CREATIVE RITUAL: EMBODIED FAITH AND SECULAR REASON IN CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM FICTION

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CREATIVE RITUAL: EMBODIED FAITH AND SECULAR REASON IN CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM FICTION

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This project argues that recent literary representations of Muslim faith practices portray the productive interplay between mindful reason and embodied habit. Drawing upon critical theories in philosophy, anthropology, and cultural studies that explore how secular rhetoric marshals a narrative where the Enlightenment subject distances himself from his somatic experience, my project focuses on authors who by contrast depict Muslim characters actualizing themselves through dedication to physical faith commitments. The project examines novels about Muslims that evoke how the cultivated body and its structured experiences can construct social agents in a way that diverges from liberal humanist models of self-realization. "Creative Ritual" then discusses the implications that such an attention to embodiment may have for aesthetics and the study of literature. Taking to task the idea of reading as a solitary, notional practice that operates only in the mind through linguistic signification, I attend to what I call "habituated reading": the internalization of story and rhetoric into a subject's body, the embodied experiences the reader recalls in order to understand narratives, and the normalizing effect of habitual exposure to sets of narratives. Habituated reading, I argue, has ethical and political ramifications for generating productive multicultural cohabitation in our contemporary age.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Noor Hashem received her Bachelors in Fine Arts in 2006 from the University of California, Los Angeles in the subjects of Sociology and English Literature, with a Creative Writing emphasis. In 2011 she received her Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Cornell University.

This is dedicated to my parents, Mazen Hashem and Iman Arabi-Katbi, without whom I could not have embarked on this project, and to my husband, John Edward Robbins, without whom I could not have completed it.

What I have accomplished is due to Allah. The mistakes are mine.

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Introduction

Cultivated Bodily Experience in Muslim Fiction

Tahmima Anam's novel *The Good Muslim* rehearses a common motif of contemporary Muslim fiction: a character's negotiation of the seemingly conflicted relationship between secular commitments and faith practices, and the manner in which these manifest through cultural constructs of the body, reason, and autonomous agency. The novel establishes Maya, its protagonist, as the properly trained secular liberal subject who is informed by modern notions of subjectivity. *The Good Muslim*, the second book in a trilogy about Bangladesh's independence, introduces Maya when she leaves her surgical studies to practice midwifery and teach sexual health in the country's small northern villages, partly out of a dedication to her feminist-nationalist-humanitarian principles, and in part to distance herself from her brother's turn to religion. But when the mystical rituals of faith practiced by her once-revolutionary, recently fundamentalist brother succeed in healing her mother's uterine cancer where medicine has failed, the narrative turns to Maya's reflections about belief:

> Maya had taught herself away from faith. She had unlearned the surahs her mother had recited aloud, forgotten the soft feather of air across her forehead when Ammoo whispered a prayer and blew the blessing out of her mouth. She had erased from her memory all knowledge of the sacred, returned her body to a time before it had been taught to kneel, to prostrate itself.[1]

Though this scene partakes of a long literary tradition where a mystical religious ritual confounds scientific reason and prompts inward introspection from a character, what is unique here is that this passage exemplifies a turn in recent Muslim fiction where religious ritual is explored for its *intentionally* productive and creative effects on the body. Here, the faith practice of Qur'anic recitation is described as empowering fecund embodied experiences which generate a knowledge and realization of religious belief. Maya is "taught" prayer and the chapters of the Quran by their

[1] Tahmima Anam, *The Good Muslim* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011): 205-6.

physical materialization through her mother's body. The sound of the surah "recited aloud" is linked to the blessings her mother whispers, which are delivered to Maya's forehead by a "soft feather of air." She is touched, in all senses of the word, by the sound and physical caress of recitation.[2] This experience is related to prostration, so that reading the Qur'an is one faith practice within a set of many rituals, including prayer, that comprise a sensory, bodily education. These practiced acts of faith are reinforced through interpersonal bonds, subverting the typical representation of faith as radically personal, independent, and internal. Forgetting these rituals becomes a process of active unlearning: Maya's ambivalent rejection of the abstract metaphysics of faith is accomplished over time through a refusal to subject the body to the discipline of submission, as enabled by the practice of physical prostration.

This dense network of interactions between what Maya knows, believes and is able to enact through her body's creative capabilities establishes many of the preoccupations of this dissertation. This novel stands as a case of contemporary literature about Muslims that, alongside similar scholarship in the social sciences and the humanities, considers ritual and faith as functioning with something more than just symbolic resonance. Such recent literary representations of Muslim faith practices portray the productive interplay between mindful reason and embodied habit. Drawing upon critical theories in philosophy, anthropology, and cultural studies to explore how secular rhetoric marshals a narrative where the Enlightenment subject distances himself from his somatic experience, I focus on literary authors who by contrast depict Muslim characters actualizing themselves through dedication to physical faith commitments. These Muslim characters are illustrated as devoted to the practices of embodied

[2] This focus on the importance of the aural experience of the Qur'an, as opposed to the specular experience of reading the Qur'an, is one invoked in Islamic tradition, such as the story of Umar ibn al-Khattab—a companion of Muhammad and later the second Caliph after Muhammad's death—who was moved to conversion after overhearing his sister's recitation.

rituals which serve them as creative, generative actions with personal and social effects. I argue that these contemporary novels and films about practicing Muslims evoke how the cultivated body and its structured experiences can construct social agents in a way that diverges from liberal humanist models of self-realization. The project then turns to what implications this attention to cultivated embodiment can have for aesthetic theory and the study of literature. Reading is often characterized as a solitary practice, a withdrawing into the imagination and self, operating only in the mind through linguistic signification. Instead, I attend to what I call "habituated reading": the internalization of story and rhetoric into a subject's body, the embodied experiences the reader recalls in order to understand narratives, and the normalizing effect of habitual exposure to sets of narratives. Habituated reading, I argue, has ethical and political ramifications for generating productive multicultural cohabitation in our contemporary age.

The first half of "Creative Ritual" focuses on literary representations of Muslims and the role cultural norms of embodiment and practice play in those representations. There is a wealth of fiction about Muslims which rehearses the trope of the friction between the bodily demands of formal religious rituals and those that are tagged as free, uninhibited "secular" rituals, such as drinking, sex, and drug use. The first chapter, "The Secular and the Muslim Character" looks at fiction that represents Muslim characters participating in such secular 'rituals' and corporal practices, which serve as evidence of the characters' successful integration into the modern world. By contrast, religious rituals that slide away from normative secular-liberal embodied experience in their striking public, aural, and physical characteristics are read as religious aggression in these representations. I argue that such portrayals of Muslim ritual tend to fill novels and stories written in English during and before the 1990s, when the prevalent theoretical focus in postcolonial studies was on Islam as a purely cultural product that structures notions of

belonging and difference. However, various political and cultural developments since then have complicated the subject of religious Muslim belief and reintroduced it as a subject of interest: some of these being the global movement in Muslim communities that has been variously called the "Islamic renewal," "Islamic revival," or the "piety movement," September 11 and its related subjects—including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, torture in Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, and new technologies of warfare such as drone strikes – and, finally, the Arab Spring. These contemporary events and others like them have made the subject of Islam and Muslims more widely popular in the English-speaking world, expanding it beyond purely academic interest. Furthermore, a generation of young "homegrown" Muslims in secular countries such as the United States, Britain, and Germany, ones who strongly identify as both modern subjects and practicing Muslims, and the diversity and creativity of their approaches to this integration, has demanded new thoughtful consideration of the relationship of religious belief, ritual practice, and embodied faith in a secular world order.

Thus the first chapter of "Creative Ritual" lays the theoretical foundation for the project by articulating how these conventional portrayals of Muslim rituals are informed by underlying paradigms about agency, rationality, individuality, community, and embodiment within secular epistemology. It draws from scholarship on the secular and the post-secular, including the work of William Connolly and Talal Asad, to dissect how secular discourse rhetorically privileges rationality over embodiment and imagines agency as a question for the individual but not groups. After locating the influence of this discourse within previous Anglophone Muslim fiction, the project turns to novels that illustrate a shift away from this framework, arguing that recent portrayals of Muslim ritual have challenged these assumptions. Theories in phenomenology and material culture inform my argument about cultivated embodiment, particularly Saba

Mahmood's inquiry into thinking about and articulating a type of agency which is not defined in opposition or defiance of cultural norms, Fadwa El Guindi's concept of Muslim rituals as activating particular spatial and temporal experiences, Ibn Khaldun's particular form of *habitus* which marries the rational and the experiential, and Jane Bennett's emphasis on the vitality of objects and things to avoid anthropocentricism and the privileging of intentional action. Furthermore, this renewed interest in the subject of Muslim faith in the modern, and arguably secular, world order is reflected not only in the epistemological shift I chart, but also in recent attempts to articulate a genre of "Muslim fiction" with a defined corpus. The first chapter thus concludes by engaging with the discussion about what constitutes "Muslim fiction" and what the category offers for interpretive practice. It tracks recent definitions and defining features proposed by Amin Malak, Geoffrey Nash, Claire Chambers, and Wail Hassan; furthermore, I argue that while they have produced important contributions to the genre's definition, what has remained absent in the definitions is a serious consideration of the relationship of these texts with Islam as a religion that articulates guiding mores, principles, and behaviors.

Robbin Yassin-Kassab's *The Road from Damascus* (2008), the subject of the second chapter, illustrates a text that directly engages with these religious codes, and exemplifies the shift in portrayals of Muslim rituals as productive and generative. It argues that the novel inserts itself into the popular debate about Islam and secular epistemology, and whether they are at odds. The novel troubles typical tropes by portraying autonomous agency asserted through, rather than in opposition to, publically visible religious traditions of habituated practice, particularly practices that mark the body, such as the headscarf and the beard. These British Muslim characters are portrayed as having dynamic relationships to embodiment and belonging as articulated through prayer and ritual dress. It portrays the scarved female, Muntaha, as already

inhabiting a comfortable relationship with her integration of Islam in her British life. By doing so, the novel subverts the trope where the female body acts as the measuring rod for either liberal emancipation or religiosity by shifting the emphasis away from Muntaha's adherence to religious sartorial codes, and instead exploring male instantiations of the paradigm, which I call the "hijab framework." In the novel, the secularly adamant Sami, who by shaving his beard "carv[es] modernity on to his cheeks and chin," learns to recognize how the body is always cultivated, even in secular discourse, an insight he comes to terms with by observing his religiously practicing wife Muntaha. Through Sami, and his experience with the Muslims practicing such rituals, the novel explores the privileging of certain experiences of embodiment in secular societies and the epistemological assumptions that undergird them. Since *The Road from Damascus* portrays veiling as an issue concerning the anthropology of dress, I draw upon Fadwa El-Guindi's anthropological study of non-coerced forms of dual-gendered veiling and the ways they reflect the relationship of cultural bodies to space. Building upon her argument about the "activation" of modes of space through sartorial manipulations, I articulate the novel's representation of the headscarf and prayer as creative acts.

In the third chapter, the project unpacks a conventional trope in fiction in which Muslim ritual is portrayed as affectively and somatically violent: portrayals of terrorism. I argue that in these pervasive portrayals, the subject is ultimately guilty of fervor—of failing to properly regulate and subdue religious emotions. While secular discourse encourages objective, emotionally-neutral reason, religious fervor is affective escalation and excess that is feared to be not only consuming, but also infectious; dedicated faith is acceptable only as long as it maintains a certain degree of emotional detachment. Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) confounds these emotional expectations. The novel does not explore the types of affect

that are associated with terrorism or fundamentalism and explored in the terrorism genre, like religious zealotry or the emotion of fear prompted by the act. Instead, it focuses on the way emotion is culturally structured, legitimized, and encouraged—and it does so with a focus on how they manifest in particular secular institutions, such as the corporate world, privileged university culture, and citizenship in America. Through a close first-person perspective that disables the readers' emotional distance, the novel follows the reasonable, personable character Changez and his experiences of social situations in the U.S. in which intense emotion is tolerated and encouraged: in his sexual-romantic feelings for Erica, and his aggressive and opportunistic feelings promoted in his promising corporate career with the valuation firm Underwood-Samson. The novel's ambiguous conclusion in Lahore – where Changez may or may not be involved in terrorism – shifts consideration away from the event of terror and the religious affect of the terrorist, focusing instead on relatable intense emotions in order to unsettle any easy reading of fervent zeal. By focusing on impassioned secular subjects and the political projects that sustain them, the novel unsettles the rhetoric which draws the experience of Muslim religious affect as monstrous, and in doing so reveals how fervent affect informs all discourse and ideology. Mohsin Hamid's novel reveals how the figure of the terrorist works to exemplify a kind of fervor that exceeds comprehensible and appropriate affect in secular rhetoric, and how discomfort with excessive zeal colors normative ideas about the acceptable intensity of religious dedication and embodied faith.

The project's final chapter concludes by turning to the aesthetic implications of affective, embodied ritual, arguing that we must attend to the ways narratives register in bodies and the ways we bring our embodied histories into the aesthetic experience, all of which influence the way we construct rational discourse. It builds upon and brings together an eclectic collection of

theoretical insights made in the plastic arts, material theory, cognitive science, and the Muslim intellectual tradition, such as work by Bruno Latour, John Dewey, and Seyyid Kutb, in order to probe the topic of the experiential, embodied resonances of aesthetic appreciation. The chapter looks at how Orhan Pamuk's novel *Snow* (2002) stresses the role of ritual, cultivated embodiment, and the enduring effects of past experiences in producing and reading artistic forms. It argues that *Snow* exploits current discourse about political Islamism and secularism to explore a philosophy of art experience that attends to ritual embodiment and passion. I show that the novel burlesques various genres, depicts archetypal religious and secular characters, and stages a politically thrilling plot, but continually wrenches focus back to questions about performance, aesthetics, and bodies of texts, such as the protagonist Ka's written journal entries, his poems, the filmed theatrical productions to which the poems refer, the fictionalized book *Snow* as written by the character Orhan, and, metafictionally, to Pamuk's actual novel, *Snow*. Ka, though a secular writer, claims to receive his poetry as revelation—even while his memory of his past embodied experiences and his current obsessive passion for his lover inspire his writing. The novel sets up archetypes of liberals, leftists, and religious fundamentalists, while, by contrast, the bodies of texts it offers up are given complexity and interpretive suggestiveness. These bodies of texts— Ka's written journal entries, his poems, the filmed theatrical productions to which the poems refer, and the fictionalized novel *Snow* as written by the character Orhan— are experienced affectively and connect characters in a radically intimate manner that crosses epistemological and physical boundaries and highlights the relationship of the reader to the aesthetic, material object. The aesthetic object is illuminated in its affective and embodied potentialities, and in its metafictional gestures, the novel asks the reader to reconsider her own embodied, affective relationship to fiction. Drawing from this, this dissertation argues that the act

of reading can be thought of as a ritual practice or cultivated experience, and argues for the importance of attending to the ways narratives register in bodies, influencing the experience and realization of rational discourse. In conclusion, I draw out the significance of attending to the cultivated, embodied, affective resonances of aesthetic experience—what I call "habituated reading"—for theories of cohabitation in multicultural and pluralist politics.

Chapter One
The Secular and the Muslim Character

In global contemporary discourse—from popular discourse, to political discourse, and even within the discourses of various academic disciplines—proper modern faith is personal, private, and transcendental experience that cannot be shared. That is, it is an individual's discretely chosen relationship to the world, an organizational schema that is privately felt and held. By contrast, the visible, public, or communal rituals linked to the institutions of belief are often construed as nonessential. They are supplementary actions and outward manifestations of that inner essence of belief which only serve the symbolic, performative, or representational purpose of displaying the adherent's affiliation to a religion, or their claimed degree of religiosity. In political discourse in the West, Muslim rituals in particular are commonly read as indicators of excessive, suspect, and dangerous spirituality or passional commitment to Islam that is incompatible with the modern secular project.

The theme of the conflicts between religious dedication and secularism is at work in many contemporary Anglophone novels portraying the intersection of Islam and the West, and conventionally, literature reflected this approach to Muslim ritual. Much of the fiction celebrated by the literary establishment and university curriculums depicted outward religious commitments through an oppositional lens, illustrating either the futility of some faith practices to inculcate true belief (such as rote memorization of the Qur'an and portrayals of harsh coercive methods employed in madrasahs) or the social and political menace of others (such as maintaining the five daily prayers, donning a headscarf or growing a beard). In the film *My Son the Fanatic* (1997), based on the short story by Hanif Kureishi, it is the son's embrace of prayer and his new beard that alert his father to his radical fundamentalism and, in the movie adaptation, explain the

son's recourse to violence.[3] In Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane* (2003), which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, the female protagonist Nazneen begins as a practicing Muslim and subjugated wife, but by novel's end has reached emancipation by releasing herself from the constraints in her traditional life, including socio-cultural pressure and religious obligations, which she trades for secular modern British priorities.[4] While such works of fiction often engaged evocatively in questions of race, class, immigration, and imperialism, their characterizations of devout characters are uncomplicated, reflecting the assumptions about ritual as gratuitous or unthinking action. Anam's novel, by contrast, reflects a turn towards the representation of ritual as having the potential to enable productive and creative experiences of the world, as found also in novels of Leila Aboulela, G. Willow Wilson, and Rayda Jacobs, and independent films such as *Bilal's Stand* (2010) and *Mooz-lum* (2010). In these and other similar works, portrayals of ritual extend beyond its symbolic function to take into consideration its actively constitutive action, exploring the materiality of the body-that-practices.

While debates about religion and secular life largely play out in the social and political sciences, aesthetics plays its role in the conversation: the fallout of the Rushdie fatwa, the Van Gogh film and murder, and the Danish cartoon controversies are considered watershed events in which fiction, literature and the arts measured and assessed the incompatibility of an inherently illiberal Islam with the secular priorities of freedom of speech, creative expression, and novel thought. The significance of literature in this debate is in part why this dissertation turns to fiction to probe the question of secularism and Islam, striving to show how certain literary

[3] In the short story, the son's faith and adherence to Islamic rituals is part of his rebellion against his father's embrace of a liberal modernity that was historically implicated in colonial violence and in modern conflictual race relations; the son's faith does not indicate any metaphysical absorption. While the father's actions at the end of the short story provocatively challenge the singular association of violence with one particular ideology, the motivations of the son's religiosity are nevertheless always reactionary and a projection of other psycho-social conflicts. Hanif Kureishi, "My Son the Fanatic," *Love In a Blue Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997).
[4] Monica Ali, *Brick Lane: A Novel* (New York: Scribner, 2003).

representations of Muslim faith practices challenge the conventional tropes of a natural antagonism between reason and embodied habit for the modern, secular subject. I argue that contemporary novels and films about practicing Muslims evoke how the body-sensorium and its structured experiences can activate metaphysical capabilities and conceptual sensibilities.[5] Drawing on methodological models established in philosophy, anthropology, and cultural studies which contend that secular rhetoric marshals an intellectual genealogy where the Enlightenment subject divorces himself from his somatic experience, this project focuses on works of fiction that by contrast depict Muslim characters actualizing their faith through dedication to physical ritual commitments. To develop these arguments the dissertation draws upon a heterogeneous selection of theories and scholarship, including critical scholarship from the Islamic tradition as well as reference to its religious texts (namely, the Qur'an and *hadith*).[6] Combining this with critical scholarship on the secular, and theories of phenomenology, the material turn, and affect studies, I argue contemporary literary fiction about Muslims often portrays cultivated habits that work at various registers of the creative sensory body to construct social agents in ways that diverge from liberal humanist models of self-realization. Ultimately, I challenge the notion of reading as a solitary practice that only works notionally as linguistic signification by highlighting what I call forms of "habituated reading," the internalization of story and rhetoric into a subject's body and the effect of habitual exposure to normative narratives. Or as Jean-Luc Nancy suggests, that "aesthetics will have to be reworked at the level of bodies with *naked* senses …*arts* have to be reworked, through and through, as the *technē* of the creation of bodies."[7]

[5] I make a similar argument, more specifically about embodied narrative strategies, in "'The Feast of Ants': The bodily agency of Qur'anic storytelling in Hisham Matar's *In the Country of Men*," *The Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, special issue on 'The Qur'an and modern world literature,' 16:3 (October 2014): 39-61.
[6] This is in part a pragmatic choice, as these are rich materials through which to support my research. It is, however, also a principled choice, as it would be irresponsible to take Islam and Muslims as my subject matter without referring to its scholarly traditions and intellectual history.
[7] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus,* trans. Richard Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008): 115.

Attending to these ideas is also useful in that it makes possible a preliminary, specific, non-comprehensive definition of Muslim fiction that recuperates passionate religious commitment as a legitimate characteristic of the genre and which models a type of definition that attends to religiosity without making recourse to hegemonic or universalizing assertions. This approach allows me to put forward a heuristic that defines the corpus of Muslim fiction based on the content of the work and the discourse in which the texts are mutually engaged, as discussed in the final methodology section of this introduction. In this way, the texts this dissertation takes into consideration are treated as serious aesthetic contributions to all literature as well as texts that participate in the wider conversations about contemporary political and social institutions and the underlying presumptions about autonomy, agency, gender, and sociality that inform them. In this way, the dissertation does not devalue Muslim fictions as merely reactionary, merely an effect of global modernity, but rather recognizes them as legitimate engagements with contemporary discourse and aesthetics.

The arguments of this dissertation are built on three driving assumptions. The first is that, as a popular discourse, secularism is rhetorically naturalized and universalized, obscuring how the secular carries certain culturally and historically particular epistemological assumptions. These inform the secular as a practice, as a lived experience that privileges some emotional and embodied investments in the world over others, such as the sharp conflictual division it presupposes between the experiences of rationality and emotionality, science and faith, mind and body, the individual and the group, and spontaneity and ritual. The second assumption is that it is possible to locate productive challenges to these secular assumptions through certain approaches and commitments to Islam by its faith practitioners, or "the religious virtuosi," as well as in

Islamic textual tradition.[8] These approaches do not represent all Islam, but do represent threads of which attend to embodiment, habitual practice, and positive sociality. Expanding upon these assumptions, this dissertation will read contemporary Anglophone Muslim fiction written for a global audience which represents Muslim characters in secular spaces who challenge the normativity of these assumptions and illustrate other possibilities by drawing from Islamic tradition regarding ritual, belief and thought. Finally, the third driving assumption is that all these considerations have important implications for revitalizing aesthetic theory about the habitual practices of textual experience and the role of embodiment in reading.

Methodological Submissions & Theoretical Commitments

> 'Commitment' – the action of entrusting to, an engagement in
> 'Submission' – as in to acquiesce to and to present

The Secular Worldview

In contemporary political discourse, secularization (as a historical process), secularism (as a political institution), the secular (as an epistemological tradition), and secularity (as the socializing paradigm of the personal experience of the good life) are imagined as the natural conclusion of modernity and the civilized civil subject. The concept of the secular is packaged with other such as humanism, human rights, scientific objectivism and discovery, ethical rationalism, the protection of diversity and multiculturalism, the continuation of the Enlightenment project of Western tradition, and the protection of the autonomous, agentive subject-citizen who benefits from and requires secularism in order to flourish.[9] This citizen acts

[8] I borrow this term from the editors' introduction in *Varieties of Secularism In a Secular Age,* Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig J Calhoun, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010): 18.
[9] My categorization of secularism, the secular, and secularity draws from Talal Asad's definition of the secular, secularization, and secularism as the epistemic category, political doctrine, and historical process, respectively as defined in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003). I add "secularity" as the socializing process to attend to the manner in which the abstraction of the

as the model of the proper modern subject, normatively male or masculine, who asserts a self-directed, subjective will that achieves interior, pre-social, authentic desires (desires which happen to align with secular priorities). In secular rhetoric this individual is imagined to require freedom as defined by independence from any limitations on his idiosyncratic choices, thus allowing the subject to transcendence the shackles of the body and society.[10] Socialization thus gets linked intimately to governance, with the assumption that such freedom is dynamically linked to one model of statecraft, in which religion is made radically personal so that it does not become radically political.[11] In the rhetoric of this predominate version of the secular and its benefits, there is no desirable alternative to this model, which the educated mind naturally inclines to and which the fully modernized subject requires.[12] Furthermore, secularity is imagined to celebrate the defiant subject even while it absorbs it and regulates conflictual sensibilities. For example, the important work of feminism has been coopted into discourses that justify military action, so that the defiant sensibility is implicated in the imperial project whereby third-world women are thought to need emancipation by the West's terms.[13] In fact, except on

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epistemology is viscerally experienced as a way of live or mode of experience that is chosen by the individual in contrast to a life of religious expression in secular and non-secular nations, sometimes consciously and other times not. For texts that trace the different genealogies and traditions that underlie secular concepts of the good life, see Asad's *Formations of the Secular* as well as *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors,* eds. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006).

[10] Robert Bellah characterizes this as the defining mode of modernity, where, since the 17th century, the theory of human autonomy developed out of the freeing of the individual from obligations of God and institutional religion in several spheres, namely economics and politics ("Confronting Modernity: Maruyama Masao, Jürgen Habermas, and Charles Taylor" in *Varieties of Secularism*, 36).

[11] In *Varieties of Secularism,* Nilüfer Göle notes the lack of critical inquiry in the implication of secular histories with the colonial drive ("The Civilizational, Spatial, and Sexual Powers of the Secular" 252).

[12] So much so that the terms 'modernity' and 'secularism' are often used interchangeably. C.f. José Cassanova's critique of William Connolly in *Powers of the Secular Modern*.

[13] See Lila Abu-Lughod's "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" (*American Anthropologist* 104.3: 783-790), and famously, Audre Lorde's "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color,* Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981). For an interesting articulation about how feminist discourses strategically engage and disengage with differential subjectivities, see Chela Sandoval's "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World" (*Genders* 10 [Spring 1991]: p 1-24).

the institutional, political level, where secular principles are explicitly codified, the secular is not thought of as a system that designates mores, behaviors, even while it does so.

These characteristics associated with the secular infuse much of literature, especially fiction that deals with the Muslim world. Much of the fiction written before the mid-1990s up to the contemporary moment trains its critical gaze upon important social concerns such as the challenges facing postcolonial societies, the hypocrisies of former imperial states and empires, racial politics, socioeconomic disparities, modern immigration, the exploitation or persecution of minorities, and questions of assimilation and integration. However, whereas such novels presented ethically challenging and complex narratives about such subjects, the treatment of Islam and Muslims within their pages generally accepted and perpetuated the tropes that portray religion and its adherents as lingering archaisms in a region too sluggish to step into the modern, global, secular world.

Critical theory differs on what the defining characteristic of the secular actually are: some focus on it as a political system of separation of church and state; as the privatization, personalization, and interiorization of belief; as its role in the protection of (minority) religions in all their diversity from the governing state, but also the protection of individuals from religion and its institutions (an emphasis on the latter illustrates secularism's French form, laïcité); as a differentiation of the world into "sacred" and "profane" spheres; as a different temporal experience with history and authority; and as the passing of certain rights of control of death and life from God to secular authority of nation state.[14] In his essay "What is Enchantment," Akeel

[14] For the differing ways the secular is applied, see the first chapter of William E. Connolly's *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). For another genealogy of the term, see John Keane's "The Limits of Secularism" in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (Azzam Tamimi and John L Esposito, eds., Washington Square, N.Y.: New York University Press, 2000). For examples of arguments about the different experience of temporality, see again Kean, William Connolly's "Belief, Spirituality, and Time" in *Varieties of Secularism*, and Fadwa El-Guindi's *By Noon Prayer: The Rhythm of Islam* (Oxford: Berg, 2008). For an argument

Bilgrami describes how the secular might be characterized a shift where life was once structured by morals that were thought of as a contract with an external source to a modern existence where the external world is experienced as brute matter upon which we attach and command our own inner dispositions and values.[15]

Classically and most popularly, the secularization thesis is defined as the separation of church and state on the political level, or, on the social level, the retreat (or repulsion) of religious belief into the private sphere and into the interiority of the self-willed individual—the Weberian 'disenchantment of the world,' to use Marcel Gauchet's aphorism.[16] Charles Taylor calls this the "subtraction theory" of secularism, where religion was removed from the political spheres of life (his "secularism 1" definition), and from the social experience (his "secularism 2" definition). As part of a critical scholarship sometimes called the post-secular which attempts to redefine the secular in order to take into consideration the staying power of religion in the modern age, Taylor proposes a third definition. This third secularism describes how the modern subject's experience and expression of religion has shifted since premodernity from an experience where the belief in God is socially inevitable to one in which doubt is the prevailing experience through which one approaches God and belief. [17]

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about biopolitics similar to Agamben's *homo sacer* as applied explicitly to secularism, see George Shulman's chapter in *Powers of the Secular Modern*.

[15] Akeel Bilgrami, "What is Enchantment?" in *Varieties of Secularism* in *a Secular Age,* 154.

[16] In "Thinking about religion, belief, and politics," Talal Asad argues that this overlooks the experience of enchantment in modern secularity, which has been displaced from the religious sphere into consumer culture and which is now "understood as a state of rapture and delight" (*The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*, Robert A. Orsi, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011: 48).

[17] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). In this third definition, "secularism 3," Taylor characterizes the 'pre-modern' experience of religion as a time in which society as a whole did not question the existence of God, and where individuals had to opt-out of belief. Modernity, by contrast, is an era in which one begins with the premise of the questionability of God, and must opt-in to believe. In this modern age, in short, doubt is the preeminent experience of faith. However, these claims only hold if examining some cultures and religious histories over others. I am also unconvinced that in premodernity the experience of faith was always one of certainty; religious literature from many different faith backgrounds and eras suggests that faith has always been an experience of reconciling doubt and certainty. For a discussion of some of the ways in which the subtraction theory derives from a particular Christian and European history, and an consideration of faiths in which

In *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, Habermas similarly restates his influential position on the subject of religion's development in modern secular society, theorize how religion should ideally function in public secular society since it has persisted. Habermas' argument maintains some basic assumptions from classical secular theory: he maintains that religion should remain apart from politics and policies, but allows that religion may be involved in the political process by providing a neutral critique "from below" through "anarchic use of communicative freedoms," so long as religious "language" is "translated" into the universal secular idiom in order to be "accessible."[18] This imagines secularity as a universal 'language' and a foundational right of humanity, subordinating religious 'language' as superfluous and possibly dangerous unless contained.

What is interesting about what is sometimes called "the Islamic revival" or the "piety movement" within modern global Islam experienced in a secular global world order is that it confounds the above two theses. The revivalist movement, recently fictionalized in novels such as *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf, The Road from Damascus,* and *Minaret*, among others, shows young Muslims that experience religion primarily through certainty and who express their religious ideals in the secular spheres of public using un-'translated' a-secular terms transliterated straight from the religious tradition.[19] Though there is earlier evidence of the seeds of this movement—as evidenced from example by the short *Toward Islamic English* written by Isma'il Faruqi in an attempt to standardize translation and transliteration of Arabic-Islamic terms

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this model would not work, largely from the 'axial' age, see John Milbank's "A Closer Walk on the Wild Side," in *Varieties of Secularism*.

[18] *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere.* Judith Butler, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011): 25-6. Habermas, in dialogue with Charles Taylor and moderated by Craig Calhoun, draws a distinction between secular "language" and thought and religious 'language,' which he argues that, unlike the secular, comes packed with certain socially constructed histories of behavior, assumptions, and philosophies. Craig Calhoun explicitly says "what Jürgen calls 'secular' I'll call 'neutral'" (67).

[19] Mohja Kahf, *The Girl In the Tangerine Scarf: a Novel* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2006); Robin Yassin-Kassab, *The Road From Damascus* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2008); Leila Aboulela, *Minaret* (New York: Grove Press, 2005).

in English in the early 80s—the movement has only recently popularized and hit a critical mass.[20] There are some arguments that it has even become the dominant approach to representing Islam in the secular world, and some critical work has already tried to correct that trend.[21] Even if we take this as true, fiction literature is only recently beginning to portray this movement. Contrary to Taylor's argument, the experience of faith in such communities is not predominately of doubt, but of self-confident certainty—which is why they are often perceived to be antediluvian, fundamentalist or 'Islamist.' Moreover, such pietists often approach of reform less 'anarchically,' which makes them seem like conformists. Saba Mahmood characterizes the Egyptian women's mosque movement as part of this larger "piety movement" that has been developing in the Muslim world since the 1970s, sometimes called the "Islamic Revival" or "Islamic Awakening" in Arabic (*al-ṣaḥwa al-Islāmiyya*) even though its boundaries are not circumscribed by the Arabic-speaking part of the Muslim world. She defines this piety movement as "a religious ethos or sensibility that has developed within contemporary Muslim societies."[22] I contend there is a like and related movement within Muslim societies inhabiting non-Muslim or secular societies and countries, such as the United States and Europe. Like the Egyptian example, these communities, from both the Sunni and Shia sects, tend to hold a range of non-liberal ideals, and could be characterized as social conservatives. There is, of course, a growing liberal Muslim movement; however, whereas the latter's goals and focus is often social integration into secular society, religious reform (on the level of practices and sometimes even of the literature and some epistemology), and the amalgamation of secular principles with private Islamic conviction, the former's goals and focus are maintaining social distinctiveness, on

[20] Ismaʿil R. Al-Faruqi, *Toward Islamic English* (Herndon, VA: Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982).
[21] One example is Nadia Fadil's "Not-/Unveiling as an Ethical Practice" (*Feminist Review* 98.1 2011: 83–109).
[22] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005): 3.

devotion to religious coherency (which rests on notions of traditions of authenticity), and the challenge Islamic principles can provide to normative social modes such as secularism. This characterization is descriptive, not prescriptive; it is not meant to valorize the former or the latter above the other, but to consider their differing approach to their subject positions. It also does not take into consideration the communication, co-participation, and comingling of these two positions, which would require an ethnographic or sociological study. However, much of celebrated and critically praised fictional representations of the Muslim subject have been written from this liberal approach, which celebrates the individual, her socially oppositional agentive capabilities, her rich interiority made up of self-realized and authentic desires that are revealed when social conformity is removed, and which imagines the best approach to faith as privately formed beliefs. This dissertation is interested, however, in the complex, compassionate portrayals of Muslim character in fiction that reflect the 'nonliberal' revival pietist movement and their experience with the secular, which are sometimes written by authors who can be categorized as part of this piety movement, but more often written by authors who have encountered such attitudes and explore them through their work.

Of course, just as the pietist movement is not only one of many approaches to Islam in the modern world, but also internally diverse, so too there is no way to fully define secularity as one entity, mode or history. Critical discourse has worked to further complicate the definition of the secular, secularism, secularization, and secularity: for example, Ahmet Kuru makes a distinction between the "passive" and "aggressive" political forms that secularism takes towards religion.[23] Wendy Brown cautions against historical narratives of secularism that give too much credit to a kind of willed consequence of ideas rather than taking into account other condition

[23] Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies Toward Religion: the United States, France, and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

forces. Judith Butler argues that post-secular discourse can work to reinscribe religion as the dominant mode of experience, so that secularization becomes a "fugitive way for religion to survive."[24] Others argue that the focus on the secular as genealogically Western/Christian phenomena overlooks the variety of influences that worked to create the contemporary instantiation of secularism, which throughout history has encountered and been informed by other modes of though and cultural forms, and posts on the Social Science Research Council's blog The Immanent Frame, and books like *Varieties of Secularism*, *The Post-Secular in Question* and *Rethinking Secularism* consider the different manifestations of the secular in non-Western countries.[25] Robert Bellah calls these "multiple modernities" which are products of their own "premodernities."[26]

Despite the importance of these variations and diverse influences on the subject, and although there is no one final, uniform manifestation of secularism, it would be just as naïve to overlook how the secular is, in a sense, monolithic, in that it is a discourse that is disseminated globally and through certain exchanges of power, and that these not only delimit authoritative realizations of the secular and its deviations (or deviant forms), but define the terms by which the discourse is to be legitimately discussed. That is, there are certain shared presumptions that inform such discussions, even when they are disagreed with: what Asad calls secularism's "origin narratives."[27] These derive in large part from the Western tradition; its specific intellectual cannon and historical heritage is considered fundamental to the realization of secularism in Europe and North America, and drives the public imaginary of legends and myths

[24] Wendy Brown, "The Sacred, the Secular, and the Profane: Charles Taylor and Karl Marx" in *Varieties of Secularism*, 72.
[25] Philip S. Gorski, *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Social Science Research Council, 2012); *Rethinking Secularism*, Craig J. Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[26] Bellah, "Confronting Modernity" in *Varieties of Secularism*, 36.
[27] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 56.

about how secularism came to be and why that is essential to its realization. What I call secularity, Charles Taylor calls the "social imaginary" of the secular—that is, apart from its institutional structures and the theoretical discourse, which are studied by an academic minority, the secular is "carried in images, stories, and legends" that structures its practices in modern life.[28] Drawing from Habermas and Husserl, Robert Bellah calls these "lifeworlds."[29] These terms attend to the practical, lived function of the secular, which works to legitimize its functions through its structuring of particular experiences. In Talal Asad's Foucauldian terminology, the secular establishes institutions and technologies of power that discursively authorize certain kinds of agencies and histories, which consequently configures specific revolutionary or emancipatory possibilities. Exploring the recognizable kinds of histories and agencies this model celebrates can lay bare what it limits, discourages and occludes. As Jonathan Sheehan argues, the attempt to locate the historical moment when enchantment exited the world and disenchantment became the organizing principle of society—that is, locating the moment of 'when' the secular came to be—is not only impossible to pinpoint, but is ultimately more significant in what it illustrates about the contemporary moment and the need to construct such a history; in other words, what counts are the stories we tell, how they defines us, and what they reveal.[30] The dissertation works through some of the stories we tell about ritual, embodiment, sociality, and agency, and how these are girded with epistemological assumptions that are being contested and amended.

This dissertation will focus secular privileging of cognitive, objective, rational public life and pragmatic behavior (tagged as a masculine sensibility) and the celebration of autonomous,

[28] Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004): 23.
[29] Bellah, "Confronting Modernity" in *Varieties of Secularism*, 47.
[30] Jonathan Sheehan, "When Was Disenchantment? History and the Secular Age" in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*.

autogenetic agency and subjectivity while it encourages the compartmentalization of emotions, spirituality, ritual, embodied life and sociality (associated with "feminine" or female sensibility). This autonomous agency gets tagged to the concept of "empowerment," which Talal Asad argues come to stand for the "metaphysical quality defining secular human agency, its objective as well as precondition" and which is a key concept which discussions about the modern Muslim figure revolve.[31] In secular rhetoric, this right to empowered agency that characterizes secularity tautologically legitimizes the need for institutional secularism, and so "the essence of the human comes to be circumscribed by legal discourse" in which "the human being is a sovereign, self-owning agent—essentially suspicious of others—and not merely a subject conscious of his or her own identity. It is on this basis that the secularist principle of the right to freedom of belief and expression was crafted."[32] While secularism guarantees the empowerment of the autonomous subject, the Muslim subject, by contrast, is imagined to be inherently lacking this capability, and thus his rehabilitation is always in question. Once in the public, social sphere, the agentive individual becomes self-governing through rational discourse which is thought to be the only way to cohabit safely with diverse groups and insure functional statecraft. But, as William Connolly argues, this emphasis on Kantian reason deprives secularism of attention to the potentially productive phenomenological and affective resonances that inform all political thought, resonances which religions have made better use of and which could lead to a fuller realization of democratic representation.[33]

The critical work of the post-secular project, as it is referred to, is approached from many vantage points from which writers try to theorize alternatives and departures from the secular dilemmas addressed above: some turn to religion, others try to locate alternatives from within a

[31] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 79.
[32] Ibid 135.
[33] He makes this argument in *Why I am Not a Secularist*, 9-13.

secular, non-religious historical and intellectual tradition.[34] Some turn to the work of writers from the Judeo-Christian religious traditions—such as Kierkegaard's oeuvre as an opposition to Kantian reason, and Spinoza's theorization of multivalent monasticism based in embodied sensation and object agency. By contrast, outside of disciplines that study Islam and its intellectual tradition, Islam is very rarely considered a source for alternative solutions that are universally applicable; in fact, more often, Islam is approached as the paradigmatic problem or opposition to the secular. In *Rogues*, Derrida presents political Islam ("a certain Islam") in the modern political world as the only "religious or theocratic culture that can still, in fact or in principle, inspire and declare any resistance to democracy," as a result of the "ambiguous secularization" of modern states.[35] Zizek uses the headscarf (as well as the Amish *rumspringa*) to illustrate the difference between authentic true choice and the manipulation of free choice by institutions of ideological power (including democracy) that may establish what is, formally, an exercise of choice, but which is not truly free because it is produced within constraining ideological constructs that delimit

[34] For example, William Connolly looks to what he calls the "minor tradition" of scholarship in the West through which he can assert a non-Christian, non-religious 'monastic metaphysics' that already resides within secularism and which has untapped potential for revitalizing immanent sensibilities. "Europe: A Minor Tradition" in *Powers of the Secular Modern*, 75-93.

[35] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays On Reason* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005): 29. Though this initially seems laudatory, Derrida's argument only uses Islam to posit how embedded the rest of the world is in the secular and the democratic worldview. Islam is rhetorically set as the "Other of Democracy" (as the chapter title goes) and of the world. Furthermore, Derrida is quick to speculate how best to neutralize the danger inherent in this opposition. He argues that it may be important to search for and catalogue "in different readings of the Koranic heritage, and in its own language, the translation of a properly democratic paradigm"—that is, to search for the secular in Islam, rather than having the two thoughts that can challenge one another. Furthermore, he is interested not in the actual intellectual history of the tradition, but prefers to search for Greek and Roman thought within Islam: "what gets passed on, transferred, translated from Europe *by* pre- and post-Koranic Arabic," such as the already famously studied links between Aristotle as read by Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and Plato as read by al-Farabi (31). For an excellent examination of the encounter of Islamic philosophers with Greek philosophy as engagement and contribution in an extended conversation of philosophy, rather than approaching Islamic philosophy in search of what it borrows or translates, see the "Islamic World" portion of the podcast series "The History of Philosophy without any Gaps" (Kings College): episodes 120-195.

knowledge and perspective (thus *free* choice).[36] There is too little disregard, as Fadwa El Gundi puts it, of "Islam as a living phenomenon and the Qu'ran as a living document." [37]

Jean Luc Nancy begins his phenomenological text *Corpus* by arguing that the Western-Christian cultural mantra (which informs the modern Western subject of liberal humanism) is exemplified by the words attributed to Jesus in the Roman Catholic tradition: *hoc est enim corpus meum* (this is my body).[38] He compares this to three other mantras: "schema Israel" (sic), the Buddhist "Om mani padme hum," and finally the Islamic *shahada*, the statement the principle tenet of radical monism in Islam ("*la ilaha illa Allah*; there is no god but God).[39] The implication here is that this Western body mantra evokes the culture's dedication to the physical, the mundane, the worldly, the profane (to the exclusion of the Other mantras). It confirms the assumptions and misconceptions that Muslims reject the lived body, trying to control, hide, and negate it. But what if this was read another way: that in the Muslim tradition, the body is not located in God, but elsewhere? That its significance is located as being one creation in relation to all creation, rather than a copy of the Eternal Godhead? And what if concepts such as advice *(nasiha)* challenge the idea that informed, self-realized thought must be radically *free*?

I am uninterested in claiming that one ideological construct ensures one experience of embodiment. Rather, I am interested in what kinds of embodiment are privileged, under what conditions they are encourages, and how discourses articulate these as certain forms experienced by certain subjects at certain times as imperatives. In what contexts is secularism imagined to be the primary site of fully-realized and freed materiality (especially as unfettered embodied

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[36] In chapter six, "The Obscene Knot of Ideology," of Slavoj Žižek's *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006): 381-7.
[37] Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 1999): *xv*.
[38] Nancy, *Corpus*, 3.
[39] Inaccurately transliterated as "Allah ill'allah," which would translate to "God except God." The Jewish *Shema Yisrael* ("Schema Isreal" in Nancy's text) begins a verse from the Torah referring to God's singularity, and the Buddhist *Oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ* is a mantra associated with the nurturing of ethical notions.

experience), and in what contexts is it imagined as transcendental logic untainted by subjective personal experience? What is gained by constructing Islam is a polar opposite that encourages dangerous metaphysical commitment (to death over life, to soul over body), or paradoxically, as encumbered bodily restraint and regulation?[40] To take this approach is to recognize how every ideology constructs, authorizes, and celebrates experiences of transcendence, emotion, embodied ritual, and material culture with relation to abstraction, metaphysics, and rationality. For example, in Western secular societies, sports is the domain in which aggressive training and ritualized embodiment is celebrated; group sports and military training promotes social bonds and loyalty over individuality; sex is at once the domain of experimentation and self-expression but also of rites of passage that are policed by rigorous sexual health knowledge and mores; personal experiences of love and passion are held at a premium as expressions of individuality; education and knowledge celebrates the transcendence over community and the body. In Islam, the Qur'an repeatedly exhorts individual reflection, deliberation, and learning to understand (and be emotionally-spiritually moved by) faith while it vitiates conformity in ancestral-based belief; it sets itself apart as a unique message but also narrates its message as the continuation and reformation of a long-standing Judeo -Christian tradition. Moreover, the disciplinary regimens for the organization of embodied experience vary from Sufi, Sunni, and Shia approaches to Islam, not to mention the variation within those categories. Though this dissertation cannot attend to all these variations, it will avoid making stark dualistic arguments about transcendence and embodiment, attending instead to the contexts in which certain experiences are celebrated and when and where they are discouraged, as well as how this works to structure possible articulations of dissent and belonging.

[40] In *"*Thinking about religion, belief, and politics,*"* Talal Asad notes that "the disciplined subject is said to be the distinctive figure of modernity and its freedom" while discipline in Islam is oppressive (54).

This will require disentangling how secularity celebrates individual agency and rationality by organization of the experience between transcendence and immanence, the immaterial and matter in a particular manner. What needs to be unpacked is how both the secular and Islamic cultures establish sensibilities about embodiment and affect, how they are structured by particular "forms of life that articulate them" and "the powers they release or disable," and how rhetorically they depend on a "grammar of concepts" rehearsed and naturalized in their own "discursive spaces."[41] Furthermore, it is particularly important to take into consideration Asad's insight that a there is no singular discursive space that acts on one the subject, but rather a "multiplicity of spaces—phenomenal and conceptual—whose extensions are variously defined, and whose limits are variously imposed, transgressed, and reset."[42] This observation allows us to recognize that the secular, the religious, and other cultural modes work on an individual in diverse and interlocking ways; a focus on how Islamic ritual challenges dominant modes in secular culture is, in large part, a conceptual and rhetorical strategy that highlights one mode over the other in an attempt to reveal and trouble current frameworks, rather than pretending at some ontological difference between the frameworks.

Muslim Ritual as Cultivated Embodiment

When the novels with which this dissertation concerns itself represent the way Muslim lived experience reveals something about the secular, they often do so with consideration of the effect of ritual as cultivated embodiment. This mirrors similar critical inquiry in anthropology, where some attention has turned to the study of Muslim rituals and the forms of life they encourage or create. Such studies attempt to consider the relationship between the discursive and

[41] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 17, 25.
[42] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993): 8.

the embodied forms of life within communities where a disciplinary, normative regimen is often considered desirable and productive; Saba Mahmood's explores the headscarf within a women's mosque movement in Egypt to articulate a novel conception of agency that is defined by its deference to religious norms rather than a resistance against them; Charles Hirschkind attends to the significance of the aural lived experience and what he calls the "epistemology of the ear" as illustrated by cassette-tape sermons circulated in Egypt's counterpublic; Lara Deeb probes the piety practices that infuse enchantment into the modern lives of a Shia community in Lebanon; in *Genealogies of Religion* and *Formations of the Secular,* Talal Asad spends some time unpacking how secular discourse authorizes particular experiences of the body with regards to emancipation and dissent.[43] In a parallel theoretical turn, contemporary theorists writing about embodiment, affect, and material culture within secular and predominately Western culture have sought to rework the language and structures of thought that present phenomenal experiences as a binary opposition to thought and rationality. To do so, William Connolly folds the embodied into one of thought's functions by characterizing the body-sensory experience as the "guttural" or "visceral register of thought."[44] In *Upheavals of Thought,* Martha Nussbaum argues that emotions are part of the engine that drives moral thought and prompts moral action, calling emotions the human's "cognitive/evaluative" capability; Connolly's less rationalizing language for his similar approach figures emotion as sensational "thought-imbued intensities".[45] Like many other theorists who—tellingly—find in art the proper metaphor for figure this cooperative relationship between body and mind, Robert Bellah employs the musical concept of "basso

[43] Portrayals of Islam ricochet between illustrating it as a punitively puritanical and rationalistic religion (with "softer" mystical, ritualistic variants that are considered radical deviations from that original form), and on the other hand, as rigorous (if not arduous) in its ritual demands, particularly the five daily prayers and the month of fasting.
[44] Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, 13.
[45] Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 3; *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, 13.

ostinato" as a metaphor for how to attend to the work of transcendental and immanent qualities of a culture.[46] Though these writers are not thinking of Islam and religious ritual when they make these claims, their ideas can serve to supplement explanations of the purpose of ritual as cultivated embodiment.

Since one of the dissertation's contentions is that these characterizations of Muslims seeks to see how cultivated embodiment challenges our concept of the forms agency can take, it is important to attend to the manner in which the Islamic religious texts and intellectual tradition organize ideas about agency alongside servitude to God and submission to faith practices and principles. For the purposes of this dissertation, this will only be a preliminary sketch of a vast and diverse canon. Like many religions (as well as other institutions, such as the secular nation state) Islam negotiates the rights of the individual's self-definition along with the responsibilities he holds to the other—whether that be society, or in religion, God and creation. In Arabic, the term 'submission' (*istislam*) is linguistically related to 'peace' (*salam*) and 'Islam'.[47] To believe is to submit to God's religion. This belief is aided, furthermore, by a specific etiquette—what Mahmood refers to as 'docility':

> Although we have come to associate docility with the abandonment of agency, the term literally implies the malleability required of someone in order for her to be instructed in a particular skill or knowledge—a meaning that carries less a sense of passivity that one of struggle, effort, exertion, and achievement.[48]

Whereas in contemporary discourse, docility and submission are related to passivity, timidity, and even the abdication of individual agency and the foreclosure of the capability for self-realization, here 'docility' acts instead as willed openness to development, as an active

[46] Bellah, "Confronting Modernity," *Varieties of Secularism,* page 45 footnote 18.
[47] In "Islam is (not) Peace," Murad Idris reads how the rhetoric of 'peace' and 'submission,' and the translation of the word Islam as one or the other, has historically served orientalist and imperialist discourse, as well as how it has been employed politically and socially in order to legitimate certain ideological constructs of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.
[48] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety* 29.

commitment to hone and master ethical skills. Linking these two concepts of docility and submission makes it possible to explain another Islamic concept, that of the terms that come from the root word ‘a-b-d. ‘Abd (often used in the Qur’an to denote the believer) is most often translated as slave, sometimes as servant; muta‘abid denotes the person who enacts that belief; ‘abada is the act of believing. Many have argued the concept should be translated as slave in order to challenge the primacy of the individual above all else in secularity; as Talal Asad puts it:

> For liberals, a slave is primarily someone who occupies the most despised status of all, and therefore the institution of slavery is utterly immoral (conversely, to be considered fully human, creatures must own themselves). Yet by employing the metaphor of slavery to describe the human relation to God, the Islamic rhetorical tradition stands in powerful contrast both to the figure of kinship (God as Father) and the figure of contract (the Covenant with God), which are part of Judeo-Christian discourse. As God’s slaves, humans do not share any essence with their owner, who is also their creator, nor can they ever invoke an original agreement with him.[49]

Though the distinction is telling, I would argue with Assad that to use the term slave is in fact to invoke the problematic connotations that underlie the modern sense of the word as not only submission and subordinate status, but inherently of oppression and abuse. Since this is not compatible with the Qur’an’s paradigm of God’s justice—the Qur’an repeatedly exhorts how God is never unjust to his creation—the term is an unsuitable translation. Rather, it might be more accurate to understand it as a trained docility (as willing receptiveness) and submission to God—a kind of faithful attendance. This is thought to enable the inculcation of *taqwa*, often translated to ‘piety’; however, ‘piety’ in English, “refers primarily to inward spiritual states,” whereas in Arabic-Islamic terminology, ‘taqwa’ encapsulates a relationship between “inward orientation or disposition and a manner of practical conduct”—which leads into the following discussion about ritual.[50]

[49] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 221-2.
[50] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 4. Because ‘taqwa’ is a Qur’anic theological concept which contains within it many variations and realizations, it is difficult to render into English. Qur’anic translators and commentators have

The editors of *The Development of Islamic Ritual* note translate *'ibadat* as "acts of service," that is, "acts of obedience and worship that a human being owes to his Lord"—the significance being that *'ibadat* requires not only apt performance, but a correct *niyya* (intention)—a dual requirement that the editors argue is not reflected in modern notions of ritual.[51] The term *'ibadat* is also a variant of the root *'a-b-d*, from which the words *'abeed* (faithful attendant of God, believer) and the conjugations of "to believe" are derived. Though I will use the term 'ritual' to speak about Muslim acts of faith instead of its counterpoint in Islamic discourse, I want to maintain some of those productive connotations of *'ibadat*. Embedded within the term is a logic in which immanent physical acts are paired with psychological interiority in a relationship through which the transcendental articles of metaphysical faith depend. In articulating rituals as central to the experience of faith, it becomes possible to consider the ways in which "sacred acts impose 'conditions on experience and on reasoning'."[52]

While such 'conditions' are socially constructed prior to individual intentionality, and thus circumscribe the very articulation of individual agency (as in Bourdieu's use of *habitus*), this dissertation will turn to phenomenological arguments which consider how individuals might attempt to cultivate certain sensibilities and types of embodied experience through attention to the conditions that Islamic '*ibadat*, such as the headscarf or prayer (*salat*) provide. These can be creative acts of interpretation, and are not always mechanistic applications of a code of

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variously translated the term as 'piety,' 'faith,' 'God-consciousness,' 'self-restraint,' 'submission,' 'fear of God,' and 'love for Allah,' to name a few. For the purposes here it is enough to note that this concept and its signifier do not divorce inner faith and outward action from each other.

[51] *The Development of Islamic Ritual*, G. R Hawting, ed. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004): xiii. Hawting suggests the closer correlate to 'ritual' in Arabic is the classically used "nusuk" (which was historically used to signify certain rites, as in rites performed during the hajj), or the modern term "ṭuqus" (rites, which originally was used to describe Christian rites).

[52] Henri Hubert qtd in El Guindi's *By Noon Prayer*, 36. Of course, secular rituals impose like or distinct conditions on the liberal-humanist subject as well.

embodiment, as religious edicts can often be considered.[53] But formal rules and repetition need not always suggest noncreative and rote experience. Art and aesthetics serves as a prime example here: it is the amateur artist or musician for whom formal rules and repetition is derivative, but the maestro uses formal rules and tradition to create innovative form. Moreover, the amateur becomes the maestro by practicing until imitation transforms into aptitude, for "the aptness of formal performance… requires not only *repeating* past models but also *originality* in applying them in appropriate/new circumstances"; in the same way, while "the cultivation of appropriate formality necessary to ethical virtues may not allow *unlimited* choice, it does require the exercise of judgment."[54]

To discuss this intentional self-cultivation, Saba Mahmood uses the term *habitus*. Distancing herself from Bourdieu's definition, which designates embodied dispositions that are socially determined but unconsciously enacted, Mahmood turns to Aristotelian tradition to define *habitus* as

> An acquired excellence at either a moral or a practical craft, learned through repeated practice until that practice leaves a permanent mark on the character of the person. Thus, moral virtues (such as modesty, honesty, and fortitude) are acquired through a coordination of outward behaviors (e.g. bodily acts, social demeanour) with inward dispositions (e.g. emotional states, thoughts, intentions) through the repeated performance of acts that entail those particular virtues.[55]

[53] This is J. Milbank's contention in his article "A Closer Walk on the Wild Side" in *Varieties of Secularism*, where he argues that rationalizing ritual as a cultivated embodiment circumscribes spiritual experience and enchantment into a scientific and rational process. We may look to Abdellah Hammoudi's description of ritual as an articulation that does not fall prey this problem: "Ritual transforms the subject by giving him or her a world to inhabit that is shifted away from the empirical, social, and pragmatic world—hence also shifted vis-à-vis the world of conscious or unconscious rationality. Not that it eliminates the latter; rather, it relates to them in concealments or displacements, thus coloring life and action" (*A Season In Mecca : Narrative of a Pilgrimage*, [New York: Hill and Wang, 2006]: 275). While Hammoudi overstates the difference between rationality and rituality, his language of concealments, displacements, and coloring speak to the way all actions exceed and subvert our intentional demands, and how ritual attends to this aspect of experience.

[54] Talal Asad, "Thinking about religion, belief, and politics," 42. This is why Judith Butler's performativity is possible. The difference is that Butler's approach depends on coopting normativity in order to reveal its dependence on a socialization in which we are all inscribed; the performativity she describes is ironic and subversive, whereas the rituals discussed here are sincere and devoted.

[55] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 136.

This focus on habit and the cultivation of values diverges from Kantian ethics, where morality is intuited and abstractly realized through rational thought as enabled by the individual's distance from the fog of embodiment and social construction. It is also to approach the questions from a different angle than post-structuralist theory, with its focus on socially constructed cultural practices articulated through linguistic signification which interpellate the subject, though they are not necessarily be mutually exclusive approaches.[56]

Mahmood describes how her subjects articulate their ritual practices as a "honing one's rational and emotional capacities" because they feel that "religious knowledge, as a means for organizing daily life, had become increasingly marginalized under modern structures of secular governance"; cultivated embodiment acts as a way to "ameliorate this situation through the cultivation of those bodily aptitudes, virtues, habits, and desires that serve to ground Islamic principles within the practices of everyday living."[57] The cultivated aptitudes that these women strive to realize challenge conventional ideas about the dissonance between "ritual behavior and pragmatic action, and between conventional behavior and spontaneous action"—their rituals are both goal-oriented projects and sensory, lived experiences in which the women practice affective sensibilities until they are sincerely felt, as with the women who pray in the attempt to hone the capability to spontaneously desire the act of prayer through the pedagogical repetition of "well-rehearsed" emotions tied to those practices.[58] This allows for the consideration of a relationship between the body and mind, between intentionality and habit, between immanence and

[56] In *Excitable Speech*, Judith Butler argues for the complementary relationship between interpellation and embodied experience. Building upon Bourdieu's *habitus* as that which makes the body the "repository or site of incorporated history" as well as the tool through which such histories are repetitively reenacted, she argues that interpellation and habitus are two sides of the same socializing coin; one works at the level of signification and language, and the other at the level of body and matter: "interpellations that 'hail' a subject into being, that is, social performatives that are ritualized and sedimented through time, are central to the very process of subject-formation as well as the embodied, participatory habitus" (*Excitable Speech : a Politics of the Performative* [New York: Routledge, 1997]: 153).
[57] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 31, 45.
[58] Ibid 127, 129

metaphysics, and between will and submission, in a manner that complicates the usual binary, oppositional roles they play, asking instead "what relationships [people] establish between the various constitutive elements of the self (body, reason, emotion, volition, and so on) and a particular norm."[59]

While Mahmood's formulates these elements of the self as aspects that cooperate with one another, in the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun forwards an idea where habit is itself a process of thought. In his theory, habit and rote repetition are some of the conditions upon which reason and logic depend. Habit is what distinguishes static, factual knowledge to creative, active knowledge that is materially realized, rather than merely theoretically held. To explain, Ibn Khaldun gives the example of abstract ideas of empathy and moral responsibility for orphans or the needy; an individual may know factually that such an attitude is moral, but meanwhile that same person may not be inclined to act upon this knowledge, because they are not in the habit of doing so. Thus, this habit (in his example, of mercy) transforms into an "attribute" which "is not obtained from knowledge alone. There must be an action, and it must be repeated innumerable times. This results in a firmly rooted habit, in the acquisition of the attribute and real (knowledge)," which he calls a "state."[60] By his argument, this is a thick type of knowledge, internalized and deeply embedded, imprinted on the mind through the body. It is made into a capability that can be tapped to work on the self and society, as opposed to the surface-level acquisition of factual information. Ritualized, repetitive, embodied habit is required in order to transform from the latter into the former. Ibn Khaldun's theory of habit helps to articulate a dependency of body and

[59] Ibid 120. Mahmood notes that there is not one configuration per culture, but that within each culture there are various "specific discursive formation[s]." In this way Mahmood attends to the various types of relationships to the world that can cohabit within a specific geographical or cultural space or time.

[60] Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah, an Introduction to History,* trans. Franz Rosenthal, and N. J Dawood, ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969): 351-2. Ibn Khaldun goes on to use this secular (in the sense of worldly) example to apply this same logic to the inculcation of belief, which one may accept logically, but not embrace completely for lack of habit.

rationality, and gives us the language to describe how ritual can work to prime and animate the mind-body's potential towards certain ethical dispositions or sensibilities.

Thinking about the embodied aspects of ritual also invites consideration about spatiality and temporality. Whereas so far the focal point has been the individual upon which ritual is effective, Fadwa El Guindi directs attention to the dynamic relationship between the individual and the physical world. Approaching ritual as cultivated embodiment or *habitus* makes it possible to think through spatio-temporal experience as a dynamic relationship with the world. Ritual can transform or "activate" particular experiences with space and time. [61] For example, El-Guindi describes the effect of *salat* (prayer), as that which "enables ordinary Muslims temporarily to convert any worldly place (street, shop, aircraft aisle) into a sacred space set apart, simply by marking it [with a prayer mat] and occupying it in a ritually pure state facing Makka."[62] Daily prayers, Friday prayer and the Hajj pilgrimage transform not only the organization of space but the experience of time as well by establishing a particular "temporal rhythm to routine life."[63] Moreover, she shows how these established rhythms are flexible and can be organically incorporated into the many spheres an individual inhabits, as when one man she was interviewing, at work crafting his wares and upon hearing the call to prayer, "seamlessly interrupted…and then resumed" the interview to voice the conventional responses to the call to

[61] In the section on aesthetics, I will return to this notion to consider the ways in which reading and other aesthetic practices activate or transform different publics and how differently appropriate agencies are imagined for each. For more considerations of the different types of cultivated ritual spaces in Muslim communities, see Barbara Metcalf's edited volume *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[62] El Guindi, *Veil* 78. El-Guindi characterizes this as transforming "a public area into a private space," but such a claim depends on accepting that all things religious are private; thus the activation of 'sacred' (I prefer ritual) space is a transformation into private space. Though the space may be transformed from non-ritual to ritual space, this does not necessarily require privatization—especially considering that public group prayer is encouraged in certain *hadiths*.

[63] Ibid 78.

prayer in a "fluid but structured 'movement' in and out of sacred space."[64] For this man, she explained, ritual did not interrupt mundane life, but rather was one of the many ways he inhabited his world at any given moment, illustrating how it is possible to cohabit different structures of spatial and temporal experience. In another example, El-Guindi reflects on the experience of Ramadan in Western secular society: while Ramadan is designed to alter Muslim's daily rhythm with the purpose of prompting metaphysical and societal introspection, Muslims who practice it in the West must negotiate its demands along with the conventions of the typical work or school day that remain in effect during that month.[65] These temporal experiences are not mere abstractions that structure memories of past time, but work on the subject, creating particular conditions of experience through "a rhythm that Muslim people feel, experience, *live by, think with, and internalize*."[66] Moreover, they are modes of embodiment that lend themselves to critique of the status quo because they "cannot be translated into the homogeneous time of national politics" as the sensibilities they prompt "escape the rational/instrumental orientation of such politics."[67]

Thinking in terms of "activation" expands the conceptual vocabulary through which we can discuss the social modes or embodied relationships we develop with the world. One way to understand the headscarf, for example, is as an activation of the rights to personal privacy in the public sphere, as when El-Guindi analogizes the scarf to a mobile *mashrabiyya*, or "(lattice woodwork screens or windows in urban Arabesque architecture [that] serve to guard families' and women's right to privacy—that is the right 'to see' but not 'be seen'."[68] If Mahmood's

[64] Ibid 68.
[65] El Guindi, *By Noon Prayer*, 4.
[66] Ibid 21, emphasis mine.
[67] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 179.
[68] El Guindi, *Veil* 94. Where this "right 'to see' but not 'be seen'" may seem primarily to reference the face-veil, the argument could still apply for the assertion of the right to conceal certain parts of the body.

habitus seemed to correlate certain actions with certain effects, El-Guindi's theory of the activation, transformation, and structuring of rituals attends to the potentiality of action without ascribing certainty to them. The actions are dynamic and their effects emergent, rather than directly causal or predetermined: it is "a dance of interacting parts."[69]

These questions of embodied ritual require some consideration of how the body is defined. The scholarship on the subject is vast, so here the dissertation will glean a few influential ideas. First, while there is matter that makes up the organism that is the human, the idea of the self-contained body is a social construct: in secular discourse, it is self-owned, and only the self can make legitimate claims upon it and decisions for it.[70] By contrast, in Islamic discourse, the body, as the rest of the created world, is subject to legitimate claims by God, and even by the community and the world. The idea that ritual is formative depends on the concept that, as Jean-Luc Nancy argues, the body is not *a priori* existence, but the making of the self into existence through sensory experiences.[71] Elizabeth Grosz defines this networked set of objects called 'the body' in this useful way:

> [The body is] a concrete, material, animate organization of flesh, organs, nerves, muscles, and skeletal structure which are given unity, cohesiveness, and organization only through their psychical and social inscription as the surface and raw materials of an integrated and cohesive totality. The body is, so to speak, organically/biologically/naturally 'incomplete'; it is indeterminate, amorphous, a series of uncoordinated potentialities which require social triggering, ordering, and long-term 'administration'."[72]

While this definition is sufficient for the purposes of the dissertation's arguments on ritual and the body, it is still important to keep in mind that this definition does not take into account the

[69] El Guindi, *By Noon Prayer* 20.
[70] This is made more complex in scholarship on ethics and public good, but conventionally even then the premise remains that the self is the primary subject, and negotiations take place between the subject's needs and sociality's demands.
[71] As best elucidated in *Corpus*, where Nancy weighs linguistic, symbolic representation of the body through social construction along with the effects of sensory, embodied experience.
[72] Elizabeth Grosz, "Bodies-Cities" in *Sexuality & Space*, Beatriz Colomina, ed. (New York, N.Y.: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992): 243.

smaller atomic parts that make up the structures we consider inanimate parts of the animal (such as bone or skin), the microbial communities that make up the human microbiome, and other discreet 'parts' that are independently active and productive. The above definition can seem to reduce the constituents that make up the human body to mechanical objects which can only have effects when activated by human agency and will, which obfuscates the manner in which our body is not exclusively our own, and not subject to our complete control.

Taking all of this into consideration—the habits, conscious and unconsciously activated, that can take advantage of sensory input that comes to define our histories and color our future actions and perceptions; the body as a compilation of inanimate and animate constituencies that work with us and on us—focuses on process rather than thingness. Matter and body are defined as a process of material experience made sensible by social significance, which reinforces the effect which we call an object, with all its constitutive defining features and boundaries—or, as Butler puts it, "the notion of matter, not as site or surface, but *as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter*."[73] The processes are, moreover, gendered in their social construction.[74] This gendered, habit-formed construct of the body with potentialities that can be activated brings us to the consideration of the ritual of the headscarf.

There are five pillars in mainstream Islam which establish its core rituals.[75] These are the *shahada* (the declaration of belief in one God, and the belief in Muhammad as the human

[73] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter : On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993): 9.
[74] See Iris Marion Young's *On Female Body Experience: 'Throwing Like a Girl' and other essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) as well as Elizabeth A. Grosz's *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
[75] I privilege here the definition of Muslims and Islam as those who follow what's sometimes referred to as "orthodox" Islam—that is, those who believe in One God, Allah, Muhammad as his messenger, and the Quran as the Book revealed to Muhammad by God. This, generally, means the focus is on Sunnis and Shias, and the spectrum of Sufi approaches in both these traditions. I limit the definition of Islam because it is the shared rituals of orthodox Islam, even in their multiform cultural and interpretative realizations, that make Islam a recognizable entity, and

prophet and messenger), *salat* (prayer), *zakat* (almsgiving), *siyam* (fasting during the prescribed month of *Ramadan*), and *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca). Much of creative representations of Muslims focus on only two of these core rituals, *salat* and the *hajj*. The other ritual or habit that is a common subject of Muslim representations in fiction has no one term, in Arabic or otherwise: it is perhaps a ritual dress, or more accurately a dress code or norm that takes many physical forms and is realized to different degrees of covering, each which has a different term: in Islamo-Arabic terminology, the *hijab*, *khimar*, *bhurqa*, *jilbab*, *niqab*, and *'abaya*, to name a few, and in English and French terminology, the headscarf, veil, and or *foulard*. In English it is often formulated in terms of the action of its wearing (i.e. "the wearing of the headscarf," the "covering of the head and body," etc.). This is often in reaction to the contentious term "the hijab," which has come to be used in Muslim discourse as an umbrella term for headscarf but which academic scholarship has rejected as inaccurate because of its use in the Qur'an not in relation to the headscarf, but to modes of belief.

The reason these rituals are most readily represented is likely because they are the most public and the most visually and aurally striking. Consider *salat*. While sometimes translated as "prayer," *salat* is a specific form or kind of prayer in Islam—that is, it is the form that is social, public, physical, audible, and formal. Its positions, movements and a large portion of the verses articulated during the prayer are prescribed and repetitive, as is the *athan* ('call to prayer') that announces the beginning of prayer. Though parts of *salat* are optional and left open to personal creativity, the majority of the prayer is directed. This is in contrast to *du'aa*, its sister form, which is the kind of personal supplication to God that is more recognizable and generalizable to other faiths. *Du'aa*, by contrast to *salat*, is personal, private, mental-emotional, quiet, and

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these share rituals are those that are prescribed either by the Quran or the tradition of the Prophet; Islam's offshoot religions often do not maintain these commitments and their theological implications *in toto*.

flexible (even though there are recommended phrase formulations). *Du'aa* is, in a way, more relatable in the West, similar in form to Christian prayer and other private invocations to deities. But it is *salat*, not *du'aa*, that is the focus in fiction and non-fictional artistic representations of Islam. While this might reflect the importance which *salat* is given in Islam, and while it definitely reveals a pervasiveness in Anglophone fiction to focus on points of difference between Islam and the West (whether it is framed as threatening or multiculturally valuable), in contemporary Anglophone Muslim fiction, portrayals of productive religious embodiment use *salat* to probe the limitations of the secular relationship to the body's cultivated habits.

Of all the various types of Muslim embodiment in ritual, the most (in)famous is that of the Muslim woman and the headscarf. This subject of the sartorial expressions and habits of modesty for the Muslim women requires careful consideration, as it can be freighted with epistemological landmines. Within global Muslim communities, there has been a movement of women who articulate their relationship with modernity and religiosity through their embrace and renovation of the headscarf, which serves them in their efforts toward cultivating piety and religiously-informed aesthetic style. On the other hand, there are too many histories in which women's subjugation has been paired with enforcement of the headscarf and other regulations of her body. Prioritizing one over the other as the genuine, valid experience only serves to further entrench patriarchal concepts whereby the figure of the female Muslim body is remade into political and literary shorthand for conceptions of freedom from both sides of the aisle. Attending to the former experience here is not meant to romanticize all relationships with the headscarf, but only to consider the potentialities available in one socially organized experience of a sartorial practice.

Because the 'veiling' issue has come to symbolize the way discourse is (forcefully) written upon the Muslim female body, much critical analysis in response has argued that the headscarf should be articulated through the language of personal choice and individually-realized, privately-held belief, thus reinscribing the action into structures of thought privileged by secular discourse and palatable to its commitments.[76] Taking its cue from Mahmood's articulation of an agency that does not depend on the "agonistic framework" and a politics of pure resistance, this dissertation looks to the way the veil in contemporary Muslim fiction is gathered to work as reform of and acquiescence to norms. [77]

One of the main issues plaguing critical scholarship on the headscarf is that it understands the ritual as a solo, female-gendered religious practice. However, in the religious literature, foremost the Qur'an and hadith, the references made to material and sartorial modesty practices that are geared to train modest dispositions are defined for both men and women. This is why throughout the dissertation I will use the term the "hijab framework," to indicate an ethical ideal that is meant to cultivate certain personal religious dispositions of *hishma* (modesty, restraint, dignity) or *haya* (diffidence, integrity, modesty, from the same root as "life") for both genders through various culturally and historically specific sartorial practices.[78] This emphasis on the

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[76] See, for example, Leila Ahmed's *A Quiet Revolution : the Veil's Resurgence, From the Middle East to America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). The term "veil" has no one material form nor referent term in the 'Muslim world'; these vary widely across cultures and languages. Fadwa El-Guindi chronicles some of these in the Arab world. Various news media have posted articles and blog posts that seek to classify and distinguish some of the common variations, such as the differences between the burqah, chador, khimar, or hijab, for their readership. See BBC News "hijab in graphics," also called "In Graphics: Muslim veils and headscarves," part of their online religion series of introductory information, under the article "Hijab" under the "Islam category, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/05/europe_muslim_veils/html/1.stm]; Illustrations accompanying Eli Sanders' "Interpreting veils: Meanings have changed with politics, history," *The Seattle Times*, 5 October 2001, Web [http://seattletimes.com/news/nation-world/crisis/theregion/veils.html]; Anne Sobel, "Know Your Veils: A Guide to Middle Eastern Head Coverings (PHOTOS)," *Huffington Post*, posted 01/25/2011, updated 06/12/2014, Web [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anne-peterson/know-your-veils_b_812944.html].

[77] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety* 8, 14, 22.

[78] The term, an Arabic word used in the Qur'an to mean "barrier" or "partition," and used to describe material partitions in the world, metaphorical barriers of faith and certainty, as well as the metaphysical divide between God and his creation, is not used to describe the sartorial act of veiling. For this reason, contentions have been raised in

guiding framework will also allow me to move away from the singular focus on women, which is used by patriarchal tendencies within Muslim communities, Orientalist and Islamophobic strains of critical inquiry, and certain feminist movements, to impress the significance of a whole religion upon one half of its devotees. In other words, the dissertation will attend to the headscarf not through the lens of a gender, but through the lens of ritual, or as in El Guindi cultural anthropology of dress approach, as an "Islamic cultural artifact," which considers the coverage of the male Muslim body.[79] El-Guindi contends that to read the veil through (what Talal Asad would call the 'cultural coherency' of) the Muslim world, it is a mistake to frame the issue as an issue of the "modesty and seclusion" of women (which are straw-men established through the colonial fantasy of the harem). Instead, she argues that it reflects the way Muslim culture enacts ideals of "identity and privacy" through practices in which both men and women participate.[80] This shifts the analysis to a consideration of the enculturated body's relationship to space and other bodies.[81] While El Guindi shows how head coverings and associated hijab garments were historically "dual-gendered" or "neutral-gendered," taking on social gendered significance in "through gait and body language," by contrast, in modern Western culture, even within Muslim

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critical discourse on Islamic veiling, both outside of (and, less commonly, inside of) Muslim communities. Still, Islamic religious discourse in English has taken on the word as a distinction of the purposive framework from the sartorial practices that fulfill this framework through various cultural realizations, and I find the term useful in this sense. El-Guindi argues that the term *hijab* (as opposed to the stigmatized 'veil') "has cultural and linguistic roots that are integral to Islamic (and Arab) culture"; my argument is that it has developed into having significance in the network of ethnically and linguistically diverse cultures that make up English-speaking Muslim communities. For some readings on *hishma*, see El-Guindi's *Veil* and Mahmood's *Politics of Piety*. Saba Mahmood overemphasizes the trait's gendered implications ("one of the most feminine of Islamic virtues, *al-ḥayā'* " pg 155).

[79] El Guindi, *Veil* 4.

[80] El Gundi argues that this kind of "privacy does not connote the 'personal,' the 'secret' or the 'individuated space.' It concerns two core spheres – women and the family. For both, privacy is sacred and carefully guarded. For women it is both a right and an exclusive privilege, and is reflected in dress, space, architecture and proxemic behavior" (*By Noon Prayer* 152).

[81] This is not to say that all the critical analysis that reads the veil through the lens of gender has been in error; there have been some productive contributions to that field. However, by and large, the veiled woman has become the whipping girl in some circles of secular feminist discourse, and the very necessary discussions about realizing gender parity in Islam have been simplified and approached in such a way that aggressively distances the pious community, either by demonizing them or by beginning with fundamental premises that are incompatible to their approach to faith.

communities, the veil has indeed come to strictly signify a female, feminine form of the hijab framework.[82] However, the modern male form has not dropped completely, but has instead been redeployed through another type of face-covering: the beard. Growing and maintaining a beard and is considered to be following the *sunnah* (example of the Prophet) for men.[83] Since the beard in Western society stands for the symbol of terrorism on a brown man, but is celebrated in non-Muslim male society as a reaffirmation of masculinity, young Muslim men navigate two cultural norms where the beard is both normative and oppositional.[84]

Though often read symbolically, we can see the way in which the headscarf "activates" certain social relationships by considering Joan W. Scott's discussion of laïcité and the *foulard* controversy in France. Scott argues that while the discourse in France often conveyed the issue as one of the sexual emancipation of women, which the headscarf is thought to repudiate and impede, this is rhetorical cover for an underlying discomfort with the veil as symbolic rejection of the normative French sensibilities regarding gender relationships. Analyzing the comment made by former French President Jaques Chirac during his term that "wearing the veil, whether it is intended or not, is a kind of aggression," Scott argues that the mentioned aggression is not, as might be expected, one against national security, but against the social security of gender interaction:

> The aggression he referred to was twofold: that of the veiled woman but also of the (Western) man trying to look at her. The aggression of the woman consisted in denying (French) men the pleasure—understood as a natural right (a male prerogative)—to see behind the veil. Depriving men of an object of desire undermined the sense of their own masculinity. Sexual identity (in the Western or "open" model) works both ways: men confirm their sexuality not only by being able to look at—to openly desire—women but also by receiving a "look" from

[82] El Guindi, *Veil* 7.
[83] As opposed to *Sunnah*—the Qur'anic *Weltanschauung* or guiding philosophical framework on life.
[84] Muslim men on social media have enthusiastically reappropriated and shared photos and memes that celebrate the beard.

> women in return. The exchange of desirous looks, the availability of faces for reading, is a crucial aspect of gender dynamics in "open" systems. (159)[85]

This open system is in contrast to that found in Islamic discourse where men and women are directed to "lower their gaze" from members of the opposite sex with whom they may have sexual relations.[86] In this way, the veiled woman symbolically and in practice rejects a particular mode of cultural citizenship, a certain form of French secularity which agrees upon a certain subject position for the female body within sexual and gendered norms. As El-Guindi explains it, in Islam "sex is to be enjoyed in matrimony. However, outside marriage, behavior between men and women must be desexualized…both men and women are required to abide by this temporary desexualization to make public interaction between them possible" (or, perhaps more precisely, to make interaction between them proper and sanctioned within the moral codes of the religion).[87]

For clarification: this is not to say that the veiled woman inherently, by virtue of the wearing of the scarf, enacts virtuous modesty, nor that she is the only site from which the refusal of normativity is possible, nor that it is not possible for a non-hijabi woman to rebuff norms and display modesty.[88] It is possible for veiled women to accept social standards of beauty and try to conform to them within the scarf; and it is possible for the unveiled woman to reject those standards. In some historical situations, the wearing of the veil has been one manner of self-

[85] Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007). Scott links this to Franz Fanon's analysis of colonialism in Algeria in his famous essay on the veil as revolution, in which he writes "This woman who sees without being seen frustrates the colonizer. There is no reciprocity. She does not yield herself, does not give herself, does not offer herself" (Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled," *A Dying Colonialism* [New York: Grove Press, 1967]:44).

[86] The Qur'an, Surat Al-Nur, trans. by Muhammad Asad, 24:30-31:"Enjoin the believing men to lower their gaze and safeguard their modesty: this will be most conducive to their purity – [and,] verily, God is aware of all that they do. / And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and to safeguard their modesty, and not to display their charms [in public] beyond what may [decently] be apparent thereof; hence, let them draw their head-coverings [*khimar*] over their bosoms"; the verse goes on to enumerate those males to whom these directives do not apply, such as her father, brother, and other males with whom a sexual relationship is not an option.

[87] El Guindi, *Veil* 136.

[88] For an ethnographic analysis of the latter see Nadia Fadil's two articles, "Not-/Unveiling As an Ethical Practice" (*Feminist Review* 98.1 [2011]: 83–109), as well as "Managing Affects and Sensibilities: The Case of Not-Handshaking and Not-Fasting" (*Social Anthropology* 17.4 [2009]: 439–454).

emancipation; in others, unveiling has been self-emancipation. In yet others, it was conventional dress, or a way of communicating social cues through the veil's manipulation.[89] It can work both as symbolic identification and embodied cultivation. The former, however, has become the primary reading in modern discourse, often obscuring the latter and the potentials it contains. While portrayals of the headscarf have largely followed the first, symbolic reading, the second, phenomenological reading will establish the guiding framework for reading the female and male instantiations of the hijab framework in the first chapter on Robbin Yassin-Kassab's *The Road from Damascus.*

Gender and Community in the Concept of the *ummah*

The tendency to frame belief as an internal experience, the distaste for public, communal ritual, and the predominate approach of reading the Muslim headscarf as a women's issue only all betray the unease in secular discourse about the relationship between the individual and community. The model of liberal-humanism puts a premium on the individual and imagines an inherent antagonism between the self and community. The human animal may be a social creature, but the modern subject is vulnerable to subjugation and to the interference of his self-realized will. Appiah calls this "the problem of the *unsociability of individualism*," whereby the assumption is that "self-cultivation and sociability are competing values" that must be "reigned in or traded-off" against one another.[90]

In the Qur'an, one of the ways this problem is negotiated is through the establishment of the logic of pairs (often articulated as differentiated complementarity, or perhaps, complement-

[89] El Guindi, *Veil* 98: "Thus Papanek [1973] also notes that Muslim women in Pakistan who do not wear the *burqah*…can manipulate their dress, chiefly through the positioning of the veil, according to the social situation. The same may be said of women in Ghanyari [in North India], who know how to draw the veil across the face in a dozen different ways to denote a dozen different degrees of respect or disrespect. I have seen the veil used insolently."
[90] Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Liberalism, Individuality, and Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 27 (Winter 2001): 319. Here Appiah means a different kind of "self-cultivation" than the meaning forwarded in my argument.

parity). While ethical and moral responsibility falls squarely on the individual, the pair, made up of two distinct entities, is the primary unit from which the created world and its social order are extrapolated. The Qur'an describes the paired characteristic of all created things, and when discussed with regard to the human animal, these are gendered male and female.[91] Larger society is derived from this human expression of the pairing principle, as in the chapter "The Dwellings": "O humankind! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know one another."[92] A verse from "The Women" rearticulates the concept with a focus on coexistence, cohabitation, and the rights and responsibilities that are born of pairing:

> Oh humankind! Be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women. And remain conscious of God, in whose name you demand [your rights] from one another, and of these ties of kinship.[93]

What is translated here as "living entity" has been variously translated as "soul," "being," "self," and "person," which the term *nafs* encapsulates. Here individuated consciousness stems out of communality, a non-individuated *nafsin wahida* (one soul). When the consciousness is individuated into this one and its mate, the text reminds that this is one constituent of a pair. The term used above for "mate" is, in Arabic, *zawjaha,* her mate.[94] As El-Guindi glosses the Arabic term's connotations:

> The Arabic word *zawjayn* is the dual form (not the plural, which is *azwaj*) of the word *zawj*, an ungendered term commonly translated as 'pair' in English. But it also connotes double, one of a pair, two as a pair, partner, and spouse. The use of 'wife' in some English translations does not capture the nuance of the Arabic

[91] In "The Scattering Winds": after expounding on creating the heavens and the earth, the chapter states, "And in everything have We created *zawjayni* (pairs), so that you might reflect" (Qur'an 51:49). Muhammad Asad translates this particular use of *zawjayn* as "opposites" rather than pairs, glossing the "so that you might reflect" to mean as a way to reflect upon God's radical and unique singularity. See also Qur'an 36:36.
[92] The translation by Laleh Bakhtiar chooses to translate *shu'ban wa qaba'ilan* as "peoples and types" rather than the more common "nations and tribes" (from 'The Winds that Scatter' chapter, 49:13).
[93] Qur'an, 4:1.
[94] In Arabic, all nouns are gendered, and any modifier is given a complementary gendered ending. Hence, since "soul" is a feminine noun, so is the word 'mate' in "her mate."

> term, since the same word is used to refer to husband. Rather, it is a notion that linguistically encapsulates the 'heterosexual complementarity of two autonomous persons,' which is culturally considered the basis of society.[95]

What is most significant here is the idea that the word used is not the plural form, as in 'those are the pairs (of something)' but the dual form, as in 'those are two of a paired unit.'

Why attend to this concept of *zawj* parity and all its parts? Such a principle has implications for the cultural attitudes about and manifestations of individual consciousness, agency, sociality, and gender. Or, more specifically, this principle can help to unpack the paradigm that undergirds the Qur'anic text by which Muslims may negotiate their roles as modern subjects, and looks to how the Qur'an portrays the relationship between the self-governing individual and the social world; it will also help to think through discussions about gender parity that arise in the chapter on *The Road from Damascus* where the themes of gender, ritual, and embodiment are explored primarily through a married couple..

This concept of the *zawj* (pair) in Islam's sexual economy is illustrated through the originary gendered human pair, Adam and Eve. The Qur'anic version diverges from its Biblical counterpart. The Biblical version, which has had significant consequences for the assumptions that structure much of modern thought about women and knowledge, presents the initial creation of Adam, who is made whole; Eve is created from out of his rib as a companion and aid for Adam, and is named by him. Eve succumbs to temptation, and feeds Adam from the tree—a tree which is crucially a tree "of the knowledge of good and evil," the fruit of which makes them aware of the shame of their nakedness.[96] As a consequence God makes childbirth painful, and the concept of original sin, which prefigures Jesus and his ultimate sacrifice for mankind, is

[95] El Guindi, *Veil* 72.
[96] King James Bible, 3:17.

established.[97] These concepts are engaged with in literature in the West, including poetry, fiction, feminist discourse, and scientific inquiry.

But in the Qur'an, neither individual is identified as the primary offending party: the Qur'anic passages on the subject of their error are always in plural.[98] El-Guindi provocatively argues that the language of the Qur'anic passages about Adam and Eve's awareness of their nakedness does not indicate sexual shame, but that the Qur'an uses nakedness to portray exposure and vulnerability, both on a physical and metaphorical level.[99] Childbirth and motherhood is not equated with punishment. Furthermore, the Qur'anic story stresses covenant and broken pact: God issues the conditions for Adam and Eve's existence in the garden, saying, "O Adam, dwell thou and thy wife in this garden, and eat freely thereof, both of you, whatever you may wish; but do not approach this one tree, lest you become wrongdoers."[100] The story does is not about the couple's willful ignorance or their naïve innocence, nor is it about an audacity to desire knowledge. Rather, the tree is a test of their willful obedience to God—thus, the consequence is not that they gain knowledge at the cost heavenly bliss, but that they lose nearness to their creator for disregarding the terms by which God set. This is, then, the origin story of covenant, of being responsible to something outside of the self.[101]

Not only is the role of motherhood not presented as punishment, but parenthood is a highly revered role attributed to both genders. Of the roles for human pairs set in the Qur'an, one

[97] "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (King James Bible, 3:15).
[98] The Qur'anic story of Adam (like most other Qur'anic parables) is spread in fragments, repetitions, and rearticulating across various chapters. Some of the relevant passages here are: "Then did Satan make them slip" (Qur'an 2:36); "Then Satan tempted them, only to reveal to them…" (Qur'an 7:20), "So Satan arrogantly deceived them and when they tasted from the tree …" (Qur'an 7:21), "They ate from the tree" (Qur'an 20:121).
[99] El Guindi, *Veil* 75-6.
[100] This final reference to that which the right hand possesses has been variously read as referring to slaves, subordinates, or those in your service.
[101] For one reading of how the concept of pairs in the Qur'an relates to God's radical monism, see Abdulwahab Elmessiri's "Secularism, Immanence, and Deconstruction" in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East.*

is to serve as support for one another, with various ethical-social rights and responsibilities. The other role is parenthood, which is highly regarded as one of the foundations that establishes and teaches social duty. Courteous and loving conduct towards ones parents is, in some Quranic verses, made second only to the radical monism that serves as the foundation for the faith, and is furthermore is paired with all sociality:

> And worship God [alone], and do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to aught beside Him. And do good unto your parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the neighbor from among your own people, and the neighbor who is a stranger, and the friend by your side, and the wayfarer, and what your right hand possesses.[102]

Thus the gendered human realization of the general principle of the pair-unit is expanded outwards from notions about kinship to all humanity. Furthermore, in the Muslim textual traditions, the significance of motherhood within this socially-generating parental unit is singled out in various hadiths. [103] The concept of motherhood even takes on religious significance through its metaphorical uses in the Qur'an, where the divine source or manifestation of the Qur'an's written message is referred to as *ummul-kitab* (the mother-source of the book) as well as the opening verse of the Qur'an which is sometimes referred to by the same name. Furthermore, motherhood is a paradigm by which much of social and ethical principles are articulated: the term *ummah*, glossed as community or the Muslim global community depending on context, has etymological roots to the word "mother" (used also to denote origin, source, and

[102] Qur'an 4:36.

[103] There are many hadiths featuring mothers, but the key one relates a man who asks the prophet Muhammad "Who among the people is most deserving of my best treatment? [Muhammad] said: Your mother. He again said: Then who (is the next one)? [Muhammad] said: Again it is your mother. He said: Then who (is the next one)? [Muhammad] said: Again, it is your mother. He (again) said: Then who? Thereupon [Muhammad] said: Then it is your father." There is also a very vernacularly popular, though disputed, *hadith* which states that heaven lies under the feet of the mother. Though the Qur'an does not only refer to women as mothers—they are often wives, but even more often believers and nonbelievers that are designated in terms of their social, ethical, moral, and metaphysical responsibilities and sensibilities—it does highly honor the institution of motherhood.

foundation). [104] Motherhood is also linguistically related to ethical and social virtues of community through another root word, r-h-m; El-Gundi notes that "*rahman* (stress on the second syllable, 'compassionate') and *rahim* (stress on the second syllable, 'merciful'), which…are prominent attributes of God in Islamic textual and lived culture" derive from the same root as *rahm* (stress on the first syllable) which denotes the womb and is also used to describe extended kinship relationships.[105] Though the Qur'an and *hadith* do make gendered associations with what is coded as 'soft' emotions (such as the 'feminine sensibilities' of compassion and mercy), they endorse them as gendered sensibilities which both sexes are encouraged to cultivate, and further authorize them by associating them as the ultimate, perfected virtues that are attributes of a genderless God.[106] Motherhood is thus a paradigm that codes certain social sensibilities and priorities to the community beyond the self.

The principle of the pair, which makes the parental unit, from which kinship springs and creates networks of sociality, helps to define a tricky construct: the *ummah*, which as a term takes on many different meanings. In Arabic, it generally designations nation, community, or 'a people.' In the Qur'an, the term *ummah* signifies "meanings ranging anywhere from Muhammad's closest followers to all living creatures (Sura vi. 38)."[107] The concept of the *ummah* has been critiqued widely in English critical texts for a variety of reasons. It is often linked to political Islamism: classically, '*ummah'* was sometimes used to connote a political conception of a Muslim community defined as an "ideal of a politically unified community of

[104] "امة" under root form "ام" (*umma*, *umm*). *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: (Arabic-English).* Hans Wehr, ed. by J. Milton Cowan, 4th ed. (Urbana, Ill.: Spoken Language Services, 1994).
[105] El Guindi, *Veil* 75.
[106] If a Muslim feminism is to succeed, it needs to take care to understand these underlying assumptions about gender within the religious culture of Islam, rather than applying analysis that is based on gender assumptions from a similar, but distinctive, Christian faith tradition. For example, even while the Qur'an does not mark motherhood as the singularly defining role for women, some Muslim cultures, modern and traditional, while showing great respect for women who fill their proper role, structure motherhood as the primary goal and method for women to enact their faith.
[107] Peter G. Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics : Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001): 71.

Believers (ummah) headed by a caliph," and so it is discussed as an extension of the feared 'sharia law.'[108] But in its modern usage amongst Muslims, the definition has popularly become a master-signifier for a global Muslim community or "the entire Islamic community."[109] Some have argued that in this meaning, the word serves as a form of alternative social belonging to the nation-state, since the "concept of the ummah calls Muslims not only to unite across national boundaries but to place Islam above all other political allegiances in their everyday lives."[110] Therefore, even in its social definition, it is seen as a threat to modern subjectivity as it elevates religious belonging over secular social order. In cultural studies, the idea of an *ummah* has been contested as being hegemonic and illusory, prompting an alternative insistence on the "local," on a plurality of "Islams," or on individual "Muslims" without reference to Islam at all. This creates confused and unworkable definitions—what is "Muslimness" without Islam, whether that is defined as scriptural, pietistic, ritualistic, or heritage based relationship to Islam? Furthermore, it establishes a problematic parochial emphasis where religion is merely a "local" facet of the "ethnic" particularities, and faith's persistence in the world is viewed as anomaly in the face of secular reason and cultural globalization. This obscures the fact that, as Asad points out, "minorities are no different from majorities, also a historically constituted group"; just because Muslims, Islam, and the cultures they involve are "formed by specific (often conflicting) historical narratives, and the embodied memories, feelings, and desires that the narratives have helped to shape," it does not logically follow that because of Islam's internal diversity there is no

[108] Fred M. Donner, "Muhammad and the Caliphate" in *The Oxford History of Islam*, John L Esposito, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999):18. I say "feared 'shari'a law'" because the concept of *shari'a* has still been conventionally widely misconceptualized in English, so much so that most evaluations are actually unwittingly speaking of *fiqh*, not *shari'a*.
[109] John L. Esposito, "Contemporary Islam: Reformation or Revolution?," *Oxford History of Islam*, 655.
[110] S.V.R. Nasr, "European Colonialism and the Emergence of Modern Muslim States," *Oxford History of Islam*, 555.

larger designation under which its manifestations structurally relate.[111] This is why in this dissertation I will use the term 'Islam' and not 'Islams,' without meaning to reduce the religious tradition to one specific form.

Relatedly, rather than do away with considerations of the *ummah* (the abstract notion of a global and trans-temporal muslim community) because it gestures towards a unified religious group, I am persuaded by definitions of the *ummah* as a kind of conceptual ethical community. Some characterize this kind of Muslim *ummah* as a Muslim civil society, as Rachid Al-Ghannouchi does in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*.[112] Peter Mandaville conceptualizes it as a "translocal Muslim discourse" through which modern Muslims negotiate and engage with contemporary discourse, arguing that they"do not see global processes simply as a means by which to bridge the differences and distances between them, but rather as an opportunity to critically engage" with the and how to define and locate themselves within that discourse. [113] While associating this concept of *ummah* with developments in the modern world, such its rhetorical use to great effect in the Muslim world by 19th- and 20th- century pan-Islamic anti-colonialist reformers, he traces its development back to Muhammad's life. Citing the *hijra* (the migration of Muhammad and his followers from the hostile social order in Mecca to a protected period in Medina where the nascent Muslim community was able to establish ordinary life and where Islam developed its civil life and social structures), he argues this period was a paradigm shift for how the Islamic community was defined as they "transition[ed] from the

[111] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 175.
[112] Rachid Al-Ghannouchi, "Secularism in the Arab Maghreb," 107. This definition has been subject to some criticism, namely that the concept of a global community is grand, naïve, homogenizing, and utopic in its most negative sense. This is to misunderstand the concept as a literal community that directly communicates, rather than a combined sense of an imagined community and a public site of discussion. Rachid Al-Ghannouchi is a popular intellectual in the Arab-Muslim world and founded Tunisia's moderate Muslim-revivalist political party, Al-Nahda.
[113] Mandaville 2-3.

pagan to the Muslim world – from kinship to a society based on common believe."[114] He also argues that the *ummah* became a space of dialogue and exchange after Muhammad's death because, "with the passing of the Prophet, Islamic political community ceased to exist and *Muslim* political community – as a space of negotiation – came to take its place."[115]

Talal Asad's definition combines the two aspects of political or civil institutions with ethical discourse. He defines the *ummah* as a morally-bound community, a kind of "religious-political space" designated as the site where "rational discussion, debate and criticism can be conducted," but which, unlike "a sociologically defined community—traditionally unified, but now subject to modern disintegration," is imagined as eternally constituted by those in the past and future, whether alive or not.[116] Asad contrasts his classically-rooted theological definition of the *ummah* to those that describe it as a religious form of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities', a conceptual error because it would be a definition that "cut off [the concept of the *ummah*] from the theological predicates that gave it its universalizing power, and is made to stand for an imagined community that is equivalent to a total political society, limited and sovereign."[117] Such a definition makes the *ummah* a concept that can only be realized in exclusion to other political forms. Rather, Asad's definition of the *ummah* attends to the ethical goals Muslims hold for themselves, and the ways these are imagined to be enacted and embodied:

> Theologically defined space enabling Muslims to practice the disciplines of *din* [religion] in the world…The crucial point therefore is not that it is [an imagined community] but that what is imagined predicates distinctive modes of being and acting. The Islamic *umma* presupposes individuals who are self-governing but not autonomous. The *shari'a*, a system of practical reason morally binding on each faithful individual, exists independently of him or her. At the same time every

[114] Ira Lapidus qtd in Mandaville 70.
[115] Ibid 73.
[116] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* 223.
[117] Asad, *Formations of the Secular* 197.

> Muslim has the psychological ability to discover its rules and to conform to them.[118]

While the definition of *shari'a* leans heavily on reason and rationality, I want to focus on the reference to "distinctive modes of being and acting." One of the significant characteristics of *ummah* is that, while theology may be its structuring principle, the *ummah* is imagined to be bound by shared embodied experiences. Through rituals, the sociality of Islam is conceived as a 'community' of like-practitioners, as much as like-believers. It is this *ummah* which is visualized as participating together, on the world stage, in public, communal rituals, such as fasting or making Hajj. Along with reason, it is these shared sensibilities prompted by ritual experiences that enable its practitioners to engage in discussions about shared moral-ethical dilemmas. This is not to say that all its practitioners are imagined to be practicing perfectly or in exactly the same manner, or at all, but that the religious institution recognizes practices that, along with the metaphysical beliefs, constitute the community.

This is to think of the *ummah* as conceptually related to William Connolly's "dense culture of negotiation" which is situated within an amorphous "rhizomatic network of interdependence and communication," and which makes possible the development of a "generous 'ethos of engagement'" in individual subject within a larger community that is not necessarily present, personally known, or even intimately related.[119] We might call the *ummah* a dynamic ethical assemblage, where the agencies of the singular Muslim body interact within a larger collective of Muslim bodies and which develops rhizomatically. Furthermore, cultivated embodiment within this articulation of the *ummah* is not fastened to the individual and instead figures a mode of cohabitation and an engagement with sociality's claims on us. As Sarah Ahmed puts it:

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[118] Ibid 197.
[119] Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, 92, 96, 35-6.

> We need an understanding of embodiment as lived experience which moves beyond the privatized realm of 'my body'…[this] can be theorised in terms of inter-embodiment, whereby the lived experience of embodiment is always already the social experience of dwelling with other bodies.[120]

Ritual Attention to the Material World

So far, the theories discussed will make it possible for the dissertation to forward an argument about the representation of productive Muslim ritual in Anglophone fiction. But beyond that, this dissertation will also ask: do these theories on ritual, cultivated embodiment, and their challenges to the privileging of the autopoetic rational subject have implications for our notions about aesthetics? To attend to objects of art, rather than human bodies, will require consideration of material culture theory.

The approach to ritual developed so far can be read as the way religions have attempted to attend to the relationship between immanent life and ideational abstraction, specifically in that case of metaphysical thinking. That is, rituals can be read as the recognition that something escapes human rationalization and intentionality, and the recognition that the material world acts upon us and makes demands of us. Ritual is a routine by which the devotee is attentive to the vitality of the things around them—those considered part of the self, such as the body, as well as those considered external, such as community or the forces of the world at large. The specific expression of certain Muslim rituals—for example, the prayer experienced, sometimes alone and sometimes in a group, at certain times of the day with certain bodily postures, establishing a rhythm of the day, or the experience of an altered schedule of sleep and eating during fasting and breaking fast in Ramadan—incline the devotee to recognition of the world of agency that extends beyond herself.

[120] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000): 47.

Thus, things in the world—animate, inanimate, organic, inorganic, material and even the immaterial (such as constructed notions of time, history, space, and even epistemology itself)—may be thought to have a kind of agency.[121] Aesthetics, then, may be said to have a kind of agency over its participants, and the manner in which we cultivate aesthetic habits implicitly recognizes this agency. Jane Bennett calls these agentive things 'actants,' after Bruno Latour, and their force "thing-power" – "a materiality that is as much force as entity, as much energy as matter, as much intensity as extension."[122] Like the argument made above about the *ummah*, hers is a "congregational understanding of agency" that steers away from atomism, for even though " the smallest or simplest body or bit may indeed express a vital impetus, conatus or *clinamen*…its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces."[123] What her theory on 'vitality' contributes is a distancing of agency from a kind of anthropocentric congregational force that is uniquely human. Also, Bennett's argument attends to the way these forces cannot be fully circumscribed by intentionality, since "causality is more emergent than efficient, more fractal than linear. Instead of an effect obedient to a determinant, one finds circuits in which effect and cause alternate position and redound on each other."[124] It is interesting to use this to think about why certain rituals are effective for some

[121] I have yet to satisfactorily answer Adam T. Smith's question of how agency, then, is different than effect. My gesture towards a response is that effect is subordinate process, a response to having been acted upon (by an agentive force), which only serves to reinstall human agency as the primary force in the world. Since as a term 'agency' is strongly associated with an intentional individual, I am intrigued by Jane Bennett's use of the terms 'vitality' and 'vibrancy' as well as her discussions of Driesch's concept of *entelechy* or vitality of things, and Spinoza's *conatus* or inertia of all objects, discussed in detail in *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). Bennett also describes her use of actant as borrowed from Bruno Latour's definition where "an actant is neither an object nor a subject but an 'intervener,' akin to the Deleuzian 'quasi-causal operator'" (9). For the purpose of this dissertation, however, I will use the term 'agency' precisely to measure it next to the celebrated concept of human agency in secularity.

[122] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 20.

[123] Ibid 20-1. Bennett makes this argument so strongly that she advocates for seeing the human being and its power to act as "a kind of thing power" where it is not just that the human is "composed of various material parts" but that these materials are "lively and self-organizing rather than passive or mechanical means under the direction of something nonmaterial, that is, an active soul or mind" (10).

[124] Ibid 33.

people, and not others—to theorize how cultivated embodiment attempts to tap into potentialities or energies, rather than certain effects or ends.[125]

By applying the insights derived from material theory and phenomenology, it becomes possible to think about how aesthetic experience affects a reader in unforeseen ways that are beyond any individual's direct, intentional control. Aesthetics can be read as working as cultivated habit. Like religious rituals, narratives can be reconsidered as active, materially-bound *experiences* that are sedimented into the reader's memory and sensibility, oftentimes through repetition. This type of visceral experience is what Sayyid Qutb explores in *The Artistic Mimesis of the Quran* when discussing his intrigue with the aesthetic and aural experience of beauty of Qur'anic recitation (which he associates with a child's experience of the religious text, when the child is allowed to experience it without being asked to analyze it). Furthermore, these are 'smart' embodied experiences that look to the way that rationality is a materially experiential process. Colin Jager argues that this kind of embodied experience of literature is what Wordsworth meant by his phrase "philosophic song," where the encounter with a literary work acts as a mode of critical inquiry by forcing an *experience* with the idea.[126] Ideas are not only ruminated upon, but embodied, felt, and experienced before they are understood comprehensively. This embodied experience of an idea, as Ibn Khaldun argues in *The Muqaddimah*, is crucial for a full intellectual appreciation and grasp of a notion.

The chapter on Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* develops a detailed aesthetic experiential theory. For now, to articulate how ritual can serve to prompt a revitalized notion of aesthetic

[125] Bennett would likely chaff at my use of her very explicitly atheological, ametaphysical theory to explain religious ritual, but in a sense, I am arguing that while religion may profess metaphysical convictions, its rituals attend to this working relationship of human-thing-assemblages with nonhuman-thing-assemblages.
[126] Colin Jager, "Charles Taylor's Romanticism" in *Varieties of Secularism*, 185-6. He borrows and builds on Simon Jarvis' argument about "poetic thinking" in *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

engagement, consider Mahmood's argument about the personal and visceral moral offense registered within Muslim world and communities in reaction to the 2005 Jyllands-Posten cartoons of Muhammad. She argues that those Muslims inculcated a sincere, assimilative (rather than representational) relationship with the prophet Muhammad through the *hadith* narratives in order to bring attention to the "affective and embodied practices through which a subject comes to relate to a particular sign" and to rethink how narrative experiences build "a relation founded not only on representation but also on what I will call attachment and cohabitation."[127]

In literature, the effects of cohabitation and attachment (to the characters, to the plots) are widely acknowledged. However, such imaginative empathy is often glossed as a kind of detachment or distancing from the real, material world, or as a process of the creative, non-rational part of the mind. The Muslim fiction in this dissertation, however, build upon the habits of cultivated embodiment in ritual to consider its implication for the experience of aesthetic form. Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*, in particular, uses allusions to the Qur'an and Western literary tradition to mine and recuperate modes of literary experience or habituated reading in both traditions, modes which have lost their vitality in the contemporary discourse on aesthetics.

The Corpus of "Muslim Fiction"

This dissertation makes its claims by reading a seemingly eclectic group of texts that vary in style, theme, and content. It reads a lengthy, complicated magical realist novel in translation, written in the Russian style by a Turkish writer whose interest in Islam is historical, focused on the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkish nationalism. It considers a slim American volume about 9/11, corporatism, cosmopolitanism, and the War on Terror in Pakistan, written by a

[127] Saba Mahmood, "Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?" in *Critical Inquiry* 35.4 (2009): 842.

Pakistani-American. It discusses a realist novel written by a Syrian-British about the secularization of second-generation Muslim immigrants in the United Kingdom. These texts seem eclectic when evaluated based on the cultural heritages and realizations of Islam to which they refer, their genres, the themes that concern them, or their stylistic choice. What they share is their representations of ritual embodiment as productive or creative, which is deployed through Muslim characters in secular spaces and that serve to contest dominant notions about modern liberal humanist subjectivity. It is not clear that all these authors read one another, but it is clear that they are all reading and responding to the same discourse in which liberal humanism and secularity are presented in contrast to Islam and Muslim lived experience.

The risk in asserting such a rubric is that it might seem to subordinate Islamic tradition and Muslim literature to a type of aesthetics which lacks internal maturity and which defines Islam and Muslims literature completely by its encounter with and reaction to secularism and European development. However, not all Muslim fiction is interested in responding to or arguing with secular or modernizing discourse. This heuristic can be thought of as one school within a larger tradition of Anglophone Muslim fiction, not to mention the literary texts from Muslim traditions written in other languages.[128] Rather this rubric looks to the way these texts participate in what Umberto Eco articulates as communities of interpretation or meaning.

The benefit of this heuristic, however, is that it offers a possible solution to a dilemma posited in the attempts to define Muslim fiction. In conversations about what makes Muslim fiction Muslim, and what contribution to scholarship is made by constructing such a genre, there

[128] For an example of some of the other concerns and 'schools,' read Mohja Kahf's article on the subject of Muslim American literature. Kahf categorizes four groups based on aesthetics, cultural context, and content. What she calls "the New Pilgrims" are sometimes referred to, within Muslim circles, as "da'wah lit"—literature whose explicit subject is religiosity and Islam, sometimes with the goal of winning hearts and minds, others times with the hopes of conversion of its readership. "Teaching Diaspora Literature: Muslim American Literature as an Emerging Field." *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4.2 (2010): 163–167.

is great hesitation to assert religion as central to the definition. Instead, Islam is defined as a feature of diverse cultures—in which case, it makes more sense to read them as ethnic fictions or postcolonial fiction, and the need for "Muslim fiction" dissipates. Also, the question that weighs heavily is the issue of how to classifying texts as part of a religion-related genre: apart from a thematic textual relationship to the religion, there is anxious question about how much it depends on the writer's religious affiliation, and who is authorized to make those decisions based on what criteria. Should the faith of the writer matter, especially if the themes and content of the writer's work do not concern religion or faith? There is also a fear that the designation circumscribes the writer and their work into a narrow and restrictive niche that denies the writer and the work respect as a novel with universal value—a fear that reveals more about the state of discourse on Islam, the shame associated with asserting a Muslim identity, and the assumptions about religious identification in secular culture than it really does about Islam or the contributions Muslim experience may afford. Even when individuals identify as Muslim, it is often circumscribed as a polemical act of identity politics or as cultural marker. The religion is very rarely, and hesitantly, considered as a meaningful and consequential aspect of a person's life—except for the terrorist, fundamentalist figure that represents a danger to pluralistic society and modernity.

These hesitations stem, in part, from the commitments of critical theory that develops out of the humanist and post-structuralist traditions. Conventionally, literature that represented Muslims was filed under the postcolonial genre, where much of the emphasis was placed on Islam as part of local traditions, with a focus on the cultural and ethnic or racial politics that informed its manifestation. This line of inquiry resulted in important contributions, but it nonetheless often participated in a critical practice where Islam was regulated to the niche

micropractices of (often) parochial or subaltern groups. Shared rituals of praying or hajj were unassociated with their wider phenomenon and personalized in the attempt to avoid hegemonic interpretations. The question remained: what links texts together under the written 'Muslim Identity' rubric—what aspect of Islam or Muslim life joins them beyond other identifications such as class, race, sex, ethnicity, or culture? What does 'Muslim' mean, if shorn from its relationship to the metaphysics and tenants of the faith?

While the definition of Muslim fiction that this project makes seeks to avoid advancing the idea of an illusory, monolithic Islam which obscures the religion's historical specificities and various cultural instantiations (especially with regards to the minoritarion traditions), I am skeptical of making piecemeal consideration of Islam and its Muslim communities as unrelated, independent parts. A purely 'local' approach to reading religion, especially Islam, ends up securing some problematic notions. The first is the idea that unity is necessarily hegemonic, and that by contrast diversity is necessarily emancipatory, which forgets how dominant discourse and institutions of power—secular governments included—absorb difference and code acceptable dissent and conflict. The irony, which Talal Asad, following Foucault, notes is the process by which "to secure its unity—to make its own history—dominant power has worked best through differentiating and classifying practices."[129] One example is this particularization of Islam and Muslims while secularity and its European history is universalized: by reading Muslims and their traditions as *only* local without any consideration of a coherency or umbrella under which they all closely relate, Muslim history (like all 'Other' or minority histories) becomes " merely 'local'—that is, as histories with limits" of consequence and interest, and which works to easily

[129] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* 17.

assimilate this tradition into dominant secular notions of the subject while disabling any productive resistance or reform Islamic tradition might make on that model.[130]

Furthermore, this approach of 'local' Islams claims to do one thing while it does another. It wants to destabilize the concept of an authentic Islam, but by investing all its critical energies on minority groups inadvertently relocates 'authenticity,' so that local, parochial Islams are true to their local cultures, while modern Islam is 'political'—that is, not belief, but strategy—and a reconfiguration of modern subjectivity clothed in religious speak. These certain parochial types of Islam favored in academic discourse are moreover ones which tend to offer the least resistance to the 'democratic' and 'secular' notions of religion and the state. This means that certain minorities are favored over others: it's not the literalist, public, minimalist Wahhabi Islam that is venerated, but the creative, mystically inclined, and privately practicing Sufi approaches.[131]

For these reasons, I assert a definition of Muslim fiction that recognizes and thinks about Islam as a coherent religion with divergent, but related, structures of thought and cultural norms. To posit a heuristic for thinking through the connectedness of these texts through their quality as dealing with Muslim characters or Islamic concerns is not to rigidly circumscribe the corpus or to advocate for religiously didactic texts—a concern for many writers who might be considered as part of the Muslim fiction corpus but who actively distance themselves from it. While many are comfortable with associating with other demarcating identities, 'Muslim writer' (even when this does not refer to their religiosity) is generally considered unpalatable. The interviews in Claire Chambers' *British Muslim Fictions* reveal these sensibilities.[132] Tariq Ali says he has

[130] Ibid 200.
[131] Note also that minorities in the 'Muslim world' were often politically encouraged and sometimes directly installed by varying colonial and world powers who exploited minority disenfranchisement to foster disloyalty against their own fellow nation-mates: see for example, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain.
[132] Chambers' interviews vary from discussions of personal religious convictions and commitments, the fictional portrayals of Muslims and Islam, and occasionally, the classification 'Muslim Fiction.' Claire Chambers, *British*

"always resisted being stereotyped as anything but cosmopolitan."[133] Fadia Faqir, whose work often represents Islamic rituals and epistemologies, and who is comfortable with polemical causes and is quick to identify as "a Black Arab writer," only embraced the identity as a defiant political response to 9/11.[134] Likewise, for Aamer Hussain, it was the xenophobic politics following the Rushdie Affair that made him "identify as Muslim rather than South Asian."[135]

When writers accept the rubric, they often articulate the rationale in terms of correcting aesthetic or representative politics: For Zahid Hussain, 'British Muslim fiction' as a "category has to emerge so that certain voices can be heard."[136] Abdulrazak Gurnuh writes about Muslims to correct for the lack of their representation in African fiction; even though he recognizes that a category for Muslim fiction makes possible the analysis of "shared tropes and concerns," his reason for writing about Muslims is to "find myself in the mirror of fiction" and works at "representing the lives of the people," rather than writing "about religion in itself."[137] When Aamer Hussain describes how his work draws upon the traditions within the religion dealing with the questions "of 'origins' and of spirituality," he insists that they work as "a *quietly* integral part of my stories, and I include *subtle* representations of Islam, or Islamic imagery."[138] Texts that are quiet, subtle, which represent individuals rather than religion—this is an insistence from these authors that they would not write polemical fiction or thinly veiled religious dogma. However, it articulates their relationship and the relationship of their work to religion in terms that are acceptable within contemporary secular discourse, revealing the deeply, socially

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Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Writers (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[133] Ibid 41.
[134] Ibid 62, 71.
[135] Ibid 85.
[136] Ibid 264. He continues by saying: "but I think that for most confident writers, it's really irrelevant whether they're Muslim, Christian…because we are all many things."
[137] Ibid 123-4.
[138] Ibid 74-5 (emphasis mine).

entrenched discomfort with staking a claim that the religion needs to inform the definition in some meaningful way. Even Leila Aboulela—widely considered the poster-child for Muslim fiction because of her explicit themes of conversions and her portrayals of proud religious identification—tells Chambers she doesn't strongly identify as a Muslim writer, and would rather be seen "as just a writer."[139]

Recent critical texts with the project of defining "Muslim fiction" have attempted to resolve this epistemological knot, though in general there is a similar hesitation among critical scholarship about how religion factors in as religion. I will look at Amin Malak's *Muslim Narratives in the Discourse of English*, Geoffrey Nash's *Writing Muslim Identity*, and Wail Hassan's *Immigrant Narratives*.[140] I turn to Amin Malak's much referenced definition of Muslim fiction for its consideration of the aspects of the work that reflect the unique contributions of Islam and Muslim religious culture and history, which he articulates as writers "who project the culture and civilization of Islam from *within*," narratives that "represent remarkable

[139] Ibid 103. She wryly notes that this is the "right answer today, I suppose, and it's true" (103). While some of the writers resist any identification—which itself accepts some humanist social constructs about the universality of the non-specific human--it also brings to bear the consideration whether some of these writers would feel more comfortable with self-identifying if the label was one which was socially admirable (for example, feminism, or in Faqir's and Hussein's respective examples, Black writers or South Asian writers). This is why Aboulela doesn't completely reject the label of "Muslim writer," as she says she recognizes it as a positive label of appreciation and recognition from Muslim communities.

[140] Amin Malak, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Geoffrey Nash, *Writing Muslim Identity* (London: Continuum, 2012); and Waïl S. Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation In Arab American and Arab British Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). For further consideration of this topic, see *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing*, Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey, and Amina Yaqin, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2012); Frauke Matthes, *Writing and Muslim Identity: Representations of Islam In German and English Transcultural Literature, 1990-2006* (London: School of Advanced Study, University of London, Institute of Germanic & Romance Studies, 2011); John C. Hawley, *The Postcolonial Crescent: Islam's Impact on Contemporary Literature* (New York: P. Lang, 1998); Carine Bourget, *The Star, the Cross, and the Crescent : Religions and Conflicts In Francophone Literature From the Arab World* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010); Emad Mirmotahari, *Islam in the Eastern African Novel* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Kenneth W. Harrow, *Faces of Islam in African Literature* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991); Coeli Maria Barry, *The Many Ways of Being Muslim: Fiction by Muslim Filipinos* (Manila: Anvil, 2008). At the time of writing this dissertation, Claire Chambers' *Imagining Muslims in South Asia and the Diaspora: Secularism, Religion, Representations* (New York, NY : Routledge, 2015) was not yet published. Karin van Nieuwkerk's *Muslim Rap, Halal Soaps, and Revolutionary Theater: Artistic Developments In the Muslim World* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 2011) considers other artistic mediums beyond the literary arts.

achievements of self-actualizing, identity-defining processes" and which "affirm…their affiliation with Islam as a source of spiritual and/or aesthetic inspiration."[141]

Because this definition depends on articulating an internally coherent or authentic representation, it snags against the questions: what is considered within (and in the same breath, outside) Islam, and who decides on what counts? This is why Malak has to draw his definition with broad strokes, encompassing content, the writer's identity, and their experiential background. To avoid the problems that come with associating writers with religious identities of which they may not self-identify (or who may reject the identification), and simultaneously to circumvent making the definition restricted to one experience or realization of the religion, Malak expands the definition of Muslim to include anyone who has "experienced Islam firsthand for an extended, formative period; they have been influenced to it by such a degree that it has represented a significant inspirational source for them."[142] Malak's definition is thus put in a bind. His definition of Muslim fiction is at once "premised on the notion that many Muslims regard religion as a key component of their identity that could rival, if not superseded, their class, race, gender, or ethnic affiliation."[143] But Malak also avoids making religion the substantial concept, arguing that he will use the term "Muslim" and not "Islamic" to avoid "reductionist equation of the whole culture of Islam with what one author produces in a single work of literature."[144] That raises the question: how do these texts relate when the organizational principle is so broad as this:

> For the flexible purpose of our discussion here, the term Muslim narratives suggests the works produced by the person who believes firmly in the faith of Islam; and/or, via an inclusivist extension, by the person who voluntarily and knowingly refers to herself, for whatever motives, as a 'Muslim' when given a

[141] Malak 2, 7.
[142] Ibid 2.
[143] Ibid 3.
[144] Ibid 6.

> selection of identitarian choices; and/or, by yet another generous extension, by the person who is rooted formatively and emotionally in the culture and civilization of Islam…Simply put, I am using the term Muslim in the widest sense."[145]

The phrase Claire Chambers uses instead is "writers of Muslim heritage."[146] This emphasis on heritage is one that she builds upon from Malak's definition; her scholarly interest, she shares, is intimately tied to her experience of growing up in the "British Asian Muslim milieu in Leeds."[147] As such, Malak's assertion that "Islam constitutes not only a cardinal component of Muslims' identity but also becomes a prominent feature in the identity of the non-Muslims. . . who happen to live in Muslim communities" resonates with her.[148] Building from Malak's "distinction between the Muslim 'who espouses the religion of Islam or is shaped by its cultural impact' and the constructed religion of Islam," Chambers characterizes her interviews as containing "fewer discussions of Islam than of the reified figure, and cultural category, of the Muslim." [149] Though chambers and others who take this approach do so to avoid homogenizing Muslim diversity, the fear that inquiring about one person's relationship to their faith would define the whole faith illustrates the burden of representation that plagues the subject of Islam and Muslims. This fear leads to some unsatisfying claims: for example, while Chambers attends to the Islamic rituals that are spiritual or metaphysical in nature that are organized through the religion as a construct, she unlinks them from their broader religious attachments by personalizing and localizing them as the "material culture – places of worship, organization of prayer, pilgrimage, fasting, and so on – of Muslims resident in Britain."[150] There is no consideration for how this places British Muslims as a local community in relation with a global religious community or phenomena and

[145] Ibid 7.
[146] Chambers, *British Muslim Fictions* 1.
[147] Ibid 3.
[148] Malak 4.
[149] Chambers 7. She thus characterizes her approach as "sociological, rather than metaphysical," though perhaps a more accurate way of expressing this is from a sociological approach, rather than religious studies, approach (7). This insistence once again speaks to the oversensitivity to not being seen as a taking Islam serious as a subject of study, or perhaps even not taking Islam seriously, period.
[150] Ibid 7.

with a religious historical tradition that extends outside Britain. This develops from an insistence on "a broad view of the category 'Muslim,' rather than examining texts for their religiosity or piety."[151] It does not make sense, of course, to examine a text's religiosity or piety. However, this too often gets extrapolated so that there is an avoidance of critically engaging with representations of piety. Approaching religious representations in this way leads to categorical problems, like Chambers' characterization of "emblematic Muslim themes, such as the Qur'an, justice, *djinns*, and compassion," though it is not clear how these are "Muslim" themes rather than "Islamic" themes (for example, the Islamic discourse and practices that structures the ideas of justice in Muslim communities).[152] I am skeptical that taking account of a text's representations of the rituals of the religion's adherents or the novel's portrayal of the religiosity of a character need necessarily define religiosity outside of the text. Rather, texts are able to reflect that character's self-identification or self-perception, or the perception of that character by the community within that text, or the larger discourse within which the novel places itself, and it is possible to analyze this without making a theological argument for correct religious practice or religiosity.

To avoid this personalization and bifurcation of religion in the description of Muslim fiction, in *Writing Muslim Identity* Geoffrey Nash altogether avoids discussion of the authors, and also avoids defining a general heuristic for Muslim fiction. Instead, his definition is descriptive, describing how his texts relate by virtue of their subject material or the social moment in which they appear: he focuses on "an image or set of images of Muslims and of Islam

[151] Ibid 10.
[152] Ibid 13. She goes on to say that there are also recurrent issues "not widely associated with Islam, such as feminism, cosmopolitanism, and literary experimentalism" (13). But this is not because these could not be designated as traditionally Islamic themes – many would and have argued quite the opposite, that Islam's onset in tribal Arabia was cosmopolitan, feminist, and shifted normative aesthetic narrative frameworks. Rather, this accepts the assumptions held in the West that such themes are non- or even un-Islamic.

found in English writing published for the most part in Britain and America which though not entirely new, since the early 1980s have grown in intensity."[153] His interest is not in the texts as aesthetic works of art but rather as objects that reveal the direction in which discourse on Islam is taking. My own definition, which trains its focus on writers that labor within the debate about the coexistence of Islam and the secular, takes its cure from this approach by focusing on texts which are in conversation with a certain historical and geographically-located discourse. More significantly, what Nash's inquiry contributes to the definition of a Muslim fiction corpus is its attention to "the conditions that might make it possible to speak of Muslim writing—that is, writing that takes Islam or Islamic religious belief and culture(s) as its focus." [154] By probing how the genre emerges as one of interest, Nash's definition allows for discussions about Islam and religious belief which are still contextualized and specific.[155]

The limitation of Nash's definition is its disregard for the aesthetic and formal aspects of the work and, further, its implication that aesthetic and ideological concerns need to be treated as mutually exclusive categories. The definition asserted in this dissertation, by comparison, is interested in the manner in which aesthetics and discourse respond to one another. To discuss the discourse in which Muslim fiction is made possible, the definition must also attend to the choice writers might make when choosing to work in certain genres, the marketability of such texts, the limits and possibilities afforded by that form, what different iterations of Muslim identity are

[153] Nash, *Writing Muslim Identity* 2.
[154] Ibid 5. Nash details two periods of time that establish a context for Muslim writing today: he tracks the historical shift of Muslim representations from what he calls the "*Kulterkampf* against Islam" (3) to the contemporary moment. Nash defines the "*Kulterkampf*" period as occurring between 1880 and the 1920s during which Enlightenment discourse, imperialism, and a Christian worldview established Islam as its radical Other (à la Said); he characterizes the contemporary moment as one of a secular, democratic character where it is the "secular self that is culturally and politically hegemonic" (9). With special consideration to the watershed moments of the Rushdie Affair and 9/11, Nash considers how the secular, modern world thus produces the terms under which discourse about, and likewise representations of, Islam and Muslims were established. Though convincing as a description of how we arrived at the contemporary moment, it seems a stretch to say this is the only condition under which the term Muslim writing might make sense.
[155] Even so, like Malak and Chambers, Nash's book reflects the anxiety of being charged with the generalization of Islam; he explains that his use of the "substantive noun" Islam does not signify a "particular form of Islam" (2).

made possible by the aesthetic and formal constrictions of each form and genre, and how the expression of Muslim identity taps into certain genres precisely to make use of particular aesthetics. [156]

Wail Hassan's book on Anglophone-Arab fiction, *Immigrant Narratives*, is one of the few that sustains its critical attention on representations of Muslims who articulate a theological relationship with Islam. His interest is specifically how Arab-Muslim immigrant fiction is one development within a larger corpus of Arab-English literature. The writer he turns to for this task is Leila Aboulela because her oeuvre contains recurring themes of practicing Muslims and their relationship with Islam as a faith. Aboulela's goal, with regard to these themes, is to write

> about Islam not as an identity but going deeper and showing the state of mind and feelings of a Muslim who has faith. I want also to write fiction that follows Islamic logic. This is very different than writing 'Islamically correct' literature—I do not do that. My characters do not behave necessarily as a 'good Muslim' should. They are not ideals or role models. They are, as I see them to be, ordinary Muslims trying to practice their faith in difficult circumstances and in a society which is unsympathetic to religion.[157]

Aboulela's fiction presents the relationship between individual faith and religious community, as well as the religion as institution and the effects of a larger historical religious discourse on the individual. In a later interview with Claire Chambers, Aboulela explains further that this approach is one within a larger Muslim fiction corpus, saying: "There are many Muslim writers and they're writing different sorts of Muslim novels," but while the dominant approach is to write "Islam as part of the culture" or a social norm, Aboulela is "consciously presenting it as a faith" which defines "the individual and their faith, beliefs, and aspirations…belonging to the individual herself."[158] Like Gurnah, she does not see a committed, practicing relationship with

[156] For example, in Claire Chambers' *British Muslim Fictions*, Robin Yassin-Kassab explains that his interest in "the novel is that it's a very holistic form: you can write about relationships, psychology, politics, sex, and religion within the same space, and in real life these things aren't in separate categories" (194).
[157] Aboulela qtd in Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives* 192.
[158] Chambers, *British Muslim Fictions* 106, 109.

Islam represented in the mirror of fiction: she is "often conscious of the absence of religion in the characters' lives" of books portraying Muslims, and the absence of the positive representation of the religion's practitioners who she thinks are "very interesting and positive—yet they are often depicted in novels as dull and harsh." [159]

Lela Aboulela's work enables Hassan to articulate a type of work that evokes an "alternative episteme [to Western secularism] derived from Islam but shaped specifically by immigrant perspectives."[160] In this way, Islam is a religion with substance (rather than just a stand-in for political ideologies or historical cultures), but the Islam in this description is also specifically realized and contextually placed. He also calls this type of work "translational" fiction, in that it seeks to translate a situated Islamic worldview for a European (and perhaps global) non-Islamic readership and cultural space. His definition of Aboulela's type of Muslim fiction works at the intersection of historical, cultural, and religious context. It doesn't fit as a strictly postcolonial type of work, he argues, because Aboulela's project as one that is "less concerned with reversing, rewriting, or answering back to colonial discourse than with attempting an epistemological break with it" which has aesthetic implications, as this "alternative Islamic discourse introduces a new narrative logic into Anglophone Arab and African fiction that finds its inspiration not so much in the European novel, as was the case with writers of an earlier

[159] Qtd in Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives*, footnote 5 for chapter 8, pg 234. In response to the interview question where Chambers characterizes Aboulela's most recent novel, *Lyrics Alley* , as less "religiously inflected" than her previous work, Aboulela explains that the characterization is imprecise, explaining that she feels she has "gone deeper in writing about Islam – and about the meaning of faith" by moving away from the focus on "the juxtaposition of East/West and the tension between Muslim/non-Muslim" that characterized her past work and reduces Islam as a response to modernity. *Lyrics Alley* instead "reflects Muslim cultures in a Muslim setting and I wanted to present characters with different shades of religious devotion" within that Islamic history (Chambers, 101).

[160] Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives* 182.

generation, but in Islamic literature (the Qur'an, *hadith*, Sufi poetry, allegory, parable, and so forth)."[161]

There are two issues that arise from Hassan's definition, however: he concludes that the idea of Muslim fiction only became possible when the Muslim identity and experience became a minority experience, because literary fiction works to challenge dominant modes of life. Thus "translational" Muslim fiction is atypical in Arab-American and Arab-British literature, which is more often "mystical, Christian, or secular"; Hassan further argues that modern Arab literature is also typically secular.[162] He locates Arab-Muslim immigrant fiction is as a minor trend under the umbrella Arab-Anglophone immigrant fiction, which is itself a minor fiction when considered in relation to Arabic, American, and British literatures (and I would even add "world" or "transnational" literature)—making Arab-Muslim immigrant fiction doubly peripheral, "a minor literature within a minor literature."[163] This minority status and its embattled experience, Hassan argues, makes Muslim fiction possible. In these "translational" Muslim novels, the subject matter is novel, a challenge to the conventional modes of secular life, and thus require consideration on the page of fiction: "The narrative logic, intertextual references, translational strategies, and ideological horizons of this fiction express a religious worldview that does not normally inform modern literature."[164] While ideology functions to legitimize normative personhood and sociality

[161] Ibid 182, 191, 186, 182. Within this same chapter, Hassan has an excellent reading of how Aboulela's fiction portrays conversion, prompted by adherence to rituals and "models of community and individual behavior that sustain the faithful," as a divine or metaphysical translation that "negates human agency, interrupts history, and supersedes all worldly affiliations," in contrast to the eternally incomplete project of human translations (cultural, linguistic, and otherwise). He also makes a strong case for the manner in which this subjective, personal, and apolitical model of religious experience borrows from liberal-humanist principles, thus implicitly critiquing the idea that this model is a clean and complete epistemological break from secular modernity.
[162] Ibid 180.
[163] Ibid 180. That double-minor status would remain even if the umbrella framework were inverted, and Anglophone Arab-Muslim fiction were read as a subcategory of Anglophone Muslim fiction; the vast majority of work in English has been championed by writers of South-Asian lineage, in large part due to English colonialism (if we widen the net to other colonial languages, such as French, the scales shift again, and we find much more Arab-Francophone fiction with themes on Islam and Muslims).
[164] Ibid 192.

through the structuring of their experiences, and while they are enacted through disciplinary techniques in social and political institutions (such as families, schools, and the state), he argues, however, that of these institutions which are informed by such precepts, "modern imaginative literature is usually not among them."[165] That is, he associates 'serious' literature or 'literary fiction' in the modern age as inherently antagonistic to the culture from which it is a product; this is why he contends that "in Arab societies where religious culture is powerful and pervasive, there is no need for fiction to offer such explanations; indeed, much Arabic fiction is secular and often oppositional toward the dominant religious outlook."[166] It is only when Arab-Muslims came to live as minorities writing within Anglophone immigrant and postcolonial literature that such themes were needed. This develops from a paradigm which assumes that literature and art function in opposition to the dominant social framework—a very modern notion about art.

Even the contention that contemporary fiction is inherently antagonistic to normativity needs to be closely examined. Much of literature, for example, depends upon dominant religious allusions to Biblical chapters or Greek mythologies; imagery for original sin (the apple, the snake) or martyristic redemption (the cross, the Jesus figure) abound in fiction, even in works which don't believe or espouse the credal validity of the faiths from which the allusion is borrowed. As for those who both espouse the belief and write them into their fiction in the celebrated canon, there is Flannery O'Connor, C.S. Lewis, and G.K. Chesterton, to name a few.

Furthermore, though fiction is often an arena in which dominant frameworks can be challenged, what Hassan doesn't take into account is the way in which certain kinds of literature has been marked as "literary" or commendable, and thus encouraged, if not economically monetarily commercially in the market, then socially with certain accolades and attention by

[165] Ibid 192. I read his use of 'imaginative' to define narratives that are not polemical, such as propaganda or advertisements or religious literature.
[166] Ibid 192.

intellectual institutions. If it seems that this disparity is because antagonistic work is inherently interesting and complex, while polemical or religiously devote work is inherently simplistic and dull, I contend that this is an epistemological framework that has been established in secular society from a framework in which the antagonistic, rebellious, secular individual is heralded above and beyond the conformist, religious community-minded and –integrated person. There are plenty of examples of reductive, sloppy fiction about 'secular,' rebellious individuals that rehearse stereotypes, introduces flat characters, and espouse hackneyed ideological attitudes. The disparity, then, is that more emotional encouragement and structural and financial incentive and support is given by prestigious institutions to texts that approach a narrative of the complex secular humanist; thus, writers who approach fiction from that thematic framework have been supported and tutored and thus given the chance to produce literary work, whereas the alternative has not been supported.[167]

The definition of Muslim fiction must combine the elements of these three writers—Amin Malak's very broad definition, which looks to the contributions from "within" historical and cultural Islam, Geoffrey Nash's definition, which situates the genre so as to look at what makes it possible and what discourse it contends with, and Wail Hassan's, which takes into serious consideration the type of Muslim fiction that approaches Islam and Muslims as a religion and it's religious adherents, rather than just as political or cultural identities, or historical heritages. To use Tariq Modood's reconceptualization of Wittgenstein's "family resemblance," just as it is possible recognize ethnic and religious groups even when their individual parts are

[167] This, I would argue, is another reason East-Asian Muslims have a longer history of contending with Islam in fiction. Arab culture for the most part puts a premium on poetry; until very recently, and even today, novels and short stories in Arabic are considered low-art, the provenance of semi-pornographic narratives (or, as a result of the modernizing drive prompted by Arab nationalism, the realm of polemically secular narratives). They are, in essence, what TV was once considered. To my knowledge, the UK-based Muslim Writers Awards is the only awards group established for this genre of Anglophone Muslim writing.

diverse and heterogeneous, while Muslim fiction may "exhibit very different features, styles, and affiliations, we can usefully speak of them as part of a loosely connected and often discordant family."[168] The following texts in this dissertation are, I would argue, cousins in this diverse and extended family, and reading them alongside one another will reveal interpretations with significant social implications that cannot be come to unless they are recognized as taking part in a corpus defined as Muslim fiction.

[168] Qtd in Claire Chambers' "'Sexy Identity-Assertion': Choosing Between Sacred and Secular Identities in Robin Yassin-Kassab's *The Road from Damascus*" in *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing*, 118-9.

Chapter Two

Hairy Hijab: The Headscarf, the Beard, and the Secular Body in Robin Yassin-Kassab's *The Road from Damascus*

In the novel *The Road from Damascus*, the faith of one of the main devotional Muslim characters, Muntaha al-Haj, is portrayed as depending on the mutual productivity of two aspects of belief: immanent ritual practices and spiritual conviction in transcendent doctrine. Unlike the typical narrative portrayal of belief in contemporary literature, Muntaha's spiritual faith is not only abstraction located in a hermetically sealed interior consciousness unrelated to the body and its experiences. Rather, *The Road from Damascus* illustrates a belief that is expressed by *and* cultivated through dedication to the ritual practices of the body—when Muntaha moves away from the dedication to the secular habits of her youth, "what she returns to is the Qur'an, and prayer, and the sense that God is next to her, closer than her jugular vein."[169] That is, her faith is located at the nexus of the discursive (the Qur'an) and its enabling physical rituals (in this case, *salat* prayer and the recitation of the Qur'an) that prompt a particular sensibility of belief. Through this representation of Muntaha's somaticized faith, the novel illustrates the cooperation between abstraction and embodiment and the ways in which habits and body disciplines encourage, realize, and sustain discourse through material experiences. The novel shows that it is through her practiced body that Muntaha is able to inculcate a relationship to the transcendental, notional idea of God—a God that is more intimately known by being more intimately felt, experienced, or embodied, than the jugular vein. The metaphor of the jugular vein represents the harmonizing of rationality and belief, as the vein's role in the body is to move blood that has been depleted of oxygen from the brain and head (the location of the mouth and eyes, the organs with which logical discourse and visual proof are associated) back to the heart (the organ

[169] Robin Yassin-Kassab, *The Road From Damascus* (London: Penguin, 2009): 92.

associated with emotion and interior knowledge disconnected from rationality, as expressed by the phrase "I know in my heart"). Muntaha, in this relationship to belief, presents an alternative to the self-fashioning rational secular subject. Muntaha illustrates, by contrast, the embodied registers of the self-cultivating embodied devotee.

Reading Muntaha this way requires an understanding of ritual that diverges from conventional approaches. In contemporary fiction written in English, ritual is very often presented as an act that initiates an individual into normative behavior within a social institution. When ritual is represented as powerfully creative, it is done so within fantastical genres which endow the mystical, specialist master—a sage maestro, oftentimes in the form of the guru or the monk—with extraordinary power honed by those rituals, the art of which the cynical hero must learn.[170] In other words, ritual is portrayed in literature as fecund when it works within the allowances of an enchanted world of fancy and fantasy where a character can tap into a transcendental, supernatural and hidden quality of the world. Otherwise, in realist fiction, there is little room for portrayals of ritual that do not function to reveal the social technologies of power.[171]

In much of fiction, just as in much of popular contemporary discourse, ritual is a concept associated with the repetition of unproductive, non-logical cultural or religious rites. Religious ritual specifically is understood as symbolic action which merely communicates one's claims to religiosity. In this formulation, ritual is purely representational. Using the terms of poststructuralism, it is a sign that signifies faith, but a sign that is arbitrary and a mere container

[170] Such characters are typically ascetic (in other words, nonmodern by choice), aberrant, and Other, often hailing from a mystical, mystified East.
[171] I would venture to guess that this may explain why much of the interesting contemporary Anglophone Muslim fiction is partaking in the science fiction genre.

for the abstraction of the signification. It is performative, and not constantive.[172] Consequently, it is believed that no harm is done to faith if these actions are scrubbed from certain public spheres, such as the political and the educational (in France and until recently, Turkey).[173]

The Road from Damascus places its characters in the middle of this contemporary moment where the religious commitments of the body in ritual are butting up against secular epistemological priorities. The novel depicts a British-Arab-Muslim couple, Sami and Muntaha, who in their youth are atheist and agnostic (respectively) and who, at most, appreciate Islam as a cultural heritage that can be unmoored from its theological significance. The novel begins at the point at which Muntaha is beginning to lean towards ritual forms of religious engagement—specifically, the wearing of the headscarf and praying of *salat*—all while Sami's academic career and intellectual investments are coming up short.[174] Simultaneously, at the start of the novel, Sami, a doctoral candidate of literature, is experiencing a crisis of faith in secularism. He is bitterly disenchanted with the inaccuracy of modernist claims about the waning of religion with time and progress, upon which he had staked much of his personal identity and professional energy. The novel follows Sami as, in his existential crisis, he resists the draw of his wife's and brother-in-laws' religious cultivation of their bodies.[175] By tracking the growing conflict and

[172] In "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization," Amy Hollywood argues that structural linguistics, followed by poststructuralism, was built on an unarticulated theory of ritual. She goes on to unpack the notion of ritual and *habitus* using the terms of such discourse (*History of Religions* 42.2 [2002]: 93–115).

[173] The inverse approach to religious rituals is to think of them as inherently imbued with meanings, or "meaning-carrying objects" as Talal Asad puts it, and approach which ritual as a "symbolic system separate from practices" which authorize and activate the efficacy of those rituals . (*Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power In Christianity and Islam.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993: 35).

[174] I say "ritual forms of religious engagement" because it could be argued that wearing the headscarf is or is not, strictly speaking, a ritual. However, this chapter will show that even if we begin from the premise that it is not a ritual, the attitude it can reflect about the body can inform discussions about religious rituals specifically, and social body rituals in general.

[175] The secular, for Sami, is intimately linked to his deceased father, who deeply believed in the triumph of the secular over religion and taught Sami to do the same. In this there seems to be a critique of the patrilineality of a discourse which has claimed to replace a patrilineal system of religion with a universal, merit based system; Sami had "believed...passionately" that God was a unmodern, illogical "fiction" because "he'd thought it was manly and worthy of his father's pride" (Yassin-Kassab, 183). At the start of the novel, Sami's father has been long since

resolution between Sami, his wife, and her family, the novel grapples with the intervention in secular modes of British life by Muslim theological traditions that challenge normative models of public belief. By focusing on embodiment and affect, the novel puts pressure on the privileging of rationality and logical thought in humanist secular discourse as the sole, necessary ingredient for a realization of agency over the material-cultural needs of the body. The novel does so by showing how Sami, in response to Muntaha's decision to cultivate her body through these rituals of faith, tries to *lose* himself in the more socially acceptable bodily pleasures of sex and drugs, but *finds* himself, by novel's end, by becoming bearded and trying to practice prayer.[176] The novel's emphasis in the end is less on the theological superiority of these Muslim embodied habits, but rather the way these Muslims rituals reveal to Sami the anemic relationship within secular discourse between the body's material, experiential practices, and the rational mind's logical capabilities.

Theorists have forwarded many explanations for this modern split between perception and introspection, body and mind, and sensibility and the sensible which so prevalently informs much of Western and secular cultures. Some compare the Platonic tradition, which asserts the existence of a pure metaphysical form over and against the corrupted material-corporal reality, with an Aristotelian tradition that unifies that duality as modes of the same substance.[177] Often,

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deceased; Muntaha is the spark which ignites the slow decay of fealty to both his father and a dogged antireligious secularism. Death is also significant in the novel as it forces Sami to think of the living body with relation to the self, as opposed to the seemingly insensate body-in-death.

[176] Growing and maintaining a beard, in Islamic tradition, is *sunnah* for males—that is, noncompulsory, volitional ritual acts that emulate the Prophet Muhammad's lived example and are said to signify a deep love and respect for his standards. I will argue that in modern Muslim discourse, the beard has come to stand for the male form of physical modesty, next to its female form, the headscarf.

[177] Saba Mahmood compares Kantian ethics in which moral values are determined against habits and inclinations with Aristotelian ethics in which morality is made manifest through those habits (*Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005: 25). Judith Butler reads Aristotle's *schema* to think through how bodies that matter are articulated as intelligible, associating it with Foucault's concept of the materialization of prisoner's bodies (*Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "sex"*. New York: Routledge, 1993:33). Islamic tradition is often characterized as strongly influenced by Aristotle's ideas because of their transmission when Arabs and Muslims translated his works into Arabic.

theories focus on unpacking a pervasive legacy of Cartesian mind-body dualism.[178] Within a religious context, theorist sometimes turn to the distinction between Pauline and Augustinian approaches to the causative relationship of the body and soul with regards to ethics, inner belief and outer good works. Others point to sociology and political science, from Burke to Rousseau, where social contract theory and the development of the state apparatus assumed a brute nature of man which required regulation to allow the higher faculties to flourish and to make governmentality possible.[179] Kant's essay "What is Enlightenment" is widely used and deconstructed to illustrate the privileging in Western discourse of individual rationality over religious conformity (specifically in the public sphere and in the service of a secular polity).[180]

Talal Asad argues that this approach to ritual developed from a prevalent framework in the social sciences in which practice is defined as performative, symbolic, or representational—a signifying action to be decoded, rather than a "practical" regimen geared to inculcate certain modes of being, and in the religious sense, certain metaphysical and affective states of belief.[181] This former approach requires an uncoupling of the inner subjective state of an individual from external, outward action. To illustrate this rending in Western history, Asad points to the differentiation during the courtly Renaissance period between what were considered to be true inner affective states, and masques, or tactical outward performances that strategically obscured and controlled public perception of a subject. This uncoupling, he argues, suited the

[178] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
[179] Jürgen Habermas, "The political: the rational meaning of a questionable inheritance of political theology" in *The Power of Religion In the Public Sphere.*, Judith Butler, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen. eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
[180] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003) and William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). See the introduction for a more detailed discussion of the epistemological and philosophical tradition which prepares a binary of body and the inner subjectivity and the way in which this diverges from and intersects with Islamic theology and theory, which in turn must be taken into account when reading the intersection of Muslims and their rituals in secular spaces.
[181] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* 58.

Reformation, which valued "correct belief" over "correct practice"; in turn, the view found a home in 19th century secular doctrine which defined subjectivity as an autotelic, autopoietic inner self at odds with external forces, such as society, religion, polity, or even the body's sensations and emotions, which were thought to constrain rational logic.[182]

This serves to explain why the novel expresses Sami's disenchantment with the secular through a discomfort with his body. Muntaha's relationship with faith, by contrast, revolves around a mutually beneficial relationship of the mind and the body, of inner faith and external manifestation. To articulate what this relationship is, I will draw upon various articulations of *habitus* and cultivated embodiment made in critical theory. Talal Asad cites Mauss' *habitus* as a theory that accounts for the body's embodied aptitudes in its notion of a "mutually constituting relationship between body sense and body learning," where the "experience of the body becomes a moment in an experienced (taught) body."[183] The implication here is not that the body can tap into some intrinsic body knowledge, but that it learns through a regimen of practice structured and authorized by a specific discourse, a regimen which is willfully accepted by the individual before it takes effect.[184] Asad calls this an "obedient will," reframing deference as an intentional action of some virtue, rather than as necessarily a pathetic negation of agency.[185] Moreover, this disciplinary regimen is aimed at reforming not only choice, but desire: "virtuous desire had first to be created before a virtuous choice could be made…In contrast to our modern assumption that

[182] Ibid 58.
[183] Ibid 77.
[184] Many theorists who write about cultivated embodiment—including Talal Asad, Saba Mahmood, William Connelly, Fadwa El-Gundi, Jane Bennett, and Charles Hirschkind—use the example of an (often, musical) artist who builds these aptitudes through repetition and practice and apprenticeship. For my reading as to why it is significant that the arts affords the most illustrative of this effect, see chapter 4, on aesthetics and Orhan Pamuk's novel *Snow*.
[185] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion 77*.

choices are *sui generis* and self-justifying."[186] Thus the techniques of the self are aimed not only at the body and matter, but also at affect and emotion.

Alternatively, Saba Mahmood invokes an Aristotelian sense of *habitus* against Bourdieu's more famous use of the term, arguing that Bourdieu's social cataloguing of class dispositions misses the aspect of directed tutelage found in the term's earlier usage. Whereas Asad focuses on the authorizing discourse that makes such *habitus* operative, Mahmood turns to Foucauldian ethics and Judith Butler's concept of the iterative process of gender performativity to probe the embodied implications *habitus* has for the subject and for the definition of ethical action and agency, especially in a context of gender parity efforts. Though indebted to Butler, Mahmood attempts to develop a divergent concept in which the subject's relationship is not antagonistic towards norms; whereas Butler's focus is on the process by which norms are subverted in the very impossibility of attaining their ideal, Mahmood studies "agentival capacity [that] is entailed…in the multiple ways in which one *inhabits* norms," and particularly the immanent, embodied forms these norms take in "the attachments their particular morphology generates within the topography of the self."[187] This will be crucial for reading how the characters of the novel are portrayed as committing to Muslim rituals but are not represented as denying themselves autonomy or freedom.

Some have translated Ibn Khaldun's Arabic term *malakat* as *habitus*. What is most interesting is that this term, which Ibn Khaldun uses to describe a process of habitual training of the self through repetition, literally means 'sovereignty over'.[188] This word thus linguistically contains the idea of autonomy and willful self-fashioning in a way that *habitus* does not. What's

[186] Ibid 126.
[187] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety* 15, 24.
[188] In this way, the Arabic grammatically reflects the technical, procedural aspect of *habitus*, as it is a verb form, and not a noun.

more, Ibn Khaldun argues that *malaka(t)* is a skill which is undertaken until it becomes an "attribute"—that is, until it comes to define the person; in this way, embodiment primes the mind's capability "to acquire an additional intelligence" by becoming "conditioned for a quick reception of knowledge."[189] What Ibn Khaldun's *malakat* adds to the conversation about cultivated embodiment is not only the dependency between rational capabilities and embodied practices, but a theory on how the cultivated body productively influences the mind.

In order not to lose sight, however, of the constructed nature of the forms of embodiment to which one may strive to cultivate, consider Judith Butler's discussion of Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* and its place alongside linguistic signification. In *Excitable Speech,* Butler describes *habitus* as a kind of "bodily knowing" which, alongside linguistic representation, is one set of practices within a mutually constituting system of bodily construction:

> The social life of the body is produced through interpellation that is at once linguistic and productive…social performatives that are ritualized and sedimented through time, are central to the very process of subject-formation as well as the embodied, participatory *habitus.*[190]

With these articulations of cultivated embodiment, it is possible to read Muntaha's description of her faith as a relationship between "the Qur'an, and prayer, and the sense that God is next to her, closer than her jugular vein" as an expression of agency that works to enact a productive relationship with her religious norms. Hers is the willful cultivation of embodied obedience which is defined by and interpellates her into a religiously authorized discourse. Moreover, this cultivated embodiment is how she fosters her notional, metaphysical ideas.[191] The novel also shows how Muntaha's embodied experience of faith is one encouraged through theological discourse and internalized from the Qur'an. The use of "jugular vein" in the novel's passage

[189] Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History,* trans. Franz Rosenthal. Eds. N. J Dawood, and Bruce B Lawrence (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005): 342.
[190] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 152-3.
[191] Yassin-Kassab, 92.

alludes to a verse from the Qaf chapter of the Qur'an that avows a material-metaphysical relationship between faith and the body, reading "Now, verily, it is We who have created man, and We know what his innermost self whispers within him: for We are closer to him than his jugular vein."[192] In fact, while this chapter began by characterizing the Qur'an as a discursive element of faith, Muntaha's invocation of the verse within her conversation about the act of prayer draws attention to the way the Qur'an inhabits a more liminal position between its discursive elements—its ideas, parables, commandments, and ethics—and between its material and aesthetic qualities, as characterized by its poetic elements, its rich tradition of oral recitation and memorization, and the manner in which it is paired with physical movements in the act of *salat* prayer.

Veiled Secular Traditions

This conversation about the intersection of the body, ritual, and secular discourse demands a consideration of the way the body and the individual's relationship to the body is culturally imagined and historicized within secular tradition—or, as Judith Butler characterizes the body of Bourdieu's *habitus* as "repository or site of an incorporated history".[193] Postcolonial theory has succeeded in historicizing the cultural body and its rituals, though the unintended consequence is this contextualization is often applied to the postcolonial subject or the non-secular Other who is situated, made periodic and specific, as compared to the universal secular Western (male) subject. Though the advantage is that this precisely critiques an essentialized

[192] Quran 50:16; the translation is Muhammad Asad's with one modification by me. Muhammad Asad translates the Arabic *habl al- warīd* (lit: rope of vein) to "neck-vein" in place of the much more customary translation, "jugular vein." I used Asad because of his translation of *nafs* as "innermost self," which is translated by others as "mind" or more commonly, as the "soul." Muhammad Asad's choice encapsulates a broader notion of subjectivity, both of the idea of the rational mind and the metaphysical concept of the soul. Furthermore, in the acknowledgments at the end of *The Road from Damascus*, Robin Yassin-Kassab attributes almost all the translations of the Qur'an quoted in the novel to Muhammad Asad.

[193] Butler, *Excitable Speech* 153.

hegemonic discourse and enacts a thick and diverse historical and cultural knowledge, it has, in a manner, been absorbed into the hegemonic system, seeming to always locate Otherness as momentary, particular, and ultimately, derivative.

As such, the secular is often approached as universal, and Islam only punctuates its history.[194] Secularism has been rhetorically deployed as the timeless, universal philosophy under which flourishes progress and scientific inquiry, inclusive political and social institutions, and humanistic ideals, as well guaranteeing the modern subject's achievement (or movement towards achieving) a natural body unfettered by societal restrictions that impede the individual's intentional self-fashioning.[195] Secularism is imagined as a transparent film that demands nothing and leaves no trace on the body; if the body is marked at all, it is only superficially, and only accordingly with the desires of the emancipated subject.[196] For this reason, before it presents embodied Muslim religious rites, *The Road from Damascus* begins by establishing the culturally situated quality of all body attitudes and their investment in a particular intellectual genealogy. In order to attend to Sami's secularized body, the novel spends time unpacking the secular relationship to tradition and progress which inflects and informs the prioritization of the intellectual mind and unattached subconscious over the body and its creative capabilities. Thus Sami declares that secular humanism is a "late nineteenth-century hiccup, an antiquated

[194] Even the argument of this chapter can fall prey to this pitfall; it can be misread as arguing that the Muslim characters and their practice of Islam in Britain serves a fleeting, singular function of remedying a secular ailment, after which it will fade away while the nation's secularism remains.

[195] In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben puts it this way: "modern democracy presents itself from the beginning as a vindication and liberation of *zoē* [the Greek term for natural, unspecified life], and that it is constantly trying to transform its own bare life into a way of life and to find, so to speak, the *bios* [specified form of life] of *zoē*" (Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998: 9).

[196] Of course, this idea of a singular secularism is a fiction that serves the rhetorical purpose of making it seem universal. For an example of scholars working to provincialize secularism through consideration of its different realizations and historical contingencies, see *Varieties of Secularism In a Secular Age* edited by Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig J Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

European gentleman's daydream."[197] The novel thus temporally, culturally, and historically situates secularism, and even parodies the language through which other epistemologies are written off as archaic by locating secularism as a specific "antiquated" historical experience located in the late 19th century body of a specific class, the gentleman, and a specific cultural subject, the European. It also secures secularism within the body by metaphorically describing the epistemological concept, usually associated with the mind, through the bodily hiccup.

The novel upsets the tropes associated with the encounter of secularism with older nonsecular traditions and cultures. Many postcolonial novels portray or play with the ambiguously or non-believing academic, intellectual, or cynic who returns to his homeland only to find his newly crafted ideological commitments in conflict with the (often uneducated) rituals and habits of his heritage culture. [198] But, as the title indicates, *The Road from Damascus* shuttles the focus away from the nominally secularly governed, culturally religious Syria, which Sami visits in a failed attempt to shore up motivation and material for his dissertation. [199] The novel flips the trope so that Sami is made to grapple with his own relationship to faith in general and Islam in particular in an England where Islam is becoming visible and populous through the public displays of faith practiced by children of Muslim immigrants. Rather than treat this resurgence of faith practices as simply an outdated mode of life applied in the modern world, the novel explores how the trend manifested within the modern, secular, Western world.

The novel even implicitly suggests an alternative genre through its title, *The Road* from *Damascus*. The title repurposes an idiom with a modern secular meaning of individual

[197] Yassin-Kassab, 245.
[198] Most famously in Arabic literature, this trope is explored in Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ's *Season of Migration to the North* (London: Heinemann, 1969). The theme continues to be developed in novels like Ahdaf Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992), Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), Nuruddin Farah, *Crossbones* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2011), and Tahmima Anam, *The Good Muslim* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2011).
[199] The Syria in this novel, set soon before and after 9/11, precedes the March 2011 revolution.

transformation that depends on an allusion to New Testament tradition. It also flips the conventionally assumed direction of progress from West-to-East. Furthermore, this flipped directionality neatly historicizes a paradigmatic shift in the ways in which the cultivation of the individual was defined through travel. In the Christian tradition, sacred history was defined by the movements of Christ and saints, where "religious travel had been to the centers of religion [as in pilgrimages], or to the souls to be saved [as in missions or crusades]," whereas, in modernity, "secular travel was from the centers of learning and power to places where man was to find nothing but himself" and where these trips came to be "(at least potentially) every man's source of 'philosophical,' secular knowledge."[200] But in using the Biblically-laden reference to St. Paul's epiphany and conversion to Christianity on the road to the historical Damascus—a history that is treated as a self-contained Biblical tradition, separate from a modern Damascus that is part of the Muslim Third World and which the West has little stake in—the novel reveals the fallacy of taking such organizational schema as ontological realities. It shows that the history of the constructs called East and West has been a series of meetings, disputes, cooperation, and mutual influence.

In one scene, the novel explicitly dramatizes the typical conversation about modern secularism and Islam in Europe and parodies the image of the book-burning, riotous, anti-intellectual and anti-creative Muslim mob. In this chapter, Sami attends a widely protested university lecture on the subject of religion. The panel is made up of Rashid Iqbal, a hawkish secularist writer and a university historian and Muslim convert that is described as having written a book called "*Secular Fundamentalism: A Panic Discourse*" and who is drowned out of the

[200]Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983): 6.

conversation by the impassioned rhetoric of both Iqbal and the audience.[201] Iqbal is a thinly veiled caricature of Salman Rushdie, the iconic figure often used to illustrate the rights of speech, belief, and sophisticated artistic sensibility guaranteed by secularism that are incompatible with or not-yet protected in Islam and Muslim societies.[202] But in the novel, the Iqbal character is not portrayed heroically, but caustically, and the Muslim characters in the audience are depicted as savvy respondents sophisticated enough to challenge the histories and power dynamics that inflect Iqbal's discourse. When Iqbal goads the crowd with lyrical and incendiary rhetoric against religion and Islam delivered with "dramatic timing," the ensuing chaos and violence is not initiated or perpetuated by the raucous, responsive Muslims but by a group from the right-wing British National Party.[203] The following brutal police intervention nonetheless targets the Muslim students, satirizing the xenophobia that underlies assumptions about Muslim violence.

But even within this scene, where *The Road from Damascus* works to unpack the situated characteristic of all cultural discourse, the novel trains it focus on the way in which these notions of distinct epistemological traditions are themselves constructs that obscure the complex manner in which traditions interact and influence one another. The young women Muslim activists that are described as a part of the "Hizb al-Hurriya" party (trans. "Freedom Party") and that cover their faces in *niqab* and their bodies in full length *jilbabs* (cloaks) are anachronistically described as "flappers."[204] While this is a comic reference to the flapping of their billowing garments, it also associates them with a cultural moment from the West where women were seen as asserting

[201] Yassin-Kassab 297.
[202] It should be noted that Salman Rushdie is directly named earlier in the novel by Sami's father, Mustafa, when Mustafa attributes the term "god-shaped hole" to Rushdie (Ibid 52).
[203] Ibid 298.
[204] Ibid 301. Considering the novel's multiple allusions to current events, the Hizb al-Hurriya students may gesture towards the Muslim typified by Egypt's political party of that name.

their rights of control over their body through sartorial choices that flouted previous norms. These Hizb al-Hurriya women also articulate this right of bodily self-definition when Iqbal presents clitoridectomy as an example of dangerous, archaic religiosity which secular progress corrects, telling him to "leave our vulvas alone!" amidst clarifications that the practice is cultural, not religious, and a discussion that needs to be had within the Muslim community.[205] They do not deny the practice is problematic, but recognizes and resist the manner in which it is implicated in imperializing discourse and the related institutions of power.

The novel also complicates the notion of unified, hegemonic rhetoric of secularism. Throughout the course of the novel, Sami comes to realize that what he once thought of as a singular "fort of secular humanism" is made up of various traditions, and furthermore that rather than being present in a singular modernity, he is surrounded instead by "various modernisms" that have been prompted by various traditions and religious faiths.[206] Contrary to his previous belief in secularism as a universalizing force with a teleological purpose, Sami begins to think of the specific and varied traditions from which it grew, how "like an imploding star, tradition hadn't simply disappeared. Instead, the old material was sucked in and spat out into a new dimension."[207] Sami thus describes the Rashid Iqbal talk as taking part in classical Greek traditions of embodiment and ritual belief, characterizing Iqbal's performance at the lecture as an example of a secular "religion of the comfortable metropolitan natives" that "was ever more Hellenized . . . requiring spectacle and heroism, requiring feats of strength and human drama, with the divine focus dispersed to allow for a variety of household gods…[and] empirical cults" of movie stars and consumerism.[208] Meanwhile, he notes how "Third World religion," in

[205] Ibid 301.
[206] Ibid 244.
[207] Ibid 244.
[208] Ibid 245.

response to accusations of irrationality in the modern word, became "more strident, more nihilist," and less attuned to its own rich history of aesthetics in religious ritual.[209]

The novel further shows how this obscurest inattention to history and tradition encouraged in universalizing secular rhetoric comes at a cost. Due to Sami's devotion to certain secular notions of progress, he has a particular relationship to history in which the past is an immutable object which needs to remain in the past. When he sees traditional practices deployed in the present, he reads it as a bastardization of that essentialized history, described that neotraditions "would have looked like parodies to previous generations."[210] Sami thus values history as long as it does not manifest as a tradition; he appreciates historical knowledge and awareness, as long as it is not made effectual. He reads tradition as a hardening of historical specificities into a rigid code, "considered tradition a concrete and formidable enemy."[211] This is an approach he learns through his father, Mustafa, who believes and makes academic claims that Islam in the Arab world is "all over" precisely because secularism made it possible for Arabs to be "unmoored from tradition."[212] Even when Sami begins to question the presumptions of secular progress, he still reads traditions as deterministic: the "past is a nightmare determining the present, and the present is empty."[213]

By contrast, the practicing Muslims in the novel are portrayed as living a more productive relationship with tradition that accounts for the past while maintaining relativity and flexible application in the present.[214] Muntaha, Sami's wife, describes it as the experience

[209] Ibid 245.
[210] Ibid 244.
[211] Ibid 17.
[212] Ibid 52.
[213] Ibid 246.
[214] Sami's non-Muslim advisors and friends also have a more productive relationship with tradition, but I am interested here in the way the rituals in which the Muslims participate in are illustrated to encourage such productive relationships to the past, thus reframing the concept of ritual and its significance. This can be said to be especially

whereby "nobody anywhere lives in smooth connection to the past. Only the shape of tradition remains."[215] When Muntaha's students begin to call her "sister" (as in, sister in Islam) after she wears the headscarf, Muntaha wryly observes that by traditional religio-cultural codes (which she identifies as "Islamic manners"), these young boys still "growing their first beards" should call her 'aunty' to show respect for their age and experiential difference.[216] But Muntaha doesn't correct them because "this was respect of the street variety," and she acquiesces to each cultural instantiation of a base ethic (here, exhibiting respect); she accepts the variability and flexibility of the praxis that Muslim codes and traditions take in specific cultures and eras.[217]

We can explain Muntaha's approach to tradition through Talal Asad's description of the temporal relationship Islam encourages through its religious traditions and *sunnah* (prophetic examples related in the *hadith* literature of Muhammad's sayings and actions, which is considered by Muslims as timelessly relevant):

> In tradition the 'present' is always at the center. If we attend to the way time present in separated from but also included within events and epochs, the way time past authoritatively constitutes present practices, and the way authenticating practices invoke or distance themselves from the past (by reiterating, reinterpreting, and reconnecting textualized memory and memorialized history), we move toward a richer understanding of tradition's temporality.[218]

This articulation of the productive relationship between practices and tradition helps us to read the novel's portrayal of Muntaha's approach to her faith commitments. Crucially, the novel presents this flexible approach to tradition through its consideration of the hijab framework and the sartorial forms it takes.

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significant as Muslims can often be typecast as holding too firmly to an irrelevant and outdated religious code (e.g. *shariah*) in a modern world.

[215] Yassin-Kassab, *Road from Damascus* 68.

[216] Ibid 122.

[217] Ibid 122.

[218] Asad, *Formations of the Secular* 222.

The novel takes on another trope here. Typically, such flexibility with regards to religion is, in fiction about Muslims, associated with mystical or minority approaches to Islam. Muntaha fits this figure, as the liberally inclined Muslim with an agnostic humanist past. She is also portrayed as accommodating and reflective as a consequence of the diversity of her religious upbringing, specifically the Shiite narratives which her mother exposed her to, as well Muntaha's Sufi- influenced religiosity (as illustrated in her description of prayer as an act of becoming one with God's unity).[219] By contrast, her brother Ammar's Islam is a modernized, revolution-minded, but adamantly Salafi approach to the religion. Still, despite his austere form of the Sunni tradition, one which is usually considered a calcified interpretation of the religion, his relationship to the past is still as flexible as Muntaha. Ammar's adherence to Islamic bodily cultivation is defined by the *sunnah* tradition (the example of the prophet, as related through the *ahadith*, or the record of his sayings and doings), in that he "shaven-headed in a skullcap, with drooping, wispy beard," and "obedient to one interpretation of the Prophet's sunnah, his upper lip was plucked bare."[220] Ammar's adherence, however, takes a modern twist, as his clothes, while loose-fitting, are not traditional robes but rather "a baggy, long-sleeved shirt. Printed in green letters on black background: Islam: The Only True Religion."[221] The novel shows Ammar and Muntaha relating to religious tradition, specifically with regard to ritual forms of dress, in a manner that is responsive and mutable.

Because the novel portrays this comfort with tradition through a focus on religious acts that are defined by religious discourse, it seems to show that this mutability approach to tradition has a basis in the very constituent elements of the religion. The focus on *sunnah* and, implicitly,

[219] Yassin-Kassab, 18, 222-3.
[220] Ibid 112-3. Note here that the novel gestures towards the variation of interpretations in what is often portrayed as a homogenous religious tradition, alluding to the various schools of theological thought in Islam.
[221] Ibid 112-3.

the hadith which structures it, is significant, because, as Talal Asad argues, this relationship to the past and tradition is built within the linguistic structure of the word hadith, which "captures nicely the double sense of temporality" because of its multiple meaning in Arabic, signifying the 'new' or 'modern' as well as the 'past' or 'tradition', while also denoting "'discourse' in the general, secular sense as well as the remembered discourse of the Prophet."[222] The novel uses Muntaha and Ammar to illustrate that this productive relationship with tradition as that which can inform and reform the present is embedded in the faith and its embodied and linguistic practices.[223] This is not to say that it is always activated by its practitioners, but the novel does reveal here how agentive possibility can be located in another tradition, and how the secular tradition can block certain agencies—or, in other words, that religion, which is often thought of as a disabling force, has the possibility of speaking to and activating certain habits, and secularism, often thought of as an enabling force, in fact disables certain habits. Also, by illustrating a male's commitment to certain forms of dress, Muntaha and the female body is no longer a gendered container in which all ethical investments are poured. The stress is not on the gendered body, but on religious bodies and their various commitments to certain bodily habits.

Unveiling the Secular Body

The novel thus presents secularity as an epistemological tradition that carries within it a delimited conception of the body developed through complex and intersecting genealogies of various traditions, and portrays how Islam in the contemporary United Kingdom illustrates one of these intersections which brings along with it a flexible, dynamic temporal relationship with

[222] Asad *Formations of the Secular* 223-4.
[223] Sami is (perhaps rightly so) cynical about Ammar's problematically selective relationship to tradition "was ancient and modern, cutting out the centre of Islamic history," a period of history which holds theological complexity and variation (Yassin-Kassab, *Road from Damascus* 264). He levels this same critique at his father's secularism. Nevertheless, Sami's comment operates from the problematic notion that the time of the prophet and his *sahaba* (disciples) was a static, clear-cut and simplistically ideal community, while Ammar illustrates a comfort with tradition that is dynamic.

the past. The novel uses the characters' embodied rituals to reveal how tradition, informed by religious discourse, not only structures the individual's relationship to the body, but also how that individual's relationship with that tradition informs the manner in which one experiences and negotiates the effects of that structured tradition on their body. In other words, the novel unpacks the way these epistemological traditions carry within them certain relationships to the body that enable and disable certain habitual forms of being in the world, and the implications of these physical states on their practitioners' senses of self and agency.

In the novel, Muntaha's approach to her body through her Islamic principles and habits unhinges Sami. Sami's disdain of Muntaha's decision to pray and wear the headscarf leads him to think of the relationship she is creating with her body, which forces him to reassess his own relationship with his body by contrast. When Sami thinks of his body, it is merely "matter that irrigated him, the incidental, time-bound stuff" that he can easily separate from "he, Sami the personality, the consciousness, Sami the intangible which couldn't be measured"—a separation emphasized by a period and a new sentence beginning with "but he, Sami the personality," and which assumes an incompatibility between the immanent and the transcendental.[224] For one to exist, the other must be denied. By contrast to his metaphysical self, he thinks of his body as "processing, without his consent or control…entirely indifferent to his ideological pursuits. Atheist, agnostic or Muslim, the body paid not the least attention, so busy it was producing aromas."[225] After a slew of failures in his emotional life and intellectual scholarship, Sami attempts to become aware of his body through his self-invented radically ascetic regimen that combined elements of the philosophy of "self-applied Sufism," Buddhism, and

[224] Yassin-Kassab 246.
[225] Ibid 256.

environmentalism through the practices of "Muslim-style" fasting and ablution.[226] He begins from the "principle that an indulged and flabby body bespeaks an indulged and flabby spirit" and so he "renounces his pleasures" in all forms.[227] But even in this mode he approaches his body as "an empirically verifiably humiliation" to be disciplined in the aggressive sense.[228] Though in this formulation he begins to try to work out how the body and soul/consciousness are connected, his still approaches his body through the framework of antagonistic dualism that leads him to approach asceticism as a process through which he "aimed for self-control" through disciplined denial, because "the body, he reasoned – and the self is what he meant – was a monster that could be weakened through lack of sustenance."[229]

The novel closely ties Sami's radically unproductive relationship to the West and its technologies of power. When on a "juice fast," Sami hears in the onomatopoeia of the action a relationship to secular torture methods: he "grew squeamish at the sibilance of the word itself…the wormy lip-puckering sound of it, as if he was squeezing juice as he spoke it" and which leads him to think of Syrian detention chambers.[230] If fasting might be associated with religious habit, a juice fast makes Sami think of secular habits of cultivating the body image in certain ways, in which he hears resonances of a sour, bitter secular history of war that included an abjuration of the body: "Liquidation: there was a word suitable for a juice fast, and for an eradicating regime. For anyone in a hurry to build a new, secular consciousness."[231] The sentence relies on puns here: There is the double entendre on fast (as a speed) and fast (as a diet), as well as the dual meaning of regime, which in its modern usage more often signifies a system

[226] Ibid 254.
[227] Ibid 253.
[228] Ibid 253.
[229] Ibid 255.
[230] Ibid 255.
[231] Ibid 255.

of governance, often with a negative connotation, but which in its classical usage denoted a meaning closer to regimen.[232] These puns play with the irony that the practice of religious or spiritual fasting relies on a slow, pared-down time-logic, whereas the secular drive, associated with the regimes of colonialism, enforces aggressive, inorganic changes quickly.

To illustrate how this approach to the corporeal is embedded in secular institutions, the novel portrays how this dualism is taken to its grossest extreme in the torture of Muntaha's father by the socialist regime in Iraq. Muntaha's father, Marwan, gains a somatic education of secular torture in the Iraqi prison: "By splitting his lips and ears, smashing his nose, crushing his spine, and tugging out handfuls of his full hair, from scalp and pubis, they had taught him at once how physical he in fact was."[233] In a parody of ablution and other ritual cleansing, his captors "washed away all the illusions concerning an expansive soul…they washed too the uneven concrete floor of both his cell and the pain room with his blood and urine, bucketloads, really sluiced[234] the place shiny so that he thought of himself in the end as a large blood blister."[235] When Marwan unintentionally repeats God's name while being beaten—an old "habit" which resurfaces at the inopportune time—his captors insist there is no God by writing it "on the wall with his blood, using the wall as a blackboard and the blood as chalk."[236] This torture, in which "they never even asked him questions, except rhetorical ones," is not meted out to extract information, but serves a purely didactic purpose with "no point to it beyond his metaphysical education, to satisfy the demands of routine, and his beaters' zeal."[237] What he learns from this

[232] "regime, n." Def. 1. *OED Online* (*The Oxford English Dictionary,* Oxford University Press. Web. 19 Sep. 2013): "Originally: the regulation of aspects of life that affect a person's health or welfare (*obs*). Hence: a particular course of diet, exercise, medication, etc., prescribed or adopted for the restoration or preservation of health. Cf. regimen n. 1a, regiment n. 5."
[233] Yassin-Kassab, *The Road from Damascus* 64.
[234] Here we have a play on the sounds of sluiced and juice, in which Sami hears resonances of secular torture.
[235] Yassin-Kassab 64-5.
[236] Ibid 65.
[237] Ibid 65.

experience is a lifelong feeling of being "betrayed once again by his body" that manifests as a "short lifelong struggle to balance an oily bubble of selfhood atop this body, a bubble of consciousness, of pure idea," feelings that persist even in his later return to religion and its faith practices.[238] His 'secular' education of torture teaches him that the body and mind must be at odds.

It is significant that Marwan later reconnects with his faith but maintains a Cartesian mentality about the body and soul for a few reasons. It reveals how secular epistemologies form the Muslim, just as much as Muslims and Muslim tradition does historically and culturally shape the secular West. It also reflects the variability of approaches and traditions within Islam and Muslim culture. Muntaha's approach to Islam, which I argue challenges certain secular assumptions and changes Sami's secular worldview, is not unique only to Islam (though it is unique in its specific form), nor is it the approach all Muslims take to Islam. Muntaha's approach is just one of many scripturally and institutionally approved approaches which happens to be emphasized in the religious discourse of her contemporary moment.

What, then, is this approach of Muntaha's, and what about it reveals and challenges these embedded notions of the body and habit in the secular epistemology? The difference is illustrated between Sami's and Muntaha's attempts at realizing and figuring out the relationship between the material body, its social elements, and the self. Sami's approach is one of control, while Muntaha's is one of cultivation. Sami disciplines his body in the sense of harsh, violent reprimand (he attempt to gain mastery over it), while Muntaha disciplines her body in the sense of working with the given material to craft, initiate, or form certain abilities through concerted practice. While Sami's corporeal relationship is built through a specific secular tradition in which the body is abjured, through certain Islamic religious and cultural traditions Muntaha finds an

[238] Ibid 116.

alternative mode of being that allows for a reconciliation between the conventional and problematic dualisms of body, ritual, mind, and rationality. The novel articulates this as derived from a different historical experience, as Sami's academic advisor Dr. Schimmer asserts that "the Arabs, you know, didn't make the spirit-reason duality until the… incurable stage of their decadence. They had their greatest material success in their most religious period."[239]

The Road from Damascus portrays this cooperation between the material and its faith practices through two rituals—the much debated headscarf to the less politicized ritual of *salat* prayer, illustrating the challenges to secular norms of practiced embodiment that the characters make through these rituals. This chapter will focus on how the figure of the headscarf and argue that *The Road from Damascus* establishes a "hijab framework" of embodiment that serves to inform the portrayals of *salat*, and eventually, of all habituated, experiential embodiment.

Hijab Habituation

Much has been written about the headscarf or veil. In academia, many scholars on Islam and Muslims have rejected the emphasis on the debate as a re-invocation of the same problematic tropes of the Eastern woman that has to be saved from the men of her culture.[240] Some argue that the debate has actually been constructed by imperial powers to distract from important issues such as class or race.[241] Others argue that it is precisely the site from which

[239] Ibid 34. This is all the more ironic because Sami's father, Mustafa, argues that Islam in the Arab world brought about an emphasis on the immaterial, such as "all this false consciousness. All this focus on the unseen. All this superstition and bloody otherworldy stuff" which he thinks is "out of character" for Arabs, who once were and should continue to be "a people of worldly power" who are "contributing to material culture, as we did before" (52). This rehearses the binary which sets religion as juxtaposed to secularism and transcendence to materialism. It also speaks to a stereotype about Islam , which is thought to deny the body and its pleasures (as epitomized in the veiled woman), unlike the secular body, supposedly guaranteed freedom to subject itself to all kinds of sensation (disregarding how certain body states are made normative even in the secular).

[240] For some iconic scholars on this issue who approach the issue differently and take different stances on the subject, see Leila Ahmed, Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud, and Lila Abou-Lughod.

[241] Ranjana Khanna, *Algeria Cuts : Women and Representation, 1830 to the Present* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008) and Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).

women can challenge the commercialism and the objectification of the modern woman's body, or that it has become a problematic rhetoric that obscures other forms of Muslim religiosity. The issue remains, however, because it is a practice located at the nexus of cultural and theological practices, with no stable ethical referent.[242]

I use the phrase 'the hijab issue,' and not 'the headscarf issue,' because the novel works to frame the various forms of hijab portrayed in the novel not through the usual feminist framework of gender parity but instead through a dual-gendered anthropology of dress. This is not to discount the fact that the headscarf is often used as a tool through which to curtail women's rights. Rather, the novel is trying to change the terms of the debate by recognizing that the ritual itself is not inherently the problem. Thus, when I use the term 'hijab' in this chapter, it will be to refer to the religious framework of modest dress and comportment, and the term 'headscarf' will signify one of its female iterations. On the other hand, the most prominent male iteration of the hijab portrayed in the novel is the beard. Differentiating (but not untethering) the term 'hijab' from its sartorial expression in the veil and defining it as a conceptual framework is doubly-productive because the word *hijab* in the Qur'an refers to physical and metaphorical partitions, the latter in reference to one's ability to perceive truth and faith.[243]

This reading of the hijab as a framework builds upon the work of two theorists. In her anthropological study *Veil*, Fadwa El Guindi argues that the "in order to understand the phenomenon of veiling one must include veiling behavior by both sexes"—a culturally coherent

[242] Thus while forced veiling is obviously abhorrent (and Islamically illegitimate—"there shall be no compulsion of [the acceptance] of religion" Qur'an 2:256), so is forced unveiling. For those whose mothers, aunts and grandmothers wore the veil at great risk to personal and familial safety and comfort at the threat of extralegal incarceration for their assertion of basic rights, narratives that demonize covered women or mark them as (a) powerless or (b) collaborators with patriarchy who sacrifice their own gendered "kind" can jar against and do a disservice to the memory of those women's bravery.

[243] *The Road from Damascus* plays with this double-entendre, describing Sami's academic failure with regards to veiling: "Like his Big Idea deconstructed: nothing. Under the veils he'd penetrated: nothing" (179). See Fadwa El-Guindi's *Veil* for the various etymological implications the word *hijab* (as opposed to *khimar*, or headscarf) has in Arabic, as well as the difficulty of finding precise translations of those words.

phenomenon, to borrow Talal Asad's formulation—rather than reading it as a "feminine" (and feminist) problem.[244] She rejects a conventional reading where the veil was explained away as an outdated relic of the Islamic appropriation of pre-Islamic cultures, such as practices from the Byzantine and Persian empires, and she rejects the interpretative matrix of "veil-harem-eunuchs-seclusion-polygamy" that developed from this line of reasoning. [245] Instead, El Guindi argues that in the Arab world, veiling was a practice whereby individuals actively demarcated and "activated" relationships with space through sartorial negotiation of their body that reflect cultural notions of sanctuary, privacy, restraint and respect.[246] From El Guindi, this chapter will derive much of its ideas about the transformative nature of the hijab on space, and its characterization as a dual-gendered concept. The second point of influence is Saba Mahmood's argument about reading the veil as a practice of agency realized through deference to norms in *Politics of Piety.* Like Mahmood's study of piety in Egypt, the novel prompts questions about the possible relationship the modern individual can experience between the metaphysical and the immanent through the body and its experience of the physical world.

Because the novel presents an atypical portrayal of such a politically fraught practice, the novel labors first to set its terms regarding the debate, and works to disrupt the stereotypes and expectations that would work to mask its portrayal of the headscarf. It does so by portraying diverse and complicated representations of the headscarf, challenging archetypal representations of its adherents and their motives, and alluding to various intellectual disputes made within Muslim religious discourse. It is not immaterial to my argument that the novel tries to disrupt all the stereotypical approaches to the headscarf and the implications that underlie them before it arrives at its material point. In order to arrive at the view of the headscarf as a physical habit that

[244] Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil : Modesty, Privacy and Resistance (*Oxford, UK: Berg, 1999): 4.
[245] Ibid 3, xvii.
[246] Ibid 3, xvii.

can reflect a new form of agency, it navigates through the assumptions about the headscarf. It is crucial to register some of these more telling disruptions.

Firstly, the novel deflates the premise that the hijab is anti-intellectual and inherently against an assertion of free will. Secondly, it complicates the idea that the hijab is exceptional in its work as a symbolic expression of identity politics and cultural conformity, revealing how all dress communicates cultural belonging, and questioning the assumption of a culturally neutral, naturalized body. [247] Finally, it challenges the paradigm that valorizes the solitary individual who is safest when protected from interference by others. It is only after it moves through these points that the novel presents hijab as part of a self-conscious regime of training and elucidation, and explores how a habituated ritual approach to the body and the body's relationships to objects can be transformative.

To begin, the novel takes to task the idea that the hijab is a form of gender oppression born of ignorance and irrationality. Rather than having been forced to wear it, Sami's mother, Nur, wanted to wear it (and to pray) but "dared do none of those things when her husband was alive."[248] After her husband's death, she "wears patterned hijabs, prays five times a day."[249] Patriarchal domination is not represented here by an undereducated, religiously fundamentalist

[247] Secular rhetoric claims to resist this threat by guaranteeing the individual the right to choose the natural inclinations of the body, and while the hijab has been faulted as a restrictive cultural and religious code that hides and denies the body (and the woman's ability of self-realization). But the problem is that this doesn't account for the fact that secular societies also have cultural codes. Joan Wallace Scott reveals this in her provocative argument for why the hijab is considered so viscerally abhorrent in France: she argues that one aspect of this disgust reflects how the scarf threatens the normative gender dynamics in the country. In response to French President Chirac's comment that the veil is "a kind of aggression," Joan Wallace Scott argues that "the aggression of the woman consisted in denying (French) men the pleasure—understood as a natural right (a male prerogative)—to see behind the veil. This was taken to be an assault on male sexuality, a kind of castration. Depriving men of an object of desire undermined the sense of their own masculinity. Sexual identity (in the Western or 'open' model) works both ways: men confirm their sexuality not only by being able to look at—to openly desire—women but also by receiving a 'look' from women in return. The exchange of desirous looks, the availability of faces for reading, is a crucial aspect of gender dynamics in 'open' systems" (*Politics of the Veil* 159). By contrast, the Islamic model asserted in the Qur'anic verses in 24:30-32 is for the members of both sexes to "lower" their sexual gaze.
[248] Yassin-Kassab, *The Road from Damascus* 53.
[249] Ibid 53.

husband character who forces her to veil and denies her access to secular education; rather, it is a highly educated, secularly fundamentalist husband who denies her a right to veil in his lifetime, mocks her religious education and blocks her ability to communicate with her son for fear that she will religiously train Sami.[250] It is his academic books that metaphorically block her Qur'an, "which she hid on the top bookshelf behind other volumes."[251] The conventional image of the abusive religious husband is inverted: that Nur "would quickly mutter [the Qur'an's] protective verses" over Sami infers some type of aggression from her husband.[252] This is not to say that education, intellectualism, and reason are inherently aggressive as contrasted by some naturalized, wholesome spirituality. Rather, the novel shows that these are just forms used in specific ways by an aggressive, hardline approach to a certain ideology.[253] The removal of the headscarf is shown to be as patriarchal as its enforcement. Sami is also guilty of such patriarchal attitudes, as evidenced by his claim after his separation from his wife that "the hijab didn't bother him…Now that he'd renounced ownership, she could do what she liked."[254]

Sami also faults his mother for having "betrayed his father's secularism by wearing a hijab" and faults her for having "stayed in London after her husband died. Lived alone, and worked in the man's world of a halal butcher's shop."[255] Obviously, the novel shows how Sami, for all his blustering about women's rights, holds on to certain patriarchal thoughts. But even

[250] "Sami didn't talk to his mother, not anymore, because she hadn't talked to his father" (Ibid 8).
[251] Ibid 53.
[252] Ibid 53.
[253] In other words, it is not even ideology that is problematic, but the approach taken to any kind of ideology that makes violence possible. Marwan, Muntaha's father, grows into an unyielding belief, but not into violent extremism. He believes in *fiqh* (religious judicial rulings, known by the misnomer "sharia law"): "the laws [that] could tie the people together with the twine of common humanity and shared purpose, could tame them with humility and restrain them with proper limits" (Ibid 77). Though he believes in these laws and finds London society lacking without them, he is content not to impose them, as "that wasn't his business. He ordered his own life and left the people to their fate. If it was God's will to guide them, they would be guided" (Ibid 77). Marwan's complex approach to faith , where he can assert the choice to order his life in a particular manner but where he also believes in a greater plan that limits his individual volition allows him to both believe deeply in Right without feeling that he must violently enforce some eventual utopic/dystopic plan.
[254] Ibid 202.
[255] Ibid 8.

more so, Nur's betrayal is inhabiting what Sami designates it as his father's secular sphere of London, and furthermore inhabiting it in a place that makes allowances for religious dietary needs—in other words, a space where secular London and Islamic London simply coexist. For Sami, religious Nur was only allowed to inhabit secular space by virtue of being bound to her husband by marriage, like a 'visa' and that expired at her husband's death, annulling the rights which it had once conferred.

To undercut the linked idea that the headscarf, as a kind of oppression, encourages ignorance and illiteracy (the antidote for it being exposure to feminism and scholarship that would necessarily reveal the backwardness of the ritual and render it void), Muntaha is depicted as a woman who is educated, smart, and has 'progressive' or 'liberal' attitude.[256] When she and Sami discuss the headscarf, the novel explicitly rehearses the various religious debates had within the religious tradition—including whether or not the Qur'anic commandment to cover the head and bosom is ambiguous or explicit, whether the headscarf is a culturally specific illustration of modesty or a universally applicable dictum, and how much the headscarf functions as a ethnocentric or national symbol of belonging.[257] Muntaha also refers to the critical work of Fatima Mernissi and the poetry of Qabbani.[258]

The culturally internal quality of this discussion is significant in two ways. First, unlike the typical narrative, the scarved character is discerning, rather than naïve, ignorant, or put upon. Second, she does not valorizes Western scholarship as preeminent over all others; her intellectual references are diverse, spanning the premodern and modern Muslim, Arab, and secular

[256] When he first meets Muntaha, Sami is drawn both to her particular Iraqi-ness, but also "saw her immediately as Qabbani's new woman" because of the way she acts as a strong, independent woman (ibid 2).
[257] Ibid 98.
[258] Ibid 109.

scholarship.[259] Sami, by contrast, is surprised to find that during their argument he was "actually engaging in theological dispute. On the Qur'an's terms" rather than "dismissing the backwardness of religion in general."[260]

It is through Muntaha's considered choice to cover that Sami eventually learns to think of his wife as "a creature of struggle and identity, making a choice at least."[261] He tries to reconcile her decision, however, by replacing the binary framework of oppression and emancipation with a second conventional lens: that of interpreting the headscarf through the lens of identity politics, where the headscarf stands as merely symbolic. In an argument, he compares it to the use of the "[Al-Aqsa] mosque as a flag" of pan-Arab nationalism that only just happens to take religious form because of the region in which it was situated.[262] Later, he argues that he "thought we stood for something else," that is, an areligious secularism that Muntaha betrays by wearing what he reads as a symbol of religiosity. In his obsession with symbolism, he refers to Muntaha as an object or concept, asking "What have I married?" rather than "whom."[263]

The novel never pretends that this symbolism is not one aspect of the hijab and the headscarf; in fact, the narrative teases out the complex ways in which the act functions in part as symbol. However, the novel resists ending its characterization there. There is constant reference to something additional or beyond that escapes such a rigid heuristic. Muntaha even mocks Sami when, in an argument against the headscarf, he claims it goes against what they symbolically

[259] Ironically, Sami's father, a "renowned (to an unheard-of coterie)" professor who has become minorly famous from his book *The Secular Arab Consciousness*, in it excises "the fourteen hundred years" of Arab history that deal with the Islamic period, which he thinks of as a "stumbling and sinking" and "falling off from previous glory," which they are found "climbing out from under it in the late colonial period" (Ibid 35, 51, 52).
[260] Ibid 95.
[261] Ibid 108. This is a realization he comes to only by being high. It is only after Sami takes weed—that is, changes his own relationship to his body through an external source—that he can feel "relaxed about the hijab" (107).
[262] Ibid 93.
[263] Ibid 99.

"stand for."[264] It is not that she doesn't take ethical positions, or think that their actions have no representational effects, but that Sami leaves no room for the significance of inhabited embodied experience: he speaks of himself and Muntaha as pure signification.

The problem with Sami's position is that he imagines a secular human body that is inherent, timeless, and universal, unmarked by social codes.[265] As Joan W. Scott puts it with reference to the French headscarf debate, this illustrates a "refusal to acknowledge that [. . .] there was a different notion of personhood being articulated" than the presumed 'universal' secular model.[266] The novel thus spends much of its time representing the hijab as just one example of a many choices of dress that are intentional and unintentional performances and signifiers of belonging within a community, whether aesthetic or ideological. For example, when Sami first meets and falls for his wife, Muntaha, long before she considers covering, he sees in her "a proper Arab. Baghdad-born" not only by her accent but also by "the way she dressed, tidy and formal, declared her."[267] She is sartorially interpellated—"declared"— by the culturally conventional mode of dress that she follows not necessarily to make a statement, but because she is a product of a specific, culturally normative approach to dress. This is in contrast to the novels description of Sami's ironic, cosmopolitan approach to dress. Sami is presented as dressing in clothes that intentionally reflects a kind of Arabism "in which the significance of signs had swiveled away from their original focus."[268] He wears the Palestinian-Syrian laborer kuffiyeh wrapped around his head "in a Kurdish style," even though "a member of his class in Syria

[264] Ibid 109.
[265] Discussing France, Joan W. Scott asks of the conventional sartorial practices of French women and their Muslim counterparts, "Which practices were expressions of private commitment? Weren't there still cultural norms setting the terms of who counted as an individual? A girl in a headscarf was a member of a 'community,' but a girl in a miniskirt was expressing her individuality…(reproducing) normative standards in the guise of neutrality" (*Politics of the Veil* 82-3).
[266] Ibid136.
[267] Yassin-Kassab, *The Road from Damascus* 13.
[268] Ibid 13.

would never wear one," illustrating how a cultural habit which traditionally may evoke class or ethnic distinctions, or cultural conformity or cultural coherency, can transform into a dissident act that only makes sense in the exilic situation in London where these distinctions are conflated as a general Arabism.[269] The novel portrays Sami as wearing the kuffiyeh "wound…tightly around his head"—the member of the body associated with thought—unlike his fellow London peers who "wrapped kuffiyehs around their necks like braces against the whiplash of adulthood."[270] His is an ideological form of dress, meant to communicate a political position in a particular cultural situation in which it will be read in a certain way, unlike the students who wear it to non-reflexively cope with the vulnerability of belonging (made metaphorical with the reinforcement of the spine at the neck). Sami wears the kuffiyeh—a type of scarf, after all— "as if wearing it were a question of asserting rights," which evokes the ethical-political discussions of the right to wear the hijab in France, Turkey, and 1980s Syria. [271] Unlike those debates, however, the novel does not pretend that the objects have certain predefined ontological meaning. Sami's male scarf (the kuffiyeh) is only one form of many: he observes that his was just another form of the diverse types of symbolic body marking employed by the London youth—"from body tattoos to nose rings, his contemporaries were all at it. Striking poses, claiming allegiances."[272] This explains why Sami, in his later adult life, reads Muntaha's wearing of the headscarf as a political act of cultural conformity. Whereas Muntaha's approach to dress is, throughout the novel, one of integration, Sami's is one of resistance. In other words, Muntaha, in Saba Mahmood's terms, illustrates an "agentival capacity is entailed [. . .] in the multiple

[269] Ibid 13.
[270] Ibid 13. It's unspecified if these other students are immigrants who use the kuffiyeh to assert a kind of pan-Arab pride and recognition in London, or if these other students are non-Arabs Londoners for whom the kuffiyeh has become detached from its cultural context and has become instead coopted as an aesthetic object for a counterculture trend. This ambiguity is productive precisely because it brings to light the flexibility of all kinds of dress to take on different meanings and forms.
[271] Ibid 13.
[272] Ibid 13.

ways in which one inhabits norms"; by contrast, Sami's is articulated through resistance.[273] What Muntaha teaches Sami through the course of the novel is not that his politics of resistance is misguided, but rather reveals to him that even his opposition is inscribed within norms—Butler would call it "the paradox of subjectivation" whereby the subject "who would resist such norms is enabled, if not produced, by such norms."[274]

The novel goes to great lengths to make sure it is clear that dress is not the only kind of social marker. Even the physical body is marked; it is not as if stripping the hijab or all symbolic clothing would lead to a universal self. Thus, in Sami's youth he and his father, Mustafa, are able to visit mosques to make fun of the "unsuspecting earnestness of the god bothered" because they are both ethnically "disguised by curling hair and thick eyebrows, by black eyes, wrapped in the mufti of their own faces."[275] The narrative plays with the double-entendre of the word 'mufti,' which means both "a [Muslim] legal scholar competent to deliver a fatwa" and also, in British English, "Plain or civilian clothes worn (in military contexts, by permission only) by a person who normally wears a uniform."[276] In another moment about the socially racialized body, Sami reflects upon his Arab face in comparison to English ones:

> there was something overdramatic about it…There was too much crammed in, too much life. The features were too big, too expressive for his English-style emotions. They suited someone else. Someone foreign.[277]

In Sami's face—something he cannot set aside or remove—the novel presents discourses about excessive, aberrant bodies and affects. Here, the body its parts evoke the same questions of belonging and visual marking that the hijab debate prompts: what body is normative? Which is

[273] Ibid 15.
[274] Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 15.
[275] Yassin-Kassab, *The Road from Damascus* 58.
[276] "mufti, n.2." *OED Online (The Oxford English Dictionary,* Oxford University Press. Web. 19 Sep. 2013). It notes: "Perhaps originally with reference to the resemblance between an officer's off-duty clothing of dressing gown, tasselled smoking cap, and slippers, and the stage costume of a mufti."
[277] Yassin-Kassab, *The Road from Damascus* 14.

unmarked, and which social codes are linked to this unmarked body and thus made hegemonic? By locating the debate in the body, the novel shows the problematic implications of the ideas that it is possible to strip individuals of any cultural or identificatory markings down to an innate, neutral human subject.

Sami encounters this issue of the cultural specificity of all bodies as opposed to the universalized Western body in a train ride with Muntaha after she decides to cover. The first body is that of "an old Jew in toned-down Polish clothing, black hat and coat but no ringlets, no fur, reading the Jewish Chronicle. A well-established – if still religious – suburban sort of Jew."[278] Sami reads this Orthodox Jew as having modified the intensity ('toned-down") of his Polish cultural affiliations and scaled back ("but no ringlets") on his religious attachments as a concession to living in the modern world of capitalism as a "well established…suburban sort" of religious person.[279] (Notice here that what the novel takes as a point of comparison is a religious man, illustrating another dual-gendered tradition of religious dress.) The second body he observes is that of a "black woman, with fingernails occupied in wave-frizzed hair"—the frizzed hair signifying one of the physical features through which racism against blacks was focalized—

[278] Ibid 110.

[279] Ibid 133. In the novel, this relativity of belonging is considered through the integration of another Semitic and perpetual Other: the Jew. Much of the way the character Gabor remembers his Jewish grandfather's experiences resonate with the current reception of Muslims in the West: they are seen to be "more tribe than nation, an archaism in the machine world, suffering a morbid and occult religiosity" which is illustrated in the way they dress and gender roles, such as "the way they treated their women, subservient inarticulate wigged shapes that they were," habits which are read as indicating a "lust for subversion. The way they dressed was a clear rejection of the host civilization. They spurned British law and established their own religious courts" (133). This language all mimics French arguments about the *foulard* or the headscarf and Muslims (133). The Jews are also viewed to be "dangerous" not just in their parochial tendencies and close-knit associations, but on the global level of "international dimension. The colony – the hive, the nest – sent and received insect signals far overseas. Untraceable, cabbalistic signals" (133). All these fears can be similarly mapped on Muslims, whose are faulted for ghettoization in host Western cultures, feared for their potential transnational terrorist connections and their martyristic desires, whose religiosity threatens the West because they are supposedly hell-bent on establishing a strict "Sharia" (misinterpreted), and who are symbolized by their control over their women and their women's refusal to submit to the dress codes of their host societies.

but who, like the Jewish man, is now "also at home, also at ease."[280] The third and final set of bodies is the dominant, normative "pair of suited natives shooting out unembarrassed glances, mumbling to each other news of the fat, round world, him and Muntaha now part of it."[281] Their bodies need no description. Meanwhile, the hijab marks Sami and Muntaha precisely by transforming them into *embodied subjects* of the world, subject to critique by the invisible, bodiless norm.

Paradoxically, Muntaha's decision to cover makes Sami feel self-conscious about no longer being assert the strategic "Arabism" he proudly cultivated as, which he fashioned into a "careful net of difference" seeking a "confirmation of the difference he flaunted" with girlfriends who sought out his a carefully crafted, controlled, desirable exoticism.[282] By contrast, Muntaha grows up feeling too culturally and physically racially marked to pass, and initially fell in love with Sami precisely because "he was more English than her, without trying. He seemed to fit. He took the place for granted. He took himself for granted."[283]

It is crucial that the novel makes explicit how an underlying racism is at work with regards to the hijab. In a scene on public transportation, Sami is anxious that to the London observer Muntaha "must look prim…prudent and stern"; with Sami, they "must look like a proper Muslim couple"— 'proper' here referring to how closely they coincide with the social expectations of their exoticness, rather than their adherence to Muslim habits—"Muslims out on dark business, their trauma children and a string of austere relatives left behind in an unfurnished overcrowded room."[284] Muntaha's hijab prompts class and race distinctions, marking Muntaha

[280] Ibid 110. This "ease" is obviously a "post-racial" simplification of Sami's; much has been made of problematic standards of beauty for black women that still preference the "whiteness" of the body, such as straightened hair. Similarly, there are still circles in which Jewish cultural specificity is abhorred.
[281] Ibid 110.
[282] Ibid 12.
[283] Ibid 87.
[284] Ibid 110.

and Sami not as fundamentalists, but rather, as immigrants. What the novel means to reveal here is that the discomfort with the headscarf is often shaded by racism or Islamophobia justified by discourse against religious symbolism.

To drive home the point that Muntaha is an a reified, essentialized figure of the scarved Muslim women, the novel loads one scene with the diversity of Muslim women's head covering and the associated differences in the ethnicity, race, class, culture, and lifestyle. The description begins with the clichéd "dark, occult, hidden females" that are "draped and masked like demons. Like antimatter."[285] This reference to antimatter literally de-objectifies the body underneath it. It hyperbolically reveals the rhetorical work underlying typical representations of women in the black Islamic robe of the Arab *'abaya* or Persian *chador*, where the female body is at once made the center of the issue, but is also disappeared in its specificity and made to stand in for all women's bodies. The novel also makes a pun with the word: these women don't 'matter' by virtue of having no physical trace. But the novel quickly defangs the dark, occult figures by giving them cultural specificity: they're shown to be simply "Saudi wives and daughters."[286] Though these are defined by their domesticity, another stereotypical trope of the Muslim woman, the other scarved women are described as "Levantine housewives *or office workers*, family women *and providers*, in neat pastel or flowery hijabs, and raincoats or *business suits*" who "flitted *seriously* about their *affairs.*"[287] The repetition of the two conjunctions ('and', 'or') portrays these different modes—familial, domestic, public and professional—as neutral and valid choices for the women. The descriptions of scarved "women springing athletically" contrasts to the description of the antimatter phantoms gliding and highlights the body in its capacity as something that can be developed and maintained—or in other words, cultivated. These athletic

[285] Ibid 102.
[286] Ibid 102.
[287] Ibid 102, emphasis mine.

women are covered "in sock-shaped hijabs which pulled their hair up and around into the form of a question mark, leaving the neck visible"—the question-mark signaling the confounding of the usual assumptions of the hijab.[288] These scarves are not only "actually quite fashionable" but also well-integrated with, and adaptable to, contemporary and surrounding popular culture, "alluding to Rasta bonnets or hip hop bandanas."[289] If this seems to glorify a kind of assimilation, the next description combines traditional culture with local London culture in the "gum-chewing British Bengali girls in heavy brown or green jilbabs, projecting defiance and bursts of cockney."[290]

With this assertion of the variety of 'hijabis' (in vernacular used among English-speaking Muslims, this indicates woman participating in the sartorial expression of the hijab framework), the novel turns to Muntaha's decision to don the headscarf as modern approach to ritual that combines the rhetoric of the rights and freedoms of individual choice with religious identification and ritual cultivated embodiment. Muntaha is "a creature of struggle and identity, making a choice," but this choice is within the historical framework which makes her choice also a "response to contemporary events" where Muslims in the West articulate their return to religion in response to post-colonialism, September 11, secularism, and other current issues.[291] But the novel does not discount or disparage Muntaha's religiosity as inauthentic because of its situated quality, as Sami does, but rather explores how her turn to a practiced Islam works within a complicated context of socio-historical dynamics. Muntaha's admission that, "like the world, she had become more religious" does not serve to disqualify the legitimacy of her beliefs. [292] She explains to Sami that she is comfortable with the idea that she "fitted" and "wanted to belong to

[288] Ibid 102.
[289] Ibid 102.
[290] Ibid 102.
[291] Ibid 108.
[292] Ibid 92.

this Muslim community," and that this communal aspect of belonging was something "you shouldn't be embarrassed by" but rather "proud of."[293] Here, the novel challenges the assumption that agency is defined only by the decisions in opposition to an institution or group, as it is often rhetorically and conceptually employed. Instead, Muntaha negotiates her volitional capabilities within a group that holds to a set of explicitly defined norms.

In contrast to Sami, as the novel's representative figure of classical secularism, the novel uses Tom Field, Sami's academic mentor and the man Sami characterizes his secular "shaikh," to portray a non-Muslim who is also confident in negotiating belonging and self-expression.[294] Tom Field interprets Muntaha's desire to wear the hijab as the way in which she "becomes representative of something else, something new for her but well established in the crowd outside" which "deepens her ties of belonging."[295] These ties to a group identity do not necessarily (in the conventional sense) serve to sever her ability of self-realization, but rather "she identifies with it. It defines her. So, in a definite way, she becomes more than herself. We are all more than ourselves, but few of us consciously so."[296] In this becoming that extends beyond her self, the novel moves away from representing group belonging as a loss of the individual inside of a larger, predetermined group, and instead explores the productive potential of belonging as an expansion of the self through sociality which offers "group-dependent – insight."[297]

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[293] Ibid 92.
[294] Ibid 106. "Sheikh," literally meaning male elder in Arabic, denotes a Muslim man who is educated in the religion to a degree in which he can act as a religious leader or mentor. See "شيخ" (šaiḵ, šāḵa) in *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: (Arabic-English).* Hans Wehr, ed. by J. Milton Cowan, 4th ed. (Urbana, Ill.: Spoken Language Services, 1994).
[295] Yassin-Kassab, *The Road from Damascus* 104.
[296] Ibid 104.
[297] Ibid 105. The character of Tom Field is a new-age paranoid, a doomsday-theorizing group anarchist who rails against hyper-individualism consumerism in a capitalist system. The novel describes him in a way that recalls the deleuzian subatomic vitalism which conceives of matter with regard to its motion and creative *energy* rather than as static state or form: "Tom Field is a man of movement, evoking a density not seen since the early moments of the

Once the novel disrupts these tropes of the headscarf—where covering is portrayed through an oppression/emancipation or ignorance/enlightenment binary framework, where it is treated as an exceptionally rebellious and dangerous practice of symbolic identity politics, or where it is presented as a form of mindless cultural conformity—the novel then develops what I have called a dual-gendered "hijab framework" which explores the creative potentials of cultivated embodiments in rituals like the headscarf. It portrays Muntaha and her brother Ammar experiencing ritual (and in this particular case, ritual dress) as a process, as the act of habitual self learning through bodily training. This is why Muntaha criticizes Sami as "silly" for saying that the hijab as antithetical to what they, as a couple, "stand for."[298] When he tries to read it as a flag, Muntaha counters by explains that it is just "a headscarf. It's material to cover my hair. That's all."[299] Sami is obsessed with its signification, whereas Muntaha is more concerned with its material, physical functionality. This is not to say that she naively rejects the symbolism it carries, but that she wants Sami to realize that it is not inherently imbued with these meanings.

When Muntaha explains her decision to wear the hijab to Sami, it is within a framework of her practice of other Muslim rituals, among them fasting and praying. That is, the hijab is not a singular phenomenon, but embedded within a regimen of faith practices: Muntaha begins her conversation about her decision to wear the hijab by reflecting how it is one practice of many that she has begun to participate in, including praying and fasting during Ramadan.[300] These practices must be *practiced* by the body in order to attain the proficiency or dexterity of their benefits; as Muntaha says "I wish I'd started before and not wasted so much time because…the

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universe, energy bound in, straitened and tied down, but heavy with explosive potential" (103). Through Tom Field, where the boundaries of matter and the ideational self blur and where both cooperate towards action, the novel sets up an alternative to Sami and Marwan's idea of the agentive soul and the dumb, unyielding mass we call body at odds.

[298] Ibid 109.

[299] Ibid 99.

[300] Ibid 97.

more you pray the better you are at it, the better able you are to concentrate. The more peaceful you feel and the greater the reward."[301] For Muntaha, prayer is not a symbolic representation of her faith through which she communicates her religiosity, but rather a process of building mastery of the experience of faith. Her articulations about the experience reflect progressive receptiveness towards the practices. When Muntaha describes her shift from her previous attitude about rituals to her current ones, she first asserts the use-value of practicing rituals (to get "better," for ease of concentration, which leads to greater feelings of "peace" and "reward"). But then Muntaha backtracks to explain that she wants to cultivate desire for and aptitude at rituals which foster a specific relationship between her and the world through belief. So at first, her attitude is cynical about these "silly" rituals, but then she reflects that this attitude developed from her disregard of the practice ("or I didn't pay attention to them") and that some exerted effort made affect her life more actively: "once I try them I find they help me."[302] She then rearticulates her meaning to focus on desire rather than a utilitarian approach to ritual, saying, "I mean, I really enjoy them."[303] Muntaha's experience of ritual, as evidenced in her linguistically mimetic statements of reasoning, is one in which she discursively tries to transform her relationship with ritual from a thoughtless symbolic act to an active, productive experience of the body and desire in faith. She uses ritual to transform her own reception of those very same rituals, to inculcate not only aptitude, but desire for that aptitude: Muntaha is a fictional portrayal similar to Saba Mahmood anthropological subjects, who work "at honing one's rational and emotional capacities so as to approximate the exemplary model of the pious self".[304]

[301] Ibid 97. I say "practices must be *practiced*" because, in contemporary usage, the noun practice has taken a passive meaning of routine, unguided, and unconsidered habit, unlinked from the active verb concept of practice, practicing or practiced, which implies intentional work.
[302] Ibid 97.
[303] Ibid 97.
[304] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety* 31.

The novel, however, resists making the female body the sole container for such meanings. The Muslim woman's body has become over signified, by both religious practitioners and feminist critics, as the site at which emancipation from native cultural and religious values or resistance from imperializing hegemonies can be fought.[305] *The Road from Damascus* evades this by making this relationship with faith not only Muntaha's, but that of male characters as well. Instead of representing the subject as one of women's inner struggle to veil or unveil, the novel presents the issue of the hijab, which I have defined in this chapter as the cultural code for normative dress in the case of both genders.

Muntaha's brother, Ammar, is her male counterpart. Throughout Ammar's development from "a lisping Anglo-boy into dungeons and dragons and maths," to general hip-hop devotee, to "some kind of counterfeit gangster," to a follower of the Nation of Islam, to his transformation as a Five Percenter, ending at mainstream Islam with a Salafi approach, his dress and bodily practices reflect a dedication to the way in which dress and habit are actively creative with regard to the kind of relationship one wants to cultivate with the self in the world.[306] With each change of devotional bent, Ammar undergoes a difference in appearance and language. As a nerd, he lisps; as a hip-hop aficionado, he dresses in a "leather jack" and a T-shirt on which was printed "A Public Enemy target."[307] With his entry into Nation theology, he begins to quote Louis

[305] For example, in "Algeria Unveiled" Frantz Fanon uses the veil as a metonymy for the native resistance in the Algerian revolution, and illustrative of the tactical guerrilla shifts that nonetheless implied certain social significance (*A Dying Colonialism,* New York: Grove Press, 1967). Ranjana Khanna wrote how those women in Fanon's imaginary are "shown to be overburdened with meanings in which they become akin to coverings, camouflage, and screens, and part of the machinery of the psychic, of the visual, and of war itself. The veiling and unveiling of the body highlights the body as machinery, and indeed as a technology of both war and the everyday" (*Algeria Cuts* 104). If the woman there is at least recognized as participatory, Nada Elia's "Islamophobia and the'Privileging' of Arab American Women" argues that after 9/11, the detention of Muslim men was made efficient and invisible precisely because of the rhetoric in which the Muslim Arab woman must be 'saved' from her male counterpart (*NWSA Journal* 18.3 [2006]: 155–161).

[306] The Five Percent Nation is an offshoot of The Nation of Islam that developed in Harlem.

[307] Yassin-Kassab, *The Road from Damascus* 212. Sami likens Ammar's enjoyment of Public Enemy to a secular religious belief, arguing that "what they do is layer different sounds. TV adverts, traffic, the police. Allusions to Farrakhan and Malcolm X. Old soul music spliced up and given new meaning," which takes "music to a new level.

Farrakhan, dresses in "sunglasses and unmixed plain colours (mostly black) and shiny shoes, and a straight-line mouth…his hair cut close and disciplined," and more importantly, matches these outward changes with behavioral transformations: he "no longer gestured provocatively from car windows, emanating now a harsh sobriety…mimicking the Nation of Islam lifestyle."[308] While dress and behavioral change are changed by ideology, the ideology is also effected by aesthetic forms. When Ammar espouses the Five Percenter version of the Islamic origin story of angelic objections to God's creation of Adam, Sami takes note of the effect of formal techniques of hip-hop that are applied to this theology, which takes "bits of Islam and bits of Christianity cut up and sampled and redefined in the mix" and explains that "this was a technique learnt from the Five Percenters, so prominent in the rap milieu."[309] When Ammar turns to Malcolm X as a model in his final move towards mainstream Islam, "his accent calmed down immediately. His hip hop fixation waned. Farrakhan and Mr. Yacqoob departed his conversation, and Malcolm X entered."[310] Thus, through Ammar the novel presents how bodily cultivation and facial gestures, dress, behavior, speech habits and even aesthetic attitudes are fostered through commitments to different ideologies, whether religious or not.

What Ammar's relationship to habits drives home more illustratively than Muntaha is that these habits often rely on a model that guides certain frameworks or habits for life.[311] His final arrival at maintaining traditions of the Prophet Muhammad serves to illustrate how this

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It isn't even music anymore…It's the news, it's politics, it's preaching…the roar of the crowd, and the noise of the metropolis" (213). Ammar's responds to Sami's analysis with a bodily response associated with religious learning, "jigging with great frequency on his stool like a praying Jew or a Third World child learning the Qur'an, like a convulsive from any culture" (213).

[308] Ibid 215.

[309] Ibid 216. Sami characterizes this as a hip-hop style deconstruction of language that "break[s] down everyday language into esoteric parts to reveal hidden political significance," as in, "Television? That's tell a lie vision" (216).

[310] Ibid 221.

[311] Even before Muntaha's concerted turn to religion and her engagement with hadith and Muhammad, she also quotes and employs the example of Ali, the prophet's cousin, son-in-law, one of the important *sahaba* (Muhammad's coterie), and the figure around which the initial split between Shia and Sunni Islam began.

manifests in Islam. Muslims believe the Quran set as an abstract, flexible, timeless framework for being-in-the-world (Sunnah), while the Prophet Muhammad and his *ahadith* (the narratives that relate the sayings and doings of the prophet) exemplify their real-world applications. These real-world examples are called the sunnah, which are time-, place-, and culture- bound, but from which general rules for application and living the spirit of the Sunnah are abstracted.[312] The novel thus attends to the significance of materially-realized examples of abstraction through figures—in Islam, these are the prophets in general and Muhammad specifically and intensely. In an article about the visceral reactions in parts of the Muslim world to the Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoon controversies, Saba Mahmood argues that the modern conception of the role and effect of fictional and symbolic representation "fails to attend to the affective and embodied practices through which a subject comes to relate to a particular sign—a relation founded not only on representation but also on what I will call attachment and cohabitation."[313] I would amend her slightly for my purpose, saying that the subject comes also to inculcate *habitus* with relation to guidance that participates in attachment and cohabitation (the mentorship aspect of apprenticeship). This explains Ammar's need for role models, sometimes secular (hip-hop artists and the culture surrounding it), sometimes religious (Muhammad), and sometimes mixed (Five-percenter Yaqoob & Nation of Islam Farrakhan, which amalgamate various religious and political sensibilities; and Malcolm X, a religious and political figure that transforms over time).

The novel thus explores the creative potential of the body's habits on the mind and the self—that is, on the individual level. But it also expands this interest to the social or interpersonal

[312] In critical texts of Islamic Studies written in English, when the word sunnah is written with a lower case it denotes the worldly, human application of the divinely revealed paradigm or *weltanschauung*, written as Sunnah with a capital letter. In Arabic, which does not have capital and lower letters, meaning is derived contextually. I find the ambiguity of the Arabic more intellectually productive, but for my purposes here will defer to the S/s convention.

[313] In *Is Critique Secular: Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech,* Talal Asad, eds. (Berkeley: Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California , 2009): 847.

potentials of cultivated embodiment, by considering how it might work to *activate* certain relationships and experiences in the social world. Fadwa El Guindi makes this argument with regards to the ritual of prayer, arguing that "ordinary Muslims temporarily…convert any worldly place (street, shop, aircraft aisle) into a sacred space set apart, simply by marking it and occupying it in a ritually pure state facing Makka."[314] In the novel, this activation is figured through manipulations of the hijab. When Sami visits his maternal aunt's home in Syria, even though "her family crowded around him, everybody kissing solemnly and shaking hands," and even though his aunt "welcomed him," nevertheless "her hair was collected under a white scarf which she didn't remove, despite her blood relationship to Sami, even after the door was shut."[315] By religious codes, she can appear without the scarf in front of her nephew. But just as a door creates spaces of privacy or public exchange by being left open or shut, Sami's aunt creates or activates a distance between them remaining scarved.[316] Her decision to not unveil when she can reconfigures common tropes of the headscarf: she is not hidden (in the passive voice, by some abstracted patriarchal-divine authority), but rather she has actively "collected" her hair under the scarf, signifying purposeful, directed action. Her refusal to remove the scarf not only signals to him that she does not consider him trustworthy, but creates a formality of space; the access she gives him to the house is temporary, hospitable, but not unrestricted; the scarf, in this situation, transfigures the personal space of the home, maintaining public distance even while inside the physical area of domestication.

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[314] *By Noon Prayer: the Rhythm of Islam.* Oxford: Berg, 2008:77-8.
[315] Yassin-Kassab, *The Road from Damascus* 3.
[316] Ibid. She distrusts Sami because his father informed on Sami's maternal uncle in the 1980s Muslim revival in Syria, leading to the uncle's arrest, torture, and return to his family in a handicapped state of mental life. Although the Ba'ath party notoriously meted out extralegal detention, torturing anyone who professed any kind of resistance to the regime's autocratic power, much of the resistance was realized in religious circles; the regime thus targeted organized religious groups and made illegal any religious learning and association outside of the state-monitored mosques. Sami's uncle, an idealist college student who wanted to "fight corruption and the Communists," nominally joins the Muslim Brotherhood and is arrested for it three months later despite being an inactive member (6).

Her ability to create such a space with objects and her body is not presented as an inherent, mystical property of the headscarf, but rather her recognition that dress functions both as symbol and as an object with the potential to activate or create states of being. Similarly, while Sami's male cousins tell "him to make himself at home, following the formulas" of hospitality, they signal their distrust with "lined and stubbled faces immobile" and by speaking to him without turning to look at him.[317] Space, here, is not static, rigid geography that can be identified by fixed boundaries. Instead, it is inhabited and variable based on human relationships, as well as their relationships with and manipulations of objects that transform the perception of that space. Space, in this way, cannot be located: it is created.

When the novel presents the headscarf as an object that helps to cultivate certain skills and desires as well as having the potential to activate certain relationships with the world, it does not mean to suggest this is how the headscarf always works, but rather adds this to the diversity of acknowledged experiences of the ritual. This is why Ammar is condescending when he hears non-Muslim characters characterizing Islam as poetry, philosophy, or artistic inspiration, asserting rather that "Islam is faith and action"; the conversation about Islam as symbolic did not align with his active faith building through dress and mannerisms.[318] Again, here, it is not that Ammar has no appreciation or does not recognize aesthetics and poetics, as the novel makes no mention of his renouncing his appreciation for art after his turn to Salafi Islam. Instead, it reflects his attempt to change the terms of the discussion by asserting the importance of acts along with symbols. Of course, the novel creates an ironic distance and critical lens through which to view much of Ammar's approach to faith, while still taking this exploration of creative cultivated embodiment seriously.

[317] Ibid 6.
[318] Ibid 141.

Thus, the novel does much work on the representation of the hijab framework and its gendered sartorial manifestations. Its characters explore the implicit philosophical traditions within popular assumptions about the body, subjectivity, and freedom that structure conventional discomfort with the headscarf. After Sami reflects on secular normativity, its habits of thought, and its approach to the materiality of the body and its habits, and prompted by his wife and brother-in-law's hijab habituation—or their inculcation of certain experiences that are creative and transformative—Sami learns a new approach to his own body, the art of which he tries to train himself in.

Ritual Shaving and the Hairy Hijab

In this novel, the headscarf is paired with the beard as the two gendered manifestations of the hijab framework. As the narrative presents it in an aside that is critical of Sami, "(Always, with Sami, issues returned to hijabs and beards)."[319] This parallels the way the Qur'an generally invokes the logic of pairs and pairing, especially with regard to modesty. The verse that defines the modest dress codes for women, from which some interpretations extrapolate that women should cover, begins first with an exhortation of men's modesty.[320] Another focus is on the husband-wife pair. For Sami, once his wife decides to wear the scarf, it catapults him into self-discovery about the roots of his own discomfort with this Islamic normative dress code. Muntaha's decision for herself still requires her negotiation of a matrix of relationships that includes her brother, her father, her mother-in-law, but most importantly, Sami. The significance

[319] Ibid 116.

[320] The men's modesty is less explicitly described. Chapter Al-Nur, 24:30-32, states "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity: this will be most conducive to their purity – [and,] verily, God is aware of all that they do. / And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity, and not to display their charms [in public] beyond what may [decently] be apparent thereof; hence, let them draw their head-coverings over their bosoms." The verse goes on to detail the blood relations that may see them uncovered, ending with "And [always], O you believers - all of you - turn unto God in repentance, so that you might attain to a happy state!"

of focusing on the husband-wife relationship in the novel may allude to the Quranic sartorial metaphor which describes the relationship between spouses as "garments" for one another (*libas*).[321] Thus Sami realizes by novel's end that the other independent part of his spousal pair, his wife "Muntaha was only as deep and shallow as he was. Nor more nor less than him. Very like him, yet not identical. Not a mirror. She was a woman. A human being. Obviously."[322]

The novel consistently circles around the concept of dual-gendered forms of Islamic dress: any mention of the female form is followed by or preceded with that of its male counterpart. This is because the novel approaches the hijab as an umbrella framework of normative religious dress under which the headscarf falls as one dependent part of a paired relation. The novel establishes this approach right at the start, when Sami, on his research trip in Syria, notices a "determinedly Muslim population, hairy and hijabbed not twenty years after the Hama events."[323] The "hairy" here alludes to the *sunnah* (superogatory religious acts or habits emulating the prophet's example) for men to grow and maintain beards. Furthermore, while the 'hijabbed' in the sentence can refer to the headscarf, that female iteration of hijab, it could also work as a modifier of the men's beards: in being hairy, they are 'hijabbed,' or in other words observing their gender's form of hijab. Either way, this portrays a group that is 'determinedly Muslim' in their cultivation of a particular relationship to religion. When the novel describes the

[321] Quran 2:187, "[wives] are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them." While this verse uses this metaphor in the context of conjugal rights, exegetes have linked it to verse 7:26, which expands the metaphor from the sexual act to a general code of conduct amongst spouses, one which develops a relationship in which spouses encourage one another towards religious and social virtue ("O children of Adam! Indeed, We have bestowed upon you garments to cover your nakedness, and as adornment: but the garment of God-consciousness is the best of all").
[322] Yassin-Kassab, *The Road from Damascus* 321.
[323] Ibid 3. The "Hama events" alluded to are those of the 1982 massacre of one Syrian city (Hama) under the dictatorship of then-president Hafiz al-Assad, who metted out gross collective punishment in the form of crimes against humanity. Hama was the practical and symbolic site of a growing civil resistance which Assad justified under the thin premise that he was protecting the country from terrorism and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Hama massacre in the 1980s, it does not only note that "the headscarf tide was reversed," but also that "beards disappeared."[324]

This dual-gendered focus of the hijab is maintained in the novel's descriptions of Muslims in London. At the campus protest of the Iqbal character, the "huddle of Hizb al-Hurriya girls flapping in jilbabs and niqabs" stand alongside "skullcapped bearded boys."[325] When the panel devolves into chaos, it is the "black beards and hijabs and dark skin and skullcaps" that end up "taking the brunt of" the police force's brutal crowd control.[326] But while there is an element of racial bigotry in the act, it is the Muslim garb that is especially targeted: even the red-headed Irish convert is attacked in the mob for wearing "*floppy clothes* and the beard" which align him with the other Muslim students, despite his ethnic difference from them.[327] The novel even associates the hijab with other religious forms of male dress, invoking monks when referring to "hooded men and hijabbed women."[328]

Note here that there are multiple forms of the male hijab: skullcaps, beards, and loose-fitted clothing. At the funeral of Muntaha's father, the "young Pakistani Briton" and Mujahid wear the Pakistani cultural form of Islamically-inspired modest clothing, the shalwar kameez.[329] Similarly, when Sami visits the mosque with his brother-in-law Ammar, he notes the men who wear "gellabiyas" (the Arab cultural form of Islamically-inspired modest clothing).[330] The beard is even described as would an article of clothing in the scene where Sami passes out in the street after a drug trip; the older Pakistani man who comes to help him "*wore* a bristly white beard"

[324] Ibid 3.
[325] Ibid 294-5.
[326] Ibid 305.
[327] Ibid 305.
[328] Ibid 178.
[329] Ibid 138.
[330] Ibid 233-4.

along with a skullcap.[331] But while the other forms of Islamically-influenced dress are mentioned in the novel, Sami's focus (and the novel's as well) is on the beard. Narratively, this is strategic because it can function like the hijab. Though it has various cultural manifestations, unlike the other dress mentioned, the beard is more widely donned by diverse Muslim cultures. Furthermore, it is part of the body, and that which can be "cultivated" and "maintained."

Of course, Sami recognizes how the male hijab, like the female hijab, functions symbolically as a mode of belonging. Even when Sami is trying, in the novel, to dissociate himself from the Muslim community by using of drugs, "a grinning skullcapped black man of Sami's age had spied him for a brother, and passed on. An instant of fraternity, an exclusion boundary split open to absorb him."[332] Later, when Sami is interrogated after 9/11, it is because he has stopped shaving and taken on "the burden of the beard…the burden of belonging."[333]

But just as Muntaha attends to the work of the hijab as a material part of her cultivated rituals along with its work as symbolic mode of belonging, Sami also begins to understand how habits mark the body in certain ways. Even before he grows a beard, Sami begins to recognize the secular embodied habits that reflect and inculcate certain states of being. At one point, he hopes his own look reflects "the marks of nicotine, alcohol, insomnia, oversleep. Un-Islamic capillary damage. He hoped that was apparent, the un-Islamic part."[334] The novels looks at how these are not just states that one enters into by partaking in certain actions, but that they are furthermore habits that, in being fostered, later work on the self, sometimes despite the will of the self. When Sami misses his father-in-law's funeral at the Regent's Park mosque, the novel portrays how the moment of decision is located in Sami's embodied habits rather than as self

[331] Ibid 178 emphasis mine.
[332] Ibid 244.
[333] Ibid 333.
[334] Ibid 110.

intentionality: "his foot waggled at the point of decision: right and up and across the bridge and into the community of believers, or left and onwards to the west, along the canal bank, towards his formative haunts. West, then."[335] Here, Sami's volition is distributed to his foot, rather than focalized in the mind through rational thought. The decision is delinked from an intentional subject in the grammatical ambiguity of referent in the imperative statement 'West, then.' Moreover, not only are his actions defined by these habits, but so is space when the novel describes his spatial habits as 'haunts' that form (and so haunt) his embodied choices.

One of these defining secular habits, Sami realizes, is the shaving of men's beards. When Sami at the hair salon decides on a whim to grow his beard by refusing the usual shave he gets along with his haircut, he reflects on the cultivation of the body through the secular. He muses that "shaving had been one of his obsessions," a habit which he interprets not only as a desire to look, but as a practice of becoming secular, reflecting on "the hours and days he must have spent scraping at his face to make it smooth and secular. Sculpting concepts, carving modernity on to his cheeks and chin. As if facial hair signified evils beyond itself."[336] This final clause of course alludes to the headscarf, which is often rhetorically treated as if it inherently containing some kind of danger. The alliteration of the sentence here is telling: 'scraping', 'secular', 'sculpting', share the consonants of s, c, p, and the gerund '-ing,' and are also linked to the c-initial words 'concepts', 'carving', and 'cheeks' and 'chin'. The passage portrays how this cultural norm of scraping away at hair is a kind of sculpting (we might say cultivation) of the cheeks and chin so that the body is carved (we might say marked), according to concepts like the 'secular' and 'modernity' (which we might call ideologies). The use of the words 'sculpting' and 'carving' invokes artistic mastery and creative process, as if the process is a molding or forming of a

[335] Ibid 245.
[336] Ibid 209.

certain relationship to the world through the body. All these words, moreover, are linked through the similar phonemes "s" and "c" in secularism, so that the passage emphasizes aurally and visually as well as conceptually the idea that secular norms guide a specific relationship with the world through the cultivations of bodies. Sami realizes that there is no natural body; all bodies have been taught to cultivate a certain kind of appearance that expresses or communicates certain cultural or ideological commitments, cultivations which are not only representational, but constitutive in identity-making.

When Sami decides not to shave, the novel describes him as "like a man accustomed to a hat suddenly unhatted, like a muhajjiba woman stripped of her scarf."[337] This works to tie the headscarf and Sami's modern day refusal to shave to that 19th century gentlemen which Sami associates with secularism by alluding to a period in Western tradition where sartorial norms were more obvious and explicit. In other words, the novel reveals how Sami's decision not to shave—his refusal to take part in a taken for granted modern norm of embodiment—is similar to the refusal to take part in the sartorial norms of taking of the headscarf, in one tradition, or taking off the hat, in another. It also reveals the manner in which some rhetoric has made literal claims of metaphorical work: by describing Sami's growth of hair—that is, the *addition* of a beard which will *cover* his face—as a paradoxical *stripping* that leaves him feeling vulnerable, it challenges the discourses that literally correlate the donning or removal of fabric with the metaphorical donning or removal of emancipation.

Sami and Muntaha's marital reconciliation does not hinge on Sami's acceptance of a certain type of cultivated embodiment, but rather hinges on Sami's recognition and reconciliation

[337] Ibid 218. This scene precedes the scenes regarding his 'formative haunts' and his 'secular' drug trip. Sami's process to reconcile his previous ideas on the hijab with his wife's attitude are not presented linearly in the novel, but as a series of interrupted and reiterative recognitions . This works to resist an interpretation of the novel as a simply *bildungsroman* where his development is a teleological progression towards some ideal.

that all bodies are cultivated through his cultivation of the beard. They reconcile when Muntaha "touched his face. Tugged on his beard gently."[338] The description that "the beard would be a magic charm for them" is not described as an indication of his religiosity (Muntaha directly tells him they are reconciled, regardless of whether or not he grows a beard, as long as Sami acts as "if you're you").[339] What the beard indicates is that Sami has developed a peace of mind or reconciliation with bodily appearance and bodily cultivation, instead of his previous obsession with the symbolic work of the body about which he had harassed Muntaha.[340] Or, as Judith Butler characterized *habitus*, he learns a 'bodily knowingness' which take into account the power of interpellation *and* cultivated embodiment. Sami, in turn, touches Muntaha's face, which, though it was always uncovered, had been previously metaphorically covered, or distant from his. In this moment of reconciliation, there is an emphasis on what is far and near, what is new and well-worn, and the tension between knowing and unknowing, especially with regard to the relationship with the (O)/other. In their reconciliatory scene, Sami is "startled by his own laugh"; when he and Muntaha touch each other's faces, he describes the sensation as "the unfamiliar familiar."[341] Through his realizations about cultivated embodiment, he comes to also understand and relate to others more deeply.

Salat (Prayer)

> True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west - but truly pious is he who believes in God, and the Last Day; and the angels, and revelation, and the prophets; and spends his substance - however much he himself may cherish it - upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage; and is constant in prayer, and renders the purifying dues; and [truly pious are] they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient

[338] Ibid 321.
[339] Ibid 321.
[340] Ibid 321.
[341] Ibid 323.

> in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril: it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they, they who are conscious of God.
> Qur'an, 2:177

This verse is often referenced in Muslim communities during discussions about the balance of the symbolic aspects of the religion with the intentional practices of personal and public ritual and civic engagement. Explications focus on how the verse describes the prayer ritual—alluded to by the movement made at the end of prayer of turning of the head right and left—as not an inherent imbuing innate piety, but as working within set of divinely authorized, actions that must be practiced along with prayer. The novel presents *salat* in this way, presenting the ritual as a way of being-in-the-world, as a cultivated relationship with the material, physical world, rather than as a practice of mystical transcendence. Like the sartorial manifestations of the hijab framework, in the novel the *salat* prayer is represented as a transformative, constitutive ritual act for its practitioner, one which is embedded in a network of likewise creative, productive acts.

Thus, when Sami's mother, Nur, participates in "attractive…ritual movements," the novel focuses on the physicality of the act, of the "standing, bowing, crouching and kneeling" that, despite mystifying Sami because they are made "according to an invisible logic," are nonetheless characterized as having some logic. When Nur's angry husband tries to distract her and fails, the novel describes her ability to tune him our because "it was as if she was deaf."[342] The novel does not describe Nur as if she was not present—as if she had transcended the worldly—but rather describes her as having a different relationship to or mode of being in the world, as if deaf. Similarly, Marwan, Muntaha's father, is characterized as focusing on the embodied physicality of the *salat* ritual. Whereas he lived in Baghdad society as a merry-making poet—that is, sensitive to abstraction and symbolism—in reaction to his torture in the Iraqi prison he "weaned

[342] Yassin-Kassab, *The Road from Damascus* 58.

himself away from symbols and observed the world by its letters and surface" and searches, in London, for a new relationship between the body and his governing beliefs. [343] Prayer, in this search of his, comes to be a practice of communal action rather than signifying personal symbolism: "He bowed like the others – the Turks, Indians, Nigerians – prayed as he'd been taught as a boy, before abstraction set in."[344] Importantly, religion for Marwan begins in the intimacy of community practice, rather than independent practice. His religious participation is at first restricted to his attendance of *Jummah,* the Friday services at the mosque. *Jummah* is the only *fard* (obligatory) prayer which has the requirement of being practiced as a group, and it is the prayer in which Marwan "stood and bowed and prostrated and knelt in conformity with the crowd," whereas, at home during the week, "he didn't read [the Quran]. He didn't pray."[345] At Friday prayer, he specifically "took pleasure in the uniform movement of the praying men, and hurried away…as the mass splintered afterwards" into socializing individuals who tried to get to know him.[346]

Over time, however, prayer becomes a habit for Marwan, linked intimately to the maintenance of the body and its relationship to the passage and marking of time. Marwan "would pray at home and at work as well as in the mosque, measuring out the day by the allotted times" of the five daily prayers. [347] This is followed by a description of his routine of push-ups and sit-ups every morning, linking ritual to exercise with the quickly followed line: "He memorized sections of the Qur'an as an exercise to maintain his mental health."[348] Later he "expanded his daily routines" and the rituals with walking, "glorifying God on his prayer beads," reading

[343] Ibid 74.
[344] Ibid 75.
[345] Ibid 72.
[346] Ibid 72.
[347] Ibid 76.
[348] Ibid 76.

religious pamphlets, memorizing the Qur'an, and adding an afternoon bodily exercise routine to his morning one.[349] *Salat* becomes a way not to fill this time with empty action, but rather a way to create, through slow process, a lifestyle, an approach to life, and an experience of belief over time and in space. His prayer is described as "not meditation but a habit establishing itself, a practice and a rhythm, the string attaching him to his place in the city."[350] Note this last assertion—it becomes *the* very physical action through which he establishes meaning of being, even though the city is a secularly marked place and time.

This transformative quality of the prayer ritual, like the hijab, works communally as well as individually. Again, as with the hijab, I draw from El-Guindi's characterization of ritual as having transformative or activating potential for the organization and experience of space and interpersonal relationships. This helps to explain the scene where Sami's father is enraged when his wife and her visitors pray together in their home. Sami's father does not feel threatened by the mocking and repudiating visits he makes with Sami to prayers at the mosque because they act as "a kind of tourism" into "slightly exotic lives… it was an entirely different matter when the mosque invaded his home. When his mother had visitors and dared to roll out her prayer mat with them."[351] For Sami's father, the prayers at the mosque are anesthetized of their power to affect his life when they remains in their place, as a place he can choose to visit and which he can leave at will. When Nur and her guests roll out the physical object of the prayer mat, however, this act transforms the house into a temporary mosque. If, in the mosque, Sami and his father are guests or historiographers and the experience is like "what a stroll through dusty farmland might have been for a gentleman of the Raj, what a visit to a refugee camp would be for a portly American journalist," group prayer at home is different because ritual space is

[349] Ibid 79.
[350] Ibid 75.
[351] Ibid 58.

activated and transforms their personal space and demands of them a different relationship to prayer, even if they do not pray themselves.[352]

One of the strengths of the novel is its ability to maintain an ambiguity and space for questions of the mystical, the representational, the constructed, and the transcendent, along with its consideration of cultivated embodiment, its creative potential, and the challenge it poses for theories about the agency of modern subject. In the novel's final extended description of the *salat* prayer, Sami experiences the ritual in a way that evokes a complimentary experience where the abstractions of faith and language commingle alongside material, embodied experience:

> Sami Traifi, inhaling abstraction, inhaling void. He touches thumbs to earlobes. Folds hands on solar plexus…Notices here that he's broken into two separate pieces: the piece that advises the other to relax. The two pieces in fact not two selves but two functions of the words. Speaker and speakee… he speaks from below or above his reason. The Opening Prayer [the first chapter of the Qur'an, read in every iteration of the prayer process]…He hears himself saying the words internally and asks himself, what do I feel? The question is also words. He hears two sets of words…two selves speaking and one listening. And now another, marveling at this thought. He splinters. Mirrors looking into mirrors. Photons reflected. As many bits of him as stars. And a sky containing the stars…something overarching and complete…[He] bows, stands, prostrates, kneels…repeats this verse until there are only words…It has made him calm and peaceful. It has opened something spacious in him.[353]

In this experiential moment, the immanent and the transcendent rotate around two axes: the repetition of acts of logos and corpus. Sami both experiences his subjectivity as located in himself, but also as fractured and generalized into the larger world, into the objects that make up that larger world. It is the moment of touch, where his hands touch his solar plexus, that he is catapulted into considerations of the solar system. His body is thus linguistically embedded into the world, and while he is aware of the construction of concepts—the "functions of words," with no pre-linguistic, pre-cultural body—the repetition of the prayer (with its focus on the physical

[352] Ibid 58.
[353] Ibid 330.

movements" creates, transforms, activates Sami, so that it "opened" something in him. The novel, in this characterization of *salat* as one ritual in a network of cultivated embodiment—rituals which help to develop notional ideas and metaphysical belief and which include the hijab in its dual-gendered manifestations—thus illustrates how thinking through Muslim rituals can revitalize questions of affect, embodiment, and the self in contemporary secular discourse.

Chapter Three

Temper, tempered: Apt Passion, Religious Zeal, and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

In the previous chapter, I argued that secular theory and secularism operate under the premise of cultural neutrality and universality while simultaneously establishing certain normative habits which draw from a particular intellectual genealogy. The chapter showed how *The Road from Damascus* presents characters who, in their commitment to Muslim religious ritual within secular spaces, reveal this secular indebtedness to particular intellectual lineages from which it authorizes certain bodily relationships in public spaces—and how it dissuades other bodily relationships. But the chapter did not answer how those discouraged experiences of embodiment are made to seem inappropriate. This chapter will argue that the regulation of affect functions to distinguish acceptable and unacceptable embodied experience in secular spaces. Though the rhetoric of secular discourse champions clear-eyed reason over the miasma of emotion, in practice secularity encourages some experiences of affect over others. More precisely, it does not only regulate kinds of affect, but intensities of affect and the objects at which specific emotions are directed. Thus appropriate emotions have delimited directions, spaces, time, magnitude and objects. The focus of this argument will be on the figure that is an amalgamation of inappropriate embodied, affective 'religious' experiences—that of the Muslim terrorist, who is an excessively emotive, zealously committed, body that is fervently invested in prescribed and irrational rites. After examining this figure in theoretical texts focusing on the affective nature of terrorism, the chapter will turn to the way Mohsin Hamid's *Reluctant Fundamentalist* confounds the readers' emotional expectations about the zealous terrorist by focusing very little on a terrorist's intensity of affect or the intensity of the reader's emotional response to a terrorist act. Instead, the novel focuses its narrative energy on a portrayal of how secular institutions in the West structure and regulate the appropriate expression and intensity of

affect.[354] The question for this chapter, in other words, is how these narratives of emotion are constructed and imagined in certain situations towards certain purposes, what that "illuminates or even reveals to us [about] the closeness … [and] the intimacy of our relation" to the world, and how "the passions illuminate or disclose differences within our world that could not be known by other means."[355]

Animating Terrorists

The Reluctant Fundamentalist uses close first-person perspective of the reasonable, personable character Changez to immerse the reader in the emotional experiences of a character that readers, gleaning from the title and the novel's first scenes, expect will transform into a terrorist. But the novel subverts those expectations; Changez remains a reasonable, sympathetic character. The novel's exploration of intense affect is not rendered through the emotions of a terrorist, but rather focuses on revealing the social situations in the U.S. in which intense emotion is tolerated or encouraged: particularly, Changez's sexual-romantic feelings for Erica, and the aggressive and opportunistic feelings promoted by the valuation firm Underwood-Samson with which his promising corporate career rests. The novel's ambiguous conclusion in Lahore—where Changez may or may not be involved in terrorism—shifts consideration away from the event of

[354] Writers in affect studies have teased out the distinctions between affect, emotion, and feeling, as well as (in some cases) moods and senses or sensations. Sianne Ngai argues that the difference between emotion and affect is that the first requires a subject, while the second does not. She locates the genesis in the psychoanalytic attempt to distinguish between the objective analyst's observation of feeling (affect) versus the individual analysand's description of their feelings (emotion) (*Ugly Feelings*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). Other distinctions read emotion as narratively structured and interpreted, while affect is not; or, in Brian Massumi's terms, affect is "unformed and unstructured," not yet assigned to particular "function and meaning" (qtd. in Ngai, 25). Affect, in these terms, is the experience of sensibility before it is marked, culturally or politically. This is not to say the emotions are naturalized or pre-cultural, but that they exist in an experiential moment that is not yet explicitly or consciously evaluated. To locate this ambiguous midpoint between experience and analysis, Ngai formulates a weak form of the argument, where she theorizes that the difference between affect and emotion is not one of type, but of intensity: it is not that affect is unformed, but less formed, less organized, than emotion (27). For further discussion, see Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004). In this chapter, I will use the terms interchangeably; in the book, I hope to attend more closely to how this terminology affects my argument.

[355] Philip Fisher, *The Vehement Passions* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002): 37-8.

terror and the religious affect of the terrorist, focusing instead on relatable intense emotions in order to unsettle any easy reading of fervent zeal.

In order to show what expectations Mohsin Hamid's novel frustrates, this section will sketch out the collective images that coalesce to make up the figure of the terrorist in the popular imagination in the West. Although the references here will draw largely from studies and theories that aim to investigate real-life terrorists and terrorist acts for preventative measures, those critical texts will be used in this section to interrogate the representations in fiction of the figure of terrorist. The manner in which the terrorist figure is represented matters for how it stands as the antithesis of the properly affected and embodied citizen subject. It is telling, furthermore, that these somatic and affective commitments are located not only in popular discourse and the rhetoric of political talking heads, but permeate scholastic efforts as well.

There is a vast body of critical scholarship on terrorism and terrorists under the various disciplines of terrorism studies, security studies, political science, psychology, and sociology; each field of study approaches the subject matter with a different emphasis on the defining feature of the subject. 'Terrorism' and terrorists requires such varied critical lenses because the term broadly applies to heterogeneous actions, encompassing diverse types of actors, from individuals to sub-state actors to state-actors, located within different histories, geographies, politics, and ideologies.[356] The contextual, historical, or structuralist approaches seek to locate

[356] For very useful review and categorization of the approaches of literature on terrorism, see Jedd Victoroff, "The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49.1 (2005): 3–42. For a comprehensive primer about terrorism, see *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*, ed. John Horgan and Kurt Braddock (New York: Routledge, 2012). For a dated, though telling, example of the vast variability and considerations of the definitions, see Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Databases, Theories, & Literature* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 2005). Most texts about terrorism make some concession, at the start, of the variability of the definitions of terrorism; see Jennifer Lee Merolla and Elizabeth J Zechmeister, *Democracy at risk: how terrorist threats affect the public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Jerrold M. Post, *The mind of the terrorist : the psychology of terrorism from the IRA to Al Qaeda* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); *Violent geographies : fear, terror, and political violence*, ed. Derek Gregory and Allan Pred (New York : Routledge, 2007).

the acts as responses to geographical, geopolitical or economic marginalization and exclusions of groups or individuals from legitimate power. Sociological or psychological arguments attempt to unlock the personal and interpersonal factors that make some individuals or groups more prone to the required lack of empathy for victims that characterizes terrorist acts, whether those factors be triggered by ideology, culture, or psychosis. Defense strategies and political studies rationalize terrorist acts as strategic projects within a framework of uneven distribution of global wealth and war technology. Interviews and autobiographical and biographical narratives in ethnographic studies work to understand the experience of being a subject of terrorism or the enactor of terrorism, while the philosophical or constructivist approach unpacks the social discourse and imaginary through which perceptions of terror are constructed, with a focus on the affective influence and response of the act. In "Rise of the Terrorist Professors," Kevin Toolis even argues that one of the analytical gaps in the influence-driven discipline is a lack of input from the subjects of terror: "the objects of study—'terrorists' or their political representatives, Irish or Arab—are never invited to contribute." [357]

While it will be impossible to attend to all the approaches, within which there are convincing and unconvincing arguments, this chapter's argument will deal primarily with the constructivist and the psychological, with some attention reserved for structuralist arguments. It is within these three approaches that discussions of affect and rhetoric about the emotions of terrorists are most discussed. This chapter's argument, however, is not about the validity or reality of those emotions, but rather, what emotions are associated with terrorism, how they are delegitimized—even when those same emotions, under different circumstances, may be

[357] Kevin Toolis, "Rise of the Terrorist Professors" *New Statesman* (14 June 2004): 26–28. In *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, Jessica Stern does in fact interview suspected and convicted terrorists in an effort to discover common contributing factors, such as histories of personal or collective humiliation (New York: Ecco, 2003).

condoned, encouraged, and even fostered—and what all this reveals about the modern, objective, rational secular subject.

Despite the complexity of terrorism studies and ambiguity of the term, in the modern popular imagination, the terms 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' (and 'terror,' when acting as a modifier, such as "the war on terror" or "cultures of terror") predominately conjure images of the too-intensely devoted Muslim figure. Though this image originates in the West, it is an image that is globally disseminated and recognized, especially after September 11. This figure of terrorism has become global political currency for justifying military action and the seizure of civil liberties and human rights by secular, democratic states as well as socialist states, military juntas, oligarchies, and totalitarian states. When the term 'terrorist' is used to describe other types of crime and criminals, such as the drug war and drug cartels, the classification functions almost as subcategory, or disambiguation, of the primary concept or the terrorists *par example*: the Muslim fundamentalists who engineer vicious acts of terror against innocent civilians.

In political and popular discourse, this exemplary type of terrorist is cast as having intense emotions that are inappropriately directed at unsuitable subjects: they are terrorists who are zealous for God, love death over life, hate freedoms, and are incapable of feeling the productive interpersonal passions that define humanity and humanism, such as love or empathy. News stories and fiction about other types of terrorists or criminals are more likely to probe the complex emotional ecology of the perpetrator in order to explain how the negative emotions are a product of a tortured history or context. The Muslim fundamentalist, in being foreign and religious (or worse—homegrown: that is, a native turned foriegner), is by contrast himself the product of those negative emotions run wild—he is the lived embodiment of negative, undemocratic, primitive emotions.

Though a few other types of all terrorists are similarly characterized—for example, the KKK member or the religious zealot—they are read as fringe elements in a largely productive society. This chapter focuses on the Muslim type because this figure combined the exemplary terrorist as the exemplary Muslim—the Muslim that experiences the most authentic relationship to the religion, revealing Islam's seedy underbelly of terror, verifying suspicions about the true experience of the religion that are otherwise veiled by political correctness and the guise of the moderate Muslim.[358] The Muslim terrorist illustrates the paradox where, as Massumi puts it, the figure of the terrorist is imagined to be enigmatic, mutable, an "unspecifiable may come-to-pass" but is nevertheless strongly associated to a distinctive, if shifting, set of characteristics (based on a combination of factors including religion, religious dedication, ethnicity, age, gender, geography, and ideology).[359]

In order to consider how affect is interpreted with regards to the figure of the Muslim terrorist, this chapter will attend to other terms that are conflated, or at least associated, with the type of religious terrorism under which the Muslim type falls. These related terms are 'extremists,' 'fundamentalists,' 'radicals,' 'zealots,' and 'fanatics.' [360] The terms suggest an

[358] This terrorist figure is almost always male—however, one of the most referenced articles to the female terrorist is Frantz Fanon's article on Algerian women's role in terrorism against French colonial occupation, which has the unintended consequence of making the exceptional female terrorist always Muslim, and always veiled ("Algeria Unveiled" in *A Dying Colonialism* , New York: Grove Press, 1967). For further examinations of the gender politics of terrorism discourse see *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), particularly chapter 7, as well as Jasbir K. Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism In Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

[359] Brian Massumi qtd in Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 79.

[360] Of all the terms I've listed, 'radical' is the one that has the most ambiguous valence. In political theory, radicals can be agents of positive change or of terror, or of both at once. But when used with regards to terrorism and religious radicalism, there is little redemptive notion. There have been a few attempts in the Muslim-American community, however, to reappropriate the term 'fundamentalism,' of arguing that the term does not necessarily need to signify rigidity and violence, but rather reflects their commitment to the fundamental tenants of faith and the religion. In *How to Win a Cosmic War: Confronting Radical Religions* (later republished by Random House as *Beyond Fundamentalism: Confronting Religious Extremism in the Age of Globalization*), Reza Aslan defines the biblical origin of religious zeal as "jealous anger" for God that is realized as "commitment to God's rule, an uncompromising fidelity to God's law, and, most crucially, the complete separation of God's people from their neighbors" (London: Arrow Books, 2007): 68.

excessive intensity of focus to particular commitments and excessive intensity of emotions directed inappropriately towards subjects—for example, religion—that must be experienced moderately (by contrast, a subject's intense commitment to their role as a consumer is good citizenry). It is not only that their ideologies are excessive, but that they are excessively committed to them. Fanatics, a word that denotes those who are "frenzied, mad," an "unreasoning enthusiast" or "devotee" who is influenced by "excessive and mistaken enthusiasm, *esp*. in religious matters," takes on different resonances when the word is applied to the couch-burning sports enthusiast versus the book-burning religious enthusiast.[361]

Extremists, fundamentalists, radicals, zealots, or fanatics are described in various critical texts as 'fervent,' 'intense,' 'hysterical' to such a magnitude that they are 'monstrous.' Some texts characterize these affective states as religiously heightened emotions that are ritually trained and inculcated: they are a "*paranormal* state of conviction, ecstasy, and purpose, often built up through quasi-religious techniques such as isolation, indoctrination, and drug-induced hallucination" that enable wanton violence in the service of metaphysical or ideological concepts.[362] Others describe these actors as driven by spontaneous passion that has been "enflamed" and allowed to reach its extreme but natural consequences.[363] Their situations and personalities make up a "combustible mixture" that "ignites into the flame of desire."[364] Even a

[361] "Fanatic, *adj* and *n*." Def. A and B. *OED Online* (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press. Web. 19 March 2014).
[362] Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 78, emphasis mine. Even when passion is subsumed to rationality—for example, Ronald Wintrobe argues that the passions of extremists are actually part of rational choice to 'mobilize' followers—the experience of the passions (after the choice to partake in them) is one of loss of rationality and being overcome by emotion ("Leadership and passion in extremist politics" in *Political Extremism and Rationality*, Albert Breton, Gianluigi Galeotti, Pierre Salmon, and Ronald Wintrobe, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002: 23).
[363] John L Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 5.
[364] Ibid 5, 76.

deliberate, premeditated attack is characterized as a moment of uncontrollable rage—and this rage is not a fleeting feeling, but rather is a *perpetual* emotion.[365]

One of the difficulties of tracking the question of terrorism and so-called Muslim terrorism is that the figure is characterized in conflicting ways. The terrorist figure has three popular forms that blend into one another: the evil mastermind, a brainwashed automaton, or the mysterious, inexplicable suicide bomber.[366] Terrorism is glossed as cowardly but also a malevolent show of brute strength. Muslim terrorism is figured as the act of fringe, extreme forms of Islam that nonetheless implicate the religion and its peaceful majority. They are always a threat to non-Muslims, and almost never figured as a threat to mainstream Muslims, and yet they are mainstream Muslims' responsibility. Muslim terrorists are usually implicitly Sunni—this conveniently holds in reserve the possibility of justifying intervention in the name of protecting a minority, or else figuring conflicts as the continuation of a historical blood feud. These kinds of terrorists are radically unhinged, antisocial individuals, but also conformists deeply embedded in addictive, cultish communities. Terrorism is strategic and rational and cold, but horrendous and unthinkable and hotly irrational. It is a psychosis and alien way of relating to the world but also a last-resort rational choice of the oppressed and disenfranchised. It is overly emotional but also deeply deficient in certain emotions, such as empathy. It is spontaneously felt emotion in the moment of action, but emotion that is inculcated and manipulated by propaganda. This chapter will attempt to track and unpack, but not resolve, the analogous and incongruous claims about terrorism and the emotions involved.

[365] C.f. Talal Asad's critique of May Jayyusi's Arendtian reading of suicide bombing based on a theory of rage following disenfranchisement. Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007: 47).
[366] In *Cloning Terror*, W.J.T. Mitchell threads together the discourse on terror and on cloning in American public discourse, showing how they "converge as forms of extremism" which enable one another and reveal the anxieties about cloning soulless, nonindividuated replicants that can enact terrorism: that is, they are non-passionate terrorist actors. (18)

When terrorism is defined in terrorism studies and security studies, as well as the various other disciplines, affect factors in two ways: first (and foremost), the resultant affective experience for the target, and secondly, the originary affective sensibility of the perpetrator. For example, Jessica Stern, a terrorism policy consultant and Harvard lecturer, describes definitions that "focus on the perpetrator, others on his or her purpose, and still others on the terrorist's technique" but simplifies her own definition of terrorism as an act perpetrated upon noncombatants that makes "use of violence for dramatic purpose" and works at "instilling fear in the target audience."[367] In the US Navy department's definition, one of the more specific iterations, terrorism is defined as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetuated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."[368] This definition exemplifies many which articulate the intended resultant affect—sometimes specified as terror, fear, angst, amongst others—as crucial for classifying terrorism (as opposed to other aggression, such as war). What is interesting about this definition is that in using the term "influence"—connoting rational action—it also reflects the avoidance of some critical definitions from prescribing the effects of terrorism in terms of affect or emotion.[369] When political scientist and terrorism studies pioneer Martha Crenshaw summarizes the critical work of the field as attempting to answer three questions—"why terrorism occurs, how the process of terrorism works, and what its social and political effects are"—the characterization obfuscates the fact that all three questions can be, and are often answered, with an assertion not only of the types of affect experienced, but also of their

[367] Stern, *Terror in the Name of God* xx.
[368] Qtd. from the "Navy Department Library Research Guide" on page 3 in *Democracy at Risk: How Terrorist Threats Affect the Public*, ed. Jennifer L Merolla and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. Note the omission of state agents.
[369] The first subcategory of the first definition of the verb form of 'influence' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* reads "to affect the mind or action of." "Influence, *v*." Def. 1.A. *OED Online*.

improperly places, excessive magnitude.[370] Most definitions of terrorism acknowledge that the threatening aspect of this influence is related to the way terrorism uses "emergency as its routine" and "exceptional forms of violence and violation as its norm" to collapse "the division between civilian and military space" and install the logic of violence as "the central regulative principle of everyday life," making terrorism "quotidian war, war as an everyday possibility."[371] By establishing violence as everyday life, terrorism destroys normative affective experiences of safety, trust, and other productive feelings; it is more than physical war in its "assault on the social imaginary designed to breed anxiety, suspicion, and…self-destructive behavior."[372]

Already in these definitions, we see how terrorism is made exceptional in its emotive effects. This is often contrasted, sometimes implicitly, other times explicitly, with war—that is, nationally authorized physical violence over land or power or national safety, and never imagined to participate in (undue) psychological tactics or emotional strategies. War, as terrorism's antithesis, is neutral and unexceptional (in that its recourse to and type of violence is unexceptional, and the ensuing emotional consequences disregarded or downplayed) but it is also a justified, ethical exception to the use of violence, as opposed to non-authorized forms of violence. Excess is imagined as inherent to terrorism; it is the "*extranormality* of the act…that so compels horrified attention."[373] While war becomes dubious when it takes on what is marked as an excessive use of force, gratuitous violence, or disproportionate reaction, terrorism is in itself marked as problematic because excess is not its state of exception, but its norm.[374] But, as many have pointed out, the distinction between the violence perpetuated in war and its effects are not

[370] "The Causes of Terrorism" in *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*, ed. John Horgan and Kurt Braddock: 99.
[371] Appadurai 31.
[372] Mitchell 12.
[373] Post 3, emphasis in original.
[374] For example, Asad argues that what political philosopher Michael Walzer "condemns in war is excess and in terrorist its *essence*" (*On Suicide Bombing*, 16).

so easily discernible from terror. What, then, is at work in this attempt to figure terrorism and terrorists as exceptionally horrifying?

Jacques Lezra answers this question by focusing on terror conceptually, rather than as an act, and the manner in which it is related to sovereignty. In his definition, terror is that which is extremely indeterminate, chronospatially as well as contextually. It has no dedicated time, space, situation, or object, and thus cannot be ascribed predetermined meaning or significance; its danger is that it opens outward, infinitely expanding, and can infect everything. Terrorism as it is currently described—as an act perpetrated by actors—is the attempt to try to contain terror in one defined event that can be thwarted if (a) individual citizens are vigilant to specifically predetermined "strange" or "odd" behaviors and/or (b) if the state performs extraordinary (and here the excess is positive) measures of control and power.[375] In this way, terror threatens to become the normative state of affairs for nation-states, while the disambiguation of terror into specific acts (terrorism) or individuals (terrorists) works to "obscure the necessary work of terror in the modern republic" as the underlying logic of sovereignty.[376] And if the act of terrorism obfuscates the pervasiveness of the function of terror to organize life under sovereignty, then the figure of the terrorist, argues Talal Asad, assuages the anxiety of the uncertainty of all signs by fossilizing meaning into the image of the terrorist.[377]

Religious war (through terrorism) is problematic precisely because it doesn't fit into this model of sovereignty wars: it is "not typically triggered by state interest, but by religious identity, zeal, and fanaticism;" it is emotional war for emotion's sake, without the legitimatizing

[375] Jacques Lezra, *Wild Materialism: the Ethic of Terror and the Modern Republic* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010): 25-6.
[376] Ibid 26. Lezra also describes a genealogy of terror during the Enlightenment period with relation to religion's retreat into the private sphere. In response to a growing "national or proto-national consciousness," the emotion-concept horror (and the religiously associated emotion of the sublime that combines awe and terror) paradoxically moves from being an experience "restricted to private, aesthetic, or physiological domains…into the public sphere" and is tied to the experience of political revolution (38).
[377] Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* 30-1.

aim to "acquire territory," as in the "old wars;" it moves to "gain political power through generating fear and hatred."[378] Just as war is in some sense terrorism's better half—restrained violence—here secular culture is religion's better half: it is restrained morality, and restrains religious extremism. Meanwhile, religion is made ahistorically exceptional in its aims and use of certain forms of illegitimate violence, but this exceptionality is also naturalized and made animalistic, referring back to a pre-social (and pre-secular) history.

Apart from lacking the proper motives and goals for violence, some characterizations argue that terrorism is a technique that is particularly preferred by religious extremists as a result of their unhealthy psychological relationship to religion. In these definitions, the overarching goal of terrorism is the attempt to violently assert a stability of meaning in a chaotic world: "extreme and spectacular violence, is a mode of producing such certainty by mobilizing…full attachment" to a religion.[379] Or, in other arguments, religious extremism is a hysterical reaction to the ambiguity of postmodern life: the turn to fundamentalism—of the Islamic variety, as well as other religious, cultural, "local" or "regional" types—is, asserts Arjun Appadurai, an attempt to rigidly structure the chaos of life, the reactionary attempt of the improperly assimilated or completely unassimilated citizen subject to create "levels of certainty about social identity, values, survival, and dignity" amidst the uncertainty built into the globalized world.[380] The assumption in such analyses is of a problematic excess of dedication or emotional intimacy to religious ethos.

[378] David Held, "Violence, law, and justice in a global age" in *Understanding September 11*. ed. Craig J.Calhoun, Paul Price, and Ashley S Timmer (New York: New Press, 2002).
[379] Appadurai 7.
[380] Appadurai 7. The rhetorical work done here is a feminization of the Muslim terrorist in order to make the enemy effeminate, and thus effete. For an extended discussion on the way terrorism and terrorists are marked as effeminate figures of abject sexuality, see Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages*.

When the link between terrorism and religion is not made within the psychosis of the individual terrorist, then it is often approached as the imbued violence inherent in religion which modern life has contained, but not exterminated. Terrorism, in these cases, is analytically linked to religion as a kind of grotesque rite of religious sacrifice which, though uncommon, is the logical conclusion of such rites.[381] The violent acts are thus a perverse kind of *habitus*, in Bourdieu's sense of symbolic "rites of institution," which reflect the terrorists' need for a "hard" religion that protects them from the confusion of the complexity of modern life of luxury and consumerism. [382] In such a reading, religion is a way for terrorists to locate "a harbor of calm" in a "dangerous and chaotic sea" of secular modernity, a way to control all life (theirs and everyone else's) and to nurse their "personal, perilous selves." [383] This serves to make religious extremism, as Jerald Post claims in *The Mind of the Terrorist*, the case *par excellence* of all extremism; religious terrorists, he asserts, are the most dangerous type of terrorist (thus making motivation more consequential than the actual act of terror).[384] As Jasbir Puar puts it, "religious belief is thus cast…as the overflow, the final excess that impels monstrosity."[385] Bruce Lincoln goes so far as to theoretically claim that religion, in this monstrous emotional attachment, consequently blocks more productive emotional attachments that are guaranteed by democracy: religion interferes with the individual's ability to subjectively evaluate the "emotionally evocative signs" that make up two forms of cultural content: abstract ethics and immanent aesthetics, the latter of which is

[381] Asad takes issue with religion theorist Ivan Strenski's Durkheimian approach through the concepts of religious sacrifice and gift, or altruistic suicide, arguing that Strenski overlays Christian theological theories of martyrdom that do not coincide with Islamic ones (*On Suicide Bombing* 43).
[382] Mark Juergensmeyer, "Religious Terror and Global War" in *Understanding September 11*, Ed. Calhoun, Craig J., Paul Price, and Ashley S Timmer. Juergensmeyer completely subscribes to the notion of traditional secularism, arguing that the defining character of extremists is that they are improperly secularized, since they "refuse to observe the boundaries that secular society has set around religion" unlike their good, mainstream counterparts (35).
[383] Ibid.
[384] Post 105-115.
[385] Puar 55.

concerned with "the evaluation of sensory experience, including all matter of form and style."[386] That is, religion blocks an appropriate, "democratic" negotiation of emotion in both its material and abstract forms.

Moreover, such religious terrorists are portrayed not only as acting upon inappropriately intense affects in unauthorized contexts, but even further of inculcating aberrant emotive relationships. Terrorists "mobilize" the "feelings" of "historic oppression, occupation, and injustice," but this is not the heroic mobilization of passion that one might associate with activists (those that are pacifist, at least).[387] They are persuasive because they manipulate emotions through narratives that tap into people's humiliation and promote the heroics of their justified vengeance.[388] That is, they exploit passions to their advantage.[389] Radicalism, similarly, is dissent taken to its most dangerous extreme, if the potential terrorist does not self-regulate and moderate their distemper—as when Appadurai characterizes religious terrorism as a "revolting version" of martyrdom which is active and consequential compared to passive (and thus acceptable) religious martyrdom.[390] Unlike the procedural dissent built into the institutional system of democracy, this is a perilous kind of "substantive dissent" taken to its furthest emotional conclusion: too extreme, too committed, too emotive, too effective, and too difficult to be absorbed by institutions of power. [391]

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[386] Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003): 51, 54.
[387] Esposito, *Unholy War* 22. In Muslim history and American history, a prime example is the difference between the reception of Malcom X and Martin Luther King, Jr. during their lives and the difference in commemoration of their legacies in the decades following their deaths.
[388] Mohomad M. Hafez, "Martyrdom mythology" in *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*, ed. John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, 423. See footnote 31 for a short summary of Talal Asad's argument against using Christian-laden conceptions of martyrdom to explain Muslim notions of military *jihad*.
[389] Sara Ahmed notes that, while passivity and passion are made to seem oppositional, 'passion' and 'passive' share an etymological root in Latin, 'passio,' which denotes suffering (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2).
[390] Appadurai, 78.
[391] Appadurai, 78.

Not all religious fundamentalism and terrorism is made equal; Muslims are imagined to be especially prone to terror, and are portrayed as one of the first historical groups to take part in terrorism. Many writers reference the historical order of Nizari-Ismailis known as the *Hashashin* (the Arabic word from which we get the English word assassin) as one of the historical precursors to modern-day religious terrorism.[392] In *The Crisis of Islam*, Bernard Lewis makes the dizzying analogy that "most Muslims are not fundamentalists, and most fundamentalists are not terrorists, but most present-day terrorists are Muslims and proudly identify as such."[393] Setting aside the logic fallacy and generalized, unsubstantiated claims, the last clause brings to mind a question: what does it mean to label, or accept the self-identification, of terrorists as (in this case) a "fervently-committed" Muslim, to use Bruce Lincoln's term, when in fact their actions (drinking, clubbing) do not square with the convictions and actions of even moderate Muslims?[394] In other words, if these terrorists are not actually committed, in any real sense, to the religious decrees that not only religious conservatives, but even religious moderates, take as fundamental, then what does it mean to be "fervently-committed"? To what?

Bruce Lincoln's argues that the commitment is to a "maximalist" view of religion—that is, an approach, contrary to the traditional view of secularism, where religion "permeates" all social life, as opposed to the Kantian "minimalist" approach, which "restricts religion to an important set of (chiefly metaphysical) concerns, protects its privileges against state intrusion,

[392] Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam : Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Modern Library, 2003). Bernard Lewis argues that this group demonstrates religion's—read, Islam's—embryonic relationship to violence and terrorism (143). Jessica Stern, more neutrally, also mentions the history of the *Hashashin* alongside that of the Jewish Zealots-Sicarii (*Terror in the Name of God* xxi).
[393] Lewis 137. Does Lewis intend, in this statement, to protect fundamentalists (such as Christian fundamentalists, for example) from the charge of terrorism—to avoid the stain of being perceived as on par with terrorism, or worse, Muslim terrorism? And since most fundamentalists are not terrorists, and most Muslims are not fundamentalists, but most terrorists are Muslim, does the statement cast suspicion on the possibility of that majority of non-fundamentalist Muslims that may still be guilty of terrorism?
[394] Lincoln, *Holy Terrors* 12.

but restricts its activity and influence to this specialized sphere."[395] Lincoln explains that fundamentalists seek power, but rather than do so through materialism and capitalism, "power is redefined as a function of piety rather than wealth, arms, or numbers."[396] In other words, they are improperly assimilated subjects of the modern project, who define power incorrectly.

Just as terrorism is made to seem inherent to the Muslim subject who becomes too committed to their faith (over and above secular liberalism), so too is the Muslim subject improperly emotional. Zeal, when referring to the religiosity of Muslims, is inherent in the religious subject. Bernard Lewis describes the fatwa on Rushdie as a call to action directed at "all the zealous Muslims."[397] Islam is analyzed as being too extremely rigid or religious (even more so than the religious right in the US, for example), and thus fostering extreme violence. That extremism is sometimes attributed to the desire for physical jihad or the establishment of *sharia*, or as a consequence of extreme patriarchy[398] or extreme gender segregation which leads to inadequate heterosexual relations and results in overly intense male-bonding.[399] Training camps not only train the physical body and steer the ideological mind, but nurture certain affects, so that belonging of this sort "enhances their excitement," providing "a clear focus for the turbulent energies…of youth and despair. Their basic weapons are intensity and extreme commitment."[400] Regardless of the reason, however, Muslim terrorism (as opposed to other terrorism) is "apocalyptic nihilism," that is, a metaphysical project of extremes;[401] Seyla Benhabib, also characterizing jihad in these terms, goes further to explain that the drive depends

[395] Ibid, 5.
[396] Ibid, 12.
[397] Lewis, *Crisis of Islam* 139.
[398] Robin Morgan, *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism* (New York, N.Y.: Norton, 1989).
[399] Lionel Tiger qtd in Puar 57.
[400] Qtd in Puar 57.
[401] Michael Ignatieff qtd. in James Der Derian, "9/11: before, after, and in between" in *Understanding September 11* ed. Craig J.Calhoun, Paul Price, and Ashley S Timmer.

on an "eroticization of death" where the improperly modern subjects are "not in search of riches, but in search of an elusive and decisive encounter with death."[402]

As image and figure, Osama Bin Laden becomes exemplary in the post-9/11 world as the Muslim terrorist. In a Boston Globe article published two weeks after 9/11, Indira Lakshmanan characterized Bin Laden as "an Islamic zealot, a military genius, a poet, an impassioned enemy of the United States." [403] But while he is the figure extraordinaire of fanatical, dogmatic religion who activates Islam's inherent and great potential for terror, as Reza Aslan points out, he is a "man with no religious credentials how has never studied in any Islamic seminary and who has only the most rudimentary knowledge of Islamic law and theology."[404] Aslan attributes Bin Laden's success to his own savvy at appropriating the Islamic jurisprudential model of fatwas to assume authority. Aslan also notes only a minority accepted this religious posturing—most who are youth, do not know Arabic or have familiarity with the Qur'an, and spurn other religious authority—while the majority of Muslims globally never recognized Bin Laden as an religious authority. Bin Laden is thus more a figure of Islamic authority in the West than in the Muslim world. The image functions more as an avatar through which secular society can illustrate a model of inappropriate religiosity.

A similar argument to the one I am making here is Bruce Lincoln's contention that Bin Laden was painted as the ultimate zealot as part of a strategic public campaign to characterize Bin Laden in a certain emotive light. According to Lincoln, the American public was kept from understanding Bin Laden as a complex rational actor with comprehensible "grievances, goals, dreams and delusions"; they were screened from knowing "his relative degree of rationality, as

[402] Seyla Benhabib, "Unholy wars: Reclaiming democratic virtues after September 11," in *Understanding September 11*, ed. Craig J.Calhoun, Paul Price, and Ashley S Timmer, 246.
[403] Qtd in Esposito, *Unholy War*, 3. Even Bin Laden's father is characterized as zealous for the Palestinian cause (5).
[404] Aslan, *Cosmic* 135.

compared to the genuinely monstrous quality of his *ressentiment*" because their reaction to this complexity of the rational and the emotive could not easily be socially disciplined, and might either "make him all the more repugnant...or might enhance his charismatic aura."[405] Instead, the administration was able to guarantee a specific response to "a cartoonish stereotype of Oriental fantasy: a 'Mad Mullah,' a wide-eyed, turbaned, and bearded fanatic whose innate irrationality precludes taking him seriously but makes him a serious danger."[406] Note that the disciplinary function here is a flattening of the expression of innate zeal: this zeal has no ethical depth or moral ambiguity, unlike the zeal of revenge-driven political thrillers and action films, where the male citizen-turned-terrorist has his hand forced by institutions of power implicated in the destruction of his wealth, his objects of love or family, or even his very capacity to love. Unlike the hyperbolic figures of fanatical terrorist with no productive affective experiences, Jessica Stern's interviews with terrorists of all stripes revealed that many were polite, caring, if troubled, family men. Ayman Zawahiri, Bin Laden's right-hand man and successor and a physician by trade, was similarly described by family and friends as "normal, well-adjusted" and "intelligent, well-read, polite."[407]

What is at work in these flattened figures of zeal and our reaction to them? Affect is made comprehensible through cultural valences. Emotions contain within them judgment: "moral responses—responses that first take form as affect—are tacitly regulated by certain kinds of interpretive frameworks."[408] In regards to zeal, the interpretive framework evaluates not only the emotion, but the intensity of that emotion; and not only the intensity of the emotion, but the intensity of the emotion as experienced by what subject and towards what object. What I have

[405] Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors* 19.
[406] Ibid 20.
[407] Esposito, *Unholy War* 18.
[408] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: New York , 2009): 48.

been characterizing as intensity of religious fervor or excessive emotional dedication, Sianne Ngai has termed "antimatedness."[409] Ngai tracks how this affect of "animatedness" is racialized, tracing it in America through antebellum representations of black slaves, to representations of Latin figures, Jews, Italians, Greeks, Irish, and Mexicans.[410] There is an ambiguity in whether animatedness "designates high-spiritedness, or a puppet-like state"; when racialized, it is presented as the latter in an attempt to think of the energy as containable or controllable.[411] Ngai argues that the primary way of making affect "visible" is animatedness, where the individual is shown to be moved or agitated. Agitation, she notes, is connected to liberal political theory in the form of the agitator, a figure which is classically treated as heroic when agitation is expressed by the proper subject in the proper context. The racialized view of animatedness is the interpretive framework in which the positive potential of the affect is made threatening or improper. Animatedness is reconfigured from agitated affect into "exaggerated responsiveness" and "a form of emotional excess…stripped of its intentionality"; what would otherwise be interpreted as agency, "human spiritedness or vitality" is redefined as a mechanical or reactionary response.[412] The agentive potential is denied by transforming the agitation into an inherent characteristic of the subject's body; agitation transforms into zeal, effusiveness, or spontaneity: "emotional qualities…sliding into *corporeal* qualities."[413]

We see this slide of active, spirited human agency into reflexive, extreme affect that objectifies the non-rational body in Bruno Étienne's description of the suicide bomber:

> The *death wish* results from an *overflowing of energies* set free by the failure of the capacities to *make representations*: when there is no longer anything, no

[409] Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* 32.
[410] Ngai contrasts this to the caricaturing of Asians, who are, at the other extreme, figured as quiet, kowtowing, and emotionally inscrutable.
[411] Ibid 21, see also 113, 117.
[412] Ibid 32.
[413] Ibid 95.

> political model, no utopia, no hope, no solution—when the representations of the possible are *frustrated*, one explodes! This *overflowing of excitation* brings about a rupture: the actor, or the agent, as Pierre Bourdieu would say, is *emptied of his own desires*. *He is then the object* of a movement of disconnection for which the neurosis of war is the outlet.[414]

Simply: the suicide bomber, an agent of terror, cannot control his overflow of excitation because he lacks the rational capacity of representation, and so paradoxically is emptied of subjective desire and becomes an object, a machine of excessive, unstable, emotional, neurotic war. It is safer to rationalize terrorism, extremism, and fundamentalism as fundamentally flawed emotional relationships or approaches to religion which democratic inclinations could have restored to productive psycho-social relations with the world. That is preferable to reading the suicide bomber's zeal as revealing, in Appadurai's words, "the darkest possible version of the liberal value placed on the individual" and the blurring between the body and martial technology that make possible the suicide.[415]

In order to contain the figure of terrorism, fundamentalism, and other zealotry, we have the figure of the torturable, tortured detainee. When terrorism is defined as the violence brought forward by non-state actors who enact extranational violence that is not legitimized by a state, the terrorist and his body come to stand for what Puar calls the "monstrous excess of the nation state." [416] The torturable detainee, by contrast, is a stand-in for the state's ability to successfully disarm the terrorist. Part of the revulsion associated with suicide bombing, as Arjun Appadurai and Jaqueline Rose have argued, is the forceful integration of the terrorist body into normal society. Building upon Rose's description of the suicide act as imposing an "unbearable intimacy

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[414] Qtd and translated in Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* 52. Emphases mine. Asad is interested in deconstructing this notion of suicide bombing as a mysterious and incomprehensible Freudian neurosis, saying that war, including suicide bombing (which he reads as a technology of war, rather than a monstrous departure from it) is "collectively organized, legitimized, and moralized game of destruction that is played much more savagely by the civilized than the uncivilized. Nor is it suicide…the rates of suicide tend to decline significantly in wartime" (53). My interest in Étienne's quote, however, is his descriptions of the intensity and excess of affected energy in relation to rationality.
[415] Appadurai 77.
[416] Puar 99.

shared" between suicide bomber and his victims, Appadurai argues that the disgust is disgust of the disruption of the clear division between the innocent body and the guilty body, since the suicide attack "promises to distribute its own bloody fragments and mix them with the bloody parts of the civilian population."[417] Detainment of the possible terrorist quarantines the zealotry from the general public while his torture is an appropriation and transformation by the security apparatus of the dangerous body into the endangered body. The torturable and tortured detainee is, in effect, the attempt to reincorporate the terrorist body back into the system of nation-states without absorbing the terrorist individual back into society —his body is relocated to a space that is at once not the country in which he has been detained, but which still has jurisdiction which allows for legal and extralegal recourse to action.

Furthermore, the judicial system works to resolve one other frustration regarding the suicide bomber specifically: while the body of the suicide bomber may be excessively shared in his act of terror, his motivations, by contrast, are entirely and finally concealed. This explains why the suicide bomber is the figure of terrorism that is not only the most incomprehensible and disgusting, but also the most frustrating, often debated and contemplated. As Nigel Thrift explains, suicide bombers circumvent the proper functioning of the rational model of governance, in the manner in which they "'remove themselves from the role of explanation' by promulgating a politics of affective sensation as much as discursive opinion."[418] When caught, these subjects are forced to rationalize and explain their actions, so that the judiciary reinscribes and reabsorbs them conceptually into the rational-discursive system. When they are not caught, however, their motivations and the emotional resonances are made mysterious and no longer easily situated or secured in a rehearseable, predictable rhetorical modes.

[417] Appadurai 77-8.
[418] Nigel Thrift, "Immaculate warfare? The spatial politics of extreme violence," in *Violent geographies : fear, terror, and political violence*, ed. Derek Gregory and Allan Pred: 280.

Animating Normal

Typical fictional representations of terrorism often mirror the analytical representations illustrated above, especially in the way affect is portrayed. This is the landscape within which Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* writes and places itself self-consciously.[419] The novel, however, shuttles the emphasis away from the terrorist figure and the associated focus on the fervent emotional commitments to particular aberrant ideologies. Instead, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* portrays the emotional structures and codes that underlie American corporate culture and popular attitudes about romantic and sexual passion, revealing the constructed quality of the seemingly automatic, autopoietic emotions and the ethos that are tagged to them.

The novel, written in the second-person, begins in Lahore, where the narrator, Changez, has a conversation over tea with a silent auditor.[420] The reader is only given access to Changez's dialogue, and during the course of their conversation, the reader gradually, but ambiguously, learns that the auditor as likely an agent or headhunter sent to find Changez, a university instructor who may or may not be mentoring, fostering, and defending students involved in terrorist activities. However, this overarching plot is only implied, and is made to take secondary importance in the novel by being embedded within the personal narrative that encompasses the majority of the novel. This personal narrative is Changez's recollection of his year in the United States after graduating from Princeton; he shares his experiences of landing his first job with an

[419] For a catalogue of some such representations in which Muslim fundamentalists or terrorists are emotionally unhinged in film, see Jack Shaheen's *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2001) and *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs After 9/11* (2007). This list does not even consider the similar portrayals of non-Arab Muslims. For some representative novels, consider Michel Houellebecq's *Platform* (2002), John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006), and arguably, even in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2004).

[420] This chapter will use the term "auditor" to refer to the man to whom Changez tells his story, because the word has at one time or another encapsulated the meanings of the modern sense as listener or audience member; but also in the sense of a disciple who learns by oral instruction; and even in a judicial sense of appraising information for a trial.

elite valuation firm, Underwood Samson, and falling in love with an emotionally unavailable and troubled woman, Erica.

Emotions, rather than the act of terrorism, are the driving force of the novel. The novel presents emotions as deeply significant in considerations of action: emotions define history in Changez's description of an uncomfortable experience with the global economy and class relations in the Philippines which makes him "unsettled by this peculiar series of events—or impressions, really, for they hardly constituted *events*."[421] Changez's articulation of his feeling as an 'impression' rather than an 'event' evokes Sara Ahmed's use of the term 'impressions' as the mutually interacting experience of sense-perception, emotion, and cognition on both the personal and the societal level, with consideration of the perspective of the subject and the object and how they affect one another. 'Impression' encapsulates meanings such as "an effect on the subject's feelings ('she made an impression')…a belief ('to be under the impression')…an image ('to create an impression')...a mark on the surface ('to leave an impression')" and reflects the social movement of these impressions, as the way in which "not only do I have an impression of others, but they also leave me with an impression."[422] The narrative illustrates the way Changez's American experiences of love and success imprinted him with consequential affective impressions that captures their importance as sedimented histories that structure personal and social memories and ideas.

The novel focuses on emotions for two reasons: first, to attend to the way the experience of emotion is socially structured; second, to reveal that these emotional experiences contain within them implicit and socially-coded judgments, moralities, or worldviews. These affects are not natural states or, as Judith Butler puts it, "emotive emanations of the universal human," but

[421] Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2007): 68, emphasis original.
[422] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion* 6.

socially defined and "differentially distributed" affects that are "conditioned and structured by interpretations" linked to social norms, such as Western and liberal frameworks regarding the individual and their interpersonal, social relationships as well as their political, public relationships.[423] Moreover, just as the act of feeling these emotions is socially structured, so is the association of certain morally-inflected emotions with particular objects or subjects—what Heidegger called moods as "attunements" that arise from, and shape or modulate the totality of, Being-in-the-World, disclosing the "situatedness" that enables things to matter in determinate ways.[424] It is crucial, then, to consider the variability, or constructedness, of the relationship between emotions and the objects they take on. Some useful ways of thinking through this approach to emotions include Martha Nussbaum's formulation of the "cognitive-evaluative" aspect of emotions; Sianne Ngai discusses Rei Terada's approach to emotions as "interpretations of predicaments"; and Julie Ellison, looking at the politically structured perception of affects in the United States, makes a distinction between reflexive sentiment and affected affect, argues that sentiment is a "heightened awareness of emotion as an *issue*"—that is, sentiment is the recognition of the discursively constructed character of certain emotions.[425] Both Ellison and Nussbaum rationalize affect; in Ellison's formulation, it is possible to "yield" or "resist" the sentiment.[426] Though these rationalizations participate in what Sarah Ahmed calls the making-good of emotions in their reconfiguration as "forms of intelligence"—so that any individual may assert a rational, agentive choice about which emotions to participate in—these approaches are still useful to attend how emotions are embedded in the workings of rationality and discourse, and how different emotions are differently authorized in relationship to their subject, place, and

[423] Butler, *Frames of War* 159, 160.
[424] Qtd in Ngai, *Ugly Emotions* 43.
[425] Julie K. Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-american Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999): 6.
[426] Ibid 6.

time.[427] William Connolly describes this as the disavowal in secular institutions of the affective intensity, or "bellicosity," of rational discourse, which he argues can be productively re-injected into public conversations in order to better realize pluralism.[428] It is particularly important to consider how the intensity of authorized affect is regulated in different circumstances, so that within any culture "emotional volatility and emotional discipline are joined in strategically choreographed ways."[429] Thus while it may be appropriate to express unrestrained anger and despair in one situation, those same emotions are in turn read as inappropriate in another.

In fact, it is the intensity of emotion—what Ahmed calls "the economic nature of intensification" where "one is more or less aware of bodily surfaces depending on the range and intensities of bodily experience"—which signals whether something has been structured as normal or abnormal in one's life. Thus, in one culture, face veiling may trigger fear and consternation, whereas in another it does not even register in the emotional sphere, regardless of whether or not the perceiver also veils; or, in one country, the change of a color code determines citizen anxiety of a potential threat, whereas in another country mired in active war, citizens are desensitized to the sound of bombs exploding and sniper rifles firing in the distance. The objects do not contain, within them, the emotion, but reflect our relationship and approach to the object: so, although some people are afraid of heights, height itself does not contain within it fearsomeness.[430] Emotions are thus deeply relational and social, conjuring histories and experiences sedimented in the subject's memory and associated with certain objects or concepts,

[427] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 3.
[428] Connolly suggests that the dominant expression of 'bellicosity' by fundamentalist or radical American right has made intense emotionality especially abhorrent to the rational left. This overlooks how the tempered 'rational' rhetoric of both Right and Left politicians presents itself as encouraging non-emotive rational discourse, obscuring the bellicosity that is encouraged for certain arguments (for example, bipartisan expression of patriotism).
[429] Ellison, *Cato's Tears* 20.
[430] Ahmed 6.

and consequently forming the boundaries that define what is included and excluded in one's life: this is why Ahmed calls emotions "affective forms of reorientation" towards the world.[431]

The project of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is to reorient its readers affectively. Contrary to the expectations prompted by its title, subject matter, and fictional genre, the novel has very little to do with the emotions associated with religious zeal. In fact, Islam factors very little into the narrative the main character, Changez, shares. The few discussions of Islam and religion are brief, and serve to show that for Changez, Islam functions as a set of cultural mores rather than as deeply held beliefs. He describes how in Pakistan, before moving to the United States for university, he had a Christian bootlegger from whom he bought alcohol.[432] When his auditor is surprised to learn that Changez used to drink, and inquires whether or not it is a sin in Islam, by way of response Changez makes an analogy to the biblical commandment not to covet thy neighbor's wife, implying that religious practitioners do not always follow their religious injunctions.[433] In college, Changez "experienced all the intimacies college students commonly experience," and later, he has no qualms about having sex with Erica outside of wedlock.[434] Apart from Changez's disregard of religious injunctions to pray, avoid alcohol, and abjure pre-marital sex, he also has very few metaphysical thoughts, religious or otherwise, with a few short exceptions regarding love. Changez describes how, when he gets his first job after graduation with the Underwood Samson corporation, his exclamation of thanks directed to God comes "as much to my own surprise as I am sure it was to the other students."[435] There is some ambiguity as to whether or not Changez continues to participate in these religiously prohibited practices once he returns to Pakistan, after becoming disenchanted with the United States. When

[431] Ibid 8.
[432] Hamid *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, 27.
[433] Ibid 53-4 .
[434] Ibid 26.
[435] Ibid 14.

discussing whether drinking is a sin or not in Islam, he alludes to the possibility that his alcoholic consumption is a past habit, and that he only grew his beard—which he knows the auditor associates with certain zealous commitments to religion—after the relevant point of his story. Furthermore, when he enacts certain religious forms—such as the beard—he does not ascribe the motivation to belief, but rather to historical, cultural, or experiential reasons. When he makes his joke about aspiring to be a "dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability," his reference is not to the metaphysics of theological Islam but to what is referred to as political Islamism, which seeks power.[436]

Whether or not Changez's dissimulating claims are true or not is not as important for the novel as the fact that Changez is often consciously playing with his auditor's expectations about zealous religiosity. At the end of the novel, Changez describes his last days in New York as a time when he would likely be perceived as a raving religious madman:

> I would like to claim that my final days in New York passed in a state of enlightened calm; nothing could be further from the truth. I was an incoherent and emotional madman, flying off into rages and sinking into depressions… sometimes I would find myself walking the streets, flaunting my beard as a provocation, craving conflict with anyone foolhardy enough to antagonize me… the rhetoric emerging from your country… provided a ready and constant fuel for my anger.[437]

Though Changez may have looked like a dangerous Muslim fundamentalist to a stranger—and while he even takes advantage of this rhetoric in order to provoke reactions—the reader is aware at this point of the complicated, intertwining motivations for this behavior that arise from spurned love, the existential questions prompted by career stress and loss of employment which has until then defined and compromised Changez's life, and the geopolitics that stir anxieties of his belonging in the United States and concerns of safety for his family in Pakistan. When

[436] Ibid 29.
[437] Ibid 167.

Changez displays hot emotion in a TV interview in which he rails against the United States, which draws attention to him as a potential terrorist and is likely the very reason the possibly undercover agent has come to find Changez in Pakistan, the distemper is articulated as his outrage at the inequality of geopolitical realities, with no mention of religious convictions.[438] Moreover, Changez recognizes that the troubling nature of his remarks (for his conversant and American culture) is the intensity of his delivery, the "admittedly intemperate remarks," rather than the content, the threat of which he deflects by insisting that he is "simply a university lecturer"—a career associated with tempered affect and considerate, studied reason.[439]

Productive Aggression, Anger, and the Tempering of Dissent

By contrast to the expectations of dangerous terrorist affect, the novel depicts situations in which intensely felt and displayed emotion, such as anger, can be culturally marked as productive and desirable. Changez's boss, Jim, encourages it as a business skill for the promising employee that wants to rise through the ranks. When he interviews Changez, he pries into Changez's socioeconomic status in the U.S.; Changez perceives this as a violation of the code of conduct for interviews and his voice rises, "taking on an edge" and a tone that comes "out more aggressively" than he intends.[440] Jim likes that Changez has a "temper," and later metaphorically refers to it as a hunger, which is "a good thing in my book."[441] Jim approves of this anger because he believes it can be enlisted in service of financial gain and career success. It's also telling that Jim articulates the anger as a base biological drive that responds to a need rather than desire, so that its expression is utilitarian. It is no longer, as Silvan Tompkins argues about affect in contrast to biological drives, "affective amplification is indifferent to the means-ends

[438] Ibid 182.
[439] Ibid 183, 181.
[440] Ibid 8.
[441] Ibid 9.

difference" so that "It is exciting to be excited" just as it is "terrorizing to be terrorized"—and in this way, affect is "self-validating."[442] Jim's metaphor of emotion-as-drive thus reconfigures the structure of affect, giving it purpose, directedness, and a (legitimized) object. Jim characterizes his Changez aggression as having "a bit of the warrior in you" which he tells Changez to "nurture" rather than be "ashamed."[443] When Jim describes himself as likewise a "shark," he furthermore describes himself as "a cool customer."[444] Jim thus marks aggression not only as productive and tied to rational goals, but does so by describing it as an emotion that, in being harnessed, is cooled from its hotly passionate (and ineffective) state.

This "sort of controlled aggression," as Changez calls it, is made appropriate in the corporate world by stripping it of any rebellious or reformatory power: it becomes "not belligerence…but determination," a productive kind of passionate affect which does not breed chaos, but is a constrained feeling that he "harnessed…to my desire to succeed."[445] This very same fervent anger is, by contrast, something Changez has to justify when it is not expressed within his corporate carreer. When he describes his experience after 9/11 where he is harassed and made the subject of xenophobic, racist remarks, he qualifies his hot, angry response by asserting that he is not, "by nature, a *gratuitously* belligerent chap."[446] His aggression in work—the productive, cool sort—is thus, in retrospect, marked as not gratuitous, but integrated as part of the system. But when he physically threatens the person who verbally accosted him, he is left shaken by the "intensity" of the emotion, which "was for me unprecedented."[447] The danger of

[442] Qtd in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003): 99-100.
[443] Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 45.
[444] Ibid 70.
[445] Ibid 41.
[446] Ibid 117, emphasis mine.
[447] Ibid 118.

this particular hot anger is that it cannot be corralled by corporations, nations, or even ideology.[448]

To further complicate its portrayal of intense anger, it yokes it to another set of intense emotions: love, passion, lust, and the intimacy that we associate with these. It presents these to explore the intimacy embedded in anger and hate. Paradoxically, hate and anger are revealed as creating relationships of interdependence and investment.[449] As Erica puts it when Changez apologizes for reacting with (bridled) anger about his country, she asserts that "I think it's good to be touchy sometimes. It means you care."[450] Not only does this statement link anger and concern for an object of affection, but by portraying anger as being "touchy," the novel explors the embodied aspect of this experience affect which negotiates proximity and immediacy between two subjects, actions with creates a relationship between them.

The novel does not portray the intimacy created by hate and anger as always positive, however. When Changez, in the Philippines, starts to act like his corporate American peers, assuming a kind of self-assuredness and arrogance (a form of hostility), he has an experience where he comes to understand that anger and hate are intimate feelings that rely on two mutually recognizing subjects of disparate privilege. While in a limousine with his colleagues, he notices that a nearby jeepney driver is looking at him with "an undisguised hostility in his expression," a hostility which he describes as a "dislike was so obvious, so *intimate*, that it got under my skin," and which transfers between the subjects when Changez, in staring back at the driver, starts "getting angry" in response. [451] At first Changez is disoriented because he thinks of himself as

[448] This is in contrast to the terrorism theories discussed at the start of the chapter, which argue that terrorist groups in fact take advantage of and incite feelings of disenfranchisement in order to motivate their members.
[449] "Indifference would manifest our lack of need for the object. Where there is hate there is obviously an *excessive need* for the object." Holbrook qtd in Ahmed 50-1.
[450] Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 56.
[451] Ibid 67. A jeepney is a type of public transportation bus in the Philippines.

sharing the driver's "Third World sensibility"—so much so that later, after he and the driver are separated, he will look at his colleagues and develop a sense of cultural detachment from his peers and assert instead that he "felt in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver" than to them.[452] Through this experience he begins to understand that he is now defined by different structures of affect and subjecthood, illustrating how, as Sarah Ahmed argues, "hate does not reside in a given subject or object. It is economic; it circulates between signifiers in a relationship of difference and displacement."[453]

This scene speaks directly to one of the affects often associated with fundamentalism and terrorism: it answers the question "Why do they *hate* us?" The question transforms any disgruntled anger—that is, an emotion that classically has powerful implications for agency and political reform—into disgruntled envy. Unlike anger, which is read as potentially productive, envy is one of Ngai's "ugly feelings;" rather than recognizing a justified inequality, envy is "dismissed as an overreaction, as delusional, or even hysterical," thus making the emotion refer to the psychosis of an unbalanced individual rather than an important consequence of historical context.[454] Ngai argues that envy is seen as "effete;" thus, by assigning envy as the motive of terrorists, the rhetorical strategy at once combines the unjustified overaggression of anger while delegitimizing it as a justified, agentive response.[455] For example, the rhetoric that explains terrorist motives with the slogan "they hate our freedoms" ignores the manner in which the modern subject is ethically implicated in the global structures of inequality that give rise to (or else fuel for) such actors. In the scene with Changez and the Filipino driver, however, the anger between both parties has nothing to do with religion, and everything to do with the inequity of

[452] Ibid 67.
[453] Ahmed 44.
[454] Ngai 128.
[455] Ibid 128.

global socioeconomics and the structures of affect that support it. The Filipino driver's anger at the luxury car, which throws back at him his own reflection and thus defines him by contrast, is comprehensible and an emotion that anyone can empathize with. That is, it takes the affect associated with extreme, unthinkable acts of terror that is marked as excessive and makes it reasonable, relatable, and conventional. As Sarah Ahmed argues, "hate is part of the production of the ordinary, rather than simply about 'extremists' (perhaps we should say that 'extremes' are part of the production of the ordinary)."[456] Changez's narrative project is to reveal how hate and extreme intensities are ordinary, but rhetorically justified in certain experiences and repudiated in others.

The novel does not only shows how certain singular emotions can be read as productive in certain situations and not in others, but also foregrounds how structures of emotion are established by institutions and marked *as* emotions. Through the affective 'impressions' of Changez's experience, the novel illustrates the way certain emotions are structured to 'feel right' in a given situation, and the variability of these codes across cultures, and even within cultures under different contexts. For example, Changez notes that within American culture, the upbringing of his Pakistani social class makes him socially awkward but professionally prepared: "My natural politeness and sense of formality, which had sometimes been a barrier in my dealings with my peers, proved perfectly suited to the work context."[457] He partly attributes the appreciation of these mannerisms in the business world to cultural residuals of a shared history of English colonialism ("like Pakistan, America is, after all, a former English colony") which makes certain accents associated with wealth and power.[458] He also partly attributes it to disparate cultural norms: Pakistani culture, he claims, inculcates the proficiency for working

[456] Ahmed 57.
[457] Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 41.
[458] Ibid 41.

successfully within "a hierarchical environment" because individuals know how to balance deference and assertiveness, so that Changez can "function both respectfully and with self-respect…something American youngsters—unlike their Pakistani counterparts—rarely seemed *trained to do.*"[459] In another scene, the novel shows how certain religious structures of feeling are appropriated by secular spaces such as his corporate world. During Changez's job interview at Underwood Samson, he describes entering a "mental state" which is "free of doubts and limits" and where his "self would disappear," leaving him to "focus" on the goal at hand.[460] He goes on to specify the various institutions under which such a structure of emotions is often constructed, arguing that this state of mind is one championed in the world of sports, in religion by "Sufi mystics and Zen masters," and even in war ("possibly, ancient warriors did something similar before they went into battle, ritualistically accepting their impending death so they could function unencumbered by fear").[461] The three subjects—sports, metaphysics, and war—can require or legitimate certain structures of affect (here, a denial of fear or doubt, and perhaps an attempt at confidence and certainty), though they may be celebrated in some contexts and demonized in others (for example, a soldier is brave by overcoming his fear of death for a higher purpose, but a suicide bomber is a coward).[462]

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[459] Ibid, 41-2, emphasis mine.
[460] Ibid 12.
[461] Ibid 12-3.
[462] Further consider the figure of the soldier, who is legally sanctioned to do what the terrorist is morally condemned for. Structurally, the experiences of soldiers and terrorists are analogous: soldiers are trained to become efficient killers, strategically, to hate their death subject, to obey commands, and to perpetuate violence, some of which is directed at or near civilian populations, (See Mitchell, 37; also, Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* 78). In *On Suicide Bombing,* Asad quotes Bourke 27: "violence was a common component of military training…individuals had to be broken down to be rebuilt into efficient fighting men. The basic tenets included depersonalization, uniforms, lack of privacy, forced social relationships, tight schedules, lack of sleep, disorientation followed by rites of reorganization according to military codes, arbitrary rules, and strict punishment." Jessica Stern also wrote that "Military psychologist David Grossman found that without desensitivity training, most soldiers will not fire at enemies at close range. Nearly 80 percent of riflemen neglected, declined, or omitted to fire at an exposed enemy in World War II, even to save their lives or the lives of their compatriots…After extensive desensitivity training, however, the nonfiring rate in Vietnam was only 5 percent" (16). Yet, as Asad puts it, in modern warfare theory, the act of soldiers is just action that is differentiated from the act of terrorists because of the assigning of the feelings of

The novel thus reveals that the proper subject of secular capitalism is not only interpellated by name and by the rational prioritization of certain goals and commitments, but is also emotionally interpellated through the construction of legitimate sets of affective responses to particular situations in different institutions. Illustrating the world of business finance as one such institution, the novel interrogates the manner in which emotions are structured. Underwood Samson prompts in Changez feelings of awe or a "sense of wonder" on his first day, feeling that are evoked so powerfully that they dwarf the feelings he'd felt upon the sight of the Himalayas, since "nothing had prepared me for the drama, the *power* of the view from their lobby."[463] It is a feeling of awe linked to the technological sophistication of the company's resources. This awe often transforms into "troubled" and "resentful" feelings at the global disparity of wealth and power—whereas once his region had boasted of technological advancement over the West, now university endowments in the United States dwarf Pakistan's national education budget—and this realization of the extent of the "vast disparity" makes him feel "ashamed."[464] Still, even while Underwood Samson produces (and sets out to produce) these feelings of a power structure which it dominates, it also obscures those feelings, making Changez think of himself not "as a Pakistani, but as an Underwood Samson trainee, and my firm's impressive offices made me proud."[465]

The interpersonal drama that occurs in this corporate culture is obscured by the professionalizing rhetoric. The business is presented as first and foremost a dispassionate, goal-

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remorse to one, and not the other: "the sincerity of the terrorist's conscience, of the excuses he makes, is of no significance in the categorization of his actions; the military commander's sincere conscience, on the other hand, may be crucial to the difference between an unfortunate necessity and a war crime" (Asad, 26; also 36-38). Modern warfare theory, he says, theorizes just warfare by imagining that soldier feeling guilt at the death of innocents, while terrorists do not. In this way, war is defined by legality—was that drone attack, for example, justified as an act of war, or does it fall under the UN's legal definition of crimes against humanity?—whereas terrorism is defined by the affect it incites and invokes.

[463] Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 34.

[464] Ibid 34.

[465] Ibid 34.

oriented profession. Changez describes a business ethos focused on "pragmatism" where "creativity was not excised…but it ceded its primacy to *efficiency*," where "we were taught to recognize another person's style of thought, harness their agenda, and redirect it to achieve our desired outcome."[466] Changez uses this as a contrast to the needs and expectations set by storytelling, where the company's disregard for rhetorically employing emotion is "perhaps rather dry" for storytelling.[467] Storytelling is a moment of reflective emotional realization, which "strikes me *now*."[468] So, while the business model would not discuss its ethos in emotive terms, the requirements of drama in storytelling allow Changez to reflect on the emotive experiences of being an employee which are not other discussed in the language of business: he insists that he did "enjoy…the realm of high finance," and moreover that there were structural opportunities, such as expense accounts, that felt "exhilarating" by allowing him to "with impunity spend in an hour more than my father earned in a day!"[469] That is, while the rhetoric of business and professionalism is that of objective endeavors and pragmatic ventures, storytelling allows Changez to reveal the structures of emotions that are cultivated within the corporate culture.

These emotions, like Changez's ability to work well in a hierarchical system, are institutionally learned and trained structures of affect set in a whole interdependent system. The novel shows how the corporate world depends on the training provided in elite universities which teach more than facts and skills, but also participate in the structuring of certain emotive habits that prime students for proper emotional conduct in certain institutions.[470] This is why Changez

[466] Ibid 36-7. Ironically, one can describe Changez's narrative in the novel as recognizing the reader's expectation of a certain style of storytelling, and harnessing and redirecting those expectations in order to achieve a desired outcome.
[467] Ibid 36-7.
[468] Ibid 38.
[469] Ibid 37. Later, he would feel a similar "self-satisfaction" when flying first-class on assignment (62).
[470] This depends further on previous grooming. Changez describes how Princeton, like Samson Underwood (and all opportunity in America), claims to be a "meritocracy," but actually depends on identifying and self-selecting those

describes his peers, the other employees-in-training, as "virtually indistinguishable" from one another (himself included).[471] Despite their diversity of race and sex, they are all alumni of elite universities, and this similarity in structural opportunities reflects through the same structure of affect: they all "exuded a sense of confident self-satisfaction."[472]

Ironically, the novel portrays these emotional structures as uncomfortably similar to those emotions associated with extremists and fundamentalists. Samson Underwood's "guiding principle, drilled into us" was "focus on the fundamentals," which Changez embraces "with both skill and enthusiasm."[473] This is a kind of fundamentalism akin to the religious kind, a "pursuit…as though my life depended on it" and a "creed" that "was for me double reassuring because it was quantifiable—and hence knowable—in a period of great uncertainty," a description which recalles Arjun Appaduri's assertion that religious fundamentalists try to produce certainty through their belief systems.[474] At their job orientation, the employees-in-training are told about Underwood Samson's "ethos" of meritocracy, and about the rigorous, "consistent routine" of instruction and meals that they would be subjected to, which evokes the training routines quoted in Asad that are shared by both military and terrorist organizations, such as "depersonalization. . . forced social relationships, tight schedules. . . disorientation followed by rites of reorganization according to … arbitrary rules").[475] When Changez describes it as "systematic pragmatism—call it *professionalism*," the suffix "ism" relates business to other ideologies which participates in "initiation" rites that parallel the tactics of military, business, cult, and terrorism training, all of which inculcate certain structures of emotion such as dramatic

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students who have been previously tracked for such work using standardized tests and "painstakingly customized evaluations"; it is only then that they are "invited into the ranks of meritocracy" (4).

[471] Ibid 38.
[472] Ibid 38.
[473] Ibid 98.
[474] Ibid 116.
[475] Qtd in Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* 27.

loyalty, a doubling of the self, conformism, and predictable routine.[476] Changez makes this allusion more explicitly when he describes that if the company's trainees had been "shorn of hair and dressed in battle fatigues, we would have been virtually indistinguishable."[477]

While the corporation inculcates structures of emotion based on loyalty and desire, it also obscures or muffles, on the other hand, compassion for the consequences of their business. Changez admits that although he feels some "compassionate pangs" for the workers who will be fired due to his corporation's evaluation, the pangs were "not overwhelming" because the demands of the job "left one with rather limited time for such distractions" —just as the awe-inspiring and desirous emotions cultivated within that workplace left little space for mulling over other emotions linked to ethical positions.[478] When Changez's emotions finally interfere, it is because he watches the invasion of Afghanistan outside of work, in the privacy of his home.[479] Perhaps it is the heavy night of drinking that relaxes Changez's inhibitions with regard to social mores; regardless, the following day he is no longer able to deny his feelings, which are "embers glowing within" and which make it "difficult to concentrate on the pursuit…of fundamentals."[480]

But although the company may structure certain appropriate emotions, this is not to say that others don't work under the surface; they are only discouraged from being cultivated or referred to explicitly. For example, the relationship between Changez and his boss and interviewer, Jim, is not as cold and calculating as it seems. When Jim interviews Changez for the company, "his eyes were cold…and *judgmental*, not in the way that word is normally used, but

[476] In *Terror in the Name of God*, Stern describes this "doubling" as the psychological explanation for how terrorists, who seem like otherwise normal people, can commit horrendous acts. They become two people: "the self they were, and the new, morally disengaged killer self" that no longer empathizes with others (xv). While she says that terrorist organizations "foster extreme doubling," she notes that doubling is a coping mechanism that certain professions take advantage of and encourage, as in the medical field, military work, and research (xv-xvi).
[477] Hamid, 38.
[478] Ibid 99.
[479] He watches footage of "what was described as a daring raid on a Taliban command post," but what really makes Changez "tremble with fury" is the imperial quality of the U.S.'s "invasion" into Afghanistan (100).
[480] Ibid 100.

in the sense of being professionally appraising, like a jeweler's when he inspects out of curiosity a diamond he intends neither to buy nor sell."[481] But their conversations and interactions reveal that, though Changez is qualified for the job, Jim's choice to hire him is strongly informed by his past experiences and the feelings prompted by those experiences. When Changez tries to "sell" himself to Jim, Jim is unimpressed and uninterested by his grades and social grooming, which all the candidates can attest to. Instead, what actually sells Changez to Jim it is the men's emotional bond as members of disenfranchised subcultures who had to struggle in silence for the opportunities they now enjoy. [482] That is, the façade of standardized, objective qualifications is buoyed by underlying emotions that are not legitimated by the structures of power within which they move.

These underlying emotions are tolerated and absorbed into the working system as long as the sanctioned emotions take priority. When Changez is about to abandon his assignment in Chile, Jim tries to dissuade him by using interpersonal metaphors that casts business as war and employees as soldiers who care for each other, who "don't really fight for their flags…they fight for their friends, their buddies. Their team."[483] However, when Changez subverts normal corporate culture codes of dress by growing a beard, one of his colleagues, also of a minority background, warns him that "this whole corporate collegiality veneer only goes so deep."[484] The deepest betrayal comes from Jim, who initially cultivates himself as Changez's mentor and seems to be emotionally invested in Changez as a younger version of himself, but who later fires Changez and asserts that he is "not a big believer in compassion at the workplace" and "didn't

[481] Ibid 7.
[482] Ibid 6.
[483] Ibid 153.
[484] Ibid 131.

think twice" about firing Changez, even wishing he'd done it sooner. [485] It is only after he asserts this harsh objectivity that he can admit that he likes Changez, offering emotional support in his obviously emotionally turbulent time by offering "to talk" Changez through his crisis.[486] This is why Changez's reply is a nod that is "a gesture not unlike a bow": his reaction recognizes that Jim's symbolic gesture of emotional compassion is more of a ceremonious formality, and that fond feelings are forced to be deprioritized with relation to the company's ethos of pursuing the fundamentals at all other costs.[487] As Changez realizes, even the vice president—who may seem, in his hierarchically dominant position, freer than the other employees—is "so completely immersed in the structures of his professional micro-universe" that "no thought was given to the critical personal and political issues that affect one's emotional present."[488] These structures of the 'professional micro-universe' even prompt the overdramatizing of certain emotions over others, so that when Changez's peers watch him leave after he is fired, they "did so with evident unease and, in some cases, a fear which would not have been inappropriate had I been convicted of plotting to kill them rather than of abandoning my post in mid-assignment."[489] By the emotional standards set in place by Underwood Samson, Changez has, in fact, enacted a kind of career death or suicide more reprehensible than ethical or moral offenses, such as those Changez believes Underwood Samson has participated in.

Arrogance is one of these ethically troubling structures of emotion which Changez most associates with this corporate culture and the elite universities that groom the future. When on a trip to Rome with fellow Princeton alumni, Changez is appalled at his peers' demands and lack of social graces when dealing with Romans, who conduct themselves with a "self-righteousness

[485] Ibid 159.
[486] Ibid 160.
[487] Ibid 160.
[488] Ibid 145.
[489] Ibid 160.

in dealing with those whom they had paid for a service" while Changez feels a "traditional deference to one's seniors."[490] Changez feels a similar arrogance from Erica's father, "a man of consequence in the corporate world."[491] This arrogance has global ramifications. When Erica's father lists all the things wrong with Pakistan, including corruption, dictatorship, economic disparity, and fundamentalism, Changez bridles—that is, checks his anger—not because there was anything "overtly objectionable" in the information, which was technically correct in the way news blurbs and sound bites are correct, "like the short news items on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*."[492] However, he objects to "his tone…its typically *American* undercurrent of condescension" which will later characterize American war rhetoric in response to September 11.[493]

These structures of emotion are not ones that an individual necessarily chooses, but which seep into one's habits when one participates in the culture. When Changez visits Lahore, he is alarmed to find that he has "changed" emotionally, looking at it just as would "that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of your country's elite."[494] That particular type is structured by certain privileges conferred by class, wealth, race, and citizenship. Changez is "angered" at this realization, and he "resolved to exorcise the unwelcome sensibility."[495] Not only does Changez realize that his emotional priorities have shifted, but that the emotions validated in that corporate culture were strategically and actively inhibiting other passions and affects: he wanted to believe he was happy in his life in New York "with such an intensity" that

[490] Ibid 21.
[491] Ibid 53.
[492] Ibid 55.
[493] Ibid 55.
[494] Ibid 124.
[495] Ibid 124.

he "prevented" himself from recognizing his unhappiness and resentments.[496] That is, he's made politically apathetic with happiness; by being "clad in my armor of denial" he is able to "focus" on Erica and his job; he even denies and dismisses rumors he hears of violent, retaliatory acts of vengeance against immigrants after 9/11, even though he had already been targeted for special treatment in the airport.[497] Nigel Thrift argues that the reactionary emotions that constitute the West's response to 9/11, such as despair, anger, fear, and hatred, disable productive progress or dialogue because "they instill a kind of hopelessness," one which is politically strategic and intentionally tries to create willing passivity and torpor towards the violence and control meted out by institutions of power.[498] Judith Butler argues that aggression, associated with terrorists and crime, is an emotion with productive potential that can come to the service of the democratic project and dissent, as "antagonism" and "discursive conflict, strikes, civil disobedience, and even revolution" contain within them productive forms of aggression.[499] But in the corporate culture of Underwood Samson, Changez shows that anger has neither a negative implication nor an emancipatory potential; rather, corporate encouragement of business aggression ultimately functions simply to inhibit dissent.

Democratic Love, Compassion, and Tolerance

In order to interrogate what the rhetoric about terrorism and affect produces and what anxieties it reveals, it will be productive to consider the operation of what has been marked as its opposite emotions, those proper passions that are associated with or guaranteed by democracy: compassion, love, and tolerance. Each of these affects has its own long and dense conceptual history, traceable all the way to the philosophy about the passions. This chapter cannot attend to

[496] Ibid 93.
[497] Ibid 95.
[498] Thrift in *Understanding September 11,* Ed. Calhoun, Craig J., Paul Price, and Ashley S Timmer, 65.
[499] Butler, *Frames of War* 48.

these affects comprehensively, so this section is simply intended to begin a line of inquiry. There are three considerations of love to keep in mind. The first is the linking of patriotic love and desire to the economy and the habits of good citizenship. Thus, vigilance is marked as an appropriate expression of impassioned affect, especially when used in service of national love and interest. Panic (and ensuing depression), on the other hand, is not only emotionally unproductive, but (perhaps more crucially) economically unproductive (and thus threatening to the stability of the nation).[500] The second is the Freudian approach to love as the appropriate redirection of negative emotions—jealousy, the death drive, paternicide—into positive realization. The third is the Christian theological conception of charitable love, or agape, and its links to modern ideas about tolerance and pity as a kind of secular piety.

Terrorism is sometimes represented as the excessive lack or perversion of romantic or familial love. Puar explores how the terrorist's motivations, when made comprehensible, are explained as pathological trauma: he is the "deranged product of the failed (Western) romance of the heteronormative nuclear family."[501] She quotes Rashid who claims that terrorist aggression stems from its isolation from the *nurturing* emotions of motherly and sisterly love.[502] Sara Ahmed discusses how love is mobilized as a tool to combat terror through the rhetoric of the nation as home, and fellow citizens as family.[503] This of course ignores how the familial lives of the terrorist bodies are either broken up with indefinite detainments, qualified as justified collateral damage in tactical military operations, or generally disregarded, obscured, or made

[500] Mitchell, *Cloning Terror* 6.
[501] Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages* 53.
[502] Puar 57.
[503] Ahmed 75.

invisible. Such a focus on love may explain why fictional representations of terrorism often attempt to understand the characters through subplots of romantic love.[504]

While the terrorist is defined by a lack of love, his victims are articulated as uniquely bound by love. The formulation "the values they hate and we cherish" or "the freedoms they hate and we love" transfers this familial, romantic love into an ideological, conceptual love. Thus John Mueller argues that American society and the victims of September 11 should not fall prey to a response of intense hate, which he calls an overreaction, which is what the terrorist act is meant to spur.[505] That is, the terrorists infect the state with an excess of emotion, which translates into an excessive fear reaction. This excessive, reactionary fear causes the state to self-destruct "the values they hate and we cherish."[506] Not only do we cherish our beloveds more than they do—their families are dispensable, ours are mournable and require vengeance—but we also cherish our values correctly (without resorting to non-state legitimized violence) and more (but not so much that we become terrorists ourselves). Love thus expands to include a righteous love for a certain ethic or value—democracy, freedom, even the love of free love—while love of religion and God is represented as threatening the more it grows.

We see this rhetoric of compassion and love at work in other arguments about the response to September 11 and terrorism as a whole. Zolberg argues that while there may have been some unforeseen, disadvantageous xenophobic violence in the US after 9/11, Americans on a whole reacted with a spirit of 'love they neighbor':

> On an impressionistic level…in the immediate aftermath there was a spate of scattered aggressions against people who were seen as resembling the terrorists or

[504] Take, as illustrative, Hany Abu-Assad's films *Paradise Now*(2005) and *Omar* (2013). The latter is a rewriting of the former, with a change in focus: though each film contains both elements, the emphasis shifts from intense male bonding between the friends to a heterosexual romance.
[505] John Mueller "Six rather unusual propositions about Terrorism" in *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*, ed. John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, 402.
[506] Ronald Dworkin, "The Threat to Patriotism" in *Understanding September 11*, ed. Calhoun, Craig J., Paul Price, and Ashley S Timmer, 284.

> believed to sympathize with them, occasionally with tragic consequences; but there were also reports of Americans going out of their way to reassure their immigrant neighbors and acquaintances.[507]

Zolberg's narrative focus is on redemption, on the loving actions of the US citizenry towards immigrants (with no consideration to the naturalized subjects that were victims of such hate crimes), and on the restraint shown by the American administration toward those nominally associated by ethnicity or religious belief to the terrorists.[508] Nigel Thrift argues that in order to "combat certain forms of violence" as a society we must inculcate "compassion, understood as *the strongest form of positive passion* because it taps into *practical wells* of affect, rather than making affective flourishes that soon run dry."[509]

If the antidote to passionate terrorist feelings is passionate love or compassion, the antidote to dispassionate terrorism is tolerance. Wendy Brown argues how tolerance operates as a political strategy which regulates emotions, reinforces ontologies between East and West, and recommends certain forms of governmentality. That tolerance is imagined to be dispassionate is a function of the political work it does—political work which it obscures in that very claim of dispassion. While tolerance is discussed as an individual ethic, a cultural mode of cohabitation, or a universal value which is emotively neutral, Brown traces one genealogy of the concept to the toleration and reabsorption of heretics back into the mainstream Church structure during Renaissance humanism, thus arguing that modern tolerance discourse is "thick with bourgeois Protestant norms" and begins from a liberal premise of "the moral autonomy of the

[507] Aristide R. Zolberg, "Guarding the gates," *Understanding September 11,* ed. Calhoun, Craig J., Paul Price, and Ashley S Timmer. Zolberg mentions specifically how Mexicans and Chinese were affected; Arabs, Muslims, and non-Arab Muslims are not mentioned.
[508] Zolberg speaks well of the government's response in contrast to the Japanese internment and treatment in the US during world war two, only later obtusely alluding to the Patriot Act and Guantanamo Bay.
[509] Thrift draws here from Lauren Berlant's book *Compassion: the Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004). The first emphasis is mine, the second is original to the source.

individual."[510] Unlike the "communitarian" form of tolerance exemplified by the Ottoman millet system, the personalized form common in political rhetoric serves to set the tolerated subject apart as naturally abject and inherently different, and requiring toleration from a superior agent. Meanwhile, tolerance also function to interpolate citizens into "passive and docile subjects" who are nonetheless called upon to be vigilant and aware of the limits of tolerance—those who are too abject, too different, too suspicious to warrant tolerant behavior.[511] She notes that the dictionary definition of tolerance involves the experience of disdain, revulsion, and other strongly felt negative emotions; she also demonstrates that in technical fields, such as medicine or biology, tolerance does not function as wholesale acceptance, but "signifies the *limit* on what foreign…or dangerous element can be allowed to cohabit with the host without destroying the host."[512] All of these appropriate passions and intensities of feelings, moreover, are socially structured, just as hate, anger, and the other emotions discussed: Sara Ahmed argues that the "values that will allow America to prevail in the face of terror—values that have been named as freedom, love, and compassion—involve the defense of particular institutional and social norms against the danger posed by others."[513] This works on the level of bodies as well as nation states: certain bodily forms and lifestyles are tagged as guaranteeing freedom from fear, and deviant bodies are demonized on these same grounds.

Love and hate are not so easily characterized, however, and some scholars look to complicate some some of these assumptions about the function of love and hate. For example, Reza Aslan argues that that love might be the more persuasive, more motivating affect for the terrorist than hate, claiming that "it is actually quite difficult to convince people to sacrifice

[510] Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance In the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006): 7.
[511] Ibid, 154.
[512] Ibid, 27 emphasis mine.
[513] Ahmed, 78.

themselves just because they hate their target…On the contrary, it appears that it is much more common to sacrifice oneself for a positive reason such as love, reputation, or glory;" for the terrorist, it could be that "it was love that made him a suicide bomber—imprudent, misguided, confused, and misplaced love."[514] Meanwhile, liberal-humanists can arguably be faulted for feeling liberal guilt too intensely, making them an "overzealous sympathizer."[515] Jacqueline Rose even explains the disgust at the idea of the suicide bomber as one of undesirable love and empathy: since conventional warfare kills in far greater numbers, and since it also kills civilians (obliquely considered as "collateral" damage), Rose wonders why it is considered worse to die alongside one's victims, rather than to survive them. Rose reads the revulsion at the "unbearable intimacy" it creates, where suicide bombing becomes "an act of passionate identification – you take the enemy with you in a deadly embrace."[516]

This imbrication of the rhetoric of love and hate within discourse about terrorism is the reason the themes of love and compassion factor so strongly into the novel. One of Changez's first assertions in the novel is: "Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America."[517] The novel is also set in "the district of Old Anarkali—named…after a courtesan immured for loving a prince," which foreshadows Changez's later culturally American version of that same story.[518] He also recognizes the importance of love, passion, and compassion in American rhetoric, and so tries to foster an interpersonal relationship with his auditor by asking him if he "left behind a love" in the US.[519] Family and romantic love are the appropriate venues of passion, and the words used to describe these passions are positively valenced: Erica describes

[514] Aslan, *Cosmic* 151.
[515] Adam Smith qtd in Ellison, *Cato's Tears*, 12.
[516] Jacqueline Rose, "Deadly Embrace," *London Review of Books* 26.21 (2004): 21–24.
[517] Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 1.
[518] Ibid 2.
[519] Ibid 16.

Changez as coming "alive" when he speaks of home, his big family, and the obvious affection he has for it; he describes Erica as "animated" when she speaks of Chris, whom she considers her home.[520] Just like the productive aggression and anger fostered in the corporate culture of his career, Changez legitimizes his passion for Erica by describing the love in terms of a drive—it is a hunger, and he "could subsist" on the spare, lean "diet" of intimate, if not explicitly romantic, communication between himself and Erica in the beginning of their relationship.[521]

More tellingly, however, love is shown to be a realm in which enflamed passion is tolerated, even when it becomes a threat to safety.[522] This enflamed romantic love—which is relatable—is made analogous to the intolerable enflamed religious love: Changez reflects that Erica and Chris' love is a "religion that would not accept me as a convert."[523] When Erica retreats into a fantasy world where she lives with her dead partner Chris, she is committed to a rehabilitation clinic, where she "glowed with something not unlike the fervor of the *devout*," prompting Changez to kiss her hand, as if visiting with a saint.[524] Changez further describes her as "someone who was about to complete the month of fasting and had been too consumed by prayer and reading of the holy book to give sufficient thought to the nightly meal."[525] What once "animated" Erica, however—her love for Chris—at this point has consumed her, making her disturbingly "too calm."[526]

Despite the novel's obsessive and morbid romantic relationship between Erica, Chris, and Changez, love and compassion are still established as the realm of potential understanding and

[520] Ibid 81-2.
[521] Ibid 69.
[522] Though the threat is largely the impassioned individual's safety—Erica is at risk of hurting herself—she repeatedly tells Changez that she thinks it's better for the both of them if they do not interact, at some points even emphasizing his safety. There are resonances here of suicide bombing, and the (emotional) reverberations of suicide that extend beyond the individual.
[523] Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 114.
[524] Ibid 133-4.
[525] Ibid 134.
[526] Ibid 134.

social bonding necessary to comprehend others, and perhaps even to avoid terror acts. Changez and Erica bond when she relates her intimate feelings about Chris after his death, which "seemed familiar…later I would realize what seemed familiar was the emotion…an emotion similar to that which she evoked in me."[527] It is both the failure of meaningful romantic attachment with Erica, along with the failure of the Underwood Samson corporation to legitimize the experiences of emotions other than the happiness of financial success and the pride of status and power, that arguably drive Changez to viscerally criticize the United States and become a threat to it. But paradoxically, unlike the emotions of aggression fostered for advancement in the corporate culture, loving Erica tempers the possibility of future fanatical passion, even after his relationship with Erica fails. When Changez returns to Lahore, he feels still "emotionally entwined with Erica," to the extent that he develops a kind of stigmata in the form of a physical bruise that mimics hers.[528] Changez reflects that the emotional attachments established in interpersonal relationships complicates feelings of belonging and identity—"it is not always possible to restore one's boundaries after they have been blurred and made permeable by a relationship: try as we might, we cannot reconstitute ourselves as the autonomous beings we previously imagined ourselves to be."[529]

Animating the Reader

In effect, what the novel is trying to do is precisely to create this interpersonal relationship between the reader and a possible terrorist. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, storytelling is the essential medium for revelation and reflection upon these impressions. Literary theory recognizes the productive potential of aesthetics to challenge socially accepted precepts

[527] Ibid 90.
[528] Ibid 172.
[529] Ibid 174.

and the emotions that undergird them. However, as Marc Howard Ross writes in his article on the psychology of socio-culturally shared narratives, stories can work reflexively, rather than reflectively, to construct practical-use narratives that soothe psychological needs. The three roles of "psychocultural narrative" are that stories "serve as gatekeepers ruling in or out options for groups, decision makers, and politicians…reveal how protagonists understand a conflict and their own underlying motivations, as well as those of their opponents…and provide in-group support and solidarity that promote negative images of an enemy."[530] These psychosocial narratives draw heavily on pre-structured and pre-defined emotions, invoking "sacred objects, sites, and rituals that reinforce the emotional connections among members of a group"[531] and in this fixed manner "play a causal role in the conflict process when they frame cognitions and emotions that structure and limit the actions individuals and groups consider as plausible."[532] These narratives structure emotion, draw on shared worldviews, and even define the possibility of reaction in a given situation.

This emotionally revelatory function of storytelling exists in contrast to the judicial form of testimony, in which emotion is only admissible when it shows direct intent. This is the kind of emotion that Changez excludes in his storytelling. Thus, when he recounts, freely and in detail, why and when he felt certain things and how those experiences and feelings changed him, he becomes cagey when he gets to the part where he grows a beard, saying "I do not now recall my precise motivations."[533] While he explicitly states the "multiple reasons" of his deeply felt anger, he refuses to enumerate his motivations for the beard – which, on a brown or Muslim body, is

[530] Marc Howard Ross, "The Political Psychology of Competing Narratives" in *Understanding September 11*, ed. Calhoun, Craig J., Paul Price, and Ashley S Timmer, 304.
[531] Ibid 309.
[532] Ibid 314.
[533] Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 130.

associated in the West with fundamentalism and extremism.[534] Similarly, when the subject of the student who kills an aid worker in Pakistan is brought up, Changez describes how he "repeatedly testified" that he did not know the boy well, and thus did not have insight to his motives.[535] The story Changez wants to tell is not what one knows or why someone did something, but how one feels, and the social structures which construct certain emotions as appropriate and inappropriate in certain situations.

The fact that there is some question as to the reliability of Changez as narrator serves to make this point in another way. He asserts:

> You can trust me. I am not in the habit of inventing untruths! And moreover, even if I were, there is no reason why this incident would be more likely to be false than any of the others I have related to you. Come, come, I believe we have passed through too much together to begin to raise questions of this nature at so late a stage.[536]

Changez is well-versed in the culturally appropriate narratives and savvy to the priorities and world-view of his audience. He understands the cultural priorities of certain affects, such as love, and the distaste for others, such as fervor of the religious type; thus, his story plays up one and downplays the other. It uses those acceptable structures of emotion to reveal the manner in which they are ambiguous and problematic. For example, when a beggar interrupts the story Changez is telling his auditor, Changez makes some assumptions about what his auditor thinks about charity: namely, that it is more efficient or pragmatic to give charity to institutions which have the power to exact change on the structural, impersonal level of "causes of poverty," rather than to give it to the "*creature* who is merely its symptom."[537] At the same time, however, Changez himself gives the poor man money, while narrating that he does so "misguidedly, of course, and

[534] Ibid 130.
[535] Ibid 182.
[536] Ibid 152.
[537] Ibid 40.

out of habit."[538] In other words, he knows his audience, and he knows how to weave his narrative in a way that is palatable for that audiences' sensibilities.

I do not want to make a strong argument that all Changez's actions and claims are lies and that Changez is actually a diabolical, savvy terrorist who knows what lies to tell his audience. Rather, the novel uses this narrative instability to reveal the instability of all narrative and the way emotion and shared assumptions structure the reception of art.[539] The novel reveals how understanding between people is fostered through not only intellectual commitments, rationality, and shared ideologies, but also by shared structures of emotion and experiences—both in terms of how emotions are socially structured and shared, and in how emotions structure the individual. This is why the novel ends with Changez asserting that "you and I are now bound by a certain shared intimacy" developed through the storytelling of these emotions.[540]

With this focus on the significance of shared emotional sensibilities, it becomes possible to read the most emotionally fraught and ethically ambiguous admission in Changez's narrative—the scene in which he shares his emotional reaction to September 11, which is quoted here at length:

> I stared as one - and then the other - of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center collapsed. And then I *smiled*. Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased.
>
> Your disgust is evident; indeed, your large hand has, perhaps without your noticing, clenched into a fist. But please believe me when I tell you that I am no sociopath; I am not indifferent to the suffering of others. When I hear of an acquaintance who has been diagnosed with a serious illness, I feel – almost without fail – a sympathetic pain, a twinge in my kidneys strong enough to elicit a wince. When I am approached for a donation to charity, I tend to be forthcoming, at least insofar as my modest means will permit. So when I tell you I was pleased at the slaughter of thousands of innocents, I do so with a profound sense of perplexity.

[538] Ibid 40
[539] In fact, along with feeling desirous, possessive, and inadequate with Erica, he feels protective of her, and he worries about the "current" or internal disquiet that would drive her to suicide (86). If we read Erica as a metaphor for amERICA, he is actually invested in the existence of the West and the United States.
[540] Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 184.

> But at that moment, my thoughts were not with the *victims* of the attack – death on television moves me most when it is fictitious and happens to characters with whom I have built up relationships over multiple episodes – no, I was caught up in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees. Ah, I see I am only compounding your displeasure. I understand, of course; it is hateful to hear another person gloat over one's country's misfortune. But surely you cannot be completely innocent of such feelings yourself. Do you feel no joy at the video clips – so prevalent these days – of American munitions laying waste the structures of your enemies?
>
> But you are at war, you say? Yes, you have a point. I was not at war with America. Far from it: I was the product of an American university; I was earning a lucrative American salary; I was infatuated with an American woman. So why did part of me desire to see America harmed? I did not know, then; I knew merely that my feelings would be unacceptable to my colleagues, and I undertook to hide them as well as I could. When my team gathered in Jim's room later that evening, I feigned the same shock and anguish I saw on the faces around me.
>
> But hearing them speak of their loved ones, my thoughts turned to Erica, and I no longer needed to pretend…I was almost relieved to be worried for her and unable to sleep; this allowed me to share in the anxiety of my colleagues and ignore for a time my initial sense of pleasure.[541]

This is one of the few scenes where Changez is attributed with the negative, threatening feelings conventionally associated with terrorists: joy at violence, hate of America's prosperity. But in this moment of storytelling, his tone is not vehement or excessively emotional, but studied. He rationally sets out his reasoning, while remaining sensitive to the feelings of his auditor and the implications of what he says: he anticipates, and notes, his auditor's disgust, noting: "Your tone is curt; I can see that I have offended you, *angered* you even. But I have not, I suspect, entirely *surprised* you."[542] The novel uses Changez to suggest that the structural inequality of the world has more to do with terrorism than some inherent inability to feel properly, such as empathize with other human beings; he goes on to illustrate how American structures of emotion condoned similar American pleasure at the violence meted out against other nations in retaliation, which only seems acceptable because its violence is authorized by the state as conventional war—what Jean Baudrillard has called the "(unwittingly) terroristic imagination which dwells in all of

[541] Ibid 72-4.
[542] Ibid 75. Though Changez implies that the auditor is not surprised because he is a secret agent seeking out extremists, there is also the ambiguous implication that frames the guilt and culpability of the auditor within the global structures of emotion.

us".[543] In this story, his obsessive, passionate love for Erica is a useful distraction which allows him to feel *properly* (subsuming his other feelings, much like the structure of emotion at Underwood Samson).[544]

To conclude, I would like to make some gestures at what critical work the novel's approach to affect and its attention to structures of emotion does beyond challenging conventional representations of the emotions associated with terrorism and revealing the situated nature of affect. The manner in which Changez narrates his story is one in which he attends to affective states in and of themselves; Ngai argues that taking affect seriously as experiential moments, rather than only reading the epistemological significance they are given. This leads to an "openness" that requires interpretation, prompting the instinct of inquiry and critical thought.[545] The experience of violence is crucial here because, Nigel Thrift argues, of the particular aspect which he calls the "phenomenality of violence": violence is a particular experience of affect which is immediate, exceeds physical trauma, and works as a kind of "affective auto-revelation" which "generates its own affective terms."[546]

This novel about terrorism, then, attempts to change the way violence and terrorism are perceived as one event characterized by a closed, predetermined structure of emotions. Borrowing WJT Mitchell distinction between images that are "emblematic," or easily

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[543] Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Requiem for the Twin Towers* (London: Verso, 2002): 5.
[544] Erica performs a similar joy-at-pain earlier in the novel. When she describes how 9/11 has reopened the wounds caused by her Chris' death, Changez tells her a story of his aunt's husband, who died a few months after their wedding. Even though the marriage was arranged, "he was the love of her life" and she never remarries, eventually going mad (Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 81). Before Erica is told of the aunt's fate, she "appeared moved, both touched and troubled" by the news; when he tells Erica that the aunt went mad "as a March hare," Erica laughs with a "surprised and delighted guffaw" (81). Though the moment is not presented as sinister, but rather a light-hearted attempt by Changez to empathize with and console Erica, the subject matter and her reaction are telling. It is not just the shock of his odd story with its literary reference that startles her into (inappropriate?) laughter: Erica asks him to tell her whether the aunt is "really mad," and when he confirms that she is "utterly" so "with mock solemnity," Erica smiles (81).
[545] Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* 14, 284.
[546] Thrift in *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence*. Eds Derek Gregory, Allan Pred. New York: Routledge, 2007: 273-294.

categorized and digested, and those that are "expressive" and require some effort to decode, I would argue that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* attempts to represent the emblematic emotions associated with terrorism as expressive ones that require interpretation.[547] The emblematic realizations of affect are those which have been socially coded, which are structurally expected and easy to resort to (as the feelings conjured by patriotism), and which are comprehensible. This novel disrupts the emblematic affects, and does so self-consciously—which explains the nearly desperate attempts Changez makes to have his interlocutor, and the reader, understand the emotions behind his actions.

However, the novel uses the second-person, and a rational, seemingly objective narrator, so as not to disturb the reader by using the first-person perspective, which might require too much empathy. Ngai calls this aesthetic technique "objectified emotion": a kind of unfelt, but perceived feeling established by tone, which dislocates the negative feelings from the subject or character, from the viewer, or from the "text's internal representation of feeling."[548] Objectified emotion is the way that the genre of art that makes terrorism its subject can closely represent the affect of the terrorist without making the reader feel disturbed by being totally assimilated into the role (and culpability) of the terrorist. This discussion of terrorism as an object of analysis in which appropriate type and intensity of affect is culturally constructed and predetermined for a given situation, and the way this subject is negotiated in art, anticipates the explicit treatment of aesthetics, emotion and the rational in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*, to which the next chapter will now turn.[549]

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[547] Mitchell, *Cloning Terror* 55.
[548] Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* 28-30.
[549] Though it is not the project of the next chapter to argue so, *Snow* also represents characters that, like Changez, profess passionate conviction, while the tone of the novel and their professions seems more like passion*less* conviction.

Chapter Four

Habits of the Art: The Material Agency of Aesthetics in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*

At face value, Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* reads as a playful political novel that portrays the collision and collusion of secular and Islamist politics in modern Turkey and, implicitly, the rest of the Muslim world.[550] A Harper's review quoted on the back of the 2005 Vintage edition of the book heralds "the political novel makes a triumphant return." In an oft-quoted review, Margaret Atwood asserts that *Snow* is "essential reading for our times," a novel through which Pamuk is "narrating his country into being."[551] But before the narrative even begins, the epigraph page complicates *Snow*'s relationship to this genre, quoting from Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma*: "Politics in a literary work are a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, a crude affair though one impossible to ignore."[552] The epigraph thus primes the reader to focus on the aesthetic value of the novel over the political. I will argue that the political and ideological issues of the novel are backdrop for the novel's more significant engagement with questions about aesthetic forms, the cultivation of sensibilities about art and poetics they reveal and prompt, and their traditions of interpretation. Politics are not the novel's primary concern; instead, politics is the furniture that fills the scenes which are exploring aesthetic theories as explored through Ka's poetry. This is not to say, however, that the political furniture is immaterial to the aesthetic issues: Snow uses the critiques of both secularism and religion in order to situate the experience

[550] For some symptomatic readings of the novel concerning the politics of the headscarf , see Colleen L. Clemens, "'Suicide Girls': Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* and the Politics of Resistance in Contemporary Turkey" *Feminist Formations* 23.1 (2011): 138-154, and Ian Ward's "Shabina Begum and the Headscarf Girls" *Journal of Gender Studies* 15.2 (2006): 119-131. As for the problematic term "Islamist," I use it here because *Snow* places itself within a particular discourse that recognizes the term. For a critique that describes why "Islamist" is problematic, see Fadwa El Guindi's comment on how it and "fundamentalism" are two notions constructed by a discourse outside the logic of the Islamic worldview that "appropriates and monopolizes debate on the Islamic movement, framing it outside the context of Islam" (*Veil: Modesty, Privacy, Resistance*, Oxford: Berg, 1999: xix).

[551] Margaret Atwood, "Headscarves to Die For," *The New York Times* 15 Aug. 2004. While for Atwood the English translation serves to write Turkey into existence for the West, the Turkish original acts as a medical diagnosis: the "Turkish public reads [Pamuks'] novels as if taking its own pulse." In this reading, Pamuk transforms into the very characters he satirizes: "rock star, guru, diagnostic specialist and political pundit."

[552] Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*, trans. Maureen Freely (New York: Vintage International, 2005).

of aesthetics in this contemporary age, particularly in politically secular, culturally Muslim Turkey.

The political preoccupation established in the novel is, recognizably, centered on the iconic headscarf, which functions in Turkey as a symbolic object and rhetorical issue to rally behind (political Islamists) or against (Kemalists).[553] The kind of secularism portrayed in the novel is secularism in its classical form, articulated as the political commitment to privatizing religion and keeping it separate from the political and the public spheres. The kind of religion portrayed in the novel is what is called "political Islam"; in this case Islam as a vehicle to express disillusionment with and alternative to secularism and secularity.[554] Thus Kadife, the leader of the "headscarf girls" who are at the center of controversy about women's dress and rights in

[553] Although this symbolism of the headscarf may seem a universal response of Western secular democracy to Muslim fundamentalist totalitarianism, the manner in which this discourse is realized in Turkey is particular to its history. Turkey has both been the seat of the Muslim Empire and the site of an aggressive, hardline secularist nation-state under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. More recently, it has struggled with, and been considered a model for, the inclusion of Islamic-revival Muslim politicians into the secular political sphere. Geopolitically, it shares boundaries and cultural elements with Eastern Europe and Asia: it acts as a buffer between Western Europe (which it has made bids to formally join), and the Middle East, which it once ruled but now tries to culturally distance itself from while maintaining regional significance by political intervention. These tensions are reflected in changes to Turkey's social life, from linguistic reform that Latinized Turkish script, to dress reforms outlawing Ottoman styles for men and, more recently, the headscarf for women, to the criminalization, for a period, of Sufi lodges and other public expressions of religious affiliation. These historical situations make Snow a very particular intervention into one of the types of secularism available in our generally secular age. The novel raises particular questions that are only recognizable in such a context; it presupposes and complicates certain kinds of agencies that are made visible or invisible within such a context. This is a very brief and broad summary of a complex regional and national history. For more on the secular reforms and their effect on Turkish modes of life, c.f. Alev Çinar's *Modernity, Islam, and secularism in Turkey: bodies, places, and time* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). Yael Navaro-Yashin's *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2002) studies the cult of Ataturk and the resulting national fantasies from a psychoanalytic-materialist lens. For a historical survey, c.f. *The Modern Middle East*, eds. Albert Hourani, Philip Khoury and Mary C. Wilson, 2nd ed (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

[554] In the novel, the alternative to political Islam is "lodge Islam," which is represented as emotional, privatized, and strictly apolitical. For example, Sheikh Saadettin is visited by secular officials, denounces the public headscarf, and is described as being "on the side of the state" (Pamuk, *Snow* 91). The novel illustrates how, in Turkey under Ataturk's modernization program, religion became tightly regulated under the secular state through the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Çinar notes that "while official Islam was given a limited and closely supervised place in the public sphere, autonomous Islamic practices were disallowed," including the banning of Sufi orders (sing. tariqa, pl. tariqat) and lodges (tekke and zaviye). The lodges survived through "deeply entrenched traditions of secrecy and covertness" that flourished through "informal social gatherings, sustained mainly through literature, poetry, and music" as a counterpublic to the development of Western sensibilities in the public lives of secular elites (Çinar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey* 18).

public institutions in Kars, explains that her decision to wear the headscarf began when she was an actress and atheist who put on the headscarf "to make a political statement" and as "one of those revolutionary gestures that you laugh about years later, when you're remembering the good old days when you were political."[555] In this case political Islam is just another form of dissent in Turkey—"in the old days, MIT kept files on leftists and democrats" Kadife explains, "now they're most interested in the Islamists"—and the headscarf is its most potent symbol: when Ka tries to convince Kadife to play the part in a play of the "proper Spanish lady with a covered head" who, amidst a blood feud becomes a "rebel heroine" by taking off her scarf "in a burst of anger," Kadife insists that "to play the rebel heroine in Turkey you don't pull off your scarf, you put it on." [556]

But for a political novel, *Snow* evades staking a strong political claim. Though Ka, the narrator with whom the reader spends the most time and develops the most emotional investment, has strong personal secular commitments, he politically vacillates and largely abstains from making judgments. When Ka visits a Sufi lodge where lay religious men theorize the causes for the wave of women suicides in the city—causes ranging from forced marriages, "unemployment, high prices, immorality, and lack of faith"— Ka "feel[s] rather two-faced" because "he agreed with everything both men said."[557] And while he is concerned with questions of class, economics, and education, Ka is particularly uninterested in debating religion

[555] Pamuk, *Snow*, 113-4.
[556] Ibid, 114, 312. The only indication that the headscarf signifies more than political symbolism for Kadife is when she argues with her lover, Blue the Islamist, against the use of the headscarf as a tool for political recognition, saying, "I pity these men wasting so much effort to gain exposure themselves while we endure so much to protect our privacy" (236). In this novel, Kadife's faith is secure but privately held. She asserts that the Quran is the word of God and that Islam has a rich exegetical tradition, but Kadife rejects making it subject to the rules of discourse set by secular (and hostile) frameworks, refusing to "discuss my faith with an atheist, or even a secularist …I'm not one of those Islamist toadies who go around trying to convince secularists that Islam can be a secular religion" (112). Of course, this insistence on privately-held belief draws sustenance from the same assumptions that structure secularism and religious belief in secular societies. It seems significant that, of the overtly religious figures in the novel, she is one of only two who will survive. The other is Fazil, who admits to feelings of religious doubt and also holds his beliefs privately.
[557] Pamuk, *Snow* 99.

and politics, and "refrained from asking questions…whenever anyone mentioned the rise of political Islam or the head-scarf question."[558] Though he subscribes to secularity, Ka is cynical about certain fanatical realizations of any ideologies, and acerbically notes the he "paid little attention to the head scarves he saw and didn't attempt to distinguish the political kind from any other; having been back in the country for only a week, he had not yet acquired the secular intellectual's knack of detecting political motive when seeing a covered woman in the street."[559]

The political ideologues in the novel are portrayed as a type of entertainment. Blue, the novel's 'Islamist,' gains notoriety as a suspect in the murder of a TV personality who makes an "inappropriate remark" about the Prophet Muhammad; the television station, because it "had such a commitment to its provocative secularist line, and showing just how rabid these political Islamists could be" invites Blue onto the show, transforming him into something of a TV personality: "he was such a hit as the 'wild-eyed scimitar-wielding Islamist' that he was invited to repeat the performance on other channels."[560] On the other end of the ideological divide, the actor-politician Sunay tries to gain popularity by "remaking himself in Atatürk's image: he was at pains to show that, like Atatürk, he was a secularist. He also dramatized the fact that they enjoyed the same pastimes and pleasures."[561] Even Kadife "was enough of an actress to know that her audience half hated and half admired her," an audience which makes demands on her ideological claims by watching "her expectantly, half hoping she was about to do something shocking and newsworthy and half wondering who had staged this melodrama and who was playing games with whom."[562] The political events around town are portrayed likewise, like the

[558] Ibid 21.
[559] Ibid 22. Ka describes how in his childhood the headscarf was worn by working-class and rural women selling their crops at market. This shift from class association to political marker is noted by Leila Ahmed in *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).
[560] Pamuk, *Snow* 69.
[561] Ibid 191.
[562] Ibid 281.

political meeting in which "all the joking and teasing and keeping score had made the atmosphere festive and intimate" and where the motivated of "men who attended them did so precisely to enjoy the pleasure of the crowd, even without realizing that they were having a good time."[563] The description of one of the politically polemical theatrical plays staged in Kars similarly characterizes the attendees as enjoying the performance of the ideological positions displayed, regardless of whether these aligned with their own ideological positions:

> The young Islamists… were not just shouting and stamping [their disdain], they were also enjoying themselves—this is one thing that everyone later forgot… a number of the ordinary citizens were even laughing at times at the students' slogans and curses, and if at other moments they also clapped and booed with the students, it was because they were just a bit bored, though still determined to make the most of a theatrical evening.[564]

Though the characters are performers, the novel's core point is not that ideology is performativity. Rather, the novel is interested in the overlooked aesthetic qualities of all aspects of life; aesthetics, politics, discourse, and belief are just elements that infuse all life in different configurations. In the novel, politics is aesthetic, and aesthetics is political.

Still, in *Snow* there is a distinction between the quality of different aesthetic performances. Much of the ideologues in the novel are involved in some kind of entertainment, where the enjoyment derived is crucially of a simplistic type that diverts. This is in contradistinction to Ka's difficult poetry, which befuddles the audience and fails to entertain. When Ka takes to the stage, the loud audience "fell silent…they were no longer quite sure what they should be laughing at or object to."[565] Though the novel later blurs the firm distinction between high and low art, for the most part, Ka's poetry maintains an elevated status.

Thus, aesthetics and artistic creation are the novel's driving engagements. The plot itself reflects this concern with artistic production and aesthetic form over ideological resolution. *Snow*

[563] Ibid 277.
[564] Ibid 154.
[565] Ibid 144.

is narrated by Orhan, an Istanbulite searching for a book of poetry titled *Snow*, written by his friend Ka, recently murdered in Germany.[566] Orhan retraces Ka's steps in the city of Kars to recreate both his friend's life and the missing poems; in the process Orhan writes the book *Snow*, which documents Ka's fateful Kars trip. The majority of the novel, however, shuttles the narrative emphasis away from the character Orhan. Except for a few sections that switch to his first-person perspective, for the most part *Snow* is narrated from Ka's close-third point of view. Ka is a poet living in exile in Germany who, at the start of the novel, has just attended his mother's funeral in Istanbul. His recent writer's block drives him to visit Kars, where his old schoolmate and crush, Ipek, recently divorced, now lives with her father and sister. Ka is drawn into the sordid politics of the city from all ideological fronts, in part because of his attempts to woo Ipek, who has had intimate relations with political leaders in the city, and in part because he is a famed poet in exile in the West. He grows close to three political figures: Blue, the radical, possibly violent Islamist and writer; Sunay Bey, the Jacobean theater troupe leader and actor with a military past; and Kadife, Ipek's sister, a former actress and the leader of the "headscarf girls," a group which is at the center of controversy regarding religion and politics in the city. When a snowstorm blocks access to the city for three days, two political plays are staged: *My Fatherland or My Headscarf,* a modernized version of a nationalist Turkish play, and *The Tragedy in Kars*, a modernized version of Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*.[567] In both, the headscarf and nationalism are central to the plot, and in both staged violence is made real. Amidst this political chaos, Ka is inspired to write the poems for which Orhan will later search.

While the political machinations in the novel make possible the conflicts that propel the plot forward, for the most part politics serves as grist for the themes of art production and art

[566] This chapter will refer to the fictional character as Orhan, and to the novelist Orhan Pamuk as Pamuk.
[567] Famous as a possible influence on *Hamlet*, a fact discussed in *Snow*.

reception that run through the novel. *Snow* explores two expansive questions about aesthetics: what is poetry's relationship to the world, and what is the world's relationship with poetry. What is most interesting is the premises about poetry which the novel presents in order to answer those lofty questions. For *Snow* is not only a novel about aesthetics, but, I will argue, a novel about reconnecting with aesthetics as a viscerally lived, embodied, constitutive object-experience.

This chapter will show how the novel explores the three themes that have interested us so far in this dissertation, but applied to the concern of aesthetics: the inculcated habits of readers and writers (or audience and performers), the fostered relationships and communities of texts and their readers, and the agentive effects of aesthetics on affect. It plays with these considerations on two levels which are nearly impossible to separate: textually, on the level of the characters, and metatextually, circumscribing the novel *Snow*, its writer Orhan Pamuk, and its readership—us—into these very same questions.

Textual Habits

In the novel, art is treated as an active, vital object, and the experience of art defines and is defined by cultivated embodied habit; the novel thus works to "take the actual and the figural serious as constitutive of lived material-semiotic worlds."[568] Jane Thrailkill approaches this by recuperating "affective criticism" in an attempt to "attend also to the corporeal textures of aesthetic experience."[569] Some of the attention of how literature works on the embodied mind come from psychological-cognitive arguments like those proposed by Lisa Zunshine, who argues that reading fiction is a way to practice and strengthen what is called 'theory-of-mind,' a 'mind-reading' capability whereby we can recognize and enter an outside consciousness and mental

[568] Donna J. Haraway. *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse*™ (New York: Routledge, 1997): 2.
[569] Jane F. Thrailkill, *Affecting Fictions: Mind, Body, and Emotion in American Literary Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007): 1, 16.

experience.[570] Other cognitive science theories present evidence of what is called "analysis by synthesis," which suggests that "when we perceive some human-produced action, we do so by being able to synthesize the same action ourselves."[571] This bodily 'synthesis' is the registering of language on the body through neuronal activity: when participants listen to sentence concerning making a bodily movement, the brain registers the stimulation in the same regions of the brain and in the bodily parts involved in the sentence. Similarly, Elaine Scarry applies cognitive theories to the reading experience to explain how the abstraction of written and verbal language is made to mimetically produce in the reader the physical effects, or the physical sense, of materiality.[572]

Such theories help to explain how the body resides in the mind, but they do not help in thinking through how materiality resides in a text, not only as a mimetic reproduction of the 'real'. Doing so requires, on the one hand, a reconceptualization of the categories that define the imagination as ethereal and ephemeral and the object world as substantial and inherently all-there. Just as bodies come to signify as bodies by being invested with meaning, texts must not only signify, but must carry within them a material world, what Barthes calls "the grain" which is "the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs."[573] What would the imagination look like—what would its experience of the senses feel like—if not for the physical world? What would textual experience or imagination be that did not depend on the immanent or material world? This is what Latour means when he suggests that fiction extends

[570] Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006).
[571] Keith Oately. *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction* (West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley Blackwell, 2011): 19.
[572] Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999).
[573] Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text,* trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977): 188.

itself into the world as its mode of existence, since "the figure can never actually detach itself…from the raw material."[574]

In order to take seriously the materiality of aesthetics and literary aesthetics, this chapter will draw upon arguments made largely in the visual and plastic arts; the arguments here will attempt to translate—or better, transform—those into a workable model for literary arts. In *Art and Agency,* Alfred Gell seeks to develop a definition of art that depends on the social work they do as material objects in the world: art *objects*, for Gell, are capable of acting as agentive "social agents" within a "system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it." [575] In order to theorize art objects as agents, Gell is content to use a "folk" notion of agency that allows him to sidestep philosophical concerns about the extension of willful agency (which requires intentionality) onto inanimate, incognizant objects (whose consequences may be said to be effects, rather than true agency). He also classifies kinds or levels of agency, so that "art objects are not 'self-sufficient' agents, but only 'secondary' agents in conjunction with certain specific (human) associates," an agency which is only activated "once they [the art objects] become enmeshed in a texture of social relationships."[576] Later he calls the subject or object that exercises influence the agent, and the subject or object that "is causally affected by the agent's action," the patient.[577] In this latter configuration, agent and patient are positions that can be momentarily inhabited.

These terms make it possible to speak of the agency of literary art in various productive ways: it is possible to discuss how a text, for example, enacts and encourages a type of politics as a secondary agent, which it is able to do through the effort of the primary agent. This avoids

[574] Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Experience: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013): 244.
[575] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 6-7.
[576] Ibid 17.
[577] Ibid 22.

imbuing an inanimate object with intentionality, but it also avoids reducing the object's agency to the intentionality of the primary agent. These Gellian terms also make possible the consideration of a mutually transformative relationship between the writer and the work, or the work and the reader: in one moment, the author or reader might serve as acting agent upon the work, which is in the patient position; in another, these roles might switch. After all, the literary arts and their experience are already described in such ways: they move us, grab hold of us, make us think and change the way we see and interact with the world. They are responsible for "transporting" readers.[578] Writers often speak of the written work as having a mind of its own in their production. But this vitality is not taken seriously, or rather, it is explained away as 'merely' the products of figures of speech and thought to which we subject art in our all-encompassing agency. Gell's theories allow us to take figures of speech as serious agentive things in their own right. By taking his theory in tandem with Jane Bennett's as sketched in the introduction, we can begin to develop a theory of how the literary arts can count as objects with agency.

In the following passage, Gell sketches out a way to think about how material world resides within art and texts in a manner which is not singularly a mimetic transfer or psychological projection of an intentional agent upon an inanimate object. Like Latour, Gell shows how the material world actively works on, and makes possible, the imagination and art:

> Were the kinds of material cause and effect with which we are familiar not in place, intentional action, action initiated in a social context and with social objectives in view, would be impossible… unless there is some kind of physical mediation, which always does exploit the manifold causal properties of the ambient physical world (the environment, the human body, etc.), agent and patient will not interact. Therefore, 'things' with their thing-ly causal properties are as essential to the exercise of agency as states of mind. In fact, it is only because the *causal milieu* in the vicinity of an agent assumes a certain

[578] Richard J. Gerrig. *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993): 2.

> configuration…[thus] it is not paradoxical to understand agency as a factor of the ambience as a whole, a global characteristic of the world of people and things in which we live, rather than as an attribute of the human psyche, exclusively. [579]

Agency, in this formulation, is not an internal, self-contained, and self-realized capability. It requires the experienced, object world, which activates it into certain configurations. These configurations, moreover, are not entirely willed by an individual. We might say that the literary arts are a part of that causal milieu that exercises creative influence upon the intentional subject, thus working on that subject as much as the subject works on them.

At this point we hit a speed bump. The problem with applying Gell here is that his theory, though not restricted to the plastic arts, draws upon art objects that have physical existence in the world as art; his purpose was to include objects, such as the props used during certain rites or festivals, which have been created not for aesthetic purposes within a market of global consumption, but as a local "by-product of the mediation of social life and the existence of institutions of a more general-purpose."[580] This is why Gell's art object is always a material, physical, tangible "index." How, then, can this theory apply to literary arts—say, a novel—which may be an object, but whose objectness, while it may be significant, does not elucidate the content? How does it work in an aesthetic medium which, through formal literary techniques, strives to make its objectness transparent? In the literary arts—verbal, abstract, notional—what is the object, or entity, with the agency?

Answering this will require a shift in perception about the literary arts, theorizing how thought-objects are connected to the material world in an energetic, vital way. The cognitive psychologist and novelist Keith Oatley, borrowing from Stephen Halliwell's argument that historically, there was a second sense of *mimesis* as constitutive, rather than solely signifying

[579] Gell, *Art and Agency* 20.
[580] Ibid 8.

imitation or representation, argues that the "second set of meaning—of *mimesis*-as-dream—has to do with world-making, with model-building."[581] Though Oatley goes on to use the metaphor of computer simulation, what is useful about the term 'model-building' is that it alludes to both a mental process (mental modeling) and a physical process (model-building). The process of reading is actively building something, and readers "don't just respond to fiction …or receive it …or appreciate it …or seek its correct interpretation…*We create our own version of a piece of fiction…*As partners with the writer, we create a version based on our own experience."[582] Oately calls this making process the active "mental enactments" of readers.[583] These are 'enactments' because we engage with texts in a similar way to the way we engage with our physical worlds. Aesthetic experience, John Dewey argues, is the same as all other worldly experience: "Art," he says, "in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience to be an experience."[584] A reader's active receptivity, submission to engagement with, and creative participation in literature, "signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events."[585] Under such terms, reading and artistic contemplation is not retreat, but is the act of more fully inhabiting one's world.

Consider for a moment what is involved in these experiences or mental enactments: it is our embodied experience of the physical world that structures our very ability to imagine. Scarry argues that the verbal arts are particularly capable, through literary "procedures," of "reproducing the deep structure of perception" to the extent that the typically evanescent quality

[581] Oately, *Such Stuff as Dreams*13. The text in which Halliwell makes the claims about mimesis can be found in Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).
[582] Ibid 18, emphasis mine.
[583] Ibid 30.
[584] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1934): 48.
[585] Ibid 19.

of the imagination is transformed into an experience of "vivacity, solidity, persistence, and givenness," so that fiction remains with us as vividly as memories of 'real' experiences.[586] Why might this be? How does literature absorb us into its world in this way? To explain why this may be so, we might reconsider that arts as not outside ourselves, but a part of our very constitution:

> As Diane Ackerman elegantly puts it in *An Alchemy of Mind* (2004), "What the brain really needed was space without volume […] It began storing information and memories outside itself, on stone, papyrus, paper, computer chips and film […] We are all out of our minds, which we left long ago when our brain needed more room to do its dance" (10). Works of literary realism…are not photographic representations of a real world elsewhere; they are condensations and expansion of human thought, sentience, and experience.[587]

If, in this sense, the mind is on the page, then, like a prosthetic, books are an extension of ourselves: of our thoughts, beliefs, desires, sociality, and habits. The narratives they hold are thus a significant part of our mental physiognomy, of the realization of our embodiment through the imaginative and sensational experiences that structure it. In this way we can say that the literary arts exists in the immanent world, that they make up the atmosphere of our world, and that there exists "some *exteriority* among the beings of fiction: they impose themselves on us after imposing themselves on those responsible for their instauration... they *offer* us an imagination that we would not have had without them."[588]

It can be further argued that even the rational, analytical process through which we come to understand the work is not our own: when a work of art "*engages* us…at no point do we have the feeling that we are free to do 'whatever we want' with it. If the work needs a subjective interpretation, it is in a very special sense of the adjective: we are *subject* to it, or rather we *win*

[586] Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* 38. She calls this the "counterfictional" characteristic of the verbal arts, as opposed to their "counterfactional" characteristic of bringing forth into the world something novel. Much of the book discusses, with recourse to cognitive psychology, how our perceptional limitations are mirrored when mentally 'visualizing' objects. Though interesting, it is hard to resolve that argument with descriptions in the genre of fantasy and science fiction.
[587] Thrailkill, *Affecting Fictions* 26.
[588] Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Experience* 240.

our subjectivity though it."[589] The experience is a process of the "mutual adaptation of the self and the object."[590] Gone is the idea that our subjectivity and intentionality is self-fashioning; instead, it is a networked, interdependent realization through the experience and appreciation of art which transforms one into "a 'friend of interpretable objects'."[591] When we become neighbors with texts and inhabit their worlds, they in turn inhabit us.

This experience requires a willing abduction of agency, since "suppressing the sense of one's own agency appears to be crucial in achieving vivacity" through the instructions of sensual imagining that the verbal arts direct us toward.[592] This abduction—or, to use the religiously inflected concept addressed earlier, 'submission'—of agency to the text need not be read as passivity:

> It involves surrender. But adequate yielding of the self is possible only through a controlled activity that may well be intense…Perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy. To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have first to plunge into it. When we are only passive to a scene, it overwhelms us and, for lack of answering activity, we do not perceive that which bears us down. We must summon energy and pitch it at a responsive key in order to *take* in.[593]

The capability of responsiveness is one that requires not only effort, but practice and inculcation. Scarry notes the mental pictures produced in reading only become more vivid, not "less startling," upon extended "recomposition" in the mind; she likens this to the process of becoming practiced in any "material art or artisanship."[594] Scarry's recomposition of the mental image is one way to begin theorizing a habitus of reading. As Latour insists, "we have to learn how to *make ourselves sensitive* to works of art…such works populate the world."[595]

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[589] Ibid 241.
[590] Dewey, *Art as Experience* 44.
[591] Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Experience* 241.
[592] Ibid, 244.
[593] Dewey, *Art as Experience* 53.
[594] Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* 242-3.
[595] Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Experience* 241.

Of course, the concept of cultivated, embodied aesthetic experience has precedent in various intellectual traditions. In the early 20th century, in "Musica Practica," Roland Barthes differentiates between "passive, receptive music, sound music" as opposed to music that is played (that is, heard for later playing). [596] His contemporary, Seyyid Qutb, argues in one of his lesser known works regarding the Qur'an and mimesis—in both the first and second meanings of the tem—that the Qur'an is written in such a way that it "grants [the images in its narratives] living presence or regenerating movement; whereupon intellectual meanings become forms or motions, psychological states become tableaux or spectacles, human types become vivid and at hand, and human nature become visible and embodied."[597]

Embodied aesthetic experience is a mode of reading that has fallen out of practice. In an article about critical reading, Michael Warner historicizes the hermeneutic discourse so as to recognize that it is "like a discipline, seeking to replace the raw and untrained practices of the merely literate with a cultivated and habitual disposition" (a "pious labor" with its own set of "pieties and techniques"); its opposite, what is commonly thought of as "uncritical" reading is imagined to be a direct, affective, embodied relationship to reading.[598] Such reading is what Eve Sedgewick argues in defense of in her concept of "reparative reading."[599] Sedgewick describes the hermeneutics of suspicion as a kind of paranoid reading that anticipates all surprise and is confident that "knowledge as a form of exposure" is efficacious in muting that surprise; paranoid reading, she argues, has not only become the dominant mode of reading, but has come to signify

[596] Barthes, *Image Music Text* 149.
[597] Seyyid Qutb, *Al-Taswir al-Fanni fi al-Qur'an* (Artistic Mimesis in the Qur'an) as quoted in translation in Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006):155.
[598] Warner problematizes these assumptions a bit. Michael Warner, "Uncritical Reading," in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, eds. Jane Gallop (New York: Routledge, 2004): 15, 36.
[599] Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think this Essay is about You," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

the only legitimate intellectual work to the extent that others—like the reparative mode—are not.[600] Reparative reading, by contrast, is "frankly ameliorative" and "additive and accretive…it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self."[601] This mode of reading is useful here because a phenomenology of reading or of poetry requires an ameliorative, coalescing move that sets aside, for a time, a strict, definite classification of things and the cynicism of unifying theories. It will also later help to further develop what Orhan Pamuk calls naïve and sentimental writing—roughly, recuperative and paranoid reading, respectively—which are the modes of reading through which the novel explores the differential relationships of materiality to text.

The relationships people had with texts in the past have not only conceptually changed according to discourse, but have also undergone material changes that effected the production and reception of texts. In a book about the change in scholarly practice and the mediatory roles of reading, recitation, and writing in Islamic *madrasas* in Yemen, Brinkley Messick details the various institutional, but also aesthetic, consequences of the shift from oral tutoring and hand-written, palimpsest and spiraling manuscripts to printed, linear manuscripts, which shifts the ways in which religious discourse is articulated *and* religious life is experienced.[602] These formal qualities of texts he terms a "textual habitus, a set of acquired dispositions concerning writing."[603]

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[600] Ibid, 138.
[601] Ibid 144, 149. Sedgewick is careful to place reparative reading as one mode within "other ways of knowing"; thus one theorist may have recourse to both paranoid and recuperative reading within the same project (144).
[602] Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). For example, Messick writes of the "spiral texts," where response were written in the margins or wherever there was space: "As the fundamental mediating site for the articulation of the physical-conceptual, the body was fully engaged as spiral texts were produced and used. Pivoting bodily movements and a rhythm of page rotation were required to either write or to read such a text" (249).
[603] Ibid 249.

Prophet or Genius

Ka's manner of writing poetry is one of the primary ways in which *Snow* shifts focus from subject-centered agency to an object-centered agency that allows for a consideration of the power of aesthetics. The novel appeals to examples of this shift from both the Islamic and Western textual traditions, and critiques (without disavowing) the cultural notions of contemporary secularity regarding aesthetics. Thus, there are two modes through which the novel portrays the creation of poetry: that of perfectly arranged and mystical revelation, and that of materially cobbled and randomly associated creation. The novel describes Ka at times as a prophet, and sometimes in terms of genius. Contemporary, and arguably secular, treatments of artistic genius focus on the subject's will, capability, and propensity towards artistic skill, while the final text is treated as existing beyond the intention of the author. Classical, and arguably religious, treatments of prophetic revelations focus on the mysterious, transcendent, and illusive reception of artistic forms, while the final text is treated as intentional and contained. So as not to make too stark a cultural distinction, *Snow* portrays Ka's receptivity of texts from both the Western tradition, via Romanticism, and from Islamic textual tradition.

When asked, Ka claims to have "no idea how poems get written," other than "a good poem always seems to come from outside, from far away."[604] This 'outside' space is variously described as a voice within himself, "the sound of his muse," or as a gift from God.[605] Ka avoids making the creation of his poetry seem as an intellectual or logical task. When asked if his writing requires much concentration, Ka replies, "why don't you explain to me what you mean when you use the word *concentrate*?"[606] Ka concentrates in the novel in the sense of engaging himself in the revelation, but he avoids the self-directed, rational connotation of the word. He

[604] Pamuk, *Snow* 121.
[605] Ibid 86.
[606] Ibid 122.

distances himself as much as possible from the idea that his poetry is self-willed, insisting that the writing process that is "like copying down a poem someone was whispering into his ear."[607]

This mystical reception of his poetry simultaneous alludes to two traditions: the novel evokes the Romantic genius, explicitly referencing Coleridge, as the artist in touch with another realm of experience, and it deploys the theme of religious revelation in general and the revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad specifically. The novel repeatedly invokes the famous account of how Kubla Khan was written, which holds sentimental significance for Ka and his friend, Orhan, the narrator:

> The man from Porlock! …When Ka and I would stay up half the night talking about literature, this was one of our favorite topics…The poet had fallen asleep after taking medicine for an illness (actually, he'd taken opium for fun) and had seen, in his deepest sleep, sentences from the book he'd been reading just before losing consciousness, except that now each sentence and each object had taken on a life of its own in a magnificent dreamscape to become a poem. Imagine, a magnificent poem that had created itself, without the poet's having exerted any mental energy! Even more amazing, when Coleridge woke up he could remember this splendid poem word for word. He got out his pen and ink and some paper and carefully began to write it down, one line after the other, as if he were taking dictation.[608]

Ka's experiences in the novel are made analogous to Coleridge's, as when Ipek (his lover and muse) interrupts Ka with "a knock on the door. Just as he opened it, the last two lines came to him, but then he lost them—and they would remain lost for the duration of his stay in Kars."[609] This novel's retelling of the Porlock story allow the novel to represent an agency of literature: a poem that is self-fashioning, distinct from the exertions of the poet's rational, intentional mind. Furthermore, the poem itself is made of an assemblage of vital objects, each with "a life of its own" which makes possible the "magnificent dreamscape" that becomes the poem.

[607] Ibid 87.
[608] Ibid 143.
[609] Ibid 88.

The allusion to Muhammad is made more subtly.[610] Ka often receives the poem, and only later "records it"; even the titles "came to him."[611] Furthermore, throughout the novel Ka both "reads" and "recites" his poetry—a reference to the word *iqra'*, which in the Quran signifies both mnemonic recitation as well as the physical act of reading. He "hear[s] the poem's music in his head" which is "exalted in its perfection," a phrase that mirrors a common Quranic description of its own aesthetic quality.[612] Even the poems' physical instantiation in Ka's missing green notebook recalls the traditional green covers of *mus-hafs*,[613] as the color green is considered by some to be theologically significant because of its mention in verses about heaven as characterizing foliage and serenity. When Ka declares, at a dinner party peopled with leftists, atheists, agnostics, and Islamists, that it is God that (in the words of the Islamist) "breathes the soul into" his poems, and an argument ensues, the reception of a poem in that moment is described as prophetic, heraldic: "Ka's face turned ashen" and is described as filled not with "fear or dizziness" but rather "sublime joy," and furthermore, the maid witnessing the event describes how "a light had entered the room and bathed all those present with divine radiance. In her eyes, [Ka] achieved sainthood."[614]

The significance of the double reference to both Islamic and Western tradition of revelation serves to sever the idea that the agentive, object-oriented, experience-focused approach to literature is inherent to one culture or another; it does, however, point to the ways inculcated reading practices define an individual's relationship to aesthetics. This is most clear

[610] One might read these treatments—the subtle allusion to Muhammad versus the explicit to Coleridge—as formal illustrations of the hegemony of one cultural tradition and the unspeakable quality of the other.
[611] Pamuk, *Snow*, 128, 100. The Quran was not officially compiled until a few decades after Muhammad's death; until then it was circulated through mnemonic recitation, though scholarship indicates that his close companions had private, if not complete, manuscripts. Most Muslims also believe the *sura* (chapter) titles were chosen by God (as related through Muhammad).
[612] Ibid 118.
[613] A word signifying the physical object that the Quran takes in manuscript form. That is, the Quran is the ideational content, separate from but capable of being produced in writing in the form of a *mus-haf*.
[614] Pamuk, *Snow* 124-5.

when Necip, Ka's younger, Islamist doppelgänger, discusses their similar approach to poetry writing:

> You could see that the world was one, but you thought if you could close your eyes to this vision, you could be more unhappy and also more intelligent…only people who are very intelligent and very unhappy can write good poems. So you heroically undertook to endure the pains of faithlessness, just to be able to write good poems.[615]

Here we can characterize Necip and Ka's relationship to text as (borrowing from Sedgewick) paranoid *writing*, which causes Necip some angst because his friends approach texts recuperatively, an approach that is culturally dominant around him. Similarly, of the many characters that produce literary art in the novel, Ka and Orhan establish two poles with regards to their approaches to writing.[616] Ka imagines his approach to his work as emotional, haphazard, and subjective; Orhan perceives himself to be clinical, distant, objective, and neutral.[617] In lectures delivered at Harvard and collected in *The Naïve and Sentimental Novelist*, Pamuk characterizes these differences between Ka and Orhan using the terms the 'naïve figure' and the 'sentimental figure,' respectively; the naïve poet experiences literature without self-reflexivity, and the sentimental critically analyzes literature.[618] Orhan is, in essence, the paranoid reader, while Ka transforms, in Kars, into a recuperative reader by receiving and accumulating his poems, constructing a world of deep relationships and connections, and learning to accept, rather

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[615] Ibid 135.

[616] It is important to note that, in this novel, text is a space for men's agency—all the males in the novel write serious literature, while none of the females do. Instead, the lives of women are realized through the public's access to their body through dress and performance. Ipek is figured as a more innocent and "real" version of the hardcore porn-star Melinda; Funda's powerful stage presence is grounded upon performances that almost recalls soft-core rape porn; The headscarf functions as an emancipatory tool in public politics for the "headscarf girls." Perhaps most tellingly, Funda asserts to Kadife that "the essence of theater was not the words but the images" (345). In the play where Kadife removes her headscarf, her hair is meant to "speak for itself": thus the title of chapter 37 is "The only script we have this evening is Kadife's hair."

[617] I speak in terms of perception because it is possible to show in the novel the ways these self-perceptions are in some error.

[618] Orhan Pamuk, *The Naïve and Sentimental Novelist* (New York: Vintage, 2010): 14.

than resist, the affective nature of his interpersonal relationships.[619] To use Michael Warner's language, Ka acts as the uncritical reader, and Orhan as the critical reader, of life and poetry.[620]

Though Ka may be a "naïve" reader who "receives" his poems, the novel does not portray him as a simple recording machine. Ka turns to his faculty of reason in order to organize, synthesize, analyze, and realize his poems. Even when he is in the very process of transcribing, "he gave the words on the page his full attention nevertheless."[621] But while his mind maintains autonomy, the agency of the work is such that it even takes control of his body, so that "Ka's hand was in thrall to a higher power" that disassociates his own body from him, " as if the hand that was writing belonged to someone else."[622] That is, the agency of the aesthetic work overrides the intentional, willed subject that secularity imagines as defining the emancipated, fully realized subject.

The very act of writing—or transcribing from a distance—becomes dynamic because of its revelatory nature: "It seemed to be a poem someone else had written—this, he thought, was why he was able to see its beauty. But also, finding it beautiful was a shock considering its contents, considering his own life."[623] Ka's appreciation of the poem, moreover, vacillates between inhabiting a critical mode in which he can intellectually realize its beauty because he is distanced from it, as if it was not his own work, and an experiential, emotional mode in which the poem's beauty touches him in a personal way. The latter actually prompts the former, so it is when he is "shocked at the beauty of his own words, Ka could not help but ask himself, What

[619] By the end of the novel, there is some suggestion that Orhan is experiencing a similar transformation.
[620] Warner, "Uncritical Reading."
[621] Pamuk, *Snow* 87.
[622] Ibid 327.
[623] Ibid 100. The poem is explicated, but (like all of Ka's poems), it is never given. Its subject matter is described as being about the incidents and conversations that take place at Ka's drunken visit to the Sufi lodge, and the content is heavily inflected with theological and existential questions that Ka would not have taken seriously before.

does it all mean?"[624] The poem here allows him to emotionally relate to experiences as if from an outside perspective. When Ka later catalogues his poems using a diagram of a snowflake whose axes are labeled reason, imagination, and memory, he places this poem, "Hidden Symmetry," which deals more than the others with faith, transcendental experience, and this revelation of his poems in the "position of the first poem on the Reason axis."[625] The novel resolves to portray a kind of receptive author in the patient position who only temporarily tempers his own agency in order to receive an agency from an aesthetic agent. This experience of the reception of poetry is thus an extension of the power of the self through the power it can access from outside. It expands the notion of what counts as the self. When the poetry comes to Ka, he internalizes it: Ka "gave himself fully to the voice now rising up inside him."[626]

The engagement that structures Ka's receptivity is not only a willingness to surrender the agent position; Ka actively works to make himself receptive to his muse. Ka mindfully "recalled the facts about snow he had read in the library that afternoon" with the purpose to "prepare himself just in case another poem on the subject came to him."[627] When he sees how "they all fit together as neatly as the six-pointed snowflake in the encyclopedia" and "that his poems were all part of a grand design," he works actively to synthesize them:

> He had told me he had come to believe that the emerging book had a 'deep and mysterious' underlying structure; he had spent his last four years in Frankfurt filling in the blanks in this hidden design. For this grueling purpose, he'd had to withdraw from the world, abstaining from its pleasures like dervish. In Kars he had felt like a medium, as if someone were whispering the poems into his ear;

[624] Ibid 99.
[625] Ibid 100.
[626] Ibid 99. This poetic experience aligns with the experience of revival Islam characters, mimicking Ipek's description of her ex-husband, Muhtar, as giving himself to religion. Ipek describes reconversion as a giving: "instead of remarrying…[Muhtar] gave himself to religion"(35).
[627] Ibid 263. In noting that the poems come together as a whole "although his poems had come to him one by one," alludes to the Quran, which describes its own narrative history as miraculous non-chronological revelation in parts over the course of two decades that nevertheless cohere.

> back in Frankfurt, he could hardly hear them at all. Still, he labored to reveal what he had become convinced was the hidden logic of this testament.[628]

Despite the revelatory origin of Ka's poetry in Turkey, his receptiveness also requires responsiveness. Alone, it is only emergent and potential: he must exert analytical and rational effort to make it cohere. Such rationality is deeply tied to his material and embodied experiences, both personal and cultural, as sometimes cultivated by him (as with the encyclopedic preparation) and sometimes despite himself.

Although Blue calls Ka a "modern-day dervish" who has "withdrawn from the world to devote [himself] to poetry," the novel is not quite so interested in exploring metaphysics, and resists positioning Ka as a prophet-figure and his poetry a type of scripture.[629] One of Orhan's narrative functions is to destabilize this image. His narrative interference consistently acts as a reminder about the novel's use of various point-of-view and the dubious reliability of each—the novel is a reproduction of biased eyewitness accounts and the claims Ka makes in his journals, as compiled and reported by Orhan, who takes fictional liberties with the narrative to create novelistic effects. As Ka describes, he is a Gemini, the astrological sign of those who "are supposed to tell lots of lies, but I'm not so sure."[630] And as Orhan explicitly reveals late in the novel, after much rehearsal of Ka's mystical poetic experiences: "I know I risk offending those poor souls who insist on seeing poets as saintly or metaphysical when I suggest that my friend spent the last four years engrossed by this adult entertainment" of pornography.[631] Furthermore, Ka's desire for Ipek is revealed as a driving motivation for his poems:

> Ever ready to fight for his happiness, to tell any lie, play any trick to make his dream come true, he hurried back to the hotel, musing upon a vision of Ipek he had conjured in his mind…. He washed his hands with excessive care. Then, without quite knowing why, he brushed his teeth (something he usually did in the

[628] Ibid 257.
[629] Ibid 76.
[630] Pamuk, *Snow* 116.
[631] Ibid 260.

> evening); sensing that a new poem was on its way, he spent a long while looking out the window, making good use of the heat rising from the radiator; in the place of a poem came a stream of childhood memories…None of these memories were in any way related, apart from the commonality of love; Ka knew very well that life was a meaningless string of random incidents.[632]

In this scene, unlike the majority of others, Ka's habits are just routines that prompt memories which may have psychological or thematic relations—love, in this case—but which are incidental and based on chance. Similarly, when Ka writes the poem "I, Ka," the process is described not mystically, but as the habits of a diligent student going through his usual motions towards work: "After Ka had finished looking at the encyclopedia, he reached into his pocket and, like a student sitting down to do homework, took out his notebook. He began to write a poem."[633] It is implied, moreover, that Ka obliquely admits his writing is plagiarism, or that all writing is plagiarism. When Ka sees "the doggerel someone had scribbled on the Karrspor poster" at a café, he copies down the lines that "another poet had added…since yesterday"; furthermore, when an employee asks if Ka is "writing a poem," Ka neither affirms nor contradicts the claim, instead enigmatically responds with "congratulations."[634] In portraying Ka's writing this way, the novel focuses its attention not on religious figures or mystical experiences as such, but rather on how they articulate different approaches to understanding aesthetic creation.

Applied Poetics

Snowflakes and Snowstorms as Objects & Experience

The agency of poetry to which Ka submits is imbued with materiality, embodiment, and mundane experience. In fact, all objects in the novel are replete with a kind of agency that acts upon its characters. When Ka meets Blue for the first time, "the threadbare room, with its unpainted walls and its flaking plaster, did not invite confidences, nor did the naked bulb that

[632] Ibid 238-9.
[633] Ibid 215.
[634] Ibid 291.

hung from the ceiling, piercing [Ka's] eyes."[635] This sentence reserves its active verbs for the inanimate objects like the inhospitable room and its parts. The objects coalesce to establish an atmosphere that works on Ka, at first to create tension, and later, to establish familiarity. When Ka meets Blue a second time, it is the recognizable objects—"yet another threadbare room filled with a number of familiar items (the same hair dryer as yesterday, the same half-open suitcase, and the same plastic ashtray with the Ottoman figures….and the logo ERSIN ELECTRIC)"—that connect Ka to Blue through their shared experience of the day.[636] The objects that make up this second meeting are also more personal, constructing Blue as a relatable character with certain needs similar to others, and a modern subject relatable to through similar structures of experience, such as his imbrication in the same capitalist, post-industrial world.

The objects are important not only because they create atmosphere, but because they work directly on emotions, recollections, thoughts, and desires. Orhan illustrates this best when he describes the objects on and around Ka's writing desk in Germany. Even though Orhan speaks in neutral, objective terms—he insists that he is making an "analysis of Ka's belongings" and deciding to approach the objects in a "clinical" manner—his is a futile project, since the objects are not (as Orhan pretends to treat them) without their own energy or influence.[637] They are so imbued with active power that even though Orhan sets about "examining every item with a forensic eye," the objects threaten to overtake him with a "despair [that] could destroy me," and they come to literally overlay his own physical life: "I laid out all Ka's belongings, on the bed and on every other surface in the room."[638] When Orhan tries to pick one object as a memento of his dead friend, he realizes he cannot take only one because it is the confluence of

[635] Ibid 73.
[636] Ibid 226.
[637] Ibid 258
[638] Ibid 259.

objects and their combined agencies that create the effect; thus he takes trash and treasure, since "almost everything had value, from his dirty socks to his handkerchiefs (never used), from the kitchen spoons to the empty cigarette packets in the wastebasket."[639] Mostly tellingly, Orhan takes the "threadbare waistcoat [Ka] had worn over his pajamas for twenty-five years" because is "carried Ka's smell."[640] Here the objects are extensions of Ka by carrying biological traces that exceed him beyond death.

These objects lead Orhan to an aesthetic admission he may not have made otherwise: his statement "I had become the curator of my own passion" leads him to mention "plans for a new novel…*The Museum of Innocence*, an idea I was still keeping from everyone."[641] Here Pamuk shows objects as a trigger or activation of certain aesthetic musings, as modeled through the character of Orhan. Furthermore, it serves to enact a metafictional suggestiveness (as this is the title of one of Pamuk's actual books) that draws our attention to our own object-relations with regard to Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*. Objects are treated in the novel as crucial to the realization of aesthetics. The very "heart" of Orhan's novel comes at the prompting of an object that is part of Ipek's bridal trousseau and other "treasures she'd been carrying around with her since childhood, things so much a part of her that she couldn't imagine life without them."[642] The significant object in question is a jade necklace of no inherent value, which prompts Orhan to interrupt Ka's narrative in a significant passage worth quoting at length:

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[639] Ibid 258.
[640] Ibid 258.
[641] Ibid 258. We can read this moment as a radical collapse of the fictional Orhan with the historical Orhan Pamuk, where Orhan prophesizes (and shares the secret) of this new novel, which is published six years after *Snow*, in 2008.
[642] Ibid 341. Notice that these objects have become part of her, extending the body beyond its skin and attaching it to the worldly objects surrounding it. All the objects described are fabrics or clothes, which connects Ipek to the issue of the headscarf that runs through the novel. Though beyond this chapter's analysis, fabric and its quality is a recurring trope in *Snow*: "Ipek" means silk, and "Kadife" means velvet. The significance of their names is considered in Sibel Irzik, "Allegorical Lives: The Public and the Private in the Modern Turkish Novel," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102.2/3 (2003): 562.

> If I say now that I saw the same great jade stone hanging…around Ipek's neck exactly four years later…I hope my readers won't accuse me of having strayed too far from the subject. To the contrary, we are now approaching the heart of the matter: For until that moment I could have said I had seen nothing for which I had been prepared so utterly, and so it must be for all of you following the story I have related in this book: Ipek was more beautiful than anyone could have imagined…I must confess to have found myself stunned, bedazzled, and deeply jealous. And as this passion overtook me, my dear friend's lost poetry collection, which mystery I'd been trying to unravel, turned into a story of a very different order. It was at this astounding moment that I must have decided to write the book now in your hands, but at the time my soul remained entirely unaware of the decision. I was beset by all manner of those feelings [of passion]…I felt myself crumbling, I felt possessed…For a while, just like my dear friend Ka, I too dreamed that I might enjoy the affections of a woman this beautiful.[643]

The idea of the consequences of the object complicates Orhan's writerly agency. The jade necklace is the object that inspires his feelings which lead directly to the creation of the novel in a way that Ka's missing notebook had not been able to activate. Though he shows self-awareness of some formal restrictions to which he is beholden as a writer ("I hope my readers won't accuse me of straying too far"), he also suggests that aesthetics drives itself through the "heart of the matter," such as his feelings for Ipek. These are emotions that the reader, having been engaged in the world—phenomenal as well as notional—are expected to be invested in as well ("and so it must be for all you following the story I have related in this book"). Just as Orhan, through his study of Ka, has been "prepared" for loving Ipek, in reading Orhan's book, the reader is prepared to love Ipek as well. Here the intellectual significance of Ka's poems takes second order to their purpose of priming Orhan for the realization of a romantic love for Ipek. He is "bedazzled," overtaken by emotion, paralyzed even ("stunned"). He feels himself "crumbling"—he is no longer self-possessed, but rather he is "possessed"—possessed by Ka, through Ka's descriptions of Ipek's body and his desire for her (much like the way Fazil is possessed, after his friend's death, by Necip and Necip's desire for Kadife).

[643] Pamuk, *Snow* 342-3.

The novel thus takes objects quite seriously as things that make the world, define its differences, trouble boundaries, link people, and most importantly, make art possible. Primarily, they act to define an individual through the embodied, material experiences that make a life coherent. That is why Ka is "seized by the certainty that everything he saw"—from political ads to religious propaganda from the government to public health announcement fliers—"every last one of these little details would stay with him for the rest of his life."[644] It is the collective agency of these "minor things" and their effect of a "vision of extraordinary power" that prompts the affective-philosophical poetic responsiveness from Ka: "so certain was [Ka] that 'everything on earth is interconnected and I too am inextricably linked to this deep and beautiful world,' he could only conclude another poem was on its way, and so he stepped into one of the teahouses on Ataturk Avenue." [645]

Furthermore, it is not only present objects that effect poetry: the novel presents memories of past objects and experiences, and fantasies of future objects and experiences, as equally significant for aesthetic production. All of the poems Ka "receives" borrow directly from the fully material, embodied past and present experiences. Ka's poetry often "draws upon the event Ka had just lived and witnessed," using the objects and even transcribing dialogue ("a number of Kadife's remarks went straight into the poem without alteration") to invoke certain philosophical ideas."[646] Similarly, in order to metafictionally draw attention to the novel and our imbrication as readers in such processes of writing, Pamuk's chapter titles are a line of dialogue taken from the chapter, followed by a line that describes a plot point occurring in the chapter.

[644] Ibid 291-2.
[645] Ibid 292. The passage continues: "But the poem never arrived." Perhaps the fullness of life that these objects create is too great to capture; perhaps the muse is aborted because Ka tries to force the moment.
[646] Ibid 100, 117.

As the novel is concerned with the objects in the world that prompt and make aesthetics possible, *Snow* never provides the content of the poems. The material with which the reader is left is only the explicitly shared objects and experiences, and the narrative summaries that describe how these relate to the conceptual thrusts of the poems. For example, all that the reader knows of the poem "All Humanity and the Stars" is that Ka "copied…into his notebook" lines from a morose doggerel written on the wall of the teahouse he visits, walls which are made up by the flotsam of the town's past, including "theatrical posters, newspaper cartoons, assorted clippings, an announcement of the terms and conditions of the civil service exam, and a schedule of the soccer matches to be played…the results of past matches—most of them losses."[647]

The objects, however, are not contained within the poem as a mnemonic history relevant only to Ka. Once in the poem, they take on a life of their own, extending outward to encompass and relate (to) other reader-characters. When Ka receives the poem "Chocolate Box," the poem's image comes from an "old Swiss chocolate box" that he sees in Ipek and Kadife's room. This object comes to dominate the poem only to create connections between characters, some of which are literally impossible as they link different pasts and presents together:

> He set to work on the poem, which began with a description of another chocolate box, one his uncle had brought from Switzerland when Ka was a child. The box was decorated with the same Swiss landscapes he'd been seeing all day in the teahouses of Kars. According to notes Ka would make later on, when he went back to interpret, classify, and organize the poems from Kars, the first thing to emerge from Ipek's box was a toy clock; two days later he would discover that Ipek had played with this clock as a child. And Ka would use this clock to travel back in time and say a few things about childhood and life itself . . . .[648]

Even though Ka begins "receiving" the poem at the dinner table before he sees the chocolate box, it is the object (seen in the room to which he is taken to write) that makes up the whole subject of the poem. One object leads to another, tying together characters and affinities along

[647] Ibid 102.
[648] Ibid 126.

with them. Thus, the logic that flows in this passage is not chronological; it moves backwards and forwards, from Ka's present revelation of the poem and his observation of the object in front of him, back to his memories of the past, and then forward to Ka's later experience in Germany when he is trying to classify his poems. This reminds the reader that the narrative is all, in fact, the past as told by Orhan, and through that we are catapulted back to Ipek's memories and their significance to Ka's memories and writing, only to end on ellipses which suggest the perpetual imbrication of time, events, and people through their relationship to the material world.

Another poem, "Stars and their Friends," allows Ka to make sense of the intense conversation he has with Kadife about belief, friendship, and secrecy. The experience of the conversation-turned-poem-turned-comprehension helps Ka to elaborate a theory about the radically porous relationships between people: "every person has a star, every star has a friend, and for every person carrying a star there is someone else who reflects it, and everyone carries this reflection like a secret confidante in the heart."[649] And Ka's poems do not only help him to understand his social world, but his own place in it as well. The poem "I, Ka," begins with the image of the snowflake—an object that in the novel serves as a contradictory symbol, acting as a catalyst for transcendental belief while remaining a strictly worldly object, signifying personal uniqueness but also depressing and forced communal bonding. This poem "extolled the singularity of snowflakes" even while it reflects upon the relationship between a pregnant woman and the child growing within her.[650] This poem is where Ka "mapped out a vision of himself and his place in the world, his special fears, his distinctive attributes, his uniqueness" and which he titles using the declaration "I, Ka."[651]

[649] Ibid 118.
[650] Ibid 215.
[651] Ibid.

Snow and the snowflake are the iconic and premier agentive objects in the novel. (In a way, the treatment of snow is the novel's joke about the iconic object—like a veil—upon which various meanings are bestowed.)[652] Snow functions to signify and act upon different characters in various ways: the snow serves as a veil, as a scientific knowledge, as a mnemonic experience, and as material object with vitality and consequences. It symbolizes a type of individuality, retreat, and inner experience, as well as a forced communality, sometimes desirable and at other times not. It is the title of the real novel—a title which, in Turkish, is *Kar*, further linking Ka and Kars with the figure of snow—as well as the title of the book the character Orhan writes, the title of one of Ka's poems, as well as the title of the collection of poems Ka writes, as organized through the schema of a snowflake diagram. Snow is the unit and the whole, the object and the notion, the science and the metaphysics.

It is through the figure of snow that Ka rethinks his faith and his belief in God.[653] Thus, speaking of himself in third person, Ka reflects that "Snow reminds Ka of God!' But I'm not sure it would be accurate. What brings me close to God is the silence of snow."[654] But it does not function for him as evidence of belief in the way that the young religious men believe, as proof that "God Almighty created the universe and everything in it, even the snow."[655] Instead, it is an object through which he accesses other past objects and contexts:

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[652] It is described at one point as like a "curtain of tulle," which is evocative because the Qur'anic use of the term *hijab*, meaning barrier or curtain, is a term associated with the headscarf, many of which are made from sheer fabrics such as tulle (Pamuk, *Snow* 13). For Kadife snow "made her think of how beautiful and short life is and how, in spite of their enmities, people have so very much in common" and that it is capable of helping people to bond "as if snow cast a veil over hatreds, greed, and wrath and made everyone feel close to one another" (110).
[653] Nergis Ertürk argues that snow functions for Ka as a placeholder signifier for God, that radical Other that cannot be named, in "Those Outside the Scene: *Snow* in the World Republic of Letters." *New Literary History* 41 (2010): 633-651. But Ka often names God in the novel, discussing his growing relief at feeling able to believe. I would argue that Ka does not completely replace God with the concept of snow. Rather, snow is the more acceptable icon through which Ka can refer to his relationship with transcendence in a secular world, since snow captivates, producing awe or wonder but is yet a worldly, scientifically observable "secular" *thing*.
[654] Pamuk, *Snow* 60.
[655] Ibid 83.

> What am I doing in this world? Ka asked himself. How miserable these snowflakes look from this perspective … Like a snowflake, he would fall as he was meant to fall; he would devote himself heart and soul to the melancholy course on which his life was set. His father had a certain smell after shaving, and now this smell came back to him. He thought of his mother making breakfast, her feet aching inside her slippers on the cold kitchen floor; he had a vision of a hairbrush; he remembered his mother giving him sugary pink syrup….he felt the spoon in his mouth, and as he gave his mind over to all the other little things that make up a life and realized how they all added up to a unified whole, he saw a snowflake . . .
>
> So it was that Ka heard the call from deep inside him: the call he heard only at moments of inspiration, the only sound that could ever make him happy, the sound of his muse. For the first time in four years, a poem was coming to him; although he had yet to hear the words, he knew it was already written, even as it waited in its hiding place, it radiated the power and beauty of destiny. Ka's heart rejoiced.[656]

For all Ka's existential questions, what snow actually triggers are the memories of sensual details of family life, the empathic moment of recognizing another's point of view, and the ability of the mind to make sense of them all in retrospect—all of which trigger the creation of poetry.

Snow is not only an active object that triggers or activates certain relationships between Ka and the world, but it is also the organizing principle through which he structures his poems and the metaphysical worldview he comes to embrace through them. If the moment of creation is characterized as one that is largely beyond the individual, then the assertion of agency for Ka is transferred into the critical mode where he explicates his poems. Orhan places great importance on these explications; in certain instances, he insists that "if he hadn't explained the allusion in the notes he later wrote, no one could have guessed it."[657] However, Ka's explications reveal that his organizational scheme is idiosyncratic, associative, and only useful contextually, rather than some inherently coded aspect of the poems. Sense is a highly situated affair, and Orhan (the character) can only access it by recreating and re-experiencing Ka's life.

[656] Ibid 85.
[657] Ibid 352.

Halfway through the novel, *Snow* shares this diagram that maps the heuristic through which Ka organizes his book of poems. It is contained inside of the novel, presented inside of the plot at the end of a chapter, and continually referenced throughout the narrative.[658] When Ka "receives" or writes a poem, he discusses its placement in the diagram, which goes on to organize Orhan's investigative attempts to retrieve the poems. The snowflake diagram thus acts on Ka, on Orhan, and on the reader, who may flip back and forth (or call up their photographic memory) of the object.

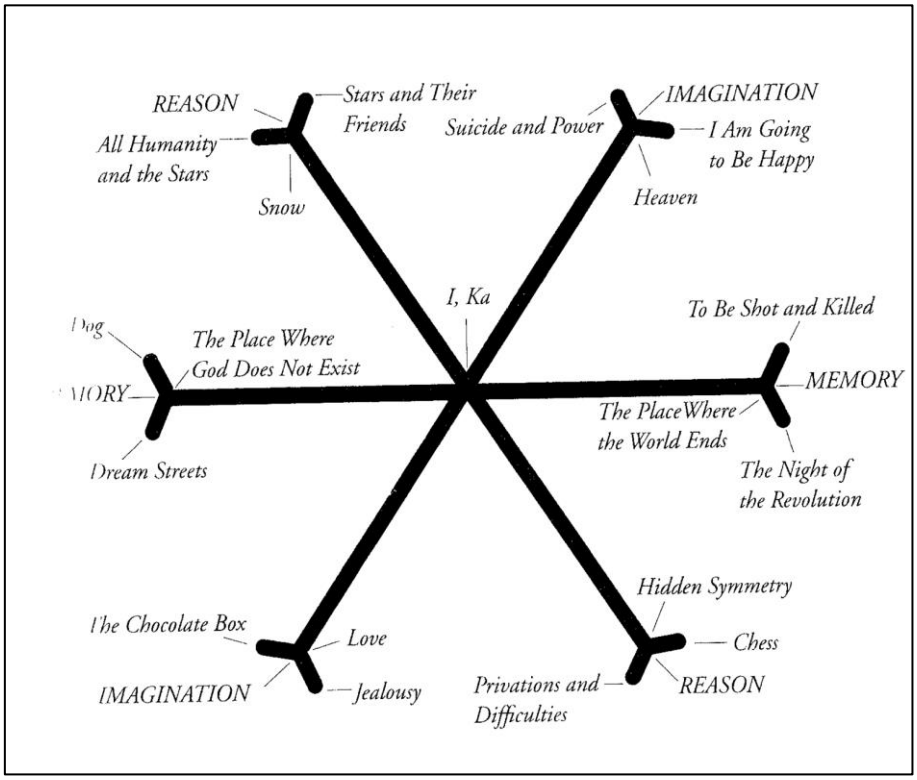
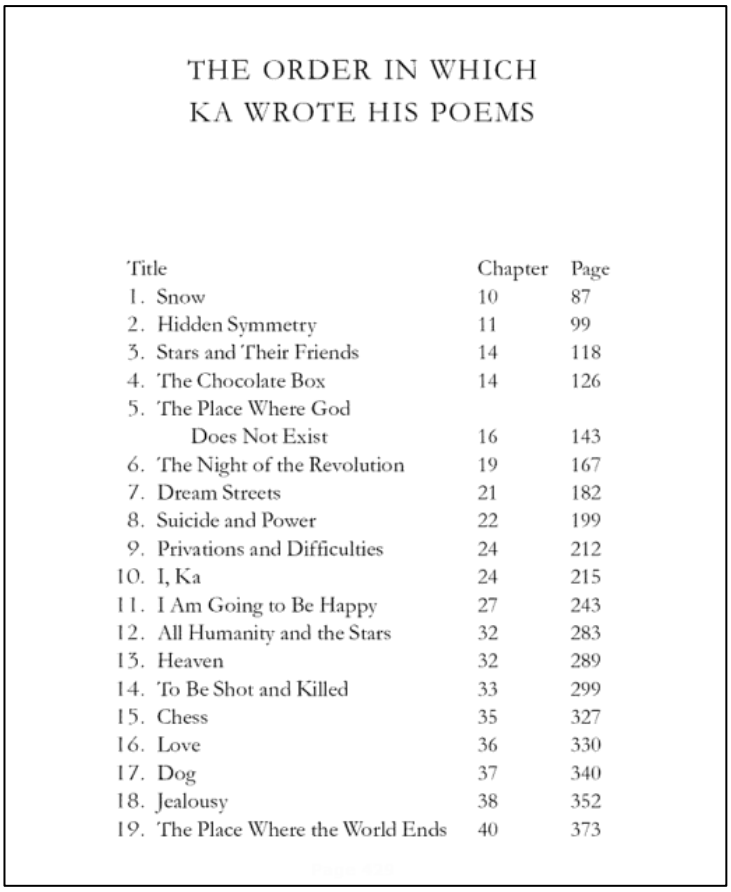


Figure 1

[658] To complicate matters: this object of the diagram is a transcription, a mimetic copy from Orhan: "I picked up one of Ka's notebooks at random…On the third—or was it the fourth?—page I found the snowflake reproduced below" (Pamuk, *Snow* 261). The actual diagram, like Ka's poems, and his journal, are all missing. This is in contradistinction to other texts that are embedded into the novel, such as the newspaper articles, statements, various doggerels, and Blue's autobiography, which the novel reflexively brings attention to: "(Those who would know Blue's own version of these matters might consult his short autobiography entitled 'My Execution,' which can be found on the fifth page of this book's thirty-fifth chapter, 'Ka with Blue in His Cell' subtitled 'I'M NOT AN AGENT FOR ANYONE') (70).

This is in contrast to the appendix, which is located at the back of the novel, after the plot and narration have concluded. By making the chronological references not dates from Ka's life, but chapter and page numbers, the appendix draws attention to the constructed quality of the novel, and of our desire to structure the text, and life, through a fiction of easy chronology.



THE ORDER IN WHICH
KA WROTE HIS POEMS

Title	Chapter	Page
1. Snow	10	87
2. Hidden Symmetry	11	99
3. Stars and Their Friends	14	118
4. The Chocolate Box	14	126
5. The Place Where God Does Not Exist	16	143
6. The Night of the Revolution	19	167
7. Dream Streets	21	182
8. Suicide and Power	22	199
9. Privations and Difficulties	24	212
10. I, Ka	24	215
11. I Am Going to Be Happy	27	243
12. All Humanity and the Stars	32	283
13. Heaven	32	289
14. To Be Shot and Killed	33	299
15. Chess	35	327
16. Love	36	330
17. Dog	37	340
18. Jealousy	38	352
19. The Place Where the World Ends	40	373

Figure 2

But just as the novel avoids presenting Ka and his poetry as obviously mystical, so too it works to present the snowflake as a sublime, awe-inspiring, mystical experience that is, nevertheless, mundane: snow and snowfall is "the endless repetition of an *ordinary* miracle."[659] This description plays at the tension between the secular and the mystical object, since it invokes the Qur'anic invocations that that the natural order of the world—what is usually conceived of as

[659] Ibid 299, emphasis mine.

the mundane, immanent, secular world—are the miraculous proofs or evidence of God. But it also presents the snowflake as an object of scientific study, one that Ka encounters and works on as much as it encounters and works on him. In fact, it is implied that Ka's snow diagram and his poem "I, Ka" is greatly affected by his childhood interest in an entry in his father's encyclopedia. When visiting Ka's father, Orhan returns to this encyclopedia, which opens to the entry on snow "almost as if the book had opened of its own accord to that page" where lays "a thirty-two-year-old piece of blotting paper."[660] Here the object, which acts "of its own accord," does so by effect of actions in the past (a repeated opening to that page). It sets up the question of what consequence, and to what degree, Ka's past experiences with worldly objects enable his so-called transcendental reception of poetry: "how many times Ka may have read this entry…to what degree he internalized its illustration of a snow crystal, is impossible for me [Orhan] to say."[661] That is to say, it is cultivated practice that works to enable the agency of things which activate experiences in the world in a mutually transforming relationship between subjects and objects. It is to this cultivated, material aesthetic—an art *habitus*—that the chapter now turns.

Habits of the Art

One of the creative, activating powers of aesthetics is its ability to model lifestyles, with all their habits. It is therefore important to keep in mind that *Snow* portrays art and life as barely differentiated. Throughout the novel, art anticipates and structures life as much as it reflects it mimetically. The starkest examples are the two plays/coups put on by the Jacobean-group-turned-guerrilla-militia. These plays/coups are presented in such a way that it is impossible to tell where the art begins and ends, and where the lives of the characters begin and end. Scare quotes are used, then dropped; the choreography of the soldier-actors is described as "the modern device

[660] Ibid 214-5.
[661] Ibid 214.

of sending actors among the audience" until they begin actually shooting into the crowd; an announcement about a murder in town disrupts the staged play/coup, but it is unclear if the declaration that follows it, made by Sunay—the actor playing an Ataturk figure—is a response to the news, part of the play, or, conveniently, both. [662] It is indistinguishable whether Sunay's later announcement that this is "not a play; it is the beginning of a revolution…!" is part of the political play or a break from it and a transformation into a coup.[663] It is commonly held that art borrows from life; but the novel wants to insist that life often borrows from art.

Many of the novel's descriptions of characters' reactions and interactions focus on how their very embodied relationship to the world is structured by aesthetic forms, including literature, art, film, or TV. When Ka agrees to meet Blue for the first time, he does so by "striking a pose that came straight out of an adventure comic, he added, 'I hope this isn't a trap.'"[664] When Kadife asks Ka to be frank with her, she takes to "assuming a pose from a second-rate Turkish film."[665] The characters often turn to culturally popular and traditional aesthetic genres; more than any other medium, melodrama is what characters employ when trying the impress the gravity of their expression through the body. These are, moreover, culturally appropriate or meaningful art mediums and genres. Erdağ Göknar notes how Pamuk's "oeuvre is a catalogue of genres," including Turkish "contemporary literary forms inspired by historical models such as *mesnevi* mystical romances, *meddah* commedia dell'arte stories, or miniature paintings," which make up a particular type of postmodernism which Göknar terms "Neo-Ottomanism."[666]

[662] Ibid 153-160.
[663] Ibid 160.
[664] Ibid 66.
[665] Ibid 224.
[666] Erdag Göknar, "Orhan Pamuk and the' Ottoman' Theme," *World Literature Today* 80.6 (Nov/Dec 2006): 34, 37.

Such aesthetic bodily habits, the novel shows, are not just unreflective mimicry, but are employed by characters with the purpose of illuminating meaning and interpretation. In a scene depicting a political meeting, a Kurdish youth who articulates his *reasons* for resistance against Western global hegemony makes "his contempt clear by reciting the line in the style of a Turkish melodrama."[667] Furthermore, these artistically habituated moments serve to absorb others into their formalized bodily postures and structures of meaning, so that Ka feels in response to Sunay, "as if they were onstage, playing a scene together; Ka gave Sunay an affected theatrical nod."[668] Of course, there are many moments when these artistically habituated actions suggest insincerity of emotion or motive, as when Ka doubts Kadife during a discussion by "the way her left eyebrow shot up almost of its own accord and the way she pouted her half-open lips like a child about to cry—or, rather, like a Turkish film actress simulating innocence," or when "Ka still recognized [Sunay] as a politician pulling a fast one" because Sunay was "still in Jacobin mode."[669] Nevertheless, the novel also suggestively presents moments of inhabited aesthetics that work to show how the lives of the characters are made up of these artistic forms and structures, and the way in which they can be used creatively and productively within discourse.

By illustrating characters that employ such melodramatic sensibilities and structures of action, the novel primes the reader to recognize how all discourses and ideologies encourage or insist upon certain experiences, sensibilities and structures of life. Moreover, these sensibilities, from ideology and from art, coexist, interact, and sustain one another. It is from "reading Western literature" that Ka develops his notions about suicide as "a solemn ceremony" with its own formal etiquette—which, as "a final act performed alone and of one's own free will," suits

[667] Pamuk, *Snow* 277.
[668] Ibid 307.
[669] Ibid 221, 309.

his secular notions of free will, individualism, loneliness, space, and the modern condition.[670] When presented with the women's suicide epidemic in Kars, what "shocked and frightened" Ka most is not the despondent situations of women, but "the *way* these girls had killed themselves: abruptly, without ritual or warning, in the midst of their everyday routines."[671] By contrast, he can relate most to the suicide of the headscarf girl particularly because it is framed by ritual habits, though religious in her case:

> The only suicide who had delivered him back to that loneliness was the covered girl… After making tea and serving it to her parents, she went to her room and readied herself for her prayers, washing her mouth, her feet, and her hands. When she had finished her ablutions, she knelt down on her prayer rug and lost herself for some time in thought, and then in prayer, before tying her head scarf to the lamp hook from which she hanged herself.[672]

In fact, the conflict Ka feels with religion is about his habits as a poet, as structured by his secular ideals about experience, individuality, and the subject. As an individual, Ka wants "a God who understands my need for solitude."[673] He is comfortable with mystical belief (as evidenced by his insistence on the revelatory origin of his poetry) but is troubled by the insistence of a specific bodily comportment from its believers. He cannot be the "sort of believer who prays five times a day" and is convinced that "in this part of the world faith in God was not something achieved by thinking sublime thoughts and stretching one's creative powers to their outer limits; nor was it something one could do alone; above all it meant joining a mosque, becoming part of a community"—structures of communal being and experience that he believes will interrupt the self-realization that makes his art possible.[674]

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[670] Ibid 16. Ka's ideal suicide requires "a great deal of time and space," but these girls cannot afford privacy; "even as they lay quietly dying, they'd had to share their rooms with others" (16).
[671] Ibid 13, emphasis mine.
[672] Ibid 16-7.
[673] Ibid 97.
[674] Ibid 60-1. The novel treats this conviction of Ka's critically, since in fact he develops crushing writer's block in Germany—a secular society where he lives radically isolated and alone—and writes his masterpiece in Turkey, which is secular and religious, and where he grows a sense of belonging, and even a kind of relationship, with metaphysics.

Similarly, this is why Necip insists that "to become an atheist, then, you must first become a Westerner."[675] This emphasis on the positionality of the subject is not to insist that Turkish people are unable to feel religious doubt and cynical rationality—with which Necip struggles—but rather recognizes that atheism is imagined in a very particular way that has cultural habits attached to it. Similarly, after Ka tells Sunay that he has acquired a personally found belief in God "here" in Kars, Sunay dismisses it as an abstract notion lacking firm commitment to the material, experienced world:

> You're deceiving yourself! Even if you did believe in God, it would make no sense to believe alone. You'd have to believe in him the same way the poor do; you'd have to become one of them. It's only by eating what they eat, living where they live, laughing at the same jokes, and getting angry whenever they do that you can believe in their God. If you're leading an utterly different life, you can't be worshiping the same God they are. God is fair enough to know it's not a question of reason or logic but how you live your life.[676]

Sunay's argument is that being-in-belief is a question of *becoming*, and this becoming is a very material, habitual becoming that encompasses both the life of the mind (creed), the life of the body (diet, geography, class distinction), and their meeting point at emotion's door (humor and anger).

Even habits of ideological faith are structured by habituated aesthetic sensibilities. Blue rejects Ka's claims that, "since coming to Kars, all the roads on which poetry travels have reopened. I attribute this to the love of God I've felt here."[677] To accept God as a sensation that is beneficial to artistic production while rejecting the notion of God or the practice of religion is a foreign expression of faith that does not square with Blue's Turkish understanding of one's relationship to God. This is why he says that Ka's "love for God comes out of Western romantic novels" and that in Turkey, "in a place like this, if you worship God as a European…You cannot even

[675] Ibid 153.
[676] Ibid 204.
[677] Ibid 327.

believe you believe. You don't belong to this country; you're not even a Turk anymore. First try to be like everyone else. Then try to believe in God."[678] This argument from the fundamentalist is not theological, but political-cultural, emphasizing the commitment to recognizing the structures of material experience and embodiment that inform ideational life.

The novel shows how the very relationship of aesthetic appreciation one inculcates is structures by past aesthetic experiences. When Kadife is asked to make a statement to represent the people of Kars, the aesthetic ideal of narrative storytelling that she articulates has learned from reading:

> If I'm going to stand up to the Europeans, it will be on my own, to tell my own story—my whole story, with all my sins and my foibles. You know how sometimes you'll meet someone you've never met before, someone you're sure you'll never see again, and you're tempted to tell him everything, your whole life history? The way it seemed the heroes told their stories to the authors of the European novels I read when I was a girl. I wouldn't mind telling my story like that to four or five Europeans.[679]

Beyond revealing the effect of past narratives on Kadife's worldview, the passage also illustrates how these worldviews, by virtue of being shared, can productively create shared experience that activate empathy and understanding. This is a central theme in *Snow*, which works to unpack the power of narratives and the literary arts to prompt this radical kind of shared empathy through narrative, aesthetic experience.

Aesthetic Cohabitation

> "What is a friend? A single soul dwelling in two bodies."
> - Aristotle[680]

The embodied, material aesthetic experiences that are cultivated as habits in *Snow* function as a kind of intimate, interpersonal socialization. The soap opera *Marianna*, which

[678] Ibid 327.
[679] Ibid 236.
[680] Qtd in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Trans. Robert Drew Hicks (London: Heinemann, 1937).

nearly everyone in the novel watches, serves also as a moment of emotional development between characters that is only made possible through its viewing. It creates spheres of privacy and intimacy, as Ipek and her father, Turgut Bey, are interrupted by Ka while watching the TV show *Marianna*, "they bristled for a moment like a couple whose privacy has just been invaded by a stranger."[681] Ka realizes that while he is spending his time trying to play the politics of the city with its radical ideologues, everyone else is watching this television show—"it wasn't just the wretched streets of Kars that were empty, it was every street in the entire country."[682] Ka's refusal to participate in this communal reception is not insignificant, but goes on to define him as a person, as his "intellectual pretensions, political activities, and cultural snobberies had brought him to an arid existence that cut him off from the feelings this soap opera was now provoking in him."[683]

Similarly, the corpus of literary texts that characters engage in creates societies of readers. These structures of likeness and belonging are made through shared experience. Sunay tries to assert a kind of literary nationalism with Ka, claiming that he and Ka are from the same "world" because they've both read T.S. Eliot.[684] This society of readers or readership is significant to the worldview the characters hold: it defines the world of Muhtar, Ipek's ex-husband, to the extent that his religious confidence in his sheikh is undermined when he tries to commiserate with the sheikh about his unpublished poetry and finds that he "knew nothing of modernist poetry, Rene Char, the broken sentence, Mallarme, Joubert, the silence of an empty line."[685]

[681] Pamuk, *Snow* 239.
[682] Ibid 241.
[683] Ibid 241.
[684] Ibid 202.
[685] Ibid 57.

The novel attends to the fact, however, that politics inform such characterizations of corpus-belonging. For example, Ka tries to undercut Sunay's literary jingoism by reminding him that Muhtar has read Eliot too.[686] Even Blue, the fundamentalist, is concerned about the state of societal bonding through narrative. When Blue tells Ka the "thousand-year-old story [which] comes from Firdevsi's *Shehname*," although Blue finds the story beautiful and powerful in content, his concern is with audience and its genealogy. [687] Stories have worth as a cultural pedigree, one which acts as a kind of alternative citizenship or mode of belonging:

> Once upon a time, millions of people knew it by heart—from Tabriz to Istanbul, from Bosnia to Trabzon—and when they recalled it they found the meaning in their lives. The story spoke to them in just the same way that Oedipus' murder of his father and Macbeth's obsession with power and death speak to people throughout the Western world. But now, because we've fallen under the spell of the West, we've forgotten our own stories. They've removed all the old stories from our children's textbooks. These days, you can't find a single bookseller who stocks the *Shehname* in all of Istanbul! How do you explain this?...Let me guess what you're thinking…Is this story so beautiful that a man could kill for it?[688]

Stories here have cultural significance and a power which acts upon those who intimately know them: a story only "speaks to"—that is, actively communicates with—those who are so familiar with it that they can "recall" it mnemonically. For Blue, it is this power of storytelling (one which has been stripped by an unnamed hegemony), and not political or religious abstraction, that warrants violent defense. Surprisingly, Blue's radical nature is not in defense of ideology, but of the power of stories: "I haven't come to Kars for political reasons," he tells Ka before he narrates the story to him.[689] But the characters are made to trouble simplistic ideas about a literary clash of East and West: all the characters in the novel draw from disparate traditions; even Blue's short "biography" describes a diverse set of writers who influence his work,

[686] Ibid 202.
[687] Ferdowsi's ancient Iranian epic poetry.
[688] Pamuk, *Snow* 73.
[689] Ibid 76.

including Ayatollah Khomeini, Franz Fanon, Seyyid Kutub, and Ali Seriyat.[690] If the novel's characters are savvy to these Western texts, the (implied Western) reader is made subtly aware of his ignorance about Muslim religious scholarship, Turkish literature, film, and TV culture, which is sometimes described, but often left unexplained. Meanwhile, Ka reflects on the movement of Muslim narratives into the West when he shares that "*The Message*—you know, that film starring Anthony Quinn….It was showing not long ago on the Turkish channel in Germany—but, for some strange reason, in German."[691]

The effect of such literary reading communities—that is, one of the agencies such groups of texts enact—is to create a radical bonding or empathy between people. The novel sets up networks or a web (or a snowflake) of doppelgängers and intimates, equating characters to one another through physical or situational similarities. Necip and Fazil are "blood brothers," and Fazil ends up living the life dreams of Necip after Necip's death; Kadife and Ipek are biological sisters who are involved in a relationship with the same man, Blue, and seem to be able to communicate to one another without speaking.[692] Sunay, Dermikol, and Blue are ideological, performative radicals whose resort to similar tactics; Sunay, Blue, and Necip are all described as having large, colored eyes, features which the novel repeatedly emphasizes.[693]

Though this is not true of all the doppelgängers in *Snow*, the novel very often develops the intimacy between these pairs through their shared aesthetic sensibilities and the ways in which these aesthetic habits connect them to the larger world. Such characters are Muhtar, Ka,

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[690] Ibid 322. He is as well-traveled as well-read, having been to Germany, Chechnya, Bosnia, and all over Turkey.
[691] Ibid 93.
[692] Similarly, Kadife's close friend, Hande, at first has deep-seated fears of not being able to recognize herself, of not being unique or distinct. But once she becomes Blue's third love involvement—that is, once she takes the place of Kadife and Ipek—she is no longer afraid "if I'm someone else in my dreams" (Pamuk, *Snow* 348).
[693] Blue has "midnight-blue" eyes "a color you never saw in a Turk," "red highlights in his brown hair," "freckles on his face" and is beardless, young, "extraordinarily handsome" with an "aquiline nose and breathtakingly pale skin" which is meant to set him off from the typecasting: "in his manner, expression, and appearance there was nothing of the truculent, bearded, provincial fundamentalist whom the secular press had depicted" (Pamuk, *Snow* 72, 226). This description is very similar to that of Ataturk.

Blue, Necip, Fazil, and Orhan (the first two of poetry, the last three of prose; Blue writes both). There is also the metatextual mirroring of the Orhan character and the author Orhan Pamuk. As Grant Farred deftly writes about this aspect of *Snow*:

> The culture of the s/Self is, in the most constitutive, de-constructive way, the culture of the Other. The conflicted, abject, pejorative understanding of the s/Self—the self that reviles itself, that calls itself "stupid" and yet can find love in that self-knowledge—makes possible an epistemology of the self (*only achievable, in Pamuk's terms, through and because of the act of writing together*) that would otherwise be unattainable. [694]

The novel portrays a radically shared bodily and perceptual experience, in narrative past and future, between these pairs. For example, when Ka meets the friends Necip, Fazil, and Mesut, the three share responsibility and consequence for the actions of one another. When Mesut accuses Ka of being part of a conspiracy, it is Necip who makes Fazil apologize to Ka on Mesut's behalf. Fazil does so with such emotion that "his face was beet red. Tears were forming in his eyes. Mesut remained silent as peace was restored."[695] As if to explain this strange codependency, Necip explains that he and Fazil "are blood brothers" who often "think the same things; we can read each other's thoughts," but who still have individual personalities and interests, since "unlike me, Fazil has no interest in politics."[696] After Necip is killed, Fazil is convinced Necip's soul has entered his body because of the alien emotions and ideas that run through him; otherwise, "there's no other way I can explain how I fell in love with Kadife so quickly. So the idea of committing suicide over her wasn't mine either."[697] Regardless if this is read metaphysically (as literal possession) or metaphorically (as extreme association with another

[694]Grant Farred, "To dig a well with a needle': Orhan Pamuk's Poem of Comparative Globalization," *The Global South* 1.2 : 95, emphasis mine.
[695] Pamuk, *Snow* 84-5.
[696] Ibid 84-5.
[697] Ibid 285. Of course, this may just be justification for finally admitting feelings he had to hide when his friend was alive.

person), this visceral empathetic experience is associated with the novel Fazil intends to write in Necip's place.

Necip is tightly bound to Fazil, but he is also as tightly linked with Ka. Necip's life goals mirror Ka's—Necip wants to marry Kadife, live in Istanbul, and write his novel, which mirrors Ka's desire to marry Ipek, live in Germany, and write his book of poetry. Their murders also mirror one another.[698] And just as Necip's best friend will live out his dreams, Ka's close friend, Orhan, will attempt the same. Their relationships to writing are, in large part, how Necip and Ka relate to one another and develop such a strong intimacy. When Necip gives a synopsis to Ka of his science fiction novel, in typical fashion for *Snow*, it metatextually encapsulates much of Ka's experiences in Kars and the themes running through Orhan Pamuk's novel as a whole: the politics of the East/West binary, issues of faith and (what is marked as secular) doubt, the deep and complex bonds between individuals, thwarted love that is replanted and thrives in the new conditions, suicide and murder, and the thin distinction between daily life and the content of fiction. Necip even makes this explicit, explaining that their lives will serve as material for the novel: "There's going to be a scene exactly like this in the science-fiction novel I'm going to write one day."[699] The novel, by turns, is meant to act as a way to realize their mutual self-agency, as Necip believes "we could be the poets of our own lives if only we could first write about what shall be and later enjoy the marvels we have written."[700]

If Necip represents the more idealistic Other within Ka, then Ka's mirror relationship with the calculating opportunist Blue is more fraught. Their link, ironically, begins with how cosmopolitan they both are: out of all the ideologues that meet to sign a statement to a German

[698] Necip dies when one of his "large green eyes" is "shattered" by a bullet (Pamuk *Snow* 134). Similarly, for Ka, "the first bullet had gone in through the back of Ka's head and out his left eye. The other two bullets had shattered major blood vessels around his heart and his liver" (255).
[699] Pamuk, *Snow* 135.
[700] Ibid 141.

newspaper, only Blue and Ka that have been to Europe and lived in Germany.[701] Like Ka, Blue has a deep appreciation for the role of poetry, literature, and the arts in the lives of people. In fact, the lack of distinction between them shakes Ka so deeply that he feels great relief and "the peace of righteousness" when he visits Blue in his cell and Blue starts threatening him, making Ka believe that "at long last, the villain was talking like a villain."[702] Nevertheless, this is small comfort as Ka "knew there was now a bond, however damning, between them. It was not a simple bond—there was more to it than fear and hatred…he realized with some remorse that he was going to miss this man."[703]

This admission of his difficult relationship with Blue prompts the reception of a telling poem about the nature of intimacy. The poem describes acquaintances from Ka's childhood and adolescence who Ka openly despised but secretly admired or desired to emulate. This love-hate polarity makes possible a bond that would not exist otherwise, and one that is figured through the body as much as in the mind:

> The title of the poem—'Jealousy'—referred to the feeling that bound together these two conflicting emotions and that also bound Ka to the task of resolving the contradiction in his mind, but the poem itself revealed an even deeper problem: After a time, these people's souls and voices had taken up residence in Ka's own body.[704]

Ka transcends the need for logical resolution: the real issue comes to be that these acquaintances, towards whom one registers conflicting emotion, come to reside through that conflict in one's *body*. Much like Necip inhabits Fazil's body, complicating Fazil's relationship to his own intentionality, Necip and Blue will come to bond with Ka in a similar manner, just as Ka will with Orhan after his death. It is poetry's revelation that reveals this life fact to Ka—it is not something he rationalizes, but that he comes to understand aesthetically through literature.

[701] Ibid 271.
[702] Ibid 349.
[703] Ibid 351.
[704] Ibid 352.

The opposite is true as well. There are moments when Orhan takes on Ka's point of view—not as a narrator, but as a character within whom Ka's soul or being resides after death. When Orhan is in Ka's apartment in Germany, looking for clues, he says "I felt I was looking at my own memories."[705] Orhan's text relies heavily on and borrows from Ka's, much like Ka's poetry relies on and borrows from the words of those around him. The first page of the novel has Orhan noting that Ka "himself had written" the description "it snows only once in our dreams" in "an early poem still largely unknown to Turkish readers."[706] Orhan even mimics Ka's actions, trying to recreate the days he lived, both in Germany before he died as well as the exact string of events in Kars. He begins to fall in love with Ipek, crediting Ka's explicit notes of their sexual relations for those feelings while simultaneously setting himself off through the use of parentheticals: "(It may be because I'd read these notes so many times that Ipek made such a strong impression on me on our first meeting)."[707]

The ultimate doppelgänger writerly pair is, of course, Orhan and Pamuk. Orhan is a character in his own right, but also a close carbon copy of Pamuk. Orhan's narration allude to novels written by Pamuk, as when Orhan describes "the beautiful stone station house, the early republican structure I'd mentioned in *The Black Book*."[708] Pamuk not only gives Orhan shared access to his past work, but even invokes the present and future: "Ka had asked about my plans for a new novel, and I had told him about *The Museum of Innocence*, an idea I was still keeping from everyone."[709] *The Museum of Innocence* is a novel Pamuk wrote after *Snow*; here he announces, or "reveals," it through another of his novels and through a character who is his

[705] Ibid 251.
[706] Ibid 4.
[707] Ibid 331.
[708] Ibid 425.
[709] *Snow* 258.

carbon copy. This might seem, simply, a postmodern move on Pamuk's part as a novelist.[710] Or, more interestingly, as Nergis Ertürk argues, this particular pairing is meant to reveal the reader's imbrication in these radical bonds of aesthetically developed intimacy:

> [Ka] is shadowed through the novel by what we might call an 'implied author'…who bears a certain both calculated and incomplete likeness to Orhan Pamuk. As self-consciously constructed figures of literary transnationalism, both Ka and Orhan (the agent, as it were, representing him) register the presence of an implied European reader.[711]

While both arguments ring true, I want to argue for a third possibility: that this technique of Pamuk's is also largely about registering his own, and by proxy, the readers', deeply embedded, embodied, lived experience in the novel.

The terms set by this approach to literature are ones that Pamuk articulates for himself in an article about his relationship to writing. In his article "Implied Writer," he describes the process of writing novels as a "habit," which he experiences much like Ka does his poetry, as a mode of experiencing the embodied world: for Pamuk, writing is that which "binds me to life."[712] Pamuk further describes literature as a direct activation of his inanimate materiality: he "was fully dead and trying to breathe life back into my corpse with literature."[713] Writing is not just a practice of the mind for Pamuk, but a physical habit of being that, if neglected, alters him materially, so that "my body has difficulty moving through space, my joints get stiff, my head turns to stone, my perspiration even seems to have another smell."[714] Like Ka's search for the interconnectedness of the world, Pamuk is "looking for that special place and time in which everything flows into everything else, everything is linked and everything *is aware of everything*

[710] Marshall Berman, "Orhan Pamuk and modernist liberalism." *Dissent* (Spring 2009): 113-118.
[711] Ertürk, "Those Outside the Scene" 638.
[712] Orhan Pamuk, "Implied Writer," trans. Maureen Freely, *World Literature Today* 80.6 (2006): 20.
[713] Ibid 20.
[714] Ibid 21.

else."[715] This last clause is crucial—the porous nature of the novel and its characters are important, but what's most significant is that the novel turns the lens continuously upon itself, endlessly encouraging the reader to notice its assumptions and forms while maintaining a mystery so that the writer lives up to his "deep responsibility" of building a novel in which his readers can "lose themselves entirely."[716] Of course, since he directly invokes his novel *Snow*, it can be said that he is just continuing to develop that framework in his usual metatextual, avant-garde, post-modernist, grandiose manner. But after all, isn't that the kind of agentive effect of literature—the mutual structuring of life and art—that I have been arguing the novel presents? These agentive activations go on to even influence and structure Maureen Freely's discussion of her relationship to translation in general, and the process of translating *Snow* in particular. Drawing upon the very paradigms and themes that *Snow* establishes, she describes her experience of a narrative trance while translating *Snow*, and asserts: "I had stayed too long, and now my own identity was peeling away. I felt fully—unnervingly—understood. Even worse, I felt prefigured. For I was no longer the author of my own life."[717]

The novel *Snow* is thus an exploration of ethical, existential questions—where does the individual begin and end when it comes to the realization of the self's need for sociality, and how does it negotiate the self at its limits?—through aesthetics, not because aesthetics mimetically reveals Truth, but because it actively takes part in constituting life. Ka reflects on this through the figure of the snowflake and its relation to his poems. He describes the snowflake poem as "his life writ small; the poem that had unlocked the meaning of his life" but, at the same time, is not fully determined by that poem, since "just as the poem itself defies easy explanation—it is

[715] Ibid 22, emphasis mine.
[716] Ibid 23.
[717] Maureen Freely, "A Translator's Tale," *World Literature Today* 80.6 (2006): 31, 33.

difficult to say how much he decided at that moment and how much of his life was determined by the hidden symmetries this book is seeking to unveil."[718]

The activations or agencies of poetry (and all literary writing) are not just a theoretical exercise regarding the power of texts. The novel is specifically interested in how the agency of texts binds people and the world together, and people with people as well. This is the 'naïve,' 'uncritical,' 'recuperative,' or humanist reader in the novel, and perhaps, in Pamuk: what is finally important for both Ka's book of poetry and Orhan's novel is the attempt to create linkages between people, to understand their point of view and to empathize with them by sharing a story. This capability is located not in the mind, but in the embodied experiences that affectively arrest us:

> Here, perhaps, we have arrived at the heart of our story. How much can we ever know about the love and pain in another's heart? How much can we hope to understand those who have suffered deeper…than we ourselves…? Even if the world's rich and powerful were to put themselves in the shoes of the rest, how much would they really understand the wretched millions suffering around them? So it is when Orhan the novelist peers into the dark corners of his poet friend's difficult and painful like: How much can he really see?... Could the mere act of my reading these words ensure that I understood them?[719]

Since our embodied experiences are sensory ones that relate and manipulate physical objects around us, since all our experiences are filtered through those objects, which act on us through aesthetics, literature is about radically accessing not just the mind of another, but their whole lived world of object experiences that defines their consciousness. It brings attention to the physical world's embeddedness in what we think of as the intangible world of feelings, emotions, and relationships.

[718] Pamuk, *Snow* 87.
[719] Ibid 259.

Coda

In this dissertation, I have pointed to the shift in the landscape that covers representations of Muslim contemporary fiction written in English for a global audience. Previous to the 1990s, most such Muslim fictions celebrated the figure of the secular liberal with his individual freedoms and rational, intellectual experience of the world around him. At the time, representations of religious rituals in novels, stories and film were critical and cynical, especially in award-winning literature admired by the literati and literary academics. For the most part, what I have called "productive" or "creative" representations of religious ritual in literature existed, but they existed in texts that could be written off as written by Muslim apologetics.

In contemporary fiction, by comparison, there seems to be a modest but growing set of authors and texts that approach Muslim ritual as a cultivation of the self through practices of the Muslim body. This new approach, moreover, is articulated by the young cultural Muslim movement in the West as a defiance or recuperation of modes of being that have been overlooked by contemporary secular political and social frameworks, which I have called in this dissertation the 'revival' or 'piety' movement. In political discourse and some scholarship, it has been critiqued reductively as either the dangerous and narrowly reactionary advance of—or more aptly, regression to—conservative values and fundamentalism. Or such negative critiques argue that the movement is merely a version of modern secularism cloaked underneath an appeal to illusionary authenticity. On the other hand, when written about approvingly, this Muslim "revival" can often be whitewashed and invoke an unblemished historical tradition and an idyllic, modern, improved future. The dissertation tries to avoid falling into either category.

Moreover, while I am certain that contemporary politics as well as social and academic discourse have informed this movement—as no one lives outside of her own time, place, and

body—I am also certain that a mere shift in politics would not have brought on such a dynamic and sustained social movement. The answer must lie somewhere in the middle of not two, three, or four aspects, but a confluence of activating events and embodiments. There is, for example, the rise of young, second- and third- generation Muslims in the West who feel confident in, or at least want to insist that they are confident in, their multiple identities. They turn to a religious tradition which does indeed contain within it a rich and diverse wealth of past contributions to thought and potential for future achievements. These youths have also begun to search for representations in fiction to which they can relate, and who have begun to write when they find a lack. Of course, economic disparities and depressions, political revolutions against tyranny, and disillusionment all factor in as well, as do parallel social and intellectual movements that express similar disenchantment with secular epistemology or the current systematic prejudice of the day.

This is why, throughout the writing process, I have increasingly found it productive to intervene in the burgeoning field which attempts to define how Anglophone Muslim fiction coheres—whether by positing connections in identity, themes, personal experiences, or politics. While each proposed definition presented in the introduction tries to attend to an important aspect within the diversity of Muslim fiction, it occurs to me that they also tend to perpetuate certain structures of thought that are inorganic and repeat problematic Orientalist or Islamophobic notions of Muslims and Muslim traditions. Though the novels analyzed within the pages of this dissertation are written by novelists who largely cannot be said to be personally participating in this Islamic revivalist movement, they have sharply observed it with wit and empathy, or at least, even-handedness and respect for the subject. Not all Muslim representations in Anglophone World Literature fit within this characterization, but enough do and the definitions theorized so far lack some sensitivity to this frame of reference.

This has lead me to claim, throughout the dissertation, that these representations of productive Muslim ritual attend seriously to a reconciliation between embodied, affective experience and intellectual, rational efforts. They do so by depicting literary 'thick descriptions' or full characterizations of Muslims negotiating the onset of challenges experienced at the intersection of secular and religious life. In these portrayals, the rituals in which the characters participate are explored for the manner in which they activate ethical sensibilities, interpersonal capabilities, intellectual achievements, and even metaphysical conviction. They are portrayals that also take to task the scarcity of such lived experiences in the dominant social framework of what I have called secularity (as in, the social discourse which works to structure even mundane, everyday notions).

Tracking this thematic thread within Anglophone Muslim fiction is important in itself as a kind of polemics which resists framing this corpus as only of niche relevance, even when congratulatory. It is important to insist that such fiction develops out of a serious interaction with or consideration of Islam's religious and intellectual history, and that it contributes to the literary scene and even illuminates the larger quandaries of our contemporary lives, as all important fiction does. The contribution it makes to the literary scene, as I have argued, is both political—regarding the politics of representation—and aesthetic. The approach to ritual as a cultivated embodiment that activates and creatively produces has important implications for rethinking the dominant notion of aesthetic experience as a private, subjective, ideational experience of linguistic representation that is merely mimetic, and a bit feeble. Applied to aesthetic theory, I was able to begin to theorize how such an idea of aesthetics builds from structures of secular thought which privilege the rational over the emotional, the individual over the community, and

the mind over the body, even when the subject matter—literature—relies on empathy that is developed through sedimented histories of affect and embodiment in the reader.

A few of the claims I make are deeply indebted to key paradigms that I have encountered through the research for this dissertation and which I attempt to develop further. The first is Talal Asad's notion of cultural coherency. In *Genealogies of Religion*, speaking about cultural translation, Asad insists that good ethnographic work must approach its subject with an assumption that the discourse is coherent, and that cultures exist within unequal structures of power that inform them.[720] Respect for the coherency of the culture and that way it convinces its practitioners, as it seems to me, is a useful and effective way of distinguishing between the portrayals of Muslims which contribute something novel, and those that don't. Also from Talal Asad, I draw heavily upon his notion of the temporal and ideational experience of tradition as innovative, flexible, and complex.[721] Saba Mahmood's invocation of *habitus* helps me to articulate how these current shifts in portrayals of ritual attend to the experiential cultivation of affective embodiment and the modes of thought which they prompt, as well as how these challenge restrictive contemporary definitions of agency and the habits of life they encourage.[722] Ibn Khaldun's treatment of *habitus* in *The Muqaddimah* allows me to further consider how the relationship between *habitus* and modes of knowing interact.[723] On the other hand, Fadwa El Guindi's notion of 'activation' of lived experience makes it possible to argue for a theory of cultivated embodiment that does not reduce *habitus* to another rational, mental process, but

[720] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power In Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993): 175-199.
[721] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* 223-4.
[722] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[723] Ibn Khaldūn, trans. Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

instead takes into account how embodiment works and how it does.[724] Finally, in order to think through my aesthetic claims, my arguments have been informed deeply by Jane Bennett's attempt at theorizing a non-human, object agency or vitality of things, and Alfred Gell's similar effort toward developing a notion of the agency of aesthetic objects.[725]

Although I began this dissertation interested most in the secular assumptions structuring modes of life and how portrayals of creative embodied Muslim rituals challenge those principles—and while I maintain this interest—there are further paths of inquiry that I am excited to develop and seem fruitful. At the time of writing the dissertation I was only able to begin glossing theories of objects, aesthetics, and agencies, and in future developments of my argument I hope to be able to more fully delve into the philosophy of agency and objects in Western and also Islamic tradition. I want to attend more to the aesthetic implications for my arguments, and I would be interested in spending a bit more critical energy on the significance of not only the content of these Anglophone Muslim Fictions, but also the way these ideas interact with the formal qualities of different aesthetic genres.

[724] Fadwa El Guindi first suggests this in *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 1999) and then later develops it further in *By Noon Prayer: the Rhythm of Islam* (Oxford: Berg, 2008).
[725]Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010) and Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: an Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

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