

The Exile of Naturalization and the Fundamentalist Bubble in Yasmina Khadra's *The Attack*

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Abstract:

Terrorism has always been a prominent political subject and after September 2001, it became a highly influential issue to be dissected through various artistic and literary products. Literary manuscripts endeavored to portray extremism through the selection of characters and the construction of events from a specific perspective. Western cultures draw a falsified version of Islam when connecting it to extremist fundamentalism at the time where Islam denies all kinds of violence against human and nonhuman beings. The Algerian francophone writer Yasmina Khadra has effectively depicted the struggle of exiled and naturalized citizens and the state of in-betweenness they behold as long as they live between two lands though they truly belong to neither. In his novel entitled *The Attack*, Khadra manipulates certain autobiographical sketches to assimilate his own identity dilemma with his protagonist's. The present paper investigates the gap between extremism and resistance and it explores the myth of integration of the 'Other' inside the colonizing community. The theoretical section introduces the main concepts of the work including fundamentalism, naturalization and the terrorist novel whereas the analytical section explores the writer's portrayal of the attack and the paradoxical integration of the Palestinian couple inside the Israeli community. The paper aims at clarifying that the terrorist discourse has no significance in Islam and that violence is not the language of Muslims.

Keywords: Fundamentalism, Terrorism, Islamic Extremism, Integration, Yasmina Khadra, The Attack.



INTRODUCTION

Since 2001, an enormous number of books and research papers have been published about Islam, Islamophobia and Islamic fundamentalism.

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Scholarly publications extended to include more other terms that seem to be strongly tied to the word, to its root precisely, such as Islamic politics, Islamism, Islamic extremism, etc. Media was one of the means that were manipulated, specifically after September 11th, to increase the public interest in reading about Islam and religious fundamentalism. Books and articles were consequently consumed outrageously in the US and in other parts of the world. A Western curiosity appeared among people to understand the relation between religion and violence. The main focus was oriented mainly to Islam being called the religion of extremism, murder, and violations. Moreover, the academic treatment of the subject was unsafe of exaggerations, distortion and falsifications. The attacks of September 11th fertilized the global land for a total exclusion of Muslims, who were already marginalized, from ordinary life tasks and they were horribly tracked by different security institutions let alone by the attack survivors and witnesses.

Yasmina Khadra is one of the authors who endeavor to approach the issue of terrorism and extremism in their writings. In his novel entitled *The Attack*, he introduces his male protagonist who discovers surprisingly that his wife has committed a terrorist attack. Dr. Amin Jaafari has not heard of or shared his wife's extremist ideas as long as they both live happily in Israel. Sihem, the naturalized Palestinian wife, translates her potential hatred into a suicide bomb believing that the path toward freedom is bloody, brutal and gouty. However, it liberates her and her nation from the Israeli colonial settlement. The present paper seeks to find out the way the novelist interprets the gap between Islamic extremism and resistance as far as the Palestinian Cause is concerned. It also seeks to explore how Yasmina Khadra's portrait of the naturalized couple serves to dissect the terrorist discourse.

Moreover, Khadra's novel delves into the complexities of identity, loyalty, and the human condition against the backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One of the central themes of the novel is the quest for truth and understanding in the face of tragedy. The novel also sheds light on the broader political and social dynamics at play in the conflict, offering nuanced insights into the experiences of both Israelis and Palestinians living in a state of perpetual conflict and suspicion. Khadra's portrayal of Dr. Jaafari's inner turmoil is masterful capturing the conflicting emotions of grief, anger, and disbelief as he navigates the aftermath of the bombing and the revelation of his wife's involvement.

I-Masking/ Unmasking the Religious Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is a complicated concept to determine and

comprehend as it is open for inclusiveness and generalization. The American historian Robert Scott Appleby argues in his book *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* that all religious fundamentalisms possess certain characteristics as part of a 'family resemblance' (2000: 5). He attempts to explain the relation between religion, peace and conflict and the evolution of religions in modern societies. In other words, all fundamentalisms share the radical conviction but they differ in the details. The statement remains relatively correct and acceptable. Furthermore,

Gabriele Merranci explains: "All 'fundamentalisms' are the consequence of conservative religious groups and leaders who reject modernism and secularism, which are seen as 'sons' and 'daughters' of the Enlightenment." (2009: 2) The writer associates the various types of fundamentalism with religious preservation and closure against any attempt of secularity and globalization; extremist religious ideation is synonymous to the refusal of modernity that affects people's faith erroneously.

He moves further to consider culture as an influential factor to shape identity exactly like the bottle shapes the water it contains. (2009: 2) Culture with its distinctive constituents controls the individual's intellectual, artistic, religious and gender decisions and preferences. Fundamentalism is hence constituted and oriented by cultural laws and canons. Moreover, many Muslim scholars have attempted to clarify that Islam is not the problem, it is the religious and political extremism that motivates criminals to organize violent and deadly attacks regardless the fact that criminals might basically be Christians, Jewish or Muslims. It is the Western ideology, particularly after September 11th, that constructs the habit of attributing all the negative qualities, ugly behaviors and criminal practices to Islam and Muslims.

On the one hand and in his book entitled *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, the Ugandan anthropologist Mahmoud Mamdani provides a genuine look at the rise of political Islam in connection with extremism and fundamentalism dispelling, simultaneously, the ambiguity between the good and the bad Muslims; most of the judgments are political rather than religious. He focuses on the role 'Culture Talk' plays in affecting people's ideation and beliefs asking the question: "How can the literal reading of sacred texts translate into hijacking, murder and terrorism?" (2004: 20) He adds that what is known today as terrorism is not born out of the religious extremism but it is the result of the political modern movements serving the modern power. (2004: 62) For no logical reason, Islam is the only religion that is accused of violence, extremism and despotism. Islam is the only religion that threatens their future

and existence.

On the other hand, Malise Ruthven notices: "Fundamentalism is just a dirty fourteen-letter word. It is a term of abuse levelled by liberals and Enlightenment rationalists against any group, religious or otherwise, which dares to challenge the 'absolutism' of the post-Enlightenment outlook it professes to oppose." (2004: 6–7) In fact, most scholars, whether justifying or rejecting fundamentalism, have been exploring not the issue itself but the various labels attributed to it. Whether explained in terms of divinity and divine reward or historical and political remembrance, fundamentalism is strictly framed within political, socio-cultural and religious dimensions; it is manipulated distinctively against Muslims for ideological colonizing purposes.

Though religion is the engine of fundamentalism and though the religious essence is one of the specific universal characteristics of the phenomenon, most scholars approve the major dynamics that are common between all types of fundamentalism. Gabriele Merranci summarizes them as: "Acceptance of inerrant scripturalism; rejection of Enlightenment, secularism, modernity and modernism, difference; formation of and support for conservative ideologies, patriarchisms and enclaves." (2009: 27) In other words, the presence of spirituality, holy texts and conservative practices is generalized and largely approved. Without the scripture, fundamentalism ends up as a social theory that is contextually shaped but not textually.

Islamic fundamentalism or as it is known in Western ideologies as the Islamic radicalism is constructed as a result of the clash between political and socio-cultural factors regardless of the holy book instructions and requirements. Merranci suggests: "If Islamic fundamentalism, before September 11, was one case study among the others in order to develop universal theories of religious fundamentalism, since September 11 it has become *the fundamentalism*, and has often been blurred with another phenomenon: terrorism." (2009: 52) He, like a considerable number of scholars, have attempted to assure the link between Islamism and terrorism despite the threatening found in the Quran against violence toward others. All types of assaults are terribly rejected and punished according to the holy verses let alone murdering others which is not forgiven by his Majesty the Creator; murder is the greatest of the major sins.

However, this category of scholars gives importance to the analysis of the holy text and the role it plays in inducing and absorbing extremist political/ religious ideas. In fact, there is still a kind of confusion between

Islamic fundamentalism and Muslim Nationalism. The latter is rather associated with aims of decolonization and unity. The concepts may overlap at certain points and the Muslim identity is, yet, to emerge from within the tempest. Nationalism is accused by these scholars for being the candle wick for extremist thoughts that generate criminal attacks, religious and political hostilities and homicides. The Western representation of Islamic fundamentalism is, hence, based on locating it at the intersection between Marxism, anarchism and socialism.

In his book *Muslim Society*, the British- Czech philosopher Ernest Gullner summarizes the reasons for which some academicians insist that Islam is a secularization resistant religion beside being vigorously fundamentalist. First, Gullner refers to the historical ideological elements like, first, the perfect scriptural faith of Islam in addition to the fact that the prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) was the last of prophets and the status Muslims give to their prophet. Third, Islam rejects the clergymen differentiation and the Quran has the referential ultimate unique priority for religiosity. The writer also emphasizes the no-difference between the church and the state. (1981: 100) The sociologist Steve Bruce also insists that religion is the core element and the cause of fundamentalism moving further to form the belief that Islam is a totalitarian religion.

II-Fundamentalism, Inferiority and Femininity

Aside from Westerners' views about the phenomenon and about Islam which is described as the 'other' or the religion of the 'other', Muslims are portrayed as fundamentalists, in general terms, as stated by the Iranian-American author Minoo Moallem: "Islamic fundamentalism has become a generic signifier used relentlessly to single out the Muslim other in its irrational, morally inferior, and barbaric masculinity and its passive, victimized, and submissive femininity" (2005: 8). Westerners attribute meanings of inferiority and irrationality to Muslim men and women.

The author proceeds to include other anti-modern particularities to Muslims that turn them into terrorists and criminals because of the misuse of the Islamic concepts; she inserts: "Words such as *jihad*, *fatwa*, *faghih*, *imam*, *ayatollah*, *chador*, *shahid*, and *sharia* are frequently (mis)used to refer to Islam as a world of religious fixities, rigidities, and barbaric traditions that is tyrannical, violent, patriarchal, and anti-modern by nature"(2005: 8) Islam is not a religion that encourages violence nor does it adopt terrorizing deeds to persuade people to convert. It has never been a religion of terror or terrorism. it is a religion of tolerance, equality and peace.

The writers Nira Yuval-Davis and Gita Sahgal have suggested that fundamentalism has three main features: "It is a project to control women's bodies; it is a political practice which rejects pluralism; and it is a movement that purposefully conflates religion and politics as a means of furthering its aims" (1992: 3) They contextualize the term within a reactionary zone where it rejects and/ or relates to certain religious, political and feminist practices. In other words, while fundamentalists attribute a moral value to the role of women in their societies, religion aims at narrowing that role or lowering its effects and importance.

Furthermore, the two writers consider the Islamic insistence on women's veil similar to the Christian anti-abortion practice; they both restrain women's freedom of controlling their bodies the way they like; this is settled at the heart of the fundamentalist ideology that does in no way satisfy feminist principles. Besides, they claim that individualism is prioritized as a political preference that assures individual responsibility assumption over the mutual sanction. Western intellectuals direct the relation toward an ideological inclination at the expense of religion which draws no benefits for any of the religions.

Bobby S. Sayyid believes: "Popular conceptions of Islamic fundamentalism all trade on the figure of the veiled, passive and subjugated Muslim woman" (1997: 13) he assures the relation between Islamic instructions about the veil and the female subjugation. It, though, means that religion is a means of enslavement and subservience imposed on women for the sake of reducing the value and the role women play in their societies. It also signifies that a female piece of cloth has such power and control prioritizing the female characteristics and position and excluding masculine capacities and qualities

The American philosopher Elizabeth Spelman coins the term of the 'Essential Woman' who: "Speaks a particular language, eats particular foods, consumes particular products, dresses in particular ways, and so on"(1990: 159) The philosopher introduces the concept to affirm that these particular aspects are to be transformed into generalities and universal values to standardize the basic qualities for any woman to be called 'Essential'. Women who do not meet these qualities are called 'Inessential'; they may even be described as subordinate, passive and socially- culturally backward. That backwardness is often tied to wearing the veil for Muslim women. It is never linked to the various shapes and colors of clothes, having a cultural significance, worn by Christian or Jewish women; it considers mainly the

Islamic symbolic value of the veil. In Westerners' terms, that symbolic value is synonymous to female submission and male manipulation.

The current paper identifies, regarding Spelman's conceptualization, whether the Muslim veiled woman is an 'Essential' or an 'Inessential' woman taking into consideration her particularity of language, food and dress. The researcher provides various examples of 'Essential' women with no special consideration to the Muslim woman whose veil symbolizes her religious identity. For her, the veiled woman beholds no particularity promoting her to be incomparably unique.

III-The Myth of Integration: Naturalized Arab Muslims in Israel

Debunking the Western myths about Islam, veiled women and committed men is one of the issues that Yasmina Khadra has been treating in his writings as an Arab Muslim writer living in France. He has also been interested in fundamentalist thoughts as far as they invoke an identity crisis and the need to survive among victimized individuals. It is not only a religious dogmatic issue; it is a political imperial dilemma that Palestinian people have been struggling for more than five decades against the Israeli colonial forces. It is a long journey of fighting for freedom not an adoption of terrorist ideologies and beliefs.

The novel is mainly a descriptive portrayal of a bomb attack of a female character called Sihem wearing some explosives around her belly to let them explode inside a restaurant where some school children celebrate a birthday. It also depicts the aftermath of the attack particularly on her husband and the way it affects his life and career. The novel sheds light on both sides: the Palestinian and the Israeli sides and the violence committed against victimized civilians. Amin and Sihem are Palestinian Arab citizens who move to live in the Israeli side for professional, ideological and religious purposes leaving an enormous heritage of patriotism and freedom fighting behind. The happy life the naturalized couple enjoys together in Tel Aviv does not prevent Sihem from feeling guilty and ashamed about their betrayal to their homeland. Sihem succeeds in keeping the whole matter hidden from her husband who feels horribly astonished when he is told that his wife is the suicidal person responsible for the attack. Consequently, Amin is forced to start a journey of investigation and self-discovery in order to understand the motives behind Sihem's sudden and secret overturn.

In fact, Amin attempts to confront his fears and his doubts about the truth of his beloved until he reaches a point where he excuses her. More than that, he adopts her convictions that man can be himself only in his homeland

feeling the same pain of his people. Amin is racially rejected by the Israeli community he prioritizes over his Palestinian origins after his wife's attack; he is called a terrorist though he is completely innocent and loyal. He remains unsettled and torn; he neither belongs to the Palestinian side where he comes from nor does he belong totally to the Israeli side where he chooses to live. He feels terribly harassed when the injured man refuses, while dying, to be treated by an Arab doctor: "I don't want any Arab touching me, I would rather croak" (2006: 11) the man refuses to be harmed by an Arab woman then be treated by an Arab man; both things do not meet for him. Amin confirms his astonishment: "He spits at me... He stares at me, his hate-filled eyes on the point of rolling back into his head. He tries to protest ... He turns his head away so he won't have to look at me" (2006: 11)

The writer plays with words to reflect the hatred and grudge that Israeli citizens possess toward Arab people specifically the ones living among them. They do never consider them equal; they are, nevertheless, inferior even if the latter have already preferred to belong to the Israeli community after leaving their homeland. Belonging to the society of the enemy is like building a house above the sea water; it is about to fall apart at any time. It is not a matter of being a victim of a bomb attack that drives the man to react inordinately; it is a continuously increasing indignation of the colonizer whose target is to eradicate the colonized. Imperialism is planted in the minds of the citizens and it develops to the extent of possessing the right of excluding the owners of the land from their land to settle for a lifetime.

Amin and Sihem are victims of a falsified ideology that persuades them to move to the other side of the country seeking a promising future among the enemies. The injured man turns his head refusing to look at Amin, who is a doctor, which clearly means that he does not even accept him in his land; he, moreover, spits at him which signifies the enormous amount of contempt he endeavors to show face to face. Amin is not only despised; he is unable to respond regarding his professional duty. Khadra describes Amin's bloody wound of being the stranger, the distrusted foreigner: "In his eyes, despite his talents as a surgeon and my aptitude for getting on with people professionally as well as socially, I am still the Arab, inseparable from the wog handyman and, to a lesser degree, from the potential enemy" (2006: 51)

The Arab Palestinian Muslims fall consequently in the trap when they prioritize the Israeli side to live in because they become the biggest losers; they remain torn and they are deeply rejected by both sides as they show no loyalty to their nation, their religion and family. They betray their belonging

which betrays them accordingly; Sihem and Amin are not an exception despite their awareness of the reality that Khadra explains.

To be a full Israeli citizen, Amin has to demonstrate more privileges for the sake of integration. However, he is often seen as a representative of his community, the community of terrorists as most of his friends and colleagues believe. His neighbors expel him from his house and from the neighborhood because they see him as equally responsible as his wife for the attack; the poster written on his iron gate explains: "THE FILTHY BEAST IS AMONG US" (2006: 34).

A crucial identity quest is underlined for the category of naturalized Arab Muslims who remain unsettled in the receiving community that accepts them as long as they submit to its humiliation silently and passively. When they attempt to react unconventionally, they are thrown severely out of its boundaries. Amin is not only rejected in Israel, he is also unable to find himself a place back in his homeland; the Imam tells him: "To me, you are nothing but a poor orphan, without faith and without salvation, wandering around like a sleepwalker in broad daylight." (2006: 91)

Again, for Amin's Arab Muslim relatives, he is a renegade as he deceives them when he moves to live with their colonial enemies. He is blamed after he converts religiously, ideologically, culturally and even spiritually to the adversary world. However, when he decides, after his long journey to find the truth, to come back to his land and his people, he is deeply forgiven and welcomed. In other words, he who betrays his origin and belonging carelessly is destined to remain torn and unsettled wherever he goes.

Additionally, Dr. Amin Jaafari spends a considerable time looking for the truth and when he is face to face with it, he is strongly astonished; the leader claims:

Whose truth do you want to know, Dr. Amin Jaafari? The truth of a Bedouin who thinks he's free and clear because he's got an Israeli passport? The truth of a serviceable Arab par excellence who's honored wherever he goes, who gets invited to fancy parties by people who want to show how tolerant and considerate they are? The truth of someone who thinks he can change sides like changing a shirt, with no trace left behind? (2006: 96)

The intellectual doctor disavows from his responsibilities and duties toward his land, his origin and his family for a new passport; he is hardly capable of leaving his comfort zone while he is financially and socially safe. He lacks the courage of fighting for freedom with his Palestinian relatives. Dr. Amin

ends up going back to his community after he perceives Sihem's motives as a freedom fighter and not as a terrorist.

Very late, Amin conceives the truth that has always existed but he could not have seen it because he has been obsessed with the unreal shining principles of tolerance and coexistence; he wakes up at the hidden truth that he has never been successfully integrated in the Israeli community. He is rejected at the first stumble being called: 'the filthy beast', 'the dirty terrorist' or the 'Arab Traitor' though he is not accused of the attack. The doctor is a victim of extremism of another type; the Israeli fundamentalist ideology hits hard though it is mostly hidden and attentive.

IV-Between the Writer's Devotion and the Genre Revelation

In that type of literary writing, the selected novelist is challenging the existing patterns and structures to create an innovative stylistic manuscript that is both unique and reflective of the genre characteristics. His viewpoint is though implemented within the manipulation of certain variables that hardly contradict the global ideology.

1-The Algerian Francophone Novelist

Yasmina Khadra is the name used by the Algerian Francophone author Mohamed Moulessehouli who was born in 1955 in the small city named Kenadsa in the Algerian Sahara. He got enlisted in the Algerian army, against his own will, and he remained an army officer for 25 years. One of the very terrible experiences in his life is related to the 1990's period of bloody violence, civil conflict and political instability in Algeria which is known as the 'Black Decade' in which he got involved as a high-rank military officer. Most of the events he witnessed in that period are narrated and described in his narratives; the reason why he had to use a penname to publish his writings.

The writer's military commitment has not prevented him from starting a simultaneous literary career during the 80's using his real name at the beginning. He felt the need to use a pseudonym to avoid censorship because his first writings were exposed to the military review before publication; that was a zone of discomfort and nuisance for him. In fact, Yasmina Khadra is his second pseudonym and it is his wife's name declaring a new phase in the writer's identity and writing thematic and stylistic tendencies. Khadra is known for his prolific literary production but he is mostly known for his trilogy which is a significant contribution that portrays the bloody decade in Algeria. His last works, significantly, reflect the fundamentalist trend and the religious-political struggle between the Western and the Eastern worlds and

the impact of the radical ideology on civilians in ideologically colonized countries. Khadra's new perspective and writing style seems to be influenced by his retirement from the army and his self-imposed exile to France; his transition is not only a mode of life but rather a literary thematic stylistic move to better understand who he is and what he is doing.

In most of his works, the reader may absorb the conflict occurring between his strict military life conditions and his artistic inclination and literary aspiration. In his autobiographical narrative specifically, Khadra explains that his resignation to his father's desire has not arrested his creative pen. However, after moving to France and revealing his real name and identity, he was largely accused of being responsible for many violent attacks and murdering the innocent citizens, which remains relative, and he wrote *L'imposture des mots* (2002) to unveil ambiguities about his military past in Algeria. His autobiographical revelation denotes his literary inclination; after that, he shifts his focus to the newly emerging genre of terror fiction.

2-Khadra's Literary Commitment to the Genre

In fact, the evolution of the terror fiction is highly marked after the attacks of 2001 in the US because most American writers who turned to the genre concentrated on describing the trauma of the American victims and their survivors. It is due to Khadra's long military experience against terrorist attacks that he is able to write his prolific narratives about the issue. After he reveals his military history to the public, he is harshly blamed and criticized for his terrorist acts against citizens during his army service. The writer suggests some innovative norms to his new doctrine of writing in order to illustrate his perspective to explain the fundamentalist ideology.

Differently from the usual genre conventions, Khadra has not focused completely on the perpetrator herself and the fundamentalist process she goes through to be persuaded of her commitment. He has not concentrated on the victims of the attack who are the dead party children and their survivors. However, he sheds light on Sihem's close partner, her husband and his sophisticated journey toward the truth. Amin is the novel protagonist and this is the innovative experimentation of the writer because he turns the main focus toward the perpetrator's survivors.

The writer has selected a female character to fulfill the attack which is not usual in that type of fiction; she is totally different from researchers' description of the terrorist as a human monster or a cruel bloody psychopath. Sihem is a beautiful happy woman who seems to enjoy her life but she keeps her big secret hidden from her husband because she is unsure he would share

the same feelings with her. In other words, Sihem disappoints Blessington's beliefs of representing the terrorist as a heartless serial killer and a sociopath; she is as full of love and devotion as a real patriot or a brave freedom fighter. Khadra's portrait of his main character reaches the target which is to affirm that Sihem is not a murderer despite the successive use of the term 'terrorist' in the novel; Sihem is a devoted woman who is no longer capable of absorbing the huge mass of prejudice against her people silently. The main character is strongly trapped between various alternatives; then at a certain moment, she makes up her mind to commit her self-sacrifice act. It is a deep and complex conflict because she has to kill innocent people, and exactly children, with whom she lives for a while.

Additionally, contrary to the traditional plot that implements a linear stream of narration highlighting the impact of the terrorist attack on the victims or dissecting the radicalization process and the executive plan of the terrorist, the author approaches the attack differently. Khadra inverts the usual doctrine when he starts with the blast then moves to reveal the reasons and effects; in doing so, he partly ignores the victims who are the Israeli children in order to highlight the couple's journeys. The writer succeeds then to attract the readers' attention to Amin's struggle to uncover his wife's secret rather than the fulfillment of the attack and the essential steps of the bombing plan.

Besides, the implication of physical spaces from different regions of Palestine reflects the contradiction that a battlefield may behold. The geographical variation may at a certain time be tied to the linguistic opposition; this is what Khadra succeeds in describing when he portrays Jenin, Bethlehem and Tel Aviv. Every geographical region is a mere reflection of the situation of its inhabitants, the Palestinian side of the wretched colonized individuals and the Israeli oppressive colonizer. The author manages to tie ideological significance with spaces and terrains.

The surgeon and his wife meet various categories of people in the various regions they have visited separately; the special symbolization is highly substantial. The surgeon Amin Jaafari turns to a detective starting his investigation from his house in Tel Aviv where he re-examines his house suspiciously this time. He is traumatized to the extent that he revises all his past life with his wife, not only to understand Sihem's motives but also to know her problem with him as a life partner and how she could keep it secret from him. Amin, then, moves to Bethlehem to meet the people whom he believes have persuaded her to fulfill the attack.

In Kafr Kanna, he discovers that Sihem is a symbolic heroine for people there because she sacrifices herself for the country though he is hardly convinced of their belief. Amin goes further to Jenin, the real battle arena of the war; the writer describes Jenin at the tongue of his male protagonist as: "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" (2006: 129) In that part of the nation, there is no reason, no logic and no mind; it smells blood and it sounds death in Jenin.

3-The Politics of the Terrorist Novel

The American author John Hoyer Updike is one of the prominent writers who wrote fiction about terrorism. Through his novel entitled *Terrorist*, the writer elaborates the ideation of fundamentalism that satisfies Western scholars and readers attributing symbols of brutality and barbarism to Muslim characters. The picture that he portrays about Islam and Muslims fulfills the needs and requirements of Westerners who leave no room for suspicion or reconsideration of issues related to that religion specifically. The author focuses on the means employed by the protagonist's friends and neighbors to persuade him divert from Islam but they all fail.

It is true that the writer displays, through the main character, the impact of materialistic Americanization on the decisions and preferences of citizens regarding their religious tendencies. However, despite the protagonist's refusal to complete the bombing mission; this does hardly amend the underlined portrait he has already set at first by linking Islam to brutalities and hostilities. The image of a Jewish counselor trying to convince the Muslim protagonist to reconsider his suicidal decision in the very last moments highlights the paradoxical hypocrisy having a negative connotation for Islam and Muslims.

Many other writers have also shown interest in the topic of terrorism in fictional works; Francis Blessington, for example, believes that the terrorist novel is related to the political novel (2008: 117). It is the pressure that the political ideology exercises on literature and arts. The researcher also distinguishes that type of fiction by its concentration on "The dilemma of a character who is trapped among negative alternatives" (2008: 117) The character is hang between various substitutes before the beginning of any real act, which is not the case in political novels. This fictional genre dissects the fear of victimization of a religious and/or a political conflict; and the author may focus on the protagonist's evolution throughout the work as he may

direct the readers' attention to the victims and the attack impact. The reader's background may, though, determine his/ her attitude, whom to blame and with who to sympathize.

Moreover, the terrorist novel enjoys a distinctive plot, characterization and stream of acts that vary from other types of novels; the author aims at challenging the usual norms and conventions for the sake of building a dramatically tragic entity of events. The researcher Antony Kubiak thinks that a narrative of terrorism: "Attempts to destabilize narrativity itself-disrupting linearity, temporality, plot, character or whatever conventions may be regarded as essential to the production of stories, memories, dramas, or histories." (2004: 295) Kubiak shares the same view with Blessington about the centralization of the main character within a dilemma where he is driven to make a decision. The combination of its features creates an aura of complexity that does not only portray a certain ideology; it rather provides a deep understanding of terror itself as a phenomenon through a delicate selection of literary variables.

Is the terrorist novel a means of resistance or emancipation? Does the writer of this genre aim at changing the public absorption of its dialectics? Does the terrorist novel reflect the difference between the political and/or patriotic act and the religious and/or extremist act of terrorism? Richard Jackson explains: "The terrorism novel has not realized its potential as a mode of resistance, but has instead tended to reinforce the counterterrorism truth regime by reinforcing and maintaining the modern terrorism taboo." (2015: 396)

Various legal, political, intellectual and media institutions have contributed in normalizing the discourse of terrorism and the structure of counterterrorism set worldwide targeting the issue. However, that fictional genre surpasses its literary potential toward a political manipulation and socio-cultural oppression where the oppressed speaks with the oppressor, the terrorist speaks with the counterterrorist. Jackson suggests that the violent Subaltern can speak not only with the counterterrorist but also with the reader on an equal footing. (2015: 396)

In fact, the literary depiction of the highly influential political force known as terrorism evolves after the famous terrorist attacks of September 2001 in the US under a large popular demand to portray what occurred behind the scenes. The writer of that genre is also expected to explain to his readers what makes a human being choose terror; readers want to get: "Inside the mind of the terrorist" as Francis Blessington claims (2008: 116) Meanwhile,

the researchers Robert Appelbaum and Alexis Paknadel work on the typology of terrorist novels highlighting the period between 1970 and 2001; they shed light on the categorization of terrorist fiction according to the criteria of diversity, influence, representativeness and merit. Their main focus is to find out how these literary works reflect terrorism through the presentation of both victims and terrorists. They assure by way of diversity and inclusion: "There is no one kind of terrorism novel, no one kind of terrorist, no one kind of terrorist conspiracy, and no one kind of thematic engagement with terror." (2008: 406) They take into consideration the variety of genres and registers of that type involving the romantic tragedy, the epic adventure, the police procedural, the comedy of manners in addition to many others.

Importantly, terrorism is related physically to nihilism and anarchy; and psychologically to the disintegration of the self. It is additionally perceived as being economically related to the love of money and socially linked to the desperate desire of revenge. Besides, characters of terrorist novels range between perpetrators and victims, supporters and opponents. Terrorists are, in general terms, described in: "Largely derogatory, dehumanizing and demonizing terms" Blessington affirms (2008: 118) They are depicted as human monsters, heartless and cruel while killing others cold bloodedly; they are even described as sociopath serial killers whose presence represents the danger that people fear inside their societies.

V-A Female Terrorist or a Freedom Fighter

That section of the paper focuses on the gap between terrorism and resistance. It aims at answering an essential question about when a freedom fighter can be called an extremist especially when the issue is related to the Palestinian resistant and the Israeli colonizer. The latter is hardly named, in global measures and international legal standards, as a terrorist or a fundamentalist despite its criminal attacks and genocides. Answering that type of quests may be found in political studies and researches but the aim of the current paper is to seek the literary portrayal of the socio-political conflict in the narrative of the francophone writer.

In the selected narrative, Yasmina Khadra utilizes the word 'terrorist' to introduce the female character who fulfills the attack though she is an Israeli citizen at the time of the event. Sihem is, obviously, the female character that the writer implements in the terrorist attack; she is described as being emotionally manipulated by some Palestinian relatives who are already involved in their revolutionary attacks to free their land. Unusually, the writer

does not choose a male character to play the role of a terrorist; he prefers a woman instead for specific purposes.

Additionally, Laura Sjoberg and Caren Gentry claim: "Women engaged in political violence are often depicted as sexual deviants" (2008: 5) the researchers' notion falls apart in Khadra's narrative because Sihem is immune from sexual deviance; her comfortable economic and social status prevents her from deviance. However, nobody denies the version that a non practicing-Muslim Palestinian woman prioritizes naturalization rather than struggling with her people against the Israeli enemy. Her self-blame is the culmination of her feelings of regret that builds on the secret fulfillment of her plan.

It is true that Sihem enjoys a happy life in Tel Aviv after naturalization; this does not, however, mean that she has not been torn between the two lands and the two identities. One of the two identities is incredibly hidden from her life partner who believes she is extremely happy, loyal and clear with him. The husband's nephew shows Amin that he knows many more things about Sihem than the doctor does; he knows that she has not been happy wearing that Israeli mask of a smiling face, Adel confirms:

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 are the child of a suffering people. There is no happiness without dignity, and no dream is possible without freedom. The fact of being a woman doesn't disqualify or exempt a resistance fighter. Men invented war; women invented resistance. ... She wanted to *deserve* to live, *deserve* her reflection in the mirror, *deserve* to laugh out loud, not just to enjoy her fortune. (2006: 136)

Happiness for a female fighter is not tied to large fortunes and fancy parties; it entails, though, freedom and dignity. Wearing the mask is no longer fruitful for her; she prefers death rather than a life of cowardice and withdrawal.

A resistant woman is mistakenly described as a terrorist when she joins the war as a devoted soldier whose obsession of freedom liberates her. Sihem's persistence stems from the pride of her Palestinian origin; Adel affirms to his uncle: "I didn't want her to blow herself up, but she was determined. ... She said she was a full-blooded Palestinian, and she didn't see why she should let others do what she ought to do herself." (2006: 132) She ignores the surrounding calls and suggestions of avoiding the bombing plan but she insists on self-sacrifice as she believes she is a martyr and she will go

to paradise. Amin does not share the same belief nor does he seek revenge or martyrdom; he is merely shocked of his late discoveries.

Besides, the philosopher Spelman identifies the required norms for a woman to be called an 'Essential' woman; women who do not meet these norms are called 'Inessential'. Is Sihem an Essential woman regarding Spelman's definition? Does she satisfy the particularities of that social category? In fact, as a wife of a surgeon, she enjoys a luxurious lifestyle and she possesses multiple particularities regarding her social and economic status inside the Israeli society. The surgeon's wife is thus an 'Essential' woman whose particular food, language, products and clothes transcend her above the ordinary conditions of the subaltern women. Sihem the terrorist or the freedom fighter is, however, an 'Inessential' woman because she moves to another level of specificity but the latter does not enable her to turn her particularities into universal norms for women; she is then denied her right to belong to the community of particularities. Sihem represents the exiled or naturalized citizens who are torn between two lands, two societies and two identities; they belong to both and to none of them at the same time. She is Palestinian but she lives in Israel; she is naturalized but she fights for the Palestinian Cause; she is a beautiful happy woman but she is a suicide bomber; she is a Muslim woman but she lives with Israeli enemies.

Amin's description of his wife is highly symbolic. He wakes up at last to discover that his wife has been suffering from the state of in-betweenness; she feels regret of having moved to the other side of the land, to paradise as she had believed it to be; she is unable, though, to confront herself or her husband with that late awakening: "Sihem must have been carrying that hatred inside her forever. She grew up among the oppressed, as an orphan and an Arab in a world that pardons neither. ... She must have been carrying around a wound so awful, so hideous, that she was too ashamed to show it to me." (2006: 136). Furthermore, the researchers Mohamed Amine Khoudi and Amar Guendouzi consider Sihem as a double victim of her gender and of her country: "Her commitment to the freedom of her people confronts two obstacles: the Palestinian patriarchal order wherein the leading roles are restricted to men, and the cruelty of Israeli colonial policy." (2021: 252)

The character of Sihem can be approached from various angles regarding her personal features and behaviors. She might be an Islamic extremist, a violent terrorist, a bloody heartless killer, a resistant, a freedom fighter, a symbolic heroine or a happy subservient passive wife. Yasmina Khadra succeeds in making the female character wear out various masks at

the same time implying various incompatible identities. For Muslim advocates of the Palestinian Cause, Sihem is a heroine and a great freedom fighter, but for Western lovers of the Israeli colonizers, Sihem is an extremist terrorist who loves blood and adores serial killing.

VI-Dismantling Extremism Unbound by Religion

The most crucial question regarding the issue of extremism is about the line that divides its facets; i.e: the limits between freedom fighting and terrorism. A murdering act can be classified as a terrorist attack inasmuch as it can be named a freedom fighting act; it relies merely on the standpoint from which one is judging the whole matter. A traditional adage says that one person's terrorism is another person's freedom fighting. Answering the question depends basically on the perspective from which one is looking at the event and where one stands. In relation to Yasmina Khadra's novel and characters, the Israeli violent attacks are perceived as legitimate defending acts while the Palestinian violent acts are reflected as terrorist attacks. In order to persuade readers of a certain thought, the writer implements that description to take his readers where they would perceive the whole scene.

In fact, Yasmina Khadra's novel brings the two contradictory views together in the same work; Amin hears from both sides before he makes up his mind at last. On the one hand, Amin's Israeli friend Navid explains how terrorists throw themselves unconsciously into a bombing act. Navid describes the Palestinian Cause as a series of useless violent attacks that unconscious people commit. As a colonizer, he believes that his adversaries should submit to their domination silently as long as they are permitted to live under an enormous mass of persecution.

Moreover, the Israeli policeman named Navid ignores the damage his community has caused in Palestine since they first arrived at the land as settlers then became owners; he fights for his people but forgets that Palestinians are also fighting for their land, the land of their fathers and grandfathers. This is what the leader attempts to transmit to Amin; in the war of liberation, resistance is required and that real men do not submit to the colonizer, they fight until they die or triumph: "We spend our evenings gathering our dead and our mornings burying them. Our homeland is violated right and left, our children can't remember what the word *school* means ... simply because you are nice and warm in your golden cage, refuse to see the inferno consuming us. It is your right, after all." (2006: 96)

Again, the leader wants Amin to understand that it is a necessity, not a choice, to fight and kill instead of being killed not because they are extremist

individuals but because they are freedom fighters. Importantly, they have to destroy the 'Other' before they are destroyed; it is a survival struggle where all means are allowed.

On the other hand, the leader affirms that they just want to live peacefully; the right they have been denied for decades since the Arrival of the Zionist colonizers. He assures that they are not extremists and they are not terrorists. Additionally, the leader's insistence on persuading the surgeon starts from the origin of the issue; he defines and identifies basic concepts for him then gives him a space to reflect and decide. The leader assumes first: "An Islamist is a political activist. He has but one ambition: to establish a theocratic state in his country and take full advantage of its sovereignty and its independence." (2006: 95) According to him, the Islamist concentrates only on the political achievement of domination and imposing a complete authority. He then continues to explain fundamentalism: "A fundamentalist is an extremist *jihadi*. He believes neither in the sovereignty of Muslim states nor in their autonomy... The great Muslim community that will extend from Indonesia to Morocco and which, if it cannot convert the West to Islam, will subjugate or destroy it." (2006: 95)

At that moment, Dr. Amin Jaafari is actually trapped between the two opposing perspectives; he compares Navid's reflection with the leader's definitions and convictions. He feels terribly lost and torn; he is thrown into the nowhere because both of them are correct, for him, and both are incorrect. The leader resumes: "We are not Islamist, Dr. Jaafari, and we are not fundamentalists, either. 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 and nothing less." (2006: 95) By doing so, he denies being fundamentalists, Islamists and terrorists; they are merely freedom fighters, the leader insists. Yasmina Khadra relies on the technique of setting the protagonist in a state of in-betweenness and doubt so that the latter decides which direction to follow.

CONCLUSION

Siham is a Palestinian freedom fighter, Amin is a reality seeker and they are both victims of a certain kind of religious fundamentalism; their experience of naturalization in Israel teaches them that extremism translates people's attitudes and thoughts about foreigners, converts and about the 'Other'. Integration occurs uneventfully when people acquire the language of tolerance as part of their culture and identity. Siham's journey of self-sacrifice assures her early awareness and understanding of the naked truth of

integration and fundamentalism attributed by force to Muslims. However, Amin's journey of self-discovery is a logical consequence of the inner conflict between the latent strong desire of liberating his nation and the dream of having a successful luxurious life in the adversary land. Sihem responds to the call of her heart and so does Amin at last. "The unravelling of the intricacies related to the mind frame of Sihem and those of his Palestinian brethren helps the protagonist in attaining enlightenment regarding his ancestry and his existence." (2019:60) Claimed Susy Antony.

Terrorism has no religion, no identity and no belonging; it is one of the multiple facets of fundamentalism which is erroneously attributed to all Muslims in the world. Anybody is a potential project of being an extremist when he/she is humiliated and disintegrated by the 'Other' at a religious, racial or sexual basis. Sihem is not a terrorist because she used to live peacefully in her country before the oppressive colonizers turned life in Palestine into a hellish arena of bloody battles. Sihem and Amin are victims of the Israeli falsified ideology of tolerance, love and equality; they, however, perceive the truth very late. They both end up defending their land at any price; it is not an attempt to justify violence or bomb attacks but it is a willingness to explain that one has to fight hard for freedom; a free nation gives birth to a free individual.

The francophone Algerian author has already experienced a similar situation of living outside one's country due to certain circumstances in addition to the clash between the two identities and the two contradictory entities. He writes about the variables of exile, naturalization, extremism and freedom out of his deep experience of living in the country of colonizers and using a pseudonym to write and get his works published. The objective of Yasmina Khadra's narrative is hung between his attempt to deny the fundamentalist doctrine of all its versions and the fear of tolerating destructive colonization. Throughout his works, he encourages no form of violence against others; he, nevertheless, motivates his readers to tolerate variation and welcome the 'Other' regardless of the Other's religion, origin, race or gender exactly as he affirms: "The bottom is no good for anybody" (2006: 39)

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