woman who appears in a headscarf on the photographs on his desk but prefers to wear Western dress in everyday life.\footnote{Updike 167-168.} In another passage, it is mentioned that the Chehabs are prominent members of Shaikh Rashid’s mosque.\footnote{Updike 227.} These characters thus imply the stereotypical danger, Otherness and support of terrorism that not only Muslims but also Arabs in the entirety of their ethnicity are seen to harbour. Another such inaccuracy manifests in Updike’s referring to ‘hell’ as “Jahannan” in the Qur’an, which is a misspelling of ‘Jahannam’.\footnote{Updike 3; 235.} These inaccuracies as well as the abovementioned Christian-inspired monologue of Ahmad’s suggest that
John Updike’s earlier quoted claim to a better understanding of Islam and therefore his superior angle for writing about it do not in fact materialise in *Terrorist*.

Moreover, *Terrorist* does not provide the audience with any moderate, reasonable and tolerant Muslim and/or Arab characters, and this further diminishes Updike’s attempt at a “sympathetic” depiction of a Muslim hero. For, how does it help improve inter-cultural understanding and weaken stereotypes if only radical and intolerant Arab individuals make appearances in the novel? Margaret Scanlan notes in her comparative analysis of post-9/11 novels by Kiran Desai, Mohsin Hamid and Hisham Matar that contrary to these authors who deconstruct the terrorist character, “DeLillo and Updike in particular are at pains to suggest that the Islamic terrorist is a human being with whom we may have some sympathy, [but] none of these writers creates a context large enough to include ordinary Muslims, people with differing political and religious perspectives.”307 Indeed, if there is an Arab community in the fictional city of New Prospect, New Jersey, then why are Ahmad, his religious teacher Shaikh Rashid and owners of the furniture store Charlie, Habib and Maurice Chehab its only (not counting the members of the terrorist cell who arrive from abroad) prominent representatives in *Terrorist*? Those Arabs and Muslims who Ahmad sees as inferior due to their inherited faith are background props rather than legitimate characters; developing the heterogeneity of Arab and Muslim American communities would have added depth to Updike’s novel. His Arabs and/or Muslims are solely embodied by radical characters, leaving no room for a narrative undermining of the stereotype. In contrast to this, for instance, stands the town’s African American community, whom despite having a high crime rate (especially among Ahmad’s fellow students) Updike shows to be largely benevolent and friendly, as during Ahmad’s visit to the church on Joryleen’s invitation.308 It thus seems that the author consciously avoids representing

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308 Updike 47-59.
Arab-American and/or Muslim communities positively; instead, they have no redeeming qualities and are consequently alienated from society at large.

Updike’s strategies of representation, such as the third-person omniscient narrative voice and direct quotations from the Qur’an, alienate Ahmad’s character from the reader. The protagonist’s motives and passions are difficult to relate to so long as he adheres to his fervent beliefs. Updike’s characterisation is thus as authoritatively distant as in the action-thrillers discussed in the previous chapter. Despite allowing occasional glimpses into Ahmad’s innermost thoughts, the narration and language present the (anti)hero from a decidedly Western Self’s point of view: Ahmad is an alien Other whom Updike studies detachedly as a dangerous curiosity. The author’s research on Islam and selective evidence of its stereotypical hostility does not improve on or contribute to the construction of a balanced and humanised terrorist character. Comparing Terrorist with Hany Abu-Assad’s film Paradise Now and analysing the treatment of suicide terrorism in these two works, Samuel Thomas concludes, “In Updike, what begins as a no doubt earnest attempt to reach across cultural boundaries ends up reinscribing many of the ideological patterns […] that it at least seeks to interrogate if not debunk. It is, in this sense, an instructive (though no less troubling) failure.”

Although brought to the forefront of the narrative – unlike the brief secondary depiction in action-thriller novels – Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy fails to transcend the archetypal terrorist character type.

2. Les Sirènes de Bagdad

Many parallels can be drawn between Yasmina Khadra’s TS and Updike’s Terrorist; the most obvious and indisputable similarity is that both follow a main character’s descent into terrorism. Khadra’s closing work of a trilogy addressing the

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309 Thomas 443.
issue of fundamentalism, *TS* is the story of a quiet, respectful and non-violent unnamed narrator’s transformation into a would-be suicide terrorist. Reviews of the novel have pointed out its didacticism over lyricism but also praised the narrative’s passion for its subject. Janet Maslin commends Khadra’s “ear for Iraqi despair, fury and violation [as] keen, even as he manipulates the book’s ideological posturing to reflect different points of view”; she concludes that the novel’s quality and verisimilitude approximate it with “real history.” Like Updike, Khadra makes the declaration (quoted earlier in this chapter) of his intent to present his reader with a less stereotypical and more humanised terrorist character. According to Youssef Abouali, who produced an in-depth study of the conflict (“malentendu”) of the Orient and Occident in Khadra’s trilogy, the author succeeds in fleshing out both the perpetrators and victims of terror and in explaining the individual histories and circumstances which lead to their acts. Louiza Kadari agrees with this assessment in her investigation of ideological context in Khadra’s published works. She adds that his characters negotiate their adherence or rejection of dogmatic ideologies in the context of violence, while also exposing its dehumanising effects and characters’ choices which lead to it. This and the next sections discuss the aspects which distinguish Khadra’s more profound terrorist characters (whether in *TS* or *TA*) from the archetypal terrorist pattern found in Updike and the action-thrillers discussed earlier.

The very titles of Khadra’s novels distinguish them from Updike’s: unlike the blunt and unimaginative title of *Terrorist*, which predesigns a negative judgement on Ahmad’s character, Khadra’s titles are more ambiguous and metaphorical. If *TA* may

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311 Maslin par. 10.


refer to the suicide bombing of a Tel Aviv restaurant, upon which the narrative centres, or the Israeli attack which opens and closes the novel – or, indeed, both – TS alludes to the unsettling nature of violence. It symbolises both the ambulance sirens the narrator hears constantly in Baghdad, announcing a new tragedy, and the beautiful Arabic songs which he shares with his cousin Kadem. Later in the novel, terrorism’s siren’s call to the narrator gives the title yet another dimension. The action takes place in Iraq under foreign (American and coalition forces’) occupation post-2003 and delineates in a first-person voice the process the protagonist undergoes to reach this radical decision. Khadra’s stylistic choice to allow his hero to address the reader directly – in contrast to Updike’s omniscient narrator – exposes the main character’s innermost thoughts and torments and lends him an increased measure of humanity and credibility. DeMille utilises a similar device in his John Corey novels, which enhances the hero/narrator’s experience and rhetoric.

The primary advantage of Khadra’s narrative is the fleshing out of the protagonist with a plausible background and history: unlike Updike’s Ahmad, he is not a zealous disciple of a radical Shaikh, who is already deeply and illogically indoctrinated to accept terrorism as a legitimate means to eliminate the infidels. On the contrary, he is an ordinary person, none too religious, who rejects violence as a concept. The question Khadra’s novel explores, thus, is what prompts the lead character to participate in insurgency and terrorism. Due to this focus, as the following analysis illustrates, Yasmina Khadra succeeds where John Updike fails: he accomplishes a more humanised, sympathetic and understanding rendering of a terrorist.

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314 Khadra, *Les Sirènes* 82. These lines in the narrator and Kadem’s conversation are omitted in the English translation.
315 Quotations are given in the English translation, while the originals used for the study can be found in the Appendix.
a. Establishing a Background

To begin with, the author provides the main character with a very detailed background. The narrator is a young Iraqi Bedouin twenty-one years of age who hails from “Kafr Karam, a village lost in the sands of the Iraqi desert, a place so discreet that it often dissolves in mirages, only to emerge at sunset.” Although he is happy and proud to be from this little village in rural Iraq, he is forced to return there after his dreams of obtaining a degree at the University of Baghdad are dashed a few months into his studies – as soon as the American offensive on Iraq began in 2003. Despite lamenting the loss and destruction of Baghdad – “[t]he university was abandoned to vandals, and my dreams were destroyed, too” – the young man is not unhappy to be back home.

After the first chapter, which depicts the narrator nearing the end of his journey in Beirut, he begins reminiscing about his life after the return from Baghdad. At the outset, the protagonist does not display any potential or desire for terrorism. On the contrary, he genuinely appears to be respectful, emotional and family-oriented with a heightened sense of morality. In the first chapter, the narrator is taken aback by his companion Dr. Jalal’s vulgarity and expressed desires for alcohol, cigarettes and intimacy with prostitutes. In this aspect, he is similar to Updike’s Ahmad; yet whereas Ahmad’s morality is enforced by piety, the lead character of TS simply follows the tribal code of conduct, morality and respect by which his townspeople have lived for centuries. Instead of being alienated from his family, he is affectionate with his mother and sisters and respectful towards his father; it is a close-knit family three of whose daughters live at home (the eldest lives in Baghdad) and help the parents make their livelihood.

Unlike Ahmad, who had learned to mask his naïveté early on, Khadra’s narrator admits to having always had a sensitive soul:

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316 Khadra, TS 2 (8). Note that the first page number is for the English translation of the novel; the number in brackets is the corresponding page number in the French original.
317 Khadra, TS 19 (27).
318 Khadra, TS 3 (9-10); 7 (14).
319 Khadra, TS 20-21 (28-29).
I was an emotional person; I found other people’s sorrows devastating. Whenever I passed a misfortune, I bore it away with me. [...] I was made that way, and that was all there was to it. A delicate porcelain creature.

[...] At school, my classmates considered me a weakling. They could provoke me all they wanted; I never returned their blows. Even when I refused to turn the other cheek, I kept my fists in my pockets. Eventually, the other kids got discouraged by my stoicism and left me in peace. In fact, I wasn’t a weakling; I simply hated violence.\textsuperscript{320}

As the analysis below indicates in greater depth, the narrator is strongly affected by the tragedies which strike Kafr Karam. Even when he slides into depression, he does not resort to retaliatory violence, like some of his fellow villagers, until he is dealt one final blow the Bedouin pride into which he was socialised does not let him ignore. Before establishing this chain of events, which ultimately transforms the narrator from the peaceable man he is into an up-and-coming terrorist, I would like to explore his history in more detail.

Aside from having a close relationship with his immediate family, the narrator is further humanised and contextualised through the friendship with his cousin Kadem. Although he had suffered tragedy early on in his two marriages (in both cases, he was widowed within the first year of marriage), Kadem – “a virtuoso lutenist” – retains his love of music and is especially fond of the protagonist.\textsuperscript{321} Kadem and his cousin share some serene moments enjoying the songs of the celebrated Lebanese singer Fairuz and each other’s company before the narrator decides to leave the village.\textsuperscript{322} Yet, even on the precipice of the unthinkable (a terrorist act), the memory of Kadem contributes to the protagonist’s reconsideration of his resolve; he hears a song by Fairuz on the radio, and it “catapults me through space and time. Like a meteorite, I land on the edge of the gap near my village where Kadem had me listen to some of his favorite songs.”\textsuperscript{323} Even at this early stage, Khadra’s character development supersedes Updike’s portrayal of

\textsuperscript{320} Khadra, \textit{TS} 96-97 (107-108).
\textsuperscript{321} Khadra, \textit{TS} 24 (33).
\textsuperscript{322} Khadra, \textit{TS} 80-83 (90-94).
\textsuperscript{323} Khadra, \textit{TS} 298 (309).
Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy. If Ahmad is alienated from everyone but his religious teacher and has not developed any relationships with peers over the course of his eighteen years of life in the town of New Prospect, the narrator in *TS* is shown to have deep and meaningful attachments from the very first chapter of the novel. The establishment of a detailed background makes him a more believable and relatable character, with whom it is potentially easier to sympathise with.

The narrator does not come from a deeply religious family or a fundamentalist town: the residents of Kafr Karam are undoubtedly Muslim, as is his family, but Khadra gives no indication of any leanings towards extremism. As the protagonist reminisces about his family home, he notes that the rooms there are “filled with old stuff, including religious pictures picked up from traveling souks. Some of these pictures showed labyrinthine calligraphy, while others portrayed Sidna Ali manhandling demons or thrashing enemy troops, his legendary double-bladed scimitar whirling like a tornado above their impious heads.”

However, his mother had put up these pictures mainly not due to religiosity but rather customary belief – the pictures are there to ward off the evil eye. Khadra, contrary to Updike and the abovementioned action-thrillers, does not emphasise religion as his characters’ defining trait.

The narrator himself does not specify whether his family (and tribe/village) belong to the Shi’a or Sunni sect of Islam, which further attests to the non-religious focus of the novel: religion does not motivate the protagonist’s resort to terrorism but his personal and political issues do. He confirms that the people of Kafr Karam were peaceful until external forces brought violence to their door: “We were poor, common people, but we were at peace. Until the day when our privacy was violated, our taboos broken, our dignity dragged through mud and gore... until the day when brutes festooned with grenades and handcuffs burst into the gardens of Babylon, come to teach poets how to be free men...”

He reiterates that “[m]ost of the inhabitants of Kafr Karam were related by blood. The rest had lived there for several generations. Of course, we had our

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325 Khadra, *TS* 11-12 (19).
little idiosyncrasies, but our quarrels never degenerated into anything worse. Whenever trouble loomed, our village elders would intervene and calm everyone down." With these descriptions, the protagonist makes it abundantly clear that – contrary to stereotypical perceptions – Arab Muslims (in this case, Iraqis) are not inherently fundamentalist and violent. Rather, the community of Kafr Karam is traditionally governed by tribal requirements of respect for elders and general avoidance of conflict. Khadra thus distinguishes his Muslim characters from the stereotype: unlike action-thriller archetypal terrorists, this rural Iraqi tribe is not defined by an innate hatred of the West or a desire for its annihilation.

For a long while, Kafr Karam happily rests on the fringes of the action (and counter-action) brought on by the foreign military occupation. The residents only hear of what is happening in other parts of Iraq on the radio and television, and they feel “light-years away from the tragedy depopulating our country.” The narrator adds that “[s]ince the beginning of hostilities, despite the hundreds of attacks and the legion of dead, not even a single helicopter had flown over our sector, not so far, nor had any patrol violated the peace of our little town.” In this fashion, Kafr Karam’s isolation from the great tumult which is destabilising Iraq engenders a sense of boredom and marginalisation from history in general and galvanises a limited minority made up of restless young village natives into becoming “rebels-in-waiting,” eager for an opportunity to prove themselves. Kafr Karam almost seems to be an unreal place: it is peaceful and isolated in the middle of a war, but it does not remain tranquil for long.

The military occupation is, undoubtedly, the source of all unease and conflict in TS; it is also the cause of daily impediments and frustrations. The deteriorating situation in the country affects even the most mundane daily activities, such as shopping. When the narrator decides to purchase a new pair of shoes, he needs to go to the nearest large town, but he cannot reach it due to war. There is no one willing to drive him because of

326 Khadra, TS 23 (31-32).
327 Khadra, TS 45 (54).
328 Khadra, TS 47-48 (56-57).
the abundance of roadblocks, so daily life is impeded. In a conversation with the local blacksmith, he receives the advice to look at second-hand shoes at the cobbler’s rather than risk the trip into town, especially as “it’s getting harder and harder to move around, what with all these checkpoints and the hassles that go with them.”\textsuperscript{329} This paints a picture of a country in paralysis, and although this particular Bedouin tribe is not yet directly involved in the widespread tragedy, they are inescapably aware and wary of the instability surrounding their little oasis of peace in the desolate and violent ‘desert’ that is Iraq. This imagery at the beginning of the novel heightens the notion of Kafr Karam as an ‘unreal’ place; it also suggests that the nearby conflict is bound to destroy its innocence.

\textit{b. A Reversal of the Self and the Other}

Khadra reverses the notions of the Self and Other, which I previously established as central to the other novels. The narrative highlights the Iraqi (Arab) Self’s status as victim of the Western Other’s imperialism and political interests. The residents of Kafr Karam are divided in their opinions on the occupation, but the general consensus is that foreign involvement in the country has not improved matters. The narrator recounts a lengthy debate he once witnessed at the local barbershop among several senior members of the tribe. It becomes apparent in this discussion that although the villagers are initially glad to be rid of Saddam Hussein – the “tyrant,” “monster” and “ogre” – they become deeply concerned with the pretexts and consequences of the occupation.\textsuperscript{330} The tribesmen now see themselves (and all Iraqis) as “commodities” for the foreign powers. In one of the tribe’s leaders summary of the general sentiment, the removal of Saddam Hussein from power is perceived to be part of a ruse aiming “to create a diversion in order to conceal the essential objectives of the exercise, which are to prevent an Arab country from acquiring the means of its strategic defense and therefore from protecting

\textsuperscript{329} Khadra, \textit{TS} 29 (37).
\textsuperscript{330} Khadra, \textit{TS} 31-33 (39-41).
its integrity, and, at the same time, to help Israel establish definitive authority over this part of the world.”

Caught in the eye of this political and economic gambit, the villagers do not blame anyone but themselves. They suggest that it was none other than the Iraqis’ weakness as a people which prevented them from stopping both Saddam and the foreign invasion. When the elder of the tribe speaks out to conclude the debate, he endorses this opinion: “Don’t try to make others wear the hat we’ve fashioned for ourselves with our own hands. If the Americans are here, it’s our fault. By losing our faith, we’ve also lost our bearings and our sense of honor.”

The elder is not referring to religious faith, but rather faith in morality. He maintains that by giving up resistance against both home-grown and foreign tyranny and condoning atrocities, the Iraqi people have lost sight of the core values of purity, morality and honour – the foundation stones of the Bedouin code of conduct. He does not place the blame on conspiracies against Arabs but on their own moral degradation, docility and acceptance of the tyranny of others.

Not all characters in TS abide by this self-deprecating opinion. On the contrary, some Arabs in the novel constantly refer to a deep and bitter divide between the Arab world and the West. It is especially true of those “rebels-in-waiting” young men of Kafr Karam (who proceed to become true rebels along the course of the narrative) and of the characters who had lived and experienced discrimination in Western countries, such as Dr. Jalal and Professor Ghany. They, similarly to the representatives of the Self in Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Koretskiy and Updike, construct their identity in terms of irreconcilable conflict with the Other. The resulting discourse reverses some of the aforementioned characteristics, such as victimisation, justification of violence and righteousness. In addition to these, the Arab Self sees the Other as inherently evil, imperialistic, arrogant and self-serving.

Doctor Jalal is by far the most vocal critic of the Western Other. Formerly a prominent intellectual in America and Europe and an outspoken critic of Islamic

331 Khadra, TS 35 (43).
332 Khadra, TS 37 (45).
fundamentalism, he is introduced in Khadra’s novel after having made a complete turnaround. Jalal “has a knack for mobilizing everyone” and now devotes it to rallying in favour of radical Islam. He is a powerful speaker and uses his talent to sway the audience with “[t]he accuracy of his analyses and the effectiveness of his arguments [which] are a joy to consider.” His academic knowledge and infallible logic render him more authoritative than men of religion: “No imam can match him; no speaker is better at turning a murmur into a cry. He’s hypersensitive and exceptionally intelligent, a mentor of rare charisma.” When Dr. Jalal juxtaposes the Arab world and the West and vilifies it, his words are met with a roar of approval by his audience, including the narrator.

According to Dr. Jalal, the Arab and Muslim world is but a pawn in Western machinations, and the only solution lies in their complete segregation from each other. In a conversation between Jalal and the narrator, the former’s uncompromising opinion is powerfully vocalised:

“You think we don’t have a choice.”
“Exactly. Peaceful coexistence is no longer possible. They don’t like us, and we won’t put up with their arrogance anymore. Each side has to turn its back on the other for good and live in its own way. But before we put up that great wall, we’re going to make them suffer for all the evil they’ve done to us. Our patience has never been cowardice. It’s imperative that they understand that.”
“And who will win?”
“The side that has little to lose.”

A “clash of civilizations” is thus established by Jalal, eerily reminiscent of the Western Self’s rhetoric discussed previously. However, the divide between Arabs and Westerners in TS is focused on political and moral reasoning rather than religion. Islam and the Arab world are portrayed as heterogeneous, and religion is a politically-motivated choice borne out of a sense of hopelessness instead of arbitrary hatred. Unlike in Terrorist,

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333 Khadra, TS 252 (261).
334 Khadra, TS 9 (16).
335 Khadra, TS 11 (17-18).
political and social circumstances trump religion as motivations for terrorism in this novel.

Indeed, Dr. Jalal’s turnaround stems from the disillusionment, perceived discrimination and lack of acknowledgement he had encountered in the West. Jalal complains that he was stereotypically and unjustly viewed merely as an Arab and a terrorist even when he used to argue against radicalism and in favour of the West:

As far as they were concerned […] all Arabs were terrorists, and what was I? Dr. Jalal, the sworn enemy of the fundamentalists, the target of fatwas, who worked his ass off for them—what was I? In their eyes, I was a traitor to my nation, which made me doubly contemptible. And that’s when I experienced a kind of illumination. I realized what a dupe I’d been, and I especially realized where my true place was. And so I packed my bags and returned to my people.\(^{336}\)

Instead of returning home and propagating tolerance and peace, however, Jalal lets his anger and frustration lead him into the association with Islamic fundamentalist organisations. These groups proceed to proudly parade him around Arab countries as the most impressive proof of the West’s corruption and malevolent intentions. Dr. Jalal thus merely changes from being a mouthpiece for one ideology to another, but he does not cease to be an instrument in the larger power struggle of the Self and the Other. He insists that “[t]he West is nothing but an acidic lie, an insidious perversity, a siren song for people shipwrecked on their identity quest”; yet he cannot create a positive identity for himself with the fundamentalists either, which dooms him to be lost in the indecision between two extremes.\(^{337}\)

As it emerges later in the novel, Jalal’s wounded academic pride also played a major role in his eventual siding with the Islamists. Feeling he was not given due recognition for his work (the Three Academies Medal he so desired), he is embittered towards the West and its academic institutions. Khadra clarifies this in a heatedly antagonistic encounter between Dr. Jalal and his acquaintance Mohammed Seen, a French writer of Arab origin who advocates moderation. Seen warns Jalal of the great

\(^{336}\) Khadra, \textit{TS} 255 (265).

\(^{337}\) Khadra, \textit{TS} 10 (17).
responsibility that enlightened Arab intellectuals bear towards peace and tolerance, but his advice falls on deaf ears. For Jalal, violence in both discourse and action is the only cure for his outrage and sense of injustice. He proclaims, “Today, the offended peoples have recovered their power of speech. They have some words to say. And our weapons say exactly the same thing.” Jalal associates the Arab Self with victimisation and sees the destruction of the Other as justified. According to him, violence becomes the only means for Arabs (and/or Muslims) to reclaim their power and identity. This obverse victimisation rhetoric is uncannily similar to the novels discussed above, but as this analysis demonstrates, Khadra undermines such polarising ideologies by the ultimate failure of Jalal’s character as well as the narrator’s refusal of terrorism.

Dr. Jalal is not the only intellectual who considers his intellect and pride injured by discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and religion. Professor Ghany, the mastermind behind the terrorist plot in which the narrator becomes the main asset, also used to work in the West and is similarly disgruntled. A prominent virologist “who worked for decades in the most prestigious American research institutions before being kicked out because he was an Arab and a Muslim,” the professor turns to designing atrocious means of violence in revenge for this slight to his intellect and pride. Through the characters of Jalal and Ghany, Khadra deconstructs the notion that terrorism is motivated by religion and ignorance. Instead, he presents a variety of reasons, which include social, political, economic and intellectual grievances as well as misdirected feelings of superiority and entitlement (which is perhaps the author’s critique of Westernised Arab intelligentsia). The categories of the Self and the Other are subverted and given new dimensions in this novel.

It is not only prominent disgruntled intellectuals who perpetuate hatred and intolerance between what is perceived to be the Self and the Other, but also some of the narrator’s fellow villagers and people he encounters on his journey to Baghdad. The

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338 Khadra, TS 275 (286).
339 Khadra, TS 278 (289-290).
340 Khadra, TS 257 (267); emphasis in the original.
latter category is most pertinently represented by a nameless Iraqi who gives the protagonist a lift on one leg of his trip: this man is a former interpreter for an American army battalion who quit the job eight months after starting due to the continuous discrimination and injustices he had been forced to witness. According to him, American soldiers only see Arabs as embodiments of Orientalist stereotypes: “retarded” members of “[a] camel caravan crossing the dunes at sunset”; “[s]ome fat guy in a white robe and a keffiyeh flashing his millions in a gambling casino on the Côte d’Azur”; “clichés, caricatures.” The man laments taking so long to realise that he was viewed as nothing but “a traitor to my country” and therefore even more contemptuous to them than other Iraqis. This encounter holds a mirror to the perception of the Self and the Other by demonstrating the injustice of stereotypical notions on both sides of the conflict: the Western Self orientalises the Arab Other, while the Arab Self demonises the West as uniformly discriminatory and opportunistic.

The young men from Kafr Karam who join the insurgency are of no better opinion of the West. In fact, they – those who had actually taken up arms against the Other instead of fighting it on discursive battlefields – are by far the most radically critical. Sayed is the son of a prominent member of the town’s community and an established businessman in Baghdad. He serves as the narrator’s only intermediary to the fundamentalist organisations he is seeking access to. In order to irreversibly recruit the protagonist to their cause, Sayed lectures him on the evils of America and the West in general:

Modesty’s a virtue they’ve long since lost sight of. Honor? They’ve distorted its codes. They’re just infuriated retards, smashing valuable things, like buffalo let loose in a porcelain shop. They arrive here from an unjust, cruel universe with no humanity and no morals, where the powerful feed on the flesh of the downtrodden. Violence and hatred sum up their history; Machiavellianism shapes and justifies their initiatives and their ambitions. What can they comprehend of our world, which has produced the most fabulous pages in the history of

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341 Khadra, TS 128 (140).
342 Khadra, TS 127 (139).
human civilization? Our fundamental values are still intact; our oaths are unbroken; our traditional points of reference remain the same. What can they understand about us?\textsuperscript{343}

This is Orientalism and ideology put forth by the previously analysed novels inverted, whereby the Arab Self is positively superior and the American Other is the bearer of violence, hatred and arbitrariness. Sayed transfers the traits previous novels ascribed to terrorists onto the foreign armies occupying Iraq. In his opinion, even if the Western Other hides behind proclamations of democracy, profiteering is their only philosophy: “All they see in our country is an immense pool of petroleum, which they intend to lap dry, even if it costs the last drop of our blood, too. […] They’ve reduced all values to the single dreadful question of cash, and the only virtue they recognize is profit. Predators, that’s what they are, formidable predators.”\textsuperscript{344} Sayed and his men position themselves as victims rather than aggressors despite the fact that they are as guilty of violence as the American army. Each side – Arabs or Americans – sees itself as a victimised Self which is in need of defence from the malignant Other. This diverges from Updike and the previous chapter’s action-thrillers, where the Western Self is depicted as the only innocent victim of terrorism.

In this inversion of the dominant discourse and the affirmation of the Iraqis’ supremacy, Sayed also puts cultural icons into binary oppositions, “Our streets are going to witness the greatest duel of all time, the clash of the titans: Babylon against Disneyland, the Tower of Babel against the Empire State Building, the Hanging Gardens against the Golden Gate Bridge, Scheherazade against Bonnie Parker, Sindbad against the Terminator.”\textsuperscript{345} Interestingly, Sayed chooses to juxtapose ancient and mythical cultural symbols of Iraq with relatively recent architectural landmarks of America, one half of the notorious Bonnie and Clyde criminal duo and a Hollywood blockbuster hero – symbols of capitalist and neo-imperialist culture. Sayed aims to show how young and

\textsuperscript{343} Khadra, \textit{TS} 174-175 (187); emphasis in the original.
\textsuperscript{344} Khadra, \textit{TS} 175-176 (187-188).
\textsuperscript{345} Khadra, \textit{TS} 176 (188). In this passage, the translator substituted the original reference to Ma Baker with Bonnie Parker – perhaps in an attempt to make the reference more relatable to readers in English.
trivial American culture is in comparison with the age-old Iraq and how immeasurably more profound the latter is. According to his logic, the culture which has a longer history and a more ‘distinguished’ legacy is greater, and insurgents and terrorists are simply trying to reaffirm this superiority. The inversion of the Self and the Other encompasses the cultural sphere, but the juxtaposition of the fictional and mythical symbols of the Arab Self to the Other’s actual icons undermines the veracity of Sayed’s argument. His rhetoric of Arab superiority is weakened by the use of Orientalist language and imaginary figures.

c. Hopelessness and Violence as Motives of Terrorism

The disheartening reality the protagonist faces is that the ‘glorious’ days of Iraq are long past, and most of the country is afflicted with hopelessness and destruction instead. Once a resplendent and promising city for the narrator – “a young, dazzled student with marvelous prospects in my head” – Baghdad has now become “disfigured, filthy, at the mercy of its demons.” Upon his return to the war-torn capital, the protagonist gives a harrowing account of the state in which he finds the city:

Baghdad was decomposing. After spending a long, tortured time docked in repression, the city had broken from its moorings and gone adrift, fascinated by its own suicidal rage and the intoxications of impunity. Once the tyrant had fallen, Baghdad found much that was still intact: its forced silences, its vengeful cowardice, its large-scale misery. Now that all proscriptions were removed, the city drained the cup of resentment, the source of its wounds, to the dregs. Exhilarated by its suffering and the revulsion it aroused, Baghdad was trying to become the incarnation of all that it couldn’t bear and rejecting its former public image. And from the grossest despair, it drew the ingredients of its own agony.

Baghdad was a city that preferred exploding belts and banners cut from shrouds.

346 Khadra, TS 132-133 (144-145).
347 Khadra, TS 148-149 (160).
Not even the bright memories of a past so glorified by Sayed can obscure the monstrosity that Baghdad (and Iraq at large) has become: this urban centre is filled with despair and violence to its very brim. Due to the semi-paralysed authorities and lack of cohesive governance, it is almost impossible to bring order to Baghdad; “the city was a sieve; it leaked everywhere. Murderous attacks were the order of the day. When the authorities plugged one hole, they freed up others that were more dangerous.” Consequently, any happy and nostalgic feelings that the narrator may have had for the city in the past evaporate as soon as he lays eyes on it again.

As the only thing the young man ever witnesses while walking the streets of Baghdad is brutality and immense human tragedy, he develops an extremely blasé attitude to the suffering of others. The daily “spectacles” he observes expose the fatalism and stoicism of local residents for whom violence has become the order of the day and nothing more than an inconvenience in the flow of their everyday routine. Sometimes, the narrator seeks the carnage out intentionally in order to desensitise himself to scenes of “ambulance drivers picking pieces of flesh from sidewalks, firemen evacuating blasted buildings, cops interrogating the neighborhood residents.” The narrator harbours no more love for Baghdad – it is a place he can no longer relate to. On the contrary, he resents it, saying that “[f]or me, it represented nothing. Meant nothing. I traversed it like a land accursed. We were two incompatible misfortunes, two parallel worlds that ran side by side and never met.” Similarly to Updike’s Ahmad, the narrator becomes alienated from his environment; however, this does not happen by virtue of his own choice nor is it explained by recourse to religious allegiances. His overwhelming sense of despair and the horrifying experiences surrounding him lead the protagonist to terrorism.

It is not only in Baghdad that the deep human tragedy is visible on the surface but also in the rest of Iraq and Kafr Karam as the events start to unfold. For instance, on

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348 Khadra, TS 147-148 (159).
349 Khadra, TS 179 (191).
350 Khadra, TS 213 (224).
the narrator’s extended journey from his village to Baghdad, he encounters many fellow “shipwreck survivors” on their way from one hopeless place to another. These travellers are harrowed by the labours of survival and “grueling day[s] of checkpoints and dirt roads”; as the protagonist observes, “they all carried on their faces the unmistakable mark of the defeated.” His desire to avoid becoming one of the defeated is another contributing factor to the narrator’s recourse to terrorism.

The protagonist’s transformation from a peaceable young man into a suicide attack candidate does not occur on the spur of the moment. On the contrary, it takes two tragedies and a violation of his family’s honour to elicit his violent response. The first shocking event which the protagonist experiences is the indiscriminate shooting of Kafr Karam’s beloved and mentally disabled youth, Sulayman, the blacksmith’s son. Sulayman and the narrator are close in age, and the entire village is protective of the ill boy. He is known in Kafr Karam for episodes where he would take off running and not stop unless exhausted or intercepted. When Sulayman suffers the loss of two of his fingers in a domestic incident, the narrator volunteers to drive both him and the blacksmith to the nearest health clinic, sixty kilometres away from the village, to prevent the youth from bleeding to death. Soon after having set off from Kafr Karam, the narrator and his passengers encounter an American military checkpoint. The jumpy GIs order the trio out of the car, and when the intimidated Sulayman takes off running in another of his episodes, he is riddled with bullets. The blacksmith and the protagonist do not see any remorse on the soldiers’ part: “Apparently, they all realized that a mistake had been made, but they weren’t going to make a big deal of it. Incidents of this kind were commonplace in Iraq. Amid the general confusion, everyone sought his own advantage. To err is human, and fate has broad shoulders.” The youth’s murder goes unpunished and becomes the catalyst of the narrator’s inner conflict.

While it might be easy for foreign soldiers to file Sulayman’s death away as yet another matter-of-course fatal misunderstanding, the residents of Kafr Karam, especially

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351 Khadra, *TS* 120 (132).
352 Khadra, *TS* 59 (68).
the narrator, are haunted by it. For a man who had never before born witness to another’s violent death, the protagonist finds it extremely difficult to overcome the shock and torments of the memory. He shuts himself off in his room and suffers from horrific nightmares which endlessly replay the moment of Sulayman’s death:

After Sulayman’s funeral, which I didn’t attend, I stayed in my room. Memories of the awful scene tormented me without letup. As soon as I fell asleep, the black GI’s screams would assail me. I dreamed of Sulayman running, his stiff spine, his dangling arms, his body leaning sometimes to one side, sometimes to the other. A multitude of minuscule geysers spurted from his back. At the moment when his head exploded, I woke up screaming.

The incident is perceived by the population as a “blow that had robbed Kafr Karam of its purest creature, its mascot and its pentacle.” While the majority grieve, a group of young men led by a young man named Yaseen start calling for retaliation and – met by the elders with discomfiture and disapproval – decide to leave the village to join the insurgency. At this stage and despite his immense grief, the narrator remains unchanged and is still a peaceable character.

Just as the village residents start to regain their bearings and prepare to celebrate the first joyous event since Sulayman’s death – the marriage of a young woman from Kafr Karam to a son of a prominent and wealthy family, the Haitems – the town is dealt a second blow. In retaliation for a checkpoint bombing allegedly carried out by Yaseen and his band, the wedding reception is hit by an American missile. The narrator joins the first responders at the scene and witnesses the carnage first-hand. He is deeply disturbed by the scale of the tragedy, which decidedly eclipses Sulayman’s death:

The force of the explosion had flung chairs and wedding guests thirty meters in all directions. Survivors staggered about, their clothes in rags, holding their hands out in front of them like blind people. Some mutilated, charred bodies were lined up along the edge of a path. Cars illuminated the slaughter with their headlights, while specters thrashed about in the midst of the rubble. Then there was the howling, drawn

353 Khadra, TS 69-70 (78-79).
354 Khadra, TS 62 (71).
355 Khadra, TS 62 (71); 79 (89); 84-85 (95-96).
out, interminable; the air was full of pleas and cries and wails. Mothers looking for their children called out into the confusion; the more they went unanswered, the louder they shouted. A weeping man, covered with blood, knelt beside the body of someone dear to him.\footnote{Khadra, \textit{TS} 92-93 (103-104).}

The horror of this happy event turned massacre perturbs the village, and they declare that the terrorists are those who murder innocents gathered for a party rather than those who attack foreign troops’ checkpoints.\footnote{Khadra, \textit{TS} 95 (106).} Revenge violence is thus legitimised by the village elders in the wake of the two tragedies.

This time, the narrator is as much enraged by this injustice as he is overcome by grief, but even at this point he is not yet prepared to become a perpetrator of similar atrocities – he is still fundamentally against war in any form. As before, he isolates himself in his room and seeks sanctuary in reading the books and listening to the music that his friend and cousin Kadem sent him. This does not enable him to escape his rage:

“I was indeed angry, I held a bitter grudge against the coalition forces, but I couldn’t see myself indiscriminately attacking everyone and everything in sight. War wasn’t my line. I wasn’t born to commit violence – I considered myself a thousand times likelier to suffer it than to practice it one day.”\footnote{Khadra, \textit{TS} 99 (110).} The narrator adheres to the dominant rhetoric of the Self and sees himself as an innocent victim of violence rather than its perpetrator.

Yet, an American raid on his family home and the distress and insults which his parents and sisters suffer as a result become the last straw which breaks the narrator’s resolve against violence. Brought up in the Bedouin tradition of respect and reverence towards parents and elders as well as an inherent and heightened sense of personal and family honour, the narrator finds this a violation too many. The deepest offence is not that the protagonist was dragged out of his room in the middle of the night by armed and aggressive soldiers, or the fact that his mother and sisters were physically and verbally assaulted, but that his father was subjected to the most degrading shame a Bedouin can ever experience – he was dragged out of his bed and in plain view of all his family with
his lower body stark naked and exposed.\footnote{Khadra, \textit{TS} 101 (112-113).} This is also an affront to the protagonist’s masculinity, whereby he is rendered helpless to prevent the assault on his honour – the humiliation of his family’s women (bearers of masculine honour) and his father (masculine role-model). For the narrator, this irreparably breaks one of the principal Bedouin taboos, and he realises that, for him, this is the point of no return:

\begin{quote}
A Westerner can’t understand, can’t suspect the dimensions of the disaster. For me, to see my father’s sex was to reduce my entire existence, my values and my scruples, my pride and my singularity, to a coarse, pornographic flash. The gates of hell would have seemed less catastrophic! I was finished. Everything was finished – irrecoverably, irreversibly. I had been saddled, once and for all, with infamy; I’d plunged into a parallel world from which I’d never escape. […] And at that very instant, when I dared not turn a hair, I understood that nothing would ever again be as it had been; I knew I’d no longer consider things in the same way; I heard the foul beast roar deep inside me, and it was clear that sooner or later, whatever happened, I was \textit{condemned to wash away this insult in blood}.\footnote{Khadra, \textit{TS} 102 (113-114); emphasis in the original.}
\end{quote}

The drive to erase the stain on the family’s honour and his own masculine self-worth with the enemies’ blood prevents the narrator from coming home after he is cleared from involvement with Yaseen’s band and released from military custody. The protagonist feels that he cannot face his father until the offence has been avenged and therefore makes the decision to leave Kafr Karam for Baghdad on a quest for a means of retribution.

\textit{d. Tragedy, Identity Crisis and Terrorism}

The compounded effect of the three incidents provokes the narrator’s identity crisis. He no longer recognises his previously peace-loving self in the creature of extreme fury and thirst for destruction that he has become. “I had gone to bed a docile, courteous boy, and I’d awakened with an inextinguishable rage lodged in my very
flesh,” he declares. The narrator finds himself no longer capable of love following his personal cataclysm. He enquires, “How could I love anything after what I’d seen in Kafr Karam? How could I appreciate perfect strangers after I’d fallen in my own self-esteem? Was I still myself? If so, who was I? I wasn’t really interested in knowing that. […] Some moorings had broken, some taboos had fallen, and a world of spells and anathemas was springing up from their ruins.” The main character’s world view undergoes a pivotal transformation which determines his fate and sets him on a one-way track to self-destruction.

The “abominable thing,” the ultimate insult to his honour and self-respect, leads to the narrator’s rebirth “as someone else, someone hard, cold, implacable.” He arrives in Baghdad with no particular plan, and the only thing he is certain of is that he wants to exact revenge for the injury inflicted on his honour. Having failed to secure lodging with his eldest sister, Farah, and having been assaulted and robbed of all his money, the protagonist is forced to sleep on the streets and in mosques and get by on scraps of food. However destitute and bleak his situation may appear, the young man never loses sight of his anger:

And there I was, come to Baghdad in my turn to spread my venom there. I didn’t know how to go about it, but I was certain I’d strike some nasty blow. It was the way things had always been with us. For Bedouin, no matter how impoverished they may be, honor is no joking matter. An offense must be washed away in blood, which is the sole authorized detergent when it’s a question of keeping one’s self-respect. I was the only boy in my family. Since my father was an invalid, the supreme task of avenging the outrage he’d suffered fell to me, even at the cost of my life. Dignity can’t be negotiated.

The employment of honour as a key character value for the narrator resonates with the archetypal hero discussed in chapter two. For both, honour is an indisputably essential characteristic, which purportedly defines them in a positive light. In the above passage,
the protagonist speaks of personal, familial and tribal honour, the possession of which differentiates him from archetypal terrorist characters analysed in the previous chapter. While they possess none, Khadra’s protagonist lives by a non-negotiable code of honour. The author thus succeeds in not only writing a humanised character but contrasts him with the pervasive stereotype.

When by a happy chance the narrator encounters Omar, his relative from Kafr Karam and former soldier in Saddam Hussein’s army, he is saved from homelessness yet is still unwilling to renounce his goals. Despite Omar’s attempts to convince him otherwise, the protagonist explains to his cousin that he has reached a point of no return following the incident with his father. He does not believe anybody’s reasoning can sway him and prompt him to return home and live with his “shame.”

A quest for work leads the narrator to Sayed’s electronics shop, where he becomes employed as a bookkeeper and night guard. He soon discovers the shop to be a cover for a workshop manufacturing bombs disguised as televisions, and he wastes no time in requesting to become part of the action. The protagonist willingly (albeit not unawares) submits to the propaganda administered by Sayed. He reconnects with Yaseen, who contributes to his feelings of rage and affirms and endorses his disgruntlement. In the narrator’s own words, “It made no difference whether Sayed was sincere, or whether Yaseen was speaking his real thoughts to me, speaking from his guts; the only certitudes I had were that the farce suited me, that it fit me like a glove, that the secret I’d chewed on for weeks was shared, that my anger wasn’t unique, and that it was giving me back my determination.”

The young man finally finds an outlet for his negative emotions and is relieved to be able to share them with others. He was already determined to follow through on his vow to redeem his family’s honour, but finding a group of like-minded people only serves to further validate his choice: “And so, when Yaseen finally opened his arms to me, he seemed to be opening up the path that would lead me to retrieve what I wanted more than anything else in the world: my

365 Khadra, TS 161-162 (173-174).
366 Khadra, TS 176 (188-189).
family’s honor.” By reclaiming his honour, the narrator aims to restore his self-respect and masculinity.

Sayed does not relent in his attempts to foster and maximise the narrator’s anger and hatred. He provides the latter with multiple DVDs bearing video montages of atrocities committed by coalition forces in different parts of Iraq. These chronicles achieve the desired result, and the narrator is amply provided with “all the possible and imaginable reasons I’d need to blow up the fucking world.” He stores up plenty of rage in his subconscious in order to “give me enthusiasm for whatever violence I might commit and even lend it a certain legitimacy,” and this is to become an endless source of ‘inspiration’ should he run out of reasons to seek violent retribution. This nurturing of aggressiveness, combined with the routine of work, boredom, endless attacks in Baghdad and waiting for his turn in the action solidify the narrator into a ready and eager instrument of terrorism.

The final tragic event, which sends him on a journey across four countries to end in Beirut, is the murder of Omar and his lover Hany by Yaseen and his henchmen. The narrator is forced to give up Omar’s address for ‘questioning’ due to a suspicion that his cousin had led the police and American soldiers to the safe house Yaseen and his men were using at the time. The protagonist finds out about Yaseen’s criminal mercilessness the hard way: Omar’s homosexuality is exposed and condemned, and he – knowing that his fate is sealed due to discrimination against his sexuality – admits to the betrayal he did not commit. Omar becomes the final and most relentless ghost to torment the narrator’s mind:

There was nothing left in the world except Omar’s ghost and me. We were the world.

It was no use praying, no use beseeching him to spare me, if only for a minute; I supplicated in vain. He remained where he was, silent.

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367 Khadra, TS 177 (189).
368 Khadra, TS 198 (209-210).
369 Khadra, TS 184 (196); 199 (210-211); 207 (218).
and disconcerted, so real that I could have touched him had I stretched out my hand.\textsuperscript{370}

With Omar haunting him at all times, the protagonist sees no other resolution to his state of mind or redemption for his cousin’s murder except becoming a suicide bomber. His desire for death stems mostly from depression, but he also wants his death to have a meaning, a purpose. All he has to do is inform Sayed of his overwhelming urge: “I volunteered for a suicide attack. It was the most conclusive of shortcuts, and the most worthwhile, as well. This idea, on my mind since well before the mistake that had led to the Corporal’s [Omar’s] execution, had by now become my fixation. I wasn’t afraid. I had no attachment to anything anymore. I felt as qualified as any suicide bomber.”\textsuperscript{371}

The three tragic events pave the way to this radical decision, but Omar’s loss cements it. Suicide terrorism is his preferred method of transcending “the painful events” of his life and “a way of getting even with destiny.”\textsuperscript{372}

Although some of these sentiments of revenge and retaliation are reminiscent of the archetypal terrorists’, they are not based on the hatred of the Western Other but rather a sense of despair and loss of will to live. This provides a fresh perspective on the terrorist character, and Khadra capitalises on the narrative of depression and dejection.

The protagonist thus becomes irrevocably set on his mission of overcoming fate and submits to the experimentations of Professor Ghany in Beirut. Sayed puts the lead character up in a luxury hotel where the likes of Dr. Jalal and other important people stay: after all, the narrator is the key element in the plan “that’ll make September eleventh seem like a noisy recess in an elementary school.”\textsuperscript{373}

However, the protagonist rejects the superficiality of luxury and empties his room of everything that is non-essential. He prefers to hone his resolve by spending most of his time in a stripped hotel

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{370} Khadra, \textit{TS} 234-235 (245); emphasis in the original.
\item \textsuperscript{371} Khadra, \textit{TS} 235 (246).
\item \textsuperscript{372} Khadra, \textit{TS} 248 (258).
\item \textsuperscript{373} Khadra, \textit{TS} 248 (258).
\end{itemize}
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The narrator’s introverted focus on his losses prevents him from deviating from the plan. Although the protagonist considers his choice of terrorism to be an expression of his will for freedom and refusal to bend to foreign occupation, he is shocked to find out about his unconventional suicide mission. Instead of achieving a quick death by explosive belt, he discovers that he is to transport and disseminate a nightmare biological weapon in his body: “The weapon in question is a virus. My mission consists in carrying a virus. That’s it; I’ve been physically prepared to receive a virus. A virus. My weapon, my bomb, my kamikaze airplane…” Despite the fact that this is not the type of terrorist act the narrator had visualised committing, he feels it is too late for him to retreat and therefore quickly recovers his bearings and assures Sayed and Professor Ghany that he will see his mission through, no matter its nature.

This is not to say that the protagonist does not experience a brief crisis of faith and resolve. He calls his doubts a “toxin” and a “trap” but regains his conviction in short order. In his opinion, “[v]irus or bomb, what’s the difference, when you’re grasping an offense in one hand and, in the other, the Cause? I don’t need a sleeping pill. I’ve returned to my element. Everything’s fine.” In brief, the narrator is so blinded by his “Cause” of retribution and recouping his honour that he is no longer capable of questioning himself. There is a relief and safety from doubt in his resignation to the leadership of others, and he is able to sleep through the night once more without being haunted by the ghosts of his past. Khadra once again contradicts the notion that Islam is the primary drive of terrorism. In contrast to the action-thriller novels discussed, Khadra’s chief terrorist acts out of deeply personal turmoil.

However determined the narrator is prior to this, he does not find himself capable of boarding his London-bound flight when the time comes. Having had an unsettling

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375 Khadra, *TS* 246 (256).
376 Khadra, *TS* 263 (273).
378 Khadra, *TS* 6 (13).
confrontation with Dr. Jalal, who had guessed the nature of the lead character’s apocalyptic mission the previous night, the protagonist has yet another ghost added to his menagerie of horror-inducing memories. For, although it is not explicitly described, the narrator’s relaying of Jalal’s attempt at dissuading him to the organisation which had recruited him effectively signs the Doctor’s torture and execution order. Guilt for Jalal’s most likely tragic end torments the protagonist even as he is on his way to the airport: “Dr. Jalal’s words resound like thunder inside my skull. I shift my eyes to the crowds on the sidewalks, the shop windows, the cars passing on both sides of the cab, and everywhere I look, I see only him, with his incoherent gestures, his thick tongue, his unstoppable words.”

Jalal’s attempt at stopping the narrator from “massacring the […] planet” – from starting an epidemic of “an unstoppable mutating virus” – does successfully contribute to the narrator’s abortion of the plan. He gets as far as the boarding gate but does not embark on the plane; he is then intercepted by one of the organisation’s men, Shakir, as soon as he leaves the airport. Khadra’s protagonist is certain he is to be executed by his recruiters. He is a danger to them due to the abortion of the plan and the risk his virus poses. The narrator goes to his death willingly; his desire for revenge is extinguished and he does not “hold anything against anybody anymore.”

Witnessing the display of positive human emotions at the boarding gate gives the protagonist a final incentive to reconsider his actions:

I feel sad. Why? I couldn’t say. My anxieties merge with my memories. My whole life passes through my mind: Kafr Karam, my family, my dead, my living, the people I miss, the ones who haunt me…. Nevertheless, of all my memories, the most recent are the most distinct: that woman in the airport, hopefully examining the screen of her cell phone; that father-to-be who was so happy, he didn’t know which way to turn; that young European couple kissing each other…. They deserved to live for a thousand years. I have no right to challenge

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379 Khadra, TS 299 (310).
380 Khadra, TS 295 (306).
381 Khadra, TS 288 (299).
382 Khadra, TS 307 (318).
their kisses, scuttle their dreams, dash their hopes. What have I done with my own destiny? I’m only twenty-one years old, and all I have is the certainty that I’ve wrecked my life twenty-one times over. \(^{383}\)

In this powerful moment of openness to the outside world after a period of self-isolation and nurturing of resentment, the narrator’s emotions overwhelm him and overshadow his anger with the world. Seeing other people’s joy and admiration of their life and loved ones make him appreciate others’ right to happiness – a right he has renounced by turning to terrorism. When the protagonist’s executioners come for him, he is finally at peace with himself and his decisions. He resolves his inner conflict by sacrificing his own life instead of scores of others’. This self-sacrificial act of courage complicates Khadra’s terrorist protagonist and vests him with traits usually associated with the archetypal hero rather than terrorist: bravery, martyrdom and honour. The narrator is elevated by his final act and becomes representative of a less stereotypical and more humanised and multi-dimensional category of terrorist characters.

### e. Secondary Characters: Between Cruelty and Empathy

Khadra’s novel implies the existence of more than one type of facilitators of and participants in terrorism. On the one hand, there are those who, like Yaseen, are inherently inclined to commit crime and violence and even take joy in it. They merely require an excuse to rally for violent action: Yaseen and his five followers are the first to leave Kafr Karam to join the insurgency despite the tribe’s initial disapproval. According to Yaseen, his move was pre-emptive: “I knew that if I didn’t go to the fire, the fire was going to come to my house. I took up arms because I didn’t want to wind up like Sulayman. A question of survival? No, just a question of logic. This is my country. Scoundrels are trying to extort it from me. So what do I do?” \(^384\) His response to this is killing, intimidating and looting the people of the very country he claims to be defending. He murders Omar and his lover Hany in cold blood and then proceeds to

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\(^{383}\) Khadra, TS 306 (317).

\(^{384}\) Khadra, TS 172-173 (184-185).
torture the person who did, in fact, report his cell to the police – a primary school teacher living across from Yaseen’s band’s safe house:

Yaseen stood up. “Why?” he asked the stranger. “Why did you give us up? We’re fighting for you, dammit!”

“I never asked you to,” the informer replied disdainfully. “You think I want to be saved by hoodlums like you? I’d rather die!”


He spat at us, one after the other.385

The teacher’s outrage is exacerbated by the fact that Yaseen and his men not only kill Iraqi soldiers and civilians alike in their attacks but also hide in civilian neighbourhoods to avoid detection. Yaseen, unlike the narrator, is not affected by the horrors he had witnessed; on the contrary, he willingly perpetuates this suffering. Alongside the redeemed narrator, Khadra thus depicts characters that differ very little from the previously discussed archetypal terrorists. Yaseen and his men are similarly cruel, arbitrary, sadistic and remorseless. Yet, even for these negative characters religion is not the primary motive. Rather than stereotypically blaming Islam for terrorism, Khadra exposes these characters’ criminal mind-sets as their true incentive.

On the other hand, Khadra provides his readers with characters capable of remorse, kindness and, potentially, redemption despite their bad choices. The narrator is certainly the most striking example of this, having almost reached self-destruction via the indiscriminate murder of others and realised his mistake. Although the protagonist becomes immune to scenes of violence over the course of the novel, he does not directly inflict harm on anyone at any point in the narrative: he has the desire and potential to do so but ultimately refuses violence. Similarly, Omar the Corporal, his cousin, reveals that he had originally come to Baghdad with the same purpose as the narrator – “to join the fedayeen” in order “to come to terms with the deserter in me.”386 Omar is another

386 Khadra, TS160 (172).
example of a conflicted character who seeks resolution in terrorism. However, he quickly realised that although he wanted “to deserve the country I couldn’t defend when I was supposed to be ready to die for it,” he could not raise arms against his own people to achieve that goal. As it is Omar who – out of despair and financial inability to host his cousin for longer than a few weeks – takes the narrator to Sayed’s shop to seek employment, he simultaneously feels guilty for setting his cousin on the path to self-destruction. Oman then tries to coax the protagonist away from the environment of violence: “If you want to avenge an offense, don’t commit one. Don’t give way to madness. If I see pictures of you mistaking arbitrary execution for a feat of arms, I’ll hang myself.” Omar also rightly points out that “the resistance” has “killed thousands of Iraqis” and asks if that is a proportionate sacrifice “[i]n exchange for how many Americans?” Unfortunately, Omar’s impassioned speeches do not sway the narrator, and Omar the Corporal’s death results in the undesirable solidification of the protagonist’s resolve for terrorism.

Omar is not Khadra’s only character capable of changing towards the better. A member of Yaseen’s group and one of Kafr Karam’s young men, Hussein, is deeply traumatised by the horrors he had had to witness during their insurgency and is no longer fit for ‘action’. This is another instance of Khadra utilising tragedy as a catalyst for both degradation and redemption. Hussein is marginalised by Yaseen and considered crazy by the rest of the band. He recounts the story of Kafr Karam’s “simpleton” and fellow gang member, Adel, whose death leaves a lasting impression on Hussein:

It’s true that I can’t stop myself from laughing, but that doesn’t mean I’ve flipped out. I laugh because… because… well, I don’t know exactly why. Some things can’t be explained. I caught the laughing bug watching that simpleton Adel get all frazzled because he couldn’t find the button to blow himself up. I wasn’t far away, and I was observing him as he mingled with the other candidates in front of the police recruiting center. At that moment, I was in a panic. And when

387 Khadra, TS 160 (172).
388 Khadra, TS 168 (180).
389 Khadra, TS 183 (195).
390 Khadra, TS 158 (170).
the cops fired on him and he exploded, it was as if I disintegrated along with him. He was someone I really liked.\footnote{391 Khadra, \textit{TS} 210 (221).}

Hussein reveals his emotional attachment to Adel who he had grown up with and the mark of extreme anguish that the latter’s violent and unnecessary death had left. Khadra’s character is capable of compassion and emotions beyond the sadism of the archetypal terrorist: Hussein is humanised through the above anecdote. Another associate of Hussein’s, Adnan (Kafr Karam’s baker’s son), was so deeply tormented by the bombing of a school bus he had carried out that he “put on a belt stuffed with loaves of bread – baguettes, all around his waist, so they looked like sticks of dynamite – and went to a checkpoint and started taunting the soldiers.”\footnote{392 Khadra, \textit{TS} 211 (222-223).} Adnan’s guilt-provoked suicide does not atone for his atrocity, but it distinguishes him from the remorseless terrorists analysed in the previous chapter. Out of the six members of Yaseen’s group of insurgents, at least two (Hussein and Adnan) are capable of feeling remorse and decide to no longer take part in the violence around them. Khadra’s humanisation renders these characters more plausible and distances them from the stereotype.

In Dr. Jalal, the author introduces a character whose complicated relationship with terrorism leads to a double switch of allegiance and rhetoric. As discussed above, he first converts from criticising terrorism to advocating it prior to the novel’s events. When Khadra introduces Jalal, he is already an outspoken supporter of violent resistance to the West. Even then, he fully comprehends the flaws of this ideology: there is nothing noble or dignified in war, especially when “[i]t’s not always our enemies who get taken out. Sometimes […] our bullets hit the wrong targets.”\footnote{393 Khadra, \textit{TS} 9 (1).} Dr. Jalal’s rhetoric emphasises the dangers of violence towards the end of the novel, when he turns against terrorism once again and attempts to stop the narrator from committing an atrocity:

Have you thought about the extent of the disaster? We’re not talking about terrorist attacks, a few little bombs here, a few little crashes there. We’re talking about pestilence. About the apocalypse. There’ll
be hundreds of thousands of dead, maybe millions. If this really is a revolutionary mutating virus, who’s going to stop it? With what, and how? It’s completely unacceptable. […] I can’t let you do this. Every war has its limits. But this – this is beyond all bounds. What do you hope for after the apocalypse? What’s going to be left of the world, except for rotting corpses and plagues and chaos?394

For Jalal, who never himself committed any of the ‘acts of resistance’ he lectures about, the protagonist’s choice puts his worldview into perspective. When forced to confront the ugly reality of what he uses his charisma and intellect to promote, Dr. Jalal cannot but reject it completely. He, like Omar before him, knows his life is forfeit, especially in light of the ideological betrayal of his ruthless employers;395 he finds his life a small price to pay for the prevention of “the apocalypse.” Jalal ultimately achieves his goal in death by becoming the key factor in the narrator’s abandonment of his plan. Like the protagonist, Hussein and Adnan, Dr. Jalal partly redeems his bad choices by remorse and self-sacrifice, which set him apart from other advocates of terrorism, such as Sayed, Yaseen or Updike’s Shaikh Rashid.

f. Connotations of Masculinity and Femininity

While the narrator’s masculinity is emphasised by his courage, self-sacrifice and sense of honour at the end of TS, Khadra’s extremely minor female characters are explicitly characterised as symbols of masculine honour. This characterisation is reminiscent of the previous chapters’ analysis of women characters, whereby they are portrayed in terms of traditional gender roles.

In the context of a traditional Bedouin tribal society, it is unsurprising that women are largely invisible in a narrative of travel and terrorism. At the same time, the narrator sees his sisters as bearers of his as well as the family’s honour. He describes his twin sister, Bahia, as “a daughter of her tribe.” He adds that “[i]n the ancestral tradition, honor was supposed to be the domain of men, but even so, she knew how to recognise it

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394 Khadra, TS 294-295 (306).
395 Jalal is well aware of the organisation’s methods of crushing dissent; see 5 (13); 258-259 (269).
and require it.” Honour is thus a masculine duty, of which women are objects. Bahia is the protagonist’s ‘good’ sister because of her devotion to family and upholding of tradition. Her femininity is positive because it conforms to the (narrator’s) masculine notion of it.

On the other hand, the narrator’s other sister Farah, is the embodiment of his and the family’s ‘shame’ and disappointment. Despite being a respectable, intelligent and financially-independent doctor in a Baghdad hospital, she is still expected to abide by tribal rules and morals. When the protagonist is denied lodging by Farah upon his arrival in the capital, he demands to know why. She reveals that this is because she lives with a man, unmarried and unbeknownst to the family, which infuriates the narrator:

“You live with someone? How can that be? You got married without letting the family know?”
“'m not married.”
I bounded to my feet. “You live with a man? You live in sin?”
She gave me a dry look. “What’s sin, little brother?”
“You don’t have the right. It’s…it’s forbidden by, by…Look, have you gone mad? You have a family. Do you ever think about your family? About its honor? About yours? You are – you can’t live in sin, not you…”
“I don’t live in sin; I live my life.”
“You don’t believe in God anymore?”
“I believe in what I do, and that’s enough for me.”

Because his (eldest) sister dares to make her own choices, independent of traditions and family expectations, the narrator rejects and erases her from his life. His masculine honour is injured by Farah’s feminine independence, so he spares her little thought:

Farah was ancient history. As soon as I left her, I’d banished her from my thoughts. She was nothing but a succubus, a whore, and she had no more place in my life. In our ancestral tradition, when a relative went astray, that person was systematically banished from the community. When the sinner was a woman, she was rejected all the more swiftly.

396 Khadra, TS 108 (119-120).
397 Khadra, TS 139-140 (151-152).
398 Khadra, TS 141 (153).
Although he does not explore female characters in depth, Khadra indicates that in a traditional community such as Kafr Karam femininity and masculinity are interdependent concepts. In Farah, the author gives a glimpse of a strong woman character, unwavering of conviction and refusing to bend to tradition. However, her story is not developed sufficiently due to the narrator’s first-person perspective; his rejection of her marks the abandonment of this strand of the narrative.

In \textit{TS}, Yasmina Khadra accomplishes what Updike, Koretskyi, Flynn, DeMille, Silva and Forsyth do not: he paints a complex picture of terrorism and its perpetrators. It is not mindless fanaticism and sadism that drive his characters to radical violence but a heterogeneous set of motives. No two ‘terrorist’ characters in the novel are alike; they come from different backgrounds and have had different experiences of tradition, religion, honour and violence. Khadra humanises, contextualises his characters and renders them more believable and worthy of sympathy than the irrationally-fanatical Ahmad and his counterparts. As Francis Blessington notes in his brief overview of the modern terrorist novel, Khadra’s “literary novel of terror” (referring equally to \textit{TS} and \textit{TA}) differs from Flynn’s and Tom Clancy’s starkly black-and-white representation of reality by depicting “the grayer world we recognize around us.”\textsuperscript{399} I now move to the analysis of \textit{L’Attentat (TA)}, in which – for the first time – the main terrorist character is a woman.

3. \textit{L’Attentat}

Having discussed representations of terrorist characters in both third- and first-person narration in \textit{Terrorist} and \textit{TS}, I turn to a novel which addresses a terrorist character in absentia. Yasmina Khadra’s \textit{TA} is the second work in his loose trilogy on fundamentalism – a novel that “underscores the futility of violence while evoking the horrors that enmesh colonized [Palestinians] and colonizer [Israelis] in this tragically

conflicted land.” I address Khadra’s novels out of publication order because it is thematically more coherent to primarily compare _Terrorist_ and _TS_, as they both focus on a male terrorist protagonist. _TA_, however, deals with the aftermath rather than the inception of a terrorist act – a suicide bombing in a Tel Aviv restaurant. The novel follows and is narrated by Amin Jaafari, the bomber’s husband who is caught entirely unawares by the attack.

Although _TA_ received a dose of criticism for its formal and rhetorical style and “[t]he missing dimensions of language” of its translation by John Cullen, other reviewers, such as Janet Maslin, welcomed Khadra’s novel as “both a plea for peace and a rendering of the Palestinian frustration and fury.” Zakaria Fatih’s review celebrates the work as a great success and a narrative which tackles one of the most urgent political themes of our time – suicide terrorism. Indeed, Khadra’s novel main preoccupation is to explore the personal and social impact of terrorism through Amin’s character. The narrator’s trauma inflicted by his wife’s act spurs on his investigation of the reasons for this choice, which offers an interesting and involved outside perspective on a terrorist character.

### a. The Self and the Other in the Israel-Palestine Conflict

In order to understand the history and circumstances that led Sihem, Amin’s wife, to such a radical act of terrorism, the analysis needs to follow Amin Jaafari’s quest to comprehend it. Before the attack occurs, Amin is a fairly successfully integrated

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Palestinian physician. He is respected by most of his colleagues and is friendly with many Israeli Jews. As a talented surgeon, Amin enjoys considerable wealth and recognition in Tel Aviv society. However, his life turns upside down following a suicide attack at a local fast food restaurant.

Amin Jaafari’s model Israeli citizenship and assimilation do not render him immune to discrimination. In a country where tensions always run high, an Arab, especially a Palestinian, is often under suspicion. In the aftermath of the suicide bombing and before it is even established that it was, in fact, Sihem who had carried it out, the prejudices which had previously been hidden resurface. Hostilities within Israeli society are exposed when one of the victims of the attack categorically refuses Amin’s treatment: “I don’t want any Arab touching me. I’d rather croak,” he says with “a look of dementia, a mixture of cold rage and disgust.”406 Later on the same night, Amin is stopped at a police checkpoint en route to his house and asked for his papers. On this occasion Amin observes, “My Arab name disturbs him. It’s always like this after an attack. The cops are nervous, and suspicious faces exacerbate their predispositions.”407 Amin is not surprised in the slightest by such attitudes; on the contrary, he takes them as a given and has long since become accustomed to being viewed with suspicion simply on the basis of his ethnic identity. The calmness which Amin displays in the face of jumpy and trigger-ready police officers is remarkable, but it further proves that such discrimination has become the order of the day for this naturalised Israeli: “It was no use showing my papers and announcing my profession; the cops had eyes only for my face. At one point, a young officer had enough of my protests and pointed his pistol at me, threatening to blow my brains out if I didn’t shut my trap. His commanding officer had to intervene vigorously to put him in his place.”408 Khadra’s exposition sets the scene for Amin’s ejection from Tel Aviv society, prompting the quest for his identity and his wife’s hidden history.

405 Khadra, TA 8-9 (14-15).
406 Khadra, TA 15 (21).
407 Khadra, TA 20 (26).
408 Khadra, TA 21 (26-27).
Amin’s life begins to disintegrate around him following the bombing. His home is searched by the Israeli police, and Captain Moshé questions Amin about Sihem. During the questioning, Moshé imparts his incomprehension of how Amin’s wife – having received more “considerations […] on a daily basis” than the Captain himself – could “do something that calls into question all the trust the state of Israel has placed in the Arabs it had welcomed as citizens.”

Moshé characterises Arabs as ungrateful and treacherous: they are a threat to the state of Israel, and the solution is to alienate these members of society completely. The dichotomy of the Self and the Other is thus established in TA, but like in TS, both Israelis and Palestinians take turns being the Self, depending on who is speaking in the narrative. In Moshé’s opinion, the Israeli Self is superior and excessively benevolent for accepting select Arabs into its midst. For him, they are representatives of a lesser and hostile Other. Due to his successful integration, Amin initially identifies with the Israeli Self, but this changes as the novel progresses, when he experiences this society’s hostility and rediscovers Palestinian plight.

The divide between Israeli Jews and Arabs is distinctly exemplified by the verbal and physical abuse which Amin suffers at the hands of an angry mob outside his house. When information about Sihem’s involvement leaks into the press, Amin’s home in an upscale Tel Aviv neighbourhood becomes besieged by a frenzied crowd who proceed to attach a newspaper article to his front gate like a banner announcing an Arab’s dwelling place: “It’s not exactly a poster – it’s the front page of a daily newspaper with a large circulation. Above an imposing photograph depicting the bloody chaos in and around the restaurant targeted by the terrorists, there’s a headline in large print, spread across three columns: THE FILTHY BEAST IS AMONG US.”

Psychological abuse does not quench the high-riding popular fury, and Amin is beaten to an inch of his death when caught in the besieging mob outside his property:

“Dirty terrorist! Piece of shit! Arab traitor!”

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409 Khadra, TA 48-49 (53).
410 Khadra, TA 53 (59).
The invective stops me short. Too late – I’m right in the middle of an overexcited mob. Two bearded men with plaited hair spit on me. I’m pushed about. “Is that how your people say thank you, dirty Arab? By biting the hand that pulled you out of the shit?” Some shadowy figures slip behind me to cut off any possibility of retreat. A jet of saliva strikes my face. A hand pulls me by the collar of the bathrobe. “Look at the house you live in, you son of a bitch. What more do you have to have before you learn to say thanks?” They push and shake me. “We’ll have to disinfect this prick before we finish him off.” A kick in the belly bends me in half; another kick straightens me up. My nose is split open, and then my lips. My arms aren’t enough to protect me. A shower of blows rains down on me, and the earth shifts under my feet.  

Although he is innocent, Amin serves as a tangible symbol of terrorism for the mob. The Israeli Self’s rhetoric is elucidated through this incident: the Self is benevolent, superior, generous and overly trusting, while the Other is violent, arbitrary, ungrateful and backward (unless assisted by the Self). The incensed throng’s self-representation narrated by Khadra is thus consistent with the depictions of the Self discussed in chapter three as well as in the section on Updike. As a consequence of this incident, Amin is disillusioned with his naturalisation into Israeli society; the tolerance he expected to be awarded by the community becomes merely a wistful delusion.

The dichotomy of the Self and Other and Amin’s alienation are further enhanced by his rejection by the majority of hospital colleagues. Amin is evicted from his job by a multitude of petitions initiated by a fellow surgeon, Ilan Ros. In his eyes, as Amin puts it, “despite my talents as a surgeon and my aptitude for getting on with people professionally as well as socially, I’m still the Arab: inseparable from the wog handyman and, to a lesser degree, from the potential enemy.” In a harsher move, “[s]ome of the people who signed petitions opposing my return even suggested that I should be stripped of my Israeli citizenship.” Amin loses all his privileges momentarily due to his apparent connection to the suicide attack. His carefully constructed social status disintegrates. His only remaining allies are his former

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411 Khadra, TA 57 (62-63).
412 Khadra, TA 82 (85).
university lover and present colleague Kim Yehuda, his boss Ezra Benhaim and his friend and senior police official Navid Ronnen. The rest of the Tel Aviv society thus turns its back on the Palestinian surgeon, ostracising him as a hostile and undeserving Other.

b. Conflict of Pacifism and Terrorism

The pivotal part of the narrative focuses on the conflict and incomprehension between pacifism and assimilation, embodied by Amin, and resistance and terrorism, symbolised by the absent character of Sihem. Despite the evidence Amin is presented with, he remains in denial about Sihem’s act until she confirms it in a posthumously-delivered letter. Amin is deeply perturbed when he is called upon to identify his wife’s body at the morgue, and his entire system of constants shifts around him: “I feel sickly, hallucinatory, devitalized. I’m nothing but a great heap of grief huddled under a lead blanket, incapable of telling whether I’m simply conscious of the misfortune I’ve been struck by or whether it’s already annihilated me.”413 Amin’s crisis of identity is exacerbated the moment he sees his wife’s remains, out of which only the head remains intact. It “emerges from the mass, the eyes closed, the mouth open a little, the features calm, as though liberated from their suffering.”414 Her “massive injuries […] typical of those found on the bodies of fundamentalist suicide bombers” are proof that Sihem was responsible for setting off a bomb in the fast food restaurant during the celebrations of a child’s birthday.415 Along with Amin, the reader is at a loss for an explanation of such a cruel act. Sihem thus initially appears cruel and arbitrary, just as the archetypal terrorists. There seems to be no justification available for this Arab Other’s (from Amin’s Israel-integrated point of view) violent act, so Amin must embark on an investigation as the novel progresses.

413 Khadra, TA 31 (36).
414 Khadra, TA 29 (34).
415 Khadra, TA 32 (37)
Due to the horror of this revelation and his inability to comprehend Sihem’s act, Amin resorts to an enraged denial of his wife’s involvement in the crime. He maintains stubbornly, “I shared my life with Sihem for more than fifteen years. I know her like the back of my hand. I know what she’s capable of and what she’s not capable of. Her hands were too white for the smallest stain to escape my notice.” Amin’s belief remains unshakeable following his arrest and violent three-day interrogation. The possibility of not having known his own wife’s character as well as he had thought exceedingly rattles the narrator, so he rejects any and all attempts to attach the label ‘terrorist’ to Sihem. He tells his friend Navid, “Sihem isn’t a suicide bomber, Navid. Try to remember that. Because it’s the most important thing in the world to me. My wife isn’t a child-killer. Have I made myself understood?”

Amin’s worldview is irrevocably altered upon receiving Sihem’s indisputable confession in the mail. She writes:

What use is happiness when it’s not shared, Amin, my love? My joys faded away every time yours didn’t follow. You wanted children. I wanted to deserve them. No child is completely safe if it has no country. Don’t hate me.

It takes Amin the length of the narrative to understand the meaning of Sihem’s words. Rather than being arbitrary, she perceives her act to be a political statement against the very integration and pacifism Amin is initially proud of. Sihem identifies these with complacency with the Israeli-Palestinian status quo and her husband’s blindness to his people’s plight, invoked by the egotistic contentment with his individual success. This is Khadra’s first distinguishing aspect of Sihem’s character from the fanatical archetypal terrorist’s: although equally cruel, her act is political rather than arbitrarily sadistic. Sihem felt guilty for living a comfortable life on the Israeli side while her own people suffered daily injustices elsewhere in the country. For her, the Self and the Other are reversed, so that the Palestinian Self is a regular victim of the Israeli Other. The

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416 Khadra, TA 41 (45).
417 Khadra, TA 51 (56).
418 Khadra, TA 69 (74).
victimisation rhetoric is validated as justification of violence regardless of the ethnic affiliation of the Self. Both sides regard themselves as the only righteous Self and justify their actions by the Other’s purportedly arbitrary attacks.

Sihem’s method of expressing her deep-seated grievances, however, is one that Amin rejects in principle. He does not believe in violence and fundamentalism and has tried all his life to be the model citizen whose lifestyle and actions would prove the prejudices against the Arab Other wrong. Originating from a Bedouin tribe, Amin realised early on that he would be doubly discriminated against, especially as a physician trying to establish his career. He explains,

> All too aware of the stereotypes that mark me out in the public square, I strive to overcome them, one by one, by doing the best I can do and putting up with the incivilities of my Jewish comrades. When I was still young, I realized that sitting between two chairs made no sense; I had to choose a side, and fast. I chose to be on the side of my ability, and I made my convictions my allies. […] For an Arab who stood out from the rest – and who gave himself the satisfaction of graduating first in his class – the least mistake could have been fatal. Especially when he was the son of a Bedouin, stumbling under the weight of the prejudices his ancestry entailed. […] Thoroughly against my will, I found myself representing my community. To some extent, the community was the chief reason why I had to succeed.419

Amin thus sees his success in education and professional career as a means to single-handedly overcome the stereotypes he is acutely aware of. The narrator belongs to an underprivileged tribal community, which is prejudiced against even in Palestinian society. His status as an Arab Other within Israeli society convinced Amin that his positive representation of Palestinians could be a contributing factor to fostering understanding between the Self and the Other. However, Amin’s integration is fragile and easily undone by Sihem’s act of terrorism: he is irrevocably classified as a hostile Other by the Israeli society despite his own innocence.

As a fervent pacifist, Amin cannot condone or even attempt to relate to Sihem’s deed, which caused the tragic death of eleven children and eight adults as well as the

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419 Khadra, TA 96-97 (99-100).
serious injury of over a hundred other people. In Amin’s opinion, no grievance is worth perpetuating the endless cycle of killing and mourning, in which the Self and the Other are mutually embroiled. Navid, an Israeli Jew and police official, also fully comprehends the absurdity of the vicious circle of violence but, like Amin, is powerless to stop it: “The Palestinian fundamentalists send kids to blow themselves up in bus shelters. As soon as we collect our dead, our leaders send up the copters to smoke a few Arab hovels. Then, just when the government is getting ready to declare victory, a fresh attack sets the clock back. How long can it go on?”

Amin’s life philosophy is the necessity to attempt to break the cycle of violence. Amin stresses that “contemptuous hostility” is “senseless” and stopping it requires the abandonment of revenge and retaliation. As a doctor whose job it is to preserve life, Amin cannot comprehend the incongruous (and incompatible with his values) desire to take it away. The narrator’s idealistic solution is thus to eliminate hatred between the Self and the Other by converting them to his pacifism.

Amin Jaafari is fundamentally against any religion calling for the destruction of others. He believes in God but does not “believe in his holy men,” as he sees that they often incite inter-religious and inter-communal hatred. As Amin refuses to support violence of any kind, he also does not “believe in the prophecies of discord,” which he sees disseminated in the world around him by preachers. The narrator denounces the manipulation of religion by its spokespeople: “I couldn’t bring myself to accept the notion that God could incite his subjects to take up arms against one another and reduce the exercise of faith to an absurd and frightening question of power relationships.”

Religion is thus a tool exploited by a select few “holy men” to control people’s actions and attain power, and Amin refuses to be subjugated by it. By rejecting both religion and violence, Amin distances himself from the stereotypical Arab Other. At the same time,
this inner debate follows his rejection of Sihem’s act, indicating Amin’s own inclination to stereotype terrorism as a violent religious act. The narrator identifies against such an Other but can no longer identify with the Israeli Self, which highlights his identity conflict.

c. Exploring a Terrorist’s Past

Following the receipt of Sihem’s confession letter, Amin’s puzzlement deepens; this spurs on his journey to retrace his wife’s steps and understand her motives. He first discovers that Sihem had visited Bethlehem – where Amin’s foster sister’s family lives – immediately before the attack and had become “[s]omewhat of a local icon” for her “martyr[dom].” Palestinian locals thus perceive themselves as representatives of an abused Self entitled to just retaliation and Sihem as its symbol. Amin also finds out that Sihem was allegedly in the city to receive the blessing of Sheikh Marwan, the spiritual leader of the intifada.425 The narrator, still in denial about his wife’s choice to become a suicide bomber, eagerly grasps at the possibility that his happy and loving wife was brainwashed rather than willing to take part in the plot. Amin prefers to view Sihem as a victim instead of a representative of a cruel Other.

Amin is determined to find someone to blame for his wife’s resort to terrorism because he cannot reconcile his memories of her with the person she had – unbeknownst to him – become. Amin truly loved his wife and aimed to do everything in his power to make her happy, but he was also profoundly disconnected from her. He had always assumed her contentment in marriage, yet when Amin looks at more recent photographs of her, he realises that although “[h]er smile is as big as a rainbow, […] it isn’t matched by the look in her eyes.”426 He begins to admit to the apparent disconnects between his wife and him, Sihem and his integration and her outward emotions and inner world.

425 Khadra, TA 130 (131).
426 Khadra, TA 22 (27).
Sihem’s early life was rife with tragedy, even as she lost her mother to cancer and her father to a road accident. She “grew up among the oppressed, an orphan and an Arab in a world that pardons neither,” and she remained “afraid that fate, which had already been so cruel to her, would return and deal her another blow.” Amin feels that, for a while, Sihem had been able to overcome her reservation and feel peace and happiness with him. He reminisces, still uncomprehending of her act:

She was so loving and considerate, and when we’d stand together in our garden, my arm around her waist, and I’d tell her about the wonderful days that lay ahead of us and the grand projects I was working on for her, she seemed to hang on my words. I can still feel her fingers squeezing mine with what I thought was indestructible passion and conviction. She was a firm believer in our bright future, and every time I lost heart, she redoubled her efforts. We were so happy; we had such confidence in each other. What spell has made the monument I was building around her vanish, like a sand castle under the waves?

Due to his lack of communication with Sihem, Amin only has romanticised memories of their marriage. This exacerbates his feelings of hurt and bewilderment, while at the same time providing emotional context for Sihem’s character. Her emotions and motives are enigmatic, thus continuing to confound Amin and the reader he addresses.

Because of his happy memories, Amin is profoundly unable to understand Sihem’s act and thus blames it predominantly on the influence of others. Initially, the surgeon censures himself for not being astute enough to notice the silent cry for help he imagines Sihem must have been broadcasting: “I was her husband. My duty was to watch over her and protect her. I’m sure she tried to attract my attention to the great wave that was threatening to sweep her away. I’d bet anything she tried to give me a sign.” However, Amin’s anger and frustration soon lead him to thinking that his wife had been “more receptive to other men’s sermons than she was to my poems.”

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427 Khadra, TA 228 (221).
428 Khadra, TA 22 (27).
429 Khadra, TA 125 (126).
430 Khadra, TA 105 (107).
431 Khadra, TA 108 (109).
instinctively associates Sihem’s actions with religious fundamentalism and does not allot his wife any agency or responsibility for her own choices. On the contrary, he views her as dependent on men for her decisions, whether it is his help Amin perceives her to be seeking or the guidance and leadership of ‘Other’ men. Amin’s undaunted determination drives him on a quest to discover “who indoctrinated my wife, who strapped explosives on her and sent her to her target,” and he does not relent until he manages to meet with “a war leader and a creator of suicide bombers” in Bethlehem. The anonymous intifada commander attempts to persuade the surgeon to abandon his “fixed purpose” and return to his glamorous – especially in comparison to most Palestinian people’s – life in Tel Aviv, but it is all to no avail: each man remains steadfastly loyal to his own beliefs and set on his course.

d. Reconciliation with the Terrorist’s Agency

Much later in the novel, Amin is forced to admit Sihem’s agency and choice in her course of action. Yet, prior to this realisation, Amin sincerely believes his wife had betrayed him. His negative feelings are exacerbated by his initial categorical denial of the possibility of Sihem’s involvement in the attack. When Amin begins to accept it, his anger with his wife’s double life and deception escalates: “What did I look like while I was refusing to admit what everyone knew? A cuckold! I looked like a pitiful cuckold, that’s what I looked like. Like an object of ridicule. Like a man who works and slaves to make life as pleasant as possible for the woman he loves, while she’s cheating on him the whole time.” This statement carries the veiled rhetoric of masculinity and honour. Sihem, like the women characters discussed in chapter two, is the bearer of her husband’s honour. By betraying his trust, having independent political convictions and carrying out a terrorist act without consultation, she diminishes Amin’s masculinity. The

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432 Khadra, TA 102 (104).
433 Khadra, TA 164 (161).
434 Khadra, TA 153 (152).
435 Khadra, TA 122 (123).
narrator projects his anger, disillusionment and identity crisis on Sihem by using the term “cuckold.”

It is not only metaphorical cheating that he suspects his wife of but also physical. After his encounter with the first member of the intifada in Bethlehem and upon his return to Tel Aviv, Amin is struck by a photo of Sihem bearing the same background and taken on the same day as a photo of his nephew Adel (his foster sister’s son from Bethlehem). This finding gives rise to a more embittered feeling of betrayal and suspicions of an affair between the two, exacerbated by the revelation imparted on Amin by the police that Sihem got into a car strikingly similar to Adel’s several days before the bombing. Amin’s new fixation on finding Adel becomes “a question of honor” because there is no “life after perjury, [or] resurrection after the final insult.” As the concept of honour is central to the construction of positive masculinity as well as to distinguishing the Self from the Other, Amin’s quest for the truth about Sihem is an attempt to re-establish his masculinity – he desires to avenge the slight to his honour. Although Kharda’s character does not fall into the category of the archetypal hero, his construction of masculinity is similarly centred on this notion. Sihem’s alleged disloyalty provides Amin with a relentless drive to answer the question ‘why?’ and brings him on a journey to the Palestinian territories, where he is forced to confront the unappealing reality of Palestinians’ daily life in Jenin.

The sentiments of betrayal are reciprocal when it comes to Sihem and the members of the intifada. On his ventures across Israel and the Palestinian territories to track Sihem’s involvement in terrorism, Amin meets several countrymen who shame him for the betrayal of his own people. The first to reproach the surgeon’s successful integration into Israeli society is the imam of Bethlehem’s Grand Mosque, whom Amin insists on seeing to enquire about his wife’s connection to Sheikh Marwan. Not only does the imam refuse to impart any information on the Sheikh, but he also reproaches

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436 Khadra, TA 179-180 (176).
437 Khadra, TA 197 (192); 187 (183).
Amin for his relinquishment of the Palestinian Self’s identity and tradition in favour of acceptance by the Other:

[W]e know that you’re a recalcitrant believer – practically a renegade – that you don’t follow the path of your ancestors nor conform to their principles, and that you have long since dissociated yourself from their Cause by opting for another nationality. […] Furthermore, nothing authorizes you to put on this air of outrage or to place yourself above ordinary mortals – not your social success, and not your wife’s brave deed, which, by the way, doesn’t raise you a whit in our esteem. […] Even if you could walk on water, you couldn’t erase the insult that you represent. For the real bastard isn’t the man who doesn’t know his father; it’s the man who doesn’t know his tradition. Of all the black sheep, he’s the most to be pitied and the least to be lamented.\textsuperscript{438}

Amin Jaafari is considered by the imam to be a traitor to his people because of his acceptance of Israeli citizenship and a life of luxury on the enemy side. Amin’s honour is thus called into question by his compatriots: in their opinion, his masculinity is more diminished by his choice of integration in Israeli society rather than his wife’s ‘betrayal’. Shortly after this meeting with the imam, Amin’s first encounter with a member of the resistance occurs. In his outrage, the narrator demands explanations: “What tales did you tell her? How did you make a monster, a terrorist, a suicidal fundamentalist out of a woman who couldn’t bear to hear a puppy whine?”\textsuperscript{439} In response, the intifada commander notes Amin’s lamentable ignorance about the Palestinian resistance due to his being a sold-out to the Israeli Other: “By dint of trying to resemble your adopted brothers, you’ve lost all discernment when it comes to your own.”\textsuperscript{440} The commander then explains the difference between an Islamist (“a political activist”) and a fundamentalist (“an extremist jihadi” who “dreams of a single, indivisible umma”) and clarifies that members of the intifada belong to neither: “We are only the children of a ravaged, despised people, fighting with whatever means we can to recover our homeland and our dignity. Nothing more, nothing less.”\textsuperscript{441} The commander’s lecture, as the

\textsuperscript{438} Khadra, \textit{TA} 149-150 (148-149).
\textsuperscript{439} Khadra, \textit{TA} 156 (155).
\textsuperscript{440} Khadra, \textit{TA} 157 (156).
\textsuperscript{441} Khadra, \textit{TA} 157-158 (156); emphasis in the original.
imam’s speech, implies that Amin had lost his dignity and integrity by siding with the enemy, but Amin himself only sees it as an expression of his pacifism and revulsion with violence. The commander uses masculinised vocabulary to deliver his message, capitalising on the recouping of honour by the reclamation of the (feminine) “homeland.” The intifada is thus also, in a way, a quest to re-establish masculinity injured by the Israeli Other. As I explained in chapter two, alongside women ‘bearing’ masculine honour, the land/nation is often presented as its feminine symbol. Winning back his land is the commander’s means to confirm masculinity.

When in Jenin, the narrator puts every effort into broadcasting his desire for retribution for the injuries which Adel’s and Sihem’s alleged infidelity has caused him. Amin is captured and held captive by militants for six days, during which they reiterate accusations of betrayal and attempt to psychologically break him by daily mock executions. There, Amin encounters the second intifada commander who deplores the surgeon’s obliviousness to the tragedies happening around him: “The good doctor lives next door to a war, but he doesn’t want to hear a word about it. And he thinks that his wife shouldn’t worry about it, either. Ah well, the good doctor is wrong. […] We’re at war. Some people take up arms; others twiddle their thumbs. And still others make a killing in the name of the Cause. That’s life.” More importantly, the commander stresses that it is due to Sihem’s disgust with the life she was living with Amin that she decided to join the resistance. He insists, “Your wife chose her side. The happiness you offered her smelled of decay. It repulsed her, you get it? She didn’t want your happiness. She couldn’t work on her suntan while her people were bent under the Zionist yoke.”

Khadra indicates explicitly and for the first time that Sihem was not, in fact, brainwashed or coerced into carrying out the bombing. Instead, she made a choice resulting from her guilt for enjoying a carefree life while her people were suffering in the background. Khadra’s female character is thus strengthened as a politically-motivated and independent agent. She does not remain complicit (from a Palestinian

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442 Khadra, TA 212-213 (206-207).
443 Khadra, TA 213 (207).
Self’s point of view) in her husband’s naturalisation but instead takes charge of her own ideas and life.

Sihem’s agency in making her own decisions is reaffirmed by Amin’s nephew Adel, who arrives to free his uncle from what is revealed as the intifada commander’s exercise to make the physician “aware of your own impotence and […] of the vulnerability of others.” Through an extended conversation with Adel, Amin discovers that his wife had not been having an affair with his nephew; on the contrary, they were strictly ‘comrades in arms’ as members of the resistance. In fact, Sihem used to be a key member of their Tel Aviv section, provided cover for the group’s meetings at her house and facilitated their financial transactions after she had guessed the true nature of Adel’s visits to the city and had demanded to be made member of the underground movement. Once more, Sihem’s choice to be involved in the resistance is emphasised over Amin’s preconception of her ‘corruption’ and coercion by other men.

Sihem did not want to be a shadow of her complacent husband while being aware of the plight of other, less fortunate, Palestinians. Contrary to the archetypal terrorists of chapter three, religion was not her primary motivator to choose such a radical form of resistance but rather her political convictions and personal guilt for being so endowed with wealth and social status. “Sihem was a woman, not just your woman,” Adel tells Amin. Her sex did not lessen her in the eyes of her comrades; on the contrary, she was seen as an equal with the power and choice to express her own opinion. Sihem’s decision contradicted the advice of her fellow intifada members. As they saw it, she was in an excellent position to provide assistance in Tel Aviv and more useful to the movement alive than dead. However, Sihem adhered to her choice and convictions, committing the terrorist act. Although Khadra does not justify terrorism as a valid method of political engagement (as mentioned above, all tragedy is equal in this novel, whether it is Sihem’s bombing or Amin’s death in an Israeli missile attack), he

444 Khadra, TA 220 (213).
445 Khadra, TA 226 (219).
acknowledges it as political instead of portraying it as a demonstration of arbitrary fanaticism and madness as Updike and the action-thrillers analysed above do.

Amin’s wife did not appreciate his inclination to ignore the suffering of others and to continue to indulge in his own fortune. As Adel explains to his uncle,

Freedom isn’t a passport issued by the authorities. […] Freedom’s a deep conviction, the mother of all certitudes. Now, Sihem wasn’t so sure she deserved her good fortune. You lived under the same roof and enjoyed the same privileges, but you weren’t looking in the same direction. Sihem felt closer to her people than she did in your image of her. Maybe she was happy, but not happy enough to be like you. She didn’t hold a grudge against you for prizing so highly the honors you were showered with, but that wasn’t the happiness she wanted to see in you; she found it a little indecent, a bit incongruous. It was as if you were firing up a barbecue in a burned-out yard. You saw only the barbecue; she saw the rest, the desolation all around, spoiling all delight. It wasn’t your fault; all the same, she couldn’t bear sharing your blindness anymore. […] Sihem didn’t want your kind of happiness. She came to see it as morally questionable, and the only way for her to atone was to join the ranks of the Cause. It’s a natural progression when you’re the child of a suffering people. There’s no happiness without dignity, and no dream is possible without freedom.\footnote{Khadra, \textit{TA} 227 (219-220).}

It is clear at this stage of the narrative that Amin’s perception of Sihem was extremely romanticised and idealised. This image may not have been inaccurate at the start of their marriage but eventually it became a screen which obscured the real Sihem from Amin’s view. He was oblivious to her growing discontent with his “morally questionable” complacency and thus was completely blindsided by her suicide attack: the real Sihem, who was politically conscious and active and who suffered from the inability to turn a blind eye to the misfortunes of her people, has profoundly unsettled Amin.

Although he is liberated by Adel’s words from his doubts regarding Sihem’s marital faithfulness and has completed his “painful search for the truth [which] has been my personal voyage of initiation,” Amin is no longer in a position to ignore the suffering
and desolation around him. His wife’s experience ultimately transforms him, thereby forcing him to witness what the first intifada commander describes as “a world where people tear one another to pieces every day that God sends” and where “[w]e spend our evenings gathering our dead and our mornings burying them.” Indeed, when Amin first arrives in the Palestinian territories, he can no longer recognise Jenin – the dazzling city of his childhood memories – in the desolate urban space he beholds, where “[w]hole blocks of houses have been knocked down by tanks and bulldozers, others destroyed by dynamite.” Amin’s observations evoke a panorama of destruction and hopelessness, as the city he remembers from the time when he was a boy no longer exists:

In Jenin, Reason has a mouth full of broken teeth, and it rejects any prosthesis capable of giving it back its smile. Besides, nobody smiles here. When shrouds and battle flags become the order of the day, the good humor of the past goes by the boards. […] I’d had no idea that the state of decay was so advanced here, and all hope so effectively dashed. Of course, I’m aware of the animosities destroying brain cells on both sides, and I know all about the obstinacy of the warring parties, their refusal to reach an agreement, their devotion to their own murderous hatred; but seeing the unbearable with my own eyes traumatizes me. When I was in Tel Aviv, I was on another planet. My blinders shielded me from taking in much of the tragedy devastating my country; the honors I received hid the real level of the horrors that were all around me, turning the Holy Land into a shambles.

Sihem’s journey opens up Amin’s perception to his surroundings. By retracing his wife’s past, he undergoes an ideological transformation of his own. Amin admits that his success shielded him from the horrors and injustices of the reality which other, less privileged, Palestinians endure on a daily basis. He finally comprehends Sihem’s motive as the unbearable hatred her grievances engendered; yet, Amin still fundamentally rejects her methods even though he now understands the reasons:

When I ponder what Sihem did, I find it unconscionable and inexcusable. The more I think about it, the less I accept it. […] Sihem

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447 Khadra, TA 224 (217); 233 (225).
448 Khadra, TA 159 (158).
449 Khadra, TA 207-208 (202-203); 203 (197).
450 Khadra, TA 200-201 (195-196).
must have been carrying that hatred inside her forever, long before she met me. [...] To go so far as to pack herself with explosives and walk out to her death with such determination, she must have been carrying around a wound so awful, so hideous, that she was too ashamed to show it to me; the only way for her to be rid of it was to destroy it and herself together.451

Through Amin’s character, Khadra expresses a condemnation of violence but acknowledges its political and social roots. This distinguishes both his novels discussed here from Updike’s, Koretskiy’s, DeMille’s, Flynn’s, Silva’s and Forsyth’s narratives, which, as I have demonstrated, stereotype terrorism as an arbitrary and sadistic expression of religious fanaticism.

Despite Amin’s unwavering pacifism and rejection of violence, there is, however, no end of it in sight. The commander who held the surgeon captive explains that none of the intifada members like violence and death because they are confronted with their ugly consequences every day; nonetheless, when “[o]ther people are trying to confine them to ghettos until they’re trapped in them for good” and “[w]hen dreams [of normality] are turned away, death becomes the ultimate salvation,”452 In fact, Amin sees with his own eyes the dejected determination with which two of his relatives go to their elected death – Adel, his foster sister’s son, and Wissam, a relative he meets at his grandfather’s house, where he returns at the end of the novel after many years of absence. The narrator also experiences the injustice first-hand: the house of his nonagenarian grandfather and patriarch of the tribe is destroyed by Israeli soldiers in retaliation for Wissam’s suicide bombing of an Israeli checkpoint. Amin is livid that there is nothing he can do to stop the displacement of the patriarch and his family, but his niece Faten tells him, “What’s a house when you’ve lost a country?” reminding him once again that the well-being of several individuals does not measure up to the much larger and more catastrophic tragedy of Palestine.453

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451 Khadra, TA 228-229 (221).
452 Khadra, TA 219-220 (212-213).
453 Khadra, TA 248 (238).
Amin’s pacifism is challenged by Faten, who, Khadra implies, wishes to follow in her relatives’ footsteps. The author demonstrates that violence breeds violence and that most are powerless to break this vicious cycle. The novel concludes with the narrator becoming an unwitting victim of violence, despite his rejection of it and the transformation he has undergone as a character. As he goes to Jenin to stop Faten from meeting Sheikh Marwan (which, he believes, indicates her intention to become a suicide bomber herself), the novel ends with the same scene Khadra began it with – the protagonist’s death. Amin Jaafari is an innocent bystander in Sheikh Marwan’s assassination attempt and is killed by an Israeli rocket along with the spiritual leader and scores of worshippers.\footnote{Khadra, TA 1-5 (7-11); 254-257 (244-246).} Khadra’s work thus concludes that despite political intent, such as Sihem’s motivation or Amin’s pacifism, violence remains an arbitrary and inconclusive act. In a narrative of shifting Selves and Others, the author demonstrates the relativity of these dichotomies and their necessary irrationality. Sihem’s story confirms feminine agency and participation in conflict, independent from men. Her character is also another of Khadra’s embodiments of contextualised and humanised terrorists rather than their action-thriller stereotypical cliché counterparts.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of these three mainstream literary novels illustrates the different approaches to the portrayal of a major terrorist character. Narrative strategies differ between Updike and Khadra, especially in their narrative’s point of view and level of engagement with the terrorist character. Similarly to the action-thriller patterns discussed in the previous chapter, Terrorist’s third-person narrator distances the reader and disengages from the terrorist, Ahmad. The narrative voice gives an omniscient view and passes authoritative judgment on his character and motives. As I explained at length above, Updike’s novel capitalises on the alienation and Othering of Ahmad via his
religious fanaticism, which is typical of the archetypal terrorist. As in the action-thriller novels, the Western Self is diametrically opposed to the Arab and/or Muslim Other, and Islam is a cruel and intolerant religion preaching terrorism. Updike does not write a more sympathetic or less stereotypical character despite his self-declared agenda.

On the other hand, Yasmina Khadra’s TS and TA provide a more involved first-person perspective. The narrator of TS especially directs his story of personal trauma and turmoil directly to the reader. He fully admits to his choices to become involved in terrorism but at the same time contextualises them with a great range of emotional, social and political depth. In TA, despite being absent from the narrative herself, Sihem’s character is gradually revealed to be equally politically-charged and traumatised by the suffering of her people. She also makes a conscious choice and, unlike TS’s narrator, goes through with it. As I have demonstrated, TA is not a narrative aiming to condone suicide terrorism but is instead a lament of the senseless human suffering on both sides. I show both Khadra’s novels to subvert and interchange the dichotomy of the Self and the Other. He paints a complex picture of these notions as relative and easily re-appropriated. If Ahmad’s Other’s main motivation for terrorism is a misguided faith in a cruel religion, the narrator of TS as well as Sihem in TA are representative of both Self and Other, depending on the speaker’s perspective. These characters’ actions are inspired by personal grievances and social injustices rather than Islam.

Connotations of masculinity and femininity laid out in chapter two run through these three novels. For Ahmad, Amin and TS’s narrator, the establishment or reclamation of masculinity are key themes. Ahmad seeks inspiration and a father figure in his fanatical faith and rejects femininity (Teresa, Joryleen, Christianity and education are all its symbols) as antithetical to his self-definition as a masculine young man. The protagonist of TS and Amin both seek to repair the injury to their masculine honour inflicted by their respective traumas. The former is infuriated by the Western Other when his family’s dignity is trampled in the incident with his father; the only way to restore it is by washing it off with his enemies’ blood. Amin interprets Sihem’s act as a
betrayal, especially as hers is a woman’s choice made without his consultation. His perceived offence is exacerbated by the suspicion of infidelity. Although Amin’s quest to recoup his honour is not as violent-minded as in *TS*, his investigation results in his death just the same.

These two authors depict their protagonists as similarly preoccupied with masculinity as the archetypal heroes discussed above, and their women characters rarely transcend the limitations of being an accessory to the narrative. Teresa Mulloy is self-centred and distracted by her art and pursuit of romantic happiness. *TS*’s narrator’s sisters are no more than symbols of his honour and are soon obscured, especially should they dare express their independence. Thus, Farah is ostracised for her unconventional for Iraqi society choice to cohabitate with her partner outside of marriage. Although Sihem is ultimately depicted to possess agency and independent thinking, she is nonetheless mostly (except the instance of her posthumous letter) described by men – Amin, Adel, the intifada commanders – rather than in her own words. She is paradoxically and simultaneously a passive and active female character. In brief, despite these narratives having a shifted and predominant focus on terrorist characters, they carry similar connotations of masculinity and femininity to the popular fiction works I discuss in the previous chapters.

Yasmina Khadra’s is the only voice among the body of works I study which earnestly seeks to subvert and debunk the stereotypes circulating in political, media, entertainment and literary discourses on terrorism. John Updike’s purported efforts in his novel only confirm the dominance of the archetypal terrorist model.
Conclusion

Having set out to investigate the representations of the characters of the hero and the terrorist in thirteen best-selling action-thriller and three literary mainstream novels in three different languages, I have analysed them within the framework of archetypal masculinity and the concepts of Self and Other. I demonstrated how the majority of these works rely on stereotypical and essentialised visions of both types of characters, with only Khadra’s TS and TA diverging from this pattern. In this final section, I sum up my arguments and outline the results of my research.

I began by explaining the broader notions informing my study, such as Edward Said’s examination of Orientalist scholarship and the definition of terrorism. Said’s study in particular lends a useful perspective on the generalised categories of the Self and the Other in the context of historical world-region relations. As I have illustrated, the primary narratives are built around these essential notions, capitalising on the depiction of the Self as positive, innocent and heroic and the Other as its diametrical opposite. This is especially true of the action-thrillers by Flynn, Silva, DeMille, Forsyth and Koretskiy as well as Updike’s Terrorist, while Yasmina Khadra problematises these categories and depicts them as relative and mutually interchangeable.

In discussing the complexity of terrorism’s definition in the introductory chapter, I established its equivocal interpretation in the field of terrorism studies. In the majority of my primary sources, as the textual analysis has proven, terrorism is defined more rigidly and stereotypically: it is usually the violent expression of an Arab and/or Muslim Other’s hatred for ‘civilisation’, religious fanaticism, sadism and even madness. Such archetypal terrorists as Flynn’s al-Yamani, Silva’s bin Shafiq and Koretskiy’s Bekmurzaev are also typically depicted as backward, vengeful and disloyal. Despite claiming to have written a more sympathetic and understanding rendering of the character, Updike’s Ahmad is as fanatical and despising of the Western Self as the action-thriller terrorists. Although he seeks a father figure in Islam, the teenager pictures it in violent rather than peaceful terms largely due to his fundamentalist Yemeni teacher.
Updike’s narrative alienates both the characters and religion as Others incompatible with the American Self. Khadra foregrounds a different type of terrorist in his two novels and depicts terrorism as a heterogeneous phenomenon with as many motives as there are participators: the narrator, Yaseen, Hussein and Adnan in TS and Sihem, Adel, Wissam and Faten in TA. Each of Khadra’s (would-be) terrorists motivates her/his participation in this violence differently; only rarely do excessive hatred and penchant for violence figure as motives, such as in Yaseen’s character. With the exception of these two works, the terrorist-villain appears as an intrinsically archetypal and essentialised character.

The archetypal hero is an equally stereotypical character, embodying all the positive qualities of the Self. As I explained in the analysis, the vision of the Self in the action-thrillers revolves around its superiority, power, self-reliance, resilience and simultaneous status as victim of unjustified violence and proactive protector of the ‘civilised world’ from it. The action-thriller hero is similarly idealised and depicted as courageous, individualist, honourable and justified in his drastic actions against terrorists. As Updike’s and Khadra’s novels shift the focus towards a terrorist protagonist, the archetypal hero model does not apply to them.

Early in chapter two, I formulated my own theory of archetypal heroic masculinity through a combination of notions of hegemonic masculinity, archetypal images and the ‘mature masculine’ archetypes of pop psychology. I applied this model and its antithesis – archetypal terrorism – to the analysis of action-thriller characters. I mainly relied on Connell’s definition of hegemonic masculinity as an idealised but influential model which is disseminated through social and cultural discourse. Hegemonic masculinity is also closely related to militarism and hero glorification, thus tying it with the archetypal action-thriller hero. Such a concept of masculinity idealises the abovementioned heroic qualities and eroticises violence, stoicism and risk-taking. The action-thriller novels I study are one of the most important platforms for delivering images of glorified heroic masculinity, and their analysis illustrates trait by trait how the heroes of these narratives conform to the model. The qualifier ‘archetypal’ in my
definition draws on the Jungian and post-Jungian understandings of the archetype and the archetypal image as well as popular mythopoetic interpretations of masculinity. In my study, ‘archetypal’ signifies a simultaneously stable, stereotypical and widely-reproduced characterisation of heroic masculinity or emasculated terrorism that presupposes these masculine traits and their opposites as ‘natural’. I illustrate this theory by analysing action-thriller heroes and terrorists through the prism of archetypal masculinity traits. The close textual analysis thus reveals that the heroes of Flynn’s, Silva’s, DeMille’s, Forsyth’s and Koretskiy’s novels all embody the archetypal hero pattern, exhibiting the traits of courage, honour, loyalty, individualism (some, such as Mitch Rapp, to the extent of anti-establishment) and ability to justly and violently punish their enemies.

On the other hand, archetypal terrorist characters depicted in these novels demonstrate diametrically opposing characteristics, in the spirit of the Self (hero) and Other (terrorist) dichotomy. Whereas the hero is presented as the epitome of masculinity, the terrorists are accordingly written as men who have been emasculated by the ideologies they subscribe to. Almost universally, the antagonists I found in these action-thrillers (except DeMille’s WF, where the terrorist is home-grown) are of (Middle) Eastern descent, Muslim of persuasion and are characterised negatively. While the hero is brave, the terrorist is cowardly; loyalty is juxtaposed with treachery; intelligence and ‘civilisation’ with backwardness; and noble reasons for violence stand in stark contrast to the terrorists’ arbitrariness. Differentiated so completely from the idealised masculinity of the archetypal hero, the archetypal terrorist is thoroughly emasculated and dehumanised. In Updike, despite the more detailed exploration of the character, the terrorist is also portrayed to be seeking masculinity. Ahmad, a teenager in his formative years, chooses to establish it through his religion (Islam), which leads to his involvement in terrorism and loss of both faith and masculinity. Khadra’s novels also display connotations of hegemonic masculinity, especially in the case of TS’s protagonist whose decision to resort to terrorism follows an assault on his honour. As I
noted above, Khadra’s novels do not conform to the archetypal terrorist model because, despite relying in part on similar notions of Self and Other dichotomy and masculinity, they ultimately subvert their validity. Thus, unlike an action-thriller archetypal terrorist, the narrator of *TS* exhibits a heightened sense of honour and, at the end of the narrative, compassion and abandonment of violence. In *TA*, Khadra’s principal terrorist is Sihem Jaafari, a woman whose political and social disgruntlements lead to the suicide attack. Once more, the action-thriller depiction of the terrorist as an emasculated man is contradicted by Sihem’s act and motives. Out of the sixteen works I study, a statistical majority – fourteen novels, produced in three countries and two languages – adhere to a predominantly archetypal and negative portrayal of terrorist characters.

As I explained in the introduction chapter, the action-thriller in particular often makes use of actual and historical context to ground and enhance its narrative. In chapters two and three, I detailed these and other techniques which the authors use to enhance the veracity of the archetypal hero and to further discredit the terrorist. I termed these ‘strategies of framing’, the principal technique of which is the referencing and incorporation of historical facts in the narrative, such as Gabriel Allon’s first mission avenging the Munich Olympics attack or Forsyth’s Izmat Khan’s medical assistance by Ayman al-Zawahiri. These historical references strengthen the narrative and the hero’s masculinity and authority to define other characters, especially the antagonists. The terrorists’ grudging acknowledgment of the hero’s qualities, minor non-archetypal traits (such as Allon’s love for art), first-person or hero-centred third-person narration and secondary female characters who either support the hero or do not daunt him despite their more senior posts all reinforce the hero’s archetypal masculinity. The archetypal terrorist’s character is, conversely, weakened by the strengthening of the hero as well as his general alienation from the action-thriller narrative: their detailed physical and personality traits are absent from the novels; they very rarely describe themselves but are most often described (negatively) by the hero or the third-person narrative voice sharing the hero’s perspective.
John Updike and Yasmina Khadra do not over-emphasise their historical references but rather stage their narratives within the context of the consequences of the 9/11 attacks, the coalition forces’ invasion of Iraq or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet similarly to the action-thrillers, these references lend authority to the novels’ portrayals of terrorist characters. Despite Updike’s admission of the reader into Ahmad Ashamwy Mulloy’s innermost thoughts via an omniscient third-person narrator, it only emphasises the character’s stringent religiosity as an archetypal terrorist’s essential characteristic. Khadra uses narrative voice to a different effect in TS. His first-person narrator details his own transformation from a peaceable young man into a potential terrorist and fleshes out the social and personal backgrounds which influence him. The protagonist’s motives differ greatly from Ahmad’s and the archetypal terrorists’ blind faith in a sadistic religion, which vests him with an increased degree of humanity to distinguish him from the stereotype.

Utilising the above characterisations and techniques, the majority of my primary sources reconstruct the concept of irrational, fanatical and arbitrary ‘new terrorism’. The verisimilitude-enhancing techniques I discussed purport to convince the reader of the plausibility of the novels’ events and the veracity of their characters, establishing these works firmly within the dominant discourses already circulating in political and media spheres. Simultaneously, the authors of the action-thrillers write their version of the ‘war on terror’, which bears similarities to the actual US response to 9/11 but condenses the valiant Self into the character of a larger-than-life archetypal hero. The heroic Self is opposed to a terrorist Other, and the violence perpetrated by each side is characterised differently. Whereas the hero’s ‘war on terror’ is justified as moral, right and necessary, the terrorist’s violence (except in Khadra) is discredited as a manifestation of an inherently violent and vindictive religion and inferior system of values. The archetypal terrorist is thus denied political agency and is written off as insane and irrational, consolidating him as a stereotype.
My original contribution to knowledge is thus the comparative textual study of hero and terrorist characters in a previously-unexamined body of primary material – best-selling action-thriller and mainstream literary primary sources in three languages – in the contexts of the Self-Other post-9/11 dichotomy and archetypal heroic masculinity. Although negative representations of Arabs and/or Muslims were previously addressed in the fairly saturated fields of the news and entertainment media studies (by Shaheen, Said, McAlister, Lockman, T. Roach, Alsutany and Ramji among others), similar research on popular fiction has been produced much more rarely. My study examines not only terrorist characters but also heroes, drawing on three post-9/11 production loci of action-thriller fiction. This is an under-researched but important and popular subgenre of popular fiction, and my research is a step towards filling that gap in knowledge. Approaching this primary material from a masculinities point of view as well as the Self and Other dichotomy enriches the understanding of how characterisations of heroes and terrorists are constructed as individual traits representing larger inter-societal and cultural categories. The comparison with more ‘literary’ works of Updike and Khadra demonstrates that such depictions are not unique to popular action-thriller fiction but are also adopted by other authors in order to either confirm the stereotypical view or undermine it.

In addition to furthering the research on dichotomised representations of archetypal masculinity in popular fiction, a reflection which arises from the analysis of these action-thrillers concerns the ambivalences of characterisation of heroes and terrorist-villains. In the case of the hero and as I have demonstrated above, patriotism is almost always coupled with extreme individualism and rebelliousness against the government’s bureaucratic apparatus. Instead of being unquestioningly loyal, heroes such as Rapp and Corey often criticise their superiors’ decisions and expertise, preferring instead to act on their own. As I have mentioned, this appears to be a feature of the “man-of-action” hero who necessarily combines the models of breadwinner and rebel masculinity to achieve heroic greatness, so this characterisation is not necessarily
inconsistent with other depictions of such heroes. The terrorist character’s frequently appearing traits of insanity and pathology paradoxically destabilise his representational ability by his mental untrustworthiness while at the same time maintaining him as a colonial ‘anthropological witness’ of the Othered society from which he originates. Not only does insanity depoliticise these characters, as I have discussed above, but it also increases their unreliability; yet still they purportedly represent their ethnicities and cultures in these works. The question to be explored by further research is then whether such ambivalences reinforce or undermine these stereotypical characterisations. Do issues such as insanity complicate the dichotomised representation of the Other? What is the reader’s reception of such exaggeratedly portrayed heroes and terrorist-villains? This does leave one to ponder whether such bulk consumer-oriented genre fiction might invite an ironic reading and in-depth analysis going beyond these novels’ design as products for unreflective consumption.
Appendix: Original Direct Quotations

1. Note: This appendix is organised by chapter. For each quotation, I then give the page number in the thesis in bold, underlined footnote number for each quotation or group of quotations as they appear in the main text and finally the primary source title and page number. All of these are separated by semicolons, with the original quotation (retaining original capitalisation and emphasis where applicable) given after a colon.

2. Chapter Two

p. 55; fn. 14; AP, vol. 1 23: частью своего существа, элементом своей души, основой умиротворяющего и возвышающего ощущения собственного нечеловеческого могущества.

pp. 93-94; fn. 124; MN 136: А Карпенко был настоящим по всем статьям, и это отчетливо ощущалось окружающими, как безошибочно ощущается порода чистокровных скакунов или бойцовых собак.

Ему стукнуло пятьдесят — многих в таком возрасте называют пожилыми людьми, а то и старицами, но к Карпенко такие определения явно не подходили. Тяжелый взгляд излучал не только властную уверенность привыкшего командовать человека, но и чисто физическую мощь, достигаемую многолетним накачиванием силы и неоднократным успешным ее применением. Перебитый нос и пересеченная белой полоской зажившего шрама левая бровь показывали, что их обладателю приходилось бывать в серьезных переделках. Спортивная, начинающая грузнеть фигура, резкие черты властного лица, вскинутый квадратный подбородок, стремительные движения, в которых угадывалась недюжинная сила тренированного тела.

p. 94; fn. 125; MN 172: Эти мужчины несли на мощных плечах бремя государственной власти, они привыкли отдавать приказы и решать судьбы других
людей, а потому излучали властную уверенность и чисто физическое превосходство над всеми другими.

p. 94; fn. 126; MN 162: «Торжество ислама» и «Зеленое знамя».

p. 95; fn. 128; MN 154: Боевая биография, героическая, можно сказать.

p. 95; fn. 129; KV 63: специальный курьер Особой экспедиции ЦК КПСС.

pp. 95-96; fn. 131; KV 81: Обостренная интуиция Макса.

p. 96; fn. 133; KV 449: Никакого определенного плана у него не было. Однако он чувствовал, что замутненное в последнее время сознание проясняется. Не было уже ни головной боли, ни приступов тошноты, ни навязчивого звона в ушах. Макс становился прежним. Не придурковатым, забитым Лапиным, не избалованным сытой британской жизнью Томпсоном, а тренированным Кардановым. Жестким и неудержимым хищником, рефлексы которого, усиленные специальной подготовкой, вполне соответствовали закону джунглей: выживает сильнейший. Тот, кто окажется ловчее, проворнее, профессиональнее.

p. 97; fn. 136; AP, vol. 2 116: Он был окрылён и горд. Вообще, в нём что-то изменилось. Оказанное доверие распирало молодого человека, он ощущал, что выходит из кабинета Будатова уже не тем зелёным новичком, которым туда входил. Он получил признание как классный ракетчик! И от этого его переполняла гордость.

p. 104; fn. 157; AP, vol. 2 207: Он правильный и не станет за деньги нарушать инструкции.

p. 105; fn. 159; MN 160: человек дела, долга и чести.

p. 105; fn. 160; MN 139: бывших и действующих сотрудников специальных служб и силовых структур, недовольных хаосом и беспределом в стране и бездействием закона.

p. 105; fn. 161; MN 337: Благодаря вам мы руку Родины почувствовали.
п. 106; fn. 162; KV 64: истинный патриот своей Родины.

п. 106; fn. 163; KV 193: Лапин любил этот город. Значит, любил его и Карданов. Любил этот город и Макс Томпсон.

п. 111; fn. 177; KV 507: Пресечение террористической акции с использованием ядерного оружия имело огромный политический резонанс во всем мире.

п. 111; fn. 178; AP, vol. 2 284: Если бы не Кудасов, мы бы сейчас глотали радиоактивную пыль, и с нами половина земного шара! […] Кудасов герой!

п. 118; fn. 205; MN 84: — Вы нарушили прямой приказ руководства, майор […] В результате два заложника погибли, два ранены….

— Первая заложница убита еще до моего вмешательства, — Алексей открыто взглянул в лицо начальника.

[… — К тому же, если бы я выполнил приказ, жертв было бы больше! — упрямо гнул свою линию Мальцев. — Террористы начали бы расстрел заложников и беспрепятственно довели его до конца!

п. 118; fn. 206; MN 85: Бессловесный робот без сердца и души?!

п. 119; fn. 209; KV 425: Судя по тому, что их не схватили в институте, операция провалилась. Чекисты потеряли след террористов. И похоже, что вся ответственность теперь ложилась на него. Допустить выезд в Москву с ядерным фугасом было нельзя. И он обязан был его предотвратить.

п. 127; fn. 233; MN 163: Официально «Меч Немезиды» не будет существовать. Строго говоря, его деятельность не укладывается в международные законы. Да и во внутренние тоже…

п. 127; fn. 234; MN 76: Всем надоела пустопорожняя говорильня. […] предложение должно быть радикальным и принципиально новым.

п. 135; fn. 261; AP, vol. 1 129-130: Оксане Моначковой было двадцать два года, и выглядела она очень аппетитно. Среднего роста, аккуратная худенькая фигурка:
плоский живот, маленькая грудь с розовыми сосками, округлые бёдра, аппетитная попка, безукоризненной формы ноги… […] Барби, одним словом.

3. Chapter Three

p. 148; fn. 24; MN 99: — Мы столкнулись с новой угрозой цивилизованному миру, угрозой терроризма. […] Немаловажным фактором нового терроризма являются его исламские корни…

p. 148; fn. 25; MN 100: Сейчас мы должны думать о других ценностях: о сохранении идеалов мировой цивилизации, — сказал президент США.

p. 149; fn. 27; MN 101: На жестокость нужно отвечать еще большей жестокостью, — сурово отчеканил президент США. — На хитрость — еще более изощренной хитростью! На коварство — опережающим коварством! Для борьбы с терроризмом мы должны взять на вооружение те методы, которые террористы применяют к безоружным и ни в чем не повинным людям! Это будет логично, разумно и справедливо!

p. 149; fn. 28; MN 119: здесь основной задачей сотрудников будут ликвидации. Только ликвидации.


— Да нет, обычай такой. Эти бенладены испокон века баб своих тряпьем накрывают…
181; fn. 107; PVBI 303: одежда, внешний вид и выражение лиц вооруженных людей полностью соответствовали облику достопамятных басмаческих банд.

188; fn. 132; MN 328: Дауд аль-Хакатти был богат и влиятелен, его жилище на берегу Красного моря в Джизане больше походило на дворец, чем на обычный коттедж; его старший сын Саид возглавлял группировку, которая контролировала территорию от Аденского залива до Суэцкого канала.

190; fn. 137; KV 449: Что-то в его голосе показалось Максу неестественным. И вид Гепарда вызывал странные чувства: окаменевшее лицо, лихорадочно блестящие глаза. Может, он сошел с ума?

190; fn. 138; KV 500: Посередине комнаты стоял самый настоящий безумец. Съехавший с катушек фанатик. Искаженное лицо, дикий оскал рта, прищуренные глаза.

195; fn. 151; MN 318: В его действиях нет рациональной основы.

196; fn. 153; MN 335: Между плениками в кресле сидит человек в камуфляжной форме российского образца, в вырезе ворота выглядывает морская тельняшка. На лице черная маска, только из прорезей яростно сверкают бешеные глаза.

«…ну что, Саид, нравятся тебе твои собственные методы? Когда не ты убиваешь чужих отцов, а твоего отца убивают? Слушай меня внимательно, бешеный пес: русские заложники должны быть освобождены. Все трое. Живыми и невредимыми. Тогда через три часа получишь обратно этих двоих. Если нет, то следующим утром пришлю тебе их головы. А остальное я скормлю свиньям и собакам…»

202; fn. 173; MN 230: кавказские законы родства.

202-203; fn. 174; MN 232: Наоборот, я возвеличу наш род! [...] Родственники будут гордиться мной!
p. 205; fn. 183; KV 466: весь мир содрогнется от расправы с неверными.

p. 207; fn. 191; KV 99: Чем ближе человек, тем больше вероятность предательства.

4. Chapter Four

p. 250; fn. 100; Les Sirènes 8: Kafr Karam, un village perdu au large du désert irakien, tellement discret que souvent il se dilue dans les mirages pour n’en émerger qu’au coucher du soleil.

p. 250; fn. 101; Les Sirènes 27: l’université fut livrée aux vandales et les rêves aux fossoyeurs.

p. 251; fn. 104; Les Sirènes 107-108: J’étais quelqu’un d’émotif ; le chagrin des autres m’accablait. Il m’était impossible de passer devant une malheur sans l’emporter avec moi. […] J’étais ainsi, c’est tout. Un être en porcelaine.

[…] À l’école, mes camarades de classe me prenaient pour une chiffe molle. Ils avaient beau me provoquer, je ne rendais jamais les coups. Même quand je refusais de tendre l’autre joue, je gardais mes poings dans mes poches. À la longue, les galopins me fichèrent la paix, découragés par mon stoïcisme. En vérité, je n’étais pas une chiffe molle ; j’avais horreur de la violence.

p. 251; fn. 105; Les Sirènes 33: un virtuose de luth.

p. 251; fn. 107; Les Sirènes 309-310: Sa voix me catapulte à travers les ages et les frontières. Telle une météorite, j’atterris dans le cratère, près de mon village, où Kadem me faisait écouter les chansons qu’il aimait.

p. 252; fn. 108; Les Sirènes 28: deux grandes salles encombrées de vieilleries et de tableaux religieux rapportés des souks itinérants, les uns exhibant des calligraphies labyrinthiques, les autres montrant Sidna Ali malmenant les démons ou taillants à plate couture les troupes ennemies, son légendaire cimenterre à deux lames semblable à une tornade par-dessus les têtes impies.
p. 252; fn. 109: Les Sirènes 19: Nous étions pauvres, humbles, mais nous étions tranquilles. Jusqu’au jour où notre intimité fut violée, nos tabous profanés, notre dignité traînée dans la boue et le sang... jusqu’au jour où, dans les jardins de Babylone, des brutes bardées de grenades et de menottes sont venues apprendre aux poètes à être des hommes libres.


p. 253; fn. 111: Les Sirènes 54: à des années-lumière du drame qui dépeuplait notre pays. Depuis le déclenchement des hostilités, malgré les centaines d’attentats et les contingent de morts, pas un hélicoptère n’avait, jusque-là, survolé notre secteur ; pas une patrouille n’avait profané la paix de notre village.


p. 254; fn. 113: Les Sirènes 37: ça devient de plus en plus compliqué de se déplacer avec ces check points et les tracaseries qui vont avec.


p. 255; fn. 116: Les Sirènes 45: N’essayons pas de faire porter aux autres le chapeau que nous avons fabriqué de nos mains pour nous-mêmes. Si les Américains sont là, c’est de notre faute. En perdant la foi, nous avons perdu nos repères et le sens de l’honneur.

p. 256; fn. 117: Les Sirènes 261: Le Dr Jalal a l’art de mobiliser jusqu’aux culs-de-jatte. […] Aucun imam ne lui arriverait à la cheville, aucun orateur ne saurait mieux que lui
faire d’un murmure un cri. C’est un écorché vif, d’une intelligence exceptionnelle ; un mentor d’un rare charisme.

p. 256; fn. 119; Les Sirènes 17-18: —Tu penses qu’on n’a plus de choix.
—Tout à fait. La cohabitation n’est plus possible. Ils ne nous aiment pas, et nous ne supportons plus leur arrogance. Chacun doit vivre dans son camp, en tournant définitivement le dos à l’autre. Sauf qu’avant de dresser le grand mur, nous allons leur infliger une bonne raclée pour le mal qu’ils nous ont fait. Il est impératif qu’ils sachent que la lâcheté n’a jamais été notre patience, mais leur vacherie.
—Et qui vaincra ?
—Celui qui n’a pas grand-chose à perdre.

p. 257; fn. 120; Les Sirènes 265: À leurs yeux, je n’étais qu’un Arabe. […] Pour eux, désormais, tous les Arabes sont des terroristes, et moi ?... Moi, Dr Jalal, ennemi juré des fondamentalistes, moi qui croulais sous les fatwas, qui me cassais le cul et les dents pour eux ?... Moi, à leurs yeux, je n’étais qu’un traître à ma nation, ce qui me rendait doublement méprisable… Et là, j’ai eu comme illuminations. J’ai compris à quel point j’étais dupe, et surtout, où était ma vraie place. J’ai donc plié bagage et j’ai rejoint les miens.

p. 257; fn. 121; Les Sirènes 17: L’Occident n’est qu’un mensonge acidulé, une perversion savamment dosée, un chant de sirènes pour naufragés identitaires.

p. 258; fn. 123; Les Sirènes 289-290: Aujourd’hui, les peuples offensés ont recouvré l’usage de la parole. Ils ont leur mot à dire. Et c’est exactement ce que disent nos canons.

p. 258; fn. 124; Les Sirènes 267: qui avait exercé pendant des décennies dans les plus prestigieux instituts de recherches américains avant d’être évincé à cause de son arabité et de sa religion.

p. 259; fn. 125; Les Sirènes 140: Qu’ont-ils gardé de nous, ces dégénérés de la modernité ? Une caravane de dromadaires enfaîtant les dunes au coucher du soleil ? Un
poussah en robe blanche satinée et en keffieh claquant ses millions dans les casinos de la Côte d’Azur ? Des clichés, des caricatures…

p. 259; fn. 126; Les Sirènes 139: un traître à ma nation.

pp. 259-260; fn. 127; Les Sirènes 187: La pudeur, c’est quelque chose qu’ils ont perdu de vue depuis des lustres. L’honneur ? Ils ont falsifié ses codes. Ce ne sont que des avortons forcenés, qui renversent les valeurs comme des buffles lâchés dans une boutique de porcelaine. Ils débarquent d’un univers injuste et cruel, sans humanité et sans morale, où le puissant se nourrit de la chair des soumis, où la violence et la haine résument leur Histoire, où le machiavélisme façonne et justifie les initiatives et les ambitions. Que peuvent-ils comprendre à notre monde à nous, qui porte en lui les plus fabuleuses pages de la civilisation humaine, où les valeurs fondamentales n’ont pas pris une seule ride, où les serments n’ont pas fléchi d’un cran, où les repères d’antan n’ont pas changé d’un iota ?

p. 260; fn. 128; Les Sirènes 187-188: Ils […] ne voient en notre pays qu’une immense flaque de pétrole, dans laquelle ils laperont jusqu’à la dernière goutte de notre sang. […] Ils ont ramené toutes les valeurs à une effroyable question de fric, toutes les vertus à celle de profit. Des prédateurs redoutables, voilà ce qu’ils sont.

p. 260; fn. 129; Les Sirènes 188: Et dehors, dans nos rues, se livre le plus grand duel de tous les temps, le choc des titans : Babylone contre Disneyland, la tour de Babel contre l’Empire State Building, les Jardins suspendus contre le Golden Gate Bridge, Schéhérazade contre Ma Baker, Sindbad contre Terminator.

p. 261; fn. 130; Les Sirènes 144-145: Je ne tenais pas à retrouver une ville défigurée, sale et livrée à ses démons. […] J’étais un jeune étudiant ébloui, qui échafaudait dans sa tête des projets mirobolants.

p. 261; fn. 131; Les Sirènes 160: Bagdad se décomposait. Longtemps façonnée dans l’ancrage des répressions, voilà qu’elle se défaisait de ses amarres de suppliciée pour se livrer aux dérives, fascinée par sa colère suicidaire et le vertige des impunités. Le tyran
déchu, elle retrouvait intacts ses silences forcés, sa lâcheté revancharde, son mal grandeur nature, et conjurait au forceps ses vieux démons. N’ayant à aucun moment attendri ses bourreaux, elle ne voyait pas comment s’apitoyer sur elle-même maintenant que tous les interdits étaient levés. Elle se désaltérait aux sources de ses blessures, à l’endroit où le bât de l’infamie le marquait : sa rancune. Grisée par sa souffrance et l’écoeurement qu’elle suscitait, elle se voulait l’incarnation de tout ce qu’elle ne supportait pas, y compris l’image qu’on se faisait d’elle et qu’elle rejetait en bloc ; et c’était dans la désespérance la plus crasse qu’elle puisait les ingrédients de son propre martyre.

Cette ville était folle à lier.

Les camisoles ne lui seyant guère, elle leur préférait les ceintures explosives et les étendards taillés dans les suaires.


p. 262; fn. 133; Les Sirènes 191: Je regardais les ambulanciers ramasser les morceaux de chair sur les trottoirs, les pompiers évacuer les immeubles soufflés, les flics interroger les riverains.

p. 262; fn. 134; Les Sirènes 224: Elle ne représentait rien, pour moi. Ne signifiait rien. Je la parcourais comme un territoire maudit ; elle me subissait comme un corps étranger. Nous étions deux malheurs incompatibles, deux monder parallèles qui cheminaient côte à côte sans jamais se rencontrer.

p. 263; fn. 135; Les Sirènes 132: confrérie de naufragés […] éprouvés par les pistes et les contrôles qui essayaient de reprendre des forces pour affronter les déboires du lendemain, tous me rappelaient mon père car ils portaient sur la figure une marque qui ne trompe pas : le sceau des vaincus.

p. 264; fn. 137; Les Sirènes 78-79: Après l’enterrement de Souleyman, auquel je n’avais pas assisté, j’étais resté chez moi. Les souvenirs de la bavure me tourmentaient sans relâche. Dès que je m’endormais, les cris du GI noir me sautaient dessus. Je rêvais de Souleyman en train de courir, l’échine roide, les bras ballants, le corps penché tantôt d’un côté, tantôt de l’autre. Une multitude de minuscules geysers giclait dans son dos. Au moment où sa tête explosait, je me réveillais en hurlant.

p. 264; fn. 138; Les Sirènes 71: le sortilège qui avait ravi à Kafr Karam son être le plus pur, qui fut sa mascotte et son pentacle.


p. 265; fn. 142; Les Sirènes 110: C’est vrai, j’avais de la colère, j’en voulais aux coalisés, mais je ne m’imaginais pas canardant les badauds à tort et à travers. La guerre, ce n’était pas mon rayon. Je n’étais pas conçu pour exercer la violence – je me croyais en mesure de la subir mille ans plutôt que la pratiquer un jour.

p. 266; fn. 144; Les Sirènes 113-114: Un Occidental ne peut pas comprendre, ne peut pas soupçonner l’étendue du désastre. Pour moi, voir le sexe de mon géniteur, c’était
ramener mon existence entière, mes valeurs et mes scrupules, ma fierté et ma singularité à une grossière fulgurance pornographique – les portes de l’enfer m’auraient été moins inclémentes !... J’étais fini. Tout était fini. Irrécupérable. Irréversible. Je venais d’étreindre le bâton de l’infamie, de basculer dans un monde parallèle d’où je ne me remonterais plus. […] Et à cet instant précis, alors que je n’osais pas broncher, je sus que plus rien ne serait comme avant, que je ne considérerais plus les choses de la même façon, que la bête immonde venait de rugir au tréfonds de mes entrailles, que, tôt au tard, quoi qu’il arrive, quoi qu’il advienne, j’étais condamné à laver l’affront dans le sang.

pp. 266-267; fn. 145; Les Sirènes 146: Je m’étais couché garçon docile et affable, et je m’étais réveillé dans la chair d’une colère inextinguible.

p. 267; fn. 146; Les Sirènes 146: Comment pouvais-je aimer après ce que j’avais vu à Kafr Karam ? Comment me croire encore capable d’apprécier d’illustres inconnus après avoir été déchu de l’estime de moi-même ? Si oui, qui étais-je ? Ça ne m’intéressait pas de le savoir. […] Des amarres avaient rompu, des tabous étaient tombés, et un monde de sortilèges et d’anathèmes venait de pousser sur leurs décombres.

p. 267; fn. 147; Les Sirènes 119; 207: cette chose abominable ; […] quelqu’un d’autre, aguerri, froid, implacable.

p. 267; fn. 148; Les Sirènes 145: Et j’étais venu, à mon tour, y sécréter mon fiel. J’ignorais comment m’y prendre, cependant j’étais certain de lui porter un vilain coup. C’était ainsi depuis la nuit des temps. Les Bédouins, aussi démunis soient-ils, ne badinaient pas avec le sens de l’honneur. L’offense se devait d’être lavée dans le sang, seule lessive autorisée pour garder son amour-propre. J’étais le garçon unique de ma famille. Mon père étant invalide, c’était à moi qu’échétait la tâche suprême de venger l’outrage subi, quitte à y laisser ma peau. La dignité ne se négocie pas.

p. 268; fn. 149; Les Sirènes 174: honte.

p. 268; fn. 150; Les Sirènes 188-189: Il importait peu de savoir si Sayed était sincère ou si Yacine me parlait avec des mots à lui, des mots qui lui sortaient des tripes ; la seule
certitude que j’avais était que la mascarade m’arrangeait, qu’elle m’allait comme un gant, que le secret que je ruminais depuis des semaines était partagé, que ma colère n’était plus seule, qu’elle me restituait l’essentiel de ma détermination.

**pp. 268-269; fn. 151; Les Sirènes 189:** Aussi lorsque Yacine consentit à m’ouvrir enfin ses bras, c’était comme s’il m’ouvrait le seul chemin qui conduisait à ce que je cherchais plus que tout au monde : l’honneur des miens.

**p. 269; fn. 152; Les Sirènes 209-210:** toutes les raisons possibles et imaginables de foutre en l’air le monde. [...] conférer à mes sévices de l’enthousiasme et une certaine légitimité.

**pp. 269-270; fn. 154; Les Sirènes 245:** Il n’y avait plus que lui et moi au monde. Nous étions le monde.

J’avais beau prier, beau le supplier de m’épargner rien qu’une minute, c’était en vain ; il restait là, silencieux et déconcerté, si réel que je l’aurais touché en tendant le bras.

**p. 270; fn. 155; Les Sirènes 246:** Je me portais volontaire pour un attentat-suicide. C’était le plus probant des raccourcis, le plus payant aussi. Cette idée me trottait dans la tête bien avant la méprise qui avait conduit à l’exécution du Caporal. Elle devint mon idée fixe. Je n’avais pas peur. Plus rien ne me rattachait à rien. Je ne voyais pas ce que les kamikazes avaient de plus que moi.

**p. 270; fn. 156; Les Sirènes 258:** revanche sur le destin ; [...] les vacheries qui ont jalonné ma vie.

**p. 270; fn. 157; Les Sirènes 258:** quelque chose qui ramènera le 11 Septembre à un chahut de récré.

**p. 271; fn. 158; Les Sirènes 257:** Ma chambre est peuplée de fantômes et d’absents.

**p. 271; fn. 160; Les Sirènes 273:** Il s’agit d’un virus. Ma mission consiste à porter un virus. C’est ça, on m’a préparé physiquement pour recevoir un virus. Un virus. Mon arme, ma bombe, mon engin de kamikaze...
Les Sirènes 280: Virus ou bombe, qu’est-ce que ça change, lorsqu’on étreint d’une main une offense et de l’autre la Cause ? Je ne prendrai pas de comprimé pour dormir. J’ai réintégré mon élément. Tout va bien.

Les Sirènes 310: Les cris du Dr Jalal résonnent à travers les douves de mon crâne, aussi tonitruants que ceux d’une hydre blessée. Je déporte mon regard sur la foule déambulant sur les trottoirs, les devantures des boutiques, les voitures qui se relaient de part et d’autre, et partout je ne vois que lui, le geste incohérent, la langue épaisse, mais les propos imparables.

Les Sirènes 306: foutre en l’air la planète.


Les Sirènes 318: je n’en veux plus à personne.

Mes soucis se confondent avec mes souvenirs. Toute ma vie défile dans ma tête ; Kafr Karam, mes gens, mes morts et mes vivants, les êtres qui manquent, et ceux qui me hantent… Pourtant, de tous mes souvenirs, ce sont les plus récents qui sont les plus nets. Cette dame, à l’aéroport, qui interrogeait le cadran de son téléphone ; ce futur papa qui ne savait où donner de la tête tant il était heureux et ce couple de jeunes Européens en train de s’embrasser… Ils mériteraient de vivre mille ans. Je n’ai pas le droit de contester leurs baisers, de bousculer leurs rêves, de brusquer leurs attentes. Qu’ai-je fait de mon destin, moi ? Je n’ai que vingt et un ans, et la certitude d’avoir raté vingt et un fois ma vie.

Mais je savais que, si je n’allais pas au feu, le feu allait venir chez moi. Alors, j’ai pris les armes pour ne pas finir comme Souleyman. Question de survie ? Question de logique, seulement. Ce pays est le mien. Des fripouilles cherchent à me l’extorquer. Qu’est-ce que je fais ?

Yacine se releva.

—Je ne vous ai rien demandé, rétorqua le mouchard avec dédain. Sauvé par des voyous de votre acabit ?... Plutôt crever !

[...] —Vous vous prenez pour fedayin. Vous n’êtes que des assassins, des vandales et des tueurs d’enfants. Je n’ai pas peur de vous. Faites de moi ce que vous voulez, vous ne m’enlèverez pas de la tête que vous n’êtes que des chiens enragés, des détraqués sans foi ni loi… Je vous hais !

Il nous cracha dessus à tour de rôle.

p. 274; fn. 170; Les Sirènes 172: pour rejoindre les fedayin ; [...] j’avais des litiges avec le déserteur que j’étais.

p. 275; fn. 171; Les Sirènes 172: mériter le pays que je n’avais pas su défendre alors que j’étais censé mourir pour lui…

p. 275; fn. 173; Les Sirènes 195: Tu veux venger une offense, n’offense personne. Si tu penses que ton honneur doit être sauf, ne déshonore par [sic.] ton peuple. Ne cède pas à la folie. Je me pendrais haut et court si je te reconnaissais sur un enregistrement filmé confondant exécution arbitraire et fait d’armes…

p. 275; fn. 174; Les Sirènes 170: La résistance, tu vois ce qu’elle fait tous les jours. Des milliers d’Irakiens sont tombés sous ses coups. Pour combien d’Américains ?

pp. 275-276; fn. 175; Les Sirènes 221: C’est vrai que je n’arrive pas à retenir mon rire, mais ça fait pas de moi un dingue. Je ris parce que… parce que… J’sais pas pourquoi au juste. C’est des choses qu’on n’explique pas. J’ai chopé le virus quand j’ai vu Adel l’Ingénu s’énerver en n’arrivant pas à mettre la main sur le poussoir qui devait faire exploser la bombe qu’il portait sur lui. J’étais pas loin, et je l’observais pendant qu’il se mêlait aux candidats dans la cour de la police. Sur le moment, j’avais paniqué. Et quand il a explosé sous les tirs des flics, c’était comme si je m’étais désintégré avec lui… C’était quelqu’un que j’aimais bien.
p. 276; fn. 176; Les Sirènes 222-223: il a mis une ceinture avec des baguettes de pain autour de sa taille pour faire croire à des bâtons de dynamite et il est allé narguer des soldats dans leur guérite.

p. 276; fn. 177; Les Sirènes 15: Ce ne sont pas toujours les traîtres qui tombent. Des fois, ça foire, et nos balles se trompent de cibles.

pp. 276-277; fn. 178; Les Sirènes 306: Tu te rends compte de l’étendue du désastre ? S’agit pas d’attentats, de petites bombes par-ci, de petits crashes par-là ; il s’agit de fléau, d’apocalypse. Les morts vont se compter par centaines de milliers, par millions. S’il est question effectivement d’un virus révolutionnaire, mutant, qui va le stopper ? Avec quoi, et comment ? C’est totalement irreceivable. [...] je ne laisserai pas passer ça. Toute guerre a ses limites. Sauf que là, on n’est plus dans les normes. Qu’espère-t-on après l’apocalypse ? Qu’est-ce qu’il va rester du monde, hormis la pestilence des cadavres et le chaos ?

pp. 277-278; fn. 180; Les Sirènes 119-120: Bahia était une fille de sa tribu. Même si, dans la tradition ancestrale, l’honneur se devait d’être une affaire d’hommes, elle savait le reconnaître et l’exiger.

p. 278; fn. 181; Les Sirènes 151-152: — Tu vis avec quelqu’un ? Comment ça ? Tu t’es mariée sans que la famille le sache ?
— Je ne suis pas mariée.
Je bondis sur mes jambes.
— Tu vis avec un homme ? Tu vis dans le péché ?
Elle leva sur moi un regard aride.
— C’est quoi le péché, petit frère ?
— Tu n’as pas le droit, c’est… C’est interdit par, par… Enfin, tu es devenue folle ? Tu as une famille. Est-ce que tu as pensé à ta famille ? À son honneur ? Au tien ? Tu es, tu ne peux pas vivre dans le péché, pas toi…
— Je ne vis pas dans le péché, je vis ma vie.
— Tu ne crois plus en Dieu ?
— Je crois en ce que je fais, et ça me suffit.

p. 278; fn. 182; *Les Sirènes* 153: Farah était de l’histoire ancienne. Je l’avais chassée de mon esprit sitôt que je l’avais quittée. Elle n’était qu’un succube, une putain ; elle n’avait plus de place dans ma vie. Dans la tradition ancestrale, lorsqu’un proche dévoyait, il était systématiquement banni de notre communauté. Quand c’était une fille qui fautait, le rejet n’en était que plus expéditif.

p. 281; fn. 190; *L’Attentat* 21: — Je ne veux pas qu’un Arabe me touche, grogne-t-il en me repoussant d’une main hargneuse.


p. 281; fn. 192; *L’Attentat* 26-27: J’avais beau présenter mes papiers et décliner ma profession, les flics n’avaient d’yeux que pour mon faciès. Un moment, un jeune agent ne supportant pas mes protestations a braqué son arme sur moi et a menacé de me brûler la cervelle si je ne la bouclais pas. Il a fallu l’intervention musclée de l’officier pour le remettre à sa place.

p. 282; fn. 193; *L’Attentat* 53: il faut impérativement que je sache comment une femme appréciée […] a pu, du jour au lendemain, […] remettre en question tout ce que l’État d’Israël a confié aux Arabes qu’il a accueillis en son sein. […] je ne bénéficie pas du tiers des égards qui vous sont rendus tous les jours par cette ville.

p. 282; fn. 194; *L’Attentat* 59: Ce n’est pas exactement une affiche, mais la une d’un quotidien à grand tirage. Par-dessus une large photo décrivant le chaos sanglant autour du restaurant ciblé par les terroristes, on peut lire en gros caractères : LA BÊTE IMMONDE EST PARMI NOUS.

Deux barbus nattés me crachent dessus. « C’est comme ça qu’on dit merci chez vous, sale Arabe ? En mordant la main qui vous tire de la merde ?... » Des ombres glissent derrière moi pour m’interdire toute retraite. Un jet de salive m’atteint à la figure. Une main me tire par le col de mon peignoir… « Regarde le château que tu occupes, fils de pute. Qu’est-ce qu’il vous faut de plus pour apprendre à dire merci ?... » On me secoue de part et d’autre. « Il faut d’abord le désinfecter avant de le foutre sur un bûcher… » Un coup de pied me foudroie au ventre, un autre me redresse. Mon nez explose, puis mes lèvres. Mes bras ne suffisent pas pour me protéger. Une averse de coups me dégringole dessus, et le sol se dérobe sous moi…

p. 283; fn. 196; L’Attentat 85: Parmi les signataires des pétitions s’opposant à mon retour, certains ont même suggéré que l’on me déchoie de ma nationalité israélienne. […] À ses yeux, en dépit de mes compétences de chirurgien et de mes aptitudes relationnelles aussi bien dans la profession que dans la ville, je reste l’Arabe – indissociable du bougnoule de service et, à un degré moindre, de l’ennemi potentiel.

p. 284; fn. 197; L’Attentat 36: Je me sens patraque, halluciné, dévitalisé. Ne suis qu’un énorme chagrin recroquevillé sous une chape de plomb, incapable de dire si j’ai conscience du malheur qui me frappe ou bien s’il m’a déjà anéanti.

p. 284; fn. 198; L’Attentat 34: émerge du lot, les yeux clos, la bouche entrouverte, les traits apaisés, comme délivrés de leurs angoisses…

p. 284; fn. 199; L’Attentat 37: le démembrement que le corps de votre épouse a subi présente les blessures caractéristiques des kamikazes intéristes.

p. 285; fn. 200; L’Attentat 45: Ça fait plus de quinze ans que je partage ma vie avec Sihem. Je la connais sur le bout de mes doigts. Je sais ce dont elle est capable et ce dont elle n’est pas. Elle avait les mains trop blanches pour que la moindre tache sur elles m’échappe.
p. 285; fn. 201; *L’Attentat* 56: Sihem n’est pas une kamikaze, Naveed. Tâche de t’en souvenir. Car j’y tiens plus que tout au monde. Ma femme n’est pas une tueuse d’enfants… Me suis-je bien fait comprendre ?

p. 285; fn. 202; *L’Attentat* 74: À quoi sert le bonheur quand il n’est pas partagé, Amine, mon amour ? Mes joies s’éteignaient chaque fois que les tiennes ne suivaient pas. Tu voulais des enfants. Je voulais les mériter. Aucun enfant n’est tout à fait à l’abri s’il n’a pas de patrie… Ne m’en veux pas.

p. 286; fn. 203; *L’Attentat* 99-100: Conscient des stéréotypes qui m’exposent sur la place publique, je m’évertue à les surmonter un à un, offrant le meilleur de moi-même et prenant sur moi les incartades de mes camarades juifs. Très jeune, j’avais compris que le cul entre deux chaises ne rimait à rien et qu’il me fallait vite choisir mon camp. Je me suis choisi pour camp ma compétence, et pour alliées mes convictions. […] Pour un Arabe qui sortait du lot – et qui se payait le luxe d’être major de sa promotion – le moindre faux pas était fatal. Surtout quand il est fils de bédouin, croulant sous les a priori […]. À mon corps défendant, je m’étais surpris en train de représenter *ma* communauté. Dans une certaine mesure, il me fallait surtout réussir pour elle.

p. 287; fn. 205; *L’Attentat* 69: Les intégristes palestiniens envoient des gamins se faire exploser dans un abribus. Le temps de ramasser nos morts, nos états-majors leur expédient des hélicos pour foutre en l’air leurs taudis. Au moment où nos gouvernants se préparent à crier victoire, un autre attentat remet les pendules à l’heure. Ça va durer jusqu’à quand ?

p. 287; fn. 206; *L’Attentat* 163: une attitude déraisonnable et navrante.

p. 287; fn. 207; *L’Attentat* 119: Je ne crois pas à ses saints.

p. 287; fn. 208; *L’Attentat* 102: Je ne croyais pas aux prophètes de la discorde et n’arrivais pas à me faire à l’idée que Dieu puisse inciter ses sujets à se dresser les uns contre les autres et à ramener l’exercice de la foi à une absurde et effroyable question de rapport de forces.
p. 288; fn. 209; L’Attentat 131: C’est un peu l’icône de la cité désormais.

p. 288; fn. 210; L’Attentat 27: Son sourire est grand comme un arc-en-ciel, mais son regard ne suit pas.

p. 289; fn. 211; L’Attentat 221: Elle avait grandi du côté des opprimés, orpheline et Arabe dans un monde qui ne pardonne ni à l’une ni à l’autre.

p. 289; fn. 212; L’Attentat 27: Elle avait peur que le sort, qui s’était acharné sur elle, ne revienne la désarçonner encore une fois.

p. 289; fn. 213; L’Attentat 126: Elle était si tendre et prévenante et paraissait s’abreuver aux source de me lèvres quand, mon bras autour de sa taille, debout dans notre jardin, je lui racontais les beaux jours qui nous attendaient, les grands projets que j’échafaudais pour elle. Je sens encore ses doigts étreignant les miens avec un engouement et une conviction qui me semblaient indéfectibles. Elle croyait dur comme fer aux lendemains qui chantent, et mettait du cœur à l’ouvrage chaque fois que le mien s’essoufflait. Nous étions si heureux, si confiants l’un en l’autre. Par quel sortilège le mausolée que j’élevais autour d’elle s’est-il évanoui, pareil à un château de sable sous les vagues ?

p. 289; fn. 214; L’Attentat 107: J’étais son mari. Mon devoir était de veiller sur elle, de la protéger. Elle a sûrement essayé d’attirer mon attention sur la lame de fond qui menaçait de l’emporter. Je mettrais ma main au feu qu’elle a essayé de me faire un signe.

p. 289; fn. 215; L’Attentat 109: celle que j’aimais comme un fou a été plus sensible au prêche des autres qu’à mes poèmes.

p. 290; fn. 216; L’Attentat 104: Je veux savoir qui a endoctriné ma femme, qui l’a bardée d’explosifs et envoyée au casse-pipe.

p. 290; fn. 217; L’Attentat 161: un chef de guerre et un faiseur de kamikazes.

p. 290; fn. 218; L’Attentat 152: idée fixe.
De quoi j'avais l'air, moi, alors que je refusais d'admettre ce que tout le monde savait ? D'un cocu ! J'avais l'air d'un misérable cocu. Je me couvrais de ridicule jusqu'au bout des ongles, voilà de quoi j'avais l'air. De quelqu'un que sa femme trompait de long en large pendant qu'il se défonçait comme une brute pour lui rendre la vie aussi agréable que possible.

une question de l'honneur ; une vie après la parjure, une résurrection après l'affront.

nous savons que vous êtes un croyant récalcitrant, presque un renégat, que vous ne pratiquez pas la voie de vos ancêtres ni ne vous conformez à leurs principes, et que vous vous êtes désolidarisé depuis longtemps de leur Cause en optant pour une autre nationalité… […] D'un autre côté, rien ne vous autorise à prendre cet air outré ou à vous situer au-dessus du commun des mortels ; ni votre réussite sociale ni la bravoure de votre épouse qui, soit dit en passant, ne vous élève aucunement dans notre estime. […] Vous marcheriez sur l'eau que ça ne vous laverait pas de l'affront que vous incarnez. Car le bâtard, le vrai, n'est pas celui qui ne connaît pas son père, mais celui qui ne se connaît pas de repères. De toutes les brebis galeuses, il est la plus à plaindre et la moins à pleurer.

Que lui avez-vous raconté pour faire d'elle un monstre, une terroriste, une intégriste suicidaire, elle qui ne supportait pas d'entendre gémir un chiot ?

À force de vouloir ressembler à tes frères d'adoption, tu perds le discernement des tiens.

Nous sommes que les enfants d’un peuple spolié et bafoué qui se battent avec les moyens du bord pour recouvrer leur patrie et leur dignité, ni plus ni moins.

Monsieur le docteur vit à proximité d’une guerre, sauf qu’il ne veut pas en entendre parler. Il pense que sa femme, non plus, ne doit pas
s’en préoccuper… Eh bien, il a tort, monsieur le docteur. […] Nous sommes en guerre. Il y a ceux qui ont pris les armes ; d’autres qui se tournent les pouces. D’autres encore qui font leur beurre au nom de la Cause. C’est la vie.

p. 293; fn. 227; L’Attentat 207: Ta femme avait choisi son camp. Le bonheur que tu lui proposais avait une odeur de décomposition. Il la répugnait, tu sais ? Elle n’en voulait pas. Elle n’en pouvait plus de se dorer au soleil pendant que son peuple croupissait sous le joug sioniste.

p. 294; fn. 228; L’Attentat 213: L’instant où l’on prend conscience de son impuissance, et celui où l’on prend conscience de la vulnérabilité des autres.

p. 294; fn. 229; L’Attentat 219: Sihem est femme avant d’être la tienne.

p. 295; fn. 230; L’Attentat 219-220: La liberté n’est pas un passeport que l’on délivre à la préfecture, ammou. […] La liberté est une conviction profonde ; elle est mère de toutes les certitudes. Or, Sihem n’était pas tellement sûre d’être digne de sa chance. Vous viviez sous le même toit, jouissiez des mêmes privilèges, mais vous ne regardiez pas du même côté. Sihem était plus proche de son peuple que de l’idée que tu te faisais d’elle. Elle était peut-être heureuse, mais pas suffisamment pour te ressembler. Elle ne t’en voulait pas de prendre pour argent comptant les lauriers avec lesquels on te couvrait, mais ce n’était pas dans cette félicité qu’elle voulait te voir car elle lui trouvait une touche indécente, un accent incongru. C’était comme si tu entretenais un barbecue sur une terre brûlée. Tu ne voyais que le barbecue, elle voyait le reste, la désolation qui faussait tes joies tout autour. Ce n’était pas ta faute ; n’empêche, elle ne supportait plus d’assumer ton daltonisme… […] Sihem ne voulait pas de ce bonheur-là. Elle le vivait comme un cas de conscience. La seule manière de s’en disculper était de rejoindre les rangs de la Cause. C’est un cheminement naturel quand on est issue d’un peuple en souffrance. Il n’y a pas de bonheur sans dignité, et aucun rêve n’est possible sans liberté…
pp. 295-296; fn. 231; L’Attentat 225: Cette douloureuse quête de vérité est mon voyage initiatique, à moi.

p. 296; fn. 232; L’Attentat 158: Nous sommes dans un monde qui s’entre-déchire tous les jours que Dieu fait. On passe nos soirées à ramasser nos morts et nos matinées à les enterrer.

p. 296; fn. 233; L’Attentat 197: Des pâtés de maisons entiers ont été rasés par les tanks et les bulldozers, sinon soufflés à la dynamite.

p. 296; fn. 234; L’Attentat 195-196: À Janin, la raison semble s’être cassé les dents et renoncer à toute prothèse susceptible de lui rendre le sourire. D’ailleurs plus personne n’y sourit. La bonne humeur d’autrefois a mis les voiles depuis que les linceuls et les étendards ont le vent en poupe. […] J’étais mille lieues de soupçonner que l’état de décomposition était aussi avancé, que les espérances étaient si mal loties. Je n’ignorais rien des animosités qui détérioraient les mentalités d’un côté comme de l’autre, de l’entêtement qu’affichaient les belligérants à refuser de s’entendre et à n’écouter que leur rancœur assassine ; mais voir l’insoutenable de mes propres yeux me traumatise. À Tel-Aviv, j’étais sur une autre planète. Mes œillères me cachaient l’essentiel du drame qui ronge mon pays ; les honneurs que l’on me faisait occultaient la teneur véritable des horreurs en passe de transformer la terre bénie de Dieu en un inextricable dépotoir.

pp. 296-297; fn. 235; L’Attentat 221: J’essaie de comprendre le geste de Sihem et ne lui trouve ni conscience ni excuse. Plus j’y pense, et moins je l’admets. […] Sihem devait porter sa haine en elle depuis longtemps, bien avant de me connaître. […] Pour aller jusqu’à se bourrer d’explosifs et marcher à la mort avec une telle détermination, c’est qu’elle portait en elle une blessure si vilaine et atroce qu’elle avait honte de me la révéler, la seule façon de s’en débarrasser était de se détruire avec.

p. 297; fn. 236; L’Attentat 213: On cherche à les cantonner dans des ghettos jusqu’à ce qu’ils s’y confondent tout à fait. C’est pour ça qu’ils préfèrent mourir. Quand les rêves sont éconduits, la mort devient l’ultime salut…
p. 297; fn. 237; L’Attentat 238: C’est quoi une maison quand on a perdu un pays.


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