

**Intermediality as a Means of Resistance: The Repercussions
of Neo-Orientalist Discourse on Muslim Americans in
Wajahat Ali's *The Domestic Crusaders***

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Abstract

In *The Domestic Crusaders*, Wajahat Ali criticizes the neo-Orientalist generalized negative depiction of Muslims and Islam in news media during the coverage of War on Terror. This article suggests that the intermediation of media in *The Domestic Crusaders* enables Ali to resist the ongoing neo-Orientalist generalized images of Muslims and Islam during the War on Terror. Bringing back different media sources on the stage such as radio news, CNN and FOX TV news, and newspaper enables Ali to show the audience their inauthenticity and their repercussions on public opinion and accordingly on Muslim Americans. Moreover, through representing an example of domestic, nonviolent, peaceful, and non-terrorist Muslim Pakistani American family, Ali informs the Western audience that not all Muslims are terrorists. In this vein, Ali deconstructs the constructed generalized Western images of Muslims; the image of veiled woman as oppressed by her father or husband, and the image of Muslims as terrorists and anti-Semites.

Keywords: neo-Orientalism; Wajahat Ali; Pakistani Americans; *The Domestic Crusaders*.

Introduction

September 11 was a turning point in the lives of not only the Western society, but also the Muslim world. When the two hijacked planes destroyed the twin towers causing injuries and killing too many innocent people from different ethnicities, the existing gap between the West and Islam increased dramatically. This act of aggression caused fear in Western society and pushed Western scholars to revise the classical concepts of Orientalism, as presented and discussed by Edward Said in his influential book *Orientalism* (1978), renewing them to new negative stereotypes that are suitable to the new geopolitical events. The present research attempts to clarify the role played by the intermediation of media within theatre to resist the post-9/11 neo-Orientalist discourse as disseminated in different media sources within the play. It traces its repercussions on a Pakistani Muslim American family, and scrutinizes how the dramatic work challenges the neo-Orientalist imageries of Muslims as terrorists and anti-Jewish and the imagery of Muslim women as oppressed by fathers or husbands.

Wajahat Ali (b. 1980) is a Muslim American writer of Pakistani origin. Ali studied at the University of California. He joined the Muslim Students Association. After the 9/11 attacks, Ali organized activities for Muslims with the main purpose to overcome their fears and resist the rumors that connect Islam with terrorism. *The Domestic Crusaders* (premiered 2005, and then 2009; published 2011) is about a Pakistani Muslim American family: Salman, the father who is a successful experienced engineer, Khulsoom, his wife, Hakim, Salman's father, Salahuddin, the elder son who works in the stock market, Fatima, his daughter who is a veiled activist law student, and Ghafur, the youngest son who is supposed to be a medical student. *The Domestic Crusaders* describes a day in a Muslim Pakistani American family. From the very beginning in act one, scene one, Ali brings our attention to the existence of media devices as part of the daily life of this Pakistani Muslim American family. The stage directions show that "There is a television in the family room" (Ali 2). In scene two the stage directions point to the existence of "magazines and the TV remote on top" (Ali 22). This indicates that media is inseparable in the play. Ali uncovers the challenges faced by a Muslim Pakistani family in the American society after 9/11 events, and how the US Media participates in aggravating these challenges and changing the public opinion. Through his play, Ali tries to defy the misconception of Muslims in the post-9/11 period.

Ishmael Reed, the winner of Pulitzer Prize, was the instructor of Wajahat Ali. Reed is the one who discovered Wajahat Ali's talent in writing. He encouraged Ali to write a play about a real Muslim American family that can confront the demonized prevailing image in media. In the introduction of *The Domestic Crusaders*, Reed concludes that:

After 9/11, Wajahat stopped coming to class for about three weeks; when he returned he read aloud a four-page story, "Bulbus and Rotunda's Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary," ---I told him he was a natural playwright ---I told him that instead of turning in short stories, he should write a play about an ordinary Muslim Pakistani American family. One that would counter the ugly stereotypes promoted by a media that sees its profits in raising fear and dividing ethnic groups and races. (Ali ii)

This denotes that Ali's play challenges the post-9/11 skewed depiction of Muslims in media. Through *The Domestic Crusaders*, Ali challenges three negative neo-Orientalist portrayals of Muslims. He challenges the image of Muslim veiled women as oppressed by fathers or husbands, voiceless, and a threat. Also, Ali challenges the portrayal of Muslims as anti-

Semites and terrorists. The article tries to find an answer to what is meant to be an American Muslim in the post-9/11 period, how neo-Orientalist depiction of Muslims is reflected in media and how the intermediation of media sources within theatre-- the framing medium-- enables Ali to resist the demonized neo-Orientalist imagery of Muslims.

Intermediality is discussed in several works. For instance it is dealt with by Michael Odichi-Dan Ugorji in "From Intermediality to Plurimediality: Deleting the Lines of Medium Essentialism in Creative Media and Digital Rhetoric." Intermediality is thus defined as "the incorporation of digital technology into theatre practice and the presence of other media [film, television and digital media, ... etc.] in contemporary theatre productions" (Chapple and Kattenbelt, 11). This definition focuses the inclusion of technology in the theatre.

Theatre as a medium has the ability to embrace other media within it. In this intermedial process, audiences are "in-between and within a mixing of space, media and realities, with theatre providing the staging space for intermediality" (Ugorji 17). This staging space could be another media, "functioning as the framing medium, while incorporating others in a way that boosts its own capacity to effectively convey its narrative goals" (Ugorji 17). This uncovers the effective role played by media on the stage in the way that it has a message to convey. Moreover, the role played by the theatre as a framing medium cannot be denied.

Moreover, hybermedium is another concept that is attributed to theatre by Nibbelink and Merx in "Presence and Perception: Analyzing intermediality in Performance" that theatre can represent and stage other media (220). Theatre offers a hybermedium (Kattenbelt 32), "a platform for other media to perform on" (Nibbelink and Merx 225). This ability of theatre has its impact on audience "in the staging of media, conventions are often played with, whether the goal is to tease the spectator or to show the construction of (the effects of) media" (225). This shows that intermediality on the stage always has a goal to achieve as well as an impact on the spectator. One of the intermedial impacts on audience is elaborated by Kattenbelt saying that the co-relations between different media which influence each other lead to "the exploration of new dimensions of perception and experience" (35).

In this vein, intermediality plays an integral role within the theatre, and produces new meanings and perceptions. It also blurs the boundaries. It can be said that intermediality on the stage helps to explore what is beyond the theatre. Intermediality deconstructs the boundaries and this process enables raising the audience's awareness.

Intermedial relationships can be located on different levels in the performance. Many performances play with and deconstruct established cultural connotations normally assigned to either live or mediatized performances. Clear-cut distinctions between *unmediated/mediated*, *presence/absence*, *life/death*, *real/virtual*, *present/past*, *visible/invisible*, *subject/object*, *private/public* become blurred. Therefore, we prefer to see these word-pairs not as oppositions, but as constituting and constructing each other, operating as an 'axis'. (Nibbelink and Merx 221, italics in original)

In this kinship, the intermediation within theatre in Wajahat Ali's *The Domestic Crusaders* enables the author to challenge and deconstruct neo-Orientalist imagery as perceived in TV news, radio news, and newspaper. Unlike Classical Orientalism which is tackled in written books by Western intellectuals, neo-Orientalism is embodied in the news media and different media sources during the coverage of War on Terror. It is also supportive to

the Israelis considering Arabs and Muslims as anti-Semites. This is explained by Salim Kerboua who points the beginning of neo-Orientalism to the twenty first century in "From Orientalism to Neo-Orientalism: Early and Contemporary Construction of Islam and the Muslim World" and elaborates that:

Twenty-first century neo-Orientalism is a body of knowledge, news, analyses, and current affairs comments, created and propagated by a loose coalition of intellectual, pundits, opinion makers, and to a lesser extent political figures of Western public life that enjoy a special and effective relationship with Israel and Zionist cause. In this sense, it is ideologically motivated. (22)

Since 9/11, the image of Arabs/Muslims has shifted from bad to worse, associated with negative neo-Orientalist stereotypes. This in turn has led to a drastic procedures against innocent Muslim Americans. Alrasheed points to this shift in Muslims representation that previously Arab/Muslims were "caricatures in movies and desert romances, but now they are visible as part of the daily life of Americans, associated with bad news, or seen every now and then on an FBI or CIA list of wanted people. The neo-Orientalist discourse represents Arabs/Muslims as "the unwelcome Other nationally and as a threat internationally" (17).

It can be said that neo-Orientalism does not merely weigh its power on the countries intended to be dominated during the War on Terror, but it also has negatively affected the life of Muslim Americans in the way that it rationalizes discrimination against Muslim Americans who are under the spotlight in the American society. As Priyadarshini Gupta concludes in "Reincarnation of Neo-Orientalism: Islam and its Representations in Post-9/11 Literature" that:

Neo-Orientalism, a derogatory way of describing incarnations to Orientalist thinking after 9/11, reinforces Islam as a subculture in modern societies. In the war of ideas between the putative East and the so-called West, Neo-Orientalism revives the legacy of American and European colonialism on Asian and African countries through relentless attacks on Islamic identity and integrity. It shows how xenophobia, racial discrimination, and violence against Muslims is rationalized in Western societies. (3)

Wajahat Ali through his play criticizes this derogatory neo-Orientalist depiction of Muslims as described by Gupta and resists the racialization of Arabs and Muslims post-9/11 events.

Furthermore, Ali points to the participation of experts in portraying the distinction between the West and Islam. Since 9/11, the US media has perpetually introduced the so-called "Experts" who are people from "government, the military, and academia". They emerge as "the owners of dominant discourses on terrorism". They are authorized to define terrorism "who and what causes it and who and what will deal with it" (Karim 104). Those authorized people often connect Islam with terrorism.

Samuel Huntington's notion of the "Clash of Civilization" is one of the building blocks in the neo-Orientalist thinking. Huntington also was a corner stone for the US foreign policy. Dag Tustad in "Neo-Orientalism and the New Barbarism Thesis: Aspects of Symbolic Violence in the Middle East Conflicts" argues that Huntington has been "an important figure in US foreign policy since the Vietnam war, and has been a member of the National Security Council" (593). In the clash of civilization assumption, Huntington denotes that the future's conflicts or wars are going to be between the Islamic civilization

of the East which has clashed with the Christian civilization of the West; "the main adversary in the tribal global wars in Huntington's narrative—'civilizations are the ultimate human tribes, and the clash of civilizations is tribal conflict on a global scale'—was the Muslim civilization" (Tustad 593). Huntington presumes that Muslims are more violent than any other people and according to him this feature refers to their Islamic religion. In this vein, Tustad adds that Huntington's ideas "resonate very well with the neo-Orientalist trend in American academe" (594). It can be said that Huntington's ideas have nurtured the neo-Orientalist thinking, in spite of being subjective and not depending on sound reasons.

The other notion that has affected the neo-Orientalist thinking, is "the new barbarism" postulate. In defining what is meant by "new barbarism", Dag Tustad concludes that this term was first used by Paul Richards to "criticize presentations of political violence that omit political and economic interests and contexts when describing that violence, and present the violence as resulting from traits embedded in local cultures" (592).

This "new barbarism" assumption attributes the violent terrorist incidents committed by some extremists to Islamic religion. For, these incidents are discussed as embedded in the biological features of the Islamic culture, neglecting any political or economic interests. In this vein, Tustad argues that "*New barbarism and neo-Orientalist imaginaries may serve as hegemonic strategies when the production of enemy imaginaries contributes to legitimize continuous colonial economic or political projects, as can be witnessed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*" (591, italics in original).

Accordingly, similar to Huntington's postulate of "Clash of Civilization," the "new barbarism" assumption serves hegemonic colonial interests. "In the same way that Orientalism once served the policies of colonial powers, the new barbarism thus serves the political interests of people who are aware of the need to produce images of a conflict as one between civilization and barbarism" (Tustad 596).

It can be argued that neo-Orientalism shares with classical Orientalism in espousing specific constructed stereotypes. Both of them point that the Other is backward, barbaric and oppressor to women. What differentiates neo-Orientalism from its classical version is the "new barbarism" assumption which implies that Muslims are violent and their violence is inherited from their Islamic culture. Consequently, they are perceived as a threat to the American society, anti-Semites and terrorists. Orientalists draw a distinction between two dichotomies the "West" and the "East", while neo-Orientalists draw a distinction between the "West" and "Islam"; suggesting the superiority of the West for its being civilized, democratic and peacekeepers; and presupposing that the West represents everything good while the Arabs and Muslims do not.

During the War on Terror, the public opinion was shaped by different media sources such as radio news channels, the CNN and FOX TV news, and experts. Edward Said in the preface of *Orientalism* (2003) considers them as "war mongering" which means that their participation has a powerful impact in changing the public opinion. Said states that:

Accompanying such warmongering expertise have been the omnipresent CNNs and FOXs of this world, plus myriad numbers of evangelical and right wing radio hosts--- all of them recycling the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalizations so as to stir up "America" against the foreign devil. (xv)

Television has played an effective role during the coverage of the War on Terror as Simon Cottle in "Television Agora and Agoraphobia Post-September 11" concludes that television as a medium has the ability to "prompt and sustain (or displace and trivialize) public reflection, questioning, analysis, and debate" (179). Moreover, Cottle adds that the military and political actions have to be legitimated and defended; and they do this by "invoking the public." To add, "Television is a potent medium in this play of power" (179). This reveals that media's role in the War on Terror cannot be denied. In *The Domestic Crusaders*, Ali intermediates television within theatre that disseminates the CNN and FOX news coverage of the War on Terror.

The CNN in its part has a wide scope. It has an impact on the whole world. According to Eytan Gilboa in "CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations" concludes that the CNNs, including CNN International, "have affected many facets of global communications and international relations, such as technology, economics, culture, law, public opinion, politics, and diplomacy, as well as warfare, terrorism, human rights, and environmental degradation, refugees, and health" (28). This shows that the CNNs are more than just news channels; they have power and authority on the public vision. Gilboa points to this effect in the post-9/11 period. The CNN has an influence on the public opinion during the War on Terror. "--- The new strategic environment of the global war against terrorism may have serious implications for the CNN effect that should be explored and assessed" (39).

Not only did the CNN news channels assume covering and legitimating the post 9/11 War on Terror, but also newspapers. It can be argued that the CNN news as well as the reports of newspapers adopt the neo-Orientalism power discourse during the coverage of the War on Terror. Their reports cover the terroristic events in relation to Islam:

Even though the events of September 11 were extraordinary, their reporting--- was shaped by frames that had been in place to cover such issues as violence, terrorism, and Islam. There has emerged over the last three decades a set of journalistic narratives on "Muslim terrorism," whose construction is dependent on basic cultural perception about the global system of nation-states, violence, and the relationship between Western and Muslim societies. The dominant discourses about these issues help shape the cognitive scripts for reporting the acts of terrorism and carried out by people claiming to act in the name of Islam. (Karim 102)

Generalization is problematic in the US media. Muslims are associated with the terrorist events around the world. As Abu Sadat Nurullah concludes in "Portrayal of Muslims in Media: '24' and the 'Othering' Process" that:

Individual violent incident or any extremist movement in Islamic countries is attributed to Islam by Western media. The continuous negative portrayal of Muslims by the media has led many Muslims to perceive the media as an enemy and conspirator against them---When it comes to terrorism, the media most frequently link it to Arabs or Muslims. (1022)

Through the intermediation of media within theatre, Wajahat Ali challenges the perverted demonized representation of news media. Ali deconstructs the grand narratives established in the audience's minds replacing them with small ones. In *The Domestic Crusaders*, Ali uncovers the inauthenticity of the news coverage during The War on Terror.

The intermediation of news media within theatre enables Ali to convey his message that what is presented in the US media during The War on Terror is not totally true, but rather it is a construct. Also, through portraying a domestic, non-violent, and non-terrorist Muslim American family, Ali challenges the post-9/11 neo-Orientalist portrayal of Muslims as terrorists, violent, anti-Semites and oppressors to their women.

Deconstructing Neo-Orientalist Representation of Muslims in Media During the Coverage of the War on Terror

At the beginning of Wajahat Ali's play, *The Domestic Crusaders*, Fatima has turned the radio to the AM news station. The news introduces the coverage of War on Terror as intermingled with neo-Orientalist discourse. The news coverage associates the war against extremism with Islam. This generalized distorted representation instigate Fatima's feeling of disgust:

RADIO: (*Voice-over*) We now return to our in-depth coverage of "The War against Extremism." Joining us now for an NPR exclusive are world renowned, respected academic experts on Islam and the Middle East—
(FATIMA *visibly disgusted, turns it off*).

FATIMA: (*To no one*) Experts! What a joke. (Ali 5)

The author criticizes the usage of what are called experts on Islam during covering the war against extremism. Through inviting those experts they try to link Islam to extremism and the terrorist events. Salman is interested in the representation of Muslims in the media during the war on Terror. When he returned from his work, he read the first page of the newspaper. His reaction suddenly changed: "tired of this goddamn heat...goddamn media. Same nonsense every day! Blame Islam. Blame Muslims" (Ali 23). The representation in the news of Muslims and Islam in the first page reveals that it is the hit news during that time. Moreover, Salman's annoyance with these news uncovers its unfairness, since the news Salman has read does not only blame terrorists for their terroristic action, but rather connects their violence to Islam and other Muslims.

Furthermore, Ali points to the CNN effort during the coverage of the War on Terror. Here, the CNN news headline reflects the neo-Orientalist assumption that the Muslim countries the US fight during that time are "dedicated to hatred" and this means that Muslim countries are anti-American and anti-Jewish, while the US is represented as the peace keeper. Ghafur watches the CNN news channel at the end of scene four in which the stage directions indicate that it "was on at the beginning of the scene, is now heard again" (Ali 44). The news comes as the following:

THE TELEVISION: (*voice-over*) The President urged the nation today not to fear or doubt, even though the battle against extremism and evil will be long and painstaking---against those dedicated to hatred. (Ali 44)

The CNN news as presented in *The Domestic Crusaders* sheds light on the War on Terror in Iraq. By tackling this issue, Ali raises the audiences' awareness of the falsified assumption of this war. The characters' comments on this news deconstruct the dominated neo-Orientalist assumption that supports it. In a family gathering Ghafur, Salman, Hakim and Fatima listen to the CNN news. Through their comments on the CNN news, Ali deconstructs

the neo-Orientalist image of the West as peacekeepers replacing it with a countering discourse in which they are represented as deceivers and killers:

CNN Headline News: (voice-over) The soldiers of peace, an evangelical group with a loyal membership headed by Reverend Edwards, spiritual counselor to the President, say that they are ready to send over two thousand, as they call themselves, "*lovers of Christ*" to help preach the gospel as soon as the army decides it is safe for American citizens and missionaries to reside in Iraq—

HAKIM: Just like the British—typical colonizers, imperialists, just like the *ferengi* Europeans. Come in—rape, loot, destroy, turn brother against brother and countryman against countryman just for dawlat and power.

SALMAN: Preach!

GHAFUR: or *teach* people about their Christianity.

FATIMA: Yeah, right! How Christian is it to bomb innocent civilians? And then conveniently convert the devil-inspired heathens—that us, by the way. (Ali 47-48)

Ali deconstructs the falsified colonial power assumption that they are doing good through invasion. Moreover, in *The Domestic Crusaders*, Ali points to the US media's effort in supporting post-9/11 War on Terror precisely by explaining how they are doing good. During a family gathering, Salman increases the volume of TV to listen to the interview of the bestselling female writer.

FEMALE COMMENTATOR (voice-over): This war will end only when these monsters and terrorists and Al-ka-eeda and fundamentalist regimes renounce their hatred and extremism and learn to love and embrace democracy and freedom and American values, such as tolerance and separation of church and state and, God willing, good hygiene, ha!

MALE COMMENTATOR: (voice-over) Ann, how do you expect them to love us when we're invading their countries and bombing their homes?

FEMALE COMMENTATOR (voice-over) That's the problem! They don't understand. They just don't get it. We're not invading them. Hello, stupids! We're liberating you! (Ali 92-93)

In *The Domestic Crusaders*, Wajahat Ali calls upon his Muslim American audience for an awakening, for an opening dialogue in which Muslims could define themselves instead of the derogatory subverted misconception disseminated through the media. Ali asks Muslim Americans to be their own media. In this dialogue between Ghafur and his father, Ghafur suggests ways to resist the misconception of Muslims and Islam within American society:

GHAFUR: --- These extremists using those millions to teach their perverted version of Islam. The Taliban thinking it's Halal and Islamic to beat and lock up women. Thinking they're doing God's work. Americans, and these Christians here, thinking each and every Muslim is a Jew-hater, about to go berserker-rage and blow himself and everyone else up. No one knows

anything. And look at this media—that's the same garbage they get day in, day out—Why don't we go out and tell them how it really is? You could do it

SALMAN: Yeah, right. And you can earn the daily bread.

GHAFUR: You can! Call over all these neighbors---Go to those churches and do some interfaith dialogue. (Ali 49-50)

In spite of its incredibility, Ali points to the essentiality of watching news during the coverage of war on Terror. Also, he blames the president of the United States for the discrimination that Muslim Americans face:

KHULSOOM: Then why do you watch it?

SALMAN: look at this nonsense. This Amreekan news. Fair and balanced, ha!

SALMAN: We must know, as Muslims, as Americans, what these people think of us. Look—such blatant lies. Our President—your President—you voted for him!

KHULSOOM: I only voted for him because they told me he is pro-Muslim! And the entire community. (Ali 88)

It can be said that these neo-Orientalist strategies adopted in different media sources have an impact on the public opinion. In the way that it has shaped the public opinion's vision towards Muslims in general and Muslim Americans in particular. As Constantine Gidaris in "Victims, Terrorists, Scapegoats: Veiled Muslim Women and the Embodied Threat of Terror" elaborates, "Associations between terrorism and Islam that are sustained by the cultural apparatus of the news media, reify the dominant, hegemonic ideology, which often shapes public opinion and discourse" (3).

The perpetual neo-Orientalist connection between Muslim/Islam and terrorism in media "leads to the belief in people they are really terrorists, and thus hatred and discrimination against Muslims in general takes place" (Nurullah 1024). It can be said that media determines how people should see another ethnicity or culture. Also, media evaluates who is good and who is bad according to the power holders' vision:

---The press or media is strikingly successful in telling its consumers what to think about. The media not only set the agenda for public discussion, but also they strongly suggest how readers should think and talk about ethnic, cultural, and religious affairs---Most views of media in the West would develop a disliking attitude towards Muslims based on the media portrayal of Muslims as terrorists or otherwise bad people. In this way, Media cultivate the impression on peoples mind to look into the nature of reality based on the window of media representation issue. (Nurullah 1024-1025).

Furthermore, post-9/11 neo-orientalist representation of Muslims in media has led to the exacerbation of fear of Muslims in the American society "Association between Islam and terrorism in mainstream news media buttress Islamophobic ideology and practices, which interprets violence and terrorism as intrinsic characteristics belonging to all Muslims" (Gidaris 7). Accordingly, Muslim Americans have experienced discrimination for they are perceived as terrorists or prone to be terrorists.

For this reason, many challenges have faced Muslim Americans. The government has followed different cautionary decisions against Muslim Americans. Since 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush has issued an act that has affected Muslim Americans social life that is called the Patriot Act. It has been assigned in order to prevent any possible terrorist attack. This act restricts the freedom of innocent Muslim American civilians by making secret searches without legal cause. Hence, Muslim Americans are widely discriminated against and prevented from exercising their normal life as freely as the rest of American citizens. Also, in 2002, the National Entry-Exit Registration System required fingerprinting men from many Muslim countries. This reveals that racial profiling has become a must since the attacks.

Since Muslims are considered a threat to the American society, their freedom and stability has become under attack after the 9/11 period. In a way to evade the danger of Muslims living in America, the US government has determined the signs that clarify the terrorist person such as "giving up cigarettes, gambling, and urban hip-hop gangster cloths (*sic*)"; "wearing traditional Islamic clothing, growing a beard." Also, "The doctrinally mandated five daily prayers [that millions of Muslims complete] are also evidence of radicalization towards terrorism" (Aziz 204). Consequently, Muslim Americans and those who look like them have experienced institutional discrimination:

The result of racialized governmentality allows institutions, like airports, to justify racially profiling Muslims and those who are perceived to be Muslim, such as South Asians or Arabs, on the basis that their looks may provide an insight to the potentiality that they may be Muslims who want to commit violence. (Mohammad and Naveed and Rudnick 51-52)

That is, millions of Muslims are being profiled as they share certain characteristics.

Challenging the Neo-Orientalist imagery of Muslims as Terrorists, Oppressors to Women, Anti-Semites, and a Threat to the American Society

In *The Domestic Crusaders*, Ali represents the post-9/11 discrimination faced by a Pakistani Muslim American family. In a family gathering Ghafur tells his family that at the airport on his way home, Ghafur picks up his bags and gets in line. He remembers the article he read about a Punjabi Sheikh, a professor of English with an American citizenship, who was banned by the crew of the flight attendants: "he was kindly asked to leave so as not to endanger and disturb the psychological and mental comfort of the airline passengers" (Ali 39). Also, Ghafur has experienced a discriminatory action for his affiliation. He has been searched at the airport and they took his nail cutter. His family expressed their anger about what happened to Ghafur; Fatima has considered this as a discriminatory action: "---It's a blatant racial profiling. They only nabbed you 'cause you an Arab-sounding name—that's the only reason!" (Ali 41). Ghafur is now expected to have a file at the FBI because of his nail cutter:

KHULSOOM: Why did you have to pack a stupid nail cutter, uloo? Idiot! Great, make them lock you up next time! You read—you should know better. The FBI probably has a file on you now!

FATIMA: "Probably" is being naïve. They *definitely* do.

GHAFUR: I don't know—

FATIMA: You're lucky they didn't just strip-search you, hose you down, and do some superman scan of your internal organs while they were at it. (Ali 38)

Moreover, Salman has experienced discrimination at his job place. He is humiliated by his manager. Salman has told his wife about the challenges he encountered at his job from his executive manager as follows:

SALMAN: Upset? Too much to be upset about in this world. Disappointed, yes—who wouldn't be? A man works, faithfully, competently, not a single blemish on his entire record, night and day, like a dog. As they say in America, give a dog a bone... This brown, foreign, Muslim dog—a Muslim camel... Hunter, the executive of my division, loves his camel-jockey and A-rab jokes. It's been thirteen years and he still thinks I'm from India. "India, Pakistan, Afghanistan. What's the difference?" he always says. My name was too hard for him to pronounce, so he asked me, or rather told me, (*SALMAN does a hick accent*) "I'm gonna call you Sal from now on. You don't mind, now? It's hard for Americans to pronounce these A-rab names. You understand, Sally? (Ali 79)

The discriminatory action that Salman has experienced is degrading. The manager's inability to distinguish between Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and Arab countries, uncovers the disseminated misconception in the Western society.

At this moment, Salman remembers his father's advice which uncovers the immigrant's suffering and struggle in the Western society:

SALMAN: ..."Everyone takes a beating," Abu always said that. He told me, right before I left for Amreeka: "remember, Beta, those streets in Amreeka aren't paved with gold, they're paved with blood. As a foreigner, you're going to take a beating, you'll always take a beating. But inshallah, when you make your gold, don't wipe your blood off the street. Keep it there, to show all of them that you've *earned* it." And all I have after all these years is a bloody nose and a bloody shirt. (Ali 79)

Furthermore, Salman suffers from the lack of equal opportunities at his work. Hunter, the executive manager in his division does not give Salman the new highly-paying promotion he is waiting for, even though he has worked for 13 years in the company and is one of its leading engineers. Instead, Hunter has chosen Abdullah; a twenty-eight years old who is hired eight months earlier. Khulsoom has considered this matter as discriminatory "Khulsoom: (*flustered*) This isn't right. This exactly what you said—racism! Discrimination! We can talk to ACLU or CAIR and tell them you're passed over" (Ali 81).

The reason behind choosing Abdullah is also discriminatory and based on the post-9/11 prevailed stereotypical imageries of the Middle Eastern culture which considers the appearance and culture of the terrorist Osama bin Laden as representative of the whole Arab and Middle Eastern countries. Abdullah is not chosen to travel to the new position to an Arab country for his experience or cleverness but rather, Hunter has chosen him for his style that the manager sees as similar to the Middle Eastern "exotic" culture. Salman describes him to Khulsoom as the following: "wears a daarhi, his beard down to here—(points to chest) looks like Osama bin Laden's younger brother! This fraud—this is the one they chose for the new

contract!" (Ali 80). The manager's choice of Abdullah is unfair as well as discriminatory as he summarizes the Middle Eastern culture and religion in the style of Abdullah which is described as:

HUNTER: (*voice-over*) ...We're sending Ab-doolah because here's a young A-rab man who is absolutely serious about his Middle Eastern Ar-a-bic roots, and dedicated to his religion and culture, and it's *exactly* that image we need to drive home to our foreign investors and current business partners—that we, as Americans, respect their exotic culture and A-rab-esque heritage, and to prove it, We're gonna send'em one of their own—*Ab-doolah!* That "authentic" image we're gonna sell them needs a certain kind of representation that only Ab-doolah...has in spades. (Ali 80-81)

That is, ironically Abdullah is favored because he looks like Osama bin Laden.

The 9/11 period marks a shift in representing veiled Muslim women. In the neo-Orientalist discourse the Muslim women are no longer the victim and oppressed who need to be liberated from their male patriarchs. Instead they are represented as "conspirators with the terrorists that victimized Americans. Overnight, the oppressed Muslim women became the oppressor of those who just a few years back had pledged to liberate these same women from the tyranny" (Aziz 216).

Veil has formulated a threat to the American society. It no longer represents the control of male patriarch over women's sexuality, but rather "now 'marks' women as representatives of the suspicious, inherently violent and forever foreign 'terrorist other' in our midst" (Aziz 192). The shift in the meaning of the headscarf leads to discriminatory prejudiced behavior against Muslim American women donning the head scarf. The shift in meaning of the Muslim headscarf is due in large part to a "recasting of Islam as a political ideology as opposed to a religion. Once this definitional shift occurs, acts that would otherwise qualify as actionable religious discrimination are accepted as legitimate" (Aziz 193).

Muslim American women suffer from the suppression of their voices in the American society. The shift of the meaning of the headscarf from "subjugation to terrorism causes palpable discrimination faced by Muslim women [and] occurs in conjunction with accusations of terrorism and disloyalty" (Aziz 196). Since the 9/11 period, a woman who wears the headscarf "equally bears the brunt of the government's harsh counterterrorism tactics and the public's distrust of Muslims, her voice and perspectives are notably absent from the discourse" (Aziz 195).

In *The Domestic Crusaders*, Wajahat Ali points to the challenges that might face a head-scarfed woman in the American society after 9/11. Fatima is a Muslim American woman of a Pakistani origin. She wears a headscarf. Fatima joins the Muslim Justice League. Her activities are not appreciated by Salahuddin and her mother. "**SAL:** ---Wasting your time on this newfound Muslim Justice League—(*trying to find right words*) crusader fad—phase" (Ali 10). Fatima's voice has no echo in the American society:

Their post-9/11 experiences are neglected by mainstream American feminist organizations or used by male leaders of o Muslim organizations to implement a civil rights agenda tailored to the Muslim male experience. Consequently,

Muslim women are caught in the crosshairs of national security conflicts that profoundly affect their lives and receive inadequate support from advocacy groups focused on defending Muslims, women's rights, or civil liberties post-9/11. (Aziz 197)

The personal choice of wearing the headscarf for women or growing a beard for men exposes Muslim Americans to discrimination and abuses. The generalized prejudiced representation of the headscarf for Muslim women and the beard for Muslim men as a symbol of terrorism, gives no choice to the public opinion to accept them or have a sympathy with them, but rather they are rejected, dehumanized and abused.

Stereotypes of the dark-skinned, bearded, Muslim male as representative of primary threat to national security consume the (predominantly male) government's anxious attempts to prevent the next terrorist attack. Sparse attention is paid to the impact of post-9/11 national security era on Muslim women, and specifically those who wear the headscarf... The headscarf "marks" these women as sympathetic to the enemy, presumptively disloyal, and forever foreign. (Aziz 194-195)

Accordingly, in *The Domestic Crusaders*, the *hijab* or headscarf of Fatima and the beard of Ghafur are rejected by the American society and some members of their family. Their rejection is based on seeking to live safe in the American society as it "symbolizes more than a mere cloth worn by a religious minority seeking religious accommodation. It is a visible 'marker' of her membership in a suspect group" (Aziz 196). Hence, Fatima cannot be liberated in the American society until she takes off her veil; "women are expected to uncover to look more 'Western.' Refusing to do so becomes a basis for suspicion" (Aziz 227-228). So, wearing a *hijab* in the American society post-9/11 is a big challenge that is not desirable. Although Fatima wears stylish modernized clothes, "wearing stylish red designer sweater and designer blue jeans. Green armband", she is still criticized for her *hijab*. Aziz points to this issue that "Despite the various fashionable ways to wear a head scarf, it remains the marker of the terrorist, the terrorist's wife, the unwelcome foreigner, and the oppressed woman" (229). Fatima complaining of her mother's friends comments on her *hijab*: "The aunties all whisper behind my back—at that wedding—backbiting like they always do, because I wear the *hijab*" (Ali 31). Also, Fatima's mother rejects her *hijab* as well as her activities as it costs her a lot:

KHULSOOM: --- My only beti, twenty-four years old. *Still* single! No proposals from anyone. Instead of attending her law-school classes, goes to these rallies. Once such a nice girl, now wearing *hijab*, giving controversial speeches, getting arrested at the university protest, going out on the town with *blacks*— (Ali 7)

That is, the beard and traditional clothes have become a terrorist code. Hence, there is fear of Muslim Americans to be classified as terrorists for their style; "following September 11, many Muslims living in Western societies were fearful of wearing traditional clothing in public" (Karim 108). So Ghafur's beard and the traditional clothes he wears are rejected by his mother and his brother Salahuddin. Sal expresses his disgust of Ghafur's beard and traditional clothes. "SAL: What is this? (SAL looks at GHAFUR's *kufi*.) And what is this disgusting mess? (SAL looks at the beard on GHAFUR's *chin*.) This Filth. You put Velcro in your face" (Ali 35). Also, after Ghafur has told his family about what has happened to him at the airport, his mother blames him for growing his beard:

KHULSOOM: Didn't I tell you to shave your beard before you come? Who give you the brilliant idea to keep a beard? And you wore the *topi*? Oy, uloo! Why didn't you hold a sign saying, I'M AN EXTREMIST. ONE WAY TICKET TO ABU GHARAIB! PLEASE. (Ali 41)

During cooking, Khulsoom turns on the radio and she settles on a radio station that was broadcasting a classic song for her favorite singer "Tom Jones". This image of Khulsoom the Muslim American woman who takes off her *hijab* and sings the lyrics of her favorite song combats the Orientalist representation of Muslim women as oppressed under her *hijab*:

KHULSOOM: (*Taking off her hijab so that it hangs like a scarf around her neck, she sings the lyrics in accented English while rhythmically bobbing her head to the music. She is rushing around, straitening the family room.*) Hmnnn...nnn...mmmmmm...to be loved by anyone...Ta-da da da...It's not *unusual* to be...hmmmn...mmmm...mmm...happens every day...la la la la. (Ali 3)

Fatima also wears the *hijab*. She is proud of her headscarf; she does not feel that it is a burden. Fatima has her own voice as an activist in the "Muslim Justice League". Her brother Salahuddin mocks her and her head-scarfed friends, who join in the protests. Sal thinks that they are wasting their time. Fatima's answer reflects her pride of her *hijab* and that she is not oppressed to wear it:

FATIMA: Ha-ha—very funny, "SAL." I'm glad someone who spends all his time thinking about cheap, ho-ey white girls—the one he can never have—by the way—and the stock market...can lecture me in *my* activities. I can't believe you don't even care your people are being senselessly massacred.

SAL: (*Raises eyebrow*) My people?

FATIMA: Yes, your people! You should be there with me, and with my "sisters," who are by the way are known as *muhajjabahs*, and should be respected because they have the modesty to cover themselves in order to keep away from Studio 54 rejects like you. (Ali 10)

Also, Fatima is favorable to her father. The stage directions indicate that Fatima can change her father's bad mood "**SALMAN** gives **FATIMA** a hug, and another kiss on her forehead, and his mood becomes more pleasant" (Ali 24). The representation of the lovely passionate relationship between Salman and Fatima resists the imagery of Muslim woman as oppressed by her father. Salman comments on Fatima's *hijab* asking her to take it off at home. His comment reveals that her *hijab* is based on her choice:

SALMAN: Abey, no need to wear this in the house? We're all family men—you can take it off. You have such nice hair. I miss seeing it.

FATIMA: I have a bad-hair day today, and I have to go out later— (Ali 24)

Salman respects Fatima's refusal to marry Dr. Mumtaz, the one that her mother sees as a proper husband to Fatima. While Fatima loves Aziz, the black Muslim American man,

whom her mother refuses. Khulsoom gets angry when Fatima has mentioned the name of Aziz while Salman becomes defensive of his daughter:

KHULSOOM: (**KHULSOOM**'s voice rises –and slamming the knife down on the table as she cuts, she replies) I told you we will not discuss him again! It's over and done! Khalas! Khatam!

FATIMA: Yeah, for you!

KHULSOOM: What does that mean?

FATIMA: (Turns her back) God, I'm so disgusted. (**SALMAN** walks over to his daughter and puts his arm around her).

SALMAN: Beti, relax, relax. Your mother just gets excited, you know that. (to **KHULSOOM**) stop bothering her! You know she doesn't like it.

KHULSOOM: ...Like always, father and daughter team up. (Ali 33)

Furthermore, Hakim's relationship with Fatima resists the persisting image of Muslim women as oppressed. When Hakim comes home, the stage directions show that "**FATIMA** goes to her grandfather, bows, and burrows herself in his chest to give him a hug" while he reacted to her greeting as such '...How is my rani doing?' (*kisses her on her cheek, with a boisterous smile*)" (Ali 15). Hakim also considers all women as valuable, when he commented on Kashif's marriage from a Jewish girl. "**HAKIM:** ...Our men are in such a rush to become white and Amreekan we've forgotten our own traditions, and our own precious jewels—our women" (Ali 29).

Moreover, the relationship between Salman and his wife Khulsoom negates the idea of a woman as oppressed and enslaved by her husband. Their relationship is based on love, respect and partnership. "**KHULSOOM:** ... but you wouldn't have someone like me. Your partner, and your best friend" (Ali 78). Without saying one anything, Khulsoom could understand that Salman does not get the position when he returns from his job:

KHULSOOM: They didn't give you the position, did they? (**SALMAN**, still looking out the window, shakes his head no.)

KHULSOOM: I knew it

SALMAN: How? Who? Did Abdullah's wife tell you? I bet it was his mother. Couldn't wait to rub it in..

KHULSOOM: (*Calm and assuaging*) I've been married to you almost thirty years. I know your face. You were upset when you walked through the door this morning. (Ali 78-79)

In another situation, Khulsoom is presented as supportive and defensive to Salman. This image challenges the representation of a woman as oppressed or enslaved by her husband. When Salman knew that his son Ghafur does not attend the medical school as their

family assumes, rather he decided to be a teacher, Salman gets angry and slapped Ghafur on his face. Hakim sees that Salman's anger is from the devil. While Khulsoom finds excuses for her husband as she is the only one who knows Salman's suffering "**KHULSOOM:** (*Defensive*) He—he is a good man. He just lost his temper, that's all. Just lots of stress. You know how much he works" (Ali 87).

Moreover, Ali challenges the representation of Muslims as anti-Semites which means that Muslims naturally hate the Jews. In a family gathering Salman tells his family about a Muslim American man called Kashif, who has recently married Elaine, the Jewish American girl. Through his characters' argument, Ali deconstructs the image of Muslims as anti-Jewish, but rather they are presented as critical not hateful of the Jews:

SAL: So what if she's Jewish? Who cares?

HAKIM: (*shrugs*) They are ... people of the book, Allah has said it is lawful to marry their women. They believe in Allah and the Last Day... they just—

FATIMA: Hate our people? Oppress Palestinians? Own Hollywood, distort the media?

SAL: Great—I'm listening to anti-Semites in my house. Unleash the swastikas!

SALMAN: ... This country conveniently calls us anti-Semites anytime we criticize Israel for anything. I don't hate the Jews or Judaism. I'm just *saying* that it's not *wise* to marry *a girl* like *that*, especially when you have such nice Muslim girls—like Fatima—. (Ali 26-27)

Furthermore, Ali deconstructs the neo-Orientalist imagery of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists as they share Osama bin Laden's same culture. This twisted image is constructed through the US media sources and has been absorbed by the Western people. As Nurullah elaborates:

Another point to note is the media extension of terrorism to all Muslims on earth. Taking few scarred terrorist incidences committed by Muslim-named individuals, and appointing Osama bin Laden as the representative of Muslims, the media has put a serious question mark on its objective nature... It should be here emphasized that Osama bin Laden is not the representative of 1.3 billion Muslims around the world. (1031)

In *The Domestic Crusaders*, Ali introduces a countering discourse that combats the post-9/11 prevailing image of Muslims as terrorists as Osama bin Laden. Hakim, the grandfather, narrates to his family a situation in which he is asked if he is related to Osama bin Laden. Hakim's answer raises the Western audience's awareness to understand that not all Muslims are terrorists:

HAKIM: Yesterday, at the flea market, I was picking my fruits—as usual. One white man was next to me. He was with his son—just a boy, probably

eight or so. The boy looked up at me and asked, "Are you related to Osama bin Laden?"

FATIMA: What? No way!

HAKIM: ...I said no, no, I'm not. He is a terrorist who doesn't know the first thing about the religion of Islam. I am a proud Musلمان, Alhamdulillah, born and raised in Hyderabad Deccan, India. (Ali 16-17)

Conclusion

To conclude, the intermediation of different media sources within theatre, the vast medium, enables Wajahat Ali in his play, *The Domestic Crusaders*, to deconstruct neo-Orientalist presumably universal truths. Moreover, through representing a peaceful, domestic and non-violent Muslim American family, Ali challenges the misconception of Muslims as anti-Jewish, oppressors to women, threat to American society and terrorists. The intermediation of TV news, radio news and newspaper that present the neo-Orientalist coverage of War on Terror that connects Islam with terrorism, enables the audience to compare these neo-Orientalist coverage with the challenges that face this Pakistani Muslim family post-9/11. This comparison raises the audiences' awareness of the insensitivity of the media coverage during the War on Terror. In this vein, intermediality in *The Domestic Crusaders* is a means of resistance.

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