
THE MUSLIM AS THE OTHER IN AYAD AKHTAR'S DISGRACED

Shaymma'a Muhammed Mukhlif
Directorate of Anbar Education, Ramadi, Iraq

Shaymma77@uoanbar.edu.iq

Asst. Prof. Majeed Ismail Fayadh, College of Arts, University of Anbar, Ramadi, Iraq

majeed fayadh@uoanbar.edu.iq

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ABSTRACT

Negative stereotypes of Muslims have become the frequent feature of contemporary Islamophobic discourse and the icon of the "War on Terror". Perceived differences in race and religion, false depictions of Muslims and misconceptions about Islam have been recruited by mainstream discourse to create "the Muslim Other" or the Muslim enemy. "The Muslim Other", thus, has to live under the fierce measures of the "PATRIOT ACT" and the "Homeland Security State" that have created a new phase of Islamophobia in post- 9/11 world. Therefore, the first objective of this paper is to examine stereotyping Muslim identity in Akhtar's *Disgraced* in the light of Postcolonial Theory via the concept of the Other. It will also investigate the Western Islamophobic view of Muslims. The second objective is to investigate the Islamophobic setting created by "the Homeland Security State and the PATRIOT ACT" and supported by the "political discourse and Mass media". The significance of the study stems from the fact that it provides an investigation of the way Muslims are othered by adopting a postcolonial reading of the representation of Muslim identity in the aftermath of 9/11, thus, enriching the academia with contemporary literary studies in dramatic field. Ayad Akhtar's "Disgraced" (2012), is selected because it shows the quandaries endured by Muslims under the measures of "the Homeland Security State" and the "PATRIOT ACT" that have conceptualized Islam as a threat. The selection of Ayad Akhtar, the playwright, stems from the fact that he has experienced the dilemma of being Muslim in post- 9/11 America. The study concludes that Akhtar's "*Disgraced*" condemns "the Homeland Security State" and the "PATRIOT ACT" that have criminalized the Muslim Other.

Key words: stereotypes, Other, Islamophobia, "War on Terror".

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed the complexities of 9/11 that have made stereotyping Muslims a prevailing "ideological power" and have created a new "climactic phase of Islamophobia" that has marked the initiation of a prolonged American "War on Terror" inside and outside the American borders. The West has always resorted to "fictional and non-

fictional records and travel literature" to derogate Muslims by terms such as "erotic, primitive, ignorant, and slave-traders" (Ridouani 2011, 2). Recently, these negative images have been injected into the public mind via politicians and mass media that have presented Muslims as the heartless, brutal terrorists and the religious fanatics (Shaheen 2012 and Ibrahim 2010). Islam has always been delineated as a religion that produces "terrorism, violence, and global threat" (Said 1981).

The distorted image of Muslims is the result of deeply rooted misinformation that has been manipulated by politicians and mass media in order to preserve hegemony and political power via ideology. The "America's bogeyman" (Shaheen 1995, 191) or the negative stereotypes are constructed from "collective memory" (Jackson 1996, 65) and are planted in the public mind and have created a "common sense ideology" (Gitlin 1980, 10) that has embraced what is identified as the "archetype of enemy" (Hyde 2008, 86). This, in fact, has resurrected "the ancient binary opposition of West vs. East, us vs. them, good vs. evil, or what is recently known as United States vs. Islam". The "we/they" binary opposition supports the positioning of "the Other as an aggressive and hostile alien":

"Sensationalism, crude xenophobia, and insensitive belligerence are the order of the day, with the results on both sides of the imaginary line between (us and them) that are extremely unedifying" (Said 1981, XIV iii)

Activated by 9/11 attacks, the American media has reanimated the "old binaries and the negative stereotypes of the Oriental Other" (Richardson 2002). Negative stereotypes that are related to "barbarism and cruelty are the most common traits associated with Arabs" (Jackson 1996, 65). Such negative stereotypes have been expanded to "lump Arabs, Muslims, Middle Easterns into one highly negative image of violence and danger". (Ibid). In fact, they refer to not only those of Arab descent, but also all those marked by a Middle Eastern-looking (Hamada 2001). These negative stereotypes and negative evaluations of Muslims are carefully used by politicians and mass media to be "cultivated in the public opinion so as to create the imagined enemy that threatens the American national security":

"America's discovery of an enemy who is not merely an enemy, but "evil" has impeccable historical credentials. In a long history of responding to real perceived threats, it seems clear that this large, heterogenous country defines itself in part through its nemesis" (Worth 2002, 1)"

After 9/11, political rhetoric and mass media used the negative image of Islam to create a negative discourse and a speech of hatred against Muslims. Muslims and Islam have been

connected with the terms that have formed Islamophobia such as "fundamentalism, terrorism, fanatic Islamism, and Jihadism" (El-Aswad 2013).

Though Edward Said's works have been written prior to 9/11 events, Said has investigated the same negative discourse about Islam and Muslims. In his "*Orientalism*" (1978), Said emphasizes that Islam has been depicted as "a threat and has been linked with terrorism and that the colonial discourse and Orientalists have constructed a negative frame of reference about Islam". In his book "*Covering Islam*" (1981), Said proclaims that there is a formerly "ideological work" to guide the attitudes of the Western media towards Islam as dangerous and to connect Islam with fundamentalism:

"The association created deliberately between the Islam and the Fundamentalism guarantee that the common reader starts to see both as being essentially the same thing. Due to the tendencies to reduce the Islam to some rules, stereotypes and generalizations regarding faith, its founder and its people, the reinforcement of all the negative fact linked to Islam – its violence, primitiveness, and atavism, threatening qualities- It's perpetuated". (Said 1981, xvi- xvii)

In other words, they are the everlasting negative attributes that have always disgraced Muslims. Said proclaims that Islam is nothing but trouble to the majority of the Americans (Ibid xv). Said recognizes a climate of danger where "it will be difficult for many Americans to think of Muslims as anything but enemies" (Sides and Gross 2013, 597).

Influenced by these deeply rooted misconceptions about Islam and advocated by Politicians and their aggressive policies towards Muslims, mass media distributed the ideology that framed Islam (Gitlin 1980). Thus, the public investigate and comprehend news through frames that have already been created for them (Goffman 1974). Journalists can, thus, "shape the readers' perception through highlighting and emphasizing certain aspects of an issue or information". The audience receives the news after being analyzed and re-created by the mass media that relies on:

"The framework of interpretation offered by public officials, security experts and military commentators, with news functioning ultimately to reinforce support for political leaders and security policies they implement" (Norris, Kern, and Just 2003, 1).

Therefore, the aim is to "proliferate an atmosphere of fear", a fear of the Muslim Other or "a collective sense of fear and Vulnerability" (Kuzma 2000, 92). In the aftermath of 9/11, the pre-existed conflict against Muslims has developed more and more. A well-known commentator in the American media, Dan Pipes (2002), proclaims that all Muslims represent

"a threat to the United States". The prevailing image of Muslims has always been related to "suicidal explosions committed by the exotic Other who forms an ugly icon that represents the Islamic culture" (Asad 2007). Politicians and journalists have created conspiracy theories and exaggerated claims of possible nuclear attacks on the U.S.A. (Ruff 2002). After 9/11, terms like "Terror", "Terrorism", "Islam" and "Muslims" have become highly associated since the attacks have been committed by Muslim groups. The attacks, in this sense, have provided the ideological foundation for both Islamophobia and the "War on Terror" (Kundnani 2014).

Throughout his speeches at that time, President George W. Bush has talked about a conflict between "us and them", between "good and evil", and has put together "terror and evil":

"The language of good and evil encourages a projection of the world and of people in which the boundaries between "them" and "us" must be delineated, and the nature and qualities of ourselves and the enemy Other must be affirmed. This representational project is deliberately designed to dehumanize the enemy, because as agents of evil, they are by definition of less human worth" (Jackson 2005, 69).

Mahmood Mamdani states that President Bush distinguishes between "Good Muslims" and "Bad Muslims" and that "Bad Muslims" are clearly responsible for terrorism and "unless proved to be good, every Muslim is presumed to be bad" (2004, 15). Thus, the connection of "bad", "evil", or "terrorist" with Islam can be applied to all Muslim Americans who have to demonstrate their national belonging over their religion and their Islamic identity in order to "prove to be good". To gather support and justification for the war abroad, the American Administration has recruited "the long-established misconceptions" about Islam in its political rhetoric and media:

"For mobilization of national hatred, the enemy must be represented as a menacing, murderous, aggressor, a satanic violator of the moral and conventional standards, an obstacle to the cherished aims and ideals of the nation as a whole and of each constituent part" (Lasswell 1995, 18-19).

The reinforcement of these misconceptions and negative stereotypes via association with "violence, threat, and terrorism" has produced the image of Muslims as "the face of evil" (Pilon 2001) and has intruded the Americans in "War against international terrorism" (Fish 2001, A 19). September 11 trauma has imposed the "PATRIOT ACT in 2001, a system

according to which the American citizens are vulnerable and need the protection of a Homeland Security State". Because of the "PATRIOT ACT", civil liberties have been highly restricted and the language of Islamophobia that has immediately appeared after 9/11 and focused on the enemy abroad has shifted later to talk about "the enemy within". Thus, "thousands of innocent Arabs and Muslims have been racially profiled in the aftermath of 9/11" (Kumar 2012, 160). Muslims, particularly Arabs and South Asians, have been forced to live the nightmare of "racial profiling, surveillance, detention, torture, and deportation". "The making of the domestic Muslim enemy" is reinforced by "liberal imperialists" and the mainstream media that have raised the alarm about "Terrorism in our midst" (Ibid). Muslim Americans are no longer free. They are afraid of prosecution and connection to terrorism. Connecting Muslims to terrorism has kept them as the "Other" that is no longer from the outside, the "Other" is now both an insider and an alien.

Stereotyping Muslims has found its echo in drama written by Muslim playwrights who try to convey the trouble of being Muslim in America. Thus, there is a pressing need to explore the representation of Muslim Other in some dramatic texts that will illuminate the utilization of the Other to mischaracterize and misconceptualize the image of Muslim who is both an internal and external enemy. This study investigates the representation of Muslims in the light of postcolonial lens. Moreover, the exploration of the Other will create a new awareness of "Othering" via the most effective means of communication, that is, literature. The present study argues that the negative representation of post- 9/11 Muslim identity has been magnified and has disturbed the construction of Muslim identity caught in the buzzle of "national belonging, modern secularity and religious heritage". This study deals exclusively with the American playwright of a south Asian origin, Ayad Akhtar, and his remarkable play *"Disgraced"*(2012).

The first objective is to examine stereotyping Muslim identity and the Western Islamophobic view of Muslims. The second objective will investigate the Islamophobic setting created by "the Homeland Security State and the PATRIOT ACT" and advocated by political discourse and mass media. In such a climate, Muslims have become the main target of "surveillance, persecution, and profiling". A reaction towards these procedures has been shown by Muslims playwrights, particularly, Ayad Akhtar whose play can be read as a protest against such procedures.

The significance of the present study is produced from the fact that it provides a postcolonial understanding of the representation of post- 9/11 Muslim identity and the way

Muslims are Othered, thus, enriching the academia with contemporary literature studies in the dramatic field. This study concentrates on Ayad Akhtar's *"Disgraced"* that negotiates the dilemma of 9/11 and how it affects Muslim's belonging and assimilation in a secular and hostile American society. Moreover, this study asserts that the racialization of Islam and Muslims is connected to Islamophobia that has, in this context, influenced, negatively, Islam's perceived religious inferiority and has conceptualized Islam as a threat.

No single study has ever tackled the representation of Muslim identity as a result of "the Homeland Security State and the PATRIOT ACT" which have established new obstacles faced by Muslims who try hard to integrate or belong to the American society. The procedures of "the Homeland Security State" have enhanced the image of the Other in the minds of the Americans and Muslims as well. Khoury, for instance, states that "Akhtar threw his community under the bus in hopes of gaining mainstream approval and acclaim." (Afzal-Khan, Bose, and Khoury 2016,17). Fawzya Afzal Khan interprets Amir, the protagonist, through Frantz Fanon's lense and remarks the colonized's desire to take revenge via the sexual conquest of the white woman (Ibid). Arlene Martineze Vasques (2016) claims that *Disgraced* is a complex, timely, and a well- written play; nevertheless, it is a racist play with its protagonist, Amir, and his cousin, Abe, showing anti-Americanism and pride over 9/11. Diana Benea investigates the dilemma of post-9/11 Pakistani American identity under the influence of intercultural and interreligious tensions in a global society where Muslims have been trying to reconfigure their identities in the aftermath of 9/11 (Benea 2015). Lupamudra Basu reads *Disgraced* as "a tragedy that draws on its Shakespearean predecessor *Othello*" (2019). Antoun Issa [2016] states that *Disgraced* imposes the question: "Is there a priority in the sequence of national and religious identities?" Erin Neel investigates *Disgraced* and proves the persistence of racial hostility and tension in America (2014, 53). Yuliano(2018) argues that *Disgraced* is a "valid play from an immigrant nation" and as a part of Muslim American Literature. Field (2018) investigates *Disgraced* in the light of Stuart Hall's theory of identity, and questions whether identity is inherited or performed.

Discussion

Akhtar is a unique South Asian playwright that has occupied the hot spot with his most frequently produced play of the 2015-2016 seasons (Tran, 2015) "the Pultizer Prize Winning Play" has triggered a controversy revolving around its representation of Muslim Americans and the quandaries they face. Akhtar defines Amir as a successful lawyer who

thinks that he knows the game in the firm he works at with his two Jewish bosses, he lives in the fierce, prejudicial, climate targeting Muslims and thus has decided to change his identity, social security number and represent himself as an Indian (Charlie Rose, The Charlie Rose Show, Jan. 30, 2015). Changing his family name resides in the fact that he wants to succeed at his workplace where he would experience discrimination as a Muslim. This, indeed, reflects the Islamophobic climate of "intolerance, paranoia, and surveillance" which is a widespread phenomenon in post-9/11 America. Mort, Amir's advisor at the law firm, assuming that Amir is a Hindu, particularly Sikh, has given Amir a highly expensive image of Siva. Emily naively asks Amir whether Mort knows that Amir is not Hindu- a fact that Amir has not clarified for Mort in order to erase his Muslim identity. Amir immediately changes the conversation to talk about the importance of his own Hindu name being "*alongside all those Jewish ones*" (Akhtar 9). Bayoumi documents this type of discrimination "one-fifth of the complaints reviewed by the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) since 2001 have been from Muslims and Arabs, a number that is widely one of the proportions to their number in the United States" (193. 2008).

Akhtar's ability to bring together characters with "different perspectives, different backgrounds, and different attitudes" is clearly apparent from the very beginning of the play; Amir's preference of a white American wife can be analyzed as an attempt to make a full integration into American society, whereas Emily's preference of a Muslim Pakistani husband is nothing but a preoccupation of Islamic art; Amir is nothing for Emily but a piece of her collection of Oriental portraits. The first scene portrays Emily preoccupied by a portrait of Amir which is modeled on Velazquez's portrait of Juan de Pareja, his Moorish assistant or (his slave) as Amir, the protagonist, keeps correcting Emily:

"AMIR: That you want to paint me after seeing a painting of a slave.

EMILY: He was Velazquez's assistant, honey.

AMIR: His slave". (Scene one: 4).

The audience soon know that the painting is meant as "a response to an incident at a restaurant" where Amir has faced the terrible racist remarks of a waiter who relies on the idea of whiteness as the core of being American. Aparajita De states that being Muslim-looking or "brown in America is often conflated with religious and cultural practices that are demonized in time of crises" (2016, xiii). Thus, Amir's rank or position in the restaurant incident is determined through "sociocultural codes" or via "sight, political-economical perceptions" "or is determined by positionality" (Ibid, xii). Amir seems to be uncomfortable with being

replicated in the "master-slave painting", a situation which implies that Amir feels "too integrated and too assimilated to still be acting the racial Other". Amir's racial identity reflected by his brown colour that subrogates any other markers of identity is the cruel fact that Amir has to endure; "*the question remains of your place*" uttered by Isaac manifests the way Amir's skin colour completely subrogates all other indications of his identity. Such a remark may activate Amir's self-hatred and his succeeding endeavor to imitate the powerful white. Basu argues that:

"Amir, following his predecessor Juan de Pareja, is seeking approval of white American society and his gaze is directed at Emily and other representatives of that group who hold power and whom he is always trying to appease" (2016, 90)

Isaac indicates that the portrait manifests Amir's own pride "*The slave finally has the master's wife*" (Akhtar 73). Thus, the black slave is described as being in a continuous endeavor to gain the white's approval.

Amir has not practiced Islam for years, "drinks alcohol, he eats pork, does not pray, and marries a white non-Muslim American woman". He is, in fact, cutting his roots with his Islamic heritage. According to Aparajita "religious and cultural identities are increasingly becoming major scripts inflecting goodness or evilness within racial identities" (2016, ix). Therefore; Amir who has been unable to change his colour and his race, now, is refashioning his cultural and his religious identity in his endeavour to get others' approval and to control how others perceive him. "The question of ethnicity and the struggle of Muslim identity" resurface once Abe(Hussein), Amir's nephew, attends to Amir's flat just to ask Amir to be present at the trial of Pakistani Imam. Amir refuses to defend the Imam saying that "*I'm not gonna be part of a legal team just because your Imam is a bigot*" (Akhtar 13) since the Imam has refused to be represented by "*a couple of Jews*" (Akhtar 13). Amir denies his religion and explains to Abe that he has left Islam because of "religious bigotry" against Jews and he narrates the incident when his mother spat at him because of his relation with Rivkah, the Jewish girl. The Imam has spent four months in prison. According to Bayoumi (2008, 39) Muslims detained by authorities are imprisoned for about 80 days, whereas they could only be held for 24 hours before 9/11. The audience soon know that Amir's nephew (Hussein) has transformed his Muslim name to "Abe Jensen" instead of "Hussein" because he thinks that "*things are easier for him*" with his new name (Akhtar 11). It seems that Abe is changing his name as a self-defense means "*It is okay to hide your religion if you have to. It's called taqiyya*" (Akhtar 11). Switching one's name is one of the most disturbing ramifications of

discrimination. Akhtar portrays the consequences of 9/11 attacks on Muslim Americans.

"In the months after 9/11, the U.S. Justice Department detained thousands of Muslims, South Asians, Middle-Eastern men through various initiatives. Many were deported, others held for months without charge; all has their lives turned upside down and their reputation destroyed. The only basis for such a policy was a general suspicion directed at those thought to be Muslims; only one or two convictions on terrorism charges resulted from roundup". (Kundnani: 2014, 63-64).

Kundnani (136) also confirms that "Muslims who have changed their names" to Arabic names or even American names have been investigated and placed in "Top Secret NYPD intelligence files". At the end of the play, Abe says "*They knew a lot about me ... like they already had a file. They brought up me immigration status*" (Akhtar 83). Moustafa Bayoumi (11) notices that Muslims "abandoned their ethnic roots or religion out of shame or fear or both" and used names from other ethnicities. Muslims are no longer free. Officers working undercover have been sent to conduct surveillance in gathering places such as mosques and restaurants. In a November 2001 meeting, a Georgia Congressman, Saxby Chambliss, suggested that "turn the sheriff loose and arrest every Muslim that crosses the state line". (Source Watch 2007). In the final scene, the audience are informed that a barista of a coffee shop has reported to the FBI both Abe and his friend Tariq for proclaiming that the CIA has created Al Qaeda and that "*this country deserved what it get and what it was going to get*" (AKhtar 82). It is observed that "maltreatment to terror and violence may motivate South Asians, Arabs, and Muslims to critique that state" which may eventually push "many young secular Asians towards Islamism as an alternative world view" (Sharma 2016, 146). The questions directed by the FBI to Hussein and Tariq revolve around whether they hate America, read the Quran, or believe in Jihad (Akhtar 82). It is obvious that such questions link Islam to terrorism. Though the majority of "Muslim Americans do not practise Islam, do not attend mosques, and have a secular outlook, they have been under severe surveillance due to the fact that after 9/11 they have been considered "Muslims" because others perceive them as Muslims" (Kundnani 2014, 48). Those who are "devout or those who have conservative religious views are considered more worthy of surveillance than others" (Ibid 136). The Imam's arrest has occurred after being surveilled. Imam Fareed has been collecting money for charitable activities in the mosque, yet; he has been accused of funding the terrorist

organization, Hamas, a charge that is held under the provisions of the "PATRIOT ACT". Kundnani (24) confirms that Muslims who were arrested or indicated for being involved in terrorist attacks in the U.S.A. between 2001 and 2010 were:

"Prosecuted not for violence but for expressive or charitable activities that the government considers material support for terrorism but which would likely have been considered lawful before 9/11".

In scene three, a dinner party progresses at Amir and Emily's apartment. This is the central scene of the play. Isaac expresses his unease and dissatisfaction about "airport security measures after 9/11 attacks". Amir explains that he willingly offers himself up to be searched before even been asked by the security to do so. Amir says *"I know they're looking at me ... I figure why not make it easier for everyone involved ... The next terrorist attack is probably gonna come from some guy who more or less looks like me"* (Akhtar 51). Amir, apparently, cannot escape the fact that he is a man of colour. The fact that he is a South Asian-looking man connects him to Islam and terrorism. He cannot hide his colour, He is easily recognized by security *"I know they're looking at me"*. As a matter of fact, after 9/11 attacks, flying has become so troublesome and irritating for Muslims. Those of Middle-Eastern looking men are "voted off the plane by pilots, flight attendants, and passengers because they are seen as a source of threat and danger due to their religion, appearance, or speech such as saying Allah or praying" (Ahmad 2002).

Amir is presented as highly critical of Islam and he seems to be internalizing the main stream discourse that enforces the "War on Terror". Amir, indeed, replicates mainstream media depictions of Islam such as bigotry, misogyny, and intolerance. Amir is hiding his identity under the cover of the white men discourse and the white men culture. The queer thing about *Disgraced* is that the Muslim protagonist is the one who criticizes Islam and its tenets while those from other religions like Emily and Isaac are rejecting his views about Islam. Akhtar is clever enough to realize the fact that if he presents his Muslim character as defending Islam, nobody will ever listen to him. Akhtar, in fact, is not in the process of advertising Islam. His Muslim protagonist speaks via a Western tongue; AKhtar wants to be heard and he puts on the table of discussion a hot case with different perspectives revolving around it. However, though Amir expresses his rejection of Islam and acts as an apostate, he proves that he still has that *"Muslim psyche"* he has previously criticized. *"You can't help but feel just a little bit of pride"* (Akhtar 64). Isaac is shocked and immediately asks

Amir whether he feels pride about the 9/11 attacks. Amir asks Isaac about his feelings hearing Ahmadi Nejad "*wiping Israel into the Mediterranean*" (Akhtar 66); a fact that Amir likes to hear, yet; it has stimulated outrage in Isaac who reveals his tribal identification and marks Amir as a "*closet Jihadist*" (Akhtar 68). The point that Amir aims at via stimulating Isaac's outrage is that they should not have blamed him for feeling pride; they all have that tribalism. Isaac, the Jew, is the speaking voice that summarizes the dilemma of a Muslim grappling with the question of "Islam" and "identity" and he diagnoses the problem of generalization that has put all Muslims in the frame of "Radicalism". Islam, thus, is framed as a threat. In an interview with Jewish columnist Cal Thomas U.S. Attorney General John Ash said: "Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him. Christainity is a faith in which God sends his son to die for you". (Ibish and Stewart as cited in Kaplan 2007). Shifting roles shows Akhtar's ability to voice Muslims via their opponents' tongues. Amir who shows no sympathy towards Iman Fareed-who is imprisoned as a terror suspect according to the provision of the "PATRIOT ACT"-now is accused of being a terrorist sympathizer because of his involvement in the case of the Imam. The news reports have ascertained that Amir is Muslim and thus justified his Jewish partners' resolution to exclude Amir and to promote Jory instead. The exclusion asserts Amir's failure to achieve approval in American society despite his overt endeavor to be fully integrated and to demolish all signs of religious and racial differences. Now, Amir, the apostate, the wine drinker, the pork eater and the Islamic taboo-breaker is completely an alien who is accused of ambivalence and of being a terrorist sympathizer. During the climax of the play at the dinner party, Amir comes to a full recognition of the predicament he is living. The catastrophe happens when Emily's affair with Isaac is revealed the moment Jory finds Isaac and Emily in a state of affection and requires knowing what is happening. Emily explains that "*I was upset they made you a partner*" (Akhtar 95). Amir is outraged once he knows that Jory is the one who has been promoted to a partner instead of him. He argues that unlike Jory he has worked for long hours and he hates the fact that she has been treated much better than him by the partners at the firm. Then Amir continues to say "*you think you're the nigger here? I'm the nigger!! Me!!*" (Akhtar 76). Describing himself as a "*nigger*", Amir exposes the deep frustration that Muslims suffer because of occupying the lowest rank in social hierarchy. Thus, the word "*nigger*" here does not only mark those of black skin or Africans; it also refers to those occupying the bottom of the social pyramid, in this case, they are the Muslims. Bayoumi (2008, 135) summarizes this harsh fact when he translates "we are the new abeed" as "we are the new niggers". Events move rapidly at the supposed dinner party. Amir spits at

Isaac who, in turn insults Amir and negatively stereotypes him saying "*There is reason they call you people animals*" (Akhtar 72). While it seems for the audience that Amir is replicating his mother's anti-semitism and bigotry, yet; the truth is that Amir is only showing a "natural individual reaction" for being betrayed by Isaac and Emily. Jory mentions that Mort says that Amir is duplicitous and cannot be trusted "prejudice, discrimination, and compromised sense of safety are historically correlated with racial subordination in the United States". (Cainkar 2006, 269). Disappointed with this shocking unwelcomed news along with Emily's confession about betraying him, Amir beats Emily violently conveying "*a lifetime of discreetly building resentment*" (Akhtar 79). Amir's violence is not fortuitous; it is, unfortunately, the product of a long time of repression and resentment. He is not beating Emily; he is, in fact, beating the image of the "whole white American race" into which he has been aspiring to be integrated. His violent act has been made by the prejudices of the American community; it has not been inherited and it does not replicate Islamic teachings. Spitting at Isaac and hitting Emily violently do not offer us the explanation that Amir is a bigoted or a violent Muslim. Akhtar reminds his audience that the pressure (caused by surveillance, prejudice, and betrayal) Amir has been living has made him what he is. In scene four Amir and Emily meet one last time. Once Emily leaves, Amir starts contemplating the portrayal which according to Isaac questions Amir's place. Amir tries to find answers: "what does the portrait mean?, What does it represent?, and what does it mean to be portrayed as a Muslim?. Akhtar is problematizing a serious issue here: is Amir going to change what the West has misconceptualized about Muslims who have been stereotyped as the contrary identity or the Muslim Other?" Amir is not going to be the American gentleman anymore, yet; "he needs to know who he is" because, according to Akhtar, saying "I am not what you think I am" is not going to be enough (Basu2019, 159). He needs to change how people perceive him to how he perceives himself.

Conclusion

Amir's plight can be best understood by analyzing the opening and the ending of the play "with a representation of a Muslim man". Ending the play with the protagonist striving to figure out the meaning of this representation and to reconcile with it emphasizes the problematic equation that is represented by two complicated factors: "the represented and the representer". Amir has been trying to define his identity via opposing his religious and ethnic background and adopting the trends of an islamophobic society that is completely rejecting aliens who are seen as parasites

that must be demolished. Amir's identity is shattered between being Muslim South Asian and being American. It is, in fact, a hybridizing area, where Amir is striving between "how he perceives himself and how he is perceived by others". Amir's long looking at the portrait indicates that certain issues must be negotiated. Amir's religious, ethnic, and national identity must be recognized and reconfigured, particularly, in the climactic islamophobic setting of the post- 9/11 racialization of Muslims that has led to the persistent need to "a reconfiguration of the indices of belonging to the American polity" (De X, 2016). *Disgraced* urges the audience to look deeply into the plight of Muslim Americans and to negotiate their perception of Islam and Muslims. Akhtar says "The play's resolution lies not on stage, but in the consciousness of the audience" (Younis 2014, 93). This paper concludes that Akhtar's "*Disgraced*" condemns "the Homeland Security State and the PATRIOT ACT" that have criminalized the Muslim Other.

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