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The Representation of Islam and Islamic Culture in Realist and  
Magical Realist Contemporary Literature:  
A Cultural Critique of Western Representation of Islam

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
Of  
PhD in Comparative Literature in the Department of Cultures and Languages  
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## Preface

Prophet Muhammad (MPBUH) said: ‘A person does not thank Allah if he/she does not thank people’

I consider myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to pursue my PhD research with my principal supervisor Doctor John Walker without whom this research would have not been possible. I am very thankful for Doctor John Walker’s supervisions, advice, encouragement, and his patience for making my PhD research journey a positive experience. Doctor John Walker has nurtured my knowledge and inspired me through a fruitful research path, which I hope is reflected in this dissertation. I also thank Doctor John Walker for his constructive advice and expertise in helping make this dissertation complete up to the very end. I am very grateful for Doctor John Walker’s support during my pregnancy in the first global lockdown of Covid-19 and his reassurance that the university was okay with my decision to return home. I would also want to take this chance to thank the Walker family (Christiane and Alex) who have helped organise Zoom meetings during this Covid-19 pandemic. I also thank Professor Akane Kawakami my second supervisor for her experience in the field. I have benefited from her supervisions and constructive advice. Thank you for your patience, shared knowledge that was encouraging and helped shape my research. It has been an honour to work closely with Doctor John Walker and Professor Akane Kawakami. Thank you for your continued support and for seeing me through to a successful completion of the upgrade and for seeing me through to the submission stage. Many thanks for nurturing me professionally and for reading the many rewritings of each chapter throughout the past four years of my PhD.

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the way in which cultural critique and representation of Islamic traditions have been achieved through images, multi-narrative perspective, and verbal description of images using Western symbols to avoid offense against religious doctrine. The first introductory chapter sets out the argument of the thesis. I examine the representation of Islam through the two literary modes of realism and magical realism. Chapter One focuses on why *The Satanic Verses* cannot be considered as a magical realist novel in its representation of orthodox Islam. I argue that the novel is not a magical realist novel because part of the *magical realist* literary mode must conform to the canons of literary realism; this criterion is not satisfied in *The Satanic Verses*. Chapter Two examines Orhan Pamuk's *The Colour Red* where the representation of Islamic culture and tradition is achieved through the prism of European realism. The discussion of *The Colour Red* shows a way of critiquing the Islamic tradition in a positive way through respectful questioning of prohibitions and finding a way to enhance Islamic culture. The Western fantasy of the *Other* is turned on the West through the Westernization of Islamic art. Chapter Three is an anthropological analysis of the representation of a Saudi Arabian culture through Western symbols in Yousef Al-Mohaimed's *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*. Western culture is mistranslated by the Arabian adoption of Western symbols, and this is used by the novelist as a form of critique. Some cultural actions reveal corrupt actions that take place in an Islamic society. These cultural actions do not fall under Islamic tradition and indeed violate it. Chapter Four on Michel Tournier's *The Golden Droplet* critiques the Western representation of Islamic cultural appropriation which forces and imposes a false image of the Algerian Islamic world during French imperialism. The *Islamic* representation of the West creates a critique of the colonial gaze. In this section the Islamic form of representation is shown to mediate truth more than Western form of representation.

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## Introduction

This thesis seeks to investigate the representation and critique of Islamic culture and tradition through two literary modes: magical realism and realism. My research explores the reasons behind the prohibition of representation in the different Islamic traditions. My overall approach here is to consider several authors' critiques of Islamic culture through Western/European symbols.<sup>1</sup> Focusing on the concept of representation, I aim to consider the hidden meaning of the use of Western and Islamic symbols that are religious and cultural as a means of critique. The rationale of this research is to take a close look at culture and its critique from a perspective which differs from a European/Western way of critiquing the *Other* where Western symbols are used as a means of critique and a dialogue between different cultures; representation can be a subtle and persuasive form of critique, rather than an offense against religious doctrine. The importance of literary representation for cultural studies is that it becomes a way of understanding society, culture and the world through a different perspective that literature can offer. Islamic culture can be difficult to critique, and this produces a representational problem. In the Islamic tradition there is a prohibition on representing God, the Prophet Muhammad, and anything that is considered sacred; I aim to investigate the reasons behind the prohibition and to examine literary solutions to the prohibition of representation in Islam. How do we overcome the problem of representation to form a persuasive and creative critique of Islamic culture and tradition? The importance of literary representation for cultural studies is that it becomes a way of understanding society, culture and the world through the magnified scope that is literature.

My research looks at a new and different way of understanding culture in relation to the Islamic tradition through the authors' self-critique as a way of tackling issues found in Islamic cultures; in relation to Islam this is problematic because of the prohibition on representation. In Islam we cannot represent things directly but allude to them in an indirect way; and therefore, magical realism might seem best for the representation of Islamic culture and tradition. This is a key theme in my research that relates to the ideas of realism and magical realism. I examine the different definitions of realism and magical realism; however, my definition of the literary modes is specific in relation to the representation of Islam. My brief

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<sup>1</sup> In the Islamic context the term *Western* is used to refer to both Europe and the West. When I refer to Western symbols, Western critique and Western influences I mean both in Europe and the West unless otherwise stated. Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red* is influenced by European realism: in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* there are both Western and European influences and the same is true of Yousef Al-Mohameed's *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*.

definition of realism is the representation of reality or the real world through literature; realism represents the real world and our common experience of the real world. However, I also cite J.P Stern's definition of the nineteenth-century realism in *On Realism*<sup>2</sup> (1973), where it can only be defined through examples (Wittgenstein's theory of family resemblance) and that it contains a double meaning (28). Realism has a 'double meaning':<sup>3</sup> the first is directly speaking of the real world and representing the common world of experience, and the second is through a type of philosophical questioning of the world (37). Therefore, realism as a literary mode is restricted when it comes to the imaginary because of its attempt to represent reality or stay truthful to its representation of reality. In relation to Islam, this can be a problem as it is difficult to critique Islam in a straightforward manner of narration. There are different ways of writing about the Islamic world both from within the different Islamic traditions and outside; and both of those perspectives often end up in offending against Islamic principles. However, there is a way of writing and reading that writing, which employ Islamically permissible practices that allow us critically to engage with Islam without offending the key principles of Islam. This introduction will explain how this is possible through exploring some problems about the relationship between Islam and literature and different ways of writing and reading about Islam by both Islamic and non-Islamic authors.

### **Different ways of writing about Islam from Islamic and non-Islamic authors**

Most Western writers have developed critical tools for showing how Islam has been misrepresented. Western writers such as Michel Tournier critique the Western projection of its *fantasy* about the *Orient* in its representation of Islamic culture and Islamic symbols. Tournier reflects Said's discussion about colonialism, Western dominance and the misrepresentation of the *Orient*, but this is reversed in the novel. Islamic symbols become a critique of the Western representation of the image and the commodification of Islamic culture. Tournier's *The Golden Droplet*, critiques the Orientalising gaze. However, Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red* explores the problem of the Islamic prohibition of representation. The prohibition on representation in Islam means that the critical representation of Islamic culture can be enabled by a *Western*

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph P. Stern, *On Realism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1973), p.28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

literary mode of representation. Here one can see that the use of Western symbols in writing about Islam forms a safe barrier for discussion without offense.

There is Western literature that critiques the Orientalising gaze and vindicates Islamic truth without falling into the trap of Orientalism. This dissertation, especially in chapters Two and Four, examine how this is possible by examining writers whose work does not bear out Edward Said's arguments in *Orientalism*<sup>4</sup> (2003). There are Western writers who critique the dominant and Orientalising gaze that is projected on the Orient. The knowledge portrayed by Said on the Western projection of the Orient is critiqued by Tournier as a false form of "imperial" knowledge directed towards a particular kind of literary market. Tournier's writing portrays a critique of the way the West perceives and represents the 'Orient' through the creation of museums and the projection of particular locales as exotic. In the novel, the word *image* in all its forms or meanings is very important as it portrays a certain characteristic of people and religiously (in an Islamic context), portrays the problems associated with the projected image. On the other hand, there are authors who deliberately use techniques that allow them to distance themselves from that which they wish to critique. In the case of authors such as Orhan Pamuk, and Yousef Al-Mohaimed, one finds that the use of Western symbols or forms of representation makes it easier to write about Islamic culture and Islamic practices without offending against Islam. This is because the language that is used employs Western terminology or modes of expression that are non-Islamic and therefore enable a critique of the Islamic cultural domain.

## **Problems with Islam in Literature**

The Islamic prohibition on representation centres on the idea of 'prejudice against the Divine Self'. In Arab culture the use of the phrase 'prejudice against the Divine Self' indicates a false or hateful statement and misuse of religion. This is considered blasphemy because it can cause harm and is understood as a deliberate malice or bias against God and religion. 'Prejudice against the Divine Self' may include a critique of religion, interpreting actions of the Prophet or Islamic doctrine. The problem with this sort of religious representation is that it is not just a

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2003), p.226-277.

mistake or misinterpretation but is a distortion of truth. There is a specific verse in chapter nine (Surah at-Tawbah)<sup>5</sup> of the Qur'an that shows:

'ولئن سألتهم ليقولن إنما كنا نخوض ونلعب قل أبالله وآياته ورسوله كنتم تستهزؤن' (٦٥)

'And if you ask them, they will surely say, "We were only conversing and playing." Say, "Is it Allah and His verses and His Messenger that you were mocking?"' (9:65)

'لا تعتذروا قد كفرتم بعد ايمانكم ان نعف عن طائفة نعذب طائفة بأنهم كانوا مجرمين' (٦٦)

'Make no excuse: you have disbelieved [i.e., rejected faith] after your belief. If we pardon one fraction of you — We will punish another fraction because they were criminals.' (9:66)

Abdul Rahman Al-Sa'adi is a distinguished Islamic scholar explains that those who mock God and all of the Prophets has become an infidel and denounced his religion. The basis of Islam is to glorify God and all his Prophets. Those who mock God and his prophets were not believers from the beginning and are contradictors of faith:

'فإن الاستهزاء بالله وآياته ورسوله كفر مخرج عن الدين لأن أصل الدين مبني على تعظيم الله، وتعظيم

دينه ورسوله، والاستهزاء بشيء من ذلك مناف لهذا الأصل، ومناقض له أشد المناقضة. 6 (ص ٣٤٢-٣٤٣)

Muhammad Al-Tiremithi a scholar of Islam, gives another interpretation of the Qur'anic verses about those who misuse and misinterpret religion:

حديث رقم ٢٩٥٠

'حدثنا محمود بن غيلان، قال: حدثنا بشر بن السري، قال: حدثنا سفيان، عن عبد الأعلى، عن سعيد بن جبير، عن ابن عباس، قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "من قال في القرآن بغير علم فليتبوأ مقعده من النار" 7

رواه  
الترمذي  
ذي

<sup>5</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings* trans. by Saheeh International (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: Abdul-Qasim Publishing House, 1997), p.255.

<sup>6</sup> عبد الرحمن السعدي، تيسير الكريم الرحمن: في تفسير كلام المنان، الطبعة الأولى (بيروت، لبنان: مؤسسة الرسالة للطباعة والنشر والتوزيع، ٢٠٠٢م)، ص ٣٤٢-٣٤٣.

<sup>7</sup> محمد الترمذي، سنن الترمذي: الجامع الكبير، الطبعة الأولى (لبنان، بيروت، دار الغرب الاسلامي) ١٩٩٦.

سنن الترمذي: الجامع الكبير (٥) م / أبواب تفسير القرآن عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم (١) باب ما جاء في الذي يفسر القرآن برأيه ص ٦٥ حديث رقم ٢٩٥٠

سنن الترمذي: الجامع الكبير (٥) م ٥ / أبواب تفسير القرآن عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم (١) باب ما جاء في الذي يفسر القرآن برأيه ص ٦٥ حديث رقم ٢٩٥٠

The translation of the hadith above is: those who interpret the Qur'an without knowledge will have a seat made of fire. Prejudgment is considered part of interpretation of certain religious traditions (such as Christianity) but in Islam it is harmful because the privilege of commentary is reserved for Islamic scholars who specialise in the interpretation of the Qur'anic text and hadith.<sup>8</sup> In the Islamic tradition the *hadith* is part of the Prophet Muhammad's Sunah or Serah; this contains the Islamic teachings of the Prophet such as ablution and praying. The text of the *hadith* is not part of the Holy Qur'an itself. The meaning of the word *hadith* is a conversation which the Prophet has with his companions in which he taught them about Muslim character. The meaning of hadith in English is defined in Oliver Leaman's *The Qur'an: An Encyclopaedia* (2005)<sup>9</sup> where he emphasises its importance in orthodox Islam:

A very important source of Islamic law, not to say interpretation of the Qur'an, comes from the traditional sayings of the Prophet and those close to him. These have been collected and are called *hadith*. [...] (*ahadith*, sing. *hadith*) had been made during the third century/ninth century, but six works became recognized as authoritative in Sunni Islam, especially the Sahih al-Bukhari and the Sahih Muslim. The adjective Sahih [...] means accredited: the other four are also highly esteemed, but it is allowed by the Muslims that some of the hadith in them are suspect and may not be genuine. (229)

Leaman finds that the most trusted collectors of *ahadith* are Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim; he explains that *ahadith* are Muslims second only authority after the Qur'an 'for the laws and customs of Islam' (230). However, the most highly regarded hadith literature is of 'Abu Abdulla Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari': this is the most highly regarded work of hadith literature (230). Therefore, prejudging of the Islamic text can be considered as prejudging God in the Islamic faith.

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<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. by Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.20f. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989), pp.438-46.

<sup>9</sup> Oliver Leaman, *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia* ([n.p.]: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), p.229-230. ProQuest ebook Central.

## Methodology

### A Modern approach towards an Islamic reading of Contemporary Literature

The sense of the term *real* relates to Plato's cave allegory in the *Republic*<sup>10</sup> (2008). This characterises knowledge of reality as a shadow (241). As Plato explains, truth to the prisoners are shadows from artefacts (241).<sup>11</sup> According to Plato our knowledge (what we see) of the world and the objects that surround us are only shadows not the true reality of an image or truth (243). Therefore, the analogy between representation and shadow is similar to Plato's use of the *shadow* and truth of reality. The shadow that the fire casts at the wall of the cave becomes this representation of objects (240). However, the shadows are not a true imitation or an accurate image of an object (241). The shadows create a different image, which is projected onto the wall (241). The shadow image can give a different meaning to the object that it casts on the wall (241). The analogy of the cave is highly relevant in relation to realism, but also to the Islamic context of the prohibition on representation, which could be understood in the same way. The prohibition on representation in Islam is explored further in *My Name Is Red*, in which the challenges of depicting reality and Islamic art clash together. In a novel, the reader is the prisoner of the cave as he/she steps out of the novel and into reality. The reality of a novel is a representational shadow of the true reality of the reader. Plato's banishment of the artist is similar to the Islamic banishment of art because it is a shadow of the ultimate truth that is conveyed by the Holy Qur'an. Plato describes the objects that are seen within the light outside of the cave, which creates a confusion of realities where the shadows seem truer than the light on the objects (242). These two realities of shadow and light create a distorted representation of reality and could mean that '[...] the truth of the matter [is] that these [shadows] are clearer than what he was being shown' (242). This is comparable to the reasons behind the Islamic prohibition on art because it can never truly convey truth. In this quotation one can see the similarities between Plato's banishment of the artist and the Holy Qur'an's treatment of the artist. One can think of the light as the Islamic truth and the shadows as the artist's representation of that truth. However, in the novels I discuss representation becomes a problem because it can never portray the same truth that is revealed by the Holy Qur'an. In Pamuk's novel representation not only portrays a clash between art and Islamic religion but reveals a

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<sup>10</sup> Plato, *Republic*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2008), pp.240-243.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

modern way of respectful and responsible questioning of Islam. In Al-Mohaimed's novel representation is important in revealing non-Islamic cultural practices in an Islamic country, where the foundation of Islam took place. In Tournier's novel this becomes the opposite of the other two novels where Islamic art conveys truth unlike Western art. Tournier's novel is also highly relevant to the Platonic reference and the Islamic prohibition on representation.

Plato's allegory of the cave has a remarkable resemblance to a *hadith* in Islam that describes God as a very bright light. Prophet Muhammad was unable to see God because of how bright God's light is, which burns the eyes with brightness when attempting to look directly in God's direction: Plato's allegory of the cave is similar to the hadith where Plato describes the pain the prisoner will suffer after being set free from the cave:

Imagine that one of them has been set free and is suddenly made to stand up, to turn his head and walk, and to look towards the firelight [...] It hurts him to do all this and he's too dazzled to be capable of making out the objects whose shadows he'd formerly been looking at. [...] someone tells him that what he's been seeing all this time has no substance, and that he's now closer to reality and is seeing more accurately, because of the greater reality of the things in front of his eyes (241-242).

Plato's cave analogy is similar in its depiction of why humans cannot see God. Below is an Arabic hadith that describes Prophet Muhammad's encounter with God and why he was not able to see God:

حديث رقم 450  
'حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة: حدثنا وكيع عن يزيد بن إبراهيم، عن قتادة، عن عبدالله بن شقيق، عن أبي ذر قال: سألت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم هل رأيت ربك؟ قال: "نوراً أنى أراه." 12 (٨٥)  
رواه مسلم

صحيح مسلم/ م ١ كتاب الايمان/ ٧٨ باب في قوله عليه السلام "نور انى اراه" وفي قوله "رأيت نوراً" ص ٨٥  
حديث رقم ٤٥٠

حديث رقم 451  
'حدثنا محمد بن بشار: حدثنا معاذ بن هشام: حدثنا ابي. (ح) وحدثني حجاج بن الشاعر: حدثنا عفان بن مسلم: حدثنا همام، كلاهما عن قتادة، عن عبدالله بن شقيق، قال قلت لأبي ذر: لو رأيت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لسألته، فقال: عن أي شيء كنت تسأله؟ قال: كنت أسأله هل رأيت ربك؟ قال أبو ذر: قد سألت فقال: "رأيت نوراً." 13 (٨٥)  
رواه مسلم

أبو الحسين مسلم النيسابوري، صحيح مسلم، م ١ (بيروت، لبنان: دار صادر، بدون تاريخ)، ص ٨٥. 12  
صحيح مسلم/ م ١ كتاب الايمان/ ٧٨ باب في قوله عليه السلام "نور انى اراه" وفي قوله "رأيت نوراً" ص ٨٥ حديث رقم ٤٥٠  
Imam Abu Hussein Muslim Al-Nisaburi, *Sahih Muslim*, 4 vols (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Sader publishers, [n.d.]) I, 85.

13 Ibid., p.85.

صحيح مسلم/ م ١ كتاب الايمان/ ٧٨ باب في قوله عليه السلام "نور انى اراه" وفي قوله "رأيت نوراً" ص ٨٥ حديث رقم ٤٥١

صحیح مسلم/ م ۱ کتاب الایمان/ ۷۸ باب فی قوله علیه السلام ”نور انی اراه“ وفي قوله ”رأیت نوراً“ ص ۸۵  
حدیث رقم ۴۵۱

Abi Thar is Prophet Muhammad’s companion; he retells a conversation he had with the Prophet asking him if he had seen God. The Prophet answers by saying: ‘I saw him as light’ and ‘light is what I saw’. The hadith describes the light that the Prophet saw as a veil like Plato’s shadows which were cast by the fire. The prisoners in the cave only saw shadows that were cast from the wall and were able to hear the outside world. However, the Prophet still heard the voice of God who commanded him and his followers to pray. The effect of the sun on the prisoners resembles the Prophet’s experience when he tried to see God. The two encounters can be thought of as life changing experiences; from one lived reality to a completely different understanding of it. However, the prisoners’ perception of reality is affected by the sun and changes. The prisoner is no longer able to distinguish between the two because of the knowledge that he is unable to comprehend all at once. In literary representation real life can be comparable to Plato’s cave, as the reader is the prisoner of the shadows of the representation of reality. In Islam, representation is prohibited because it is a distortion of the ultimate truth revealed to the Prophet; this is how Plato’s cave allegory is analogous to Islamic prohibition on representation.

## **The Islamic context for reading, writing, and critiquing**

### Definition of Literary Terms

Magical realism and realism are important concepts in my research because they relate to the representation of Islam One cannot begin to define magical realism before defining realism first because this literary mode depends on a realist manner of narration. Realism is an attempt to represent experience as though it were real through fiction or art. Looking at Catherine Belsey in *Culture and the Real*<sup>14</sup> (2005), examines Woody Allen’s film *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, which interrogates the idea of ‘reality’ by portraying as its main fictional character Tom Baxter who jumps out of the screen and into the real world. Woody Allen’s character Tom faces difficulties in the “real” world such as using “film” money that is of no value in the “real” world. Tom’s other difficulty is waiting for the screen fade out after kissing

<sup>14</sup> Catherine Belsey, *Culture and the Real* (London: Routledge and Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), p.1-38  
Kindle Edition.

Cecilia as he is not sure what to do next. Other characters in the film have their faces pressed against on the screen complaining that they cannot escape. (1) Belsey finds that Allen's films depend on stories that confound common sense:

Inside the imaginary world of Woody Allen's movie, the comedy depends on a story that crosses the common-sense dividing line between fact and fiction. This is the line actualized by the presence of the screen itself, 'behind' which, as it naively seems, fictional characters conduct their thrilling, passionate or tragic lives, oblivious of the audience who have paid to watch them do so. (2)

Belsey gives examples about realism from different Hollywood films as examples of real life and a made-up world that resembles reality. Belsey states that Hollywood 'knew the difference between fact and fiction, the story's 'reality' and dreams.' (2) This is demonstrated through *Walter Mitty*, the daydreamer who escapes the suburban life and his mother through fantasies, in which where he becomes the hero, while in his real-life day job he proofreads novels (2). Belsey discusses the opposition between reality and imagination, that 'can easily be naturalized in a classic realist story' (2). Belsey argues that *Walter Mitty* sets 'a binary opposition between the actual and the imagined.' (3) This shows that the story portrays for the reader what is real and what is not real for the reader.

For Belsey, these film extracts exemplify the distinctions between fiction and reality and so confirms the Western tradition that is:

sanity, rationality, responsibility, the characteristics of the citizen entitled to play a part in society, and accountable before the law, are synonymous with the ability to tell the difference between reality and delusion. (3)

So, Belsey argues that fiction is not real, but then questions if reality is a creation of our minds or culturally induced and what if there is a difference between the two? (3):

Cultural criticism has successfully challenged the common-sense assumption that our social arrangements and values constitute the expression of a universal, foundational humanity. Indeed, we have also relativized common sense itself. (3) [...] this radicalism has been so influential [...] that it has become fashionable to see human beings as entirely culturally constructed. (3)

Belsey gives an example of this in Jean Baudrillard who questions where Disneyland ends, and the real America begins (4). Baudrillard explains that Disneyland is part of American culture but also that Disneyland that is authentic (4). Here Belsey's attempt to define realism or rather cultural realism and references Stephen Greenblatt:

[...] reality is understood to be synonymous with the cultural conception of reality, and this in turn is historically relative. (4)

Belsey explains that ‘poststructuralism holds on to a structural uncertainty’ that she names “‘the anxiety of the real’” (4). She looks at Saussure and Lacan’s distinction between meaning that we learn from language which is different from ‘the world that language purports to describe [...]’ as there is no evidence that meaning and the world, we know are the same (4). Lacan’s real is not the reality ‘which is what we do know’ that is culturally defined (5). Therefore, what is meant by real here ‘is there, but undefined, unaccountable, perhaps, within the frameworks of our knowledge. It is there as such, but not there-for-a-subject.’ (5) Belsey gives examples of the real in psychoanalysis such as the work of Sigmund Freud where he gives an account of how a dream ‘can bring to light the missed encounter with a real so unbearable that it cannot be named.’ (5) Freud’s case of the father dreaming of his dead son is interpreted by Lacan, that the father woke up and is no longer dreaming (5). Belsey describes this as a ‘loss [that] is real, organic, but language cannot do it justice.’ (5) For Lacan this ‘[...] is a realm beyond reality [...]’ (5).

Belsey considers poststructuralism to distinguish between reality and the real:

By distinguishing between reality and the real, the known and the unknowable, poststructuralism acknowledges the relativity of what we can be sure of, without resorting to the position of the culturalists, who make what exists depend, in effect, on our idea of what exists. (6)

Belsey gives the interesting example of the film *Last Action Hero* because it does not make the viewer assume that there ‘is no difference between illusion and reality’ (7). This becomes a cultural problem because it highlights the fact that there is uncertainty ‘between fiction and fact, [...] the lives we imagine and the simulacra we live, and a corresponding anxiety about the implications of that uncertainty.’ (8) Belsey portrays reality in our real world and in films, fictions that portray a ‘reality’ different from the one we culturally know. Belsey described culture in our globalised society as including art, opera, fashion, media (film-television), and travel:

Culture is the element we inhabit as speaking beings; it is what makes us subjects. Culture consists of a society’s entire range of signifying practices – rituals, stories, forms of entertainment, lifestyles, sports, norms, beliefs, prohibitions and values. [...] Culture resides in the meanings of those practices, the meanings we learn. The subject is what speaks, or, more precisely, what signifies, and subjects learn in culture to reproduce or to challenge the meanings inscribed in the signifying practices of the society that shapes them. (8)

Belsey describes culture as all that we know and always being a part of. Culture is known to us through language and the knowledge we have of it is through symbols. So, these symbols do not show a specific set of symbols maps the world accurately (10).

In *The Singularity of Literature*<sup>15</sup> (2017), Derek Attridge explains that attempts to define literary and non-literary language since the Renaissance have failed (2). However, he explains that this failure is necessary because ‘literature as a cultural practice has been continuously constituted.’ (2) Attridge has found two issues within literature, that is, ‘[...]the role of innovation in the history of Western art’ and ‘the importance to readers, viewers, and listeners of the uniqueness of the individual artwork and of the artist’s oeuvre.’ (2) These two are redefined by Attridge as ‘invention’ and ‘singularity’, which consist of our understanding and ‘acknowledged properties of art’ (2). This, Attridge explains, brings them into conjunction in theoretical writing with terms such as ‘alterity’ and ‘otherness’ (2). Literary works are described as events that can be experienced and reexperienced repeatedly without seeming to be the same; Attridge argues many have noticed this but only ‘a few have pursued’ it (2). Attridge argues that literature can be a mode for cultural critique:

In the field of literary studies, this attitude has been highly productive, giving us valuable accounts of literary works as indices to the historical, sociological, and ideological texture of earlier periods and other cultures and to the psychic and sometimes somatic constitution of authors, injecting literature into political struggles (in the name of humanism, the working class, oppressed races and nationalities, women, and homosexuals, to name just a few), and exemplifying in literary works important features of linguistic structure, rhetorical and formal organization, and generic conventions. The experience of immediacy and vividness which we often gain from literary works of the past leads naturally to their being pressed into service as a source of evidence for lives led before ours or in foreign places; and although there is a danger that the “reality effect,” the created illusion of a real referent, may interfere with as much as it aids accurate historical and human judgment, the judicious use of literary evidence is clearly as valid as other modes of access to a vanished or otherwise inaccessible culture. (9-10)

Attridge argues that literature is highly influential in ‘cultural formations’ as it has been a political weapon and influenced social movements against slavery and capital punishment (10). Literature is described as contributing to social advancement (10). The term ‘otherness’ is described as culture giving way to ‘thinking, understanding, imagining, feeling, [and] perceiving’ (27). The other term used for ‘otherness’ is ‘newness’, but Attridge finds that this word contains a negative side to it as it seems to suggest that, in historical narrative, the old is replaced by the new. Attridge argues that most of the time it is through the old ‘that otherness makes itself felt.’ (27) There are times when literary works are described as a ‘challenge to

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<sup>15</sup> Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge Classics, 2017), (p. 1-79), Kindle Edition.

cultural norms' and these works continue to be a challenge throughout centuries as 'it is never fully accommodated' (66-67).

Attridge investigates cultural distance, which he describes as a product of 'passage of time' (71). Literary works can make us aware of 'the differences between simultaneously existing cultural formations' (72). For Attridge these cultural differences function in many ways. He gives as an example literary works which have been translated into foreign languages. If they are enjoyed by their foreign readers as much as they would have been in their original untranslated language then it is not just because the translator is good. He explains that it is 'because of a large degree of overlap between the governing cultural conditions and linguistic norms of (for example) contemporary Portugal and Britain.' (72) Another example is of Korean Literature. If it appeals to the reader this is a sign of globalisation 'that has diminished cultural difference that were once marked [...] [or] that the work has a quite distinct kind of inventiveness in its new context, just as an older work in one's own language may be inventive today in ways that could not have been foreseen when it was written.' (72)

In literature, cultural criticism is reflected in the different ways reality is perceived in the novel. The distinguished scholar of European realism J.P. Stern reflects on Erich Auerbach's definition of realism in *On Realism*<sup>16</sup> (1973) as a way of 'establishing the coherence of a literary and cultural development, a story in time' (30). Stern looks at the discussion of what is realism and what is realistic in literature. For him, the aim of realism is to show:

what is entailed in literature and outside it, as we use these words: to show, occasionally in a philosophical way, the irrelevance to realism of philosophical enquiries into the nature of reality; to avoid the specious and the esoteric on the one hand and the contradictory on the other: and in the process to find out something about the more reassuring areas of our world. [...] realism doesn't ask whether the world is real, but it occasionally asks what happens to persons who think it isn't (31).

Here realism becomes a way of rediscovering and understanding our world while the previous definition of the mode focuses on the imitation of reality and the critique of it through literature. However, Stern does not aim to define conceptually what *realism* is but suggests that it is a way of describing the world (31). According to Stern, the definition of *reality* should be left to the philosopher and not to the literary critic (31). Therefore, for Stern realism in literature has a parallel in life and this double existence is central to his discussion of realism (37).

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<sup>16</sup> Stern, p. 30.

Raymond Williams' *Keywords*<sup>17</sup> (1976) provides a cultural and societal meaning for terms such as *realism* and *representation* (representative). Williams finds realism to be a complicated mode because it depends on two words, 'real' and 'reality' (257).<sup>18</sup> For Williams, *realism* in its earlier use meant "the reality underlying appearances" (258). He says that the *real* has a shifting double sense and denotes 'something actually existing' (258). The mode is often referred to as a limitation because of several senses such as:

(a) that what is described or represented is seen only superficially, in terms of its outward *appearance* rather than its inner **reality**; (b) in a more modern form of the same objection, that there are many **real** forces—from inner feelings to underlying social and historical movements—which are either not accessible to ordinary observation or which are imperfectly or not at all represented in how things appear, so that a **realism** 'of the surface' can quite miss important **realities** [...] (261).

Therefore, representation in language, arts or film becomes different from the represented object. Effects such as "lifelike representation," "the reproduction of reality" can seem to be an 'artistic convention' or 'a falsification' giving the reader an assumption that representation is real (261).<sup>19</sup> The objects that are being represented as realistic only touch on the surface of a realistic representation and are not a completely *real* representation of reality. So, representation comes from the artistic need to recreate, repeat, or imitate reality. The terms *representation* and *reality* go hand in hand. Williams finds that realist art and literature uses repetition to make objects that are represented appear to be real (261). This is harmful because it is a false 'version of reality' and is being 'passed off as reality' (261). A false representation of reality, or an imitation of reality, excludes its active element (261). Realism as Williams has shown is a form of representation in itself. The word *real* can be defined not just in relation to its antonym of *imaginary* but also as the opposite of *appearance*, as in the example given by Williams about Christ's presence in 'the materials of communion, but also in wider arguments about the true or fundamental quality of some thing or situation—the real thing, the reality of something' (258). The term in the nineteenth-century describes new doctrines of the world as something 'independent of mind or spirit, in this sense sometimes interchangeable with NATURALISM or MATERIALISM' (259). For a certain reality to be real means that it needs to be realised (260). This sense of the term *real* also relates to Plato's cave allegory.

The relationship between realism, meaning and representation is directly relevant to the novel. This is when the reader becomes a spectator, looking at the lives of others through a

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<sup>17</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Fontana Press, 1976), p. 241, 257-269.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.253.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.261.

novel which is a representation of reality. Peter Brooks looks at the pleasures of imitating reality in *Realist Vision*<sup>20</sup> (2005). Brooks looks at our pleasure of imitation from an earlier stage of our lives. Brooks questions the reason we find pleasure in imitating and reproducing ‘things of our world’ (1). This pleasure comes from our childhood (1).<sup>21</sup> Children always imitate real life actions using toys to ‘reproduce in miniature the objects amid which we live’ (1). Brooks describes the scale models as models that help us prepare and get our minds with the objects that might seem alien to us (1).

The pleasure that human beings take in scale models of the real—dollhouses, ships in bottles, lead soldiers, model railroads—must have something to do with the sense these provide of being able to play with and therefore to master the world (1).

One of the reasons representational art and icons are prohibited in Islam could be the pleasures these items bring as a distraction from life. The pleasure one finds in this is a way of mastering the world through a type of *play* (2). Therefore, this becomes a type of temptation and a trigger for sinning. Furthermore, these scale models are more like the novel where the reader experiences a representation of a realistic world in a safe environment. The safe environment in the novel is a place where the complexities of real life can be experienced without actual consequences. Brooks examines Friedrich Schiller’s model of art as a form of play: ‘art is the product of a human instinct for play, the *Spieltrieb*, by which we create our zone of apparent freedom in a world otherwise constricted by laws and necessities’ (1). For Brooks we have a desire to play and this desire is brought out by scale models (of the world) or, by extension, in the realist novel (2). He describes playing as a form of mastering the world and this provides the feeling that we have ‘freedom in it’ (2). In an Islamic perspective this can create a world other than the one we live in. The rules for mastering such a world changes or does not include the Islamic way of life. In other words, it becomes a man’s created world where man takes on the role of the Divine and becomes in control of that *play world*.

The word *play* is highly important, as it not only includes a type of imitation but also a form of repetition where the world is manageable (2). Brooks places an importance on the ability to be in control of this play world and for adults it is ‘[...] that form of play we call literature, the creation and consumption of fictions’ (2). Literature as a form of play or a model as an object for writers is a way to face and master the world. Fiction is not real but is a representation of a real world where the artwork is a counteraction and is our way of

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp.1-3 ProQuest ebook Central.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

humanizing the world around us (2). The way in which the novel becomes like the scale model is that the author offers a miniature world that he controls. So, the reader becomes an observer of the events of this miniature world. Brooks explains that most novels and fictions attempt to produce this scale model effect:

Now, if what I've been saying applies to all fictions, in whatever medium, what may be specific to fictions that explicitly claim to represent the real world - "realist" art and literature - is its desire to be maximally reproductive of that world it is modeling for play purposes. It claims to offer us a kind of reduction —*modèle réduit*— of the world, compacted into a volume that we know can provide, for the duration of our reading, the sense of a parallel reality that can almost supplant our own (2).

The importance of realism in a make-believe play is that it creates meaning for the recreated world by making it seem real. For Brooks realist literature depends on the visual because we acknowledge the presence of things in our world through sight (3). The dominance of the visual on realism goes back to Greek philosophy (3). This conflicts with Islamic tradition because representation is a recreated world and is not the exact world we inhabit. The make-believe play approach is not truthful.

From realism we begin to understand what representation is and how it can have several meanings. In *Keywords*,<sup>22</sup> Williams points out how *represent* had already been used in the fourteenth-century as a verb "to make present" (266). Williams explains the different meanings of represent through the senses: making something present physically as an authority or in the mind, or visually through art and plays (267). Williams explains the symbolic meaning of represent:

when '**represent**' was used in the sense of 'symbolize' or 'stand for' [...] it is clear that at this stage there was considerable overlap between the sense (a) of making present to the mind and the sense (b) of standing for something that is not present. What was eventually a divergence between these senses, in some uses, might not at first have been perceived as a divergence at all. The emergence of the separable sense of 'standing for others' is very difficult to trace. Many early political uses have the sense of 'symbolize' rather than 'stand for' (267).

Williams associates the term mostly with politics as a means of representing a group of people which is a symbolic type of representation (268). But the literary meaning of representation, William says, has been used for the descriptions of characters and situations in the eighteenth-century (269). Williams explains how representation in the arts can come to mean a 'visual embodiment of something' or an 'accurate reproduction' which he names 'representational art' (269). The function of realism is to reproduce a representation of reality and a recreation of

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<sup>22</sup> Raymond Williams, p. 266.

reality, which differs from the political use of the word representation (269). Williams attaches a double meaning or perhaps a symbolic meaning to representation. The symbolic type of representation here is described as one thing that represents something else:

something which **represents** something else, to the late sense of something significant but autonomous — not a **representation** but an *image*, which indicates either something not otherwise defined or something deliberately not defined in its own terms [...] (269)

The relationship between realism, meaning and representation can be treated in the novel. This is when the reader becomes a spectator who looks at the representation of other people's lives in a novel. A realist novel must contain elements of the external world and shared experiences for it to be realistic, but it must also represent and interpret reality. Realistic writing can examine real life issues and questions our worldly experiences through literature.

As we have seen, one way of looking at realism is through the representation of everyday struggles, of the peasant and worker. J.P. Stern's *On Realism* offers a different way of defining the realist mode.<sup>23</sup> It is not a "definition of reality" but rather a 'certain kind of description of the world' (31). He also defines realism as 'a way of depicting, describing a situation in a faithful, accurate, "life-like" manner' (40). Similar to Cuddon, Stern refers to Balzac's account of realism in his realistic prose as a 'way of writing' which at the same time is bound up with the author's 'world, society, and life' (42). This can mean that the created world in writing is itself a source of meaning. Stern adds that critics have said that realism is 'hostile to any form of transcendence' (45). But Stern believes that realism in our era is 'written on the assumption that the tenets of the Christian religion are no longer' an issue because it is assumed that our era is 'an age without God and transcendence' (45). However, Stern disagrees with this assumption as God and religion can exist in our world through different symbols and forms in our daily life. For Stern, realism is concerned with man and man's everyday struggle which has replaced the sphere of religion as the depiction of transcendence. This is where man is concerned with the material aspect of life as in capitalism, materialism, consumerism, social and class distinctions. It does not mean that God or religion is non-existent in the world but rather that the kind of concern once associated with religion has now been displaced into the sphere of everyday life. Man's focus has shifted to these man-made conventions. For Stern, realism is a balance between the mind and the world, and this is achieved by the co-operation of 'the world, self, meaning, and language' (142). On the other hand, realism for Stern is also related to the Christian concern with ordinary things and the meaning of the created world (83).

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<sup>23</sup> Stern, pp.31.

In the same way, magical realism is a literary mode similar to that of realism, as its narrative makes use of a realist tone in presenting magical happenings. The two literary modes can be regarded as a response to society and law, and a critique of them. Magical realism has a specific relevance in the representation of contemporary Arab society because it becomes a way of critiquing culture in an indirect way. Magical realism differs from realism in the inclusion of magical occurrences, extraordinary events that could not take place in a *realist* mode of writing but are still described in a *realist* way. Magical realism can work best in representing a modern Islamic context especially a critique of law and society by alluding to them indirectly where classical realism could not. The *stability* of modern Western notions of realism is challenged because magical realism shows how Western realism can *erase* difference. This is done by reducing everything to the object of the *Western* realist gaze and thus implicitly usurping the *absolute* vision of God.

For Maggie Ann Bowers, author of *Magic(al) Realism*<sup>24</sup> (2004), the term refers to a particular narrative mode and is an alternative way to approach reality: ‘to that of Western philosophy, expressed in many postcolonial and non-Western works of contemporary fiction’, by writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Yousef Al- Mohaimmed and Orhan Pamuk (1). This mode of writing is fiction that consists of a realist narrative tone in its depiction of magical happenings:

magical happenings in a realist matter-of-fact narrative, whereby “the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it *is* an ordinary matter, and everyday occurrence – admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism” (2).<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, some definitions of magical realism eliminate the dream factor because it limits or changes the mode to the realm of dreams and the imagination, rather than a type of reality (24). This definition of the term is most relevant to my argument.

Bowers refers to Salman Rushdie’s definition as ‘the “commingling of the improbable and the mundane”’ (3). Critics have debated about what magical realism refers to exactly, a mode, a genre, or a form of writing or cultural concepts (3)?<sup>26</sup> The reason magical realism has become hard to consider under one genre is because of the different applications and its changing meaning (3). Therefore, Bowers has found that magical realism constitutes ‘a particular narrative mode’ as it relies on a realist tone in its narrative to present magical events (3). Narrativity is crucial for both realism and magical realism in the representation of real

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<sup>24</sup> Maggie Ann Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p.1-67.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

events. The realist tone in magical realism makes one consider it to be part of and even a ‘version of literary realism’ (3). Narrativity is a pivotal aspect of both realism and magical realism as it aids the literary mode in reflecting on culture and humanity. Bowers explains that it is difficult to include allegory ‘into a magical realist novel’ (27). For Bowers, allegorical writing gives the narrative an alternative meaning and therefore removes the magical aspects from the novel:

In allegorical writing, the plot tends to be less significant than the alternative meaning in a reader’s interpretation. This makes it difficult to incorporate allegory into a magical realist novel, as the importance of the alternative meaning interferes with the need for the reader to accept the reality of the magical aspects of the plot. (27)

Allegorical writing can interfere with the magical realist mode and does not fit easily with it. However, differences in the magical realist literary mode appear when one considers that magical realism does not offer narrative closure and consists of a non-linear narrative. Furthermore, magical realism combines opposing aspects, ‘the magical and the realist’ forming ‘a new perspective’ (4). This fusion of opposing aspects often makes magical realism seem to be a ‘disruptive narrative mode’ (4). Thus, it is best suited as a mode for “‘exploring [...] and transgressing [...] boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic’” (4). This relates to the earlier definitions of European realism as well the difference between classical European realism and magical realism. Magical realism enables a critique of Islam because it can transgress boundaries and overcome the prohibition on representation in orthodox Islam. This is evident in Pamuk’s *My Name Is Red*, where the treatment of objects, colours, and animals give the reader a critique of Islamic culture and religious problems in relation to modernity.

Bowers examines Amaryll Chanady’s definition of magical realism from a narrative point of view, which depends on the “‘absence of obvious judgment about the veracity of the events and the authenticity of the world view expressed by characters in the text’ (1985:30)” (4). A key feature of magical realism is that it relies on the readers accepting in the same way the narrator accepts the “‘realistic and magical perspectives of reality on the same level’” (4). For Bowers, this narrative mode relies on the reader’s acceptance of the authenticity of the fiction ‘during the reading experience’ even if it differs from the reader’s perspective or ‘non-reading opinions and judgments’ (4). This narrative mode has become prevalent because it allows writers who wish to write against a totalitarian regime (4). Magical realism attacks the ‘definitions and assumptions’ that support systems like colonialism and attacks ‘the stability of the definitions upon which these systems rely’ on (4). Magical realism undermines European

and Western perception by undermining the way the Western observer sees reality. This is done by examining the presuppositions of the Western and European enlightenment by undermining the empirical definition of realism and reality. Hence magic is placed in the real world in opposition to realism. Magical realism is also common especially in Latin America and the postcolonial English-speaking world because it “opposes fundamentalism and purity; it is at odds with racism, ethnicity and the quest for tap roots, origins and homogeneity” (1998:22).’ (4). Magical realist writing has been influenced by the ‘modernist techniques of the disruption of linear narrative time and the questioning of the notion of history’ (9). A key aspect of magical realist writing is the mixture of cultural influences (18). Bowers relates magical realism to narrative fiction where the ‘magic’ in the mode refers to ‘extraordinary occurrences’ that are ‘spiritual or unaccountable by rational science’ (20). ‘Extraordinary occurrences’ in this literary mode are miracles, ghosts, disappearances, extra ordinary talents and strange atmospheres, but it does not refer to magic as in *magic shows* or illusionist acts (21).

To understand magical realism as a narrative mode, Bowers finds, one has to consider the relationship between *magical* and *realism* in literary terms (21). Aristotle paved the way for a definition of realism, the imitation of life or mimesis through art (21). Bowers reflects on David Grant’s definition of realism: that it is not achieved by imitation of reality ‘but by creation’ (22). The reader creates a sense of reality through the narrative “rather than a sense of reality from the text revealing the author’s interpretation of reality to the reader” (22). Realism is relevant to magical realism as it is “constructed out of what is (discursively) familiar” (22). There is an importance in the emphasis on familiarity to enable this mode to work. Magical realism’s reliance on the creation of a familiar surrounding is crucial as it offers a ‘realistic context for the magical events of the fiction’ (22). Therefore, the only commonality between magical realism and realism is the former’s dependence on realism to ‘stretch what is accepted as real to its limits’ (22). One can see that magical realism is linked to realism but it ‘is a narrative mode distinct from it’ (22).

Magical realism’s narrative mode is subversive as it alternates ‘between the real and the magical’ while maintaining ‘the same narrative voice’ (67). Unlike a realist narrative, a magical realist narrative gives the magic and the real serious treatment; ‘magic remains identifiable as magic and the real as real’ (67). Pamuk’s *My Name Is Red* treats ekphrastic characters as though they are real and portrays dead characters as real characters in the novel. In *The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist*<sup>27</sup> (2016), Orhan Pamuk explains that the ancient

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<sup>27</sup> Orhan Pamuk, *The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011b), p. 99.

Greeks named the relationship between literary texts and paintings as ekphrasis which he defines as:

[...] the description of visual artworks (such as paintings and sculptures) through the medium of poetry, for the benefit of those who cannot see them. The paintings and sculptures in the poems can be real or imaginary, just like details in the novel (99).

In relation to the ekphratic characters in Pamuk's novel they portray the European realist style of art as a way to enhance Islamic art. The European realist style of art contains a realistic representational style. In the novel, if one were to draw a tree using the Islamic Ottoman style of art it would be a symbol that resembles a tree. Islamic Ottoman art does not include paintings of realistic style that would depict a detailed tree with branches and leaves. Ekphratic characters in the novel critique the uses of colours in Islamic art because miniaturists do not display colours with the exact colour of red. For example, to represent blood, miniaturists would use one shade of either light or dark red and not the spectrum of the colour red. Through Pamuk's novel one can see a clear critique of Islamic culture in prohibiting the use of different shades. The colour green is mentioned in the Qur'an but the shade (light/dark) is not mentioned and so it is assumed that the Qur'an forbids the representation of light or dark shades. Another example of this is in Yousef Al-Mohaimeed's *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, which portrays events that are real and part of modern Saudi Arabia as well as the magical aspects of the novel which derive from folklores and are accepted as cultural magic. In Al-Mohaimeed's novel, the reader witnesses the transformation of the characters' lives from life in the desert to the city of Riyadh. *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* critiques the non-Islamic practices that take place in the city under Islamic laws. However, in Tournier's novel the opposite process takes place; the use of a *European* form of realism shows the modern relevance of orthodox Islamic truth. Tournier's novel portrays the Islamic art of calligraphy as a way of depicting truth which differs radically from the Western form of art or the photographic image.

Maggie Bowers's *Critical Insights: Magical Realism*<sup>28</sup> (2014) contains an essay titled 'Magical Realism and Subaltern Studies', in which she looks at subaltern studies in relation to magical realism and how this mode addresses issues of subalternity such as marginalisation and liminality in order to give voices to the unheard (35). In this context Islamic representation through magical realism might seem to offer a more critical perspective than classical European realism because of its ability to offer a deeper critique than classical realism. Bowers reflects on how this mode creates a platform for the unheard voice or the subaltern (35). Bowers quotes

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<sup>28</sup> Maggie Ann Bowers, 'Magical Realism and Subaltern Studies', in *Critical Insights: Magical Realism*, ed. by Ignacio López-Calvo (New York: Grey House Publishing, 2014), pp.35-48 (p.35).

Gayatri Spivak's definition of the Subaltern as a person tied to "social mobility" (35). The Subaltern does not have authority or agency and is not allowed to have a voice because of his/her social and class status, sex, or ethnicity (35). Again, this relates to orthodox Islam as a way to overcome prohibition on representation. In *My Name Is Red* the Ottoman miniaturists do not have authority or a voice to question the actions of the Sultan on the issue of imitating Western art. Miniaturists find a way around this problem through ekphrasis. Bowers' association of the subaltern with magical realism is similar to my approach to *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* in relation to Clifford Geertz's anthropological studies as a means of cultural critique. The reader is introduced to Saudi Arabian folklores that address prohibited cultural actions in orthodox Islam and these folklores become a way to disguise acts that violate Islamic laws. The voices of societal outcasts such as the main character Turad is heard, and his critique of cultural traditions is projected throughout the novel. This mode allows one to question religion and one's belief of the transcendent from an anti-colonial perspective, because the critique is expressed through the cultural symbols of the Islamic community itself. *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, portrays the Islamic prohibition on feminine scents; but depicts other scents in the context of a critique of an incident that happens on the ship. The ship on its way to Mecca carries captives (women and children) dressed up as pilgrims who will be sold as slaves. On the ship immoral acts happen which violate Islamic orthodoxy. Some of these immoral acts include the rape of an enslaved child by Eritrean man and the dirty Ihram clothes that are worn in a ship that contains the smell of animal dung.

In *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence*<sup>29</sup> (2009), Christopher Warnes outlines some critical uncertainties about magical realism which are key to my research. For example, the assumption that the magical realist mode signifies '[...] ideas clustered around notions of narrative and representation, culture, history, identity, what is natural and what is supernatural' (2).<sup>30</sup> Warnes questions the mode and its purposes if it is simply a narrative mode for an author or a literary movement with an agenda that defines cultural boundaries or a comparative fictional genre (2). Magical realism as a literary mode combines all these functions but more importantly it is a hybrid mode of writing. Warnes also defines the term as a hybrid or 'oxymoron' (2). Warnes explains it as an opposition of entities because the magical is not within 'the realm of the real' and for him realism does not include

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<sup>29</sup> Christopher Warnes, *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel* (Hampshire, England: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), pp.2-14.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

the magical (2). Warnes acknowledges that most texts show the acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday life (3). Warnes clear definition of magical realism is:

A basic definition of magical realism, then, sees it as a mode of narration that naturalises or normalises the supernatural; that is to say, a mode in which real and fantastic, natural and supernatural, are coherently represented in a state of equivalence. On the level of the text neither has a greater claim to truth or referentiality (3).

Warnes incorporates the use of the theoretical approach of magical realism by two distinguished magical realist scholars Wendy Faris and Erik Camayd-Freixas (6). Faris's approach to magical realism is 'a form of epistemological scepticism, a productive fictional mode of critique' (6). Camayd-Freixas approaches magical realism from an anthropological angle where he interprets 'the magic in magical realism culturally, as an expression of particular belief systems or ways of seeing the world' (6). Warnes's incorporation of these two approaches to magical realism, especially Camayd-Freixas's approach, is exemplified by reference to Yousef Al Mohaimmed's *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*. Al-Mohaimmed uses the symbolism of Saudi Arabian folklore as a source of cultural critique. Warnes argues that magical realism tries to 'reclaim what has been lost: knowledge, values, traditions, ways of seeing, beliefs' (12). Hence magical realism seeks to remove an enforced reality, an empirical reality or an acceptance of the dominant reality (12). The reason for this emancipation is the refusal to have a favoured order of reality, which creates a oneness removing the differences of cultural realities (12). This type of magical realism Warnes' categorizes as 'faith-based<sup>8</sup> magical realism', which makes the reader detach themselves from a 'rational-empirical judgments' about reality in order to understand 'a non-western cultural world view' (12). For Warnes, irreverent magical realism is not only concerned with knowledge but what is done with it (13). Warnes defines the first type of magical realism as 'supernatural in faith-based' and 'operates metonymically' (14). Metonymy becomes a type of figurative language that replaces one concept with another. This occurs in Michel Tournier's *The Golden Droplet*, where the image can contain so many meanings but can only be deciphered through calligraphy. The same can be said of the golden droplet, the pendant Idris loses in Marseille. The droplet's meaning changes along with its owner from a sign of purity to an exotic Saharan jewel. However, some of the novels I examine such as *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, I argue that the use of *Western* views or *Western symbols* creates a critique of Islamic tradition. Some of the characters in the novel have body mutilations such as the orphan Nasir who lost his eye after his mother abandoned him in a crate outside a mosque. Nasir's eye mutilation is compared to Moshe Dayan who lost his eye in war. Moshe Dayan's lost eye is the Western symbol of a

war hero while Nasir's lost eye is a source of humiliation. Another example is in the way Turad lost his ear from a punishment he received by the Amir of the pilgrims. Turad was buried up to his neck and left in the desert for animals to feed on him. This scene, succeeds in portraying the use of a non-Islamic punishment against criminals by a professing orthodox Muslim, reclaims the authentic beliefs and traditions that an Islamic state should contain.

## Reasons for choosing each novel

The reason for choosing these novels is because they are a representation of the content of the Islamic faith and the Prophet by both Islamic and non-Islamic writers and from different perspectives. These novels (with the exception of *The Satanic Verses*) portray the Islamic prohibition on representation, which centres on the idea of 'prejudice against the Divine Self'. *The Satanic Verses*, written by the British-Indian author, Salman Rushdie deals with the problems of Islam in a secular and modern world. The novel is set in India and then the characters move to England. The themes of the novel are of identity, hybridity, religion, immigration, and modernity. This novel is important for my discussion because it allows me to show how *The Satanic Verses* undermines the effectiveness of its satirical critique of Islam. The novel is culturally offensive and distorts facts about Islam in a manner that shape and weaken the novel. The realist element, where characters accept magical events are not to be portrayed as dreams. It's the relegation of the apparently magical to a level of reality in which the laws of reality don't really apply. There is no deliberate attempt to collapse or introduce the magical events into the realm of normal experience. This novel segregates the magical from the real; it cannot therefore be magically real. It cannot be read as a work of magical realism because it does not fulfill the criteria for a magical realist novel or what a magical realist novel needs to do.

The reason for choosing *My Name Is Red*, a novel written by the Turkish author, Orhan Pamuk, is because it deals with problems of representation in Islamic art during the Ottoman Empire. The novel deals with issues with the problem of representing Islamic history and the Prophet Muhammad using realist Venetian art. The themes of the novel are fear of imitating Western art, prohibition on creating an image in a way similar to the way God creates the human image, and a modern way to approach art in relation to Islam and Islamic art. Pamuk's novel is important for my argument because it allows me to show how in the novel, an Islamic country under Ottoman Caliphate rule was using Venetian art to help enhance Islamic art. My

discussion of this novel helps prove my argument that the only way in which narrative realism can represent of can represent the East or Islam is through a non-Islamic form of representation, that is through a ‘Western’ medium. The novel helps portray my argument that there is a modern way of discussing Islam and Islamic culture without blasphemy through ekphrasis.

The reason for choosing *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, written by Saudi Arabian author Yousef Al-Mohaimed, is that this novel deals with the problem of cultural traditions that are not associated with Islam but are viewed as part of Islam because they are part of a country that is Islamic. The novel deals with issues of Islamically forbidden practices that are done under an Islamic authority. The critique of Islamic prohibitions on scents is ironized to show that prohibition on scents is not limited to feminine fragrance. This supports my argument as it shows that there are other actions with unpleasant scents that violate Islamic laws. Al-Mohaimed’s novel is important for my discussion as it allows me to show how Western symbols can be a way to critique Islamic culture without being blasphemous. This is shown through my argument about how the critical representation of cultural actions and symbols can create a critique of culture. I seek to show that the literary representation and do interpretation of these cultural actions and symbols can enable a deeper understanding of an alien culture, which is different from what one sees at the surface view.

My reason for choosing *The Golden Droplet*, a novel written by the contemporary French author Michel Tournier, is that it deals with the problems of cultural appropriation, the capitalization of the *Orient*, cultural commodity and display for tourists. The relevance of the novel is that a classical European realist novel written by a European writer portrays the truth in terms of Islamic cultural representation and shows how Western representation of the Algerian culture can be a corrupt form of capitalization. Tournier’s novel is important for my discussion as it allows me to show how a Western author can give a critique of Western misrepresentation of the Orient. The aspect of the novel dealing with the difference between Western and Islamic art is an exploration of cultural symbols such as the *golden droplet* that get translated to their Western equivalents and become corrupted by that translation.

## **Scholarship on Chosen Novels and My Approach to the Novels**

There is a fair amount of scholarship on *The Satanic Verses*. Several critics of Rushdie's novel discuss themes such as the blasphemous representation of Islam, the issue of postcolonialism, religious immigrants in Britain, and the reaction of Western readers. Roger Y. Clark *Stranger Gods: Salman Rushdie's Other Worlds*,<sup>31</sup> describes *The Satanic Verses* as a dangerous experiment (129). Clark accuses Rushdie of knowing that writing about the 'gharaniq', (قصة الغرانيق), also known as the bird incident, would cause massive anger for Muslims because he has a Masters degree in Islamic history (129). Many Islamic scholars have dismissed the incident and believe the hadith mentioned is weak (129). Clark examines the novel from the standpoint of the 'otherworldly politics' in the text itself, instead of the worldly politics that most critics focus on; he compares Iago—the villain of Shakespeare's *Othello*—with Rushdie's 'insidious narrator' (129). The book offers a character and plot analysis of *The Satanic Verses*; the main characters Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha are viewed as angelic and the latter as demonic (130). The focus is on the demonic and angelic nature of the characters; and the narrator who seems to take the author's God-like role in the novel is replaced by the Devil (131). A small section of the book addresses the problem Muslims face reading the text because it is 'antithetical to those promoted by God' in the Holy Qur'an (144). On the other hand, Clark argues that Western readers have a different reading of the novel (144). Western readers do not see the nature of the narrator's storytelling as blasphemous; nor do they tend to separate between the author and narrator, whose message has a deeper meaning than the narrator (144). The book analyses the character of Satan in *The Satanic Verses* and compares the narrator who is portrayed as Satan to different religious traditions, including Greek mythologies (157). Clark investigates the blasphemous parts of the novel and some Western criticism such as Richard Webster *A Brief History of Blasphemy* finds the content of the novel to be violent and insulting to most Western writers (167).

Similarly, Paul Weller's *A Mirror For Our Times*<sup>32</sup> (2009), examines the controversy and the aftermath of the publication of *The Satanic Verses* (1). Weller focuses on 'political representation and participation in a plural society' (2).<sup>33</sup> The book shows that Muslims were angered by the content of the book and the title of the book; Muslims refused the label of *the Rushdie affair*, which highlights the author rather than the content of the book (2). Weller's work examines the mass media outbreak after the publication of the book and the fatwa of

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<sup>31</sup> Clark, p.129.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Weller, *A Mirror for Our Times: 'the Rushdie Affair' and the Future of Multiculturalism* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2009), p.1-10. ProQuest ebook Central.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

Ayatollah Khomeini (4). There is a list of books Weller includes that were published about *the Rushdie affair*, that were not noticeable by the public at the time of publication (5). Weller examines media and publication discourse on liberal freedom versus religious rights and scholars' reactions to the novel in either morally defending or condemning it (6). Weller includes a collection of 'material and reports' published right after the publication of the book; and examines the future of multiculturalism (8). The main argument of this book is: looking at the challenges of freedom of expression in relation to religion and secularism, globalization and secularity, and sanctioned religious violence (10).<sup>34</sup>

Ursula Kluwick's *Exploring Magical Realism in Salman Rushdie's Fiction*<sup>35</sup> (2011) explores Rushdie's magical realist writing and highlights the discrepancy between his form of magical realist writing and the widely accepted definition of magical realism (2). Kluwick defines Rushdie's magical realist writing as postmodern and postcolonial where she finds a clash: 'between two representational codes' (2).<sup>36</sup> Kluwick scholarship indicates that Rushdie has his own magical realist form where the 'realist and non-realist perception of reality are against each other' to form a doubt on his use of representation (3). Kluwick perceives that realism in the novel is not normalized because it is 'juxtaposed with its opposite, the supernatural' (3). Kluwick asserts that aspects of magical realism are set apart from 'mainstream realism'; and argues that the realist mode in magical realism differs from realist writing (34). For Kluwick, Salman Rushdie's *realism* in magical realism 'is prevented from becoming normative' because it is confronted by 'its non-realist other' (34). Kluwick argues that magical realism challenges Western realism "from within" (34). Wendy Faris a distinguished scholar on magical realism, in this quotation refers to magical realism from a Latin American perspective where the Western reality and form of representation is turned around or against its maker. In terms of the representation of Islamic tradition and European realism, I argue that Kluwick's approach to the novel does not make sense in relation to the Islamic sections in the novel. Kluwick finds that Rushdie's use of 'realist and non-realist perceptions of reality and modes of writing' when 'set against each other' places 'doubt on representation' (34). The inclusion of real places that Kluwick finds Rushdie's realism such as Jahilia is a real place; the dreams that the main character Gibreel Farishta has of Jahilia is *not real* nor is it part of the magical realist mode (39). The hadith that the novel is based on as a

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<sup>34</sup> Weller, p.10.

<sup>35</sup> Ursula Kluwick, *Exploring Magic Realism in Salman Rushdie's Fiction*, (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), p.2-40. ProQuest ebook Central.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

historical fact in the novel, is very weak neither scholars Sahih Al-Bukhairi nor Sahih Muslim approve of it. Furthermore, the hadith is not found in their hadith collection. Moreover, the hadith maybe based on a *misinterpretation* of Surah (chapter) An-Nahl/سورة النحل(16:101)<sup>37</sup> in the Qur'an; this shows that the realist element in the novel is fictive and may be seen as a fantastical element. Kluwich's provides a list of examples such as historical events, objects, places, and streets in the novel to show that the novel contains realism. Rushdie's style of magical realism and realism does not work with the representation of Islam. The sections that deal with Islam do not contain any realistic depiction of Jahilia nor the Islamic tradition. I will argue that Kluwich's list of ordinary life things such as: a plane, a bag and seat belts are irrelevant to the question of the representation of Islamic events and the historical Jahilia (39).

In the section of Talal Asad's *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*<sup>38</sup> (1993) entitled 'Some British Readings of a Postcolonial Novel'; Asad explores the question of textual interpretation in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Asad considers textual representation from an anthropological angle as it covers politics, religions, cultural identity, and gender (270).<sup>39</sup> The novel has political implications that Asad finds most ethnographers and anthropologists need to consider (270). The third and most important aspect for Asad is that, it generates an 'encounter between Western modernity [...] and a non-Western Other'; and this is what anthropology seeks to untangle (270).<sup>40</sup> The most important reading is of the Hindu professor of political theory, Bhikhu Parekh, who informed Asad of his two readings of the novel. Parekh's first reading expresses his delight of a fellow Indian's fluency that excelled most English writers; and secondly the novel's presentation of religion by a loyal secular Muslim 'to a non-sectarian, progressive India' (279). However, after reading the novel with the aid of two Muslim friends, Asad argues that, Parekh recognized the urgency of understanding the Muslim immigrant protest against the novel (280). Asad examines Parekh's statement about a Muslim generation which turns to religion to help provide meaning for their lives; Asad finds this problematic in a modern state because it implies that a religiously based identity needs 'curative treatment' (288). For this reason, Asad finds that the phrase 'empty-lives' has been wrongly applied to immigrants who have brought their 'non-Christian religion' with them (280). The two main problematic outcomes are: 'medicalizing religious opposition' and a centralized 'control of compulsory schooling' (280).

<sup>37</sup> *The Qur'an*, trans. by Saheeh International, p.368.

<sup>38</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p.270-300.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.270.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.270.

Asad questions whether the characters' mystical experience is authentically represented when they are transformed into narrative form by 'transmuting religion into literature'; such as Rushdie's character, Alleluia Cone, who narrativized her 'hallucination of communion with God' in her mountain experience (288). Secular literature is not hostile to religion but Asad questions whether transmuting religion into literature can 'substitute religiosity for the author' and whether this substitution can be acceptable and recognized by 'Western and Westernized readers' (288). Asad argues against social life being linked 'to a work of art' because social life is not built out 'of preexisting matter' like the works of art (290). The only part of social life that can be narrativized is similar to 'a story by an artist' (290). The privatisation of religion in modern Western states transferred the narrative of religious experience into the category of literature for English believers and non-believers (290). Asad explains that this does not work for most Muslim immigrants in Britain because they find it hard to incorporate Islam into literature (290). Asad demonstrates the influence especially of British literature in the British mission to modernise the Indian population (290). Asad compares this to Rushdie's (anti-imperialist) attempt to change Indian Muslim immigrants by 'subverting their traditions' to make their identities suitable for the modern world (290). However, Asad points to an important difference: Lord Macaulay 'wrote as a legal administrator to improve institutions [...] [Rushdie] wrote as a privileged author to improve ideologies' (291). Many of these scholars' arguments will be examined in more detail in the chapter that deals with Rushdie's novel.

However, my account of this novel is much more critical than that of the others because I argue that it does not follow certain criteria of magical realist novel and it misrepresents Islamic history and tradition. The novel is a distortion of Islamic facts and history and in the Islamic tradition this is known as Tahref تحريف. The word Tahref in Arabic means the changing of facts or events in religious doctrine. Asad finds that the transformation of religion in modern Western society into a form of literature accessible to both believers and non-believers cannot be applied to *The Satanic Verses*. In this novel, religion is not authentically transmuted into literature. In my treatment of this novel, I will show that magical realism is negative and misused as a form of representation. I will argue that the novel is not a magical realist novel in its form of representation especially when every event in the novel is set as a dream within a dream. There are certain criteria that a magical realist novel has to maintain or exclude. One such criterion is the incorporation of dreams as part of events that take place in the novel, which makes them purely imaginative. One main theme in *The Satanic Verses* is the disappearance of religion because of secularization and modernity, which is represented as one and the same.

However, in the Middle East science and technology has not led to the disappearance of Islamic belief or the practice of the Islamic religion. The claim that Islam is incompatible with modernity is not true. Most people find that Islam is compatible with modern education and science, as part of the Islamic faith is to seek knowledge. However, the main reason for the intense hostility towards *The Satanic Verses* is the use of obscenity in relation to God and the Prophets; in Islam this is known as using ‘prejudice against the Divine Self’. Degrading the Prophet intentionally is highly offensive. I examine the multiple distorted representations of the *prophetic experience* and the way it is turned into a myth. This is demonstrated in Rushdie’s novel through his depiction of the mythical city of Jahilia. I compare the representation of *myth* in the novel and Hans Blumenberg’s account of myth in *Work on Myth*<sup>41</sup> (1985). I include Shabbir Akhtar’s critique of the novel’s content in his book *Be Careful with Muhammad!*<sup>42</sup> (1989) to support my argument about the distorting of Islamic truth and taking Islamic facts out of context. Imtiaz Atif’s theoretical framework in *Wandering Lonely in a Crowd*<sup>43</sup> (2011) examines the three types of knowledge that one acquires about a subject and the type of knowledge the media uses in presenting information about a subject. The first type of knowledge is when someone has heard about a subject, the second type of knowledge is when someone has brief or prior knowledge of the subject or anything relating to the it (47). The third knowledge is acquired through research (47). Imtiaz argues that the media portrays only the first and second type of knowledge about Islam. I argue that *The Satanic Verses* has the same kind of limitation in the way it portrays the Islamic tradition. By considering these theoretical approaches I aim to address Talal Asad’s questions about the novel and to demonstrate that it does not transmute religious experience into literature as some other Western and non-Western novels do.

There is a significant body of scholarship on Orhan Pamuk’s *My Name Is Red*, it has received little attention in academic discourse, and most scholars either discuss his other novels or his approach as a writer rather than *My Name Is Red*. Gloria Fisk in *Orhan Pamuk and the Good of World Literature*<sup>44</sup> (2018), examines how a non-Western author’s work of art can be considered or read as world literature (18). Fisk uses Pamuk’s novels as a case study to explore non-Western literature and its readers (18).<sup>45</sup> The book explores the canonization of world

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<sup>41</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, trans. by Robert M Wallace (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985), p.4.

<sup>42</sup> Shabbir Akhtar, *Be careful with Muhammad!* (London: Bellew publishing, 1989), pp.1-4.

<sup>43</sup> Atif Imtiaz, *Wandering Lonely in a Crowd* (Leicestershire, England: Kube publishing Ltd, 2011), p.47.

<sup>44</sup> Gloria Fisk, *Orhan Pamuk and the Good of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), p.18-64. Apple ebook.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

literature and how Pamuk's novel meets these standards (19). Pamuk succeeds in bridging between 'Judeo-Christian West and the Islamic East' providing insight into cultural clashes and interfaces (20). Fisk investigates the readers whom Pamuk writes for and finds that his translated novels have sold more than the native Turkish novels (24). There is an exploration of the reader and authorial relationship in the representation of the city of Istanbul, which the author writes far away from (27). The book explores the readers of world literature from different parts of the world, where Pamuk has a global audience not restricted to Turkish readers (28). Fisk scholarship investigates Pamuk's novel as a bridge between Eastern and Western culture and a window to an Islamic East where the West can be at peace (24). Fisk investigates *Snow*, *The Black Book*, and *The Museum of Innocence* in an in-depth study (61). The book investigates Pamuk's 'authorial personae' and explores his exilic writing, which Fisk finds integral for comparative literary studies (68). This is achieved through a comparison between Pamuk and Erich Auerbach where Fisk argues that critics in the United States of America have limited the way people think about the world of literature (68). Fisk has found that non-Western literatures are judged in terms of an idea of 'homelessness' that is supposed to be captured through the discipline of comparative literature (68).

John Mullan's *How Novels Work*<sup>46</sup> (2006) investigates the literary devices used by Orhan Pamuk in the novel such as ekphrasis (253). A very brief definition of *Ekphrasis* is a verbal representation or description of an artwork such as paintings and sculpture (263).<sup>47</sup> Mullan explores how an old device such as ekphrasis depicts the different 'Eastern and Western codes of representation' (253). Mullan finds that ekphrasis is used in Homer's *Iliad* and is usually used in poetry rather than fiction (263). I explore the use of ekphrasis in Pamuk's *My Name Is Red*, which emphasizes the Islamic prohibition on individuality shown by the artist's painting (264). In the novel it is forbidden to show individuality because it depicts the Miniaturist's unique style in painting. Mullan argues that ekphrasis is integral to the plot of the novel to help solve the murder mystery through the sketches of images found with the murdered man (264). The sketches help to prove that the murderer is one of the miniaturists who work in the palace (264). Gloria Fisk and John Mullan touch on the surface of Pamuk's work in relation to *My Name Is Red*. Fisk does not investigate Pamuk's *My Name Is Red* but approaches his other novels and his authorial writing in terms of a non-Western exilic writer. John Mullan's work looks at the novel in terms of style and literary devices. However, I extend his work on

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<sup>46</sup> John Mullan, *How Novels Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.251-283. ProQuest ebook Central.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.263.

ekphrasis where I investigate how Pamuk's novel is both a magical realist and a realist novel. I examine the way ekphrasis is used as a literary device to overcome the prohibition of representation but offer a critique on Islamic tradition by examining the problem of the literary representation of objects.

In this section I look at Harold Bloom's theory in *The Anxiety of Influence*<sup>48</sup> (1997), where influence is not necessarily something negative. For Bloom, influence can come from a result of 'creative misreading' that is not necessarily something bad (xxii). Bloom's thesis shows that influence creates something new and only through influence can something new be created (6). Influence in *My Name Is Red* is a problem for miniaturists because it creates a fear of representing the Islamic world in Western ways. The problem of influence is explored through the characters' having to learn a new style of painting using a technique of art that is not Islamic, which is forced upon miniaturists by the Sultan. The change in artistic style is also a change in lifestyle and a way of seeing or experiencing the world. Intercultural influence produces a fear that the style of painting and use of colours can become an imitation of the West. The fear of intercultural influence creates the assumption that it reduces the style and authenticity of Islamic art. The role of the Ottoman miniaturists in the novel is important because it shows the struggles in using the European realist form of art to represent the Islamic Caliphate's realm. One of the main problem miniaturists have in the novel is painting the Prophet's Hegira using the European realist form of art. This causes a problem for miniaturists because of the prohibitions associated with representation in Islam. The European realist style of art depicts a realistic image of people and in Islam this is prohibited. The Venetian form of art would enhance Ottoman Islamic art. However, these foreign influences will change the Ottoman Islamic religious attitude to what is forbidden and make the prohibition clearer to the viewer. Pamuk's representation is in a sense a defence or at least a mediation of the Islamic perspective.

This chapter of my research looks at art from a literary perspective as a Western creation. The main focus of this chapter is the representation of Western reality that is enforced on an Islamic perception of reality through art images and the Greek use of ekphrasis. Ekphrasis in the Greek tradition is a form of storytelling through the use of images. This is closely tied to the function of icons in Christianity and the representation of the Sultan as an 'Islamic icon' in the novel. This novel can be seen as a magical realist novel because of the narrative style and

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<sup>48</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. xxii, 5- 6.

the inclusion of characters who are inanimate objects speaking as though they were alive. I examine how the Western fantasy of the *Other* is turned on the West, as in the Ottoman fantasy of Western art and the Westernization of Islamic art. I relate Pamuk's text to Erich Auerbach's account of the reformation of Turkey and the city's history as it moves from a classical history to an Islamic one. Pamuk's technique of textualizing the reader shows the important role of the reader in the interpretation of the text. This involves a crucial critique of Islamic culture that includes the reader's response to religious and cultural activity by characters in the novel. In this section the characters question reality, truth, the value of things and the imitation of reality through literary representation in art. Art as a type of icon can hold meaning beyond the immediate suggestion of the image in front of us. In *My Name Is Red* the reality being imitated is not only that of people's lives but of the city they inhabit.

Ernst Bloch's *Man on His Own*<sup>49</sup> (1970), suggests that anti-religious questioning is something that already exists within religion and is a form of pious critique aimed at religion. In the novel a critique of orthodox Islam is achieved through a religious language and its opposite (27).<sup>50</sup> This is seen through the Dog character who criticises Muslims hatred of dogs by misinterpreting the Prophet's kindness towards a cat. In relation to my reading of Pamuk, I focus on Mona Siddiqui's<sup>51</sup> (2014) intellectual reading of the Qur'an which suggests that one needs to question if the commands of the Qur'an that were applicable in 610 CE can still be suitable to practicing Muslims in a modern world (103). Through ekphrasis one can see that the characters apply a type of intellectual reading of the Qur'an and Islamic tradition. This type of pious exercise of reading will be discussed later on in more detail below in relation to the characters of the Dog narrator and the preacher Husert Hoja.

The function of icons in Rowan Williams *Lost Icons*<sup>52</sup> (2000) explains how they become more than a representation of something absent and that icons contain a deeper meaning (2). An Icon is a way to see through or beyond a painting or image to a spiritual; it is not the same as a secular image or representation (2).<sup>53</sup> The image like the colour Red or the Coin which are art images represent something beyond their immediate representational meaning. The images come to life through narrative to give a critique of Islamic culture and traditions. Islam prohibits the representation of animate and inanimate objects by images that

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<sup>49</sup> Ernst Bloch, *Man on his Own*, trans. by E.B. Ashton. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p.3, 27-28, 112, 116.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>51</sup> Mona Siddiqui, *How to Read the Qur'an*, p.103.

<sup>52</sup> Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 2000), pp.1-2, 184-186.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

may become objects of idolatry and veneration. I explore the reasons behind the prohibitions on images such as the ones found in Jamal Elias's *Aisha's Cushion*<sup>54</sup> (2012), where the problem with representation in Islam is not just the image but its content (2).<sup>55</sup> I focus on the performative description of the act of creating an image that is similar to the role of the creator and therefore can be an affront to theistic belief. The role of the Ottoman Sultan as an Islamic icon and the book that he orders to be created are presented as antithetical to religious books and becomes a symbol of blasphemy because it glorifies the Sultan and his realm instead of the God and God's realm. In the same way, literary representation of the power of images becomes itself a problem as it makes one think beyond the boundaries of religion. The narrative description of representation in art shows how images can have great influence and power over the observer. Literary representation can expose the problems with false imitation of reality, which can lead one to reject reality in favour of a false reality that appears to have become truer.

This problem explores the problem of the conflict between the need for seeking knowledge and its clash with religious and cultural traditions. An example is the problem with the colour red and its different meanings in Islam. The colour red in the novel has a high significance especially in relation to the title of the novel. The representation of the colour red has an extreme meaning in relation to the Islamic Ottoman tradition. The colour red in the Islamic Ottoman tradition represents religion and an opposition to new ideas that lead away from religion. In this chapter the representation of Islamic culture and its critique through Western symbols is highly effective. The novel succeeds as a creative critique, approaching Islam without attacking the faith. The novel portrays a modern Western way of transmuting religion into literature for Western and non-Western readers. This is done through the depiction of the Ottoman Empire's attempt of modernising its art style in a similar manner to the West.

For *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* there was only one scholarship found, *The book of scents* (كتاب الرائحة: في نماذج من الرواية العربية)<sup>56</sup> by Dr. Riza Al-Abyad is a semiotic critique of the concept of scents in Arabic novels including *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*. Al Abyad's analysis begins with the title where the words فخاخ و رائحة (entrapment and scent) include different meanings (124).<sup>57</sup> The meaning of entrapment (فخاخ) is that scents spread and entrap so that characters are attracted to the scent that entrapped them. Al-Abyad finds that the title of the

<sup>54</sup> Jamal Elias, *Aisha's Cushion: Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012), p.2-3,7-11, 28, 32, 38, 41, 48, 81.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>56</sup> د. رضا الأبيض، كتاب الرائحة (نابل: تونس، زينب للنشر والتوزيع، ٢٠٢٠)، ص ١٧٩-١٢٤.

<sup>57</sup> د. رضا الأبيض، ص. ١٢٤.

novel is creative and beautiful (124). All the characters in the novel are lured into traps because of scents and the use of their sense of smell (125). Al-Abyad's approach to *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* is through scents in relation to the body (125). Al-Abyad finds that Yousef Al-Mohaimed chose characters that are societal outcasts to write a novel about how the human senses can become a trap (140). The novel is divided into three parallel stories that consider the abuse of the different senses such as an eye that can see, an ear that can hear, a nose that can smell (140). Al-Mohaimed made the scent a central theme in his novel that combines the storyline of all the characters to discuss the experiences of all the victims in a savage world that has stolen their senses and dignity (140). The stolen senses of the characters caused them a deep wound that cannot be healed (140). Al-Abyad traces the word scent throughout *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* to explore its dominance in the novel (141).

In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* I explore the performative meaning of representation and its relevance to cultural critique. J.L. Austin in *How To Do Things With Words*<sup>58</sup> (2018), discusses the performative aspects of words. Performative utterances are words which have a practical effect and so resemble actions, such as swearing on the Bible or Qur'an in court before giving a testimony, unlike constative utterances which simply describe a state of affairs (3). I explore the performative actions of words in narrative and literary form, these are not just description words or actions but are symbolic actions that contain certain cultural representations. Every culture has its own cultural symbols and traditions that represent a certain meaning. Some actions in an Arabian culture have a different meaning but no meaning in a Western culture and vice versa. Some Western symbols when translated into an Arab culture can transform completely into something other than its original meaning. The theoretical approach in this chapter focuses on cultural actions and an anthropological approach to culture. Looking at Clifford Geertz's approach to understanding culture through anthropology shows how narrative can be a more effective way of understanding foreign cultures (17).<sup>59</sup> When cultural symbols are interpreted, they can represent a deeper and hidden meaning. Susan Bassnett in *Translation and World Literature*<sup>60</sup> (2019), explains how translation involves a 'loss and gain' (2). For Bassnett, the transmission of a text to the reader can be problematic because it is transformed from one language to another. Bassnett believes each translator gives an account of a novel differently and it can never be the same as the

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<sup>58</sup> John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. by James O. Urmson (Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2018), p.3.

<sup>59</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, Basic Books, 2017), p.17.

<sup>60</sup> Susan Bassnett, 'The rocky relationship between translation studies and world literature', in *Translation and World Literature* (London: Routledge, 2019), pp.1-14. (pp.2-3)

account another translator gives (2). Translation also involves the reading and interpretation of a text and therefore each translator attaches his/her own culture to the translation (3). Kwame Appiah in *Cosmopolitanism*<sup>61</sup> (2007), discusses how actions are a form of representation of things and so a way of understanding culture (75). Appiah shows how Western anthropologists can engage in a false objectification of foreign cultures and how this can prevent intercultural understanding (15).<sup>62</sup>

I examine how Arab icons that contain Western symbols create a critique of Islamic tradition and of the author's culture as a form of self-critique. This section looks in depth into the heart of Arabian and Saudi Arabian culture through folklore as it can provide an understanding of foreign or alien cultures in literary works. Here folklore becomes a way of understanding culture and a way of reading into culture through an anthropological approach. The characters' actions are read and interpreted through narrative, folklore, and cultural actions. The characters' history, actions, and consequences of certain actions all represent a critique of their culture and traditions. I distinguish between the different cultural interpretations or response of author, reader, and character. Roland Barthes' essay *The Death of the Author*<sup>63</sup> (2017), is relevant to my work because he argues that literary studies, unlike anthropology, need not include the concept of an author. The author becomes eliminated through the narrative and characters and the reader become the main focus of textual analysis. Whereas, in anthropology the main focus is the anthropologist and his/her interpretations and conclusions of reported events. Barthes's relevance here is that he highlights the importance of the reader and the reader's function, whilst in anthropology this function tends to be dismissed as the emphasis is more on the reader receiving information without deciphering events.

However, in *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* the text is a form of self-critique. The reader's response and interpretation derived from the text are important. In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* the main character happens to be a reader who reads events from a green file found at a bus stop. The emphasis here becomes the reader's response rather than just interpretation; in this section we have the character's reading response and the character's response to the actual events he/she is experiencing. Another focus is the anthropological analysis where the character becomes a case study for the reader.<sup>64</sup> Narrative becomes a better

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<sup>61</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism Ethics in a World of Strangers*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2007), pp. 14-15, 75, 85.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp.15.

<sup>63</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by S. Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp.142-148.

<sup>64</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.15.

way of understanding a culture because the reader experiences events in a way different from a spectator's analysis or speculation about those events. The character becomes a window to a foreign culture and an interpretation of an insider's knowledge of a culture. With anthropology the knowledge of a foreign culture is that of a spectator, a guess rather than an understanding of a different culture. In literature, a *foreign* culture becomes authentic through a self-critique and understanding of what is being represented. Here the reader is presented with cultural actions that are described from the point of view of the actors and the reader becomes the interpreter of these cultural actions.

Through an analysis of *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* I will argue that literature can extend one's understanding of the symbolic in relation to different cultures. Another focus is the cultural transition from desert life to modernity in the Arab world, which is described as more limited than it might appear. I will argue that modernity shifts away but also preserves cultural and Islamic traditions and this leads in the novel to the examination of cultural practices. The humanity of received cultural practices is questioned in relation to modernised cultural practices. Cultural practices in the Saudi Arabian city of Riyadh are compared to Western practices. For example, Turad's ear mutilation is compared with Vincent van Gogh's ear mutilation and the reasons behind the cutting. The former is a non-Islamic practice and might be a cultural/tribal form of criminal punishment, while Van Gogh's ear mutilation becomes a comparison between Eastern and Western representations. There is also a Middle Eastern tendency of taking Western labels and translating them out of their original cultural context.

In the Islamic culture and faith feminine scents such as perfume are prohibited but, in the novel, there are more destructive scents than feminine perfume. In the Islamic faith there is a prohibition of seductive scents and in this section this prohibition is ironized and taken to its extreme opposite to show how other scents can be more destructive. An example is of the charcoaled fat that lures Amm Tawfiq into slavery and causes his rape onboard of a pilgrimage ship. The critique of these scents represents the actions or cultural actions that corrupt the Islamic tradition and how some people choose to ignore this corruption. I will focus on aspects of Saudi Arabian society that produces the emotions of exclusion and self-hatred that each character faces. The main characters are mistreated by others in society without any regard to the Islamic tradition they live under. The novel portrays that there are some Saudi Arabian

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For Clifford Geertz telling a story can be more effective in understanding a culture than anthropological studies. Geertz has shown here how narrative or magical realist narrative can be an effective way of understanding culture.

cultural practices that are not part of Islam and violate Islamic laws. These un-Islamic practices become normalised to the extent that they remove meaning from anything that is sacred or symbolic such as the raping of a child on a ship crossing the Red Sea. The path of the ship symbolizes the Prophet Moses's crossing of the Red Sea freeing Israelites from slavery. The use of dirty Ihram clothes as a disguise for pilgrims who will perform a sacred act entails the normalizing of non-sacred acts. The religious meaning of certain clothes is transformed along with the actions that are associated with the person wearing it. The symbol or meaning of Ihram cloth changes to the extreme opposite from sacred to vile, masculine to feminine, safety to exploitation, and religious to antireligious. Yousef Al-Mohaimeed gives a realistic account of Saudi Arabia yet it is still considered as a magical realist novel because of its digressive and non-linear narrative. Al-Mohaimeed speaks of his culture but also it is a critique of it in relation to Western symbols. In this novel the idea of representation as a performative action is relevant to cultural critique; this is presented through narrative, folklore, and cultural symbols. These can be an effective way of looking at a foreign or alien culture through literature.

For Michel Tournier there were only two works of English scholarship on *The Golden Droplet*. Susan Petit's *Michel Tournier's Metaphysical Fictions*<sup>65</sup> (1991), investigates the mixed reaction from the misunderstood theme of *The Golden Droplet*. Petit argues that the novel is often misunderstood because of the way it portrays 'visual arts' relation to and difference from literature'; a difference between Islamic culture that prohibits visual representation and popular French culture that celebrates visual displays such as: television advertisements, store window displays and mannequins (147).<sup>66</sup> Petit explores the 'philosophical and historical background' of the novel and considers the treatment of 'image versus sign' (147). Tournier examines physical and mental images from a philosophical angle that considers if an image 'is a true representation' (149). Petit argues that the image has a creative function, it is a mental image of something that is absent and should be thought of as such to remove the need for an image to represent (149). Petit's work examines the novel's historical background when it was under French power and investigates the false image of the Sahara, the French obsession with the Sahara at a time when Algerians did not have much to say about their region (151). The historical background includes Algerian immigrants who worked in France after the independence of Algeria and some of the economic benefits that provided for Algeria (151). Petit explains that this caused problems between French and Arab

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<sup>65</sup> Susan Petit, *Michel Tournier's Metaphysical Fictions* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1991), p.147-172. ProQuest ebook Central.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147.

Algerians who started families in France, chose to stay and have the French citizenship (151). Petit examines the different images in the novel from Idris's photograph to television advertisements and portraits that are painted by the artists (162). Petit argues that these images are intended to sell harmful products such as palm grove beer and are intended to convince the viewer to buy the product; Tournier portrays the seductive nature of French commercials (163). The commercial is filled with clichés about the Oasis (163). Petit offers an in-depth analysis of the images, the sign and symbol in relation to different cultural approaches to the meaning of the image.

Michael Worton has published a collection of essays in a book titled *Michel Tournier* (2014)<sup>67</sup> where he argues that *The Golden Droplet* attacks French views towards immigrants and portrays a 'European obsession' with images (18). Tournier opposes the Islamic dedication of the sign 'as an abstract figure' which reveals without 'saying or revealing explicitly' (18).<sup>68</sup> Worton finds that Tournier's novel contributed to revealing the exploitation and alienation of immigrants in France by 'racist statements' by most 'French political leaders' at that time (18-19). Tournier's employment at a radio station influenced his understanding of the 'European obsession with the image and the visual media,' although Worton notes that Tournier did not produce any programmes but acknowledged the way publicists exploit people (36-37). Tournier did fieldwork on Arabs and immigrants before writing *The Golden Droplet*, where he visited a variety of places: a mannequin factory, immigrant foyers, attended Arab 'political and cultural meetings', went to slaughterhouses, observed police officers performing random checks of immigrants to verify their permits and learnt about calligraphy from 'Hassam Massoudy' (42).

This chapter differs from my other three chapters because the novel is a realist novel and is written by a European writer. *The Golden Droplet* portrays the cultural commodification of Algeria as something exotic. Tournier successfully depicts the French cultural appropriation and capitalisation of Algeria. I argue that cultural appropriation in the novel forces an imposed image on Algerian-Islamic culture. This imposed image creates a false and corrupt translation of the Algerian culture as an 'Other'. I use Jean Paul Sartre's concept of the gaze in *Being and Nothingness*<sup>69</sup> (2015), which argues that in the novel the gaze is portrayed as dominative and controlled by the person looking at the *Other* as an object. I argue that in the novel the person

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<sup>67</sup> Michael Worton, *Michel Tournier* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 18-19, 36-37, 42. Apple ebooks.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>69</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* ([n.p.]: American Book Publishing, 2015), pp.427-428, 453-455, 560, 563, 567, 571, 573-574, 558, 590, 1298. Apple ebook.

perceived as the *Other* feels the gaze of the person looking and feels objectified in a negative sense.<sup>70</sup> This negative gaze is described as a form of domination because it causes the alienation of the person who is being perceived. In the novel this is done in the form of a picture of the main character Idris that is taken by a European woman. I argue that the gaze is a type of image which reflects back what the *Other* sees, which is similar to the way images work in Tournier's novel. The gaze or *the look* is a source of domination that turns the object into an image in a way similar to the colonial gaze that objectifies certain cultures (453). The dominate image that is imposed causes a conflict and becomes a source of entrapment by the creators of the image (560).

I will argue that *The Golden Droplet* is a European critique of cultural fetishism and capitalisation of Islamic-Algerian cultural capital. In doing so, I will consider Roland Barthes's metalanguage in *Mythologies*<sup>71</sup> (2018), and his concept of myth as a 'second language' (280). Barthes theoretical work is important because it shows how modern myths, such as the French colonial representation of Algerian culture, are produced. For Barthes in order to produce myth, the sign is used as a signifier and a new meaning is produced (251).<sup>72</sup> Here the meaning of words contains different signs and for Barthes the production of this new meaning is not random. I look at Barthes' interpretation of modern-day myths that are created to have specific intentions; that is, to perpetuate certain societal ideologies in politics and in the media. The function of myth is to create a concept and to give it a new meaning that is relevant for the creator of the myth (257). In *The Golden Droplet* I argue that there are several symbols that are recreated to give new meaning through cultural appropriation and commodification. For example, photographs in *The Golden Droplet* act as a depiction of a fantasied image of the desert. The *Sahara* is described as the *Oriental paradise* in an advertisement, which is specifically targeted at the Occidental viewer.

*The Golden Droplet* shows the prohibition on the Western form of art (images) from an Islamic perspective using calligraphy as a way to counteract the maleficent power of the Western image. In the novel calligraphy is defined as writing that consists of descriptive poetic sentences written about the Western image. These descriptive poetic sentences form a kind of verbal imagery which breaks the effect of the visual image. The maleficent gaze of the image captures the person who sees the image and writing using calligraphy breaks this gaze. I also

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<sup>70</sup> Sartre, p.453.

<sup>71</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Richard Howard ([n.p]: Owls Book Publishing LLC, 2018), pp.251, 254, 257, 280, 453, 560. Apple ebook.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.571.

argue that calligraphy is a reaction against cultural appropriation and the Western depiction of reality through images, which are shown to distort the truth of what they represent. Citing Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*<sup>73</sup> (1997), I consider his argument that the printed word (the written word) offers a free critique of the image (113).<sup>74</sup> I argue that calligraphy provides the element of freedom and the ability for the viewers to free themselves from the controlling image through a kind of poetic commentary on it. I argue that the act of writing allows the viewer a freedom of expression, which Derrida argues first comes from speech. The image does not offer a freedom of expression; it dictates what the viewer has to see. In *The Golden Droplet* calligraphy becomes a way of preserving one's tradition through writing. I argue that in the novel the definition of calligraphy is not the same as in the Islamic tradition. In the Islamic tradition calligraphy is beautified handwriting using verses of the Holy Qur'an or the name of God that decorates a mosque's interior walls. In the Islamic culture calligraphy is considered part of Islamic art. In *The Golden Droplet* the purpose of calligraphy is mainly in the act of writing itself. Tournier's use of calligraphy is a way to counteract an imposed and dominative image and provides freedom of expression.

In the following chapters I will explore whether magical realism or realism might be the best form of representation of orthodox Islam; why Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* does not portray a preconceived representation of Islam through magical realism rather than a communication of different cultural positions within Islam as with the European writer, Michel Tournier, who succeeds in representing Islam in *The Golden Droplet*. Tournier uses a European *realist* form of representation as a Western *translation* of Islamic cultural symbols which shows the meaning of the prohibition of images in orthodox Islam. However, there are different aspects of magical realism where the magic in the mode is taken from indigenous cultures and communities, such as in Yousef Al Mohaimeed's *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* and Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red* where it allows for an in-depth critique of orthodox Islam and cultural practices. Although a critique of Islam is possible in realist literary representation, it is in *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* and *My Name Is Red* that a modern Western or secular approach to orthodox Islam is employed without creating a literary representation that is

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<sup>73</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.113, 259, 262, 282, 288, 312, 303, Apple ebook.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.113.

offensive to Islam but powerfully explores the tension between faith and modernity in the contemporary Islamic world.

## Chapter One: Representations of Myth and Religion in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*.

### Overview

Three major sources of scholarship on *The Satanic Verses* have all shown different approaches to the novel: Paul Weller's *A Mirror For Our Times – 'The Rushdie Affair' and the Future of Multiculturalism*<sup>75</sup> (2009) and Roger Y. Clark's *Stranger Gods: Salman Rushdie's Other Worlds*<sup>76</sup> (2000), discuss the anger that the novel caused in Muslim communities in Britain and across the world. Weller and Clark mention a dismissed hadith by Muslim scholars known by some as *the Gharaniq*. Both critics know that the use of that hadith in the novel would anger many Muslims but overlook the use of false Islamic facts in the literary representation in a magical realist mode. The novel's literary representation is based on a fable and not an actual historical aspect of orthodox Islam. Another critic, Ursula Kluwick's argues in *Exploring Magical Realism in Salman Rushdie's Fiction*<sup>77</sup> (2011), that Salman Rushdie has his own style of realism in magical realism. Kluwick finds that Rushdie includes real names of places such as the historical name of Mecca previously known as Jahilia<sup>78</sup> (39). However, the dreams that the main character Gibreel Farishta has of Jahilia are not real; nor are they part of the magical realist mode. Evidence for the hadith that is represented as authentic in the novel is very weak; neither Saheh Al-Bukhairi nor Saheh Muslim include this hadith within their collection of ahadith. Moreover, *the Gharaniq* hadith may be based on a *misinterpretation* of the Qur'an. Kluwick finds that Rushdie's realist style includes objects, actual places and streets that are real, and she lists a series of ordinary objects that are found in the real world such as a plane, a bag, people who exist in our actual world and seat belts. However, the novel's representation of Islamic events and Jahilia is distorted (38). Magical realism and realism are not just about the setting, places or inclusion of real people as characters, the events themselves must be real. In relation to Islamic representation, the setting of Jahilia is not real; nor are the main characters in the sense in which Kluwick argues Rushdie places 'real-life' people in the novel (39). What is *realist* about magical realism is *not* that it

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<sup>75</sup> Paul Weller, *A Mirror for Our Times : 'the Rushdie Affair' and the Future of Multiculturalism* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2009), pp.1-10. ProQuest ebook Central.

<sup>76</sup> Roger Y. Clark, *Stranger Gods: Salman Rushdie's Other Worlds* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), pp.129-167, 275-279. ProQuest ebook Central.

<sup>77</sup> Ursula Kluwick, *Exploring Magic Realism in Salman Rushdie's Fiction* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), pp.2-40. ProQuest ebook Central.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

creates an illusion of reality but that it *depicts actual reality* and is incorporated within the real world. Jahilia is portrayed as a city of sand that hates water and this seems to contradict the element of the real and incorporates a *mythical* city rather than a *real* one. The extra-textual referents are objects and places but in realist writing it is the situation that the characters find themselves in and the life that is represented in the novel. The extra-textual referents Rushdie's magical events are weak because they do not have the same factual reference as those that take place in the real or historical real world.

In *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*<sup>79</sup> (1993), Talal Asad considers different readings of the novel by critics and intellectuals such as: Homi Bhabha; Fay Weldon; a Muslim teacher—Zaheera; Yasmin Ali; Bjikhu Parekh; Gautam Sen; and Shabbir Akhtar. Asad quotes from two letters Rushdie wrote to the prime minister of India discussing his authoritative reading of the novel after it was banned in India. Asad uses Rushdie's letters to show the different rhetorical status between the novel and Rushdie's authoritative reading of the novel (275).<sup>80</sup> He finds that the letters written by Rushdie offer a contradictory reading and examines the reasons behind this (275). *The Satanic Verses* does not focus on doubt but on conviction and war, as Asad has noted from Rushdie's authoritative account of his novel (275). For Asad, other critics such as Homi Bhabha have read the novel 'backwards into an authorial intention (the 'spirit' of the writing) that produced the text' (275). Rushdie's clarifications on his novel offers an author's intention that cannot be ignored, claims Asad; for this reason Asad uses Rushdie's glosses to portray him as the 'embattled author' (276). Asad finds, that Rushdie cannot provide the most authoritative account of his own novel (276). Asad's scholarship shows that many critics such as Fay Weldon, Rushdie's friend, attack the Qur'an and argue that his novel insists on 'liberal truth', which calls for a rejection of cultural differences in British society (276). Weldon illustrates the novel's liberal truth through America's "'uni-culturalist policy'" which she finds is successful in bringing people from different races and beliefs together (276). Asad finds that Weldon's claims presuppose an artificial idea of a unified culture such as her example of a 'fictional' United States of America (276). Asad finds that Weldon's reading of the novel amounts to a rejection of 'immigrant difference' and creates the assumption that it is a threat to the stability of British culture (276). Asad quotes Weldon, who insists that Islam should be excluded from 'personal and national construction' because it cannot be read in a similar way

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<sup>79</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp.270-300.

<sup>80</sup> Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, p.275.

as the Bible (276). A very important flaw in Fay Weldon's argument is made clear by Asad; Weldon compares 'St Rushdie the Divine' to 'St John the Divine' (277). The flaw in her argument is made clear by Asad, Saints are chosen by God through the 'certainty of their visions' unlike Weldon's St Rushdie, an author, who writes a 'haunting narrative' about Islam (277). Asad finds that Zaheera's reading, contrary to Fay Weldon, presents a genuinely liberal argument in favour of fairness and equality (278). Zaheera does not agree with the blasphemy law but points towards the problem of the minority in a modern state (278). Yasmin Ali finds the novel authentic in its depiction of the 'individual reader's experience' which Asad translates to mean a shared Muslim experience (279).

Asad finds that Gautam Sen's revised reading of the novel in relation to the British political situation at that time shows that it is a threat to all immigrants and not just Muslims (281). Shabbir Akhtar, a distinguished scholar at Oxford University, has argued that *The Satanic Verses* is 'inferior as a work of fiction' and the chapters that narrate the story of Mahound are insulting to Muslims (281). Akhtar argues that an attack on the Prophet Muhammad is seen by Muslims as an attack on their 'moral and religious ideals' (281). Asad finds Akhtar's argument is similar to Zaheera because they both point out 'the double standards of Western public opinion' (281). Insulting religious identity is similar to insulting individuals and 'group honour,' and Asad argues that modern law finds it difficult to deal with this concept (282). Modern law cannot 'quantify in monetary terms' the damages of 'malicious statements' that offend and hurt morally and spiritually (282). Asad highlights the political implications of the novel in Britain; he examines the effects on post-colonial immigrants, which he finds are not treated in the novel as many critics have argued (299). Self-recognition, Asad argues, 'confirms the self-satisfied reader in her/his established predispositions and prejudices' and does not invite the reader to think he/she is in 'a new world' (284). These categories exist in both the literary and the Western liberal world that conjures different responses 'that work on recognition' (285).

For Asad, parts of the novel that deal with Islam are not clear, and he questions the way it is pursued through the 'fictional dream of a fictional character, an Indian movie star [...] who is losing his mind' (291). If the book's aim is to ridicule 'shared beliefs and practices of Muslim immigrants of Britain,' Asad finds that the use of these literary devices is appropriate (291). Asad points out that several commentators find the sexual episodes in the novel about the Prophet are an attempt to humanize him (291).<sup>81</sup> However, in the Christian tradition the

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<sup>81</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, p.21.

sexualization of a figure is to remove him from ‘divine truth, to pronounce him *merely* (sinful) human’ (291). Asad argues that whilst the Prophet is humanised, a real figure such as Khomeini, an ‘Imam’ in the novel, is ‘mythicized’ (292). Another aspect of the novel portrays the Qur’an to contain information that is found in a hadith (the hadith is the teachings of the Prophet and does not include information from the archangel Gabriel) (293). Muslims do not consider the hadith to be divinely revealed (293). For Asad, to claim that for a work of art to be labelled as satire means claiming ‘a respectable status for it’ (293). *Satire* is not considered to be the representation of ‘people’s belief and customs’ as immoral; the satirist must comprehend ‘the moral structure of the people he is satirizing’ (294). The main problem with Rushdie’s criticism is that it is situated, addresses and shares ‘a Western liberal tradition’ (295). Asad finds that the vilification of the beliefs and traditions of others can force them to abandon them; the abandonment is a result of superior power and shame rather than ‘moral argument’ (295). Asad has left one question open for other critics to settle; that is, the novel’s ‘ultimate merit as a work of art’ (300). The inaccuracies in the literary representation of Islam found in Asad’s reading of Rushdie’s novel portray another aspect of the violation of realist literary mode. Asad touches upon some of the literary representational problems within the novel that I refer to, but he does not specifically address the problems of magical realist and realist modes.

By contrast, in the other novels I consider there are no fixed or preconceived ideas on Islam as there are in *The Satanic Verses*. In this novel, magical realism does not offer the kind of forum for unprejudiced encounter and communication between different cultural positions which is provided in the work of Orhan Pamuk, Yousef Al-Mohaimmed and Michel Tournier. Salman Rushdie’s *Is Nothing Sacred?*<sup>82</sup> (1990) explains that ‘Literature is the one place in any society where, within the secrecy of our own heads, we can hear *voices talking about everything in every possible way.*’ (16) Georg Lukács in *The Theory of the Novel*<sup>83</sup> (2006), makes a similar point on the plurality of voices in the same world of experience in the realist novel. Lukács’s discussion of the of the novel describes a form most suited to articulate the ‘transcendental homelessness’ and therefore the plurality of different voices in the modern world (41). Rushdie quotes Carlos Fuentes on the novel, where he describes the novel as “‘a privileged area’” (7). “The novel,” Fuentes writes. “is born from the very fact that we do not understand one another, because unitary, orthodox language has broken down. [...]” (7). My thesis argues that

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<sup>82</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Is Nothing Sacred?: The Herbert Read Memorial Lecture* (Cambridge:Granta, 1990), p.2-16.

<sup>83</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p.41.

*magical realism* might provide such a form specifically in relation to Islam, but Rushdie's approach in *The Satanic Verses* seems to negate this. The magical occurrences within the novel do not work because the narrators do not present them as *real*. I will argue that *The Satanic Verses* does not represent a 'pious reading' or secular representation of Islam in a modern context. I will argue that *The Satanic Verses*<sup>84</sup> cannot be read as a magical realist novel in its representation of magical events and is culturally (Islamically) offensive. The main thematic issues that I will be addressing are the novel's distortion of Islamic history and misrepresentation of Islamic tradition and culture. Magical realism combines the *magical* and *realist* aspects in one literary mode. Maggie Ann Bowers work in *Magic(al) Realism* has indicated that there are certain criteria for a magical realist novel. The first criterion is the presentation of extraordinary events, magical and real, as though they were real which is key for this literary mode (22).<sup>85</sup> Magical realism is a hybrid literary mode that is in part a realist literary mode. The narrator's acceptance of extraordinary events that take place in the novel is important. The reader accepts the extraordinary events that the narrator accepts (4). Bowers explains that these magical happenings cannot be 'imaginings of one mind' produced by the use of drugs or as an attempt to explore 'the workings of the mind,' 'imagining our futures' or to set 'a moral point' (31). Gibreel Farisha, one of the main characters in the novel, does not accept the 'magical' events that take place. The omniscient narrator portrays Gibreel Farishta as a man who is losing his mind after experiencing a brain haemorrhage. These two examples portray how magical realism does not work in the novel; this will be discussed further later. Another aspect of a magical realist novel is that it must contain 'a realistic setting that is recognizable in relation to any past or present reality' (30). This is the second criteria as Bowers states, where extraordinary events in a magical realist novel are rarely presented as psychological events and dreams (24). So, placing magical events as dreams removes the magic from the 'recognisable material reality' and becomes part of an imaginative world (24). The magical and real 'have the same narrative voice' but the real is still identified as real and magic as magic and are given the same serious treatment (67). In *The Satanic Verses* extraordinary events are depicted as dreams. Gibreel Farishta dreams that he is the archangel Gabriel who dictates revelations to *Mahound* (Prophet Muhammad). The third criterion is the realist mode in magical realism that stretches 'what is acceptable as real to its limits' (22).<sup>86</sup> In the novel the

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<sup>84</sup> Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Vintage, 1998).

<sup>85</sup> Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism* (New York: Routledge, 2004) p. 22.

<sup>86</sup> Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, p. 22.

representation of Islamic history is not real and is stretched far beyond the limits of what is commonly recognized as *real*. The narrator, Gibreel Farishta, does not accept extraordinary events and therefore the reader does not accept them.

The novel seems like a parody of Prophet Muhammad's life, the foundation of Islam and the manner in which the Prophet received the revelations. There are many Islamic events in the novel that become distorted: the Isra'a and Mi'raj (الاسراء و المعراج), the way in which the Prophet received the revelations, abasement of the Prophet and his wives, humiliation and degradation of Islamic sacred symbols such as the Hijab (الحجاب) veil, comparisons between holy verses and poetic verses, accusations that the holy book is dictated by the devil and the distortion of the Prophetic experience through three characters; Mahound, an Imam (representation of Ayat Allah Khomeini) and Ayeesha an epileptic orphan.<sup>87</sup> The Prophetic experience is distorted by the representation of multiple versions of the revelations where the representation becomes meaningless. The novel is not a convincing example of magical realism nor does it offer an imaginatively convincing critique of Islam and is merely a form of external framework imposed on the reader. The novel is not a modern Western approach to religion through literature as Talal Asad has argued.<sup>88</sup>

## Summary of the Novel

*The Satanic Verses* opens with a plane crash caused by a group of terrorists whose only survivors are two Indian Muslims, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. The two protagonists land on the shores of England and Gibreel's series of dreams begins here, while Saladin's transformation into a devil begins at this point. Gibreel Farishta is not a devoted Muslim and is a famous Bollywood actor who is known for playing different deity roles, while Saladin Chamcha is a naturalised British citizen who lives in London and has a career in voice acting for a radio show. The protagonists are not devoted Muslims and have had different upbringings: Gibreel lost his parents at a young age and lived with a foster family while working as a delivery boy as a teenager. his foster parents encouraged and helped him achieve a career as an actor. However, after the plane crash Gibreel suffered from brain haemorrhage but after his recovery he lost his faith in God. Saladin Chamcha was born in Mumbai and had a troubled relationship with his father before moving to a boarding school in England. Saladin

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<sup>87</sup> What is meant by the *Prophetic experience*, is the experience of being a prophet and receiving revelations.

<sup>88</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, p.290.

stopped talking to his father after his mother's death when his father remarried a younger woman with the same name as his mother, Nasreen.

After the plane crash the characters begin a transformation in which Gibreel turns into an angel and Saladin turns into a devil. Gibreel Farishta starts to have dreams where he becomes the archangel Gabriel and is helping Mahound (Prophet Muhammad) found Islam in Jahilia. In most of these dreams Gibreel is called upon by Mahound, Ayesha the epileptic Orphan and the Imam (an Islamic cleric). Through these dreams the reader is taken back in time to Jahilia, to mount cone where Mahound is founding the Islamic religion. Ayesha the epileptic Orphan convinces the villagers of Titlipur to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca by crossing the Red sea by foot and the Imam, who (Ayatollah Khomeini) was in refuge in Paris until he returned to Dosh after defeating the empress Ayesha,. All of these characters call on Gibreel Farishta in his dreams in which they forcefully transform him into the archangel Gabriel. In the first dream Gibreel is forced to help the Imam to regain his power in Dosh by making him fight the goddess Al-Lat who is incarnated as the empress Ayesha. The Imam becomes ruler of Dosh after Gibreel kills the empress Ayesha. In the second dream Gibreel finds himself under a tree with Ayesha the epileptic orphan in the village of Titlipur. In this dream, Ayesha convinces Mishal the wife of Mirza Saeed Akhtar that she has lain with the archangel and he has given her a prophecy. Ayesha claims the prophecy has revealed that Mishal's cancer will be cured if the entire village goes on a pilgrimage to Mecca by foot. Ayesha convinces the villagers that Gibreel will part the Red Sea to help them cross it to Mecca. Miraz Saeed does not believe in Ayesha's prophecy and decides to follow them in his Mercedes fearing for his wife's health. In the third dream, Gibreel is called upon by Mahound in mount cone to receive revelations for the people of Jahilia and to make Jahilians believe in one God. However, Mahound forces Gibreel to reveal a false revelation and then told the people of Jahilia that they were dictated by the devil.

## **Theoretical Approach**

Literature conveys experience to the reader especially when it depicts a certain era such as colonialism and slavery. So, literature allows the reader to experience past historical events whether they are historically real or culturally constructed such as the ones found in Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* or Zora Hurston's *Jonah's Gourd Vine*. Any type of realist literary piece takes its readers on a journey of experience and relates truth to a certain era it represents. *The Satanic Verses* as a magical realist novel contains realist elements in an

allegorical or symbolic sense. However, Bowers finds, that the plot is less significant in allegorical writing where importance is placed ‘on the alternative meaning in a reader’s interpretation’ (27).<sup>89</sup> Bowers states that allegory is problematic for magical realism because the ‘alternative meaning interferes with’ the readers’ need to accept ‘the reality of the magical aspects of the plot’ (27). For magical realism to work the realist part of the literary mode must comply with literary realism. Part of the realist mode is to represent the external world and the common world of experience through literature. Literary realism can be defined by examples such as J.P Stern’s concept of family resemblance in realist literature that is not sufficiently developed in *The Satanic Verses*.<sup>90</sup> Stern’s family resemblance refers to the many different kinds of work that can all be described as *realism* (28). The *matching* element rather than the *making* element refers to J.P. Stern’s idea that realism must include an element corresponding to our actual world, ‘a common usage of a given age’ as *real* (84).<sup>91</sup> Stern’s family resemblance can also be applied to magical realism and especially to *The Satanic Verses*. However, the ordinariness of the magic in this literary mode is questioned and not accepted by the character in their reality. The dream factor that is incorporated into the novel is also questioned and not accepted by the characters.

I argue that magical realism can be a mode used to overcome problems associated with the critique and prohibitions on representing the Islamic tradition. However, in this chapter, my critique of the idea of magical realism might be negative, unlike the positive critique I have of the literary mode in the rest of the thesis. The reason for this is that the novel language is undermined and does not represent a coherent and comprehensive critique of the Islamic faith. *The Satanic Verses* is not a philosophical inquiry of faith. The novel does not raise questions of the meaning of Islam, which as we have seen means ‘submission or obedience’ and why it might seem important to follow the faith without questioning it.<sup>92</sup> The chapter is divided into three sections: theoretical approach, Rewriting of Islamic history as myth and *The Satanic Verses* as work of fiction rather than a Magical Realist Novel, and The Role of the Media in Representing the *other*.

First, secularisation does not make sense in the Islamic tradition because Islam is embedded within the laws and culture of Islamic tradition; they cannot be separated. The distinction between the sacred and the secular is not relevant in relation to Islam. In

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<sup>89</sup> Maggie Ann Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, p.27.

<sup>90</sup> Joseph Peter Stern, *On Realism* (Great Britain: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1973), p.28.

<sup>91</sup> Stern, p.84.

<sup>92</sup> *The Qur’an: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Oliver Leaman ([n.p.]: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), p.212. ProQuest ebook Central.

*Secularization and the World Religions*<sup>93</sup> (2009), a collection of essays edited by Hans Joas and Klaus Weigandt, Gudrun Krämer argues in an essay 'Islam and Secularization' that secularisation does not necessarily mean or enforce a retreat or disappearance of religion (109).<sup>94</sup> In relation to most Islamic countries, secularisation does not make sense because it is hard to separate the state from religion (109). Krämer argues there are three types of secularization: the decline of religious relevance, religion becoming a private practice and the '*institutional and constitutional separation of church and state*' (112). In all these three forms secularization does not make sense and is not compatible with Islam.

Hans Blumenberg, in *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*,<sup>95</sup> discusses modernity in relation to secularisation in the West, but more importantly questions the 'legitimacy and illegitimacy of the modern age' (xii). He also argues that academic philosophy has found an error in 'basic modern concepts' (xii).<sup>96</sup> For him, this is a modern error that forces one to go back to Aristotle and other pre-modern authorities (xii). This relates to his notion of returning to the archaic as a way of understanding oneself as a form of 'theoretical curiosity' (xiv). The archaic way of understanding oneself is through myth which is a retelling of the survival of humans and human history. In relation to Islam if one were to return to the archaic it would be the beginning of Islamic history or the formation of Islam. In relation to myth there is no escape from that narrative: one would always return to Islam through the archaic narrative of the foundation of Islam. Secularisation has different meanings as it is a complex idea, the first and obvious is that religion has less influence on the state, opinions and political choices of the majority of the population. Blumenberg argues that Karl Löwith's idea about secularisation as the 'central modern phenomena' is linked to the secularisation of Christian ideas (xiv). In relation to Islam, that does not make sense because religion is embedded deep within the roots of the state such as law, marriage, and cultural practices.<sup>97</sup> The distinction between the sacred and secular is irrelevant in relation to Islam. The philosophical critique here is that the Islamic culture cannot be separated from the practice of Islam itself. In this section I will show that Rushdie's association with the idea of myth is completely separated from truth, it is just a series of images, whereas Blumenberg's analysis is a medium of truth as he is not using the word

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<sup>93</sup> Gudrun Krämer, 'Islam and Secularization', in *Secularization and The World Religions*, ed. by Hans Joas and Klaus Wiegandt, trans. by Alex Skinner (Liverpool: Liverpool University press, 2009), pp.108-121 (pp.109, 112).

<sup>94</sup> Krämer, p.109.

<sup>95</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. by Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985), pp. x, xi, xii, xiv.

<sup>96</sup> Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, p.xii

<sup>97</sup> Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 2017), p.116f.

*myth* in a pejorative sense. Rushdie does the opposite: his novel takes Islamic events out of context and distorts them.

I will argue that the representation of myth in the novel is not used in an indirect way to form a Western critique of the Islamic tradition. The novel contains several references to Greek mythology and presents Jahilia and the foundation of Islam as a myth like the Prometheus myth. Hans Blumenberg's *Work on Myth*<sup>98</sup> explains that myth has persisted because it has been a means of renewing the significance of human history that has been passed down through generations (viii). Myth makes our 'existence possible' because it is the beginning of human history (viii).<sup>99</sup> We learn to understand ourselves through these myth by the act of telling and narrating myths. Blumenberg looks at Freud's account of myth as a primitive form of storytelling (5). Blumenberg in *Work on Myth* shows myth as something that we constantly work on 'if it is to continue to be adaptable to life as it goes on' (501). In other words, myth gives narrative form to human experience. So, myth becomes a narrative which we constantly rewrite as our experience changes at different points in our history (59). As our experience changes it brings a critical rewriting of myth that includes experiences such as enlightenment and religion. Therefore, myth articulates our experiences thematically in the stages 'that have already been lived through' (113). In a secularised world people need this myth to counteract the overwhelming fact of external reality and the solution to this problem is the creation of culture (x). People need myth in order to live effectively in the human world and to be able to face the challenges 'of survival' (xi). I compare Rushdie's uses of myth in *The Satanic Verses* with Blumenberg's use of the word 'myth'. When one looks at Blumenberg's use of myth and the use of myth in *The Satanic Verses* there is an obvious difference in the way myth is represented. Rushdie portrays myth as unreal or imagined and associates it with the 'Marvel' comic about the boy who turned into a flower and then relates Islam to these non-mythical examples. Blumenberg's use of the term myth is a way in which we deal with reality through narratives of human history and the survival of human beings throughout history. Myth in *The Satanic Verses* is used as a way of taking something out of its geographical and historical context. The primitive form of storytelling is similar to the retelling of the prophetic experience and the retelling of the mythical city of Jahilia (now known as Mecca) in the Islamic faith as myth in *The Satanic Verses*.

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<sup>98</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, trans. by Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985), pp. vii, viii, ix, x, xi, xxxii, xxxiii, 4, 5, 59, 113, 266, 274, 501.

<sup>99</sup> Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, p.viii.

Blumenberg argues that the Prometheus myth is an example of how it is possible ‘to bring to an end by the indirect means of bringing one particular great myth to an end’ (xxxiii). In *The Satanic Verses*, however, myth is used to deform a “story, by ignoring or reversing what seemed to be its fundamental patterns” to the point where one can hardly recognise the myth (xxxii). Myth would come to an end through ‘extreme deformation’ and ‘no longer allows the original figure to be recognised’ (266). The way in which the myth becomes deformed is by making it ‘nearly unrecognizable [...] subjected to the violence of reversal’ (274). When it is told and retold as a deformed story, ‘by progressively deforming the story by ignoring or reversing what had seemed to be its fundamental patterns’ (xxxii). Similarly, the representation of religion in *The Satanic Verses* is portrayed as a deformed myth that is told and retold again, which becomes distorted to the extent that it would no longer be relevant and come to an end. Rushdie is not retelling the myth of Islam nor is he engaging with the myth of Islam, but he is bringing it to an end. Rushdie is using the word *myth* in a negative sense just as people would normally use the word to mean that something is mythical or *unreal* but not contrary to the truth. Myth in *The Satanic Verses* is not a symbolic articulation of truth. For Blumenberg myths are told to avoid ‘absolutism of reality,’ this *reality* is the situation that we face, which forces us to realise our inability to adapt (4). Blumenberg defines the absolutism of reality as a situation where humanity comes to the verge of losing dominance over existence with the resulting belief that humanity cannot control the conditions of its own existence (ix). Therefore, the ‘absolutism of reality’ is a crucial threat for our biological nature because it is related ‘to our natural environment [and] our capacity for survival’ (x).<sup>100</sup> The way in which we respond to this threat is by ‘the development of culture’ (x). This is a ‘limiting case’ which helps us understand ‘what we do observe in myth and in the rest of human history’ (ix). The inability to adapt causes anxiety and myths are a way to overcome this anxiety (4).

The function of myth is to reduce the absolutism of reality whereby it creates a space for man to deal with ‘the practical side of the challenge of survival by [...] cultivating the rational comprehension and control of specific natural phenomena’ (xi). Myth survived because it is ‘inherent in human nature’ and makes our ‘existence possible’ because it is the beginning of human history (viii). We learn to understand ourselves through these myths by the act of telling and narrating myths. So, myth historically is an oral form of telling the story of the beginning of ‘human history’ and is similar to the role of *The Satanic Verses*’ narrator who retells the beginning of Islamic history (ix). The Islamic history, revelations and Jahilia is

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<sup>100</sup> Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, p.x.

portrayed as a distorted myth to bring it to an end. Blumenberg has shown that to bring myth to an end would suggest that there is a solution to the absolutism of reality and there is no longer a need for myth (xxxiii). Rushdie's approach to myth may appear to be similar to the idealist's approach (Blumenberg refers to the 'fundamental myth of German idealism' of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel) and Kafka's and Gide's approach to the Prometheus myth (xxxii). The idealist approach brings myth to an end 'by means of itself' instead of 'offering a substitute for it' (xxxii):

The idealists are, in effect, baldly stating that we are in that situation and, in fact, that we always have been. To make their assertion plausible, they put it in the form of a story about the subject and 'its' world—a story that is presented as "philosophy" rather than as myth, so as not to call attention to what it has in common with the phenomena of human dependency that it is trying to bring to an end (xxxiii).

The other way of bringing myth to an end is similar to the example of Kafka and Gide's in which the story is deformed by reversing or ignoring its sequence (xxxii). Rushdie forms a story about a subject to remove either human dependency on religion or to bring the subject of religion to an end. However, his association with the term myth is not the same as the one presented in Blumenberg's work. I will demonstrate this by examples from the novel in the section: *Rewriting of Islamic History as Myth*.

Secondly, the title of Shabbir Akhtar book *Be Careful with Muhammad!*<sup>101</sup> (1989), portrays the caution one has to take when speaking about the Prophet Muhammad. Rushdie's technique of representing the Islamic way through myth as a form of retelling of cultural narrative and especially Islamic tradition is abusive. For Akhtar, rewriting the history of Islam in *The Satanic Verses* not only distorts it but becomes 'an alternative biography of Muhammad, his wives and companions' (4)<sup>102</sup>. The novel not only recreates and destroys the image of Islamic religion as Akhtar says, but does not work as a magical realist novel because it is not a true representation of real historical figures of the Islamic tradition. The novel does not attempt to create a theological critique or understanding of Islam to non-Muslims or Muslims who have questions about the faith that cannot be answered in a traditional manner. Shabbir Akhtar focuses on the reason why Muslims have found *The Satanic Verses* to be hurtful and disrespectful because they are angered by the change of Islamic records in the novel. Missionaries who preached in Islamic territories have found that Muslims are protective of the Prophet and his family (1).<sup>103</sup> Muslims do not tolerate any type of slander towards the prophet

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<sup>101</sup> Shabbir Akhtar, *Be careful with Muhammad!* (London: Bellew publishing, 1989), pp. 1-5, 8, 11, 20, 23.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>103</sup> Akhtar, p.1.

and his family (1). In Islam any slander or criticism towards any of the prophets is not tolerated at all. To think that it is tolerated would be misconceived knowledge about Islam (1). One important quotation from Akhtar is a Western slogan about Islam that is also misconception: ‘Say what you like about God—but be careful with Muhammad’ (1). In Islam one should not only *be careful with Muhammad* but also what is said about God. The Western or Hebrew equivalent of this slogan is “‘Say what you like about Moses—but be careful with God.’” (2). These slogans are a misconception because if one criticises a prophet, it is a criticism aimed at God who has chosen this prophet to represent his message. As we have seen from the ahadith, criticism of God and the prophet in Islam is the greatest sin and it is considered Kufir (disbelief). Akhtar argues that even though the Prophet is dead he is alive in all Muslims through the revelations and Islamic history have kept the Prophet alive in the spirits of all Muslims (3). God’s revelations are communicated through the Prophet and does not reveal the importance or seriousness of this to its readers.

Akhtar is very critical of Salman Rushdie and *The Satanic Verses*. Akhtar argues that Rushdie has written a parody about Islam and the novel is not an attempt to explore Islam or critique it in a fictional context (5). Magical realism does not succeed in the novel because many of the Islamic symbols, history and the Holy Qur’an are not critiqued but taken out of context where they are represented as ‘a confused catalogue of trivial rules about sexual activity and excretion’ (5). The prophet’s house is described as a brothel that is named the veil, the symbol of female chastity (5). There is nothing allegorical about the depiction of Islam or the prophet from this literary piece. *The Satanic Verses* is ‘the worst type of orientalist sentiment’ because the way it represents the Prophet and Islamic tradition (8). *The Satanic Verses* is a depiction of a Western fantasy of Islamic civilisation that is taken further as a debasement of the faith. There are several passages in the novel that portray the Oriental sexuality such as the portraits depicted by Western artists of wild fantasies of the Ottoman Harem. The Islamic civilisation and the foundation of Islam is described as a series of sexual encounters through the characters Mahound, Ayeesha, Gibreel and other historical figures. Akhtar reads the novel as the expression of an Orientalist consciousness that depicts a Western interpretation of Islam as the *Other*. The Orient is always depicted as a tempting and sexualized *Other*. However, the concept of the Orient is taken further in its distortion of Islamic history.

Akhtar gives an example of historical distortion in the novel, reducing Islam to a business deal, and portrays the way *Mahound* treats his converts as a way to close ‘business’ deals: ‘Rushdie insinuates that the Abyssinian slave Bilal, who converted to Islam, was a more committed monotheist than Mahound. [...] Hind, emerges as more uncompromising in her

idolatry than Mahound in his Islam.’ (20). The novel does not represent the Holy Qur’an’s deeper interpretation of the idea of obedience, which in Islam means free but complete submission to the will of God. The idea of *obedience* in Islam is not about childish conformity but devotion to the faith. *The Satanic Verses* questions the Prophet’s commitment and beliefs in the message given to him by God. The revelations that are represented in the novel are reduced to political requirements when the character *Mahound* is forced by the Jahilians to get a revelation from God to persuade them into converting. There are other instances in the novel where the Prophet is accused of forcing Gibreel to give him revelations to help him fix a specific situation. Akhtar argues that the novel fails in representing the ‘prophetic experience and in showing an allegorical meaning behind the representation of the Prophet’s revelations and in critiquing it (23). Islam is the faith of the pen, and *The Satanic Verses* is considered literary terrorism (11).

*The Satanic Verses* is an act of literary terrorism where pen and ink are used against Islam through a pretence at magical realism as a literary mode. The novel is not a convincing work of a magical realism, as its “realist” depictions of magical realist events in the “Islamic” parts of the novel are rejected by the characters or projected as dreams within dream. This is not part of magical realist criteria. The depictions of dreams as magical events are rarely used to present extraordinary events. In magical realism dreams remove the magic from the reality that is presented in the novel. I will demonstrate this by examples from the novel in the section: *The Satanic Verses* a work of fiction rather than a Magical Realist Novel and Its Representation as a Western Fantasy.

Thirdly, I will use Atif Imtiaz’s theoretical framework in *Wandering Lonely in a Crowd*<sup>104</sup> (2011), in which he distinguishes between three types of knowledge that one acquires about a subject and the type of knowledge the media uses in presenting information about a subject. Imtiaz is persuasive in talking about distortion in relation to the media and the three types of knowledge presented by the media. This is portrayed in *The Satanic Verses* where the camera becomes a way to capture specific images for the world to see. Therefore, the camera becomes a new type of documentation (myth) where it manipulates images not just to tell but to re-tell a story that is different from what actually happens. This is a false acknowledgement of others, a false recognition, and false representation. Salman Rushdie uses the same type of media knowledge to portray the Islamic tradition to his readers through *The Satanic Verses*.

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<sup>104</sup> Atif Imtiaz, *Wandering Lonely in a Crowd* (Leicestershire, England: Kube publishing Ltd, 2011), p. x, 12, 13, 47.

Imtiaz examines the issues of identity and misrepresentation faced by British Muslims who want to remain committed to the faith. He explores current Western impressions of Islam and what that might mean to British Muslims who are misrepresented by writers such as Salman Rushdie and terrorist attacks across the globe. *The Satanic Verses* here bears out Shabbir Akhtar's concept of literary terrorism in which the distortion of Islamic facts and history is a misrepresentation of Islam similar to Jihadist organisations that violate Islamic laws. Rushdie's *literary terrorism* produced an image similar to the image or impression Jihadists left about Muslims and Islam. The Rushdie affair produced stereotypes that describes Muslims as 'violent, ignorant, illiterate and hypocritical' while on the opposite side the liberal individual is 'humane, educated, literate and genuine (x).<sup>105</sup> Imtiaz argues for the recognition of difference rather than equality because in reality no one is born the same or equal (12). The media has shown that '[...] culture determines the ascriptions of value' (12). The representation of culture through the media can be thought of as 'created culture' that aims to globalise cultural traditions. Imtiaz quotes John Locke who wrote that the world is becoming the United States of America and 'tomorrow, "America is the world"' (13). The world is seeing reality with the eye of the Western media and Hollywood's stereotypical depiction of others. Locke's quotation exemplifies the power and influence the media can have over the viewer, which can be similar to the power literature can have over an uninformed reader of a certain subject. For Imtiaz, Salman Rushdie's account of Islam and Muslims depicts Muslim believers as intolerant and reactionary. For Imtiaz, *The Satanic Verses* is not an attempt to represent Islam but is an attack on the faith and on Muslims. The novel is not an attempt to understand or represent a different culture but is an attack on Islamic culture and traditional practices.

The media has a powerful role in creating or influencing a certain type of image to represent certain individuals, cultures, religions and can create a persuasive account of them (42). Imtiaz argues that there are three kinds of knowledge, which he labels as three types of knowing:

[...] I wish to distinguish between three different kinds of knowing: knowing of, knowing about and knowing. The first kind is a glancing kind of knowledge: it is the first threshold beyond ignorance. To know of something is to have heard of the subject, but not much more than that. Perhaps a sentence or two on the subject might be all that can be recalled. The second kind is a slightly more elaborate form of knowing: the subjects are also known, perhaps its relations with other subjects are also known, and explanations, attributions, causes, and histories could all be briefly provided. This kind of knowing involves being able to speak about the subject matter for a short while, but no more than that. The third kind of knowing is knowing itself. The subject is

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. x.

thoroughly understood; its history, relations, internal distinctions and so on are all familiar and, if pursued, then this kind of knowing could provide the content for lengthy conversation (47).<sup>106</sup>

Imtiaz describes the media's type of knowledge consists of the first and second type of knowing (47). The third type of knowing can only be achieved "through individual study" (47). Public knowledge comes from the media and this is where most people attain their knowledge about Islam and Muslims (47). As we will see in *The Satanic Verses* the media plays a huge role in the representation of the 'Other', Muslims, minorities and other ethnic groups. *The Satanic Verses* in itself is similar to Imtiaz's first and second type of knowing in its representation of Islam. Most of the public's knowledge is a false representation about Islam that can be similar to television shows that present psychological talk shows that are psychobabbles' such as the Dr. Phil show.<sup>107</sup> Many people have been on the Dr. Phil show and he analyses them during the 40 minutes period of that single episode despite the fact it usually takes a psychologist many sessions with written notes to give a proper diagnosis of his/her case. For people watching that show, whatever diagnoses Dr. Phil gives of a certain behaviour will then be used by the viewers on any other person they see in their daily life, thinking that is a proper diagnosis. Clinical psychologists observe their patients through several sessions to give a proper diagnosis of their patients and yet in the Dr. Phil show, patients or interviewees are diagnosed on the spot or within the 40 minutes duration of the show. I will demonstrate this by examples from the novel in the section: *The Role of the Media in Representing the 'Other'*.

### **Rewriting of Islamic history as Myth and *The Satanic Verses* as a work of fiction rather than a Magical Realist Novel**

The critique of religion in *The Satanic Verses* consists of treating it as a form of myth. Myth is represented as a way of dealing with 'man's problems' similar to Blumenberg's idea of the function of myth (xiv).<sup>108</sup> I will argue that the function of myth in the novel is comparable to Blumenberg's in which the story is presented as myth rather than religion to bring it to an end. The history of Islamic tradition is retold and is distorted to an extent where it is not recognisable like the distortion of the Prometheus myth. The distortion of religion that is told as a myth is not a form of critique of Islamic religion as myth nor are the myths a way to

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<sup>106</sup> Imtiaz, p.47.

<sup>107</sup> The Dr. Phil show is an American television show from the Oprah Winfrey Network whose host is Dr. Philip McGraw. Dr. Phil uses his past experiences as a psychologist to diagnose or offer life strategy advice in front of a live audience.

<sup>108</sup> Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, p. xiv.

overcome the absolutism of reality. The representation of Greek mythology does not in *The Satanic Verses* enable a Western critique of Islam. The introduction of myth in *The Satanic Verses* is confused and does not serve a purpose in the novel other than portraying myth as something that is separate from truth through several passages from the novel. Myth is portrayed almost like a fairy tale with references such as ‘the magic lamp [...] the magic of the rainbow [...] the crock of gold’ and Richard Burton’s translated copy of *Arabian Nights* (36).<sup>109</sup> All of these items were left on a shelf to rot because Saladin’s father hated books, but this shows how myth in the novel is treated in a similar way. Most of the digressive stories are portrayed as myths within *The Satanic Verses* begin with the traditional Arabic form of tale-telling similar to the Arabian nights, ‘Kan ma kan Fi qadim azzaman’ (143). The traditional old Arabian stories begin with this sentence كان في مكان في قديم الزمان which translates to, it was in a place in ancient or olden times or there was a place in an old time/age. However, in the novel it is miswritten as ‘kan ma kan’ (كان ما كان) which literally means *it was and it was not*. So ‘ma kan’ means *that it was not* and ‘makan’ means *a place* but in the novel it is ‘ma kan’<sup>110</sup> (143). It is important to distinguish between these two words as to avoid confusion with others who would suggest otherwise. No known Arabian tale begins with this sentence. In the novel parts of the stories of the main characters start with the sentence ‘Once upon a time—it was and it was not so’ (35). The concept of myth in *The Satanic Verses* is in itself a distortion of the function of myth that extends further to the retelling of Islamic history in that same manner.

There are many references to different kinds of myths in the novel but these references rarely display meaning. An example is of Saladin’s relationship with his father, Changez. When Saladin has an ongoing battle with his British identity in relation to his father’s Indian identity, he is rejected by him. Changez tells him he does not have answers for his problems and that he is not his ‘Old Man of the Sea’ (68).<sup>111</sup> The old man of the sea is the ‘[...] old prophet of the sea’ a reference to Greek mythology from Homer’s *Odyssey*.<sup>112</sup> Changez does not explain to his son the identity changes he is going through, nor does he have answers to these changes. On the other hand, the other references to myths are separated from truth and myth in these references are a series names of characters or individuals who have no association with myth. The role of myth in the novel seems that it is set against religion and the meaning or representations of these myths are shown to be as a mixture of stories (secular myths, scientific

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<sup>109</sup> Rushdie, p. 36.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>111</sup> Rushdie, p. 68.

<sup>112</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by William Cowper (Minneapolis, MN: lerner publishing group, 2010), p. 74. ProQuest ebook Central.

myths) and are ironized as a critique of Western culture. At the same time this irony is reflected on the representation of Islamic events as myth. An example is of Gibreel Farishta and the different types of myths that he studied:

[...] metamorphic myths of Greece and Rome, the avatars of Jupiter, the boy who became a flower, the spider-woman, Circe, every-thing; and the theosophy of Annie Besant, and unified field theory, and the incident of the Satanic Verses in the early career of the Prophet and the politics of Muhammad's harem after his return to Mecca in triumph; and the surrealism of the newspapers, in which butterflies could fly into young girls' mouths, asking to be consumed, and children were born with no faces, and young boys dreamed in impossible details of earlier incarnations, for instance in a golden fortress filled with precious stones. (24)

From the quotation above it becomes clear to the reader that the treatment of Islam as myth is not a way to critique the Islamic tradition but to show that it is a negative or fictive type of myth similar to the quotation. The myths mentioned in the quotation are from the American Marvel's comic books, Circe the goddess of sorcery from the *Odyssey* and the philosophy of Annie Besant (a nineteenth-century social reformer and theosophist)<sup>113</sup> and *The Satanic Verses* and its depiction of the life story of the Prophet. The comparison of Annie Besant to the Prophet suggests that Islam is a created or imagined religion or an occult practice. The treatment of Islam is not taken seriously in the novel because it is compared to the boy who turned into a flower and to Annie Besant's ideas and views that led her to leave her faith and turn to theosophy. The comparison between all these different characters and people in the quotation are not relatable to each other nor to Islam. The idea of myth has become completely separated from truth unlike Blumenberg's analysis of myth. Realist novels are an imaginative communication of the world of the past and a world of another where readers experience a different life through novels. Realist novels are imaginative but contain a form of reference and the form of reference in *The Satanic Verses* is unclear. Magical realism is part of the realist mode in its representation of narrative as real. However, in *The Satanic Verses* neither myth or the novel as a whole displays an exploration of Islam and the Arabian culture for the readers to experience other than a series of unrelated and meaningless images that are non-Islamic. From the quotation above one can see how the novel's treatment of myth and Islam will be displayed

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<sup>113</sup> Jane Oppenheim, '*Prophets without Honour?: The Odyssey of Annie Besant*' *History Today*, 39.9 (1989), 12-18. *JSTOR*, (URL:<http://content.ebscohost.com/ContentServer.asp?EbscoContent=dGJyMNLr40Seprc4xNvgOLCmsEmep7ZSs6q4SLOWxWXS&ContentCustomer=dGJyMPGvrkiwqLFKuePfgex43zx1d%2BI5wAA&T=P&P=AN&S=R&D=a9h&K=11404724>) [accessed 09 February 2021]

throughout the novel in a similar manner. The Prophet is compared to Annie Besant and her outlook on religion and creation of several religious beliefs into one through theosophy.

Another example is the representation of myths and the Qur'an is ridiculed and is reduced to a plagiarised narrative to produce images that are not compatible with Islam nor do they reproduce a coherent myth about Islamic culture. For example, in the chapter Mahound, some verses from Surah an-Najm (سورة النجم) are mixed with the story of Pleiades the seven daughters who were born on Mount Cyllene and became stars:

'The Star,' Mahound cries out, and the scribes begin to write. 'In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful! 'By the Pleiades when they set: Your companion is not in error; neither is he deviating. 'Nor does he speak from his own desires. It is a revelation that has been revealed: one mighty in power taught him (114).<sup>114</sup>

In the quotation above the narrator has taken parts of the Qur'anic verse and attached part of a Greek myth to the verse. The quotation shows that the revelations seem to be inspired by Greek mythology. The character Mahound<sup>115</sup> then introduces the verses as God's words for the scribes to write. The act of writing an orally dictated speech is similar to the act of myth as a form of human documentation. The critique of religion is set against myth as a type of manmade inspiration of the universe and Mahound's inspiration comes from Greek myth of the clustering stars. The Qur'an is orally recited in Arabic to Prophet Muhammad by the archangel Gabriel (Gibreel) on God's command.

Magical realism depends on a realist narrative and for Muslims and Islamic historians this quotation does not represent the real Qur'an verses of Surah an- Najm. One can see that the quotation above is plagiarised from the Qur'an and Greek myth that is put into the novel without serving a purpose of fictional critique. The original verse of Surah an- Najm (chapter 53) begins differently:

'بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، والنجم إذا هوى، ما ضل صاحبكم وما غوى، و ما ينطق عن الهوى، إن هو إلا وحى يوحى، علمه شديد القوى،' (٥٣: ١-٥)<sup>116</sup>

The English Translation of the first five verses:

Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Raheem<sup>117</sup>, By the star it descends, Your companion [ie., Muhammad] has not strayed, nor has he erred, Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination.

It is not but a revelation revealed, Taught to him by one intense in strength [ie., Gabriel]—

<sup>114</sup> Rushdie, p.114.

<sup>115</sup> The character of Mahound in *The Satanic Verses* is a representation of the Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>116</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings* trans. by Saheeh International (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: Abdul-Qasim Publishing House. 1997), p.751.

<sup>117</sup> In the name of God, the most Compassionate and the most Merciful.

(53:1-5)

The original verses from the Holy Qur'an are similar to the quotation from the novel with the addition of the Greek myths that are used in a way to change the original text. This turns or reduces the meaning and the story told in the Qur'anic verses. The depiction of myth in the novel is not used in the same manner as Blumenberg where the story contains a moral meaning. Most of the representations of events in the novel that are told as myth have removed the moral of the original story told in the Qur'an. The representation of the act of reciting becomes a mythical act and writing becomes the documentation of it is comparable to myth, but it does not present a coherent story. The quotation above presents two different misleading stories that are unrelated. This specific quotation shows that the Islamic revelations might have been inspired from a poet rather than a God chosen prophet, which is offensive in the Islamic tradition. The language in which the revelations were produced is the same manner of language used in the time of Jahilia. During that period, Jahilians were known for their love of poetry and for writing poetry. The language of the Qur'an is poetic because it was aimed at Jahilians to challenge them in their own poetic language. The language of the Qur'an is distinct and is not poetic as in the Greek sense or of just being a poetic language that is lyrical. So, the language of the Qur'an is aimed at the people of Jahilia who will welcome the faith in their known common form of language which was the *fus-ha* Arabic Language (اللغة العربية الفصحى).

The introduction of Greek and Roman mythology is a conscious distortion of Islam and is not an attempt to critique the language of the Qur'an. The poetic language of the Qur'an is set as a challenge against the Jahilian poetry and the purpose of this is that Islam (as with Judaism and Christianity) was aimed at the people from which the prophets came. The language of the Qur'an spoke to the Jahilians in their same language that was a poetic language because Jahilians were known for their love of poetry. This poetic language is not the same as the language of Greek and Roman poetics that is represented in the novel. *The Satanic Verses* does not portray that Greek and Roman myths contain moral stories and has represented both languages to contain absurd context of life or reality. The Qur'an is also different in its context because it is not just poetic verses but contains three types of knowledge: law, way of life and historical narrative. One of the aims of the Qur'an is to make Jahilians follow the word of God in their spoken and written language. The Arabic language or the language used in the Qur'an does not copy or imitate Western poets nor is it a copy of the Jahilians' form of language. The word of God is only spoken in the common language of the people of Jahilia. In the realist novel there is a common use of language and in this historical event God used the Jahilians'

common use of language in the formation of Islam. The common use of language was intended for the Jahilians to understand the words of God. The Qur'an has a verse in Surah Yusuf (صورة يوسف) that explains why the Qur'an was dictated in Arabic: 'إنا أنزلناه قرآناً عربياً لعلكم تعقلون' (12:2).<sup>118</sup> The English translation of the verse is: 'Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an<sup>535</sup> that you might understand' (12:2).<sup>119</sup> The reason the Qur'an might sound poetic and is comparable to Western poetry because Jahilians spoke Arabic and they loved reading and writing poetry.

Another example of how myth and Islam do not get a serious treatment is of Gibreel Farishta's mother Naima Najmuddin. In this example one can clearly see that the treatment of Islam and myth in the novel is not critical nor allegorical. Naima recites stories about the Prophet's life to Gibreel, but the narrator says that 'if inaccuracies had crept into her versions he wasn't interested in knowing what they were.' (22).<sup>120</sup> For literary studies the details are as important as the main point or gist of the story especially in relation to religious stories. The quotation shows that Gibreel Farishta and his mother are not devoted Muslims. However, in a way Gibreel is not a practicing Muslim because he has only heard stories from his mother similar to a myth or an oral story being told. The representation of telling inaccurate stories portrays these two characters as ignorant Muslims who are unaware of their own religious history. The problem with telling stories that contain inaccuracies shows that as they get passed on to another person it leads to the passing on of misinformation, which is another form of distortion within the novel. It is important to know about the prophet's life because it is part of being a Muslim. There are certain things that are not mentioned in the Qur'an, which is known as Sunah (السنة) and Serat (السيرة), al Rasool (الرسول/Prophet) and the Prophet's life. Shaikh Kadir explains the meaning of Hadith in his book *Inside Islam*<sup>121</sup> (2008). As we have seen the Hadith (also referred to as Sunah or Serah) 'contains the Prophet's character and actions' and is referred to as a 'practical demonstration of the Qur'an'<sup>122</sup> (16). The Hadith and Qur'an are a source of guidance for Muslims which adds or explains knowledge (16). The Qur'an mentions part of the ablution in Surah Al Ma'idah (سورة المائدة) which is referred to as Ayat Al Wudu (ablution/آية الوضوء), but it does not contain the details of the ablution process performed by all Muslim who learnt this from the prophet. Kadir also explains that Muslims learnt how to

<sup>118</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings* trans. by Saheeh International, p.308.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p.308.

<sup>120</sup> Salman Rushdie, p.22.

<sup>121</sup> Shaikh Kadir, *Inside Islam: 101 Questions and Answers*, (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International (Asia) Private Limited, 2008), p.1, 2, 10, 15-18, 20, 27-28, 136, 145-147, 208. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

pray from the Hadith, not just the Holy Qur'an (18). The Sunah contains many of the prophet's practices or teachings of the things he did such as breaking his fasting by drinking Liban and eating a date.<sup>123</sup> The inaccuracies that are told about the stories of the prophet's life are similar to the inaccuracies of the way myths are told in Blumenberg's work to bring an end to them. The inaccuracies of these stories show that Naima Najmuddin is passing down an inaccurate version of the sayings and doings of the Prophet. These inaccuracies portray the treatment of Islam in the novel and show that it is not an attempt to critique or understand Islam but rather create a distortion of the faith. The way each story is told in the novel functions as an old Arabian tale and at the same time it makes Islam seem like a myth. The function of myth in this novel acts as a form of telling old oral cultural stories. These stories incorporate the retelling of the story of the Prophet Muhammad that becomes part of a series of dreams in the mind of Gibreel Farishta.

The use of the term *myth* does not imply that what is said is true or untrue. Myth could be used to enable a critique of Islamic tradition but at the same time in the novel it becomes a way of overcoming religion or an emancipation from religious traditions in one's daily life. This becomes culturally offensive and illegitimate in relation to *The Satanic Verses* because some Islamic historical facts are falsified and are taken out of context. *The Satanic Verses* includes past historical events that are included to present narrative chronology. This is done through the narration of stories that move the narrative from past historical events to present events and vice versa. Another example of this is the representation of men dressing up as mythical creatures in the city of Jahilia as a way of presenting religion in Ancient civilizations. In Jahilia there were no such events that took place like Ibrahim's festival. There were festivals during the time of Jahilia where people recited poems, played music, and danced but not to the extent described and depicted in the novel. However, the Jahilian celebration of Ibrahim's festival seems to be set in contrast with the Muslim's celebration of Eid Al-Adha in Mecca. The comparison between the novel's Ibrahim's festival and the actual religious celebrations is portrayed as a meaningless celebration that has no historical significance. Ibrahim's festival involves a red manticore, a creature found in myths that comes from a Persian legend and resembles an Egyptian sphinx. The manticore's voice is hybrid and consists of two instruments:

[...] the red manticore with the triple row teeth. The manticore has blue eyes and a mannish face and its voice is half-trumpet and half-flute. It is fast as the wind, its nails

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<sup>123</sup> Liban is fermented milk which is similar to yoghurt but is in liquid form. Muslims break their fast during the Holy month of Ramadan by eating a date and drinking Liban. Dates are eaten in an odd numbers: one piece or three pieces never an even number.

are corkscrew talons and its tail hurls poisoned quills. It loves to feed on human flesh. [...]<sup>124</sup> (117)

The representation of the mythical creature waiting on the other side of the city walls produces the notion that Jahilia is a mythical city. The manticore's voice is depicted as a trumpet which is associated with military commands (reveille). The flute is comparable to the pied piper's magic flute, an instrument that lures people. The quotation above portrays the fact that when the Qur'an is read it has a hybrid of voices that trick and command people. The manticore's voice portrays religion as have two contradicting voices. The manticore's tail suggests that the quill's ink is poisonous and thus the words written with this mythical creatures quill are poisonous. This shows not only that religious texts are poisonous but that the very ink of the novel is too. The city becomes a depiction of tales told about Greek mythical cities because of the depiction of the creatures in Ibrahim's festival. There are references to other animals like 'two-headed amohisbaenae', 'winged bulls known as Assyrian sphinxes', 'Djinns, houris, demons populate the city on this night of phantasmagoria and lust.' (117).<sup>125</sup> The novel is a retelling of the foundation of the Islamic religion and its narrative is interrupted by stories that are told as myths along with the interruption of the main characters living their life in a modern world. The characteristic of this narrative makes it seem that the Islamic tradition draws the characters back to an archaic life and interrupts or becomes an obstacle in their daily modern existence. The comparison between Ibrahim's festival to the religious celebration of Eid Al-Adha does not offer a relevant critique of the language and imagery of the Qur'an. In Eid Al-Adha Muslims celebrate by sacrificing a lamb, a re-enactment of prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham) obedience to God when, at the last moment as he attempts to sacrifice his son Isaac a ram appears in the thicket as a substitute. God spares Abraham the duty of sacrificing his son because of his obedience and submission to God's will. The representation of the festival does not offer a critique of Ibrahim's sacrifice but is an absurd depiction of the actual celebration. The significance of this celebration is undermined by portraying the festival as a moment where mythical creatures feed on human flesh. The use of *mythical* material does not communicate effectively with the cultural world of Islam.

Another example is of the archangel Gibreel, represented as a sick man who is suffering from a haemorrhage which causes him to have these dreams. The revelations were visions and portraying them as dreams places them in the psychological domain and not just the

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<sup>124</sup> Salman Rushdie, p.117.

<sup>125</sup> Rushdie, p.117.

imagination. Sigmund Freud's *Dream-Interpretation as an illustration*<sup>126</sup> (2001), describes how dreams reflect a person's life events but their characteristics are not the same as one's waking life (165). Freud describes dreams as 'confused, unintelligible or positively nonsensical' and dreams can contradict one's knowledge of reality (165). A person's behaviour in dreams often resembles that of an insane person because in dreams 'we attribute objective reality to the contents of the dream' (165). Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretations of Dreams*<sup>127</sup> (2001) shows that dreams can only be interpreted on the basis of the 'manifest content as it is presented in our memory' (923).<sup>128</sup> The way in which dreams are interpreted is through the latent content or dream thoughts that are revealed after we wake up from a dream (923). We cannot find the meaning of a dream through a dream's manifest content (923). Freud explains that there is a relationship between the content of dreams and the latent dream-thought where 'the latter have been changed into the former' (924). So, our waking reality and thoughts affect our dreams. Reality or the real world we live in influences or is present in our dreams in a different form. Freud describes the dream-thoughts and the dream-content as different representations of one subject (924). The dream-thoughts and dream content contain the same reality but are expressed differently. The dream-content is a transcript of the dream-thoughts and one is described as the original and the other as a translation (924). Freud explains that the dream-content is a 'pictographic script' that is 'transposed into the language of the dream-thoughts' (924).<sup>129</sup> Dreams are not meaningless but are a distortion of our waking life. The meaning of a dream allows one to see things that one cannot in waking life.

Dreams are a transformed or exhausted and distorted 'pictographic script' of our daily life (924). In the *dream work (Traumarbeit)* our reality or life events are transposed into our unconscious mind and so dreams become meaningful once analysed. One has to look at how things are transposed from the conscious mind into the unconscious mind to make dreams meaningful. However, the dreams in the novel cannot be interpreted in this way because, in the dream sequences, the reality of the Islamic history is distorted and portrayed as purely imaginative. In relation to the magical realist mode these dreams are portrayed as meaningless because they are purely imagined events. In the universe of the novel, the reader receives a critique of religion from a character who is suffering from a brain injury and whom Rushdie's

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<sup>126</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), p.165.

<sup>127</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W Norton and Company, Inc. 2001), pp. 919-929. (p.923-924).

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p.923.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p.924.

narrator does not represent as a reliable source of truth. The archangel Gibreel is known as al-roh al-ameen (a devoted soul) and here he is portrayed as a crazy man who appears in different eras of human life because he is called upon to give revelations. In *The Satanic Verses* Gibreel has a dream that he is in Jahilia and this becomes a reversed revelation:

Sometimes when he sleeps Gibreel becomes aware, without the dream, of himself sleeping, of himself dreaming his own awareness of his dream, and then a panic begins, O God, he cries out, O allgood allahgod, [...] Just as he, the businessman, felt when he first saw the archangel: thought he was cracking, wanted to throw himself down from the rock [...] from a rock on which there grew a stunted lote-tree, [...] He's coming: making his way up Cone Mountain to the cave. Happy birthday: he's forty-four today. (92)<sup>130</sup>

The quotation shows Gibreel's visions as dreams— purely dreams— and not a vision similar to the critique of the way Mahound received the revelations as dreams. The lote tree in Islamic tradition is called Sidrat al Muntaha (سدرة المنتهى). Sidrat al Muntaha is a tree of high significance in Islamic tradition because it is believed this is the place where Allah told Muhammad that Muslims will pray five times a day. Shaik Kadir explains the revelations as 'ideas, knowledge, elucidation, instructions, advice and guidance.'<sup>131</sup> Prophet Muhammad's revelation is the Holy Qur'an (15). Kadir explains that the Prophet had a double-checking technique where he asks his scribes to recite aloud what had been written down to make sure it was written down correctly (16).<sup>132</sup> The location of Sidrat al Muntaha is in the sixth sky near heaven. The first inconsistency of Islamic history and especially the first revelations is in this quotation because the Prophet did not see this tree on a mountain top nor was he going to throw himself from the mountain. The Prophet saw this tree when the archangel Gibreel took him on a journey to the Isra'a and Mi'raj. Kadir explains the Prophet's ascension to heaven is known as 'The Night Journey' to Isra'a and Mi'raj (145). In the Isra'a journey the Prophet is taken to Jerusalem to Masjid Al Aqsa or 'Baitul Maqdis', which is called in English the Dome of the Rock (145). The Dome of the Rock is known as the 'place of submission' that was 'first frequented by Prophet Abraham' (145). Mi'raj is the second part of the Prophet's journey from Dome of the Rock (Masjid al Aqsa) to heaven (145). However, Kadir explains that the narration of the Prophet's journey to heaven 'means the spiritual Heaven and not the physical "heavens" which refers to the universe' (145). The Prophet's entire journey is 'to be taken in the spiritual sense as they are metaphorically expressed for common understanding' (145). The reader gets false information on the events that occurred to Mahound when he first saw Gibreel. The

<sup>130</sup> Rushdie, pp. 92.

<sup>131</sup> Kadir, p. 15.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p.16.

symbolism of dreams in Islam that are depicted in the Qur'an are not similar to the way they are depicted in the novel. The symbolism of dreams is portrayed as part of the world of imagination rather than a vision.

In the novel, revelations are represented in the form of an idea or question of an *idea*: 'There is a voice whispering in his ear: *What kind of idea are you? Man-or-mouse?* We know that voice. We've heard it once before.' (95).<sup>133</sup> The quotation represents the symbolic language or use of symbolic philosophical questions in Islam as *ideas*. In the Islamic tradition, God shows that human beings were chosen as a highly regarded part of creation because man can think intellectually and logically, while animals do not possess that quality. The common English phrase of man or mouse is used sarcastically in relation to the revelations. The dreams that are portrayed in this novel are not dreams; they are more like visions or listening of the heart in Islamic history. The novel does not depict the Islamic perspective of the listening. In Islamic history Gibreel told the prophet *read* and the prophet said I am not a reader because he did not know how to read and write. Gibreel repeated it four times, *read* and with each time he would hug the prophet hard. In this moment the first verses of the Qur'an came to the Prophet of Surah al-'Alaq: 'Recite in the name of your Lord who created—'(96:1-2).<sup>134</sup> The reason God chose a Prophet who was unable to read and write is to show that these were the true words of God. In the Islamic tradition the reason Allah chose a prophet who was unable to read and write is to show that he would not be able to use false verses or lie about Allah's message.

The second time Gibreel appears in the novel with revelations is with the Imam who is awaiting his return to Desh. In the quotation below it seems to suggest that the deity is waiting for their call and their request not to be heard but to create their own message as it were God's revelations. In the quotation the character Bilal is a radio presenter, but in Islamic history Bilal is the first Muazzin (مؤذن) to call on the five prayers. He is the first black man (عبد/freed slave) to enter Islam and he was known for his beautiful voice.<sup>135</sup> In the quotation below, Gibreel is summoned by the Imam and the words that are forced out of his mouth come from Bilal:

This dream-Gibreel, so like the waking one, stands quaking in the sanctum of the Imam, whose eyes are white as clouds. Gibreel speaks querulously, to hide his fear. 'Why insist on archangels? Those days, you should know, are gone.' The Imam closes his eyes, sighs. The carpet extrudes long hairy tendrils, which wrap themselves around Gibreel, holding him fast. 'You don't need me,' Gibreel emphasizes. 'The revelation is complete. Let me go.' The other shakes his head, and speaks, except that his lips do not

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<sup>133</sup> Rushdie, p.95.

<sup>134</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings* trans. by Saheeh International, p.895.

<sup>135</sup> The word slave in the Arabic language means 'a black man', 'a slave' and 'God's servant in Islam'. See Oliver Leaman, *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*, ([n.p.]: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), p.581. ProQuest ebook Central.

move, and it is Bilal's voice that fills Gibreel's ears, even though the broadcaster is nowhere to be seen, tonight's the night, the voice says, and you must fly me to Jerusalem. Then the apartment dissolves and they are standing on the roof beside the water-tank, because the Imam, when he wishes to move, can remain still and move the world around him (212).<sup>136</sup>

The depiction of the Imam in this quotation portrays him as a mythical person who uses his beard to capture people by wrapping it around them. For Gibreel the revelations are complete, and he had given them to Mahound. The quotation shows that the days of revelations have ended. The depiction of the Imam wanting to create revelations seems to suggest that anyone who becomes head of Islamic state recreates or relives the initial experience of mystical revelation. Islamic power seems to create the illusion that one may claim to have a prophetic nature and the ability to command the archangel. Bilal's voice is used as a magic instrument that can make the hearer (Gibreel) do what he wants. In this quotation a retelling and re-enactment of the Isra'a and Mi'raj, an important historical event in Islamic history is turned into a mythical story. The *mythical* element is used in a negative sense that is contrary to the facts of Islamic tradition. The Prophet's visit to Jerusalem on the steed Buraq and ascending to heaven all in one night is being replaced by Gibreel taking the Imam on this journey.

In the novel, the section about the revelation of Iman of Desh portrays him as distorting the symbolic meaning of the concept of time in the Islamic tradition. An example from the text is where the Imam has a discussion with Gibreel about *time* and how he is loved more than Ayeesha the empress of Desh because he will stop *time*:

They love me for my habit of smashing clocks. Human beings who turn away from God lose [...] the sense of His boundless time, that encompasses past, present and future; the timeless time, that has no need to move. [...] She is nothing a tick or tock. She looks in the mirror every day and is terrorized by the idea of age, of time passing. [...] she, too, is in the chains of Time. After the revolution there will be no clocks... The word *clock* will be expunged from our dictionaries. [...] We shall all be born again, all of us the same unchanging age in the eye of Almighty God.' (214)<sup>137</sup>

The uses of the words *time* and *clock* both refer in the Arabic language to Judgment Day. In the Arabic language (الساعة/ساعه) both mean time, clock and hour. There are three chapters in the Qur'an that refer to the time and clock as Judgment Day. In al-Qamar chapter, judgment day is referred to as the *Hour*: 'اقتربت الساعة وانشق القمر' (54:1).<sup>138</sup> The English translation of this verse is: 'The Hour has come near, and the moon has split [in two].'<sup>1468</sup> (54:1). The English

<sup>136</sup> Rushdie, p. 212.

<sup>137</sup> Rushdie, p.214.

<sup>138</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings* trans. by Saheeh International, p. 757.

translation of al-Qamar verse one, reference to judgement day is the *Hour*. The reference to time in the novel seems to portray the Imam as the bringer of the Judgment Day and as the one who will remove the words *clock* and *time* from our *dictionaries*, which seems to refer to the holy books. The deep meaning of time and clock in the Islamic tradition is taken out of context. Furthermore, the signs of judgment day are clearly set in the Hadith and Holy Qur'an, which in the quotation above seem to be outside the frame of reference of the real sign of judgement day in the Holy books.

The reason why the novel seems to be a mockery of the Qur'an is because of the use of imagery to describe the revelations through the three characters the Imam, Ayeesha and Mahound. Through these three characters the depiction of the revelations is portrayed as a dream. The events that take place in the revelations do not make sense or convey meaning to the reader. In the quotation below the narrator Gibreel says that the stories change without warning or a sign and one moment he is in Jahilia the next he is in a battle with the Imam and Empress:

When the nocturnal story changes, when, without warning, the progress of events in Jahilia and Yathrib gives way to the struggle of Imam and Empress, Gibreel briefly hopes that the curse has ended, that his dreams have been restored to the random eccentricity of ordinary life; but then, as the new story, too, falls into the old pattern, continuing each time he drops off from the precise point at which it was interrupted, and as his own image, translated into an avatar of the archangel, re-enters the frame, so his hope dies, and he succumbs once more to the inexorable. (216)<sup>139</sup>

The interrupted stories are picked up right at the place where they stopped before being interrupted by another story. The representation of these revelations is similar to the dreams any reader would have, which are initially only a series of images that are not connected to one another and so are without meaning. In dreams the images or places are not connected to one another as in ordinary life but this absence of connection is not noticeable in a dream. However, when one wakes up from the dream, one realises that the events that took place in the dream are not connected. The point about dreams is not that their contents are unconnected or do not have their own logic, but that they do not contain the logic of everyday life. So, the quotation above describes a psychological dream of a troubled dreamer. However, the representations of these stories or dreams that are revelations in the novel mimics the stories in the Qur'an about previous Prophets. The novel portrays preconceived ideas on Islam and does not function as a forum for unprejudiced encounter and communication between different cultural positions or as a literary critique of Islam. The novel repeats or mimics the language of the Qur'anic text

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<sup>139</sup> Rushdie, p.216.

but does not enable communication in or with the language it mimics. In the quotation ‘the new story, too, falls into the old pattern’ seems to show that the stories within the Qur’an are themselves repetitive or derivative from other religious stories (216).<sup>140</sup> The archangel Gibreel is the intermediary between God and the Prophets. Gibreel was sent by God to all the Prophets, from Prophet Adam all the way to the last Prophet Muhammad. The archangel is depicted as someone who is trapped in a series of revelatory dreams and an avatar moved and placed in different stories. The novel fails to function as a magical realist novel in two different literary levels: the first is in its allegorical representations and the second is in the reference to real life as we have seen in classical European narrative. In allegorical writing the plot is not significant because it is subordinate to the alternative meaning that derives from the reader’s interpretation of a symbolic narrative.<sup>141</sup> As we have seen, for magical realism, allegory is problematic because it interferes with the reader’s acceptance of magical occurrences as real.<sup>142</sup> So, in this sense *The Satanic Verses* cannot be read as an allegorical novel. The novel cannot be read as a magical realist novel because the surface of the narrative is an extravagant distortion of reality within the magical realist mode to the extent that its *realist* element cannot function. In *The Satanic Verses* magical realism has no relationship to realism. Ursula Kluwisch is therefore mistaken in her thesis that Rushdie has his own realism in his magical realist writing. For magical realism to function as a critique of Islam its symbolic representation of Islam has to have something in common with the commonly known and recognized world of Islam. In Rushdie’s novel, J.P. Stern’s concept of the ‘matching element’ which belongs intrinsically to *realism* is largely absent.<sup>143</sup>

The second part of the quotation shows how Gibreel goes from one religion to the next and represents the stories within the Qur’an as a confused text. The revelations are presented as nightmares and a tale rather than a holy act from God:

Things have reached the point at which some of his night-sagas seem more bearable than others, and after the apocalypse of the Imam he feels almost pleased when the next narrative begins, extending his internal repertory, because at least it suggests that the deity whom he, Gibreel, has tried unsuccessfully to kill can be a God of love, as well as one of vengeance, power, duty, rules and hate; and it is, too, a nostalgic sort of tale, of a lost homeland; it feels “like a return to the past [...] what story is this? Coming right up. To begin at the beginning: On the morning of his fortieth birthday, in a room full of butterflies, Mirza Saeed Akhtar watched his sleeping wife [...] (216)<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Rushdie, p. 216.

<sup>141</sup> Maggie Ann Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, p.24.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>143</sup> Stern, p. 84.

<sup>144</sup> Rushdie, p.216.

The Imam's story, 'his internal repertory,' becomes extended by the next tale similar to the narrative in the Qur'an where one story ends and another begins.<sup>145</sup> The quotation above shows that the Qur'an is akin to myth where it is documented or passed on as a surviving myth. The forced revelations by the Imam portray him as a deity and this in itself is blasphemous in the Islamic tradition. The beginning of the next story or revelatory story is presented as a type of broadcast and mocks the age in which the Prophet received his first revelation at the age of forty. In the Ayeesha chapter there is a section about a folklore of Bibiji a holy woman who was surrounded with butterflies and has healing abilities. The butterflies banished along with bibiji and have returned with Ayeesha after she received her revelations from Gibreel. The story of the revelations in the Ayeesha chapter is a mixture of Bibiji's story and the butterflies. This shows that revelations in the novel are distorted and portrayed as mythical stories in an attempt to rewrite Islamic history.

Another example of this is in the Ayeesha chapter the epileptic orphan who leads her entire village in Titlpur to a pilgrimage to Mecca by foot to cross the Red Sea. The depiction of the symbolic crossing of the Red sea is a parody rather than a critique. The narrative in this section of the novel it is not similar to the language or the image of the Qur'an in portraying a moral of the story. The village of Titlipur has the same mystical characteristics of Jahilia but it is set in modern times. *The Satanic Verses* attempts to convey or recreate similar stories to the ones in the Qur'an but does not offer a relevant critique as a basis for the recreation of the story. The Ayeesha chapter tells the story of Mirza Saeed Akhtar and his wife's illness with cancer. The archangel appears to Ayesha in her dreams with revelations and they decide to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca on foot. The pilgrimage is comparable to Moses's crossing of the Red Sea. Mirza fears that his wife Mishal became sick because of the desire he felt towards the orphan girl Ayesha. Therefore, God was punishing him through his wife. Mishal Akhtar and Mirza disagree on her cancer treatment. Mishal seeks faith, prayer, God, and believes in Gibreel's command that the miracle of the parting of the Red sea will happen so that they can walk to Mecca. She believes that her cancer will be cured after she completes the pilgrimage.

Ayeesh informs the people of Titlpur that Gibreel came to her in a dream with a revelation. The dreams are sexual encounters of the archangel Gabriel (Gibreel) and Ayeesha. The problem with depicting the revelations as dreams is that in reality the revelations were not dreams. In the novel, the dream does not have a *dream work* which enables us to interpret these dreams clearly in a way which one can integrate into reality. So, Freud's description of dreams

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.216.

reflects how they cannot work in the representation of Islam and the imagery used in the revelations of dreams are a contradiction to Islamic history. An example from the novel is of Ayeesha's dream revelation that is represented in a sexual encounter between her and the archangel Gibreel:

The dreamer, dreaming, wants (but is unable) to protest: I never laid a finger on her, what do you think this is, some kind of wet dream or what? Damn me if I know from where that girl was getting her information/inspiration. Not from this quarter, that's for sure. [...] This happened: she was walking back to her village, but then she seemed to grow weary all of a sudden, and went off the path to lie in the shade of a tamarind-tree and rest. The moment her eyes closed he was there beside her, dreaming Gibreel in coat and hat, sweltering in the heat. She looked at him but he couldn't say what she saw, wings maybe, haloes, the works. Then he was lying there and finding he could not get up, his limbs had become heavier than iron bars, it seemed as if his body might be crushed by its own weight into the earth (226).<sup>146</sup>

In the quotation Gibreel seems to be accusing Ayeesha of forcefully binding him to the ground in a kind of rape scene. The quotation above shows that Ayeesha raped Gibreel or raped a revelation out of Gibreel because after this scene she believes that Gibreel has given her a revelation. Gibreel is summoned from another part of the world in his coat and hat while he was laying down in the heat feeling forcefully bound to the ground. This suggests that Ayeesha's way of getting the revelations from Gibreel happens in a forced rape-like manner unlike the Imam's persuasive voice. The revelations in this scene are a retelling of the Prophet's story but through an epileptic orphan girl experiencing a feminine prophetic experience. The quote also seems to misrepresent the different ways in which each prophet experienced the process of revelation and it is represented in a profane manner. The critique of the revelatory experience is reduced to a sexual and degrading portrayal that removed the sacredness of the revelatory act. The type of imagery used in this scene does not comply with Islamic culture. The language used to describe the revelatory experience is completely taken out of context of the Islamic use of language that describes the revelatory experience.

However, in the quotation below the narrator shows that Gibreel might have asked Ayeesha to remove her clothes and lie next to him under the tree. The narrator says one thing and the character Gibreel says something else, and this puts the reader in a position where he/she is unable to know the truth about Ayeesha's revelation. The most important aspect of the quotation is that it does not form a critique of Islamic revelation but produces a parody of the revelatory act:

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<sup>146</sup> Rushdie, p. 226.

When she finished looking at him she nodded, gravely, as if he had spoken, and then she took off her scrap of a sari and stretched out beside him, nude. Then in the dream he fell asleep, out cold as if somebody pulled out the plug, and when dreamed himself awake again she was standing in front of him with that loose white hair and the butterflies clothing her: transformed. She was still nodding, with a rapt expression on her face, receiving a message from somewhere that she called Gibreel. Then she left him lying there and returned to the village to make her entrance. So now I have a dream-wife, the dreamer becomes conscious enough to think. What the hell to do with her? – But it isn't up to him (226).<sup>147</sup>

All the revelations presented so far are as a series of dreams within dreams, which in magical realism is not part of the literary mode. In relation to Freud's theoretical work on dreams, one can see that the realm of dreams is different to reality and causes confusion or 'dream-distortion.'<sup>148</sup> For the reader to analyse the revelation as a dream would create Freud's 'dream-distortion' because readers need to understand the 'manifest content of a dream and the latent dream-thoughts' that is the dream-work.<sup>149</sup> The text can no longer be analysed as a magical realist or realist text but as a *dream*. The treatment of a magical realist text should not be looked at as a dream but as a reality accepted by the characters. The reader's analysis of the text through psychological methods places the text in the realm of imagination with characteristics that differ from reality and that is not part of a magical realist novel. Gibreel describes how each character's revelations occur, which is a type of calling on Gibreel. Mahound calls on Gibreel through questioning, with the Iman it happens through a type of radio broadcasting voice and with Ayesha it becomes a sexual act that brings the archangel to her. The reader is left with three confusing ways of speaking to the archangel and none of them offer a critique of the Islamic tradition but a distortion and mockery of the holy act of revelations. These dreams become a problem because they are a representation of how one can talk to God through the manipulation of the archangel. This is shown as a forceful act of calling on Gibreel who is easily manipulated into giving false revelations. If the representation of revelations in the novel is a critique of the way humans interact with God, it only shows the creation's (humanity's) desire to communicate with the Creator (God). The revelations also show that God has not spoken to any of these characters nor with the archangel Gibreel. The novel also suggests that Gibreel is the creation of the human mind more than a divine intervention on earth. The use of mythical material and portrayal of dreams does not communicate effectively with the cultural world of Islam. The use of this type of imagery serves only to suggest that religion is man-

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<sup>147</sup> Rushdie, p. 226.

<sup>148</sup> Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, p.165.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

made rather than truth revealed to humanity by God. Another example from the text is when Ayeesha believes that Gibreel requested a pilgrimage to Mecca:

‘I have flown with the angel into the highest heights,’ she said. ‘Yes, even to the lote-tree of the uttermost end. The archangel, Gibreel: he has brought us a message which is also a command. Everything is required of us, and everything will be given (235).<sup>150</sup>

In these false revelations as with the Imam, Ayeesha believes that she flew with Gibreel to heaven and saw the Sidr tree on the Isra’a and Mi’raj date. Each character believes that the revelations begin with this incident in Islamic history which is not true. The first time Gibreel spoke to the Prophet was inside Ghar Hira’a (غار حراء) a cave in Jabal Al Nur (جبل النور /the Nur mountain). Rushdie’s authorial perspective does not make the kind of truth that he explores in *The Satanic Verses* clear, whether it is looking at the Qur’an as a form of historical record or a mythical text.

In the quotation below the narrator Gibreel addresses the reader and explains that he is not an archangel and that *Mahound* comes to him to receive revelations in his nightmare of the foundation of Islam:

Mahound comes to me for revelation, asking me to choose between monotheist and henotheist alternatives, and I’m just some idiot actor having a bhaenchud nightmare, what the fuck do I know, yaar, what to tell you, help. Help (109).<sup>151</sup>

The quotation shows that the act of revelations that Muslims regard as a highly sacred act is debased. The quotation contains blasphemy more than any type of representation because the reader takes nothing from this scene. All the narrator does is misrepresent the revelatory act in the mind of a believer and suggest inconsistency in the Islamic historical account given in the Qur’an.

The use of Western symbols in representing Islam as the *Other* in the novel is used in an abusive way and this is depicted in a sexual scene between Mahound and Gibreel. However, most Western representations of Islam are not abusive, as in *The Satanic Verses*, but are a misconception or an anthropological gaze at an alien or unfamiliar religion and people. The novel portrays a Western fantasied narrative and turns it into a harmful content, which is a reality from the perspective of a renounced Muslim’s awareness of Islam. This is depicted in one of the scenes where the Harem of the Prophet is reduced to a brothel:

The Curtain, *Hijab*, was the name of the most popular brothel in Jahilia, an enormous palazzo of date-palms in water-tinkling courtyards, surrounded by chambers that interlocked in bewildering mosaic patterns, permeated by labyrinthine corridors which

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<sup>150</sup> Rushdie, p.235.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

had been deliberately decorated to look alike, each of them bearing the same calligraphic invocations to Love, each carpeted with identical rugs, each with a large stone urn positioned against a wall. None of The Curtain's clients could ever find their way, without help, either into the rooms of their favoured courtesan or back again to the street (376).<sup>152</sup>

In the quotation the Arabic calligraphy that could be considered a sacred writing language and the Hijab are turned to profane symbols of Islam. The Hijab is depicted as a way to conceal erotic and bad Islamic practices. The holy veil is a symbol of chastity and here is reduced to a form of hiding the identity of male visitors in a brothel scene. The hijab is a symbol of modesty and privacy from the gaze of strange men and protects females from unwanted attention. Here, it becomes a way of protecting brothel visitors and female prostitutes from being seen and known by their customers as well as outsiders. Sacred Islamic symbols in the novel are turned against the Islamic tradition in an abusive manner. This is what Akhtar calls an 'unprincipled abuse' and is not a 'disciplined critique' nor can it be considered as 'a powerful work of art' (35).<sup>153</sup> The narrative of the novel is set out to distort Islam for Westerners and aid people against Islam.<sup>154</sup> The depiction of the Prophet's Harem as a brothel shows that allowing Muslim men to have four wives is the equivalent of a man having his own brothel at home. What the novel does not show is that Islam does not permit a man to marry four wives unless his first wife could not bear children or is terminally ill. The Qur'an clearly states that if a man can provide for all four wives equally then it is permitted.

In the quotation below Mahound goes up to the mountain and forcefully dreams of Gibreel to come and give him a revelation:

Mother-fucking dreams, cause of all the trouble in the human race, movies, too, if I was God I'd cut the imagination right out of people and then maybe poor bastards like me could get a good night's rest. Fighting against sleep, he forces his eyes to stay open, unblinking, until the visual purple fades off the retinas and sends him blind, but he's only human, in the end he falls down the rabbit-hole and there he is again, in Wonderland, up the mountain, and the businessman is waking up [...](122)<sup>155</sup>

The revelatory act in the novel is shown to be part of the human imagination because it is described as a dream rather than a vision. There are two types of dreams occurring at the same time in the quotation below. The first dream is of Mahound and the second is Gibreel's dream taking place simultaneously. Not only is the revelation shown as part of the human imagination,

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p.376.

<sup>153</sup> Akhtar, p. 35.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>155</sup> Rushdie, p. 122.

but it is shown as a waking dream where delusions and hallucinations can occur. The second part of the quotation shows a sexual scene between the prophet and the archangel Gibreel:

[...] Gibreel and the Prophet are wrestling, both naked, rolling over and over, in the cave of the fine white sand that rises around them like a veil. *As if he's learning me, searching me, as if I'm the one undergoing the test.* [...] Mahound wrestles the archangel, hurling him from side to side, and let me tell you he's getting in everywhere, his tongue in my ear his fist around my balls, there was never a person with such a rage in him, [...] he has to K N O W and I have nothing to tell him, [...] we may both have taught ourselves by listening a lot but as is plain to see he's even a better listener than me; so we roll kick scratch [...] (122).<sup>156</sup>

The holy act of receiving revelation is turned into a raging sexual scene filled with profanity of the Prophet and Gibreel. The representation of the revelatory act is not treated in a critical manner but is ridiculing the way the Prophet used *listening* to receive revelations. The act of listening to revelations is represented as a homosexual act that Islam forbids. The depiction of the Prophet in this manner resembles Akhtar's finding of an evil Christian mythology character who uses the devil to create 'a new monotheistic religion' (4).<sup>157</sup> The representation of the character of Mahound is done under Western terms in the use of 'Medieval Christian terminology.'<sup>158</sup> In the Middle Ages, Mahound was believed to be a devil who wrote the Arabic Qur'an.<sup>159</sup> *The Satanic Verses* seems to be a regurgitation of the medieval Christian character Mahound who delivers satanic verses.

Akhtar's argument about *The Satanic Verses* is similar to my own because the novel is culturally offensive and distorts Islamic history especially in its representation of the revelatory act and in the depiction of Isra'a and Miraj. The prophetic experience is ridiculed to the point where other characters engage in this experience and summon Gibreel for new revelations. The reason the novel cannot be read as a magical realist novel is because it reduces the magical realist mode to the realm of dreams and the imagination and removes the<sup>160</sup> *realist* element. To place events as dreams in a magical realist novel removes the realist tone and makes the narrative purely imaginative. Magical realist novels are an attempt to discuss issues that are otherwise difficult to discuss in a realist tone. In this novel, there are no such attempts in critiquing Islamic traditions other than the debasement of the tradition and the representation of profanity towards sacred things. The representation of the prophetic experience through revelations is played at and do not offer a critique of the actual Islamic revelations. The other

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>157</sup> Akhtar, p. 4.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>160</sup> Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, p.24.

two novels I consider offer a critique of the Islamic tradition without profanity or sacrilege content. In the case of this novel, there are no such attempts found in a critique of the Islamic religion nor anything that includes the modernisation of Islam.

### **The Role of the Media in Representing the *Other***

The Western media's role in the representation of the *Other* depends on Imtiaz's two 'types of knowing.'<sup>161</sup> The first language of the media consists of images from the camera and the sounds that are picked up by microphones (41). The second language consists of 'The subaltern position' this points to an empire of feeling threatened by the loss of power.<sup>162</sup> As we have seen, for Imtiaz the media uses the first and second type of knowing. In *The Satanic Verses* the television cameras act as a way of capturing certain images, which is similar to the novel's representation of Islamic history. The narration of the novel acts as the eye of the camera and changes events, where the story lines become manipulated into something other than the truth:

— Cut. — A man lit by a sun-gun speaks rapidly into a microphone. [...] The reporter speaks gravely; petrol bombs plastic bullets police injuries water-cannon looting, confining himself, of course, to facts. But the camera sees what he does not say. A camera is a thing easily broken or purloined; its fragility makes it fastidious, A camera requires law, order, the thin blue line (455).<sup>163</sup>

The role of the reporter, the camera, and the act of rewriting narrative all work through images. Each time the camera *cuts*, truth is removed from the image. The media does this to erase what it does not intend to report to people. The media coverage differs from what the people are witnessing. The camera in this quotation portrays that it is no longer showing truth because it conceals part of the image. The narration in the novel acts like a Western camera looking at religion from the outside but with an insider's knowledge of Islam:

Gibreel: the dreamer, whose point of view is sometimes that of the camera and at other moments, spectator. When he's a camera the pee oh vee is always on the move, he hates static shots, so he's floating up on a high crane looking down at the foreshortened figures of the actors, or he's swooping down to stand invisibly between them, turning slowly on his heel to achieve a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree pan, or maybe he'll try a dolly shot, tracking along beside Baal and Abu Simbel as they walk, or handheld with the help of a steadicam he'll probe the secrets of the Grandee's bedchamber. But mostly he sits up on Mount Cone like a paying customer in the dress circle, and Jahilia is his silver screen (108).<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Imtiaz, p.41.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>163</sup> Rushdie, p. 455.

<sup>164</sup> Rushdie, p. 108.

The description of Gibreel who acts as the camera lens shows that the main character Gibreel seems like a distortion of the Islamic image he represents. The quotation shows the characters in the city of Jahilia as part of a narrative of a retold story of real historical events and Gibreel is a camera that is controlled by the narrator and sometimes by himself. In the novel, Rushdie is reinforcing the camera's gaze through his narrative. In the next quotation, Gibreel shows that he wants to be free to move around the scenes of the places he gets summoned to give revelations. The constant change of angle by the camera suggests that it is not observing a real religion, but rather a series of scenes in a show:

[...] Hamza says to Mahound: 'Go ask Gibreel,' and he, the dreamer, feels his heart leaping in alarm, who, me? I'm supposed to know the answers here? I'm sitting here watching this picture and now this actor points his finger out at me, who ever heard the like, who asks the bloody audience of a 'theological' to solve the bloody plot? – But as the dream shifts, it's always changing form, he, Gibreel, is no longer a mere spectator but the central player, the star (108).<sup>165</sup>

The quotation shows that the representation of Islamic history in the novel is an act played by one person who takes on two roles: the archangel and the Prophet. There are two instances in the novel that represent Islam as a creation of the imagination: the first is through the series of dreams and the second is through acting. Gibreel is not only dreaming in this quotation but he is also a spectator watching a film that he stars in. The critique of the role of the Western camera that is offered in the novel is directed against any truthful representation of Islam. The novel distorts Islamic history in two ways: in the form of a series of dreams and in the form of the camera's gaze.

## Conclusion

Magical realism does not work in the novel because it does not succeed in its representation of contemporary Arab society nor in a critique of Islamic culture in an indirect way. Magical realism in this novel is used as an abusive attack on sacred things. The novel does not use the techniques of narrative to offer a Islamic critique of law and society by the way it portrays them but becomes a debasement of Islamic traditions that does not offer an alternative way to approach reality. The treatment of Islamic history and the profanity towards it clearly shows that it is an attack on the faith which seeks to belittle it without comprehending the implications it causes on readers who are of the faith. The opposing aspects of magical

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

realism that are the magical and the realist do not interact successfully because of the misrepresentation of Islam. One of the important aspects of magical realism is its reliance on the readers acceptance of realistic and magical perspectives in the same way as the narrator. However, in *The Satanic Verses* the narrator(s) do not accept the magical occurrences, nor can the reader rely on the authenticity of the fiction, which is clearly represented as an attack on the faith. The duality of the *magical* and the *real* in this novel is disrupted by the segregation of the magical from the real, such that it cannot be *magically real*.

In the other magical realist novels, such as *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, a critique of the Islamic tradition is successful because it aims to show other ways of approaching Islam without attacking the faith. In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* the author gives a critique of his culture (Saudi Arabia) through a critical exploration of cultural practices and Western comparison of why certain actions are prohibited in the Islamic tradition. Magical realism in that novel works because of the use of Western symbols as a means of critique that forms a dialogue between different cultures. That type of representation can be a subtle and persuasive form of critique rather than an offense against religious doctrine. In Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red*, the Western fantasy of the *Other* is turned on the West, as in the Ottoman fantasy of Western art, Western objects and the Westernisation of Islamic art. In the novel, images, the colour *Red* or an object like a *coin* represent something beyond their immediate meaning. In *My Name is Red*, images come to life through narrative to give a critique of Islamic culture and traditions. These images narrate the challenges that man faces and man-made systems that cause struggles, which shifts the focus away from religion. The role of the Ottoman Sultan as an Islamic icon and the book he orders to be created is presented as antithetical to religious books. The Sultan's book becomes a symbol of blasphemy because it glorifies the Sultan and his realm instead of God and God's realm. Magical realism does not work in *The Satanic Verses* whilst it does in the other texts I consider because it does not follow the criteria that are mentioned above about the magically real and the associations of dreams to introduce magical events. Salman Rushdie is described as engaging in a form of *literary terrorism*<sup>166</sup> in his misrepresentation of Islamic faith by using profanity against Islamic tradition and distorting Islamic facts, which is considered *tahref*<sup>167</sup> in the Islamic tradition. In the position of the *Other* that is Islam in the novel, Islam is being attacked on the assumptions of others' rather than becoming a way to attack those assumptions made of it.

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<sup>166</sup> Shabbir Akhtar, p. 11.

<sup>167</sup> The deliberate act of changing of religious facts and religious texts.

In the next chapter, I will be examining Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red* as magical realist and realist novels in the treatment, representation and critique of Islamic tradition. I will focus on the technique used to form a critique of Islam by finding a way around the prohibitions associated with the Islamic tradition on representation. I will argue that the critique used in *My Name is Red* is based on modernising and enhancing parts of the Islamic tradition such as Islamic art. Pamuk's novel is an exploration of the prohibitions associated with creating an image of inanimate and animate objects and shows the reason behind these prohibitions. The novel creates a creative critique of how to overcome Islamic prohibitions on literary representation of the image and a discussion of it through the technique of the Greek term ekphrasis. In *My Name is Red*, ekphrasis becomes a method that distances the narrator and characters by using images in order to create an informed critique of aspects of Islamic tradition without malice to discuss aspects of the Qur'an and Ottoman culture in relation to societal and cultural traditions.

## Chapter Two: Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red* as a Magical Realist/Realist Novel in Its Method of Representation

### Overview

Some recent scholarship on *My Name Is Red* (2011)<sup>168</sup> has shown a similar approach to the one in this chapter, but its approach touches only on the surface of the narrative. Gloria Fisk in *Orhan Pamuk and the Good of World Literature*<sup>169</sup> (2018), examines Orhan Pamuk's writing as a non-Western author and how it can be read as world literature (169). Fisk does not exclusively look at *My Name Is Red* but investigates Pamuk's cultural style of writing through his different novels such as *Snow* and *The Museum of Innocence*. However, Fisk investigates the interpretations of Western readers who misread the text based on tensions between East and West, rather than 'cultural and political divisions internal to Turkey' (169). Fisk finds these divisions are ambiguous to 'Anglophone readers' who read Pamuk's novels without questioning his representations of historical realities' and without having some background information (170). The reader relies on the author 'to provide information that exceeds the fictional' narrative (170). Fisk finds that Pamuk uses 'magical realist devices' as a means 'to make the limitations of translation and mimesis readily visible', for example in the episode where he makes a coin and corpse 'speak during the reign of Sultan Murat III' in *My Name Is Red* (170). The second critic who investigates Pamuk's use of literary device is John Mullan in *How Novels Work*.<sup>170</sup> However, Mullan does not label the taking of a coin or corpse as a magical realist device but as *Ekphrasis* (253). Mullan looks at this from an artistic point of view in relation to the Ottoman miniaturists (artists) in the novel. In this chapter, I extend Mullan's work on ekphrasis and Fisk's claims that Pamuk uses magical realist devices. I investigate how Pamuk's novel is both a magical realist and a realist novel. I also examine the way ekphrasis is used as a literary device to help overcome the prohibition of representation to offer a critique of Islamic tradition.

Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red*, is chosen as an example of a unique form of representation which incorporates both magical realism and realism. *My Name Is Red* depicts a realistic account of Ottoman history, Ottoman Islamic art, and Istanbul as a city Westernising

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<sup>168</sup> Orhan Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, trans. by Erdağ M. Göknar (London: Faber and Faber, 2011).

<sup>169</sup> Fisk, p.169.

<sup>170</sup> Mullan, p.253.

under the Islamic Caliphate rule. I focus on narrative and visual narrative representation through a realist and magical realist literary mode. There is a spectrum between magical realism and realism where I discuss the historical reality of Istanbul in relation to the Westernisation of Islam. In this chapter I argue that through magical realism one can portray religious issues such as the ones presented in *My Name Is Red*, which could not be addressed through the classical realist form. The question is, how can an imaginative narrative be written in a context where there is this idea of prohibition on any form of representation in Islam? Magical realism makes an imaginative narrative possible because it offers a way around this notion of prejudgment through the use of narrators (which in this case are represented as physical objects) which can allude to things in an indirect way, as we have seen through allegory where the narrative has an alternative meaning.<sup>171</sup> I will also address the problems of religious interpretations such as prejudgment which can be expressed in other religions but not in Islam. Prejudgment in Islam is considered a *prejudice against the Divine Self*, an expression that might lead to false or hate statements or worse: the heretical practice of religion.

The prohibition on the representation and interpretation of Islam is that it may become a way to distort truth. In Islam God's word in the Qur'an is clear and any form of interpretation or representation can be considered blasphemous. So, prejudging of Islamic text can be considered as prejudging God and is harmful when applied to Islam. In some religious traditions (such as Christianity) prejudgment (*Vorurteil*) is considered part of interpretation and therefore considered to be a harmless practice.<sup>172</sup> The notion of prejudgment in *My Name Is Red* is redefined in a narrative sense to look at the Qur'an in relation to modernity and the West. Prejudgment becomes a way to question religious traditions in relation to modernity without being blasphemous. Magical realism maybe a way of dealing with that discussion without attacking Islam or religious traditions. Therefore, magical realism may be a way of discussing Islam without distorting truth or attacking the faith. I argue that representation can be a subtle and persuasive form of critique rather than an offense against religious doctrine. Another way of discussing Islam is through European realism that is related to the interplay between realism and magical realism because the critique and representation of Islamic tradition is achieved through Western symbols. In Turkey, especially Istanbul, Islam or the representation of Islam is perceived through European reality as a way of acknowledging the world. In other words,

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<sup>171</sup> Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, p. 27.

<sup>172</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. by Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.20f. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. Marshals (New York: Continuum, 1989), pp.438-46.

any form of critique considered under a Western perspective, such as representation through multi-narrative perspective and an insider's critique of Islamic culture through Western symbols, might not be considered blasphemous.

The definition of realism and magical realism is crucial to understand how both forms are present in *My Name Is Red*. Realism in the novel can be found in the depiction of historical changes especially in relation to the Westernisation of Istanbul. The Westernisation of Istanbul relates to European realism because of its transformation from an Islamic to a European city. The language and representation of reality in literary texts such as William Shakespeare are not the same as that of contemporary text like Salman Rushdie. Therefore, realism is a representation of historical changes and a response to instability such as capitalism, modernity and industrialisation. One can think of realism as a representation of a certain time and age of a specific society and is subject specific. So, realism cannot be simply defined except by examples, similarly to the way Erich Auerbach traces realism throughout European history. In *Mimesis* (1974), Auerbach traces the 'interpretation of reality' or 'imitation' of reality 'through literary representation' (554).<sup>173</sup> Auerbach traces nineteenth-century modern realism from France where it was an 'aesthetic phenomenon' and was emancipated from philosophical realism (554). Thus, Auerbach traces the evolution of realism to modern realism, that is 'keeping with the constantly changing and expanding reality of modern life' (554). Auerbach investigates the imitation of reality in fiction, the changes that the literary mode has gone through by the depiction of novelists and how reality is depicted in fiction. Auerbach not only traces realism in literature but in Biblical narratives/stories where he finds that the Biblical narrator seeks truth and not realism (14). Scripture stories not only assert that they are 'historically true reality,' but that they are 'the only real world' (15). Auerbach's investigation of a different form of *realism* in pre-modern biblical narratives shows that there are different types of *realism*. Biblical *realism* suggests that there is one authentic form of truth whilst Auerbach traces the multiple forms of imaginative realism in European literary history (15).

As we have seen, this may be exemplified by J. P. Stern's concept of family resemblances<sup>174</sup> where realism can only be defined by examples and not abstract definitions. For Stern, literature and realism have a double life: The double existence is looking at realism in relation to ordinary life and in relation to literature (40).<sup>175</sup> So, the double life of realism in

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<sup>173</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 554.

<sup>174</sup> Stern, p.40.

<sup>175</sup> Stern, p.40.

literature and philosophy is different: Realism in literature is not a philosophical concept and cannot be conceptually defined. It initially implies the common use of the word and our real world outside. The use of ordinary language is very important in relation to realism as it connotes our experience, the importance of the external world and public social world in modern and early modern society. The philosophical use of the term realism is abstract and questions how we know things really exist through philosophical questioning of the world. Literary realism is not a philosophical concept although it raises questions about what we mean about reality. Stern's concept of the *double life* of realism means that literary *realism* always has a context both in intellectual life and in ordinary experience. Therefore, it becomes a bridge between this ordinary common use of language and this more specialised use of language. The representation of Islamic countries and especially the representation of Istanbul becoming a European city is certainly related to the emergence of nineteenth-century European realism.

Compared to realism, magical realism is a literary mode that consists of a realist tone in presenting magical happenings. Unlike realism it is not about the common real sense of the world around us, it is about things that are not real in the ordinary sense. Magical realism is about things that are not real in a real world such as fables, ghosts, disappearances, miracles, the supernatural, talking objects such as a horse and a coin (21).<sup>176</sup> The magic in this literary mode is extraordinary and cannot be explained by rational science (20).<sup>177</sup> The two opposing aspects in magical realism, the real and magical, make this writing mode suitable for exploring and transgressing boundaries (4). This writing mode consists of a non-linear and disruptive narrative style (18). The disruptive narrative allows for multiple narrative perspectives and therefore highly relevant to the world of classical Islamic culture and in particular to the problem of representation. Some of the things that cannot be talked about or represented are the analogy of the Qur'an and misrepresenting or prejudging the Qur'anic text. Magical realism is relevant to the Islamic world because it becomes a way to avoid the prohibition associated with representation by alluding to things in an indirect way. In *My Name Is Red* magical realism is a critique of cultural and religious traditions in relation to Islam versus the West. In the novel, magical realism becomes a critique of European traditions versus Ottoman Islamic traditions. However, what belongs to the category of magical realism is the representation of icons, digressive narrative through ekphrastic storytelling of myths or fables, and the magical act of

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<sup>176</sup> Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, p.21

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

the textualization of the reader (this is where the reader is taken from their world into the world of the novel): the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red* can be considered part realistic novel in its representation of real problems found in Islamic and Venetian art history books. Firstly, realism in *My Name Is Red* depicts how Western art can enhance Islamic art and modernise the Islamic world through an artistic realist movement. Realism in the novel is found in the historical account of Ottoman history and the Ottoman Empire's trade with Venice. The changes in the Ottoman artistic style can be attributed to the influences of Venetian art. The Ottoman Empire's trade with the West was influential for Islamic art as it introduced different shades for each colour for painting techniques (such as light red and dark red). The *representation* of artistic realism as an objective aesthetic form in the novel is depicted in the way miniaturists face religious and existential problems in relation to the influences of Venetian art. Changes in the Ottoman artistic style led miniaturists to question their way of life, practices of art, and of seeing things from a religious and nonreligious perspective. Another historical aspect of the novel is the representation of the city's transformation. The city's original identity and architecture during the Ottoman Empire is important as it shows the reason behind the change in Ottoman Islamic artistic style. There is a comparison between the change in artistic style in relation to the historical changes Istanbul went through during the Ottoman rule. Istanbul originally had a classical Western identity, which then changed after the Ottoman Empire rule to an Islamic identity. An example of this transformation is Aya Sofia, a Byzantine church that was converted into a mosque under Ottoman rule and was then turned into a museum under its first late president Mustafa Kamal (Atatürk). The city's Westernisation is a result of the Ottoman Sultans preference for a Western lifestyle, and this is displayed in the design of palaces such as the Dolmabahçe. However, the Westernisation of the city might have started unintentionally through Aya Sofia. The church's exterior has been recreated for building mosques in Turkey. The reason this was done might have been as a colonisation of a church to show that it has completely transformed into a mosque. The opposite of this occurred in Spain where Moorish mosques were transformed into Churches. In his article *Islamic Cultural Influence in Spain*,<sup>178</sup> Issiah Woodward describes how Muslims were distinguished in their architecture (172). Christians used the arches and the nave of the mosque in the transformation of the Church such as the San Roman Church (172). It could be said that Istanbul and its Islamic

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<sup>178</sup> Issiah A. Woodward, 'Islamic Cultural Influence in Spain' *Nego History Bulletin* 19.8 (1956), 171-173  
<URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44215103>> [accessed 11 March 2021] (p.172)

tradition is represented through Western realism. This is reflected in the fact that Erich Auerbach wrote *Mimesis* in Istanbul and that other scholars who were Jewish émigrés' helped transform the Turkish educational system in the university from an Ottoman education to a Westernised one. The change in the country's system took place with Mustafa Kemal's Reform Act, which demanded the removal of all teaching of Ottoman as part of the secularisation and modernisation of Turkey. This will be explored in detail in the section: An Islamic City Reclaiming its Classical History.

*My Name Is Red* is particularly interesting as a realist novel in its depiction of European influences on Ottoman miniature Islamic art. The word miniaturist in Arabic is Al- Monam-nim (المنمنم<sup>179</sup>) or Rasam Al-Sowar Al- Monam-nima (رسام الصور المنمنمة). The meaning of miniaturist form of art in English is a miniature depiction of buildings, statues or cities. Islamic miniature art means illustrations or paintings accompanied by writing about war, religion, history and the Ottoman Sultan's celebrations of special events. Some of the Ottoman miniatures were made as gifts and war trophies.<sup>180</sup> Most people might think Islamic art is just about architecture and calligraphy<sup>181</sup> because of the prohibition on the representation of images set by the Qur'an and the Prophet.<sup>182</sup> Calligraphy and architecture are the acceptable forms of Islamic art because of God's punishment for those who create images. So, one would agree with Robert Irwin in his book *Islamic Art*<sup>183</sup> (1997), when he describes Islamic art as a 'Western construction' because of the prohibition and that most Muslim artists thought of themselves as Western artists, who do not relate to a specific religious empire. Robert Irwin found most artists that are categorised as Muslim artists were either Christians living under an Islamic regime or Muslims living under a Christian regime<sup>184</sup> (12). Irwin's research shows that Islamic art's categorisation includes everything from architecture to other forms such as paintings, while 'Christian' art includes only religious material such as cathedrals and churches (12). So, the categorisation of Islamic art is not subject specific like Christian art. A reason for this is that art itself is not an Islamic discipline but a Western one. Irwin looks at the Arabic word 'fann' (فن/plural funoon) which is not equivalent to the Western word 'art' because it can

<sup>179</sup> See page 27 (Arabic translation of *La Miniature Islamica* by Maria Fontana):

<sup>179</sup> عناية عز الدين، المنمنمات الإسلامية (القاهرة: دار التنوير للطباعة والنشر، ٢٠١٥)، ص٢٧.

<sup>180</sup> Filiz Ögütmen 'A Wealth of Miniatures', *Apollo: The International Magazine for Collectors* (Archive : 1925-2005), 92 (1970), 28-37 <<http://0search.proquest.com/catalogue/libraries.london.ac.uk/magazines/wealth-miniatures/docview/1366978122/se-2?accountid=14565>> [accessed 16 January 2020] (p.28.)

<sup>181</sup> Elias, p.2.

<sup>182</sup> Gaston Migeon with Henri Saladin and others, *Art of Islam* (Parkstone International: University of California, 2009), p.69.

<sup>183</sup> Robert Irwin, *Islamic Art* (London: Laurance King Publishing, 1997), p.12.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p.12.

categorise different art forms or crafts (12). The Arabic word for art is Al Funon Al Mar'eya (الفنون المرئية) and that translates to visual art. So, art itself is a Western construct that was adopted by aspiring Islamic artists. Therefore, most miniature paintings have been influenced by different schools of art such as the Baghdad, Persian, Byzantine models, and Seljuk style<sup>185</sup>. Ottoman miniaturists in Topkapi Palace workshops produced a new school of art that is distinct from other Islamic schools. In her article *A Wealth of Miniatures*, Filiz Ögütmen shows that the miniature paintings made in Topkapi Palace for Sultan Mehmed were of Persian style (28). These miniature paintings had no traces of influence from the European painters who were invited to the palace (28). In the novel, it is shown that the main influence on Ottoman miniaturists is of the European realist style. Similarly, Jamal Elias in *Aisha's Cushion*<sup>186</sup> (2012), finds that most figural paintings in the Islamic world have come from the 'Persianate world' (38). This will be discussed further in the section: Problems of Representation in Islam

## Summary of the Novel

*My Name Is Red* is a mystery, historical, post-modern, detective novel set in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire. *My Name Is Red* explores the life of miniaturists in the Ottoman Empire and their different styles of art in that Islamic period. In the novel, miniaturists who work for Sultan Murat III are forced to adopt the realist Venetian style of painting because it is not Islamic. The imitation of European art becomes the reason for the murder of the two miniaturists, Master Enishte who is the main narrator and Elegant Effendi<sup>187</sup> the head gilder, of Sultan Murad III Palace workshop. The novel begins with a murder case, which the reader tries to solve by the end of the novel as requested by the deceased narrator. The murder frightens the miniaturists because they fear the Islamic preacher Erzurum, who blames all of the Ottoman Empire's troubles on the imitation of European art and their way of life. Miniaturists' find the Venetian European realist style of art as a colonisation of their workshop. In the first chapter of the novel, the reader is addressed by the ghost of Elegant who was murdered. Elegant wants the reader to find his murderer and solve the mystery of the killer who is an enemy of Islam. Here the reader becomes fictionalized in the novel through the character's

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<sup>185</sup> Filiz Ögütmen 'A Wealth of Miniatures', *Apollo: The International Magazine for Collectors (Archive: 1925-2005)*, 92 (1970), 28-37 <<http://0search.proquest.com/catalogue/libraries.london.ac.uk/magazines/wealth-miniatures/docview/1366978122/se-2?accountid=14565>> [accessed 16 January 2020] (p.28.)

<sup>186</sup> Jamal Elias, p, 38.

<sup>187</sup> Effendi in Turkey and some Arab countries can mean Mister or Sir.

interaction or involvement with the reader. Elegant oversaw the creation the Sultan's secret book which seems to contain blasphemous images that violate the Islamic teachings. The Sultan's book would be distributed across Europe to show the Sultan's achievements, reflect on his realm and power, and most importantly to celebrate the thousandth year of the anniversary of the Prophet's Hegira from Mecca to Medina. After Elegant's death Enishte has been assigned to complete the Sultan's book. Enishte has travelled to Europe and has seen the European realist style of painting and how different it is from the Ottoman Islamic style of painting. The character Black returns to Istanbul to his uncle Enishte who is the father of his cousin Shekure, the woman he loves. Black helps his uncle Enishte to complete the Sultan's secret book with three master miniaturists Stork, Butterfly and Olive. One of these three master miniaturists is the murderer, but it is not clear who it is until the end of the novel. The murderer starts visiting a coffee house where a storyteller uses drawings to entertain the people at the coffee house. The storyteller impersonates the images that are drawn by random miniaturists and starts to talk about politics, religion, different styles of painting and the uses of shades of colours. There are different forms of representation in the novel such as visual narrative, using drawings of objects to aid storytelling.

Some of the narrators in *My Name Is Red* are the illustrations used by the storyteller in the coffee house. The storyteller uses miniature paintings to help with his visual narration to talk as the objects represented in the paintings. Some of the illustrations used at the coffee house are: a *Tree* whose papers fell out of a book and whose story became incomplete, a *Dog* who reflects on people's misinterpretation of religious actions and texts, a *counterfeit coin* that talks about people's greed and obsession with money, *Satan* who explores philosophy in relation to Islam as well as the importance of evil and sin, *Death* who reflects on how the use of European realist art has the ability to create an image that brings terror to the eyes of those who see him, *Red* explains how it is hard to describe a colour to those who have not seen it and the association of colours with religion, and the narrator *Horse* explains that his illustrations using the European realist style caused a massacre for all horses. The main reason behind the horses' massacre was when the prince saw that a real horse was not as beautiful as the painting. The storyteller uses miniature paintings to help with his visual narration to talk as the objects represented in the paintings. So, here there is a difference between an image of a horse and the horse who is talking. The prince was locked up in a room for years and was only given beautiful paintings of horses. After the prince was released, he wanted to see a real horse and after seeing one, he ordered that all the horses in the palace be executed because they looked ugly. The horse narrator gives a critique of the European realist form as a style that

beautifies a piece of art and is not a true representation of reality. So, the new European realist style causes a problem and a rejection of real life, the world outside similar to the prince. The horse character is a representation of how Venetian art is not a true imitation of reality but is purely an aesthetic form of art. The Ottoman's miniature art is very simple where the painting of a horse would resemble the shape of a horse; therefore, Ottoman miniature art would not have caused a massacre as the European realist style.

The novel continues in this manner with different narrators telling disparate stories about Islamic art, style and the signature of a painter's work. The novel explores art, sin, religion, and the Sultan's secret book which is the centre of all the events that take place. Throughout the novel it is left to the reader to guess who the murderer is. The reader is addressed several times in the novel by the murderer whose identity remains concealed. Butterfly, Stork and Olive are murder suspects because they were working with Elegant to produce the Sultan's book. Master Elegant had humiliated the three miniaturists by giving each of them names, a way to humiliate them for imitating a Western style of art. The murderer despises Elegant and informs the reader that he put on an act at the funeral where he pretended to be very sad. Each time the murderer addresses the reader he blames two of the three miniaturists, and the reader becomes confused as to who murdered Elegant. Throughout the novel the investigation as to who is the murderer continues as the reader learns more about Islamic art and the Sultan's secret blasphemous book. The only way to escape the death of the miniaturist tradition is for miniaturists to blind themselves with a needle to carry on drawing using the Islamic Ottoman technique. Master Osman blinded himself with the same needle the great master Bihzad used to paint and blind himself. The act of using that same needle is Master Osman's own way of handing himself the right of passage and saving the tradition by sacrificing his eyesight. However, it seems to be a terrible reality that someone who *represents* reality has to blind themselves because of the fear of influence.

## **Theoretical Approach**

*My Name Is Red* is partly realistic in its depiction of the miniaturists' fear of influence that is addressed throughout the novel. The European realist style of painting is seen as an internal colonisation of art that changes the representation of Islamic art. The fear of influence arises from the fear of breaking religious prohibitions. Harold Bloom's thesis in *The Anxiety of*

*Influence: A Theory of Poetry*<sup>188</sup> (1997), addresses or corrects the poets fear of influence: that is, of imitating or reproducing the same material as their precursors (5). Bloom gives the example of Oscar Wilde who ‘failed as a poet because’ he could not overcome the anxiety of influence (5).<sup>189</sup> The fear of reproducing the same material hinders the creative process of the poet and makes the poetry weak (6). Bloom suggests the pressure of anxiety produces a sense of creativity and this is how strong poets manage to overcome the pressures of influence (5). Bloom finds that an original poet does not exist; every poet reproduces through intentionally misreading and misinterpreting their ‘masters’ (precursors) (6). So, only by intentionally or unintentionally misreading can a poet or artist produce creative work. Another way to look at Bloom’s fear of influence is by comparing it to Freud’s Oedipus complex (xxii). The father and son relationship problem is similar to a poet and his precursor. However, Bloom’s explanation of the Freudian Oedipal rivalry was not in relation to the anxiety of influence but rather that Freud’s concept was influenced by Shakespeare’s Hamlet through creative misreading (xxii). Bloom refers to Freud’s creative misreading as the ‘Hamlet Complex’ (xxii). Therefore, influence cannot be avoided and every poet takes from the subject matter of their precursors: that is, a process of consequence of creative interpretation, ‘poetic misprision’ (7). The key element here is ‘strong misreading’ of a piece of literary work that is achieved through ‘a creative interpretation’, which in Bloom’s term is called ‘poetic misprision’ (xxiii).

However, every piece of artistic work takes the form of its creator as it takes its creator’s personality (6). For example, this can be done through a unique painting technique or through the structure of poetry. Bloom’s definition of influence is from Oscar Wilde’s *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.*, which is when the creator adds his/her personality or self in a piece of poetry, painting, or music during the creative process (6). In relation to miniaturists<sup>190</sup> this becomes a problem as expressed in the novel; they are not allowed to show personality or originality in their paintings as that would be seen as a sign of imperfection. The application of Harold Bloom’s conceptual framework will be applied later on in the chapter, which will be further discussed along with the problem of the ‘fear of influence’ in Islamic art and how it can also be positive. However, the influence of the new European realistic style of painting enhances Islamic art where the ability to show some personality may be possible. Islamic art becomes a hybrid form of art where a combination of miniaturist illustrations incorporates a European

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<sup>188</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.xxii, 5-6.

<sup>189</sup> Bloom, p.5.

<sup>190</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.28.

realistic depiction along with the narrative that accompanies the painting. The other problem miniaturists fear is the use of a non-Islamic style of painting to represent Islamic history and the Prophet. Art historians Gaston Migeon and Henri Saladin have argued that although there is a prohibition on representation in Islamic art, yet there are Islamic figural images.<sup>191</sup> Jamal Elias has argued that the problem is not with representational images but the fear of returning to idol worshiping.<sup>192</sup>

Firstly, in *My Name Is Red* the ‘narrators’ are miniature paintings that become icons through the representation of meaning rather than the immediate image. Pamuk’s narrators act as icons in the way they create an understanding of an alien culture and religion. Icons in this research are images that do not directly represent the Islamic world but point to something beyond itself through a transcendent reality. Some of the digressive narrators’ act as religious icons where they critique religious traditions in accordance with what they represent in Islam. Rowan Williams’s definition of icons are images which point to a reality beyond themselves. He also explains that holy events do not look like anything and cannot be defined in earthly terms. For him, icons are more than a representation of something absent; they contain deep meaning, something beyond their immediate purpose of representation. In relation to *My Name Is Red*, Islamic paintings are not supposed to be an exact image of what they represent. Images serve a purpose that is to reflect the inner thoughts of each person in relation to a specific image. Therefore, icons show hidden thoughts behind the representation of each image and can create an understanding of our world in relation to religion and God. The use of paintings as icons becomes a way to discuss religious symbols through meaning and the interpretation of paintings.

Secondly, ekphrasis in the Greek tradition is a form of storytelling through the use of images. John Mullan explains ekphrasis as ‘the description of a picture in a text’ (253). Mullan defines *Ekphrasis* as ‘the verbal representation of a visual representation—the description of an artwork’ (263).<sup>193</sup> However, the common use of ekphrasis is in poetry because poems ‘can formally recreate some of the properties of a work of art’ (263). Ekphrasis ‘is an old device [...] used in poetry’ and in Pamuk’s novel (253).<sup>194</sup> Mullan describes Pamuk’s use of ekphrasis as a means of showing ‘[to] the mind’s eye the mutual strangeness of Eastern and Western codes of representation’ (253). Mullan describes the use of ekphrasis to tell the reader ‘about

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<sup>191</sup> Gaston Migeon and Henri Saladin, p. xcix.

<sup>192</sup> Jamal Elias, pp. 2, 10.

<sup>193</sup> John Mullan, p263.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 253.

the character who is describing the artwork' (263).<sup>195</sup> Ekphrasis is not only a way to reveal the character who is describing the image or to display the perfection of the piece of art that they have drawn. Ekphrasis in the novel becomes a form of critique of Islamic cultural traditions, Islamic and Western forms of artistic representation. Ekphrasis is when images come to life through narrative: in this case, to give a critique of Islamic culture and traditions. Ekphratic narration is central as it comes from an image that is an icon voiced through the act of storytelling to give a particular perspective of the world. Ekphrasis, in the context of Rowan Williams's in *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement*<sup>196</sup> (2000), looks at the concept of the icon and connects the listener to something more than an image: something beyond what is being represented. Art can be regarded as a type of icon that can have meaning beyond the immediate suggestion of the image in front of us. I will argue that ekphrasis is similar to the Greek storytelling as it is a means of avoiding visual representation by taking an image or thing and transposing it into a narrative to avoid the problem with idolatry. I use the term ekphrasis to mean a form of narrative which gives a voice to a work of art by making it speak for itself; that action, in itself, brings the piece of art to life. In this way the use of ekphrasis is a way to overcome visual representation by replacing it with narrative representation.

An example of magical realism in the novel is in the textualization of the reader. The textualization of the reader<sup>197</sup> transforms the reader into a character within the novel and allows the reader to experience events similarly to characters. The way the reader becomes textualized is through a character's invitation to engage in an imaginative dialogue. This is where the reader enters the fictional world of the novel from the outside world. The reader's role is to bring the text to life through the act of realization. In *My Name Is Red* textual activation is not only in the reader's mind but is motivated by narrators for specific purposes. Textualization occurs when the events of a novel attract the reader to the novel. Elements such as the scene and the situation that are set attracts the reader to the novel. Jon Thiem defines textualization as the process in which a person from outside the world of the text enters the fictional world. What is meant in this research as the 'textualization of real readers' into the text is: being approached by a character and being addressed as a reader (236).<sup>198</sup> The reader is no longer a spectator of events but is engaged as a 'side character' who is addressed every now and then reminded that

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., p.263.

<sup>196</sup> Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 2000), pp.1-2, 184-186.

<sup>197</sup> Jon Thiem, 'The Textualization of the Reader in Magical Realist Fiction', in *Magical realism: Theory, History, Community* ed. by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), p.235-247.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 236.

he/she is part of the story/narrative and is not an observer of events. An example in *My Name Is Red* is when the reader is set with a task (to find a murderer) from the first chapter and is transported into the text. Textualization here means not being lost in the novel or absorbed by the fiction; the reader is well aware but is focused and engaged in the events and task set ahead. However, while textualization does not involve pleasurable reading, the reader does experience the problems that characters are faced with especially when the reader is asked to give an opinion about issues the characters face. This type of reading is one I find crucial for magical realism because it keeps the reader conscious and focused during the act of reading. My concern is with readers who are transported into the text through textualization, becoming fictionalized in a sense as a character without losing the sense of their outer world or getting lost within the novel.

This chapter is divided into a discussion of representation through realism and magical realism in the novel. In the first section, I will be looking at representation through realism: ‘An Islamic City Reclaiming its Classical History, Fear of Influence in Western and Islamic Art, and Problems of Representation in Islam.’ In these sections I discuss the connection between Auerbach and the modernization of Turkey. Auerbach, like many Jewish scholars, obtained a job in Istanbul University and contributed to Westernising the Turkish educational system. This was part of Mustafa Kemal’s (Atatürk’s) reforms to secularise and modernise Turkey. The Westernisation of Turkey is an attempt to reclaim the country’s classical history through the Roman and Greek historical remains. The Westernisation of Turkey is mirrored by the change of artistic style that takes place in *My Name Is Red*, where miniaturists have a fear of Western influence and colonisation of Islamic art by the Sultan. Miniaturists fear the representation of Islam and Islamic historical events through the use of the Western form of representation that is prohibited in Islam. European influence is also feared because it might portray Islamic art as lacking the proper technique for representing Islam and therefore that its originality might be reduced by this influence. This relates to Orhan Pamuk’s discussion in his memoir<sup>199</sup> about how certain Turkish writers followed French culture and Western techniques of writing but feared that they might not produce original material.

The second part of the chapter is divided into the discussion of representation through magical realism where I will be looking at: Textualization of the Reader, and Ekphrastic Narrators and Digressive Narrative, and Ekphrasis and Storytelling through Narrators. In the

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<sup>199</sup> Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories of the City* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005)

section Textualization of the Reader I show how the reader becomes textualized in the novel through the character's interaction with the reader. In the magical realist novel, the reader becomes part of the text as a character and reexperiences the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire as a modern character. In the section Ekphratic Narrators and Digressive Narrative, I look at the use of ekphrasis in the novel as a form of critique and a way to overcome the prohibition of the image. Some of the characters and narrators in the novel are colours or objects. The digressive narrative in the novel becomes a way for the ekphratic narrators to critique Islamic cultural traditions and gives the animate and inanimate images a form of life. This helps to project their point of view as items such as the colour *Red* and the *Dog*. This part of the chapter explores the problems of the clash between Eastern and Western traditions and identity politics, which Orhan Pamuk describes in his memoir after the secularisation of Turkey.

### **An Islamic City Reclaiming Its Classical History**

The city of Istanbul has a hybrid identity as it is both historically Eastern and Western. The Western influence is not just part of the city because Istanbul's foundation is Byzantium. The city of Istanbul has a cosmopolitan identity that is not alluded to in Pamuk's novel. In *My Name Is Red* the reality being imitated is not only that of people's lives but of the city they inhabit. What Pamuk's novel fails to show is the reverse colonisation of the Ottoman rulers who removed or converted most buildings that were non-Islamic in the city. Kader Konuk and Victoria Holbrook argue in *East-West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey*<sup>200</sup> (2010), that Auerbach's inspiration for *Mimesis* came from the city he was exiled to, Istanbul (2). Similarly, for Orhan Pamuk, the city (Istanbul) is very important and has been a subject of most of his novels. Konuk and Holbrook explore Auerbach's inspiration and history of the process that contributed to the writing of *Mimesis*. They believe that 'Turkey's humanist reform movement' is a form of 'cultural mimesis' (1).<sup>201</sup> Many German Jewish scholars fled Germany after the First World War and some went to Istanbul to catalyse the Turkish Renaissance. Most of these Jewish scholars helped revive the 'classical education in a city that was once the greatest centre of learning in the world' (2).

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<sup>200</sup> Kader Konuk and Victoria Holbrook, *East-West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 1-9, 11, 16.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

According to the article by F. Asli Ergul *The Ottoman Identity: Turkish, Muslim or Rum?*,<sup>202</sup> during the Ottoman Empire they had a ‘millet’ which allowed for all monotheist religions to live peacefully under their own religious rules and laws (629). There were Jewish emigres in the late fifteenth-century Ottoman Empire.<sup>203</sup> Sephardic Jews immigrated to the Ottoman Empire to escape ‘persecution in the Iberian Peninsula’ (5). A year before Auerbach’s arrival in Istanbul the city had been going through many changes towards secularism; Hagia Sofia was converted from a mosque into a museum and has recently turned back into a mosque last July 2020 (3). The function of the city and the changes it goes through are important for a realist representation. Pamuk’s *My Name Is Red* traces the origins of Istanbul’s Ottoman history. *My Name Is Red* links the readers of a modern age to the Ottoman history that was slowly being erased by the government of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) through the reforms (8). To the modern reader Turkey’s capital city is Ankara and not Istanbul as it was during the Ottoman Empire. An important aspect of modern Turkey is that its identity was shaped by intellectual European Jewish émigrés (5). Auerbach was assigned ‘the chair of the nation’s leading faculty for Western languages and literatures’ in Istanbul University in 1936 to promote secularisation and modernisation in Turkey (4). The creation of a European Turkey and its change in history towards a classical heritage is a creation of the West. Konuk and Holbrook’s research has shown that the recreation of a modern culture and identity in Turkey was shaped by European intellectuals:

Émigrés took on special significance when Turkey decided to reclaim the region’s classical heritage and re-create modern culture in the image of ancient Europe. Investigating the émigrés’ role in wartime Turkey will help us understand the relationship between philology, cultural heritage, and Turkey’s modernization reforms (5).

The city has become a model of imitation of European cities which establishes ‘commonalities between Europe’s ancient heritage and modern Turkey’ (6). Another example of Turkey reclaiming of its classical history is through Hagia Sophia. Aya Sofia or Hagia Sofia was transformed into a museum but traces of its transformation from Cathedral to mosque were left untouched (3). There are paintings of angels on the ceilings and the names of Islamic Caliphs hung on the walls of Hagia Sofia. During the Ottoman rule Hagia Sofia’s ceilings were only covered by plaster to hide the images of angels and they were not permanently removed.

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<sup>202</sup> F. Asli Ergul, ‘The Ottoman Identity: Turkish, Muslim or Rum?’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 48.4 (2012) 629-645 <URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41721156>> [accessed 12 March 2021] (p.629).

<sup>203</sup> Kader Konuk and Victoria Holbrook, p.5.

The Turkish government looked to Europe as a model for imitating a Western city. But the city's Westernisation and modernisation began during the Ottoman Empire in the form of appearance, especially through a change in their clothes (7). However, there are European remains in Turkey such as the ancient library of Celsus (part of the Roman Empire) and the Greek city Ephesus, which proves that Turkey is reclaiming part of its historical past. This cultural reorientation seems to suggest a fetishistic desire to become European and imitate a Western culture. The fetish is part of a cultural reorientation, and this is still the case today in many Eastern and Middle Eastern countries. However, as Konuk and Holbrook have shown, Turkey's '[...] Westernisation reforms constituted a kind of cultural mimesis [...]'<sup>204</sup> because it did not copy European culture but generated it from the city's historical past (9). Turkey's reform was not an imitation or a representation of Western culture but a form of recreation because it traced back origins of earlier settlers in the region to reclaim Turkish culture as European.

Konuk and Holbrook focus on the humanist movement and their attempt to create a revised version of the Turkish past, which is removed from its Ottoman past (11).<sup>205</sup> Pamuk's novel compared to this is an attempt to reconcile Turkey with its Ottoman past and is a representation of a previous historical reality. *My Name Is Red* looks at a similar concept which Konuk and Holbrook explore: that is, why the West is different and separate from the East (16). The art forms in Pamuk's novel stand as an analogy for the city's cosmopolitan reality, which might no longer be present in the future because of its Western transformation. Istanbul is a good example of a city's imitation or a mimetic transformation to a Westernised city. In *Istanbul: Memories and the City*<sup>206</sup>(2005), Pamuk sees this transformation as a 'second class imitation' of a Western city, which he expresses in his book (214).<sup>207</sup> However, the imitation of Western cities is represented in Turkey as the reclaiming of a past that was buried by the Ottoman's Islamicization of the region, to create a single identity. In the same way, Aya Sofia's transformation is reflected by the city giving it a European past along with an Islamic past and now a secular present.

The representation of the transformation of Istanbul as Western is shown from a historic and realistic point of view in Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red*. The Sultan's interference in Islamic art causes an internal colonisation of art and a reversal of Islamicization. The change

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>206</sup> Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories of the City* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), pp.6, 39-40, 55-67, 82, 91, 100-101, 163-164, 214, 217.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., p.214.

of artistic style changes Istanbul and the way it will be represented in the book created by the miniaturists for the Sultan. The representation of Istanbul would no longer be from an Islamic perspective but a Western perspective. Therefore, the Sultan's actions, regardless of their intended outcome, lead to the reclaiming of classical roots before the Islamicization of Istanbul under Ottoman rule. *Turkey's* classical roots consist of Roman, Greek, and Byzantine cultural remains. However, the reality of the classical heritage attached to the city seems unreal because of its cosmopolitan history. Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memoirs and the City*, describes the city as having 'hüzün' (sadness or a period of mourning in the Arabic language) and a detachment from its Ottoman history (82). The *hüzün* chapter starts with the meaning of the word in the Holy Qur'an and in contemporary Turkish where the meaning is the same (sadness). The chapter begins with a story about Prophet Muhammad (the death of his wife and uncle) and how the word referred to a year of sadness, *hüzün*. However, Pamuk describes his use of *hüzün* in the chapter as containing 'distinct philosophical tradition' (81). Pamuk's memoir focuses on the aftermath of the reforms and the effects of erasing Ottoman history and Islamic religion on Turkish identity. Pamuk's memoir portrays that secularisation has caused an existential crisis for Turks. Pamuk explains that *hüzün* is 'the black mood shared by millions of people together [...] the *hüzün* of an entire city, of Istanbul' (83). The type of *hüzün* Pamuk refers to in his memoir is a cultural *hüzün* which has witnessed a decay in Turkish history as described in this quotation:

There is nothing like the remains of great empires to be seen in Western cities, preserved like museums of history and proudly displayed. The people of Istanbul simply carry on with their lives amongst the ruins. Many western writers and travellers find this charming. But for the city's more sensitive and attuned residents, these ruins are reminders that the present city is so poor and confused that it can never again dream of rising to the same heights of wealth, power and culture (91).<sup>208</sup>

This quotation shows Pamuk's views about the Ottoman Empire, Westernisation and Atatürk's reforms. Pamuk describes 'the secular fury of Atatürk's new republic' as a 'smugness' that contains 'the flame of idealism' (163).<sup>209</sup> The Westernisation of Turkey is described by Pamuk as an imitation of the West, not a true transformation into a Western Turkey. The public movement away from religion meant modernisation and Westernisation (163). However, Pamuk describes how in the private life of the Turkish people there was a 'spiritual void' left in the place of religion (163). Pamuk describes how during Ramadan none of the members of

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid, p. 91.

<sup>209</sup> Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories of the City*, p. 163.

his family would fast, but they would have a meal prepared for the breaking of the fast (164). The ‘cleansing of religion’ and the emptiness caused by it are compared to city’s emptiness and the ruins of yalis and its ‘gloomy [...] darkened gardens’ (163). Pamuk describes religion in Turkey at the time he was growing up as reduced ‘[...] to a strange and amusing set of rules on which the lower classes depended’ (164). Religion was stripped of its power in Turkey; it became accepted into citizens’ homes ‘as a strange sort of background music’ that accompanies Turkey’s ‘oscillations between East and West’ (164).

Pamuk’s novel and the memoir clearly show that the erasing or removal of Ottoman history removed part of the Turkish sense of identity and how this created the melancholy and nostalgia he describes in his memoir. Pamuk goes on to describe what the removal and destruction of Ottoman history inflicted upon his childhood:

It is no more possible to take pride in these neglected dwellings, in which dirt, dust and mud have blended into their surroundings, then it is to rejoice in the beautiful old wooden houses that as a child I watched burned down one by one (91).

The burned down old wooden houses also refers to the burning of Ottoman culture. Pamuk’s memoir shows that Turkey’s Westernisation was incomplete and created a historical and cultural void in the homes of its citizens (163). Pamuk describes how his generation of ‘Istanbulus’ have ‘one foot in this culture and one in the other’ because of the removal of Islam and Ottoman culture (260). Pamuk portrays how the country’s history can only be revived or restored through the Western gaze (260). The Western gaze has helped Pamuk fight ‘nationalism and pressures to conform’ (217). The Western painters and authors such as Knut Hamsun and Hans Christian Andersen who might have depicted Istanbul as exotic have not done the country any harm as Pamuk argues ‘we were never a Western colony’ (217).

Pamuk’s memoir argues that Turkish people see their city in black and white because it was painted by Western artists (39). Turkish people are left with Western engravings of their city that were not painted by local hands (39). The representation of Turkey through Ottoman paintings cannot ‘accommodate’ the Turkish people’s ‘visual taste’ because there is no writing that can teach them ‘to take pleasure in Ottoman art or the classical Persian art that influenced it’ (39). Here there is a clear clash between East and West in the representation of the city. The description of the city is like a gallery and the Divan poets wrote poetry praising the city ‘as a real place but as a word’ (40). Pamuk describes these artists as having ‘a map-like understanding of the city’ and that their vision of the city was ‘something that passed in front

of them' (40). The authors Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar were inspired by Théophile Gautier and learnt to translate his painting of landscape into words (100). These authors were inspired by French literature and Western culture which 'informed their Western-modern approach' in their work (100). One of the most important things these authors learnt is that they could not write exactly like Westerners if they wanted to be original like the Western writers whom they admired (101). French culture and modern literature taught these authors the need to be 'original and authentic to be truthful' (101).<sup>210</sup> For Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar this caused a contradiction between being Western and authentic at the same time (101). In Pamuk's *My Name Is Red*, the Sultan wants to enhance Islamic art and modernise Islam but in terms of Western influence. The use of Venetian art to enhance Islamic art is similar to a melting pot where the merging of two different stylistic approaches to create an original artistic style.

### **Fear of Influence in Western and Islamic Art**

Harold Bloom's theory in *The Anxiety of Influence*<sup>211</sup> (1997), is that 'influence' is not necessarily something negative. Bloom conceives influence as part of the artist's personality, history or cultural background (6). The anxiety of influence is fear of repetition and the inability to talk about art without tradition (7). He explains that newness must be defined in relation to tradition and has a starting point that it is inherited from precursors (19). For an artist to be original he/she cannot reproduce past styles or achievements of others; there has to be a production of something new through creatively misreading one another (5). For Bloom, influence based on *creative misreading* is not necessarily a bad thing. Every poet or writer has to start from somewhere and look at what others have done in the field as a model to start from. For Bloom weak artists are unable to escape the anxiety of influence but reading differently may make the artist original (7). Bloom aims to correct the idea behind the fear of influence by 'adequate practical criticism' (5). The main argument in Bloom's theory is that poetic history and poetic influence are the same (5). For him, strong poets make history by misreading other strong poets and this enables poets to have their own imaginative space (5).

Bloom uses Oscar Wilde's example of *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* where influence is described as a transfer of personality (6). Wilde describes this transfer as giving a precious part of the self and that becomes 'a reality of loss' (6). The transfer of influence could be thought of as a teacher passing on to a pupil his/her taught experience which was passed down to them

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>211</sup> Bloom, p.5.

from their teachers. For Wilde, pupils take away or rather learn something from their master (6). Another example is of Lord Henry Wotton who looks at borrowed sins and virtues, which is similar to the way humanity lives under the echo of the sin of Adam and Eve:

Because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of someone else's music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him. (qtd. in Bloom 6)

The quotation above suggests that influence has always been around and seems like a shadow that plagues pupils in different disciplines along with their masters. One way to overcome this anxiety is to apply Lord Henry's insight to Wilde by taking material and influence from others but then adding one's own reality-imagination (7). Bloom interprets Wallace Steven's reality-imagination concept to mean poetic influence. Steven's reality-imagination refers to one's own past experiences that is not influenced by others or poets (7). Reality-imagination even when it is seen in others it is one's own and so he believes the same applies to the creative imaginative process (7). The reality-imagination concept then changes influence by enhancing it or rather advancing it in some way (7). The main problem with influence is that it can remove originality and result in a fear of being critiqued and accused of imitation (7).

As with poetry, visual art incorporates different cultures, histories, models and borrowed techniques. Bloom argues that poetic influence should not make poets less original, but it can make them more original (7). There are some cases of authors, poets, and artists who are excluded from the sphere of influence. These authors wrote before the burden of influence. Shakespeare is excluded from Bloom's argument because he wrote before 'the anxiety of influence became central to poetic consciousness' (11).<sup>212</sup> However, Shakespeare cannot completely be excluded from the anxiety of influence because of the impact Greek tragedies, written by precursors such as Euripides, had upon his oeuvre. Influence is inescapable even for artists but that does not necessarily mean it is purely imitating someone else's creative technique.

Influence in *My Name Is Red* is a problem for miniaturists because it creates fear of representing the Islamic world through Western methods. Some of the problems of influence consist in learning a new style of painting using a technique of art that is not Islamic, which is forced upon miniaturists by the Sultan. The change in artistic style is also a change of a lifestyle and way of seeing or experiencing the world. The role of the Ottoman miniaturists in the novel

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., p.11.

is important because it shows the struggles in using the European realist form of art to represent the Islamic Caliphate's realm. Miniaturists struggle to separate religion and modernisation because the latter seems to suggest setting aside religious beliefs in the interests of material progress. The problem miniaturists' have is painting the Prophet's Hegira using the European realist form of art because of the prohibitions associated with representation in Islam. The European realist style of art depicts a realistic image of people and in Islam, this is prohibited. The Sultan not only requested that miniaturists should use the European style but also use Venetian painters to help make the book that includes Islamic depictions. Ottoman miniature paintings could be considered sacred because they represent God, the Prophet, Islamic historical events, and the Caliphate. Therefore, Ottoman miniature painting is related to religion and the way of seeing things in a godly way.

The character Enishte is partially responsible for the new style but does not believe it is a form of imitation. For Enishte, combining the Venetian style of art with the Islamic style is not an imitation but an inspiration and enhancement. In the scene below, Enishte explains how the Sultan forced Master Osman to recreate the Sultan's Venetian portrait by imitating a Venetian artist style:

On one occasion, the Sultan forced the great Master Osman to copy a portrait of His Highness, which had been commissioned from a Venetian. I know Master Osman holds me responsible for having to imitate that painter, for having to make that strange painting, which he did with disgust, referring to the experience as "torture." His wrath was justified (148).<sup>213</sup>

Enishte is blamed by Master Osman for being forced to recreate an image using the European style of painting. Influence for Master Osman is perceived as something that not only creates fear but disgust for the artists because it changes a tradition that requires years to master. Influence in *My Name Is Red* seems to replace one artistic style with another. The Ottoman miniaturists' anxiety of influence is a fear of imitating and reproducing Venetian art, which represents Islamic symbols. However, the influence that the miniaturists fear becomes a way of enhancing Islamic art. In *My Name Is Red* miniaturists are inspired by the European style. Miniaturists' fear using the new European style because it is blasphemous to create Islamic religious images for the Sultan's book. So, the murder of the first narrator *Corpse* becomes an important part of the novel.

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<sup>213</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.148.

John Mullan in *How Novels Work*<sup>214</sup> finds that the reason for the murder is the difference in aesthetic codes between East and West (126). There are opposing views in theology and the artistic movement of the Sultan that leads to a conflict between the miniaturists in the novel. The Sultan's colonisation of art in the novel has turned against the Ottoman miniaturists because Islamic artwork is not supposed to show individuality. However, the style of the paintings is Venetian so, even if an Ottoman miniaturist produced the art, it would be seen as Venetian because of its style. Mullan describes how miniaturist paintings are like an act of devotion; the artwork should be impersonal and not display the creator's or artist's individual style: 'By a strict Islamic code of devotion, each must strive to be impersonal. [...] The great miniature is an idea of something seen by Allah, not the realisation of something seen by the artist. It transcends particularity' (264).<sup>215</sup> For Mullan, the reader would need to know about Islamic art and 'how it began to be influenced by' the Venetian artists (126).

Influence in *My Name Is Red*, introduces a technique of art that does not require narrative because the painting is 'something in its own right' (41).<sup>216</sup> Even though Ottoman Islamic miniaturists try to break away from any influence they recognize that the new European style will have to change Islamic art. In the scene below Enishte looks at a portrait of a particular nobleman and believes if he sees him, he can spot him out of a crowd:

The Venetian masters had discovered painting techniques with which they could distinguish anyone one man from another—without relying on his outfit or medals, just by the distinctive shape of his face. This was the essence of 'portraiture' (41).

The quotation above shows the advancement in the Venetian painting technique that thrilled Enishte. The use of the actual application of European realist style would not only enhance the Sultan's book but is a way to preserve a culture through art. The contrast between the two forms of art in Pamuk's novel and the borrowed technique from Venetian artists would enhance Ottoman Islamic art. However, these foreign influences will change the Ottoman Islamic religious attitude of the forbidden and highlight it by making the prohibition clearer to the viewer. The fear of influence comes from the miniaturists' fear of the new realist style that will take over or replace Islamic art in the Ottoman Empire. The end result of this influence might make it seem as though Islamic art never existed. The miniaturists might have feared that an assumption would have been made that Islamic art has borrowed from other artistic styles and claimed them as part of Islamic art. The most obvious problem that the miniaturists face is the

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<sup>214</sup> Mullan, p.126.

<sup>215</sup> Mullan, p. 264.

<sup>216</sup> Pamuk, *My Name is Red*, p. 41.

prohibition on representation in Islam and the new style that the Sultan has enforced upon their workshop is a realistic style of depicting Islamic figures. The prohibition on representation in Islam includes drawing animate figures such as human beings and animals or depicting the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. The prohibition of representation in Islam will be further discussed in the next section Problems with Representation in Islam.

### Problems of Representation in Islam

Jamal Elias's *Aisha's Cushion*,<sup>217</sup> investigates the highly argued prohibition on the representation of images in the Islamic tradition. The book opens with a famous Hadith between Prophet Muhammad and his wife Aisha about a tapestry with images she bought and hung on the wall of their home. After their conversation Aisha cut the tapestry and turned it into a cushion and Prophet Muhammad did not object. Elias traces the different historical artworks from different parts of Islamic countries and tries to understand the reason why images are prohibited in the Islamic tradition. Jamal Elias says that the problem with representation in Islam is not the 'image content.' (2) Elias believes there is a contradiction with images as religious images and objects, which are worshipped as supernatural or divine and this is the problem. The issue might not be with the image content but the 'image status' as in the glorification of an image (2).<sup>218</sup> The worshiping of images and idols is one of the reasons Islam forbids representational art. For Elias, the only type of Islamic art is architecture and calligraphy (3). An example is of Pamuk's narrator, the Tree, who believes that images serve as an item to be worshipped by 'the likes of pagans and infidels' but not Muslims (74).<sup>219</sup> The Tree informs the reader that the infidels (Kuf-ar/كفار) 'prostrate themselves before me in worship' (74). The talking Tree has a Muslim identity unlike the rest of the objects and images that narrate: 'I am a tree and I am quite lonely. I weep in the rain. For the sake of Allah, listen to what I have to say' (74). Although it is a Muslim, the Tree confesses that it takes pride in being worshipped but also fears it (74). The Tree narrator was disturbed for not being part of the Sultan's book as a page and as a picture. The reason the tree is not a picture is because it is not representing something in a book (74).

So, every object or image (animate or inanimate) in the Sultan's book represents something other than what it is. For example, a tree can represent a family tree in most cultures.

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<sup>217</sup> Elias, p. 2.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>219</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.74.

However, in Ottoman culture the tree has a symbolic meaning as it represents the Ottoman rulers. For example, in an episode of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem Sultan* episode ‘*Aslan, Kurt ve Kuzu*,’<sup>220</sup> Sultan Ahmed has a dream that a drop of rain fell down from the sky on to his chest. In the dream a small plant started growing out of his chest into a big tree, which represents his family, the Ottoman dynasty. In the episode, Sultan Ahmed wakes up to the news that his father Sultan Muhammad had died and that he is now the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire.

The previous example is one form of Ottoman Islamic representation through dream interpretation. Every culture has a different way of representation through art, film, and literature. However, there are different forms of representation in ‘art’ such as the film *The Message* by the Sunni American Syrian director Mustafa Akkad. There are also a series of short religious films, which depict life after death and how death occurs. Also, during the month of Muharram some Shia in some countries do a re-enactment of the battle, in which the Imam Hussein (grandson of Prophet Muhammad) was murdered. However, the image of the Imam Hussein is not shown in this re-enactment or any depiction of blood and killing is shown. All of the examples above show that there is some type of Islamic representation but its purpose acts as a historical reminder. However, Pamuk’s novel tackles the issue of the puritanical perspective of art in which nothing is looked at as a historical object to be cherished or as advancement in knowledge (علم) in art (as an artistic movement or style). Pamuk’s representation is in a sense a defence or at least mediation of the Islamic perspective. The *Tree* chapter shows that Islamic art has a specific type of representation through meaning and not a realistic depiction of a model tree, replica or copy of an image (80).<sup>221</sup>

The reason why there is a prohibition on representation in Islam is because images, icons and statues could be used for idolatry. Jamal Elias has found two instances in Islamic history where people went back to idolatry. Elias makes a connection between idolatry and the Abrahamic moment in history in which two things happened: the first was both Prophets Muhammad and Abraham’s decision ‘to break from the idolatry of his father and ancestors’ and the second is Abraham’s willingness ‘to sacrifice his son’s life at God’s command’ (7).<sup>222</sup> These two moments in Islamic history occurred in the exact same area of the Ka’aba: the first was with Abraham and the second was with Prophet Muhammad (7).<sup>223</sup> These two incidents of Islamic history show the fear of returning to idolatry. The prohibition of art is because of the

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<sup>220</sup> Translation title of a Turkish television series about Ottoman Sultans from Timz productions: *The Glorious Years: Kosem Sultan* episode one ‘Lion, Wolf and the Lamb’.

<sup>221</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.80.

<sup>222</sup> Elias, p.7.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

fear of going back to idol worshipping. The second reason Islam forbids artistic representation is because art is seen as trying to imitate the role of God as a creator. In Islam, God's punishment of artists is to complete their challenge against God, by bringing their artistic creation to life. On judgment day artists will have to breathe a soul into their paintings or they will remain in hell until they achieve that. No human is capable of giving an image life, but the creation of the image is similar to the Qur'an's description of God's creation of Adam and Eve. Therefore, it is clear that the offense is not in the image content or the image itself but the act of creating it (9). The parallel between the creation of art and the way God created Adam and all animate beings is the ultimate offense here. In the novel, Ottoman miniaturists try to separate religious influences from art.

In *My Name Is Red* the problems with representation are not only in relation to images and taking on the role of the creator but also a problem with the representation of narrative. The coffee house gathering allows people to engage in a similar critique of humanity's understanding of religion. In the novel, the chapter 'I Am a Dog' focuses on the problems of reinterpreting religion through images. For example, angels cannot enter a house where there are animate pictures or images, and it has the same religious consequence as having a dog in the house. Through this narrator one can see that an image represents more than an image in the Islamic religion. Therefore, in the Islamic tradition paintings or objects have a deeper meaning. Jamal Elias looks at Christian writers who differentiate between simulacrum and imago. Image is described as 'likeness of a comparative sort, specifically painting or representations of a deity' (28). Elias describes the simulacrum as a copy '[...] or an archetype and [...] [a] manifestation of an idea, like when the world is seen as a *simulacrum* of divine wisdom.' (28). Similarly in Islam, Elias looks at the meaning of a *surah*, an image (صور) and 2-3-dimensional image *Timthal* (تمثال). However, the verb or the word *Timthal* in Arabic is similar to, acting or representing. Paintings or drawings are the exact image of the reality they represent whilst the simulacrum can be an idea of the real object it represents but is not a representation of the object itself. The image is prohibited because it is a realistic depiction whilst the simulacrum is not a real representation but a copy or idea of the thing it represents. This will be portrayed in the section: Ekphrasis and Storytelling through Narrators, where the counterfeit coin shows openly that it is a replica of a real coin. The miniaturist who drew the coin did not complete it by painting it in gold, but the shape of the coin gives the idea of what it is supposed to represent.

In the novel, the Sultan, who is the Caliph, is criticised for using a Western style of art to represent and depict Islam and Islamic history. The Sultan is seen as an Islamic figure who

is glorifying himself through a realistic depiction of paintings. Pamuk's novel is not just about images and their representations but the creation of a book that could be interpreted as a challenge to the creation of the Qur'an. The book includes images and narratives that go along with these pictures that are intended to glorify the Sultan and his realm. In the novel this is problematised because the realm which the Sultan rules and glorifies as his own belongs to God, the creator of everything. Rowan Williams looks at the figure of those who 'claim to speak in the name of God' as dangerous because it reflects a presence in the absence of God, even though God is present (162).<sup>224</sup> The suggestion that a particular person could represent God entails an abuse of that power to enforce non-Islamic forms of representation to depict Islamic history. Williams claims that this is a dangerous statement, it is a means to claim power and control over people. The Sultan who represents Islamic religion and tradition has made a shift to Western traditions. So, the meaning behind the Sultan who could be considered here as an Islamic icon changes the perception of the viewer. Williams also says that one should not mistake 'words for a description of what it is like to be God, of the 'essence' of the divine' (183).<sup>225</sup> In *My Name Is Red*, the reason behind the Sultan's power to change Islamic art is because he is the representation of a caliphate, God's authority on earth. As Williams has argued this allows for the thought that God is present through the Sultan's presence. The reason why this claim is dangerous is because God is present and the thought of God being present in someone else can be blasphemous.

Another example from Pamuk's *My Name Is Red* is in chapter 24; The narrator is a supernatural being and at this point in the novel the reader realises that the drawings have come to life: 'I am Death, as you can plainly see, but you needn't be afraid, I'm just an illustration. Be that as it may, I read terror in your eyes' (199).<sup>226</sup> The drawing of the character *Death* reflects man's understanding of death and this resembles the meaning of art and how it reflects human life. More importantly it reflects on humanity's imagination and curiosity to create or bring before oneself an image of the unknown, to make what is intrinsically unknowable known. The act of bringing a face or making an image of the unknown is similar to the way one tries to rationalise fear. However, Rowan Williams states that when the church commissioned images it was not intended to show what heaven or holy things look like because '[...] the events of a holy life-don't 'look-like' anything' (184).<sup>227</sup> In other words, Williams

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<sup>224</sup> Rowan Williams, p.162.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p.183.

<sup>226</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.199.

<sup>227</sup> Rowan Williams, p.184.

states that the ‘divine reality’ cannot be put or made ‘in material terms’ (184). An example from the novel is in the scene below, the entity of the Angel of Death is unknown to miniaturists and is taken from the Venetian depiction of death as:

[...] “Death, whom the Venetians depict in human form, is to us an angel like Azrael,” he said. “Yes, in the form of man. Just like Gabriel, who appeared as a person when he delivered the Sacred Word to Our Prophet. You do understand, don’t you?” I realized that the young master, whom Allah had endowed with astonishing talent, was impatient and wanted to illustrate me, because the devilish old man had succeeded in arousing him with this devilish idea: what we essentially want is to draw something unknown to us in all its shadowiness, not something we know in all its illumination (202).<sup>228</sup>

There is a need to draw supernatural things because of the fear of the unknown. The Venetian idea of representation of religious things seems to be in terms of familiarising the unknown in relation to earthly things. The Ottoman interpretation for Venetian representation is that since Gabriel came in the form of a human so would the angel of death. In Islam, this type of representation is strictly forbidden. Like Rowan Williams, Jamal Elias<sup>229</sup> argues that there can be a need to see images that cause emotional movement towards religion and allow the viewer to feel God’s presence (81). The viewer, the person looking at the image, has a very important role. The viewer’s reaction to the painting or picture creates a magical effect on the painting as seen with the Death narrator. The viewer’s reaction to the image gives the image more meaning than is illustrated by the image itself. The reaction the Death narrator receives from the viewers in the coffee house causes him to tell them not to be afraid (199).<sup>230</sup> Jamal Elias argues that ‘representation and its recognition only exist in the context of human life,’<sup>231</sup> because the image is made by someone, and another person is looking at the image (41). The previous quotation looks at the depiction of the Angel of Death that is taken from Venetian artists and is known to Muslims as *Azrael*. The depiction of the angel shows that before the influences of Venetian art there might not have been Islamic art. Therefore, Islamic art in the novel seems to be a creation of the West. Robert Irwin also looks at the same idea in his book *Islamic Art*, that Islamic art is ‘a Western construct’ (12).<sup>232</sup>

In Pamuk’s novel, the portraits and paintings are in the sense of progression towards a greater self-consciousness and modernity. Orhan Pamuk’s work of literary criticism *The Naïve*

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<sup>228</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p. 202.

<sup>229</sup> Elias, p. 81.

<sup>230</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.199.

<sup>231</sup> Elias, p.41.

<sup>232</sup> Irwin, p.12.

*and the Sentimental Novelist*<sup>233</sup> (2011), looks at the novel as a Western invention that was taken up and adapted in the Islamic world (38). Pamuk looks at Schiller's use of the word sentimental in German, which differs from the English use of the word. Similarly, Schiller's use of the word naïve does not mean childish or foolish but simply not self-conscious. Schiller's use of the word is used to describes the modern poet as someone 'who has lost his childlike character and naivete' (13).<sup>234</sup> The German use of the word sentimental describes a state of mind 'which has strayed from nature's simplicity and power and has become too caught up in its own emotions and thoughts.' (14) The naive poet 'does not differentiate much between his perception of the world and the world itself' (16). Schiller's use of the word sentimental is self-conscious, the poet who questions and is aware of everything he writes (18). Turkish novelists follow the Western novel as a model, and Pamuk categorises Turkish writers as naïve poet in a Schillerian sense (18). For him, previous generations of Turkish writers wrote without much concern for 'problems of style and technique' (18). Pamuk explains how the imitation of Western art (novel) was difficult:

[...] the Western idea of fictionality underwent a creative and practical adaptation to local cultures. Non-Western authors, who found themselves obliged to fight against prohibitions, taboos and the repression of authoritarian states, used the borrowed idea of the novel's functionality to speak about "truths" they could not openly express—just as the novel had formerly been used in the West. (38)

The same could be applied to the role of art in Pamuk's *My Name Is Red* due to the need to create truth using the imaginary. Pamuk looks at the transportation of Western characters to non-Western countries. The transportation of Western characters showed that they too had models of characters, which were as good as the West (65). In *My Name Is Red*, the Greek form of storytelling—ekphrasis—creates this transformation of 'ready-made art objects' to be introduced to non-Western art. For Pamuk, the art of the novel allows one to speak truth or critique using characters, which we have seen in *My Name Is Red* (71). Pamuk draws on the relationship between art and the novel, which is 'narrative painting' (96). Narrative painting allows objects and paintings to have a voice to speak. Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories of a City* explores the origination or the introduction of art in Istanbul as European. He explains that the Ottoman Sultans left Topkapi Palace because they were in fear of tuberculosis and wanted to have a Western lifestyle (24).<sup>235</sup> In other words, Pamuk has shown that Islamic art is the

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<sup>233</sup> Pamuk, *The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), p.13-14, 16, 18, 38, 65, 71, 96.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>235</sup> Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories of the City*, p.24.

creation of the West. Europe introduced art to the Ottomans, and this created an influence that shaped Islamic art and Turkey's culture. Miniaturists are similar to Schiller's sentimental poet because they question the orders of the Sultan in imitating the European realist style of painting. As with the Western novel, using the European realist style creates this idea that miniaturists can also be Schiller's use of the word naïve, who find it hard to distinguish between their awareness of 'the world and the world itself' (16).<sup>236</sup> This is demonstrated in the creation of the character of the colour red, who becomes a symbol of Westernisation and secularisation.

In the chapter 'I Am Red', the way the colour red is made relates to the process by which Islamic art becomes a Western product. In *Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797*<sup>237</sup> (2007), Barbara H. Berrie's essay 'Pigments in Venetian and Islamic Painting' looks at the pigments that are used in Venetian and Islamic paintings and finds that it is hard to identify whether the plant dyes originate in Islamic countries or are Italian (141). Berrie explains that the colour red is made from 'mostly cinnabar (or its synthetic equivalent) and vermilion although artists used hematite and probably also lake pigments such as kermes and lac' (141).<sup>238</sup> In the novel, the colour red is made of crushed dried red beetle powder with some crushed alum (299).<sup>239</sup> The chapter 'I Am Red' relates to the title of the book *My Name Is Red* because the colour has different representations in Islam and Turkish culture. The colour red has different meanings in Islam; it could resemble the Kabaa's Kiswa (the cloth that covers the holy mosque), which was first made in the colour red by the Prophet Muhammad. The colour red resembles the colour of blood and in Islam it is unclean especially for women during their menstruation cycle. Women cannot pray, enter mosques or touch the Holy Qur'an during their menstrual cycle.

In Turkish culture, the colour red represents the old Ottoman military uniform, the Sultan wears a red Kaftan when he is about to make an official important decision and it is worn for the succession to the throne. At the beginning of an episode of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem Sultan* episode 18 *Kırmızı Kaftan*,<sup>240</sup> the making of the red kaftan is shown. Sultan Ahmed Han I. specifically requested the Kaftan to be made for the execution of his grand adviser Darwish Pasha for murdering his father. Here, the colour red represents law, power, justice, and the Ottoman Empire's flag. In the Ottoman culture there can be different meanings

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<sup>236</sup> Pamuk, *The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist*, p.16.

<sup>237</sup> Barbara H. Berrie, 'Pigments in Venetian and Islamic Painting', in *Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), p.141.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142.

<sup>239</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.299.

<sup>240</sup> Translation: *The Glorious Years: Kösem Sultan* episode 18, *Red Kaftan*. A Turkish series by Timz production about the Ottoman Sultans.

behind colours as well as in religion. But in *My Name Is Red* the interpretation of the colour red is linked to religion. Therefore, the colour red has high significance in both Islamic and Ottoman culture. In the novel, the Red narrator has a religious tone and informs the reader, ‘Besides, we believe in only one red’ (300).<sup>241</sup> The quotation suggests that the colour red represents religion but specifically the Islamic tradition. The colour here seems to resemble the meaning of the one God and this is interpreted to mean that art can have one form (301). The narrator Red explores the reason why Ottoman rulers began to take interest in Venetian art:

One hundred and ten years ago Venetian artistry was not yet threat enough that our rulers would bother themselves about it, and the legendary masters believed in their own methods as fervently as they believed in Allah; therefore, they regarded the Venetian methods of using a variety of red tones for every ordinary sword wound and even the most common sackcloth as a kind of disrespect and vulgarity hardly worth a chuckle. Only a weak and hesitant miniaturist would use a variety of red tones to depict the red of a caftan, they claimed—shadows were not an excuse. Besides, we believe in only one red. (301)

According to the Red narrator the depiction of a different shade of red to resemble blood on a battlefield is barbaric and repulsive. In ‘The Cave’<sup>242</sup> chapter of the Qur’an, the people who live in heaven wear the colour green, but the shade of green is not specified (18:31). However, the attention to details of paintings made Venetian art unique and different from the Ottoman miniaturists. From the quotation above the colour red reflects on a way of life or a ruling system.

The different shades<sup>243</sup> of red reflect modernity and therefore a progressive movement away from religion, while the Ottoman meaning of the colour red is tied to religion and creation of beings (301). The voice of the colour red and its tone seems mighty: ‘Thereby, as I bring my colour to the page, it’s as if I command the world to “Be!” Yes, those who cannot see would deny it, but the truth is I can be found everywhere.’ (301). The quotation above aims to give one a Godlike feeling because only God can exist everywhere or in a religious sense is everywhere. The colour red could also be a symbol of the Sultan who is a Caliph with power over the Islamic world. This is demonstrated in the quote above in the words ‘as if I command the world to “Be!”’ (301). It is a well-known phrase from the Qur’an that God can order things to ‘be’ (‘كن فيكون’). In the Qur’an<sup>244</sup> there is a verse that is similar to the narration of the character red:

‘إنما أمره إذا أراد شيئاً أن يقول له كن فيكون’ (٣٦: ٨٢)

<sup>241</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.300.

<sup>242</sup> *The Qur’an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, trans. by Saheeh International, p.396.

<sup>243</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.301.

<sup>244</sup> *The Qur’an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, trans. by Saheeh International, p.619.

The English translation of this verse:

‘His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, “Be,” and it is.’ (36:82).

The translation of the Qur’an clearly shows a similarity between the Qur’anic verse and the quote from the novel. The use of the word *Be, command*, and the authority that the colour is assumed to have over the existence of others gives it a God-like tone. The tone and use of language used is similar to that of the Holy Text. The use of ‘*as if*’ in the quotation above shows that it is not fully in the speaker’s power to command the world. Therefore, the colour red in the novel becomes a representation of the Sultan and his power as the Caliphate of Islam. Therefore, the meaning of the colour red changes with the Sultan’s command to Westernise Ottoman Islamic art. This could be a reason why Ottoman miniaturists did not like to show different shades of red in their paintings. In this sense, red could be tied to several passages in the Qur’an about God and His creation. Also, all of God’s creations have red blood although different blood groups but it is the same substance. The reference to the taste of copper and iron in the novel as part of felt texture of the colour resembles the taste of blood. The colour red in the novel is associated with emotions, the senses and taste: “‘If we touched it with the tip of a finger, it would feel like something between iron and copper.’”<sup>245</sup> (300). The narrator compares the emotional feelings associated with the colour in art with the things it represents in daily life. This comparison creates an emotional connection that is established between the piece of painting and the viewer.

Jamal Elias<sup>246</sup> looks at the emotional response to representational artworks and religious relics; he believes Muslims are not ‘immune to the power of images’ (98). Elias refers to John of Damascus who believes that images act as reminders of God: “[The] image is made for the remembrance of past events, such as miracles or good deeds, in order that glory, honour and eternal memory may be given to those who have struggled valiantly” (48). The power of representational artworks relates to the different meanings that the narrator *Red* gives to himself: In the novel, artworks are an input (an emotional creation) and an output (an emotional effect) when they evoke emotions. In the quotation below, one of the blind miniaturists relates belief in God to the colour red:<sup>247</sup>

“What is the meaning of red?” the blind miniaturist who’d drawn the horse from memory asked again. “The meaning of color is that it is there before us and we see it,” said the other. “Red cannot be explained to he who cannot see.” “To

<sup>245</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.300.

<sup>246</sup> Elias, pp. 98.

<sup>247</sup> Pamuk, p.301.

deny God's existence, victims of Satan maintain that God is not visible to us," said the blind miniaturist who'd rendered the horse. "Yet, He appears to those who can see," said the other master. "It is for this reason that the Koran states that the blind and the seeing are not equal" (301).

The conversation between the two blind miniaturists uncovers a connection between a colour and God. In relation to the Qur'an, in Surah Fatir<sup>248</sup> (سورة فاطر), 'و ما يستوي الاعى و البصير', which translates to, 'Not equal are the blind and the seeing' (35:19). The meaning of the blind resembles Pamuk's miniaturist when he says that the 'blind'<sup>249</sup> is the (الكافر/Kaffir) disbeliever and *seeing* is the believer (301). Art in this quotation seems to be associated with the idea of seeing beyond what the eye can see. Blind men can see what men with vision are unable to see through their other senses. The use of the word 'blind' does not refer to a visual impairment but to the symbolic sense of not being able to see the truth. The colour red resembles the cycle of life as it is connected to the colour of blood, death, and life. In another verse from the Qur'an as we have seen in Surah al-Alaq<sup>250</sup> (سورة العلق), describes how life or humanity is made: '[God] created man from a clinging substance' 'خلق الانسان من علق' (96:2). The translation of the Qur'anic text is 'a clinging substance', and this substance is a clot of blood. The colour *Red* narrator describes the different forms and textures he is found in such as the creation of life and the loss of virginity:<sup>251</sup> 'I was in the folds of the quilt upon which he made furious love with the beautiful daughter of the king' (296). In this context, as with a shade of colour the meaning of a colour can vary in accordance with its viewer. The colour red in Pamuk's novel could be compared to the colour of *royal blue*. Here colours are associated with the symbol of royalty in the same way that *royal blue* is the eponym of Queen Charlotte's dress, consort of king George III. In this sense, the colour red could be linked to the Sultan, the Islamic Caliph.

Another problem with representation is false representation of reality that can be dangerous, which is demonstrated in the chapter 'I Am a Horse' from an Islamic perspective. The horse is used as a model to help the narrator to depict a problem with illustrations that should not be perfected or beautified but should be a realistic depiction of reality. The horse narrator tells the story of an imprisoned prince who only saw beautiful drawings of horses. However, these beautiful drawings of horses were not a realistic representation of horses in reality. When the prince became king, he ordered his men to bring a real horse and was shocked by the horse's true features he massacred all the kingdom's horses. The chapter acts as a

<sup>248</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, trans. by Saheeh International, p.606.

<sup>249</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.301.

<sup>250</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, trans. by Saheeh International, p.895.

<sup>251</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.296.

digressive narrative and addresses religious problems associated with *realistic* art in the Islamic tradition. The prince's form of truth about horses is similar to Plato's cave analogy. The false representation of the horse becomes a problem in Islamic art because it presented a false type of reality to the imprisoned prince. What the prince saw in a drawing did not resemble the truth he saw outside his imprisonment and that led him to reject the reality of the real horse.

The problem with realistic art is explained in chapter 47 'I, Satan'. In this chapter, the character of Satan portrays, in an unexpected way, an Islamic understanding of why the European realist style of drawing is a sin. The narrator Satan gives an example of the realistic mode of art as a form of self-worship, where men worship other men instead of God. This parallels Jamal Elias's argument about art as an icon of idolatry (32).<sup>252</sup> Elias describes this when images become icons for worshippers especially if the image is of a prophet (32). The narrator Satan looks at man's sin as something man has done intentionally and not as a result of the devil's temptation.<sup>253</sup> In the novel, the narrated painting of Satan explains that with art there is no need for him to deceive man or persuade man into sinning: 'Many people sin out of their own blind ambition, lust, lack of willpower, baseness, and most often, out of their own idiocy without any instigation, deception or temptation on my part' (563). The character of Satan is a representation of sin, which is depicted in the novel as 'figurative painting' (464). The narrator Satan explains that he was blamed for the use of Venetian style of painting because miniaturists feared the preacher and his mob (464).

Images have power over the viewer that even the devil recognises. In a way, Satan's critique is that anything that goes against the Islamic tradition is blamed on him, even if he had nothing to do with it. In the same way, some people tend to blame every bad choice or action on Satan instead of realising that some of their actions were not initiated by the devil. The character of Satan shows that false representation can take different forms such as art and philosophical ideas. He shows that idolatry through visual representation is a choice that he chose not to take part of when God ordered him to bow down to man (462). In a way, the character of Satan shows that man chooses to prostrate to images in the form of painting using the European realist style (465). He describes the European realist style as idolatry because of the importance of details in representing human images, which makes it seem that the representation of human beings is as important as God (465). Another example the character Satan gives, is of philosophers such as Imam Al Gazzali, Ahmed Al Ghazzali, and Mansur Al

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<sup>252</sup> Elias, p.32.

<sup>253</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.563.

Hakkaj whose thinking encouraged idolatry and prejudiced thoughts against the Divine Self. The reason for their prejudices is their analogy with the sins committed by people, which are done under God's permission. If God did not permit these sins, they would not have been committed. Sin is not just in representation of images but can also be in narrative representation:

[...] I was not the one who planted such absurdities into the heads of these dimwits; they came up with it all by themselves. [...] Many people sin out of their own blind ambition, lust, lack of willpower, baseness and most often, out of their own idiocy without any instigation, deception or temptation on my part (463).

The character Satan is embarrassed by these philosophers' theories to the point where he admits he has nothing to do with their way of thinking. These thoughts, the character Satan explains, contradict the saying of the Qur'an. Most of these philosophers and thinkers have written corrupt and blasphemous theories.

In the novel, the character Satan explains that he is helping God test his subjects by destroying their faith: 'The good, possessed of sound judgment, would not be led astray, while the evil, giving into their carnal desires, would sin, to later fill the depths of Hell' (462). Here the character Satan shows that it is not entirely his fault when man sins because man has the capacity for voluntary sin. Therefore, the character Satan says that man is capable of being sinful or committing sin without his interference. The idea presented in the novel is that *any* type of representation has an element of sin. This is shown by the example of Satan refusing to bow to God's creation (462). Satan's statement cannot be taken literally as he is an untrustworthy and deceitful character. However, although he compares human beings worshipping art and his refusal to bow down to God's creation, his refusal is not to bow down to God's artistic creation but to obey God's commands. The comparison that is set in the novel between European figurative painters and Satan would suggest that art or creativity causes idolatry. In the novel, Satan's perspective shows that God ordering him to bow to man is similar to man bowing down to paintings and his refusal was correct. The other idea presented is that the creation of art can also be religious in opposition to Satan's view because God's creation is being compared to art. Satan is deceiving the reader, using the knowledge of the prohibition on images as a way to justify his actions. The character Satan attempts to justify his actions from a non-religious perspective, but this fails because his disobedience of God was a heretical act. Therefore, the comparison set by the character Satan is in a religious context, but to understand religion from a non-religious context would require a different approach from a non-believer's perspective.

In his book *Man on his Own*<sup>254</sup> (1970), Ernst Bloch looks at the idea of understanding religion from a non-religious perspective. What is most interesting is Bloch's thesis that is to understand something it can only be done through its opposite (27).<sup>255</sup> In terms of religion the opposite is non-religion. In other words, Bloch says that atheism brings people closer to religion in some way because it can create a better understanding of it (27). If we take Bloch's analogy of understanding faith using an example from theologians who learn about Jesus from Jewish critics:

[...] theologians would learn as much about God from atheists as the atheists could perhaps learn from the theologians; and correspondingly. Christians may learn as much about Jesus from the Jewish critics as the Jews can perhaps learn from Christians. (28)

In relation to the Venetian artists, the novel shows how Ottoman Islamic artists and the people sitting in the coffee house have come to critique their religion through a Christian interpretation of art. The conversations and storytelling in the coffee house become a narrative that bridges the interpretation of different religious texts and the literal reading of religious texts. As Hans W. Frei's shows in *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*<sup>256</sup> (1974), a biblical text can also be read as a narrative in relation to our world. Through figuration one could make sense of the biblical historical experiences in relation to human experiences (3). A similar approach is taken in the coffee house where artistic images are used to critique some of the Ottoman cultural traditions in relation to the Islamic tradition and stories from the Qur'an. Ernst Bloch<sup>257</sup> suggests that anti-religious questioning is something that already exists within religion and labels it as 'a religious critique of religion' (112). Therefore, it seems that one can only critique religion through a similar language and its opposite (anti-religious). For Bloch philosophy was first seen as containing evil or bad ideas and thoughts (116). This is similar to Pamuk's Ottoman miniaturists' thoughts about Venetian art and the character Satan's interpretation of art and philosophy.

However, the main issue that Ottoman miniaturists find hard to change is their tradition and Venetian art is criticised as being a new form of art that does not follow the Islamic tradition. T.S. Eliot's essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*<sup>258</sup> (1998), looks at how a

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<sup>254</sup> Ernst Bloch, *Man on his Own*, trans. by E.B. Ashton. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p3, 27-27, 112, 113.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p.27.

<sup>256</sup> Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1974), p.3.

<sup>257</sup> Bloch, p.112.

<sup>258</sup> Thomas Stearns Eliot, *The Sacred Wood and Major Early Essays* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1998), p.27.

change in tradition creates confusion and a self-critique: '[...] criticism is inevitable as breathing, and that we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of criticism' (27). For him, it seems that to create something new one must have a knowledge of the past and only from that knowledge that is inherited can one create something new (28). Eliot explains that tradition takes years to assimilate and does not only involve having a historical sense (28). This is similar to Bloom's theory of influence where a poet can create something new and original through influence or *misreading* (xxiii).<sup>259</sup> The problem with tradition for the Ottoman Islamic miniaturists is that they do not know much about Venetian art or its history. More importantly the Islamic form of art cannot be applied to or with Venetian style of art. A point made by one of the miniaturists in the novel similar to Eliot's is that it takes them years to be able to understand the concept of art in the Islamic tradition. It is difficult to understand Venetian art by simply imitating it. For a modern reader it is difficult to understand the problems faced by sixteenth century Ottoman miniaturists. Orhan Pamuk's incorporation of the reader into the novel, through character interactions with the reader, helps to overcome this difficulty.

### **Textualization of the Reader**

The role of the reader in *My Name Is Red* is important as a character because it changes the novel and creates a different reality. The textualized reader experiences the same changes to reality that the characters experience. Pamuk's narrators treat the reader as a fictional character within the novel and not as an outsider or spectator. *My Name Is Red* works for the textualized reader and magical realist author as it engages the reader, allowing them to look at issues and solve a murder case from an objective point of view. Textualization can depend on the nature of the novel but in this novel the textualized reader is given a task from the beginning of the first chapter. The task of the reader is to find the murderer of the miniaturist Elegant. The task set by the first narrator (Elegant Effendi) in *My Name Is Red*, creates a rule or a restriction that the reader must follow to the end of the novel, thus negating the possibility of being an escapist kind of reader. An escapist reader wants to escape his/her reality to enter the novel's reality. The reader steps into an unfamiliar sixteenth-century Ottoman Istanbul that is

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<sup>259</sup> Bloom, p. xxiii.

different to the reader's reality, and their textualization occurs when an imaginative dialogue occurs between the narrator and the reader.

In chapter nine, there are two incidents in which Shekure stops narrating and engages in an assumed dialogue with the reader. Shekure is the daughter of the miniaturist Enishte and she married a soldier when she was only twelve years old after her father discovered that Black was in love with her. Shekure starts speaking about her beauty and how she fell in love with the character Black who is her cousin. She suddenly assumes the textualized reader has lost interest and says: 'I'm not being a braggart, I'm explaining this so you'll understand my story and be able to share in my grief' (61).<sup>260</sup> Similarly, there are incidents where the characters' narration stops, and they start to engage in a dialogue with the textualized reader about their lives. This acts as a break from the plot to allow communication to happen between the textualized reader and the characters. These breaks function in a way that involves the reader in the text by allowing the reader space to react to the scene and the narrator addressing him/her. In the scene below, Shekure tells the textualized reader that if the reader does not believe her, she will not tell her story:

Are you aware that my relatives, the women whom I meet at the baths and everyone who sees me, swear that I look more like a sixteen-year-old maiden than a twenty-four-year-old mother of two past her prime? Believe them, truly believe them, or I shan't tell you anymore. Don't be surprised that I'm talking to you (66).

The quotation above shows that the narrator Shekure is engaging with the textualized reader as she realizes that the reader is in shock. The narrator's interaction with the reader's assumed reaction introduces the reader into the text of the novel. The reader becomes fictionalized in *My Name Is Red* and this is in itself a magical act. The reader-narrator interaction might be common in a fantasy novel but *My Name Is Red* is presented as historical fiction and is told in a realist tone. Another example of the reader being textualized is in an interaction between Elegant Effendi and the textualized reader in the first chapter. The quotation can be classified as an element of magical realism because it is presented as something that is real when it is imaginary: 'Let me say also that if the situation into which we've fallen were described in a book, even the most expert of miniaturists could never hope to illustrate it' (7). Another example is when Master Elegant Effendi refers to his dialogue with the textualized reader as a 'miracle' that his voice can be heard (4). Each narrator has a chapter that acts as an alternative approach to reality.

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<sup>260</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.61.

*Magical realism: Theory, History, Community*<sup>261</sup> (1995), edited by Lois Zamora and Wendy Faris, presents a collection of essays on the relevance of textualization and multiple narrators within the literary mode of magical realism. These influence the author's fictional world and allow the reader to become part of this world: a character within the novel. Jon Thiem's essay in Zamora and Faris's book, 'Textualization of the Reader in Magical Realist Fiction', defines textualization as the process when the reader (from the outside world) enters the book and becomes part of the fictional text or world (235).<sup>262</sup> He explains that there are two ways in which textualization occurs. The first is through escapism; this is where the reader becomes part of the novel and goes on a journey along with the narrator. The second is 'when the world of a text literally intrudes into the extratextual or reader's world' (236). This happens when the world of the text overlaps with the actual world of the reader, and the characters of the fictional world are transferred into the reader's world and become part of it. Therefore, the actual world and the fictional world overlap and become blurred. Another example of the textualization of the reader in *My Name Is Red* is where the reader is expected to find the killer of Elegant Effendi.<sup>263</sup> In the scene below, the narrator (Elegant Effendi) communicates with the reader and transfers the reader into the novel to become an unwritten mysterious character in the book:

Find my body without delay, pray for me and have me buried. Above all, find my murderer! [...] Find that son-of-a-whore murderer and I'll tell you in detail just what I see in the Afterlife— [...] You say the world is full of base and worthless criminals? Perhaps this one did it, perhaps that one? In that case let me caution you: My death conceals an appalling conspiracy against our religion, our traditions and the way we see the world. Open your eyes, discover why the enemies of the life in which you believe, of the life you're living, and of Islam, have destroyed me. Learn why one day they might do the same to you. (7)

Elegant Effendi assumes that the textualized reader wants to know everything about the afterlife and what happens after death. He captures the reader's curiosity with a promise that if the murderer is found, then the reader will know everything about the afterlife. Every Muslim as well as adherents of other religious beliefs is informed about what happens after death; in Islam souls go to *عالم البرزخ* (Alam Al-Barzakh), a different realm where souls stay until judgment day. So Elegant Effendi does not inform the reader of something he/she does not already know but he can give his own experience of the afterlife. This also implies that there

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<sup>261</sup> Jon Thiem, 'Textualization of the Reader in Magical Realist Fiction', in *Magical realism: Theory, History, Community* ed. by Lois Parkinson, Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 235-244.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, p.235.

<sup>263</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.7.

is more to be told about what happens in the afterlife than what we have been told through religious texts. But more importantly the character (Elegant Effendi) assumes that the textualized reader is a Muslim and that a change in the way the world is seen will be enforced on the reader as well. One can see through the death of Elegant Effendi how miniature painting is associated with religion and the way reality is seen through art. The conspiracy Elegant Effendi talks about in the quotation above is the change in artistic style and therefore religion as well. His death is symbolic of the death of Islamic Ottoman miniaturist tradition.

The previous quotation leads one to think that the preacher Erzurum might be the murderer because of his hostility towards Christianity and imitating the West. The first chapter of *My Name Is Red* is very important because it functions as a gateway into the novel's fictional world. However, Thiem explores the magical motif of textualization through the psychological, cultural, and philosophical implications (236).<sup>264</sup> He looks at readers that are actual characters of the book rather than the textualization of real readers. He discusses the textualization of fictional readers who are actual characters in the fictional world. For him, these readers are absorbed into the fictional world at a 'hypodiegetic level;' the term hypodiegetic here means the secondary narrative that is set within the primary narrative (236). Hypodiegetic can mean a story within a story, similar to a play within a play (236). Thiem focuses on the play within a play function of character textualization. However, our concern here is not with the textualization of fictional readers or characters but with the textualization of the actual reader. The textualization of the reader brings a real reader into the text who is drawn into the imitation of the real world. The reader, who is drawn into the novel experiences the representation and the imitation of reality without losing sense of his/her outer world or getting lost within the novel as an escapist reader. For Thiem, textualization 'is a 'magical realist' topos' because it makes the reader conscious of 'the act of reading itself' (240). Thiem looks at Wolfgang Iser's reflection on 'Roman Ingarden's influential theory of reading' (241). This essay discusses how the reader brings the text to life through the act of realisation (241). For Iser, this is the process of activation and animation, where the textual activation takes place in the readers mind (241). According to Thiem, this is when textualization becomes a motif for magical realism; when the reader stops being a reader and is transformed into a character in the text (242). In *My Name Is Red* the textual activation does not only happen in the reader's mind but is also motivated by the characters in the book. The importance of the textualized reader will be demonstrated in the section below.

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<sup>264</sup> Thiem, p.236.

## Ekphratic Narrators and Digressive Narrative

The fictional narrators that I will consider in *My Name Is Red* are animate and inanimate objects, and dead or supernatural beings whose purpose is to embody a critique of religion, society and man. These narrators also show Western influences and their perspective about the way human beings reinterpret religion or religious actions. Some of these narrators such as *Satan*, the *Tree* and the *Coin* act as icons that represent complex meanings in the novel. Their narratives become digressive narrations that momentarily remove the textualized reader from the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire to a different focus. Sometimes the digressive narrative is related to the plot of the novel but functions as detailed background information about an object or figures as a narrator. In the novel, the digressive narrative serves the character or narrator as it helps to explain their thoughts and feelings, which might not be possible in traditional narration. In the first chapter, 'I Am A Corpse', the deceased miniaturist narrates his story and asks the reader to find his murderer. The deceased Master Elegant Effendi who is the head of the Sultan's workshop in the palace narrates this chapter. He sets the reader on a mission that magically textualizes the reader as a fictional character in the sixteenth century-Ottoman Empire. Master Elegant Effendi who is the ghost narrator, addresses the textualized reader and this transforms the narrative into a magical one. The dialogue creates the impression that the reader is inside the novel and is no longer a spectator or an observer of events.

The narrators themselves act as *Surah* (chapters/ سورة) or like *Ayat* (verses/آيات) in the Qur'an. *Surah* in the Qur'an is the name of each chapter while the *Ayat* (sing. *Ayah*) are the verses in each chapter. The Holy book contains digressive narrative and has stories within stories, that Allah dictates are moral examples for humanity. Pamuk's ekphratic narrators and digressive narrative in *My Name Is Red* evokes discussions such as the *Surah* and *Ayat* as he imitates their style and purpose. The way in which Pamuk imitates the style of the Holy book is through the digressive narration of stories, which the ekphratic narrators tell, containing stories within stories. In a way, the use of the novel as a secular text can be an analogy of talking about the Qur'an. Pamuk's use of the animate and inanimate characters can be analogous to the *Suwar* in the Qur'an. The main point of the *Surah* is to highlight an event or a critique of an event within the overall story. Mona Siddiqui in *How to Read the Qur'an*,<sup>265</sup> looks at the problems Muslim face when trying to interpret the Qur'an in relation to modernity and the West.

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<sup>265</sup> Mona Siddiqui, *How to Read the Qur'an*, (London, Great Britain: Granta Publications, 2014), p.2, 11, 13, 16.

[...] the Qur'an within Muslim belief [...] [evidences that] [...] its origins lie in God himself and that the Qur'an acts as a focus for the faithful, their central source of divine inspiration and guidance in all matters of life. Yet the process of revelation is undeniably complex: when the divine word becomes the written word, it is appropriated by human beings. Human beings read and understand in their own contexts and with the legacy of inherited tradition. When that legacy is divorced from today's social and moral concerns, how should interpretation continue? (2).<sup>266</sup>

One way to overcome the problem of interpreting the Qur'an proposed by Siddiqui can be through the use of ekphratic narrators. The use of the Qur'an analogy with ekphrasis becomes a way to discuss and reinterpret the Qur'an in relation to modernisation and Westernisation. The foundation of Islam was between 610-632CE. During this time the Prophet received revelations which were written on animal skin, palm branches, papyrus and stones (12). The Qur'an was not made into a book during the life of Prophet Muhammad nor was it preserved in any specific form to be made into a book (12). The Qur'an was made into a book by the third Caliph Othman Bin Affan and this is known as the 'Uthmanic codex' or the 'Uthmanic mushaf' (12). The Caliphate Othman preserved the Qur'an into a book rather than just oral recitation so that it remained unchanged (13). Siddiqui claims for many Muslims this is seen as a sign as a divine intervention (13).<sup>267</sup> In relation to Pamuk's storyteller, the use of ekphratic narrators with miniature paintings in a way is similar to the revelation process and can be seen as a way to discuss religious issues in relation to the West. In a changing world we need to question if the commands of the Qur'an that were applicable for nomadic time of 610 CE can still be suitable to our present time (16). This is a question that is raised by the coffee house storyteller of the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire using ekphratic narrators. In the novel, drinking coffee is seen as a sin because it is a Western tradition, not part of the Ottoman Islamic culture. The consumption of coffee and sitting in coffee houses in the novel becomes a metaphor for the imitation of Western culture, as it is not an Islamic tradition. The Turkish coffee is used as a way to tell fortunes by looking at the images that are formed after the coffee dregs have dried. The grounds in the small cup form images, which are then used as representations to give meanings to these images. Although the environment of the coffee shop has a positive effect, the preacher associates it with divination. Jamal Elias explains the meaning of divination as a practice of telling the future through supernatural ways or other forms (11).<sup>268</sup> Even though the storyteller was not fortune telling, the Preacher associates ekphrasis with this.

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>268</sup> Elias, p.11.

Siddiqui addresses another issue where confusion has befallen Muslims, they cannot differentiate between cultural practices and Islam itself (7).<sup>269</sup> This is also something addressed by Pamuk's narrators especially the Dog narrator about cultural issues that are being mixed up for religious ones. Siddiqui believes that this type of criticism is naïve in saying that scripture on its own '[...] is responsible for how Islam has developed and how it is practised in society' (7). The main problem here is the different interpretations of the same text that is read by many Muslims according to their 'personal, historical and social contexts' (16). Siddiqui looks at the Algerian academic Muhammed Arkoun critique of secular and devotional approach to the Qur'an:

The secular approach fails to appreciate that a scriptural is more than a piece of writing; it contains deep meaning for the faithful. The devotional approach is unable to systemize a methodological framework which allows for a 'scientific' approach to scripture (101).

As with Siddiqui, Muhammed Arkoun believes that Muslims should be able to reinterpret the Qur'an without fearing that they are engaging in a critique or committing blasphemy against the Divine (103). The modern Muslim practices should include the engagement of the Qur'an intellectually not only to read and recite it as it is (103). Therefore, according to Siddiqui, intellectual reading of the Qur'an should become a modern pious exercise (103). This type of pious exercise of reading will be discussed later on in more detail below in relation to the Dog narrator and the preacher Husert Hoja.

Pamuk's characters (objects) act as icons in a way similar to Rowan Williams concept of *Icons*,<sup>270</sup> which are 'a window into an alien frame of reference that is at the same time the structure that will make definitive sense of the world we inhabit'(2). The way in which Pamuk's characters act as icons is that they create a way to understand an alien culture. In the example I provide here, which was explored earlier in the chapter, is the character of the colour *Red* and how it becomes a type of icon. The creation of the colour *Red* as a character represents not just an understanding of the Islamic tradition but of the meaning of the colour in Ottoman culture as well. The *Dog* narrator can be seen as an icon, even if in a negative sense, because the dog is viewed as an unclean animal in Islamic culture. The *Dog* narrator feels that his picture is a symbol or representation of an animal that is shunned in the Islamic tradition. Another religious icon in the novel is the drawing of *Death* that is a constant reminder of the one thing every living being fears. The *Death* narrator acknowledges the look the viewer gives this icon as he

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<sup>269</sup> Siddiqui, p.103.

<sup>270</sup> Rowan Williams, p, 2.

says '[...] I read terror in your eyes. Though you know very well that I'm not real' (199).<sup>271</sup> Here Rowan Williams 'presence-in-absence'<sup>272</sup> is clearly illustrated in the drawing of the *Death* narrator and shows clearly how religious icons function as reminders (161). The *Dog* narrator is not a religious icon but in the novel acts as one, because as William states, images give directions and '[...] essays a way of bringing you into a new place and a new perception' which is the exact challenge the *Dog* narrator attempts (184). Williams explains that '[...] the events of a holy life-don't 'look like' anything, and that the divine reality can't be rendered exhaustively in material terms' (184). In this quotation Williams explains that events of holy life do not have a specific image that can be captured. Nor can they be described or defined in *earthly* terms (184). In relation to *My Name Is Red*, these images of holy things are not supposed to be an exact image of what they represent. Images serve a purpose that is to show what is inside of each person such as the fear of death, through his/her relation to the image of *Death*. The other purpose is to show how images can create an understanding of our world in relation to religion and God. Hence the new Venetian artistic style can be compared to a secular way of approaching Islam in the novel, where Miniaturists see the world in a modern way through art.

Talal Asad looks at the meaning of secularism in both European and Islamic contexts. In Asad's *Formations of the Secular*<sup>273</sup> (2003), secularism was introduced by the English freethinkers of the nineteenth-century who wanted to avoid being labelled as atheists or infidels in a Christian society (24).<sup>274</sup> Freethinkers wanted 'an emerging mass politics of social reform in a rapidly industrializing society' (24). Asad defines the secular as a concept 'that brings together certain behaviours, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life' (25). For Asad, a split between Christian and secular life occurred where certain terms and practices were changed and replaced (25). For him, secularisation has enhanced the 'construction of civil society' in Poland and in the United States because it 'promotes public debate around liberal values' (182). Therefore, Asad believes political religion is itself compatible with modernity (182). For him political religion is when religion is in agreement with politics (182). In the quotation below Asad's defines political religion and argues that it is not a positive thing for every religion:

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<sup>271</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.199

<sup>272</sup> Rowan Williams, p.161.

<sup>273</sup> Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.24-25, 182-183, 192, 195, 201, 208.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

For when it is proposed that religion can play a positive political role in modern society, it is not intended that this apply to *any* religion whatever, but only to those religions that are able and willing to enter the public sphere for the purpose of rational debate with opponents who are to be persuaded rather than coerced. Only religions that have accepted the assumptions of liberal discourse are being commended, in which tolerance is sought on the basis of a distinctive relation between law and morality (183).

In the Islamic context political religion has become a way ‘to undermine civil society (as in Egypt) or individual liberties (as in Iran) then political religion is indeed a rebellion against modernity and the universal values of Enlightenment’ (182). In Iran political religion is an ideological use of religion where one can critique without rejecting Islam. In the Islamic context it would be hard to apply secularism because of Islamic law as endorsed by the Hanafi school of law in Egypt (208). For example, there is an endowment law called Waqf that allows the founder to transfer ownership of property to God and is irreversible, which then becomes used for the needs of mankind (208).<sup>275</sup> An important point Asad makes about secularism is that there are ‘national differences’ in the manner it is perceived in Europe, which corresponds ‘to different political histories’ (208).

Asad defines the secular as part of the concept of secularism, which ‘builds on a particular conception of the world (‘natural’ and ‘social’) and of the problems generated by that world’ (192). Asad does not define secularism as the private practice of religion so that it does not become a political threat or a limit to the freedom of freethinking citizens (192). However, this was the case in early modern Europe where secularism was a means to control (192). Asad notes that ‘the secular cannot do without the idea of religion,’ and some movements like nationalism are secular (201). Therefore, Asad has found that some observers of political Islam have adopted this idea of the secular which he says reverses the effects of secularisation (195). The distinction between the secular and the sacred is modern. One similar idea is to be found in Orhan Pamuk’s novel, the act of seeking artistic knowledge (علم) can be considered as religious in Islam but is also secular. At the time of Prophet Muhammad in Mecca the secular did not exist and so there was no such thing as a religious sphere and secular sphere; they are the same. Although Talal Asad suggests that this reverses the effects of secularisation, it also becomes a camouflage, a way of masking secular terms and applying them in an Islamic context. This concept of camouflage suggests that from the outside it seems like secularism is applied when the inside remains Islamic. This is similar to what Asad means by the ‘camouflage effect’ and is a reversal of the secular application of the Islamic tradition. The

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., p.208.

Western mode of critique becomes a form of camouflage which circumvents the prohibitions set in Islam. The Sultan's use of a Western artistic approach goes beyond the secular because he represents an Islamic authority. However, in regard to Atatürk's reformist approach secularism was not a camouflage but a means to erase Islamic practices and culture in Turkey. In Orhan Pamuk's memoir<sup>276</sup>, he describes the effects of the Kemalist constitution of Turkey as leading to a confusion of culture and tradition in which religious practices became confused with cultural ones. A similar way of introducing this camouflage of the secular is found in the *Dog* narrator and many others.

The narrator in the 'I Am a Dog' chapter, challenges the reader's religious beliefs and practices about Islam and the reader's interpretation of the Prophet Muhammad's actions. In the scene below, the dog insults and criticises the rationality of the textualized reader's thoughts about Islam. The *Dog* narrator addresses the fictionalized reader by saying:

I'm a dog, and because you humans are less rational beasts than I, you're telling yourselves, "Dogs don't talk." Nevertheless, you seem to believe a story in which corpses speak and characters use words they couldn't possibly know. Dogs do speak, but only to those who know how to listen (16).<sup>277</sup>

The quotation exemplifies Rowan Williams's point in *Lost Icons* about the viewer becoming '[...] the object of what is at work' and that images have the power to control and speak to the viewer (186).<sup>278</sup> The power of an image is represented through the *dog* narrator in the dialogue between the image and the textualized reader looking at the textualized image. The dog's uncleanliness is a false interpretation of the prophet's kind action towards a cat he let into the mosque. It is assumed that dogs are unclean as a result of the misrepresentation of the Prophet's action. The way the Dog narrator acts as an icon is in the assumption that the reader is not forced to listen but is willing to listen. Here the work of an icon is translated into the text and what Williams describes as '[...] the strange skill of letting yourself be seen, be read,' enacted through the narrator (185).<sup>279</sup> However, the textualized reader is not willing to listen but is on a mission to find a murderer who might be any one of these narrators. The reader takes in the information that the narrator chooses to share. This implies that human beings take in information without questioning, similar to that of religious preachers (16).<sup>280</sup> There is an emphasis on the power of words and listening, which is an important factor in religion.

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<sup>276</sup> Pamuk, Orhan, *Istanbul: Memories of the City* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 83-217.

<sup>277</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.16.

<sup>278</sup> Rowan Williams, p.186.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, p.185.

<sup>280</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.16.

However, the preacher's words Husret Hoja of Bayazid Mosque, seem to have a magical effect on the listener (17). The Dog narrator notices that the Islamic preacher uses two types of emotional manipulation: the first is by intimidation and the second is through 'bringing people to tears,' that is, by playing on people's emotions (16). The Dog narrator is criticising the way the preacher Husret Hoja is using religion for his own benefit and as a means to fight the new non-Islamic traditions. The Dog narrator questions the preacher, Husret Hoja, who believes the cause of the sixteenth-century Ottoman economic crisis, plague, and military defeat is because people forgot Islam and fell into 'falsehood' (17).<sup>281</sup>

The Dog narrator is not the only one who questions these traditions and religious actions. Husret Hoja questions the created traditions such as the celebration of the Prophet's birth, whether or not that was done during his lifetime. He also questions if the fortieth-day ceremony was applied to honour the deceased, if the Qur'an was recited in a melodic way during the lifetime of the prophet, and if the call for prayer was done in a dialect similar to that of Arabs? The preacher assumes there is a change in cultural and religious traditions and not only challenges the congregation but also the reader's thoughts about these matters. There are two opposing opinions in this chapter; the first is of a fundamental mindset (Husret Hoja) and the second (The Dog) seems like a secular one. The reader sees the change or rather new developments of Islam through Husert Hoja and the Dog's point of view. Husert Hoja ridicules the new developed traditions and finds them blasphemous. Some of these blasphemous traditions include visiting and worshipping tombs of Saints and making promises to the headstones of graves (17). Husert Hoja's argument is clearly opposed to secular thought or any that might have Western or other religious influences.

The Dog's point of view becomes crucial because he criticises the preacher's Friday sermon and the way he uses the change in religious traditions as an excuse to define a *Kaffir* (كافر/infidel). The Dog's perspective shows the strictness and absurdness of Husert Hoja who is referred to as 'one bone-headed cleric' (16). The Dog's point of view could be seen as a satire on European attitudes to Islam but it also shows that Husert Hoja is seen as an extremist (متطرف mota-ta-rif/mota-as-ib متعصب) with his strict religious attitude. Therefore, the Dog's point of view is not just a satire of Western attitudes towards Islam but of Husert Hoja's opposition towards different sects in the Islamic tradition. The Dog's critique is that religion should not be politically strict to such an extent but contain a balance. In other words, figures with authority such as Husert Hoja are using religious issues as a means of retaining political

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., p.17.

control instead of a way to maintain religious traditions. Husert Hoja criticises Islamic traditions practiced by some Muslims, which seem similar to some Western religious practices (17). The Ottomans were Sunni (سنة الله و رسوله) meaning they followed the practices of the Prophet Muhammad in Islam. Husert Hoja compares Islam during the Prophet's lifetime, to Islam in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire. He not only shows the newly developed fad traditions (بدع/ Bi-da'a), which did not exist during the Prophet's life, but also questions the cause of their existence.

The Dog narrator explains these (fads/بدع) as a misinterpretation of Islamic (سنة) Sunnah traditions. He gives the example of why dogs are not welcome in Muslim homes and mosques. Thus, the Dog, who is seen in the Islamic tradition as unclean (نجس/Naj-es), is the only one who could see through Husert Hoja's hypocrisy. He argues that most Islamic traditions are misinterpreted by many Muslims and gives an example of how dogs became animals that defile homes and sacred spaces. The Dog narrator states that Muslims interpret the Prophet's kindness towards a *cat* as a preference for cats. Therefore, it is believed that dogs defile those who perform the 'ritual of ablution' (18).<sup>282</sup> The Dog narrator is well versed in the Qur'an and shows the reader his knowledge by naming a chapter 'The Cave' (الكهف/Al-Kahf). He attempts to intimidate the fictionalized reader by questioning if the reader is familiar with 'The Cave' chapter, assuming the reader is Muslim: Every practicing Muslim recites 'The Cave' on Friday. The Dog narrator critiques political and religious ideas. In the novel, the Dog narrator and the reference to 'The Cave' chapter in the Qur'an<sup>283</sup> become a metaphor for those who just follow traditions and do not comprehend the meaning of a sacred text. In 'The Cave' chapter of the Qur'an the purpose of the dog being in the cave has nothing to do with its impurity. The story is about the people of the cave (اصحاب الكهف /As-hab Al-Kahf), and how they became a lesson (عبره/Eb-ra) for others. They were a group of men who left their people (قومهم/qaw-mahum) because they were idol worshippers. They found sanctuary in the cave which Allah (يسر لهم) provided them with. The cave's entrance faces north (الشمال/Al-Shimal), where the sunlight would not enter, and they would sleep for 309 years (18:25). The Qur'an explains why the dog is actually there in the cave:

و تحسبهم ايقاظاً وهم رقود ونقلبهم ذات اليمين وذات الشمال وكلبهم بسط ذراعيه بالوصيد لو اطلعت عليهم لوليت منهم فراراً ولملئت منهم رعباً.<sup>284</sup> (18:18)

And you would think them awake, while they were asleep. And We turned them to the right and to the left, while their dog stretched his forelegs at the entrance. If you had

<sup>282</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.18.

<sup>283</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, trans. by Saheeh International, p.391.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p.393.

looked at them, you would have turned from them in flight and been filled by them with terror. (18:18)

The dog in the cave was there to help while they were asleep to guard them and to preserve their skin as to not get bed sores as the elderly get when sleeping in the same position for a long time. Thus, the purpose of the dog in the cave was to help them move from left to right (18:22). The dog has an important role in the cave as he guarded and protected them from bedsores in 309 years of sleep. The Dog narrator critiques both the Ottoman Islamic hatred towards dogs and the European treatment of dogs as slaves, '[...] dragged around in isolation' (21). The Dog narrator seems to have an objective point of view of both traditions by showing their flaws. The dog who is a symbol of impurity is helping to prevent the thing it is known to represent in the Islamic tradition. Religion in *My Name Is Red* looks at identity politics and for Orhan Pamuk it represents a clash between the East and the West. The novel highlights cultural and social values by exploring the imitation of infidels *Al-Tashabuh bel Kufar* (التشبه بل كفار). There is a form of dialectic in which the idea of extraction and prohibition is turned around. For example, in the Jewish tradition there is a prohibition against the consumption of pigs or sea animals that do not have fins and scales because they are unclean. These are characters that are prohibited in religion that critique the faith from the outside, as objects that are foreign to the faith but want to understand the prohibitions.

### Ekphrasis and Storytelling through Narrators

Storytelling is an important theme in the novel because the act of telling a tale, brings it to life as a form of recreation of reality. As we have seen ekphrasis is an oral description of a work of art. In the Greek tradition representation of storytelling, ekphrasis acts as an alternative to the way God breathes part of his soul into the creation. In the text, the real coin is compared with the talking *Coin* image created by the painter Stork. The painter passes the painting of the counterfeit coin to show his ability to create a copy of an inanimate object and this is how the artist challenges the creator. The counterfeit coin chapter introduces a new artistic style—*realism*. This differs from the traditional Ottoman Islamic art because this form consists of *meaning*.

However, there are two important terms in this chapter (*realism* and *meaning*) in the creation of the counterfeit coin as an image. The act of storytelling explores what it means to be a coin through the representation of a creation. The creation of the coin is realistic and is a specific image, which everyone can identify because it is seen as a replica, an exact copy. In

this chapter the reader understands what it means to be a coin from the object's point of view. The counterfeit coin is also an imitation or reproduction of an image of a real coin and is an imitation of art reproducing a replica of a model that is copied. In the scene below, the *Counterfeit Coin* has just been drawn and is not coloured yet, and it begins to speak:

My image is here before you, yet I myself can be found in the money purse of your dear brother, Stork, that illustrious miniaturist. He's rising now, removing me from his purse and showing me off to each of you. Hello, hello, greetings to all the master artists and assorted guests (163).<sup>285</sup>

The counterfeit coin has a dual meaning because it has an artistic value as a creation of art and a monetary value as a commodity, but more importantly it represents the Sultan's power and authority of the Ottoman empire. In *How Novels Work*<sup>286</sup> (2006), John Mullan believes that ekphrasis gives life to paintings and 'ekphrasis reverses the orthodoxy that painting should not have its own life' (264). However, Pamuk does not really reverse the orthodoxy but gives to artistic creation a life of its own when it becomes voiced. The act of giving an artistic creation a voice in the novel overcomes the prohibition of critique in the Islamic tradition because it is projected through the point of view of objects and animals. In the Islamic tradition paintings cannot have a life of their own because it is prohibited, and only God's creations can have a life. So, in the novel the act of narrating for an image or object seems to suggest that human beings can also give their creations a life by this act. In the novel, the act of storytelling brings the characters to life and this is why it resembles the Greek *ekphrasis*. Storytelling disguises life, a magical life by transforming inanimate objects into animate ones. Pictures become objects of veneration according to Mullan, but this is not true as pictures bring out the curious nature of humanity (264). Images or artistic objects are not made for the purposes of worship but have become a way of seeing the world or identifying the world artistically. There is a difference between questioning an image and worshipping one. Mullan describes ekphrasis as a type of writing that '[...] seems to confess its subordination to another form. Words give an impression of the picture; the picture gives an image of the world' (265).

The unheard perspectives of the paintings, objects, and animals are a metaphor for the unheard voices of those who want to critique culturally created traditions (fads/عادات) which contain falsified religious influence. The paintings are a critique of art and religion and are a way to mirror issues which would otherwise be difficult to address. Miniaturists draw pictures of objects while they are in the coffee shop and the storyteller narrates them. The act of giving

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<sup>285</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.163.

<sup>286</sup> Mullan, p.256.

a voice to paintings to enable the storyteller to use them as a mask or puppet becomes a theatrical act. The coffee house goes through a transformation and becomes a stage for the imitation or representation of the city's reality through critique; and therefore, implicitly a Western phenomenon. However, the reader later realises that the narrating Dog might also be a picture held in the coffee house that is narrated by the storyteller. Voiced art becomes important in the novel as it speaks or mirrors back what one cannot see in him/herself. For example, the Counterfeit Coin narrator describes the look one gets when looking at a coin: 'Your eyes widen as you behold my glimmer, you thrill as I shimmer in the light of the oil lamp, and finally, you bristle with envy at my owner, Master Stork' (163).<sup>287</sup> The Counterfeit Coin reflects the look of its observer. The storyteller in the coffee house does not act as the voice of the dead miniaturists Elegant Effendi and Master Enishti; they have their own voices in the novel. The voicing of objects and paintings becomes a type of magical act and is seen as analogous, in the Islamic tradition, to the way God created souls.

In *My Name Is Red* the representation of human beings speaking for their artistic creation is sometimes considered blasphemous in Islam. As the narrators have shown art is not just a representation of the world we live in; it has the ability to transform it. There is a tension in the Islamic artistic tradition on how to represent God's creation and this type of representation is contrary to the Islamic tradition. Islamic art is about being humble and not challenging the Creator. Therefore, the murderer is a representation of something new (فادس/بدع) and a different way of seeing life as Master Elegant Effendi mentions at the beginning of the novel. Elegant Effendi refers to this as 'the enemies of the life in which you believe, of the life you're living, and of Islam, have destroyed me. Learn why one day they might do the same to you' (7).<sup>288</sup> The Muslim way of living is changing into a secular one. The sense in which the application of ekphrasis could be considered blasphemous lies in the way these artistic creations have human voices speaking/narrating through verbal description as though the art is speaking for itself. Verbal description that accompanies these inanimate objects and animals gives life to them. This is similar to the role of the Creator, by breathing life into a picture 'وتركنا بعضهم يومئذ يموج في بعضٍ ونفخ في الصور فجمعنهم جمعاً'<sup>289</sup> (18:99). The translation of the verse from 'The Cave'<sup>290</sup> chapter describes the awakening of man from the grave on judgment day: 'And We will leave them that day surging over each other, and [then] the Horn

<sup>287</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.163.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>289</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, trans. by Saheeh International, p.406.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., p.406.

will be blown, and We will assemble them [one] assembly' (18:99). The awakening happens when God blows into humanity what is described in the verse as pictures. Thus, art here becomes a way of seeing the world from the creator's point of view by taking on the role of the creator.

The emphasis on the role of the creator in art violates the precepts of Islam and the Islamic Ottoman tradition but is also an aesthetic advance of Ottoman art in relation to the West. Therefore, miniaturists are caught between religious and cultural traditions, and between the East and West. For them, the meaning of art and religion changes from creating beauty and admiring God's creations and God's worship to showing the ugliness and vileness of humanity. There is a passage in the Qur'an that is similar to the miniaturists' problem with the meaning of art in the novel, God tells the angels that he has made man caliphates on earth:

'وإذ قال ربك للملائكة إني جاعلٌ في الأرض خليفةً قالوا أتجعل فيها من يفسد فيها ويسفكُ الدماءَ ونحنُ نسبحُ بحمدك ونُقَدِّسُ لك قال إني أعلمُ ما لا تعلمون،<sup>291</sup> (2:30)

And [mention, O Muhammed], when your Lord said to the angels. "indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" He [Allah] said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know" (2:30).<sup>17</sup>

The idea that God can create evil and good, virtue and sin is found in this passage of the Qur'an. Satan is God's creation and is an example of something that was created to do good changed to doing bad. Many things or objects are created to be used in a good way but at the same time the object has the capability to inflict something bad. The same is the case with art where its purpose is to represent something good but then can also represent something bad. Artistic talent is a gift from God but can be sinful when put into practice. However, the narrators decide on labelling these artistic creations as sinful or virtuous according to their point of view and not to the teachings of the Qur'an.

In *My Name Is Red*, there is a reference to a chapter in the Qur'an al- Baqarah<sup>292</sup> 'The Cow,' which is about the East and West belonging to God:

'ولله المشرق و المغرب فأينما تولوا فثم وجه الله ان الله واسع عليم،' (2:115)

'And to Allah belongs the east and the west. So wherever you [might] turn, there is the Face<sup>33</sup> of Allah. Indeed, Allah is all-Encompassing<sup>293</sup> and Knowing' (2:115).

However, this verse does not specifically mean just the geographical area but everything and

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>292</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, trans. by Saheeh International, p.21-22.

<sup>293</sup> Some of the translated words in the quotations are capitalized such as Knowing and Encompassing because in Arabic they are some of the names of Allah.

this can be linked to art. The way in which this passage is linked to artists is in the idea of recreating what belongs to God. A similar idea is found in Plato's cave in *The Republic*<sup>294</sup> (2008), which portrays artists as the people in the cave who are imitators of God's creation. Plato finds art to be a type of *play* where he banishes the artist because he found it dangerous. For Iris Murdoch, in *The fire and the sun*<sup>295</sup> (1977), Plato did not banish all artist but he viewed them as irresponsible critics and meddlers that affect society (1).<sup>296</sup> In Plato's *Republic* he says that poets were seen as 'prophets and sages' before the appearance of philosophers and they were the main source of information (1).<sup>297</sup> Plato was impressed at the artists ability to 'produce what they cannot account for' and refers to this inspiration as 'a kind of divine or holy madness' that creates good poetry (2). Murdoch explains that art is bad because it is 'mimetic or imitative' and art does not question it only accepts, therefore Plato dismisses it as *play* (5).<sup>298</sup> The idea of truth in the Holy Qur'an is not the same as in Plato. In monotheist religions the same truth is displayed but in a different form and these different ways of seeing the truth are represented in art. In the Islamic tradition truth is absolutely transcendent and so cannot be represented in art at all.

Jonathan Sacks discusses in *The Dignity of Difference*<sup>299</sup> (2002), the idea that religions are about different ways of seeing truth through difference (60).<sup>300</sup> The whole of the truth is present to everyone in each religious tradition, although it is represented in a different form. Plato's cave analogy and the Holy Qur'an are highly relevant because Plato wanted to banish the artist but not in the same sense as in the Holy Qur'an. The prisoners in the cave only see a reflection of the fire and the artist is only representing the reflection of the fire but not the ultimate reality. This is similar to Plato's notion of Divine essences, but it also differs sharply from the representation of God in monotheism. In relation to Islam, it becomes the opposite: it points out the problem that representation of an image of God is offensive to God. The reason religious representation is offensive is because we do not see it and we do not know what it looks like. In Islam God cannot be represented at all unlike in the Christian faith. Even secular things that are worldly things cannot be represented because they are a representation that somehow distorts them such as the drawing of the *Horse* narrator. On the other hand, Plato seems to be talking about a world beyond the sensory world which is intellectual or spiritual

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<sup>294</sup> Plato, *Republic*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2008), p.241-244.

<sup>295</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The fire & the sun* (Oxford University Press. Great Britain.1977), p.1-2, 5.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>297</sup> Plato, p.1.

<sup>298</sup> Iris Murdoch, p.5.

<sup>299</sup> Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (London: Continuum, 2002), p.51, 55, 60, 64.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60.

but not related to the monotheist God and His Prophets. Plato's banishment of the artist/poet is because the imitation of truth is not real (55).<sup>301</sup> One important point here is that difference is a positive thing because the shadows of the cave show that there is no one notion of truth. Sacks explains that God threw truth on the ground to 'let human beings live by a different standard of truth, one that is conscious of its limitations' (64). However, each religious tradition embodies a truth, and every culture is different. This is similar to the function of languages (55). The shadows on the cave represent different but real meanings to each person in the cave and this is what makes art important (51). Therefore, there is a crucial difference between the Platonic and the Islamic prohibitions.

In 'The Cow' Surah al-Baqarah<sup>302</sup> (البقره) there is a verse called Ayat al-Kursi (الكرسي/ the chair) which states that everything on the ground and sky belongs to God and He provides people with the knowledge that He wants them to have:

’الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السماوات وما في الأرض من ذا الذي يشفع عنده إلا بإذنه يعلم ما بين أيديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشيء من علمه إلا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السماوات والأرض ولا يؤوده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم‘ (٢:٢٥٥)

Allah—there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them,<sup>86</sup> and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi<sup>87</sup> extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great. (2:255)

Art, knowledge, and creativity could be seen as something given by God. Therefore, not everything that is creative can be seen as blasphemous, but only the ones that seem to challenge God. An examination of Plato's cave narrative shows the reason why there are complications in the representation of an Islamic culture. In Plato's cave the shadows that are cast by the objects create a distorted image and representation of reality. Plato's cave analogy can be understood from an Islamic perspective on the prohibition of representation because the shadows cast from the fire that the prisoners saw in the cave are seen to be truer than the real objects and therefore equate to a rejection of reality. The Eastern prohibition is in the mere thought that the representation is truer than the reality it aims to represent. This outlook on reality shows that one might have different perspectives on reality. Therefore, the Islamic prohibition shows that when presented with a true reality, it becomes either dismissed or

<sup>301</sup> Sacks, 55.

<sup>302</sup> *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, trans. by Saheeh International, p.52.

difficult to realise. In the novel the Eastern prohibition of images and their representation is that it can create a false reality and a rejection of the reality one lives in. Plato and Murdoch have shown that art is a divine inspiration and a divine madness, while the Islamic prohibition has shown that it becomes a challenge against God.

For Jonathan Sacks, religious truth can be reflected in art where the identity of the artistic creator is similar to the way humans are given an identity through monotheist religions. In the context of Pamuk's *My Name Is Red*, this is reflected in the religious identity of the *Tree* narrator. The Tree narrator begins to tell different tales and fables about travelling the world. The Tree narrator explains how it made its way as a book with falling pages to Istanbul. In this chapter, the textualized reader looks at the Tree's point of view and in a way, it can be considered as the reader giving life to the book as an inanimate object. The Tree describes how humans give life to objects and how they admire the representation of the modelled objects (object, plants, animals) more than looking at the object itself (78).<sup>303</sup> As the Tree speaks, it reveals it has a Muslim identity by the way he names God as Allah: 'I thank Allah that I, the humble tree before you, have not been drawn with such intent.' (80). This reveals to the reader that it is a Muslim Tree and makes one assume that all of God's creations have a religion (80).<sup>304</sup> Every painter that creates a picture gives it his/her religious background. Therefore, the Tree's religious belief makes the reader acknowledge it as though it could have a real identity. In the Tree chapter there is a discussion of how Venetian paintings are realistic and how imitating their style is sinful because it breaks away from Islamic art and traditions. In the scene below, the Tree narrator discusses different painting techniques and style in Venetian painting and how it represents reality in a way that immitates God's creation:

Painting in the new style demands such talent that if you depicted one of the trees in this forest, a man who looked upon that painting could come here, and if he so desired, correctly select that tree from among the others (80).

This type of art violates the Islamic religion and art traditions as it is considered a sin to recreate the exact image especially when painting humans. The Tree narrator believes that art should not be an exact imitation of reality but should represent its meaning (80). The reader is shown the meaning of the difference between the Venetian art and the Islamic art from the point of view of a tree.

The Tree compares the European realist style of paintings to the Ottoman Islamic paintings. The Venetian paintings are realist images of Sultans, animate and inanimate objects.

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<sup>303</sup> Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p.78.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, p.80.

The Islamic Ottoman paintings portray inanimate models, and it is not a realist style of painting. So, the Tree compares the way it has been created to Venetian creations:

I thank Allah that, I, the humble tree before you, have not been drawn with such intent. And not because I fear that if I'd been thus depicted all the dogs in Istanbul would assume I was a real tree and piss on me: I don't want to be a tree, I want to be its meaning (80).

According to the Tree narrator, in Islamic Ottoman art Platonic meaning is more important than a realistic depiction of the model. The quotation above shows that the realistic depiction of the tree is not as important as what it means to be a tree but also includes a humorous reference which satirizes the ambition of art to truly represent reality. Art here is treated like a dream, for example what would a tree represent in a dream; there can be a lot of meanings or interpretations for a tree in a dream. The Tree narrator attempts to humanise itself by telling the reader about its long journey to Istanbul, making itself unique by not associating itself with other realistic trees and by obtaining a religious identity. Since the Tree refers to God as Allah, it is a *Muslim Tree*. Thus, the very action of giving itself a soul is ironic because of the prohibition against this in Islam. But of course, the *beholder* of the representation of the tree, the storyteller is likely to be a Muslim. The Tree begins to form a historical background for itself and how it came to be a page that has fallen out of a book (75). The Tree narrator describes that after falling out of a book it has become lonely, isolated, and has, in a way, lost its purpose from being part of a manuscript (77). The reason why it is no longer part of the manuscript was because the Tatar courier was ambushed, raped, and then killed by thieves (77). The only story the Tree represents in the coffee house is one of moral problems and corruption in the city that are not being addressed.

In the novel, it becomes important to preserve Islamic traditional art and to create a distinctive art for the Ottoman Empire. In chapter nineteen, 'I Am a Golden Coin', the Counterfeit Coin interrupts the narrative to narrate its story of how it became an imitation of a coin. The tale of the Counterfeit Coin becomes important to art as it represents the different forms of painting. Even though the Counterfeit Coin's story relates to the story line it becomes digressive because an inanimate object addresses the reader. In the quotation below the Counterfeit Coin shows how the act of drawing in the novel brings objects to life:

Behold! I am a twenty-two-carat Ottoman Sultani gold coin and I bear the glorious insignia of His Excellency Our Sultan, Refuge of the World. ... Stock, one of our Sultan's great masters, has just finished drawing my picture, though he hasn't yet been able to embellish me with gold wash—I'll leave that to your imagination (163).<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 163.

The representation of the *act of drawing* suggests that it brings to life the characters that are drawn on a page. The miniaturist Stock has not yet finished his painting of the Counterfeit Coin but the act of drawing itself brings the coin to life. The drawing is more important than the colour since the importance is about style, a *realistic* representation of a coin. Therefore, colour in this chapter is not an important factor as in a realist portrait. Master Stork does not want to define a coin by its golden colour but rather by the details that are on the coin, which gives the coin its identity. In Islamic art inanimate objects are permitted but the artist shows how even inanimate objects can become idols to be worshipped. This idolatry is shown through the 'Counterfeit Coin' character where this object is valued in a capitalistic society. The Venetian realistic form of art can produce counterfeit objects that can cause corruption. The quotation shows how the coin is looking at its own portrait as it is drawn while addressing the reader about man's greed and envy (163).

The Counterfeit Coin's description of man's greed over gold might seem strange, but from a coin's point of view (if it had one), it appears realistic. The Counterfeit Coin has humanlike qualities because it is able to recognise man's emotional reactions and material preferences in life while confessing that it is a counterfeit coin. The Counterfeit Coin confesses that its existence resembles good and bad artists and therefore creates chaos among miniaturists (170). The chapter is a metaphorical example of the creation of a copy, replica, and a mimetic representation of the function of the *Creator* and its meaning in Islam. The blasphemous artifact of this process of creation is man taking the role of the Creator (Allah/God). The creation of art is similar to the way God created Adam *the father of humanity*. The artist creating art forms such as paintings, statues and idols follows the same process or steps of the creation of man and living things. The creation of Adam in religious texts can be seen as an artistic creation. The creation of man is similar to pottery making or clay idols. Religion is an artistic representation of the divine and this makes the creation of humanity artistic. The following quotation makes one think of God's creation as an artistic one, even though that may not be the view of orthodox Islam. Bin Mote'a Al Sa'adi explains in *The Gist of the Prophets Stories and Messengers in the Holy Qur'an* the way God created humanity, which is similar to the production of artistic things. The artistic production can be seen as an imitation of the divine, which is reproduced as a realistic image:

'فكان ترابا اولاً، ثم ألقى عليه الماء فصار طينا، ثم لما طال مدة بقاء الماء على الطين تغير ذلك الطين فصار حمأ مسنونا، اسود، ثم أبيضه بعدما صوره فصار كالفخار الذي له صلصلة... وفي هذه الاطوار هو جسد بلا روح، فلما تكامل خلق جسده نفخ فيه الروح فاقلب ذلك الجسد الذي كان جمادا حيوانا له عظام ولحم و أعصاب و عروق و روح هي حقيقة الانسان، و

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First, he was sand, then water was poured on him and turned him to mud. The water stayed long on the mud and became a black clay. When the black clay dried it became like a pottery that has a type of ringing metal, a body without a soul. After the body was completely formed a soul was blown into it and the lifeless body transformed into a living thing with bones, muscle, nerves, veins, and a soul that is a human being. Allah prepared him for all knowledge and well-being (English Translation).

In the quotation above Al-Saedi looks at the prophet's stories within the Qur'an, and in this section, he describes the creation of the first prophet Adam (سيدنا ادم عليه السلام). The quotation describes God's creation of human beings in the Islamic tradition, which could be considered artistic. The material properties that are described in the creation of man such as mud and water are similar to the ones used in the making of pottery, clay. The steps that are used to make clay statues are similar to the description of the way God made man. The creation of art, the act itself is similar in imitating God as a creator and becomes a problem in orthodox Islam. Man has been creating idols and statues that look like humans excluding their inability to create a soul for it. The Islamic prohibition in *My Name Is Red* against the European realist style of painting can be understood from the quotation above. One main focus of Islamic prohibition is challenging the Creator and artistic representations is similar to equating humans to God in the ability to produce living breathing objects.

In relation to religion these artistic creations can become an icon of worship or contain certain significant meanings for the individual looking at them. Rowan Williams *Lost Icons*<sup>307</sup> looks at the function of an icon in a community or society which becomes a code for that community (1). Williams looks at the relevance of icons in the Eastern Christian world. The icon is not a reproduction of reality nor is it supposed to be an imitation of reality (2). Icons capture a time in history and specifically scenes from the Bible such as Jesus Christ and other groups of people (2). The significance of icons is seen 'against the background of a source of illumination independent of them' (2). For Williams, the icon becomes a binding image that brings people together as a reference and a transmitter (2). If an icon is a transmitter as Williams has explained, then this analogy suggests that Pamuk's narrators transmit their critique of religion to the reader through ekphrasis. These images and objects act as icons when they point beyond themselves. Rowan Williams explains the importance of the icon in a religious context, which is *not* to show what God or Jesus Christ looks like. The icon/image has a more important

بن مطيع السعدي، خلاصة قصص الانبياء و المرسلين من القرآن الكريم (الكويت، ٢٠١٨)، ص ١٠. 306

307 Rowan Williams, p.1.

role, which is to give ‘the directions, it essays a way of bringing you into a new place and a new perception’ (184).

Williams’ icons can be relevant to the Islamic faith because Islamic relics act as a way similar to Williams’ icon. For example, the Black Stone in the Kaba’a points beyond the meaning of a meteorite. The Black Stone is also a reminder of when Adam and Eve first came on earth. Holy relics such as *The Black Stone* and *The Kaba’a* are icons and reminders of the Divine even when the Divine’s presence is not felt or seen. These images and objects in a religious sense become a reminder of the Divine. They are not a replacement, nor do they act as objects of devotion and veneration as idols but are mere reminders of God. Williams describes what happens when we observe an image or icon:

The person looking at the icon is invited (instructed?) to let go of being an agent observing a motionless phenomenon: the idiom of the painting insists on its own activity, its ‘bearing down’ upon the beholder. Shedding rather than receiving light, gathering and directing its energy rather than spreading from an invisible point of convergence. And this finds its fullest expression in the iconographer’s depiction of the eyes of Christ or the Saints (no saint is ever shown in profile). As the perspective ‘bears down’ upon the beholder’s eye, the eye of the iconic figure acts, searches, engages. The skill of looking at icons, the discipline of ‘reading’ them, is indeed the strange skill of letting yourself be seen, be read (185).<sup>308</sup>

Williams here explains that an icon is not just a representation of absence but embodies a deep meaning. So, the object/image that is being observed transforms the viewer’s perception, but it does not evoke emotions (186). Icons bring out an interaction between the image and the person looking at it. Ekphrasis can be linked to Williams’ account of icons, as it connects the listener to the image and beyond what is being represented. Ekphrasis in Pamuk’s novel seems to have a more powerful effect than Williams’ icons because it takes the listener, who is also a viewer, to a different level of interaction. In ekphrasis the viewer is not only reading an image visually and listening to what it reflects. The image is representing something but is also engaging the listener in a recreation of reality from a non-human point of view. The reality of an inanimate object becomes somewhat subjective because it provides a different way of seeing the world. It is not just an image that gives directions but through ekphrasis the image has become part of a reality which is now providing a critique of a shared reality. Ekphrasis is something true; it is not an imitation of reality like mimesis but a critique of it through different objects. Ekphrasis relates to Islam as it is a discussion of things that are being critiqued in a somewhat educational environment, which is the coffee house. The atmosphere of the coffee house creates a safe and

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 185.

somehow secular environment to discuss and critique religious traditions. The critique or questioning of religious tradition in the coffee house recalls Mona Siddiqui's modern approach to religious questioning.<sup>309</sup>

In Pamuk's novel, it is not just ekphrasis that is happening, but the portraits and objects are engaged in ekphrasis for the textualized reader. In the novel, the narrators are not using a poetic verbal representation of themselves. The narrators are not just the objects of ekphrasis they begin to give an ekphrastic view of the world. This is where the world in which the narrators live is described in the same ekphrastic manner as the paintings or objects. Pamuk's narrators (Counterfeit Coin, the colour Red and the Tree) describe themselves and give attention to details about themselves and other objects. The narration in *My Name Is Red* is a central theme in the novel because each narrator provides a different point of view of the world, culture, and religion through ekphrasis. In *How Novels Work*<sup>310</sup>, John Mullan argues that Pamuk's multiple narrators 'serve the historical aspect' of the novel and give 'a sense of how the past is to be pieced together from separate testimonies rather than grasped by some 'modern' narrator' (55). For Mullan, this novel is about ideas of 'how East and West might meet' (126). However, it is not just about connecting different cultures but different approaches to life and ways of seeing life. In the novel, ekphrasis becomes an act of not only giving voice to inanimate objects through storytelling, but also a form of critique through the point of view of objects. This form of representation becomes an alternative way of critique in an Islamic culture.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the meaning of the religious prohibition of the imitation of Western (European-Venetian) art that differs from the Islamic art and the Islamic tradition. Islamic art is a Western construct, and this is evident in the prohibition of representation. Any type or form of representation must be done through Western representation, and this evokes a idea in Edward Said's *Orientalism*<sup>311</sup> (2003). The opening of Said's book features a quotation from Karl Marx on how the Orient cannot represent itself and must be represented. Said's argument is about colonialism and the construction of cultures through a European

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<sup>309</sup> Siddiqui, p.103

<sup>310</sup> Mullan, p.55.

<sup>311</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2003), p.5-6.

understanding (4).<sup>312</sup> This explanation might appear to be challenged by the points that have been discussed throughout the chapter. However, the relevance of this quotation is that the prohibition on representation in Islam means that the critical representation of Islamic culture can be enabled by a *Western* literary mode of representation. An example is of Said's analogy of Flaubert's Egyptian courtesan, that is one way of describing representation through the West (6). Flaubert describes in detail the oriental woman and represents her, but she never represented herself (6). Edward Said believes Flaubert's foreignness, wealth and dominance as a man were a factor that allowed him to represent Kuchuk Hanem (6). Edward Said's discussion is about colonialism and Western dominance and the misrepresentation of the *Orient* as a Western projection of its fantasy about the East, while in this chapter Western symbols and art forms are the only way around the Islamic prohibition on representing and discussing Islam.

The use of Western art to discuss Islamic prohibitions is viewed as a colonisation of Islamic art, which is known to be forced upon the miniaturists by Sultan Murat III. The Sultan as a symbolic representative of Islam might have known that representation of Islamic world can only be achieved through non-Islamic form and can show an internal colonisation. Therefore, the imitation of the Venetian style of painting for the Sultan's portrait is depicted as a sin by the miniaturists. Since the Sultan is the Caliph of Islam and *God's shadow on earth*,<sup>313</sup> to recreate his image in what is believed as a sinful art form violates their religion. On the other hand, Venetian artists felt that there was an Islamic colonisation of Western art. In his essay 'The Serenissima and the Sublime Porte: Art in the Art of Diplomacy 1453-1600' in *Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797*<sup>314</sup> Julian Raby argues that a 'colonisation' of Islamic art did not occur:

[...] the Frankish component in the Ottoman costume books was comparatively small. This difference is telling. For the Venetians, the Ottomans were the defining "other," the foreigners whose looming presence spurred reflection on Venetian identity. For the Ottomans, their empire stretched in all the cardinal directions, across the "seven climes," and though Venice was a critical point in their Western frame, their political, religious, and cultural horizons lay predominantly to the East. Europeans were far from a dominant element in the Ottomans' image of their empire. (113)

In Pamuk's novel Ottoman miniaturists felt Venetians were invading their style of art and traditions, while Venetians felt their art was being invaded (113). The colonisation of Islamic art takes place in the Sultan's palace where there is a special workshop that is used to produce

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>313</sup> On the exit gate of Topkapi Palace these words are written on a frame in golden writing on top of the wall.

<sup>314</sup> Julian Raby, 'The Serenissima and the Sublime Porte: Art in the Art of Diplomacy 1453-1600', in *Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), p.113.

works of art for the Empire. The Venetian form of art violates the tradition of Islamic art and makes Islam appear to be a restrictive religion. Thus, in the novel Islamic art embodies a contradiction between the representations of God's words in a sacred text and the illustration of the human world.

The only way of representing the East or Islam, it seems, can be achieved with a non-Islamic form of representation, that is through the West. Realism in the novel looks at the historical representation of the city of Istanbul. The main focus is the historical changes Istanbul goes through as a result of Western influences and the reformation of Turkey. The way in which Western representation is achieved in literary form in the novel is through magical realism rather than realism. Through magical realism the representations of Islam and Islamic prohibitions are shown through ekphrasis by portraying different meanings behind objects and images. The storyteller's use of voiced narrative on miniature paintings in the Sultan's book supports a critique of Islam. The use of magical realism shows the problems with false imitation of reality but also allows the reader to compare between magical realism and realism as it textualizes the reader into the novel from the very first chapter. Through a comparison of Venetian art and Ottoman Islamic art, *My Name Is Red* has portrayed the difficulties of realistic representation in the Islamic tradition. The use of ekphrasis in the novel is a way to overcome the prohibition on both cultural critique and representation in an Islamic culture. The main critique formed in this chapter is the Westernisation of Islamic art through an Islamic icon, the Sultan. The use of ekphrasis as an alternative method of character narration becomes central because it gives a critical point of view of Islamic Westernisation from a distant sphere.

## **Chapter Three: The Representation of Islamic tradition through Cultural Practices in Yousef Al-Mohaimed's *Wolves of the Crescent Moon***

### **Overview**

In the previous chapter, I looked at the prohibition of representation and interpretation of Islamic tradition that may lead to a distortion of truth. I contrasted the concept of *prejudgment*<sup>315</sup> in an Islamic text as the prejudgment of God with the Christian idea of the *prejudgments* (Schleiermacher) brought to bear on the interpretation of any text. However, in *My Name is Red*, this term was redefined in relation to the Islamic context, where literary narrative can be a way to look at the Qur'an in relation to modernity and the West without blasphemy. The way in which literary narrative achieves Schleiermacher's notion of prejudgment without blasphemy is through the 'narrators' who are miniature paintings that become icons through representation in meaning rather than their immediate image. *Ekphrasis* in *My Name is Red* represents Islam through the different meanings of objects and images through narrative form to support a critique of Islam from a non-human point of view. These objects are not religious icons but form a critique of Islamic culture and tradition. This is analogous to Mona Siddiqui's concept of 'pious reading' which I refer to as a type of pious questioning<sup>316</sup>. This is a modern way of worshipping in the modern world like that described in *My Name is Red*. The word pious here signifies a type of religious act that is like worship, but a form of worship that takes place through the investigation of religious texts in relation to the modern world.

In this chapter I will be looking at different cultural actions and symbols and their interpretations in Western and Middle Eastern cultures, specifically Arabian culture or that of the Gulf region. Cultural actions and symbols include Islamic prohibitions on female perfume (scents), Hijab (the female head scarf), folklore, Arab movie stars, castration of males and European artist's ear mutilation; where their representation creates a critique of culture. When interpreted, these cultural actions and symbols give a deeper meaning and understanding of an alien culture, which is different from what one sees on a surface level. As we have seen in

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<sup>315</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. by Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.20f.

<sup>316</sup> Mona Siddiqui, *How to Read the Qur'an*, (London, Great Britain: Granta Publications, 2014), p.103.

Susan Bassnett's *Translation and World Literature*<sup>317</sup> (2019), translating a text from one language to another involves a 'loss and gain' (2). In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*<sup>318</sup> one can come to understand what cultural actions represent in an Islamic Middle Eastern culture and how this differs from Western cultures. When set against a different culture, these cultural actions, folklores, traditions, and cultural stereotypes transform into a cultural critique, and even when it is not set against a different culture it can sometimes function as an author's self-critique of his/her culture. Anthropologists might misinterpret cultural actions because they are observers of events and do not really engage in them, while in literature it is more than just an observation of culture because the reader is experiencing events. The author gives insight to his culture and the reader engages with the characters events and re-experiences them first hand. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*<sup>319</sup> (2017), Clifford Geertz explains that literature can offer insight into a culture better than anthropological studies. In literature, there are no assumptions made or conclusions that are abstractly reported to the reader as in anthropology.

*Wolves of the Crescent Moon* is a magical realist novel but gives a realistic account of Saudi Arabia. The chapter contains five sections: Saudi Arabian Folklore, Destructive Scents, Author, Reader and Character, The City and Western Art, and Punishment and Humiliation. In the sections 'Saudi Folklore and Destructive Scents,' I argue that the Saudi Arabian folklore and the prohibition of scents is a critique of Islamic culture. In the novel the critique of Islamic prohibitions on scents is ironized which shows how the prohibition of scents is not only imposed upon feminine fragrance. However, there are other scents that carry actions that violate Islamic laws such as Amm Tawfiq's rape on the ship and the smell of charcoaled fat that trapped Tawfiq into slavery. The use of folklore in the novel becomes a digression where the stories form a critique of Arabian Islamic culture. The section *Author, Reader and Character*, looks at the character Turad's reaction as a reader of the green file on the bus stop. Turad becomes an ethnographer and a textualized reader within the narrative he reads from the green file to the actual reader. Turad offers his critique non-Islamic practices in Saudi Arabia through the story of Amm Tawfiq, Khairiyah, and Nasir's as a reader. This section also offers a critique of Saudi Arabian cultural traditions and practices that are not part of the Islamic tradition. The sections *The City and Western Art* and *Punishment and Humiliation* focuses on a critique of Arabian culture using Western symbols. In the section *The City and Western Art*,

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<sup>317</sup> Susan Bassnett, 'The rocky relationship between translation studies and world literature' in, *Translation and World Literature*, (London: Routledge, 2019), p.2-3.

<sup>318</sup> Yousef Al-Mohaimeed, *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, Trans. by Anthony Calderbank (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2007).

<sup>319</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York, Basic Books, 2017), pp.5-6.

Turad's severed ear is compared to Vincent van Gogh, while Nasir's eye loss is compared to Moshe Dayan and his name to Gamal Abdul Nasser. The comparison of these characters to Western artists or political figures is a form of humiliation for the characters because their mutilation is associated by shame unlike the figures they are being compared with. This section relates to *Punishment and Humiliation* where the cause of the characters' humiliation is the punishment they received in an Islamic country by non-Islamic rules and practices. Turad, Nasir and Amm Tawfiq are excluded from the rest of society and become victims of humiliation.

### Summary of the Novel

*Wolves of the Crescent Moon* opens in Riyadh's bus station where the main character Turad finds a green file on a bus seat, which contains official documentation about an abandoned child, Nasir. The green file becomes Turad's insight into the life of Amm Tawfiq a eunuch; Khairiyah, the daughter of a perfume maker; and Nasir, an orphan who lost his eye. The green file is also the reader's insight into Turad's (Bedouin) story with Nahar. The green file reveals the reasons behind Turad's hatred of Riyadh and for wanting to leave the city. These three characters become blurred into one character who faces problems with the prohibitions set in an Islamic country and society. Each character embodies a critique of Islamic culture and tradition that exemplifies how Islamic law whether applied or not affects the lives of the characters. The characters' story becomes a critique of the Islamic tradition in a puritanical society. The novel focuses on these main characters as outsiders or outcasts of society. Each of characters' punishment by non-Islamic forms of punishment is also a critique of Islamic society. The city of Riyadh is depicted as being inhabited by a traditional Islamic society facing modernism. Turad the Bedouin and his friend Nahar survive in the desert by stealing from pilgrims making their way to Mecca. Turad and Nahar get caught and are severely punished by the Sheik of the pilgrims. They are both buried in the sand with the exception of their heads and are left there. The wolf which Turad used to share his meals with and spend his lonely time in the desert finds them buried. The wolf devours Nahar's face, while Turad watches and hears the screams of his friend. Turad's scream made the wolf bit off his ear before leaving him. The Sheikh's punishment caused Turad to lose his ear and this is compared to Vincent van Gogh's cut off ear by the citizens of the city of Riyadh. Turad's humiliation made him hate the city and the people there, which causes him to go to the bus station to leave Riyadh.

Amm Tawfiq is lured into slavery by the scent of a charcoaled piece of fat. He was taken from his country to Saudi Arabia on a ship crossing the Red sea. The ship is supposed to carry pilgrims to Mecca but instead children are taken into captivity. In the journey to Mecca,

Tawfiq is raped and beaten by an Eritrean man. The Eritrean man forces Tawfiq and other enslaved children to wear old and dirty Ihram clothes. The Ihram clothes are worn by pilgrims for the Hajj ritual. Upon Tawfiq's arrival he is taken to an orphanage with three other children who are then forced to work as slaves. Tawfiq was chosen to work in a palace and had to be castrated, so that he would not be able to do anything sexually to the women living there. Tawfiq was told that his castration would bring him great fortune and work opportunities. However, after his castration all he found was misfortune and after the abolition of slavery in Saudi Arabia he was removed from the palace. Tawfiq was out on the streets without a home, a friend, money or family to turn to. So, Tawfiq was not able to go back to his country and he had to go in search of different jobs in the city.

Nasir, whose green file Turad finds on the seat of the bus, is an orphan. His parents conceived him out of wedlock and left him outside the door of a mosque. Nasir, like Turad and Tawfiq, lost his eye whilst sleeping in his crate outside the Abdullah Ibn al-Zubair mosque by stray cats. Nasir's horrific incident was compared by the orphanage's Egyptian nanny Gamalat, to Moshe Dayan's eye loss. The other character in the novel, Khairiya, the daughter of the perfume seller loses her virginity to the full moon (Bader). Bader is the Arabic name for full moon, but it is also a name given to males. Khairiya's mother warns her of the moon folklore, that it is forbidden to wash her underwear using fragranced soap and to hang it outside at night to dry on a full moon. On a full moon night, Khairiya hung her underwear while Bader was watching her. She, Khairiya, got pregnant from (Bader) a man whose picture she hid in her room but used the folklore to her advantage.

The title of the book in Arabic, (فخاخ الرائحة) meaning the entrapment of scents, is different to the English translation *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*. The meaning behind the two titles is different but both are a theme in the novel. Nahar and Turad lived in the desert with wolves, similar to the way wolves eat, steal, and function in the wilderness. Turad describes the memories of his childhood and of him eating a rabbit the same way a wolf eats his prey.<sup>320</sup> In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, Turad the thief (the Bedouin), Amm Tawfiq the slave (the eunuch), and Nasir (the Orphan who was given an identity) represent the outsiders who come to the city (Riyadh). These characters also represent the city of Riyadh before undergoing modernisation. These three characters become blurred into one character through a nonlinear narrative. Each character embodies a critique of the Arab world and Islamic law and how when applied or not applied it affects the characters' lives. There are two examples in the novel: the

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<sup>320</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.54.

first is Nasir the abandoned infant out of wedlock. The second example is the punishment of Nahar and Turad by the emir of the pilgrim. Nahar and Turad's punishment is an example of an inhumane and non-Islamic killing/punishment of criminals. The downfall of each character is the consequence of a scent that lured them into the city and thus captivity. Al-Mohaimed has different characters' narrating along with an omniscient narrator. In many ways *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* is a magical realist text because of its non-linear narrative, but it is also a realistic text because of the way it portrays contemporary Saudi Arabia. Events in the novel are not portrayed in a magical way or in any abstract form but rather in a clear and realistic manner. The novel portrays other cultural influences through Egyptian movie stars that are foreign for an Islamic society. However, the narration is disruptive and there is a blur between the characters' voices, where stories or different events merge as one. Each of the characters' story is a type of narration or retelling of their life told by Turad at the bus stop. In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, the narration is in a realistic mode because it gives an account of the story from an anthropological approach by looking at the characters' cultural history and their transition into a life in the city.

## Theoretical Approach

Firstly, representation in this chapter is in the form of performative actions and therefore relevant to cultural critique. J. L. Austin in *How To Do Things With Words*<sup>321</sup> discusses the performative aspects of words. Austin is interested in the performative actions of words and not the words themselves. Performative actions or utterances are ones which are meaningful in the act of their performance (or utterance) rather than referring to something external to themselves<sup>322</sup> (6). Constatives are descriptive statements, which he says, are not all true or false statements (3). These descriptive statements are about '...some state of affairs, or to "state some facts" [...]' (1). Constatives (descriptive statements) are used to indicate '[...] the circumstances in which the statement is made [...]' (3). For Austin 'not all true or false statements are descriptions' and so he gives them the term constatives which is not the same as performative statements (3). Performative actions occur when 'the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action'<sup>323</sup> where it is not just a statement (6). Austin gives an example of a performative action such as 'I do' which is said in a marriage ceremony (5). Another

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<sup>321</sup> John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. by James O. Urmson (Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2018), p. 1, 3, 5, 7, 6.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

example is the naming of a ship ‘when smashing a bottle against the stern’ (5). These acts are not ways of conveying information. The action in itself is significant because the saying of words is like actions (active words). Therefore, performative acts are words that must be accompanied by actions (6). There are words that take a form of life but it is not all about the performative action. It is about the representation of the action and what that means culturally.

Austin describes the conditions of utterances as they do not describe or report and are not true or false statements (5). These ‘uttering of sentences’ is part of ‘the doing of actions’ that is not a description of doing something (5). Austin names these utterances or statements as performative actions. The uttering of sentences is not a description of what one is doing; rather the uttering of what one is doing itself constitutes the action (6). Therefore, Austin defines the meaning of ‘performative’ as a name taken from the verb *perform* that contains the noun *action*:

‘The name is derived, of course from “perform”, the usual verb with the noun “action”: it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something.’ (7)

An example of Austin’s performative action is swearing in court when someone puts his/her hand on the Bible or raises his/her arm to swear before testifying. Similarly, another example is in an Islamic court when someone is asked to put their hand on the Qur’an to swear that they are saying (or have said) the truth. Therefore, actions are similar to words, or rather the actions in themselves are equivalent to words. I argue that literary representation of these performative actions can become a form of cultural critique.

Secondly, I will focus on cultural actions as part of an anthropological approach to culture through literature. Clifford Geertz<sup>324</sup> approach is related to Austin’s *performative actions*, but it is not identical. Geertz approach to understanding culture through anthropology shows how narrative can be a more effective way of understanding foreign cultures. Therefore, the text could be looked at from an artistic or esthetic way unlike anthropological case studies of those of Geertz. Clifford Geertz considers how the understanding of foreign cultures can be helped or hindered by anthropology. Geertz discusses the approach of understanding culture in terms of narrative and therefore in terms of representation. For Geertz, representation might be more important than conceptual understanding because it is ‘a concept of symbolism grounded in semiotics and an understanding of cultures as a system of meaning.’ (viii). For him, narrative

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<sup>324</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. viii.

might be more relevant than formal anthropology for understanding a foreign culture. His definition of culture, or its concept, is taken from Max Weber where:

‘man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.’ (5).

Geertz is interested in the ethnographer’s function, which is similar to that of literary authors because anthropological analysis is a form of imaginative knowledge<sup>325</sup> (6). He explains that anthropology is the study of the interpretation of cultures. The way in which cultural interpretation is linked to representation is that these cultural symbols when interpreted give a different and deeper meaning than what one sees from the surface view. The reading of cultures in anthropology is a type of interpretation of an alien culture and its people (11). Thus, anthropology in relation to literature becomes the interpretation of imaginative cultural representation (11).

For Geertz, anthropology is similar to telling a story that is similar to Joseph Conrad’s narrator Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*<sup>326</sup>(2006). It is also like Turad in *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*: the way Turad tells the story through the green file is comparable to that of an anthropologist as he is telling a story within a story. So, these cultural symbols transmit multiple meanings that are then interpreted into narrative<sup>327</sup> (ix). One case study<sup>328</sup> Geertz looks at is in the Middle East, Morocco. Geertz explains the story of Cohen’s encounter with a Berber tribe and how he was looking for compensation because of the thief who broke into his house and stole his valuables (8). Cohen wanted an additional payment as well as the merchandise that the thieves stole, and his compensation was to choose fifty of the best sheep (9). However, the Sheikh’s act of giving Cohen the opportunity to choose fifty sheep has an alternative meaning: all the Sheikh’s possessions have been taken, and this act seems to suggest that they should take what remains of the tribe’s possessions. From an Arab’s perspective the giving away of the sheep is not just a present but something labelled as *Deyah*, which is a compensation for the lives of Cohen’s murdered friends. In Islam, if someone is murdered a *Deyah* is usually given in the form of monetary compensation. So, the fifty sheep were the compensation for the lives of Cohen’s friends. However, we do not really understand these

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>326</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, in *A Norton Critical Edition: Joseph Conrad Heart of Darkness*, ed. by Paul B. Armstrong, 4<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), pp.3-77.

<sup>327</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. ix.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 8-10.

actions or the compensation in this case study: if it were in the context of the novel, we would understand that the compensation is called *Deyah* in the Arabian cultures. The anthropologist here can misinterpret this situation and provide different conclusions to the Sheikh's actions. For an observer it would appear that the Sheikh has surrendered or given up; it could also seem that the Sheikh has given sheep to equalise the situation. Thus, it could also mean that the Sheikh was trying to avoid putting his tribe under colonial control. There can be a lot of different interpretations of the Sheikh's actions, but the anthropologist can only read the situation through his perspective as an observer. For Geertz, understanding a culture as an outsider can only be done through the interpretation of cultural representation. In the case study, the only point of view the reader has is that of the ethnographer, who is narrating everything he/she sees.

When cultural symbols are interpreted, they can represent a deeper and hidden meaning. I will be following a similar approach in the interpretation of foreign cultures. Literature is not just the interpretation of an imaginative culture but of a reader's experience of that culture. However, there are problems with anthropological observations which lead to misinterpretation of a foreign culture. Unlike anthropology, literature is about the experience of the reader and is a first-hand interpretation of a culture done by the reader and not explained or reported by a spectator of events. The relevance of the anthropological approach to literature is that the immediacy of literature can make the abstract language of anthropology real through the life of characters. The reader is engaged in the character's narration of his/her story, as opposed to anthropology where the story of the characters is told by a spectator of events. Through literature one can see the significance of performative words culturally and why cultural representation of these actions is important in understanding alien or foreign cultures. Anthropological studies cannot show the detailed account of the life of the people and their culture as depicted in the case studies, whereas with literature the reader gets to experience and understand the culture and life of the characters. I will also examine the function of folklore in the novel and its relevance to Middle Eastern culture. Most folklores act as warnings or superstitions in the Middle East as I will be showing in detail in the section *Saudi Arabian Folklore*. Folklores are a window into a culture or the dark side of a culture, which reveal symbolic hidden representations of traditions. The use of these folklores is a culture's way of opening the door for an outsider to experience or interpret what they represent.

Thirdly, in relation to the reader's role, Roland Barthes' essay *The Death of the Author*<sup>329</sup> (1977) removes the author's thoughts and interpretation as a presence inside the text. Barthes finds that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.' (148) Barthes finds that when the text is given an author, the text becomes easy to disentangle and is not meant to be 'deciphered'<sup>330</sup> (147). The author places a limit on the text because once the author is found 'the text is "explained"' (147). Barthes finds that a text can have several meanings to each reader and here he places a great importance on the reader rather than the author:

[...] there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted. (148)

Barthes's theoretical work is important to my argument because I investigate the multiple perspectives of reading within *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*. By *multiple perspectives* I mean the different ways of reading a culture. This is relevant to my work as this is why literary studies, unlike anthropology, does not include an *author*. The author becomes eliminated through the narrative and characters, and the reader becomes the main focus of textual analysis, whereas in anthropology the main focus is the anthropologist and his/her interpretations and conclusions of reported events. Barthes' relevance here is that he highlights the importance of the reader and the reader's function. In anthropology the reader is somewhat dismissed because it is about the reader receiving information without deciphering events. In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, I will show how the character Turad becomes a reader and re-experiences other characters' events. This will be shown in the section Author, Reader and Character through Turad's retelling of Nasir's and Amm Tawfiq's story. In relation to Islamic law and cultural traditional laws, I look at Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*<sup>331</sup> (2007), in which he discusses cultural practices. Appiah argues cultural traditions differ for each country in relation to how ethnographers translate these actions: he claims these are false interpretations. For example, in the novel each character becomes a victim of a certain

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<sup>329</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by S. Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p.142-148.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147.

<sup>331</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2007), pp. 14-15, 75, 85.

circumstance and they each receive a mutilation as a result of their incidents. These mutilations such as eye loss, castration or a severed ear become misinterpreted by the people of Riyadh, and these misinterpretations become a cause of humiliation for the characters and cause them shame. While these mutilations are not Islamic or cultural practices, if an ethnographer were to observe them they might be interpreted as such. Here I consider Martha Nussbaum's *Hiding from Humanity*<sup>332</sup> (2004), where she focuses on the humiliation and the suffering it causes because of the punishment that victims endure.

Nussbaum's work is relevant to the novel because she explains that societies mark both normal and punished people. The mark becomes a branding of human beings: those who are accepted into society and those who are not: those who are not accepted into society because of a punishment they have received carry a societal shame with them. Nussbaum investigates the reasons behind the humiliation caused by the punishment which creates a lingering humiliation that is attached to the person as a stigmatization. Nussbaum shows how stigmatization as a result of punishment creates shame for a person who is unable to conform to the norms of society. In the novel the humiliation scars the characters' pride and culturally the characters' *Arab pride*. For characters (Turad, Amm Tawfiq and Nasir) they try to conceal their mutilations that they received from an unlawful punishment to avoid stigmatization and being societal outcasts. The type of punishment the characters receive do not fall under the Islamic tradition or laws. In the Islamic tradition any form of punishment is supposed to be an example intended to limit other's replication of these bad deeds, and it is not intended to be a source of humiliation. In the novel, the concept of humiliation becomes relevant because the characters find themselves the victims of humiliation. The characters of the novel suffer from humiliation because of certain cultural punishments in which they become victimized. Nussbaum's title *Hiding from Humanity* suggests the way the characters in *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* hide from the rest of humanity or from the people of Riyadh. In the novel, the characters try to hide their humiliation from humanity or try to mask them from the rest of society. Some of these characters use cultural symbols such as clothes in their reversed form to hide their humiliation which I will discuss in the section *Punishment and Humiliation*.

In this chapter, the representation of Arab figures such as famous actresses or political figures creates a critique of the Islamic tradition. Nasir's mutilated eye is compared to the loss of an eye by Moshe Dayan, the former defence minister of Israel, and his name is compared to

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<sup>332</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

that of Gamal Abdel Nasser. The comparison of Nasir's eye and his name to each political figure is used as a critique of both figures, but also to humiliate Nasir. The Egyptian actress Suad Hosney is another example who is also used as a critique of Arab culture. Here, Egypt is portrayed as an Islamic culture that does not contain restrictions similar to Saudi Arabia, especially with regard to women. The use of these symbols as a performative act and how they are used in *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* implies a critique of Saudi Arabian culture by using Western symbols such as (Hollywood & train stations) or figures to critique his own culture. The title of the novel in English (*Wolves of the Crescent Moon*) is different to the original title in Arabic (فخاخ الرائحة) the entrapment of scents. The title has a symbolic type of representation that creates a shield, a safe space or a zone between the author and the truth he is talking about. Both titles represent the Islamic culture and the English title refers to the male dominated society (wolves in the Islamic culture), while the Arabic title refers to the Islamic prohibition on *feminine scents* as it contains a sexual connotation.

One of the major sources of scholarship on *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* is in Arabic and called *The Book of Scents* by Dr. Riza Al-Abyad. (كتاب الرائحة: في نماذج من الرواية العربية).<sup>333</sup> Al-Abyad finds that 'scent' is the main cause of the incidents that take place in the novel, even though the characters (Amm Tawfiq, Turad, Nasir and Khairiya) have different stories<sup>334</sup> (142). The magical element in the novel comes from the different stories that are initiated by scents and the use of characters that are abused and face a tragic fate (143). Al-Abyad finds that the scents of charcoaled fat, camels, humans, chloroform, feminine perfumes, and coffee in *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* were all inhaled or smelt by the characters and the animals in the novel (143). This lead some of the characters to their tragic fate that was a cursed trap (143). In the novel, there is a relationship between characters and scent which controls the characters actions and their states of consciousness; this makes the characters into prisoners of the scents (179). Al-Abyad finds that the analysis of the novel is summarized within the Arabic title of the novel *The Entrapment of Scents* (179). However, my approach to the novel is somewhat different than Al-Abyad, as I investigate how the use of scents in the novel is a critique of Islamic tradition and culture.

The scents featured in the novel do not only have a sexual connotation: the idea of *scent* is ironized to show that there are different types of scents, not just female perfumes that violate the Islamic code. In the Arab world this type of symbolic representation is used a lot in theatre,

د. رضا الأبيض، كتابة الرائحة (نابل: تونس، زينب للنشر والتوزيع، ٢٠٢٠)، ص ١٧٩-١٤٢. <sup>333</sup>

د. رضا الأبيض، ص. ١٤٢. <sup>334</sup>

movies, and political and cultural critiques. An example of this is the Egyptian film *Omaret Yacoubian* (Yacoubian's building). The opening of the film describes Egypt during the 1930's and the societal and cultural functioning of the country. Yacoubian's building is a European, Art Deco style mansion block, designed by an Italian architect and the owner has his name written on the building in the Latin alphabet. The opening of the film shows how the building became overcrowded by people renting small rooms in the rooftop storage space. The families who lived in the rooftop rooms symbolise the decay of the European image of that building. The narrator of the film first begins to describe the building and then looks back at the city's transformation. The city goes through the same transformation as the building after the revolutionary war of 1956. Therefore, representation can also connote a kind of critique. In the Arab world critiquing the government or the system is often done through films and theatrical plays in this way.

### Saudi Arabian Folklore

There are two folklores in *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, the full moon (Bader) and the Dabbaha<sup>335</sup> (Slaughteress). The first folklore, told to Khairiya by her mother, is about the full moon (Bader بدر) and contains different meanings and act as a warning to young women (112). In Arabic the name of the lit full moon is Bader, which is a known male's name. This folklore tells the story of the moon (Bader) that impregnates women during the cycle of the full moon. The narrator (Amm Tawfiq) describes Khairiya in a very seductive manner but then says that she is not *bold* or *flirtatious*:

[...] Khairiya was a pale adolescent girl. Her breasts were two ripe fruits, and her soft, intelligent eyes flashed brightly between her dark lashes. Her fingers were long and slender and ended in red-painted nails. When she moved them in her dark room it was as if red moons were appearing unexpectedly from behind the clouds. (112)

The language used to describe Khairiya in the quotation above shows that her appearance and her choice of nail varnish colour is a form of seduction. The way Khairiya moves her red nailed fingers in the dark resembles the way in which the lit full moon sees her outside in the dark while washing and handling her underwear. Khairiya's act seems to have been staged or practiced before the night that she actually goes out on a full moon to hang her underwear. However, the narrator (Amm Tawfiq) states that Khairiya's act was not intentional: she did not listen to stories that were told, thinking they were only tales:

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<sup>335</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.112.

[...] she had given her underwear a good scrub in a tub full of soap suds, wrung it out with her own soft hands, and hung it on the clothesline on a night when the moon was completely full. [...] she stood for a moment to contemplate the roundness of the awesome silver moon. He was looking down at her madly, contemplating her charms, the roundness of her bulging thighs, her breasts surging inside her cotton nightgown. [...] shamelessly exploring the details of her body, and she shuddered with fear as she felt him descend towards her underwear and sniff it with his silvery light, [...] unaware of what the full moon might do to her panties [...] (113)

After this incident Khairiya gives birth to a baby girl who everyone names after her father as the moon daughter. The way the narrator describes Khairiya's hand movements, the washing of her underwear in a fragranced soap and her transparent night gown evokes a sexual scene. The reader can see from the quotation that Khairiya knew someone was watching her because after the act of washing her underwear she stood there watching the moon. The moon's act of descending to smell her fragranced underwear reveals the sexual connotations of the idea of scent in relation to the prohibition of female scents for women in the Islamic tradition. The act of washing her underwear in a tub with soap suds is similar to the act of a person taking a bath in a tub, especially when the narrator describes Khairiya's hands as being soft. The quotation above shows that Khairiya had, if not intentionally, seduced the full moon. The full moon (Bader) folklore is similar to the werewolf myth in which a man changes into a wolf during a full moon cycle and preys on or attacks others. The tale also alludes to the title of the novel and to the men who are out in the streets at night like wolves. Khairiya has somehow become a victim of the full moon despite the warning of her mother.

The second folklore is of Bedouin origin and is called the Dabbaha<sup>336</sup> (Slaughteress). The folklore tells the story of Dabbaha, who came with the gypsies, and claims that she was so beautiful that she caused men to lose their minds at the sight of her. The Dabbaha would abduct men by carrying them on her wings:

He had been abducted by a genie with long hair and deep dark eyes. They say he went out one night to relieve himself, when the genie fell in love with him and carried him off on her wings. Some said that my brother Sayf had become an inhabitant of the underworld. They even went as far as to say that he had become a great King in one of the genie kingdoms. (54)

The quotation above shows that it is believed that in the desert there are spirits or demons that wander during the night and abduct people. These genies take the form of women who seduce men with their beauty. In Arabian culture women who seduce men or make them leave their families for them are referred to as bint eblis (the devil's daughter/بنت ابليس). Turad's older

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<sup>336</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.54.

brother Sayaf was abducted by the genie Dabbaha but Turad at an older age then learned that the Dabbaha was not a genie but a very beautiful woman:

When I grew older I realized that my brother Sayf hadn't really been abducted by a genie. She was in fact a very beautiful woman. We called her Dabbaha, the Slaughterness, because whomever she glanced at would lose his mind and become hopelessly smitten with her. She was a daughter of the gypsies who used to pass through the Bedouin encampments. They would patch our tents and clothes, polish our coffeepots, mend our teapots, and sell pillows, rugs, and such wares. (55)

The quotation above shows that the Bedouins were not the only people who lived in the desert or travelled in the desert. In Saudi Arabian culture, they have gypsies or travellers who would camp in the desert before moving on to complete their journey.

In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* there is a great deal of Saudi Arabian folklore and anthropological cases. Al-Mohaimed uses the same technique to help others understand Saudi Arabian culture. These two instances of Saudi folklore suggest the idea that women who wash their clothes at night or wear a certain type of nail varnish are seductresses and the way women wash and hang their underwear and use any type of fragrance are illicit forms of seduction. The use of folklore in the novel shows the continuing power of 'folklore' in Saudi Arabian culture to keep women in a condition of subjection.

In relation to *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* these folklores become a culture's voice and window into an alien culture. The function of folklore then becomes a way of inviting strangers and can act as a warning for someone who is not of that culture. These folklores become a cultural critique where the reader sees how Khairiya took advantage of the folklore and used it to instil a cultural belief in these stories. The folklores also create a critique of how women are viewed, in Saudi Arabian society, as seductive creatures. Through these folklores one can see that the Saudi Arabian culture focuses mainly on specific Islamic laws that enforce a restriction on women. The folklores act as a digression from the main storyline of Turad but they form a critique of cultural Islamic traditions in comparison to the story of Turad, Amm Tawfiq and Nasir. These cultural folklores do not contain stories similar to the ones the main character Turad narrates about the characters and himself. The story of these main characters becomes a kind of folklore for the reader because it forms a critique of non-Islamic practices that are overshadowed by the characters' stories.

In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, the Saudi Arabian folklore acts as a type of warning but still addresses these created cultural stories that people pass on to keep their children out of trouble. For example, there is a Kuwaiti folklore of *The Afternoon Donkey* (حمارة القايله). These stories were made up for children whose parents feared they would go out during the hot

hours of the summer's afternoon when the parents are asleep. This creature has a woman's body with the head of a donkey. She would come out in the hours when the streets are empty. *The Afternoon Donkey* would eat children. In Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the gulf region, human traffickers or thieves abducted children wondering in the empty streets during the afternoon in the hot summer hours. These folklores were told to keep children from leaving the house and often to force them to sleep during the hot hours. The purpose of folklore in literature helps one understand a foreign culture and folklores contain some sort of history. The purpose that the stories serve is very important as it explains the reason for telling them. The narration of the main character Turad reveals that, within an Islamic society, males are brought into subjection under non-Islamic practices. *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* is a magical realist novel because of its digressive and non-linear narrative which is presented through the inclusion of these folklores and the narration of the three main characters (Turad, Amm Tawfiq and Nasir) where their narration is blurred into one. The blurred narration of the characters' stories portrays them as a folklore in which they become a critique of Saudi Arabian society. Through a digressive and non-linear narrative, the folklores and the main plot becomes a story within a story where a clear critique of an Islamic society, in which non-Islamic practices are performed. The main character Turad looks at his culture and critiques it from a different perspective (using Saudi Arabian folklore) instead of the Western way of critiquing Islamic society as an *Other*.

## **Destructive Scents**

In the Islamic tradition feminine perfume (scents) is prohibited because it is a form of seduction that leads women into sin. *Scents* have an important role in the novel as they determine the destiny of each of the characters. In the novel the prohibition of feminine scents in Islam is ironized to show how other scents can also provoke sinful acts. The ironized scents represent a cultural critique that could be more destructive than feminine scents. The action in itself is representational but a verbal description of it in the sense of a critique. So, scents in the novel have a symbolic meaning that becomes critiqued by the characters, especially Amm Tawfiq. Three of the main characters Khairiya, Nasir, and Tawfiq have their lives destroyed because of scents. Khairiya's life got destroyed by fragranced soap and Nasir's by the placenta and the stains of blood that were intentionally put on the prayer cloth for a wild animal to find<sup>337</sup>. Amm Tawfiq became a victim of a series of scents that trapped him in human

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<sup>337</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.31.

trafficking, rape, castration and forced slavery when he was lured into a trap by the smell of burning or charcoaled fat. Tawfiq explains to Turad that his life was destroyed because of scents:

[...] The first time I sold my humanity for the smell of gristle and became a slave, and the second I sold my manhood for the smell of cotton and became a eunuch. May God destroy all smells. (89)

In the novel these scents become a critique and reveal the events that cause misfortune to each character. The prohibition of women's perfume in Islam is because it is seen as a form of seduction and any woman wearing any type of scent is considered an adulterer. The novel reveals that not only feminine fragrances are bad but other scents are also corrupting Islamic traditions.

The first smell is the one that trapped Tawfiq into slavery, removed him from his country and changed his name from Hassan to Tawfiq. In Sudan at the time there were slave traders who would come into the country and enslave people. Tawfiq describes that they were living in the jungle sleeping by day and moving around at night hiding by the bushes: 'We were just like animals, living off grass and vermin. Hunger began to take its toll, until we fell into the trap.' (31) So, the slave traders used the scent of charcoaled fat to lure out Tawfiq and his friends:

There we were, a bunch of people who couldn't find anything to eat, and suddenly the breeze carried to us a wonderful aroma, a sweet smell, the smell of delicious cooking. [...] The farther we walked the stronger the smell grew. It went up our nostrils and made us dizzy. We wondered our way between the tree trunks, and if a clump of bush or a thicket of trees got in our way, we didn't go around it for the fear of losing the smell but rather climbed straight over it and trampled the thorns with our bare feet. (31)

At the moment Tawfiq and his friends were about to reach the fire, the masked men appeared and captured them. From the quotation above one can see how this particular smell can be more dangerous than a feminine fragrance because it acts on the basic instinct or needs of human beings. In this case, Tawfiq and his friends were hungry and were tricked out of the jungle by the smell of burning fat because of their need for food. When Tawfiq reveals to Turad that the smell was burning fat and not meat it shows how much power that smell can have on human beings. However, the smell of burning fat also reveals how Saudi Arabian slave traders in the novel have violated the Islamic law that forbids human trafficking. The other scent that destroyed Tawfiq's life completely was on the cotton ball which was a type of anaesthesia or chloroform:

[...] the man with the glasses tore off a small piece of cotton, rolled it into a ball between his fingers [...] soaked it in yellow liquid, and stuck it up my nostrils. A strong pungent

smell sneaked directly up into my head, and I saw the walls begin to move. [...] After that I couldn't see anything in front of me. I was so drugged I couldn't feel a thing, even though I could sense there was something going on lower down, between my thighs.<sup>338</sup> (87)

The second smell caused Tawfiq to lose his manhood and would change his life forever. In the Islamic tradition it is forbidden to castrate men or have any surgical procedures to stop men from procreating. The smell of the cotton bud that is supposed to be used in surgical procedures to eliminate pain and to help save a person's life is used in a non-ethical way and against Tawfiq's knowledge. One can see from the two quotations above that each scent carries along with it an act that violates the Islamic tradition and is practiced under an Islamic culture.

### Author, Reader and Character

Roland Barthes's concept of the death of the author is highly relevant to *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, as the author does not seem to have a voice in the novel. The characters are narrating their stories and Turad with the aid of Nasir's green file is narrating their stories himself. The author or the voice of a main narrator is lost within the novel and as with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the main narrator is a character like Marlow. *Heart of Darkness* is a critique of colonialism by a Western author just as *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* is a critique of Islamic culture by an Islamic author. Al-Mohaimmed portrays hidden aspects of an Islamic society that not many are familiar with; it is a critique of the corruptions that are concealed or not addressed. F.R. Leavis in *The Great Tradition*<sup>339</sup> (2008), writes about the reader's experience of the Congo journey in *Heart of Darkness*:

The details and circumstances of the voyage to and up the Congo are present to us as if we were making the journey ourselves and (chosen for record as they are by controlling imaginative purpose) they carry specifics of emotion and suggestion with them.<sup>340</sup> (202)

The importance of the journey in *Heart of Darkness* is that it allows the reader to relive the journey as though it has just happened. Readers are experiencing events first-hand and are discovering Conrad's 'prehistoric earth' and 'prehistoric man' for themselves<sup>341</sup> (35). Similarly, while travelling one experiences a culture through food, history, and site seeing. In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* cultural experience is critiqued through folklore, performative

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid., p.87.

<sup>339</sup> F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 202, 204.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>341</sup> Conrad, p.35.

actions and representational symbols. In the novel, the reader experiences the characters' transition from a life in the desert and the alienation caused by this rapid change. The reader experiences the exploitation of the sacred Hajj pilgrimage journey where young boys are enslaved and castrated. The reader witnesses the abandonment of infants outside a mosque in an Islamic society. Literature differs from all forms of writing such as philosophy and anthropology as it embodies the immediacy of experience in the language (204). Even though some literary works are translated into a particular language, the history of tradition is embodied in the language.

In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* the narrator is reading the story from the green file at the bus stop, so there are two types of readers involved. Here the reader's perspective is more relevant than that of the author. There are two types of responses, Turad's response and the reader's response to the story being told. Wolfgang Iser in *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*<sup>342</sup>(1974), refers to Roman Ingarden. Ingarden looks at the way in which the text is 'realized' by the reader (274). The realized text contains two poles: the *aesthetic*, that refers 'to the realization accomplished by the reader' and the *artistic*, that 'refers to the text created by the author' (274). Iser describes the representation of reality as looking at a particular aspect of reality. An example of this would be if one zooms in on an image instead of looking at the picture as a whole image (Iser 103). In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, the reader looks at particular aspects of Saudi Arabian society, while the reader is looking at that particular angle from a particular point of view, which is that of Turad's. In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* the narrator is telling the story and the reader becomes the ethnographer who tries to understand the culture. From the case study, the ethnographer concludes and makes assumptions of these cultural symbols unlike literature where this is left to the reader. The methods of literary criticism are much more relevant than the methodologies of the social sciences (in the understanding of culture) because it is not only a record of witnessed events as the case study has shown. Literature provides a detailed account of the life of the characters and the events that change their lives.

There are two sections where I will discuss Khairiya and the full moon folklore. The folklore shows the meaning behind actions and especially the cultural meaning behind these actions. In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* characters' actions have a meaning; an example is Khairiya hanging her washed clothes outside at night on a full moon. According to the folklore

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<sup>342</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974), p274-275.

(even if it is superstitious) this act is Khairiya's way of wanting the full moon (a man) to notice her. Someone who is not familiar with the Arabic language will not know that the full moon is called Bader and is a male's name. Khairiya's actions in other cultures are seen as normal, a woman hanging her washed clothes, and no one would think it was anything more than that. However, understanding other cultures and their symbols is as Geertz says 'actor-oriented'<sup>343</sup> (16). Sometimes actions provide more meaning than words especially when meaning is accompanied by that act. One way this can be understood is through body language. Certain human body movements can indicate an attitude or feeling that is communicated from one person to another. A similar approach to the anthropological actor-orientated definition in literature is character based where the reader sees the characters point of view of their realities. As with fiction, so does anthropology represent and show something symbolic of a culture, but literature extends the understanding of the symbolic. The role of the ethnographer/anthropologist is similar to the reader as they interpret the (actor) subject by recording cultural data. Therefore, these interpretations can be seen as fictions, stories made up through a close study of a certain culture<sup>344</sup> (17).

In the novel, the green file that Turad reads in the bus is similar to a case study but Turad's narration of events acts as part of a literary work in the way it extends the knowledge of events that the green file lacks. Turad's narration extends the understanding of the customs of Saudi Arabian tribes and culture, unlike the green file that is similar to the anthropologist approach, which is a spectator's insight to incidents and not a full account of a culture. An example of this is demonstrated through Turad's narration of the story of Nasir's parents. The green file does not reveal who the parents are or give the reader the story behind Nasir's fate as an orphan. Nasir's father was a taxi driver and women would try to seduce him, but he would not respond to their perfume that 'made his head spin'<sup>345</sup> (66). The names of Nasir's parents are not revealed in the novel and they remain anonymous. All the reader knows is that the father is a taxi driver from a traditional tribe and that his mother was recently divorced. Nasir's parent's fall in love from the moment she entered the taxi. The quotation below shows how Nasir's mother and father would meet up and sneak around in the streets of Saudi Arabia:

He pulled the taxi up to the end of a quiet, dusty lane [...] and turned the lights off, [...] she suddenly turned toward him. She wrapped her arms around him, then pulled him towards her in her seat and made him taste the full measure of her sadness, loneliness, and crushing isolation. He was like a young, wild animal that doesn't know the way through the gates of the forest. [...] she showed him the way, [...] leading him by the

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<sup>343</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretations of Cultures*, p.16.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>345</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.66.

hand like one would do for another who does not know, helping him until he understood his goal, and reached full pleasure. “You will marry me,” she told him. “I will marry you,” he said. [...] They enjoyed the pleasure many times, until one day she wept with him like a little bird at the slaughter [...]”<sup>346</sup> (72)

Nassir’s mother sat next to the taxi driver telling him she could be his wife and people would not know the difference. Adultery in the Islamic culture and tradition is not tolerated and even when it occurs it is not usually spoken about in public to show that it is not allowed to be known as acceptable. In Saudi Arabia there are religious restrictions but, in the novel, it depicts the city of Riyadh modernising in an odd and rebellious manner in opposition to religious views. Intercourse in public is against the law and intercourse without marriage is a violation of the Islamic tradition and Saudi Arabian culture. Nasir’s parents have engaged in two violations of the Islamic law and Saudi Arabian culture, if they were caught in the act the Islamic punishment would have been enforced upon them. The green file does not reveal the reasons behind leaving Nasir in a banana crate outside the mosque. In relation to magical realism, this suggests the textualization of the fictional reader in Jon Thiem’s essay ‘The Textualization of the Reader in Magical Realist Fiction’<sup>347</sup> (1995). Thiem’s essay focuses on the textualization of fictional readers as readers who are ‘[...] already characters in the fictional world of some text and who themselves get literally absorbed into the world of fictional stories [...]’<sup>348</sup> (236). Thiem describes readers who are characters that ‘are engaged in reading’ (241). Similarly, in *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, Turad is a character who is a reader and is engaged in reading the green file at the bus stop.

Turad’s narration of the story of Nasir’s parents shows their side of the story but it also gives the reader insight of the events that lead to the conception of Nasir. Hence, the reader can also come to a conclusion as to who the victim of this story is, because the reader has witnessed the events that led to the terrible fate of Nasir and his father. One might think that the actions of Nasir’s mother was to seduce the taxi driver into marrying him as she had just gotten divorced before getting into the taxi. Nasir’s father might have not understood this because he had no experience with women. The intercourse scene shows that Nasir’s father had no experience with women and that Nasir’s mother has experience from her previous marriage or that she has done this before. Nasir’s mother might have trapped her previous husband into

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<sup>346</sup> Ibid., p.72.

<sup>347</sup> Jon Thiem, ‘The Textualization of the Reader in Magical Realist Fiction’, in *Magical realism: Theory, History, Community* ed. by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995): p.235-247.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., p.236.

marrying her after she had a relationship with him. This sort of marriage can occur in Islamic countries where the man must correct the mistake he has made with the woman and then get divorced after the marriage in a few months. Thus, this could have been a way to trap Nasir's father into marriage. Nasir's mother was not good enough for the taxi driver's family because they are purebred, sons of free men:

[...] she wept with him like a little bird at the slaughter. "The fruit of our love is growing in my womb," she told him. [...] After he had explained to his family his desire to marry, he mentioned her family's name. [...] "You are a son of the tribe," they told him. "You are a purebred, a son of free men. How can you marry a woman with no origin or breeding?" And when they noticed his insistence, his brother threatened to kill him, and waved the shotgun in his face, "Don't even think about it. Don't even think about that common woman."<sup>349</sup> (73).

In the Saudi Arabian culture, certain tribes cannot marry into unknown families or families without a certain type of lineage. From the quotation above Nasir's family not only condemn the marriage they threaten to kill his father if he attempts to marry a woman who has no origin or tribe. The reader witnesses that Nasir's father does not inform his family that the woman is pregnant and that he needs to correct the situation through marriage. In the quotation below Turad is commenting on Nasir's father abandoning him and his mother for the sake of the tribe:

Damn the tribes and their evil customs. What good have the tribes done for me, Nasir my friend? Nothing. They said I was defective because I was without an ear, yet before that my reputation and courage had preceded me into the desert wilderness. This father of yours, my founding, abandoned you, and ran out of your mother's life for the sake of the tribe.<sup>350</sup> (75).

Turad's reading of the green file on the bus stop engages him in a story within a story that he is part of, and Turad relates to the misfortune of the character he is reading about. Turad's reaction as a reader to Nasir's story in the green file is relevant because it shows how cultural discrimination in an Islamic region does not respect the Islamic imperative of compassion that is required by the emphasis in Islamic teaching on the recognition and acceptance of others. Turad criticizes the traditions of tribes and Arabian cultures because they have concealed or removed Islamic traditions.

The consequences of the actions of Nasir's father led to his abandonment at the mosque. Nasir's mother could not have an abortion as it is illegal and violates the Islamic tradition. Nasir's mother finds a common solution which most women in her position choose. She

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<sup>349</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.73.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., p.75.

abandons Nasir at the door of a mosque in the hope that someone will take him. An old poor woman who lives in al-Abul helps Nasir's mother with her childbirth:

[...] the contractions started... The old woman's driver, her partner in those operations, picked them up in a neutral place [...] After she had given birth to a little boy with olive skin, the old woman placed him with his afterbirth and accompanying blood in a banana crate, [...] He opened the backdoor and lifted out the banana crate covered in the old-fashioned, dark red prayer cloth, placed it against the wall of the mosque, and then sped off down the empty predawn main roads. Turad did not read these details in the green file he found in the bus station."<sup>351</sup> (75)

The reader here discovers how an animal ate Nasir's eye because he was put in the crate with the placenta and blood. One can conclude that in doing this it was hoped that the animal would have eaten Nasir while he was in the crate. Nasir was covered with a dark red prayer cloth intentionally to cover the blood and not show that they wanted an animal to smell the blood and attack an infant. The prayer cloth was stained with impurity as in the Islamic tradition blood, especially menstrual blood is considered impure. A menstruating woman cannot pray, touch the Qur'an or enter a mosque until after she is cleansed from her menstrual cycle. The act of covering Nasir in a holy traditional cloth seems to indicate that this is part of a *tradition* that has taken place in an Islamic practicing country. The cloth in itself represents the way in which religion is used to conceal or hide un-Islamic acts that are taking place in an Islamic country. Turad might have not read these details in the green file but has heard similar stories told about women abandoning their infants in a similar manner. Thus, Turad reveals to the reader the story behind the documented facts that he has found in the green file through his narration.

In relation to Geertz's work, *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* is similar to anthropological studies because of the folklores and cultural actions of characters in the novel. The reader is given the role of an anthropologist, allowing them to experience a culture first hand but without any anthropological explanations or analysis. *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* is a novel about reading a culture and a critique of a culture through other cultural symbols and actions. Al-Mohaimed's novel gives an insider's account of contemporary Saudi Arabia. The reader is introduced to Saudi Arabian culture through the point of view of three societal rejects Turad, Amm Tawfiq, and Nasir. All three characters give an account of their tragic life in the city. In the novel, the characters reveal a dark and hidden side of Saudi Arabia. The characters' point of view is that of Saudi Arabian citizens or those who have lived there all their lives. These

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<sup>351</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.75.

characters are not translating a culture; instead, they are giving an account of a culture through its folklore and cultural traditions that become a medium for translating cultures.

The role of the ethnographer in literature is similar to the author and an example of this is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad's fictional character Mr. Kurtz could be looked at as a case study and Marlow as the ethnographer who tries to make sense of events. Now the ethnographer is analogous to a reader. However, Mr. Kurtz is not the author or the critic he is a character who is represented. Conrad's technique of framework narration shows that everything in the novel is a representation of a foreign culture by others. The actual language that Marlow describes of the natives in the Congo is reduced to grunts and untranslatable to civilization. *Heart of Darkness* is an imperialist translation of an alien culture because it seems to reject the culture it attempts to translate. A similar analysis to Conrad's novel is found in Chinua Achebe's essay *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*<sup>352</sup>. Achebe describes Conrad's novel as a 'Western desire and need'<sup>353</sup> (337). For Achebe, *Heart of Darkness* only highlights 'the antithesis of Europe' (338). As an ethnographer, Marlow's account of the *Other*, is interpreted as a 'dismissive reification in the representation of the Other' in Paul Armstrong's essay *Reading, Race, and Representing Others*<sup>354</sup> (430). For Armstrong, Marlow is creating a monologue with the absences of the Other<sup>355</sup> (430). The main problem of Marlow as an ethnographer is that he and Mr. Kurtz do not attempt to understand the Congo or the natives who they constantly refer to as savages. The comparison between Europe and Africa does not produce an interpretation of cultures but a constant rejection of one and the favouring of Europe as the unique source of civilization.

Kwame Anthony Appiah<sup>356</sup> explains that once we understand a foreign culture, we begin to make sense of the foreign culture and it begins to feel like home (94). There is no form of intercultural communications in the Conrad's novel and the language of the savages is reduced to forms of sounds. Similarly, Marlow and Mr. Kurtz account of the events taking place in the Congo are different. Marlow's account of the events is as an outsider who has just arrived in a foreign place, while Mr. Kurtz's account is of an imperialist who has taken control of the region. Mr. Kurtz has made sense of the Congo by using signs of domination. In the scene below Marlow describes the exterior of Mr. Kurtz's house in the Congo:

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<sup>352</sup> Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa' in *A Norton Critical Edition: Joseph Conrad Heart of Darkness*, ed by. Paul B Armstrong (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 2006), p.336-349.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p.337.

<sup>354</sup> Paul B. Armstrong, 'Reading, Race, and Representing Others' in *A Norton Critical Edition: Joseph Conrad Heart of Darkness*, ed by. Paul B Armstrong (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 2006), p.429-444.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, p.430.

<sup>356</sup> Appiah, p.94.

[...] These round knobs were not ornamental but symbolic; they were expressive and puzzling, striking and disturbing - food for the vultures if there had been any looking down from the sky [...] those heads on the stakes, [...] turned to the house. Only one, the first I had made out was facing my way. [...] it was, black, dried, sunken with closed eyelids—a head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole, and, with the shrunken dry lips showing a narrow white line of the teeth, [...] Mr. Kurtz's methods had ruined the district.<sup>357</sup> (85)

The reason why the savages remain loyal to Mr. Kurtz is because he is a kind of translator. Mr. Kurtz pretends to understand them, but his form of understanding is achieved by domination. Therefore Mr. Kurtz does not understand the African culture but has dominated the region under the disguise of a translator who communicates their voice as a European. In *Heart of Darkness* European symbols are not used to create a critique of Africa or an interpretation of African culture. In relation to *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, Turad only understands the characters that have a missing or mutilated part of their body like himself. Turad does not understand the sad Turk who sings the sad song while cutting the shawerma because his ear is not mutilated<sup>358</sup> (17). He does not talk about Khairiya who lost her virginity to the moon, which is told by Tawfiq. Turad's main focus is on Nasir, Tawfiq and himself as people who were affected from the transition of living in the city, which he refers to several times in the novel as hell (44). However, Turad portrays a type of understanding that is real because it is based on actual experience: his own and that of those he knows. Both Turad and Mr. Kurtz go through a transformation because of the change in their habitat. Turad is filled with rage and resentment because he can no longer live free like a desert wolf, while Mr. Kurtz lost his mind because he has been cut off from the civilization he was once part of. This scene featuring detached heads is similar to Turad and Nahar's heads in the middle of the desert. In the chapter, 'Prisoners of the Sand'<sup>359</sup> Turad and Nahar are dominated and punished in their native space by outsiders (pilgrims) who were crossing the desert (121). The punishment of Turad and Nahar is a deliberate humiliation of desert Muslim savages by pilgrims who are on a sacred path to Mecca and the pilgrims are portrayed as not showing forgiveness similar to that which they seek from God on their holy journey. In the passage below, Turad criticizes the actions of the pilgrims' because their decision to kill them slowly was not the Islamic way of sentencing criminals to death:

Those dogs of the *hajj* go to Mecca to pray when they don't possess even the decency or generosity of spirit to pardon or forgive. Aaah, I wish they'd killed us with their swords, or shot us and spared us the grisly torture. "We don't want to stain our hands

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<sup>357</sup> Conrad, p.85.

<sup>358</sup> Al-Mohaimmed, p.17.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., p.121.

with their blood when it is our intention to perform the pilgrimage,” the emir of the caravan had said. What pilgrimage, when you put us slowly to death after unimaginable torment?<sup>360</sup> (170)

For the pilgrims, Turad and Nahar are savages in search for their basic human need of food, but instead of doing an Islamic deed of sharing their food the Amir of the pilgrim decides to punish them severely. The Islamic teaching of the Prophet teaches every Muslim to give to those less fortunate than them. Thus, the pilgrims’ actions portray a hostile, unforgiving and anti-Islamic attitude. Turad also criticizes the emir of the pilgrims of the ‘*African Moon*’<sup>361</sup> ship that took Amm Tawfiq and other children as slaves:

If I were the *hajj* minister, I’d locate all the captains who’ve been involved in the trade in human beings like Tawfiq, Jawhar, Anbar, and others, and who’ve sold them like animals, and I’d drown them in the Red Sea.<sup>362</sup> (172)

Turad’s critique of the emir of the pilgrims is that, when one is going to perform the ritual of Hajj or has the intention to do so, one has to have the intention of seeking forgiveness from God for the misdeeds committed in the past. Through the two previous quotes the reader can see that the rituals or the intentions that a pilgrim has to have before doing the pilgrimage have been violated. The intention of being forgiven by God is not demonstrated by the behaviour of the emir to Nahar and Turad when they try to steal food.

Clifford Geertz’s *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*<sup>363</sup> (1988), looks at the author as an anthropologist. Geertz describes anthropology as a form of writing as ‘the scene of writing’<sup>364</sup> (5). Geertz looks at anthropology as a writing form, what he names as ‘the scene of writing’ (5). Geertz’s ‘scene of writing’ is similar to that of literature having the ability to penetrate ‘another form of life’ (5). In relation to the narrator Turad has been there with the characters Tawfiq and Nasir in the palace. The account of the story is not just reading or narrating; the narrator/Turad is also reflecting back on the events that happened to him. Turad waiting at the bus stop while reading the green file is analogous to the journey the ethnographer goes through from one place to another writing and reflecting on the cultural events that he/she witnesses. The bus stop resembles a stop in the character’s movement, not being able to progress anywhere in terms of his own cultural self-understanding. Turad goes back and forth with the events he reads in the *green file*, but he is stuck without a destination. This suggests

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<sup>360</sup>Ibid., p.170.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., p.81.

<sup>362</sup> Al-Mohaimeed, p.172.

<sup>363</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1988), p.5-16.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., p.5.

that modernity in Saudi Arabia comes with restraints unlike the freedom of the desert. Geertz focuses on Michel Foucault's *What Is An Author?*<sup>365</sup> (1979); he looks at the role or task of the author and compares it to the role of the anthropologist:

By the same token, literary discourses came to be accepted only when endowed with the author—function. We now ask of each poetic or fictional text: from where does it come, who wrote it, when, under what circumstances, or beginning with what design? The meaning ascribed to it and the status or value accorded it depend upon the manner in which we answer these questions [...] As a result, the author—function today plays an important [though, again, in Foucault's view, decreasing] role in our view of literary works.<sup>1,366</sup> (8)

In literature the author knows the subject he/she is writing about and it is largely in relation to his/her culture. As with *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, Al-Mohaimed writes about the Saudi Arabian culture and the history of the people who came into the country illegally. Al-Mohaimed also looks at the transition the Bedouins made moving from the desert and to the city. The difference between literature and anthropology is that the latter provides a conclusion for the reader while the former allows the reader to have their own conclusion<sup>367</sup> (16). In anthropology the writer guesses the results of the case study while in literature the reader draws this conclusion, the author does not explain the reason for the events that take place. This might suggest that anthropology might lead to a false objectification and therefore false certainty about the Other or foreign culture.

Kwame Appiah in *Cosmopolitanism*<sup>368</sup> discusses how actions can be a form of representation and so a way of understanding culture. However, Appiah has a negative view towards ethnographers in his chapter *The Escape from Positivism* (14). For Appiah, the ethnographer tries to make sense of people in other cultures and societies even if outsiders view them 'as failings in other societies'<sup>369</sup> (15). Appiah argues that Western anthropologists have a false reification of foreign cultures and this prevents a clear understanding of them. He gives examples of 'revulsion against unfamiliar practices' such as male circumcision and female genital mutilation, tattoos, and piercings (15). However, he says once we understand these different practices we tend to 'forgive' (15). Every culture has its own practices and once they are understood they are no longer different to our own practices (15). Some ancient practices are still considered wrong such as female genital mutilation because it is damaging. So, Appiah compares these practices with modern cultural practices such as piercings or skin scarring that

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<sup>365</sup> Michel Foucault, *What Is an Author?*, in J.V. Harari ed. by *Textual Strategies* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1979), p. 149-150.

<sup>366</sup> Geertz, *Works and Lives*, p.8.

<sup>367</sup> Geertz, *Works and Lives*, p.16.

<sup>368</sup> Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 14.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

can cause damage to the body. For example, in the novel Tawfiq's genital mutilation is not the same as the culturally practiced male circumcision in Islam and Judaism. Appiah looks at ways one can understand other cultures in the same way that Al-Mohaimed and Pamuk do when critiquing their own cultures. Appiah looks at the meaning of certain actions and how they appear to be different representations of similar practices (75). Take for example female genital mutilation as compared to genital piercings or surgeries such as vaginal rejuvenation. In some cultures, it is believed that genital mutilation (Khitān Al-Enāth/ ختان الإنث) helps preserve the family's honour and controls female sexual desires. There are different types of female genital mutilation or cutting. Even if some are seen to control a woman's sexual desire and preserve family honour, they can cause severe damage to women. Female genital mutilation is not an Islamic practice but a cultural practice. Tawfiq's castration was to prevent him from pursuing any sexual desire with female servants or women living in the palace. In the Islamic tradition male circumcision is not the same as Tawfiq's mutilation and male castration violates Islamic laws. Appiah gives examples of genital mutilation not to show or praise the idea of honour or these practices, but to highlight the ambiguous Western relationship to such practices such as genital piercings and cosmetic surgeries. Appiah is referring to the ignored equivalent abuses in the West. In the scene below, Amm Tawfiq explains to Turad that a lost ear is not as severe as what he has lost:

‘YOU’VE LOST YOUR EAR, MAN, BUT THE real problem is when someone loses his life and his future, his happiness and his stability.’<sup>370</sup> (79)

The mutilations and other abuses described in the text are also offences to Islamic culture and Islamic laws and are not just things perceived as abusive by Western observers. In Islam the castration of men is forbidden because it stops reproduction. The quotation above shows that Tawfiq's castration ended his life and deprived him of all his basic human rights. Modern medical practices such as cutting off women's fallopian tubes and male vasectomy are also forbidden in Islam because they stop reproduction.

Appiah explains that objects, whether ‘national’ or ‘religious’, tend to create an imaginative conversation that comes from a place other than our own<sup>371</sup> (85). Appiah refers to the word ‘conversation’ as ‘[...] a metaphor for engagement with the experience and the ideas of others.’ (85) In relation to *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, these imaginative conversations take the shape of the treatment of folklore and Turad's narration using the green file. Turad

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<sup>370</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.79.

<sup>371</sup> Appiah, p.85.

looks at cultural and religious acts in relation to the experience of the characters. In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* as well as *Heart of Darkness* the reader is engaged in this cultural conversation about difference. Mr. Kurtz's means of dominating the 'natives' was to engage in becoming a 'savage' himself as Marlow describes the scene of his house and the queen he had by his side. In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* Turad's experience of moving from the desert to the city is a conversation the reader is engaged in throughout the novel. In the quotation below Turad refers to the green file as a diary but his treatment of the green file is more like a novel which he is reading:

How did a file containing official papers find its way here? he asked himself. How did it leave the shelves and filing cabinets of the government department dealing with the case? Was this person, Nasir Abdililah, the same Nasir that Amm Tawfiq talked about? It must be him. Didn't I just read in his diary that they took him from the orphanage to live inside a palace and to be their son? Didn't he talk about a black driver called Tawfiq who drove a lime green Rolls-Royce? Why don't I remember him from the time I worked as a guard at the palace gate? Could he have come after me or before me? [...] Anxious thoughts went around [...] in the mind of this Bedouin fleeing from the violence of the city.<sup>372</sup> (163)

Turad's reference to the green file as a diary shows that he is both a reader, a second narrator of events and is retelling his story as he places himself with Amm Tawfiq and Nasir in the palace. Turad's account of the events and cultural traditions is not from an outsider's point of view but that of an insider (a Saudi Arabian). The main character, Turad, is supposed to embody all the other characters through the flash back narrative technique to represent the outcasts of Saudi Arabian society as rejected by their country. The lives and journey of these three characters is important because they represent different situations that captured three people in a corrupt fundamentalist system.

## **The City and Western Art**

The characters in the novel have different types of mutilations and each one is compared to a symbolic figure in history. Turad's ear mutilation is compared to Vincent van Gogh's ear and Nasir's mutilated eye is compared to Moshe Dayan, but Tawfiq's castration is not compared to anyone; he is only referred to as useless and as no longer a man by Zahra the palace maid. Turad gets humiliated by his colleagues at work and several people on the streets, while Nasir gets humiliated by the nanny of the orphanage, Gamalat. The comparison between the three characters' misfortune is compared to the loss suffered by symbolic figures, either from war or

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<sup>372</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.163.

for art. The characters' humiliation comes from losing a part of their body by being violated by others and so they have become victims that are viewed by society as weak, unlike the symbolic figures who lost their body parts for something great or heroic with whom they were compared. Turad describes the city of Riyadh as 'Hell' several times in the novel<sup>373</sup> (55). This is seen through the suffering of the three main characters that live under an oppressive male dominated society.

Each of the characters' mutilations makes them less than men. Turad explains how he is treated as less of a man because of his mutilated ear. At the bus stop when the ticket sales boy calls him 'sir', he is surprised:

Don't call me "sir" or you'll make me change my mind about leaving this damn city. Perhaps if you saw the other boys, some of whom are even younger than you, tugging my *thobe* or kicking me on the backside; perhaps if you saw my left ear, which I hide under the edge of my *shmagh*, you might change your mind and curse me in front of everybody. (4)

Each of the three characters Turad, Tawfiq, and Nasir face discrimination because of their mutilations that make them appear different or as less than men. Tawfiq became a eunuch who lost the respect of women because he was "only good for pissing" and he resembles the Eunuchs of the Ottoman Harem (134). Nasir was labelled Colonel Nasser by the Egyptian nanny Gamalat (as in the late Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser), while another woman said, "That's not Abd al-Nasser. It's Moshe Dayan. Why, just look at his eye!" (143). Nasir is outraged to be called a 'dictator and a tyrant' but also 'an Israeli, a Zionist, and a murderer' because he lost his eye when he was a newborn in a crate (143). Nasir informs the reader that the reason for naming him Moshe Dayan is that he had no one to defend him or to protect his eye (142). Nasir explains that he had wished he lost his eye in war he would have been perceived as a war hero: 'Aaaaah! If only I'd lost my eye in the war, I'd have destroyed you both with a shell. I'd have blown your heads off, you two thieves, before I lost it.' (144)

For many Egyptians, Colonel Nasser is the symbol of an Islamic hero because he freed Egypt from British Imperialism. However, in the quotation below Nasir shows the reader Gamalat's view of the late Egyptian President:

Gamalat would pretend to know all about him [Colonel Nasser] and inform them that he had eaten all the Egyptian people and destroyed the economy. Social worker Salma would say that he wasn't only an enemy of the people, but that he was an enemy of Allah and Islam as well. Psychology specialist Jawahir would add that he was mentally ill, a megalomaniac, and suffered from psychological complexes. (141)

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<sup>373</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.55.

Nasir was verbally abused by the nanny Gamalat, the social worker Salma and psychology specialist Jawahir in the orphanage. All three women have violated their positions of responsibility for childcare in the orphanage. Nasir explains to the reader that “By giving me the nickname Colonel Nasser, Gamalat was showing me that she hated me”<sup>374</sup> (141). So, for Gamalat to insult Nasir by naming him after the late president is a sarcastic critique because his eye loss is not perceived in the same heroic sense as Moshe Dayan but as useless. Each character’s mutilation is compared to symbolic figures in history.

The representation of Vincent van Gogh’s painting creates a comparison between the why Turad’s ear was cut and Van Gogh cut his own ear. The co-workers in the ministry show that they do not know much about Western art, nor do they know the representation of van Gogh’s missing ear self-portrait:

The secret of the left ear was out. One of them shouted, “Hey, guys, his ear’s cut off!” They roared with laughter, [...] one of them collapsed across the top of the desk, while another, tears rolling down his cheeks, shouted, “It must be van Gogh. Hahahaha.” [...] one of them asked, “Who’s van George, then?” “Hahaha, van Gogh, you idiot. He’s the Dutchman who cut off his ear and gave it to his girlfriend.” (11)

Turad’s co-workers do not seem to know much about the reason behind Van Gogh’s ear cutting nor do some know who Van Gogh is, but they compare the cutting off of Turad’s ear with that of Van Gogh. In the novel, it is said that Van Gogh cut his own ear for the woman he loves while the reason for Turad’s ear mutilation was not known by the rest of the characters. A wolf in the desert ate Turad’s ear because he was buried in the sand as a punishment for trying to steal from the pilgrims passing through the desert to Mecca. Turad’s ear mutilation is a sign of punishment while Van Gogh’s was a form of self-mutilation, after which he painted a picture of himself. For Turad, the loss of his ear brings him shame and he tries to hide it, while for Van Gogh (in the novel) it is a sign of love because he has sacrificed a piece of his body for the woman he loves. In the novel, this is reflected in the way Turad hides his ear with the *Shmagh*<sup>375</sup> out of shame while Van Gogh chose to paint his bandaged missing ear. Turad’s co-workers know that he had lost his ear because he might have been punished or that an animal has taken it from him.

In an article, *Van Gogh's Ear Again. And Again*<sup>376</sup> (1993), Sidney Geist explains the story behind Van Gogh’s ear mutilation. Geist explains that she is interested in the “pictorial

<sup>374</sup> Al-Mohaimeed, p.141.

<sup>375</sup> A traditional Arabian head scarf for males.

<sup>376</sup> Sidney Geist, ‘Van Goghs Ear Again. and Again’ *Notes in the History of Art*, 13:1 (1993): 11–14 <URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23203034>> [Accessed 19 February 2019]

aftermath” of Van Gogh’s left ear mutilation. In her article, Geist describes Van Gogh’s allusion to his ear in his self-portrait (January 1889):

[...] van Gogh shows himself wearing a fur hat, smoking a pipe and looking intently, if calmly, to the right. The bandaged ear is on the left, [...] that an unusual feature of the bandage has gone unnoticed. [...] The reading of a phantom hand is supported by the presence of a “real” hand and arm of similar design and placement [...] Van Gogh could, of course, have rendered the bandage more faithfully. [...] the sharp angles of the painting are more than the knuckles of a phantom hand: they are, [...] the (unconscious) graphic analogue of its movement and van Gogh's feelings as he cut—[...] the lower part of his ear. In short, the painted bandage recapitulates the frenzied moments of his self-mutilation. (11)

Geist gives his analysis of the painting: the reason Van Gogh painted the self-portrait is his way of making sense of the incident and realising what he did. The meaning behind that painting is of a man who had been terribly ill and had started to experience hallucinations. Van Gogh has been taking ‘bromide of potassium’<sup>377</sup> according to the letter he wrote to his brother Theo in January 1889 (339). In his letters to his brother, he also mentions being in the hospital but does not say the reason for being there. A Western ear mutilation in comparison to a Middle Eastern ear mutilation is interesting if one thinks of a legal action for those who violate the law. For example, in Islam those who steal get their hand cut in the traditional Islamic law. However, the Islamic law does not permit the cutting of the ear and, especially in this era, no such actions had been taken towards criminals; but in Saudi Arabia the traditional Islamic law is applied by the court of law.

Therefore, the comparison in the novel between Van Gogh and the character Turad might be a critique of the law that mutilates part of the human body, by showing that, in a European context, this is something which ‘sick’ people often attempt to do. Turad’s mutilated ear is always compared to Van Gogh’s except for the reason for the mutilation. Van Gogh supposedly mutilated his ear out of love and as he was ill, he entered an asylum<sup>378</sup> (12). Therefore, Van Gogh’s ear mutilation is done out of mental illness and is a romanticised, European action done by an artist. He hurt himself for love to prove himself to his beloved, giving her a part of himself like a classical European image of love. The cutting of an ear is not only sacrificing a piece of yourself for love but in a way has become a sign of how much one person is devoted to the other. Thus, Turad’s co-workers not only mock him for his lost ear but also tell him that he is incapable of devotion: ‘And you, Turad, you dog, would willingly give

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<sup>377</sup> Vincent van Gogh, *Van Gogh; a Self-Portrait: Letters Revealing His Life as a Painter*, ed. by W.H. Auden (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), p.339.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

your only ear to a stray black cat.’<sup>379</sup> (20) However, Turad lost his ear because he was punished, buried up to his neck in sand and the wolf who bit his ear was his desert companion. Turad’s ear loss is not a heroic loss but a tragic and victimized one. There is a contrast between the annihilation these characters go through and the European romanticisation of it. Turad’s ear mutilation does not have a story or artistic depiction but is punishment for trying to steal from pilgrims. Nasir was also a victim, a baby in a crate who lost his eye because his parents conceived him out of wedlock. Nasir’s story is a severe critique of Saudi Arabian society as an Islamic society because of the way Nasir was left with stained blood for an animal to smell and eat as bait. A truly Islamic society is one where one is supposed to show compassion to those with deformities and to treat them with respect, similar to their examples of Western societies and political figures in Western and non-Western societies. The characters’ experiences are linked to real artists (Van Gogh) and actresses which are a mis-interpreted or mis-translated.

In the novel, there is a reference to a mistranslation of Western figures/symbols that is frequently used in Middle Eastern countries. Nasir’s father has a picture of Suad Hosni, a famous Egyptian film star whose iconic cinematic title is a mistranslation of Western symbols. Suad Hosni is known in the Egyptian cinema as the Cinderella of the Arab Screen. The label that was given to the actress has no relevance or connection to the story of Cinderella. The story of Cinderella is well known, a girl whose father remarries and then dies. Then she is left under the cruel care of her stepmother until the day she goes to the ball and meets a handsome prince. Suad Hosni’s life and acting career has nothing to do with Cinderella. The actress does not resemble Cinderella in her features nor was she under the care of a stepmother. The reason behind Hosni’s labelling in the Egyptian screen is not really known or explained. Saud Hosni as *Cinderella* is a Western symbol that is misread and misinterpreted in the context of Arab society:

On the inside of the driver’s door he had put a picture of the actress Suad Hosni in a seductive pose, with pouting lips and her hair dishevelled like a horse’s tail, as she teased her fingers through it and looked provocatively at the camera.<sup>380</sup> (66)

The reference to Suad Hosni shows how Western symbols such as the label of Cinderella can be mistranslated in another culture. The picture of Suad Hosni that Nasir’s father has is a seductive photograph and is a Westernized image of Hollywood movie stars similar to Elizabeth Taylor, Sophia Loren and Brigitte Bardot.

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<sup>379</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.20.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., p.66.

This relates to Turad's comparison with Van Gogh as it shows how symbols are translated or mistranslated from one culture to another, but it specifically shows how in the East and West these translations have an opposite meaning. Suad Hosney's depiction in the novel becomes a contrast between Saudi women who get into the taxi of Nasir's father:

Every time he looked at her while waiting for a passenger or someone crossing the road, he felt like she was staring at him, and he would let out a long sigh and silently watch the woman walking up and down the street. (66)

The quotation also shows that the character wants Saudi Arabia to modernise like the West. Nasir's father presents a critique of Saudi Arabian culture as a closed society and not as open as other Arab societies such as Egypt. From the quotation one can also see that it is hard for Saudi Arabian culture to modernise in a way similar to Egypt, when everything is observed in a sexual manner. Suad Hosni is featured in scenes that are provocative in the Gulf /Arabian region as most of the actors and actresses in these scenes are iconic figure from Hollywood. The image of the actress shows that for an Islamic society modernisation would mean the less desirable aspects of the West which violate Islamic laws. Modernisation in an Islamic society is referred to as the image of the actress (Suad Hosni): a mistranslation and misrepresentation of modernisation. This is linked to the comparison between Turad and Van Gogh's ear cutting because it shows how, when translated, foreign things contain different meanings.

However, we can also see from Nasir's time in the orphanage that even Egypt had problems with modernisation and colonisation under Western powers. An example of this is of a famous black and white Egyptian film *Cairo Station* starring Hind Rustom. The film represents a modernisation of a city that was under British and French Imperial rule. These old Egyptian films show how the quality of the films were similar to that of Hollywood and their actresses were similar to Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe (66). The film *Cairo Station* looks at the condition of Egypt after colonialism/imperialism and shows the country going through a state of chaos. The film portrays homeless Egyptians living inside broken down train carriages and running around the train tracks climbing into trains, selling sodas illegally. The broken carriages are alien objects, which were bought by a foreign power and, as the film shows, the Egyptians were not able to repair. The film is a good example that demonstrates why the nanny Gamalat blames and hates the former late president Gamal Abd Al Nasser. The chaos presented in the film resembles that which nanny Gamalat refers to when she mentions him<sup>381</sup> (141). Both representations of the film *Cairo Station* and the Egyptian nanny Gamalat show how under the

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<sup>381</sup> Al-Mohaimed, p.141.

colonial/imperial period Egypt had undergone a positive change. Thus, in political terms the representation of Gamal Abdul Nasser is ironized as a symbol of a decline in his country's progress. There is a clash between the representations of the two figures Gamal Abd Al-Nasser and Suad Hosni. The use of these figures is about irony and the multiple uses of representation. The first is an Islamic fundamentalist and the latter is an icon of Arab culture that attempts to modernise. This juxtaposition shows how after colonisation the modernisation of Egypt came to an end. The comparison of Gamal Abd Al Nasser to the character Nasir shows how they both represent corruption and a corrupted modernisation under an Islamic state. Nasir becomes a symbol of corruption and the corrupted idea of modernisation in the way he was conceived and in the way he was placed outside the mosque to die. Nasir represents a critique, arguing that in an Islamic society modernisation can be an alien process similar to that represented by the useless trains in the film *Cairo Station*. The term modernisation is also similar to the idea of the translation of the symbolic Cinderella to the Egyptian actress Suad Hosni where the term is taken and applied differently within the Islamic context in the novel.

### **Punishment and Humiliation**

Each of the characters are excluded and face self-hatred because they are hated by others. The characters become ridiculed through the prism of symbols that are significant to Islamic culture and become victims of humiliation. Self-hatred translates into a type of self-definition in terms of the *Other*. Amm (uncle) Tawfiq's story of his journey to Saudi Arabia on board a Hajj ship reveals steps that violate the sacred journey. Amm Tawfiq was raped by the Eritrean man, who then forced him to wear dirty ihram clothes (pilgrim's white clothing). Tawfiq's rape is a forbidden action and is a total reversal of what is meaningful about pilgrimage as embodied in the action of being degraded in a manner that violates Islamic law in such a way. The passage the trip was set to go on is a sacred passage of the Hajj, which is now linked to the greatest form of degradation for a child and as a Muslim. In terms of J. L. Austin's concept of the performative action<sup>382</sup>, the voyage itself is a reversal action of the sacred passage. In the quote below Amm Tawfiq describes the horrific incidents that happened to him on the ship:

One of them was a black man, Eritrean I think. They handed us *ihram* clothes for the *hajj*. They had been used before, and they were dirty. I did not know how to put the wrap around my waist. The Eritrean took me into the toilet. [...] Before he tied the wrap he began to fiddle with my ass with his huge hand, then he grabbed the back of my neck

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<sup>382</sup> Austin, p.6.

and pushed me over, and that's when I felt his cock like a *hashaab*. [...] Anyways, I couldn't scream or cry. All I did was clean myself up after he'd finished.<sup>383</sup> (37)

Everything in the scene above, from the rape up to the cursing of the Tawfiq, violates the code of the Hajj and the respect for pilgrims. Tawfiq here is reduced to the position of a woman because he did not know how to wear the ihram, which is a white cloth that covers the lower body and part of the upper body. This scene reveals the profane attitude towards a sacred ritual that occurs during the pilgrim's journey for Hajj. The regular journey to Mecca by ship can be something normalized for the sailor on board of the ship. This normalization of the journey becomes their form of life and the sacredness of it disappears or is no longer felt by the sailors. The dirty Hajj clothes (Ihram) shows how the crew no longer care about the ritual or even the image, which the dirty Ihram would represent. The meaning of the word *Ihram* is that it forbids the Pilgrim to do certain things while wearing the *Ihram*, such as wearing scented deodorant and perfume, engaging in sexual activity, cutting of hair and nails or the covering of women's heads. Any sexual act between two people even if they are married is forbidden when they are set to perform the rituals of Hajj. So, for this reason the captain of the ship would put a yellow flag indicating that there was an infestation of plague to avoid inspection checks (36). As their ship crossed the Red Sea, they would pull up the yellow flag to avoid a full inspection of the lower deck that had the smell of 'animal dung' (36). Therefore, the inspector would not be able to complete the inspection. The sexual violation and the state of the ship is being compared to a plague that is crossing the Red Sea on its way to Mecca. This particular scene is similar to that of *The Satanic Verses* where the pilgrims attempt to cross the Red Sea to Mecca on foot. It is almost as though the crossing of the Red Sea has an alternative meaning behind it. In the Hebrew Testament of the Judaeo-Christian Bible the passage through the Red Sea led to the Israelites' emancipation from slavery but in *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* it leads to captivity. In the novel, the characters are placed into captivity by an Islamic society where slavery is forbidden, and the Islamic tradition does not allow human trafficking. Through Tawfiq's story the reader can see how these practices are taking place and are concealed under an Islamic society. The scene shows a critique of the men (wolves) who are committing un-Islamic acts in the country that is the foundation of Islam (the crescent moon).

The city seems to represent the different ways in which the characters are punished and humiliated. Each of the character's punishment is the cause of their humiliation, which leads them to hide from society. In Arab society differences in appearance lead to stigmatization. For

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<sup>383</sup> Al-Mohaimeed, p.37.

men in most Arab societies some disabilities make a man less of a man as seen in *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*. Martha Nussbaum looks at humiliation in relation to punishment in *Hiding from Humanity*<sup>384</sup>. The cut of ear is a sign of humiliation and the punishment that caused this loss was a type of unmerciful humiliation without the sanction of the law. Nussbaum considers the way in which societies mark people who are normal and those that are marked as a societal ‘shame’<sup>385</sup> (318). In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon*, Turad, Nasir and Amm Tawfiq are stigmatized for being different and do not ‘conform to the norm’<sup>386</sup> (319). The result of stigmatization is shame which all three male characters face as a disability. Turad takes a job that he describes is a slave’s job and scars his Arab pride<sup>387</sup> (7). It seems that his stigmatization is the cause of his cut ear that he tries to hide with his Shimagh. The shimagh functions like a hijab: a veil to conceal Turad’s mutilated ear and a way to protect himself from people’s curiosity (8). Amm Tawfiq faces the same humiliation in the palace with Zahra after she found out he was a eunuch and the rape incident on the ship with the Eritrean man.

## Conclusion

In *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* the use of Western symbols becomes important in the critique of Islamic Arab culture. I have explored the meaning and representation of performative actions and its relevance to cultural critique. In this novel the author is letting Arab readers read themselves as a form of societal and cultural critique through the green file that Turad find on the bus stop. The reader’s response is important because Turad (as a character) who is reading events in the green file invites the reader to read the novel and its characters from his or her perspective. The character in the novel is a window to a foreign culture and mediates our understanding of it. The novel also becomes a way for Western readers to read other cultures through their own cultural symbols. One important aspect that this section has shown is the importance of folklore in the representation of cultural superstitions and beliefs as what they really mean in the culture in which they exist. The critique of certain cultural actions shows how some of these actions make the Islamic tradition appear as corrupt even though they are not part of Islamic practices. The novel is a critique of the usage of human beings and how, after they are done with them, they are discarded. There is always a *shock factor* in the novel that becomes a critique of Saudi Arabian system where the Islamic law is

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<sup>384</sup> Nussbaum, pp. 318-317.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., p.318.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>387</sup> Al-Mohaimeed, p.7.

not implemented and there are no human rights unlike a modern system or egalitarian system, which religion is supposed to impose. There are many cultural actions that contradict Islamic law, and this reveals the inhumane activities that remain part of the culture but are overshadowed by religion.

In the next chapter I will be looking at Michel Tournier's *The Golden Droplet* that is a realist novel and a critique of the Western representation of Islamic culture. The previous chapters were magical realist novels written by Islamic writers or writers who are/were part of an Islamic country. *The Golden Droplet* is a realistic depiction of modern France and Algeria (North Africa), but depicts Algeria during French imperialism. In *The Golden Droplet* the critique of Islamic culture is mediated by a European realist mode of representation.

## **Chapter Four: The Critique of the Appropriation of Islamic- Algerian Culture: Calligraphy and Realism in Michel Tournier's *The Golden Droplet***

### **Overview**

In the previous chapters the form of critique considered is from the perspective of Islamic writers and is an interplay between magical realist and realist forms of representation. *The Golden Droplet* is a realist novel and presents a realistic depiction of modern France and Algeria (North Africa). *The Golden Droplet* is a depiction of Algeria during French imperialism and a representation of Islamic culture portrayed through European realism by Michel Tournier, a European writer. Tournier uses a Western translation of Islamic cultural symbols rather than a direct critique of them and his novel is more of a classical European realist novel than a magical realist novel. This is highly relevant to my argument because it suggests that a European literary form can be used to vindicate an Islamic cultural truth. *The Golden Droplet* can be considered a realist novel in its depiction of French colonisation of Algeria and the capitalisation of Algerian culture in relation to the West. Firstly, this relates to European realism because of the novel's historically accurate depiction of Islamic tradition that is set against that of a European culture and tradition. As we have seen, Stern's<sup>388</sup> concept of 'a double life' in literary realism means that 'realism' in literature is not explicitly philosophical but raises through literary representation questions of a philosophical nature. Realism has a double life; it is about our common experience of our ordinary world but also raises questions about the meaning of reality. Literary realism also questions what we mean about reality and the meaning of reality itself. In *The Golden Droplet* Tournier's critique of the representation of Algeria under European power combines both philosophical questioning of the real world and the reality of everyday life. The reason why realism in *The Golden Droplet* is a philosophical concept is in its depiction of the image and how it can become part of a person's self. Another reason is in the depiction of how *calligraphy* as a form of writing can undo the effect of the image. Calligraphy is not just about beautiful handwriting; it is a form of writing with particular significance in relation to Islamic culture and religion. This term will shortly be defined in more detail in relation to my analysis of the text. There is a difference between magical realism and classical European realism as modes of critical engagement with Islamic

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<sup>388</sup> Joseph P. Stern, *On Realism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1973), p.40.

culture. In the magical realist novels previously discussed there was a critique of Islamic culture using Western symbols and forms of representation. Tournier uses a self-critical form of European realism as a way into Islamic culture using the Western form of art that is the image. The relevance of the classical European realist novel to Tournier's novel is that Tournier portrays the truth in the Islamic cultural representation and shows the corruption of the capitalisation of Western representation of the Algerian culture. The novel is a representation of French colonial power in Algeria, Algerian immigrants in France, Islamic traditions, and the depiction of Arab culture. *The Golden Droplet* is an exploration of cultural symbols such as the golden droplet that are forcefully translated into their Western equivalence and become corrupted by that translation. The novel is almost a critique of the Western representation of Islamic cultures, cultural fetishism, the commodification of culture and the golden droplet is an example of cultural fetishism. The representation of an Islamic culture is portrayed through signs such as the golden droplet and the art of calligraphy while the Western world is represented as a culture of images. When the main character Idris (an Algerian) loses his pendant, he loses a part of himself along with it. An example of cultural commodification in the novel is in the French-Algerian museum in Algeria that displays everyday Algerian objects, utensils, and jewellery as prehistoric objects. The novel takes up the theme of Edward Said's critique in *Orientalism*<sup>389</sup> of the Western projection of its *fantasy* about the *Orient* in its representation of Algerian culture and Islamic symbols. Said's discussion is about colonialism and Western dominance and the misrepresentation of the *Orient*, which is reflected in Tournier's novel, but this is reversed in the novel. This is because Islamic symbols become a critique of the Western representation of the image and the commodification of Islamic culture. Tournier's *The Golden Droplet*, a text by a Western author, portrays how it can critique the Orientalising gaze. Tournier succeeds in portraying the Orientalising gaze that are characterised by Said as the 'five attributes of Orientalist representation.'<sup>390</sup>

The two major sources of scholarship on *The Golden Droplet*<sup>391</sup> (1988) are: Susan Petit's *Michel Tournier's Metaphysical Fictions*<sup>392</sup> (1991) and Michel Worton's collection of essays *Michel Tournier*<sup>393</sup> (2014). For Susan Petit,<sup>394</sup> Tournier's novel is not political,

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<sup>389</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2003), p.226-277.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, p.273.

<sup>391</sup> Michel Tournier, *The Golden Droplet*, trans. by Barbara Wright (London: Methuen, 1988).

<sup>392</sup> Susan Petit, *Michel Tournier's Metaphysical Fictions* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1991), p.147-172. ProQuest ebook Central.

<sup>393</sup> Michael Worton, *Michel Tournier* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 155-219. Apple ebooks.

<sup>394</sup> Petit, p.152.

sociological or anthropological because of the main character's (Idris's) arrival in France during 1968 where France was going through a drastic political and educational change (152). Petit finds that Idris does not encounter 'conscious racism' but 'subtle and pervasive prejudice' (152). Idris, Petit argues, is seen 'through cultural preconceptions' that are positive but limiting (152). The technique and structure of the novel includes myths such as the Snow Queen and short narratives that can stand as short stories on their own (153). However, Petit finds that Tournier in the novel as a whole aims to give a realistic and naturalistic narrative rather than a *mythical* one. Tournier aims to create 'a physically realized world' through fiction (153). Petit examines the image of the Oasis in the novel which she finds portrays the Oasis dwellers' fascination with a desirable Western life (154). However, Petit also finds that in the novel Idris believes that the image has literally taken a part of his identity and the European woman who took the image to France has taken a part of him with her (154). Petit analyses the problems of the image in the novel and explores the truth of the image through the tale of Barberousse and how this image becomes reduced from a symbol to a sign (157). Her analysis of the end scene of the novel, where Idris's dance breaks the window of the jewellery shop, is that Idris has learnt to interpret French capitalism and when the rest of immigrants in France learn to interpret images, they will be free and in control of their lives (171).<sup>395</sup> Petit concludes that Tournier's novel investigates 'ontology, ethics, mysticism, Christian theology and aesthetic immediacy' which incorporates modern subjects such as: 'sexuality, racism, and economic exploitation' (172).

Michael Worton's<sup>396</sup> collection of essays focuses not only on *The Golden Droplet* but on Tournier's background as a writer, other literary works, style, and technique. Chapter Two: 'Christiane Baroche: The Perpetual Temptation of Impossible Cures in the Work of Michel Tournier' examines Tournier's observations of his suffering in his childhood and that which is found in his characters and others (115). The chapter explores the factors that feed the author's world and the causes of repeated 'images, phrases and [...] entire themes' and how this repetition is mandatory for authors, even when 'it is given a different novelistic guise' (116). In *The Golden Droplet*, Tournier shows the reader that Idris will find peace after he recovers his photography and through the discovery of 'the innocence of the sign' through the calligrapher's work (126). In chapter three Françoise Merllié investigates 'problems of identity, especially sexual identity, androgyny, marginality and the relationship between the written and

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid., p.171.

<sup>396</sup> Worton, p. 115.

the oral and orality' and finds them to be integral to Tournier's novels (129). This chapter offers a feminist reading of Tournier's novels, in which women appear 'episodically and finds that this 'virtual absence' places women in a 'privileged place' because 'men suffer from their absence [...] [and] strive to find substitutes' (129). Chapter Six by Lynn Salkin Sbiroli 'Learning and Unlearning: Tournier, Defoe, Voltaire' is an investigation of a 'didactic message' in two of Tournier's novels *The Golden Droplet* and *Friday* (219). Worton writes that Sbiroli finds Tournier's two novels are a 'rewriting' of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and 'Voltaire's *Candide*' (219).

The rationale of looking at this text within the context of the thesis is that it is the antithesis of the other texts that I consider due to its critique of the Western form of representation, the image. In the other novels, the Western form of representation is a critique of Islamic culture and tradition, but in Tournier's novel the Islamic form of representation becomes a critique of Western representation and shows its distortion of the truth. The novel reveals that a critique of other cultures using an Islamic form of representation is not impossible. The other texts I have considered have shown that a critique of Islamic culture and tradition can only be achieved through a Western form of representation because of the Islamic prohibition on images and the imitation of reality. In Islam direct representation of things is forbidden and so an indirect form of representation is needed to avoid the prohibition set against the notion of prejudice and prejudgment of the Divine Being. As we have seen, in European theology Friedrich Schleiermacher<sup>397</sup> introduced the 'higher criticism' by proposing an epistemologically neutral concept of 'prejudgement' (*Vorurteil*) which simply acknowledges the culturally and historically relative position of the interpreter. However, Schleiermacher's distinction cannot be applied to Islam even if it is intended without malice. In Islam direct representation and any type of representation of things is forbidden because it can easily be seen as a 'prejudice against the Divine Self'. In the other texts I consider such as *My Name is Red*,<sup>398</sup> textual representation is crucial to avoid visual representation of the image. However, in *The Golden Droplet* the image becomes important as a way of showing how the Islamic form of representation (textual representation) reveals truth and does not distort reality.

The chapter is divided into four sections: Representation of Algeria as an *Other*; *The Golden Droplet's* depiction of Calligraphy; The difference between the Image, the written word

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<sup>397</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. by Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.20f. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989), pp.438-46.

<sup>398</sup> Orhan Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, trans. by Erdağ M. Göknar (London: Faber and Faber, 2011).

and Calligraphy as a Form of Poetic Description; and The Commodification of the Saharan Image Under French Power. The first section, Representation of Algeria as an *Other*, looks at the representation of Algerian culture under French power as an exotic culture that is fetishized. The fetishized fantasy of Algerian culture is similar to the discussion of the Orient in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, where Algerian culture becomes a European invention. In this section one can see how the creation of the *Other* happens through the French-Algerian Museum that turns *Algeria* into a commodity. However, in this section the idea of Orientalism is reversed by the novel and is turned against the dominant culture through Idris's discovery of French culture. The second section, *The Golden Droplet's* depiction of Calligraphy explores different cultural understandings of the idea of *calligraphy*. It shows how the *Western* understanding of *calligraphy* differs from the Islamic definition of calligraphy. This relates to the previous section which seems to portray a fantasy of the meaning of calligraphy. In the third section, the difference between the Image, the written word and Calligraphy as a Form of Poetic Description, calligraphy is described as a free critique of the image that deconstructs the image. A link between European realism and the Islamic tradition is established through the critique of Western tradition using Islamic cultural symbols that is calligraphy. In the last section, The Commodification of the Saharan Image Under French Power, I examine how the Algerian culture is commodified and has created an imposed image that is stereotypical of the *Other*. This relates to the other sections through a critique of cultural appropriation and the false commodification of reality through images.

### **Summary of the Novel**

*The Golden Droplet's* main character Idris is an Algerian shepherd who travels to Paris because a blonde tourist takes a photograph of him in the desert. The idea of a woman taking a photograph of Idris changes him and attracts him to Paris. Idris's journey from Tabelbala to Paris is an artistic depiction of the image of the *Orient*. Idris's journey reveals how his everyday life has become a cultural commodity, on display for tourists coming to see the exotic Sahara. Idris utilises comparisons between both Parisians and Arabs in Taebalbala receive their news through the radio. In the novel calligraphy is a way to decipher images through description of the portrait or image. Deciphering images is a way the literate can overcome the evil of images. The capitalizing of the *Orient* creates a stereotypical description and Idris's image is used to create a mannequin to show the *Orient* as clones. The use of Idris's image as a mannequin shows the corruptness of civilized cultures, through the way in which imperialist power

markets off the *Orient* (Paris the city of fashion capitalising on ‘a certain look’), leading to the birth of fashion or modern imperialism.

In Algerian culture it is believed that images can take away part of the person’s identity and that they are part of the devil’s work. The novel has two digressive stories from which the reader learns why images are prohibited in the Islamic tradition and how they contain evil power over the viewer. The first story is of the golden droplet which is a pendant worn by a Saharan dancer. In the novel the droplet is an icon or a symbol of the Sahara, but it is treated as a type of image. Idris came into possession of the golden droplet pendant from Zett Zobeida, a Saharan belly dancer (رقص شرقي/ Raqs sharqi/Oriental dancer). The droplet was tied to her clothes and as she was dancing, Idris’s gaze was focused on the droplet rather than the dancer. Idris was mesmerised by the droplet, and he could not take his eyes away from it. The golden droplet’s simplicity and perfection made Idris forget about his photograph taken by the European woman with the camera. Idris had entered a trance or dream like state where he did not realize he had slept and suddenly noticing a glittering object between his toes, it was Zett Zobeida’s thong along with the droplet. Although the narrator describes the droplet as a sign of purity it was hung on Zett Zobeida’s thong. This suggests that Zett Zobeida has lost her purity (virginity) that night along with her thong that ended up on the floor at Idris’s foot. The way in which Idris got the droplet is not clear in the novel because he wakes up to find Zett Zobeida’s thong at his feet. However, Idris loses the droplet in Marseilles to a prostitute and by the end of the novel the droplet is displayed on a shop window showcasing jewels and gems from Africa and the Middle East. By the end of the novel, the representation of the golden droplet is a symbol of freedom that is handed from one person to the next. The golden droplet becomes a symbol of something pure that has been corrupted by those who misuse it. In the novel, cultural items of the town of Tabelbala in Algeria are also displayed as exhibition items in a museum of the Sahara. These items include utensils made of clay, women’s jewellery and dishes put on display like ancient civilization artifacts in museums. The description of the Oasis becomes a Western fantasied idea of a stereotypical image of the Sahara.

## **Theoretical Approach**

The argument of this chapter is focused on the capitalisation and Islamic cultural appropriation of Algeria under French imperialism that is symbolised by the photograph or image and the reaction against this in what I will call calligraphy. I will focus on calligraphy, an Islamic form of art in relation to religion and Western art. Calligraphy in the novel is a form

of artistic writing that consists of descriptive poetic sentences. Essentially, in Islamic art calligraphy is known as the beautiful handwritten writing of phrases from the Qur'an, the different names of God and phrases in Arabic.<sup>399</sup> Calligraphy historically was used to make copies of the Holy Qur'an and then it evolved as a form of art. However, in the novel calligraphy is not just about beautiful handwritings such as cursive writing or copying of the Qur'an. Calligraphy in the novel relates to a form of imagery or a way of describing images and freeing the observer from the maleficent gaze of the image. Calligraphy in the novel fulfils a role similar to that of the narrator in the act of writing a novel as a critique of Western culture. *The Golden Droplet* includes a comparison of the Western form of art (images) to the Islamic form of art (calligraphy). In the novel calligraphy as a reaction against images shows an Islamic perspective on why images are prohibited, which differs from the ones discussed in Chapter Two. Calligraphy in this novel is a particular way of talking about images which reduces their dominative power and so a reaction against the appropriation of Islamic culture by the West. One can think of the Arabic language as the beginning of the formation of Islam as it is the dictated written word and language chosen by God to address the people of Jahilia who wrote poems in that language. The act of calligraphic writing could be seen as a religious act like praying because the descriptive writing breaks the viewer's gaze from the Western image to show their flaws, which I will discuss in depth later in the chapter.

Firstly, realism in *The Golden Droplet* depicts an Islamic representation and critique of Western form of art but also shows the difference between the representation of the image and calligraphy. In the novel, the Islamic calligraphy is shown to hold a truthful representation than the Western form of art because the image contains representational flaws. A way into the text can be considered through Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*<sup>400</sup> (1997), where he argues that the printed word differs from oral speech because it artificially fixes a singular meaning. Here I argue that the Western form of representation (the image), when set against the Islamic form of representation (calligraphy) becomes a way to decipher the image and show its representational flaws. For Derrida, the written word is not related to a freedom of expression but is fixed into people's mind as an object. Derrida attaches a negative aspect to writing while Tournier shows a positive connotation to calligraphy as imagery. However, Derrida's notion that writing has a fixed meaning is relevant to this section because I argue that it is unlike the image whose meaning changes. The calligrapher becomes secluded from the world and

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<sup>399</sup> In Islam Allah (God) has 99 names and are referred to as the 99 Attributes of Allah (أسماء الله الحسنى).

<sup>400</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.113, 259-335. Apple ebook.

becomes one with the ink, pen and paper. One way of understanding the work of the calligrapher is through the exploration of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. Derrida looks at the inflation of language by its signified which is writing and the concept of writing in relation to language and how it is no longer just a 'signifier of the signifier' that is speech<sup>401</sup> (259). This attempts to destroy the concept of the sign which he assigns to speech (259). The Western concept of language is the disguise of writing rather than writing in Rousseau's terms being the supplement of speech (261). Here the idea of world origin has set writing as a secondary act or a way of translating speech that becomes 'shielded from interpretation' (262). He describes culturally acceptable writing as something comprehended in a volume or in a book, the 'logos':

The good writing has therefore always been comprehended. Comprehended as that which had to be comprehended: within a nature or a natural law, created or not, but first thought within an eternal presence. Comprehended, therefore, within a totality, and enveloped in a volume or a book (312).

Here good writing is something that can be comprehended such as a book. The printed word is something that is forced, objective and cannot be criticised. Derrida's idea of 'universal writing' is a signifier of the signifier', therefore implicitly a critique of the religious idea of writing (303). Thus, for Derrida writing is the signifier of the signifier that comes from inner speech and is excluded from his notion of good writing. Good writing is natural and is what Derrida names as 'divine inscription' that is in the heart and soul, which is 'exiled in the exteriority of the body' (311). Here, one can see that writing has a fixed and single meaning that cannot be changed like the word of God in religious texts (288). The idea of speech coming before writing can be thought of in religious terms because if one thinks of Prophet Muhammed's revelation, it came in a form of speech before it became written on paper (282). For him, writing or the written word is of a religious nature, and he describes writing as good and bad writing, but the act of writing in itself is religious (especially in the Islamic tradition):

When it seems to go otherwise, it is because a metaphoric mediation has insinuated itself into the relationship and has simulated immediacy; the writing of truth in the soul, opposed by Phaedrus (278a) to bad writing (writing in the "literal" [propre] and ordinary sense, "sensible" writing, "in space"), the book of Nature and God's writing, especially in the Middle Ages; all that functions as metaphor in these discourses confirms the privilege of the logos and founds the "literal" meaning then given to writing: a sign signifying a signifier itself signifying an eternal verity, eternally thought and spoken in the proximity of a present logos (303).<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>402</sup> Derrida, p. 303.

*Of Grammatology*, shows that speech is objectified in writing. Derrida finds that moving from speech to the printed word is attached to the ‘divine logos’<sup>403</sup> and is not related to the sense of free expression through writing as with calligraphy in *The Golden Droplet*. Derrida looks at the literal book as the word of God and that the existence of the word in print suggests to people that this is an object to their mind, which is fixed (303). Good writing is described as ‘figurative’ and or ‘metaphorical’ sense of writing, which is connected to the divine logos and this is connected to the idea of what Derrida names ‘the book of Nature’, the divine’s writing (304). Derrida refers to the ‘book of Nature’ as the ‘sublime book’ and that he has learnt ‘to serve and adore its author’ (312). For Derrida bad writing is a disruption unlike the book that contains ‘a natural totality’ because it is ‘alien to the sense of writing’ (312). When Derrida refers to bad writing it is in its ‘literal’ and ‘ordinary sense’ (312). He views writing as a menace that paralyzes the spirit (335). The way in which writing paralyzes the spirit is in the repetition of the letter because it is restricted in a small space and is for a minority (335). He, Derrida describes writing in the common sense as ‘the dead letter’, a ‘carrier of death’ because it shows the absence of the speaker unlike writing in its metaphoric sense, a divine sense (113).

Secondly, the depiction of the commodification of the Saharan image in *The Golden Droplet* is similar to Roland Barthes’s myth of the image in *Mythologies*<sup>404</sup> (2018), where an image becomes a sign that contains a double meaning. The double meaning is where an image contains its first obvious meaning but also contains a signified meaning where it can convey something else. Barthes argues that the signifier represents different signs (254). In relation to the *representation* of the Western image, the notion of myth becomes the production of the sign where it is used as a signifier to convey a new interpretation (257). Barthes shows this with the example of the black soldier in French military uniform, where this image carries different meanings: the immediate meaning and a deeper meaning (264). Barthes argument might appear similar to Rowan Williams’s notion of the icon in *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement*<sup>405</sup> (2000), however in *The Golden Droplet* the notion of the ‘image’ here produces a myth, and it becomes the mythologist task to decipher it. In this chapter the image becomes problematic in its representation because the image can contain a double representation in a negative sense where the meaning of that image can be artificial, as in created for a specific intent. In *The Golden Droplet* the Western *representation* of the image

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., pp. 298-299.

<sup>404</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Richard Howard ([n.p]: Owls Book Publishing LLC, 2018), p.254, 257, 264. Apple ebook.

<sup>405</sup> Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 2000), p.2.

conveys this negative sense of the image which corresponds to Barthes's notion of the language of myth in the commodification of the image of the Saharan Oasis desert that is different in reality. Here, when the image is read (deciphered) the Western *representation* of the Sahara and this can be achieved through Barthes's two ways of reading the image 'analytical' and 'cynical' readings that are the destroyers of myth (257).<sup>406</sup> The problem with myth in relation to the Western *representation* of the image is that it generates an unreal story and distorts the truth, giving a new meaning that aids the creator of the image. The new meaning of the image creates an imposed image such as the one produced by the Western *representation* of advertisement of the Saharan desert of Algeria in *The Golden Droplet*. I argue that the calligrapher in the novel deciphers the language of the Western image in its form of *representation*, which is similar to the mythologist who deciphers the image.

In this section I argue that the Western form of representation of reality in *The Golden Droplet* is similar to Barthes's argument about the picture of the Black Soldier. The Western form of *representation* becomes Barthes's notion of myth and is a distortion of truth, creating an ideology instead of revealing truth. An example is of the depiction of the Saharan desert in the novel. Here calligraphy becomes a form of critique of the Western form of *representation*, the image, where calligraphy reveals the truth an image conceals and shows that the immediacy of the image does not necessarily depict truth. In Barthes's theoretical work the image can give itself a false narrative that becomes part of a *represented* culture and in *The Golden Droplet* calligraphy is a way to counteract that myth. One can see that in Tournier's novel as with Barthes's critique of the image, it will always give another meaning and that these *representations* can be viewed as a distortion similar to the Islamic views on the image. This will be further discussed in the section The Commodification of the Saharan Image Under French Power.

Thirdly, the concept of the image in the novel is not only commercialised but also has a dominative aspect to it. In the novel, the main character Idris has his picture taken by a young French female tourist. Idris feels that apart of his identity has been taken along with the photograph and he decides to go to France to retrieve his photograph. The allegory of the photograph becomes similar to the colonial gaze where Idris's image, captured by a European woman, becomes a colonial object. The photograph enforces an imposed image similar to the one discussed in Jean Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*<sup>407</sup> (2015). Sartre expounds his

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<sup>406</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.257.

<sup>407</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* ([n.p.]: American Book Publishing, 2015), p.427-428, 453-455, 560, 563, 567, 571, 573-574, 558, 590, 1298. Apple ebook.

concept of the other's gaze as a negative and dominative form. The other's gaze becomes dominant because it is controlled by a person's look which turns the other into an object. Sartre defines this type of gaze as 'being for others'<sup>408</sup> because it has a negative type of image enforced by another person's look and alienates the person being perceived. The other's look creates a sense of shame of one's appearance and in a way produces a new type of identity where one relies on the other's look to be fully realized. In this way the other's look objectifies and reveals the person who is looked at, the perception of the other's gaze. This is how the other's gaze becomes similar to the colonial gaze and is related to the Islamic critique of the image in *The Golden Droplet*. In relation to Tournier's novel the other's gaze becomes a critique of the *Western gaze* and the Western interpretation of other cultures. Here Sartre's concept of the gaze is interpreted as a forced change of a person's reality and produces an imposed look on the person who is being looked at. The gaze shows the power and is a measurement of power of the other's ability to turn people into objects (560). In the same way Idris becomes an object like the golden pendant necklace in the novel, a colonial object, reflected by a gaze and captured by the camera as a still image that is perceived by others and thus becomes changed. In Algerian culture the golden droplet is a Saharan symbol of purity. Thus, novel presents the droplet as a representation of the commodification and appropriation of Algerian culture as commercialised exotic goods. Idris suffers the same fate as the droplet when he is commercialised and commodified as an exotic human product.

### **Representation of Algeria as an *Other***

Michel Tournier's novel is a cultural critique of what may be described as the *Orient* and *Occident* in its method of representation of both Islamic and Western culture. The meaning of *Orient*<sup>409</sup> or the *Other* in this chapter is similar to Edward Said's idea of the *Orient*, which also includes the global south. The treatment of the main character and the representation of Algerian Islamic culture is similar to that of the Orient/the *Other*. The Orient is a European invention and in *The Golden Droplet* the Algerian culture is being displayed in a museum as a French discovery similar to that in *Orientalism*<sup>410</sup>. Edward Said defines the Orient as an 'almost European invention, romance, exotic beings, haunting memories [...] landscapes' (1).<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid., p. 1298.

<sup>409</sup> In this chapter the word *Orient* is not the exact meaning of the term used by Edward Said. The term is referred to as a similar treatment of Arabs and is not referred to by the location of Edward Said's *Orient* as in the East.

<sup>410</sup> Said, p.1-2.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., p.1.

Edward Said finds that the Orient has helped to define the West as a ‘contrasting image’ and ‘idea’, which is ‘[...] an integral part of European material civilisation and culture’ (2). Therefore, by applying Edward Said’s observation of the manmade image of the Orient to the Occident as a Western construct of opposite identities, it can be applied to *The Golden Droplet* in its representation of Arab cultural commodity. The museum scene in the novel is a representation of Algerian Islamic culture as a translation of French imperial power. The museum in Algeria is a French fantasied image of the Algerian culture similar to the Orient in its form of romanticised description of Arab cultural objects as exotic for commodity fetishism: It is a debasement or appropriation of the Islamic culture.

Tournier captures the description of an idea and reality of Kipling’s White Man that is critiqued by Said in *Orientalism* (277). Said describes the nineteenth-century Europe edifice plan:

[...] we must remember that for nineteenth-century Europe an imposing edifice of learning and culture was built, so to speak, in the face of actual outsiders (the colonies, the poor, the delinquent), whose role in the culture was to give definition to what *they* were constitutionally unsuited for (288).<sup>28</sup>

In the museum scenes of the novel, one finds a critique of a cultural edifice where Algeria is given a false culture. However, the opposite of this quotation is also demonstrated and critiqued: One finds French culture obsessed with the Orient (Algerian culture) as a new fashion and image that is being sold and marketed as the next new French image. This shows a reverse of imperial/colonial edifice taking place in a European culture. In the novel, I demonstrate how Tournier critiques the colonial gaze where he portrays that the Orient can decipher European codes and is able to self-govern.

[...] for example—the Oriental belonged to the system of rule whose principle was simply to make sure that no Oriental was ever allowed to be independent and rule himself. The premise there was that since the Orientals were ignorant of self-government, they had better be kept that way for their own good. (228)

Tournier portrays Said’s critique of how the Orient is viewed through the mannequin scene in the novel which is similar to Said’s quotation that: ‘An Oriental man was first an Oriental and only second a man.’(231) Said describes William Robertson Smith’s treatment of Muslims, Islam, and Orients through his travels to Hijaz, where he describes them as both present and past:

In the Hejaz you can speak about Muslims, modern Islam, and primitive Islam without bothering to make distinctions. To this vocabulary devoid of historical grounding, Smith was able to bring the cachet of additional authority provided by his Semitic studies. (235)

The quotation above is demonstrated in a similar manner through Tournier's critique of the Orientalising gaze. This is evident through the restaurant scene in which the man in the restaurant categorises Orientals as one and the same. The term Orient groups Muslims, Arabs, and non-Arabs as one and the same. For Said this type of generalisation of the Orient is displacement:

[...] therefore, style is not only the power to symbolise such enormous generalities as Asia, the Orient, or the Arabs; it is also a form of displacement and incorporation by which one voice becomes a whole history, and—for the white Westerner, as reader or writer—the only kind of Orient is possible to know (243).

Said argues that Oriental writers have created a generalisation of non-European characters based on their skin or geographical area to European readers as Oriental. As we will see with Tournier, he critiques the generalisation of the *Western gaze* and as a European writer portrays the difference between cultures and does not categorise Arab, Muslim, Berber as an all in one, Orient. Tournier goes beyond the Orientalising gaze to show how a European writer sees and acknowledges the truth of Islam and different Islamic cultures. As with Tournier's depiction of the use of calligraphic writing to decipher the Western image, Tournier's writing is a way to decipher the orientalist gaze.

Edward Said's second book *Culture and Imperialism*<sup>412</sup> (1994), looks at the two visions in *Heart of Darkness* where the colonisation of Africa was a quest for capital and trade (24). Similarly, Michel Tournier shows a similar image of the French colonisation and cultural appropriation of Algeria culture in *The Golden Droplet*. Said argues that the unknown is translated as a threat or barbarism, the antithesis of European civilisation (30). However, Tournier translates cultural difference as a way of seeing truth. It is not as Said argues that Europeans brought the notion of civilisation to the natives. Tournier shows the opposite of this, which is that the Orient has created a sense of culture for the Occident (p.ix).

Said argues that imperialism just like narrative has taken over the system of representation through the example of *Heart of Darkness*, where he describes the manner by which Africans are represented through outsiders such as Kurtz and Marlow (27). Thus, Said argues there are two versions of the novel, the first: 'allows the old imperial enterprise full scope to play itself out conventionally, to render the world as official European or Western imperialism saw it, and to consolidate itself after World War Two' (27). Here Said argues that even when Westerners have left the colonies they still have control over them as markets and

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<sup>412</sup> Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 27-203.

‘continued to rule them morally and intellectually’ (27). The second vision, Said argues, highlights the fact that Conrad cannot give another alternative to imperialism because the natives Conrad wrote about were incapable of independence and could not imagine what could take place if European dominance came to an end (28). Tournier is an insider and gives an unedited view of imperialism or rather cultural appropriation of Algeria through French media. The last scene in *The Golden Droplet*, in which Idris breaks the glass on the window of the exotic jewellery shop in which the droplet is displayed, is similar to Said’s notion of the native regaining that which imperialism has taken away from him:

Kurtz and Marlow acknowledge the darkness, the former as he is dying, the latter as he reflects retrospectively on the meaning of Kurtz’s final words. They (and of course Conrad) are ahead of their time in understanding that what they call ‘the darkness’ has an autonomy of its own and can reinvade and reclaim what imperialism has taken for its own (33).

Said goes one to explain that Kurtz and Marlow are creatures of their own time and do not know the next step to be taken and did not know that:

As a non-European ‘darkness’ was in fact a non-European world resisting imperialism so as one day to regain sovereignty and independence, and not as Conrad reductively says, to re-establish the darkness. (33)

This is like the ending of *The Golden Droplet* when Idris deciphered the sign and regained his independence from French culture of imperialism. However, he was only able to do so when he made this long journey to France. They both portray that which is non-European which is, as Said states, seen as a possible threat (34).

Tournier exemplifies a very important point made in Said’s quotation below; he shows that culture is imperialised not just the natural resources of a country such as the ivory in *Heart of Darkness*. Said’s quotation here underscores Tournier’s idea in *The Golden Droplet* that culture has become part of imperialism or the thing that is being imperialised:

Yet the objection that culture should not be considered a part of imperialism can become a tactic to prevent one from seriously connecting the two. By looking at culture and imperialism carefully, we may discern various forms in the relationship, and we shall see that we can profitably draw connections that enrich and sharpen our reading of major cultural texts. The paradoxical point, of course, is that European culture was no less complex, rich, or interesting for having supported most aspects of the imperial experience. (197)

Tournier’s novel draws a clear connection of cultural appropriation through the food, clothes, Sahara and appropriation of the image of the Orient as something fashionable. The droplet is portrayed at the end of the novel as an exotic good, sold at a high price.

In *The Golden Droplet* Tournier, uses the native's voice – native narrative and writing to explore the Whiteman's world and the unhealthy imperial obsession with the Orient. But, in *Heart of Darkness*, Said argues that the Whiteman controls the narrative and exploring native's world:

In Conrad's overtly colonial settings, the disruptions are occasioned by Europeans, and they are established within a narrative structure that is retrospectively resubmitted to European scrutiny for interpretation and questioning. (198)

Said goes on to explain that the novel's audiences, or that of Marlow's are white men and this type of narration is restoring Africa to Europeans:

Marlow's audience is English, and Marlow himself penetrates to Kurtz's private domain as an inquiring Western mind trying to make sense of an apocalyptic revelation. Most readings rightly call attention to Conrad's scepticism about the colonial enterprise, but they rarely remark that in telling the story of his African journey Marlow repeats and confirms Kurtz's action: restoring African to European hegemony by historicizing and narrating its strangeness. [...] all these reaccentuate Marlow's need to place the colonies on the imperial map and under the overarching temporality of narratable history [...]. (198)

Tournier's novel is the opposite of the description of Conrad's narrator Marlow. The novel is different as one is presented with the Orient narrating his part of the story to his audience. *The Golden Droplet* does not show the need for imperialism in the way Said describes *Heart of Darkness*. Tournier's use of language is different from an objective point of view, especially with his use of digressive stories within the novel, such as (The King's Portrait and The Snow Queen) which voice the native story for different readers. Another point that Said raises is, that the readers were not concerned with the natives (in *Heart of Darkness*) or what happens to them:

Conrad's readers of the time were not expected to ask about or concern themselves with what became of the natives. What mattered to them was how Marlow makes sense of everything, for without his deliberately fashioned narrative there is no history worth telling, no fiction worth entertaining, no authority worth consulting (200).

Tournier does the opposite, the European woman who takes Idris's photo is never seen again and the reader does not remember her during Idris's quest to retrieve his photograph. Idris, is the main character that the reader is concerned to know what happens to him.

The representation of capitalising on Oriental cultures and portraying them as a European invention in the novel is through museums, hotels, and creation of holiday resorts for Western tourists. In the museum scene Idris is looking at his cultural items, which are part of his daily life that are put on display in the French Algerian museum. Tourists from different

parts of the world come to see Idris's culture which is represented as something exotic: "the secrets of the desert and the charms of the Sahara" (68).<sup>413</sup> Idris's cultural items and life are presented similarly to that of cavemen to make it seem exotic and different. In the quotation below the museum tour guide describes to a tourist that the oasis dweller's life is like a caveman's life which is Idris's life:

'That, Madame, is because the oasis dweller, like our ancestor Adam eats with his fingers. There is no shame attached to that. Everyone picks up a little handful of food with his right hand, transfers it into the hollow of his left palm, rounds it into a little pellet, and then with the thumb of his right hand pushes it to the tips of his fingers and puts it into his mouth' (69).

The French tour guide also described the display of desert stuffed animals, and tourists are told that some have disappeared from the harsh climate, while the last lion was killed by Tartarin de Tarascon (68).<sup>414</sup> The French tour guide is creating his own version of tales while walking around the museum to attract the attention of the tourists and keep them interested. The depiction of the *Other* as a symbol of prehistoric man and the creation of tales to accompany the displayed items is similar to Edward Said's notion of a contrasting cultural image. The quotation above is an example of cultural appropriation that turns cultures into an exotic fantasy. The French Algerian museum creates a European mindset of looking at the Algerian culture through a *Western gaze*. This makes the main character Idris feel like an outsider surrounded by white men while listening to a French tour guide talk about his culture. Another example of Algerian cultural debasement is in the quotation below, the French man explains that Saharan jewels are not like images and that they are non-representational:

'Here, Mesdames et Messieurs, you will look in vain for the head of a dog, the silhouette of a camel, a scarab, and especially for a man or a woman. No; Saharan jewels are non-representational. They are abstract, geometrical forms whose value lies in signs, not images. Here are solid silver crosses, crescents, stars, rosettes. Here are clasps, buckles, and rings made of goat's horn. The anklets are supposed to prevent the demons of the earth from climbing up a person's legs and invading the whole body. The least precious jewels are simply made of shells. The most precious are made of gold, but you will not see any of these in the museum. They were probably stolen a long time ago' (70).

The French tour guide debases the items in the museum that describe an entire culture's religion, traditions and practices. For Idris, this debasement makes it seem as though he is re-introduced to his culture that is displayed behind a glass frame. Idris's view and knowledge are transferred to that of an outsider and see his culture through a *Western gaze*. This brings into

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<sup>413</sup> Tournier, p.68.

<sup>414</sup> Tournier, p.68.

perspective Edward Said's argument on how the *Orient* is a European invention and that it has become the contrasting image and idea, existing in opposition to the civilised European culture (52).<sup>415</sup> Tournier's critique of European material civilisation is also shown by the depiction of Islamic culture that is grouped in the Oriental restaurant in Paris. The Oriental restaurant in Paris/Marseilles has a menu which includes different types of foods from different Arab cultures (Turkish, African, Berber and Moroccan). One of the costumers suggests that there is no difference between these dishes and cultures through his remark: "Arab, Berber, it's all the same, isn't it?" (116).<sup>416</sup> The costumer's remark might be reflected by the owner of the restaurant who was a French ex-legionnaire (118). The restaurant's facade and menu are a fantasised image constructed from different parts of Oriental architecture such as 'army blockhouse, a North African shrine, and the palace in the Arabian Nights' (116). The menu of the restaurant was 'curlicued with arabesques [...] in calligraphed letters' that are written in French (116). The restaurant is an image of cultural appropriation, and its dishes are a negative cultural melting pot that forms a European fantasy of the *Other* (116).

In *The Golden Droplet* Algerian cultural symbols are translated by their equivalent Western cultural symbols. An example is of the golden droplet pendant which is a sign of purity in Saharan culture. However, in the novel the equivalence or meaning of the droplet in Latin is *bullae aureae* and in Roman culture it means free child. The droplet represents colonialism and wearing the droplet is a symbol that does not mean the actual words of free child. Idris's facial appearance is stereotyped as an ethnic mannequin, and his actions are represented as a commodity of cultural appropriation. This cultural appropriation is used for the display of museums and window display shops. *The Golden Droplet* represents immigrants in Paris and their transition from Islamic culture to a modern Western culture. Thus, Idris's quest to find his photograph is also a quest to understand and discover his identity through a Western interpretation or translation of it. To reverse Edward Said's terms, I argue that the main character Idris finds or discovers his identity by traveling to France and discovering the West (60).<sup>417</sup> For Said, '[...] the Orient is an idea [...] and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West' (60). *The Golden Droplet* is a representation of the idea of a European created image that becomes unravelled by the written word, which is Islamic calligraphy. However, *The Golden Droplet* is not just a representation of the created image of Algerian Arabs but a representation of how the written

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<sup>415</sup> Said, p.52.

<sup>416</sup> Tournier, p.116.

<sup>417</sup> Said, p.60.

word can be truer in its form of representation than the representation of an image, which appears to be an immediate depiction of reality.

In Islam there are some things that can be represented directly while other things can only be represented obliquely. An example is of the character Ibrahim who talks openly about fire and therefore ‘invoking hell’ (11).<sup>418</sup> In some Arab cultures, insects are feared because it is believed that they can come into contact with djinni, which are the devil or evil spirits. Ibrahim would also follow an ant and kick the anthill for food and impales a ‘sacred scarab on a needle and orienting in the desired direction the irresistible movement of its legs as they paddled in the void’ (11). Ibrahim’s actions and impiety scare Idris because no one in Tabelbala would dare do these things. Ibrahim is a nomad and Idris an Oasis dweller, so the latter would use different phrases to talk about fire such as “‘the little old man that crackles’” and “‘the thing that makes ashes’” (11). Another example is in the different ways news is received by immigrants (Orient) and the West, the former is through radio while the latter is through images and television:

The different ways in which immigrants receive news about daily life through voice ‘radio’ to that of the French and American way of listening to news through television and images: This old brigade, together with the most long-standing immigrants, formed the group of those who listened to the radio, which was separated by one generation – or even two—from the television fiends. Television was image, was modern life, the French language, or even a window on to the American way of life. Whereas the radio— which you could only hear at certain hours, and sometimes only with your ear glued to the set—was Cairo, Tripoli or Algiers, the Arabic language, political speeches, and above all the Koran and traditional music. [...] He [Idris] gradually came to understand that a defence against the maleficent power of the image, which seduces the eye, might be found in the acoustic sign, which alerts the ears (171).

The different ways of receiving news is not just portrayed as an *Orient* versus *Occident* way of acknowledging the world. The quotation above shows that radio contains a deeper meaning: it shows that images are a type of seduction and listening to the radio is similar to hearing the Qur’an. The image seems to control the eyes and distract the mind, which, in turn, seems to numb the other senses. In opposition to that, the radio alerts and this is similar to reading aloud the written word. The narrator describes the acoustic sign of the sound that alerts the ear and has the ability to break the power of the image. The representation of sound and traditional music is related to religion and is depicted as a form of self-preservation against images. The narrator explains that the radio is only switched on for a short period of time unlike the image and the television, which is not time specific. The radio is also used for specific reasons and is

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<sup>418</sup> Tournier, p.11.

not aimed at seduction but at informing. The acoustic sound can also refer to the sound of the Qur'an (the written word) when it is heard, it alerts the person hearing it. The image has the opposite effect and may have the power to drag the person away from reality.

### ***The Golden Droplet's depiction of Calligraphy***

*The Golden Droplet* is a representation of Islamic philosophical ideas about the power of portraits, images and calligraphy. As we have seen Robert Irwin, in *Islamic Art*,<sup>419</sup> defines Islamic art as a 'Western construct' (12). Irwin's research categorises Islamic art, including architecture and other forms such as paintings unlike Christian art, which includes only religious material such as cathedrals and churches. Islamic art<sup>420</sup> includes pottery, miniature painting, architectural buildings, textiles, carpets, mosaics, Islamic geometric patterns, calligraphy and arabesque. Robert Hillenbrand in *Islamic Art and Architecture*<sup>421</sup> (1999), explains that calligraphy is not the same as arabesque, which is a form of interior design in mosques where calligraphy is used to give a 'mirror writing' effect and maybe part of a mystical experience (260).<sup>422</sup> Arabesque is also a form of interlocking lines, 'geometricized vegetal ornament', patterns, circles and curves (283). The term calligraphy is usually known as an art of decorative handwriting or lettering in a certain style and font using a special inked pen or brush. Calligraphy is considered as a form of Islamic art because of the prohibitions on the representation of images. Sheila Blair's<sup>423</sup> definition of calligraphy is 'the art of writing beautifully' as an 'artistic expression' (4). In Islamic art, calligraphy is considered to be a form of 'pictorial art' where the word becomes the image (7). Calligraphy is also used in Ottoman miniaturist art in illustrated manuscripts that contain painted images accompanied by calligraphic writing. There are different types of calligraphy in Islamic art such as copying Qur'anic scripture calligraphy and the zoomorphic form of calligraphy ('naksh'<sup>424</sup>). David J.

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<sup>419</sup> Robert Irwin, *Islamic Art* (London: Laurance King Publishing, 1997), p.12.

<sup>420</sup> Gaston Migeon, with Henri Saladin and others, *Art of Islam* (Parkstone International: University of California, 2009).

<sup>421</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1999), p.260, 283.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., p.270.

<sup>423</sup> Sheila S. Blair, 'Islamic Calligraphy', *Arabic Script: It's Role and Principles*, Edinburgh University Press, ([URL:http://www.jstor.com/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrjn5.7](http://www.jstor.com/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrjn5.7)) [Accessed on, 01 June 2020] (p. 4, 7).

<sup>424</sup> Annemarie Schimmel and Barbar Rivolta, 'Islamic Calligraphy' *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 50: 1 1992, 1–56. *JSTOR*, ([URL:www.jstor.org/stable/3263914](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3263914)) [accessed 01 Jun. 2020] (P.53).

Roxburgh<sup>425</sup> describes calligraphy as a way of writing to preserve ideas (279). The calligrapher would begin with the words *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم* (in the name of God, the Companionate, the Merciful) and then recite a prayer asking for God's assistance (286).<sup>426</sup>

Calligraphic writing first originated from copying the Holy Qur'an and can be considered as a religious or Holy act. When the calligrapher copies the Qur'an, he has to be purified similar to the state of prayer (20).<sup>427</sup> Therefore, calligraphy means both writing and handwriting but in the novel the emphasis is on the written word, the actual act of writing to describe something. There are two meanings to calligraphy: the written word, Zoomorphic drawings through writing and the use of calligraphy for arabesque interior design. Calligraphy does not mean the printed word in books, but it is the ancient form of actual writing as in tracing letters or copying them. In the novel, the master calligrapher teaches his student (whose father is possessed by the image of the Blonde Queen) how to break the evil effect of the image. The effect of the Blonde Queen's portrait is broken by a descriptive commentary using calligraphy to show the flaws of the image, which was seen as a perfect image by the viewer. This shows that in Arab culture and Islamic tradition it is believed that images can be very harmful. The difference between calligraphy and writing, is that calligraphy is something that frees the calligrapher. Religion can have a similar effect where it frees a person spiritually from earthly materials. Looking at the novel as a whole, the narrator who is writing is similar to the calligrapher because the act of writing a novel and the novel itself is a critique of Western culture. Therefore, calligraphy in the novel is the representation of writing in the Arabic language using letters that form words and then sentences. The act of writing in the novel is to form a critique of Western culture and art (the image), which is similar to the narrator's role. Calligraphy in the novel is represented as a form of writing that creates descriptive language about an image to show its imperfections.

Islamic calligraphy consists of the Arabic language, the language of the Qur'an and of God's word. The reason behind describing calligraphy as a Holy act is in relation to Prophet Muhammed's revelation and dictation of the Qur'an. One can also consider the language of the Torah, the Bible and the Holy Qur'an is written in God's language. One can consider Hebrew language, English language, and Arabic language as Holy languages. In orthodox Judaism the Torah is transcribed in classical Hebrew. However, the difference is that in Islam the Qur'an is

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<sup>425</sup> David J. Roxburgh, "The Eye Is Favored For Seeing The Writing's Form': On The Sensual and The Sensuous in Islamic Calligraphy." *Muqarnas*, vol. 25, 2008, pp. 275–298. *JSTOR*, (URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27811125>) [accessed 01 June 2020] (p.276, 279).

<sup>426</sup> Roxburgh, p.286.

<sup>427</sup> Annemarie Schimmel and Barbar Rivolta, p.20.

dictated by God in Arabic, this is intrinsic to its meaning and all translations are necessarily imperfect. In the novel, the power of the image is undone by using religious Arabic calligraphy to erase the effects of the images as depicted in Algerian Arab culture. The act of writing calligraphy in the novel brings back God into perspective and defeats the purpose of the image. Calligraphy breaks the viewer's gaze from the image that created by the artist, who imitates God (الخالق/ the creator). The act of writing in the novel may be thought of as a type of exorcism that is performed or written about the image. So, calligraphy seems to be a way to bring the viewer back to Islamic art and away from Western art. The written word becomes the single method of realistic depiction of reality by revealing the imperfections and flaws of images. Images become inadequate through a written commentary as a sort of poetic description as with the portrait of the Blonde Queen.

Tournier shows the philosophical power of images on the viewer and the difference between calligraphy and images. In the novel, Islamic calligraphy removes the evil effect that the image has on the viewer. Arabic calligraphy is the language of the Qur'an and therefore can have cleansing power to reverse the cursed effects of the image. Thus, the language of calligraphy is the representation of truth and purity that is set against images, which is the representation of something evil and not truthful in its representation of reality. In the Islamic faith it is believed that the Qur'an has healing powers and can guard a Muslim from the evil eye (enviousness) and committing sinful acts. Here Islamic calligraphy and the Western form of art are compared and contrasted. Calligraphy, as a form of Islamic art, is portrayed as having a power of description while the Western form of art has a power of capturing and beautifying reality. However, the Western form of art (realist form) is shown as an imperfect representation of reality. The imperfections of Western art are translated through the Islamic form of reading images, that is calligraphy. So, calligraphy makes the Western form of art (portraits) lose its power and beauty. Artists in the novel are represented as shams or con-artists and this causes a problem with representation. The French artists in the novel create their own view of Arab reality which is a representation of how Algerian culture is a commodified image and a creation of the West.

### **The Difference between the Image, the Written Word, and Calligraphy as a Form of Poetic Description**

In the Islamic tradition there is a prohibition on the representation of images, God and anything Sacred. Most prohibitions centre on the idea of prejudice against the divine self. In chapter three I discussed the problems in Arab cultures on the use of the phrase 'prejudice

against the Divine Self<sup>7</sup>, which indicates a false or hate statement and misuse of religion. This is considered blasphemy because it can cause harm and is understood as a deliberate malice or bias against God and religion. The problem with this sort of religious interpretations is not just a mistake or misinterpretation but rather an actual distortion of the truth. The prejudgment of Islamic text can be considered as prejudging God. In other religions prejudgment can be expressed unlike with Islam. The prohibition on prejudgment and prejudice is that anyone can try to represent the Divine Self or things in a negative sense of the term through the projection of oneself onto God. Representation in its symbolic meaning is linked to the idea of prejudice because it can stand for something that is absent as we have seen from the ahadith.

I make a distinction between an image and a non-sacred image/object, between the representation of a thing in an image and the glorification of an image. The glorification of an image can also suggest the glorification of the image maker as a creator. In *The Golden Droplet* the problem with the image is not just that it is glorified as in the portrait of Khair El-Din, but with the idea that the image becomes a source of obsession and self-assertion of a certain idea that it can hold on the viewer. A way of avoiding the prohibition on literary representation and representation in this chapter is achieved through calligraphic writing, as it becomes a discussion and critique of the image. The relation of European realism to the Islamic tradition is found in the critique of Western tradition by Islamic cultural symbols. Therefore, in *The Golden Droplet* calligraphy becomes a way of critiquing Western representation and Western symbols through Islamic symbols as a type of cultural comparison or way of acknowledging the world. Calligraphy in this sense forms a free critique of the image and a way of deconstructing the image. Tournier's depiction of the calligrapher shows that the act of writing in the novel is not only artistic but a form of spiritual exercise that requires time and devotion.

Calligraphy provides the element of freedom and the ability for the viewer to free him/herself from the image through calligraphy with the act of poetic description/commentary. In *The Golden Droplet* the act of calligraphic writing first happens through speech when the image is analysed to formulate a written description of it. Unlike Derrida's account of the difference between writing and speech, in *The Golden Droplet* calligraphy gives the freedom of expression that is not possible in speech because of certain prohibitions in the Islamic tradition where certain things can only be alluded to through imagery. In *The Golden Droplet*, the word and writing creates a critique of the image and it is the independent free critique of the image which is the task of the calligrapher. The practice itself allows that inner freedom of

expression that first comes from speech as described by Derrida. For him, writing does not allow one to criticise or critically analyse to attain truth from the printed book.<sup>428</sup>

Deconstruction of the image through writing is dissimilar to Derrida's deconstruction of the text because here it offers a free critique on the image. In relation to calligraphy, writing as a form of imagery is the opposite of the negativity that Derrida finds in the literal and ordinary sense of writing. This is something also found in miniaturist Ottoman Islamic art where pictures are accompanied with calligraphy. An example of the power of calligraphy is in the story of the portrait of 'The Blonde Queen.'<sup>429</sup> In this digressive story within the novel, it explains how the power of descriptive calligraphy (writing) can break the power of the Queen's portrait on the viewer. The story of the portrait of 'The Blonde Queen' justifies the prohibition and the perspective of images in Arab culture and Islamic tradition as harmful. It is through calligraphy that the depiction of the maleficence of the image is shown. The story of the blonde queen explains why the image itself is cursed and curses those who gaze upon it. The blonde queen's parents were cursed because of their indecent public display of affection in full daylight:

Now, no one in this country was unaware of the punishment meted out to those who make love in full daylight: the solar child is condemned to be born blond, to be of accusatory, indecent, bewitching blondness [...] (181)

The blonde queen's parents were cursed to have a daughter with blonde hair, who is known as the solar child. The beauty of this queen is cursed and has made a king fall in love with her (181). The description of the blonde queen's beauty in the quotation above is not an 'innocent' or God gifted beauty but a curse that is translated through her portrait. Her portrait can be seen as a pornographic image that has to be concealed because it carries with it her parent's sin of adultery. In the novel it is said that the queen was so beautiful she had to cover her face with a veil to hide her beauty and this made the whole kingdom curious because no man was allowed to see her. This caused the painter Ismail to want her as a model for his painting, which would be his last piece of work. The painter decided to paint her image and disguised himself as a woman to enter the palace and be able to see the queen and paint her from memory. After completing the portrait, Ismail fell madly in love with the image, which caused him to commit suicide next to the portrait (182). The portrait of the blond queen represents the beauty of the fruit of sin that is the embodiment of infidelity. Through narrative one can understand why the

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<sup>428</sup> Derrida, p.288.

<sup>429</sup> Tournier, pp.181-192. The story of the Blonde Queen.

image of the queen is cursed or contains an evil nature, but with an image one cannot see further than a beautiful portrait of a woman.

The portrait of the queen got passed from one person to the next and the image could not be destroyed. The portrait possessed evil power and anyone who tried to destroy it was harmed in the same way as any person who tried to harm the image (183).<sup>430</sup> A king had the image thrown in the sea and was then caught in the net of a fisherman, Antar, who then became obsessed with the image and neglected his profession (184). Antar's son found a way to break the curse of the image of the blonde queen through his master calligrapher. Ibn Al Houdaida, the master calligrapher told the fisherman's son, Riad, that images have the power to enslave similar to the head of Medusa (185). Calligraphers know that images are evil and only the reed and pen can be the defence against them (186).<sup>431</sup> The illiterate is controlled by the image because 'it is the most vivid source of fear, of shame, and above all of hate and love.' (187). Ibn Al Houdaida explains that the only way to destroy the power of the image is through the calligraphic written word and the description of an image (191).

Calligraphic writing shows the true form of an image and its imperfection (191). For the calligrapher, images do not show the whole story and therefore images have to be deciphered and analysed, to be read (192). Idris learns calligraphy from a master calligrapher Hassan Massoudy who tries to teach him how to breathe and write (178). In the quotation below the calligrapher Hassan Massoudy describes to Idris the power of calligraphy:

The sculptor's chisel liberates the girl, the athlete or the horse from the block of marble. In the same way, signs are all prisoners of the ink and the inkwell. The reed pen liberates them and releases them on the page. Calligraphy is liberation (179).

The act of writing here becomes a way to critique the image through description that is similar to sculpture where the imperfections of the image are revealed to the viewer. The Islamic form of reading images becomes a way of deciphering Western images and so becomes a way to break the prohibition on images. This prohibition is broken by revealing the artist's flaws instead of idealising the image as a perfect creation. In the quotation below the calligrapher Ibn Al Houdaida shows that the illiterate fall under the spell of the image while the literate have the ability to unveil its evil spell:

'The image is endowed with the power to paralyse, as for instance the head of Medusa, which turned to stone all those who came within its gaze. Yet this fascination is only irresistible to the eyes of the illiterate. Indeed, the image is no more than a jumble of signs, and its maleficent force comes from the confused, discordant sum of their

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<sup>430</sup> Tournier, p.183.

<sup>431</sup> Tournier, p.186.

meanings...For the literate man, the image is not mute. Its wild-beast roar unravels into mellifluous words. It is only a question of being able to read [...]’ (186)

The example of the Greek mythology of Medusa in the quotation above shows that images are not just portraits but consist also of symbols such as the golden droplet. The Greek mythology of Medusa is used as an example to show that in the Islamic tradition it may be considered that feminine symbols or representation can have a destructive power over its viewer. Most of the images that are considered in this novel are of a feminine nature or contain feminine aspects to them such as admiring one’s image captured in a portrait. These images cause destruction to the viewer who becomes fixated by the image similar to Medusa’s glance turning men into stone. Medusa’s story is analogous to the blonde queen’s portrait in the way an image can destroy its viewer.

The critique of the image through calligraphy in the novel is not the same as speaking openly about it because writing sets the viewer free. Writing is a medium which does not commit the reader or writer as much as the spoken word because it is not so directly personal and can be interpreted in many different ways. Speech directly commits and engages the person who is speaking unlike writing which produces a distance. Another example is the calligrapher Ibn Al Houdaida who shows Riad how to use calligraphic arabesques parchments to critique the image. In the quotation below, Ibn Al Houdaida teaches Riad about the different signs of the image and their different meanings that can be read in four different ways:

His master taught him first that *figure* does not only refer to the human face and form, but that there are also figures of rhetoric. These include *figures of diction* (in which the form of words is modified), such as prothesis epenthesis, paragoge, aphaeresis, syncope, apocope, metathesis, diaeresis, synthesis and crasis. There are also *figures of construction* (which concern the natural order of words), such as ellipsis, zeugma, syllepsis, hyperbaton and pleonasm. And *figures of speech*, or *tropes*, such as metaphor, irony, allegory, allusion, catachresis, hypallage, synecdoche, metonymy, euphemism, antonomasia, metalepsis and antiphrasis. And finally, *figures of thought*, such as antithesis, apostrophe, epiphenomenon, subjection, obsecration, hyperbole, litotes, prosopopoeia and hypotyposis (186).<sup>432</sup>

There are four different figures of diction, construction, speech/tropes and thought. These figures show the importance of constructing a passage that will form the critique of the image by showing it to be imagery and exploring how the imagery works. Thus, Ibn Al Houdaida not only teaches Riad how to read the image but how to be able write and think to form a calligraphic sentence. This will help in showing the allegory of the image that is present in front of him. In this quotation one can see the importance of the process of writing and the

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<sup>432</sup> Tournier, p.186.

ability to express one's thoughts through speech and transform them into imagery. In the quotation below, Ibn Al Houdaida uses the image of Sultan Omar to show Riad that through calligraphy one can read the signs of an image:

'What does this face inspire in you?' He asked Raid. 'Respectful fear.' The boy replied. 'And also a kind of pity. You would want to obey him, but only because you were afraid. If it were possible, you would also want to be able to be like him a little.' 'That is very well seen, This portrait is of Sultan Omar, the whole of whose reign was nothing but a series of violent and treacherous acts. But since you are now literate, and therefore capable of it, it is essential that you liberate yourself from the obscure rays emanating from this portrait (187).

Riad and so many other viewers of the blonde queen's portrait, have been cursed by the image because they have not been able to read the image in the same way as a 'literate' person like Ibn Al Houdaida. However, the image content that Ibn Al Houdaida presents to Riad as an exercise to decipher (Sultan Omar) is not the same image as the blonde queen. The content of the image is different, and this the reader knows or is aware of through the narrator of the novel. The image of Sultan Omar shows a powerful figure who has authority over his subjects, unlike the image of the queen that is a form of seduction like a pornographic image. The queen's figure represents the essence of adultery.

In the quotation below, Riad begins writing from the right-hand side which in itself is part of the Islamic tradition. When entering a room, shaking hands, eating, handing someone something it is always done from the position of right-hand side. It is not just the written language that most acts of purification require; the act is to be performed by the right-hand side:

'[...] He picked up a reed pen and traced the following words in broad calligraphic characters on the right-hand side of the parchment:

*The Child is father of the Man*

Then he chose another sheet and, in a winged hand, he wrote on its left-hand side:

*Young wounds, great destinies*

On the right-hand side of the third parchment, he wrote next:

*Beware of the dreams of youth: they always end by coming true<sup>3</sup>*

Then, on the left-hand side of another sheet, he wrote:

*Power drives men mad.*

*Absolute power drives them absolutely mad*

Finally, on the last sheet, he wrote these words, but this time over the whole surface of the sheet:

*A man alone is always in bad company'* (188).<sup>433</sup>

Some of the parchments were written from the right-hand side while others from the left-hand side. It is impossible to write from the left-hand side using the Arabic language. From the quotation above it does not mean using the left hand to write but the place where the sentence is being written. This is shown by the last phrase that was written and put over the whole surface of the sheet. The chosen sentences that were written with the left-hand side contain bad or evil connotations, while the sentences that were written on the right-hand side contain a warning against an idea that will provoke evil. In the Islamic tradition the left-hand is associated with the devil and therefore Muslims use their right-hand (the right-hand side) for most things in their daily life. The use of imagery in the quotation above acts as a type of warning and a representation of actions or ideas that are seen in the portrait.

When the calligrapher has finally formed the written imagery of the portrait, the real or concealed truth of the image is revealed to the viewer. In the quotation below, Riad has just finished writing on the parchments to reveal the truth behind the image:

[...] 'And now—look carefully!' [...] For what appeared in filigree, as if in the bottom of a tranquil lake, [...] the face of Sultan Omar, with its bitter, brutal expression, [...] He changed the order which the parchment sheets had been superimposed [...] each time the Sultan's expression changed subtly, and its dominant aspect became now imperious will, now cruelty, now the memory of a childhood deprived of tenderness (188).<sup>434</sup>

The same type of poetic description is also used by Riad to critique the blonde queen's portrait. The quotation above shows how calligraphy is used to form a critique of the image. The calligrapher has to look at the image carefully and read its content (subject/model) to be able to form a written critique using descriptive poetic sentences (imagery). Here the narrator shows that the problem with representation in Islam is because the image can change to represent something else. Unlike the image, calligraphy in its form of descriptive poetic writing represents a singular meaning. When the master calligrapher reordered the calligraphic parchments, it revealed Riad's speech form of the analysis of the image before it was written down on the parchment. Thus, one can see from the quotation above that calligraphy is associated with religion. Calligraphy brings one back to the Islamic tradition as a form of writing by revealing truth. The verses of the Qur'an are not only poetic but contain imagery that reveal truth to all Muslims. In a way, the use of calligraphic imagery in the novel is an

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<sup>433</sup> Tournier, p.188.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., p.188.

attempt to show truth and reveal the misrepresentation of the Western form of representation (the image).

In the Islamic tradition verbal critique or written critique of sacred things is not permitted. One way around this taboo of openly speaking about religious things is to allude to them in an indirect way. Religion in *The Golden Droplet* is represented as something more important abroad than in Algeria because of the different cultural traditions. According to the Goldsmith, Idris will be surrounded by enemies and foreigners who do not care (88). Therefore, the immigrant's defence 'against despair and poverty' is 'the Koran and the mosque' (88). Religion is portrayed by calligraphers and the Goldsmith as something that liberates one from the power of the image (88). However, one can see that calligraphy acts as a defence for Islam and traditional Islamic culture because it becomes a way of preserving one's tradition through writing. Here one can see how calligraphy can bring the person back to religion.

Calligraphy is considered part of Islamic art although in the novel the focus of calligraphy is on the act of writing itself. However, the focus later shifts on calligraphy as art and not just as a form of writing or imagery that is critical of Western art. Christiane Gruber, in *The Islamic Manuscript Tradition*<sup>435</sup> (2010), explains that Islamic art is linked to the pen (31). For Gruber, 'practitioners in the "art of the word" attempted to present knowledge through writing, artists, preferring the "art of the form," strove to depict the world around them by means of the picture' (31).<sup>436</sup> In Islam the pen has been viewed with exceptional significance because it is seen as 'the primordial tool used by God to reveal sacred scripture and to record man's actions in his book of deeds' (32). The pen is associated with God in the Islamic tradition and is a representation of a sacred item because it is through the pen that God teaches us (33). For Gruber, calligraphy has the ability 'to produce form' and this connects the act of writing 'with God's creative force' (29). One can consider calligraphy more expressive in its form of art than the actual production of art (images). Art is not entirely prohibited in Islamic art nor is representation as long as it does not depict a *prohibited form of representation* such as images or sculptures of animate being, *objects of idolatry and veneration*. Arabesque in the novel is compared to the occident's opium that is images (180).<sup>437</sup> This form of art contains some calligraphy as a form of interior design in mosques and can be the source of a form of mystical experience as defined in the introduction. In the novel arabesque is described as the infinite

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<sup>435</sup> Christiane Gruber, *The Islamic Manuscript Tradition: Ten Centuries of Book Arts in Indiana University Collections*, ed. by Christiane Gruber (Bloomington: Indiana Press University, 2010), p.29-32. Apple ebook.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>437</sup> Tournier, p.180.

through the finite and this meaning is tied to the desert and God, while Western art emphasises the image:

The image is indeed the opium of the Occident. The sign is spirit, the image is matter. Calligraphy is the algebra of the soul traced by the most spiritualized organ of the body, its right hand. It is the celebration of the invisible by the visible. The arabesque manifests the presence of the desert in the mosque. Through the arabesque, the infinite is deployed in the finite, for the desert is pure space, freed from the vicissitudes of time. It is God without man. The calligrapher, who in the solitude of his cell takes possession of the desert by peopling it with signs, escapes from the misery of the past, from the agony of the future, and from the tyranny of other men. Alone, he converses with God, in a climate of eternity. (180)

Images are described as something negative like a drug that is addictive, while signs are like calligraphy such as the golden droplet that is related to the spirit. Calligraphy here is a form of knowledge similar to algebra and its purpose is not simply aesthetic. The spiritual aspect of calligraphy comes from the use of the right hand that is related to the Islamic tradition where eating, drinking, writing and ablution all require the right hand. Calligraphy is not just a form of art but is another way of connecting to God, ‘the invisible with the visible,’ that is the written word (180). Calligraphy combined with arabesque creates a form of religious worship and celebration of God. The narrator defines calligraphy in the quotation as not just simply a form of writing but as imagery. The narrator also uses imagery to define calligraphy as something more real or true in its form of representation than the Western image. From the quotation one can see that calligraphy is more than a critique of Western art and in a religious sense it is a realistic depiction of reality through descriptive writing. The association of religion and God with calligraphy makes this form of art a way of seeing truth. This style of Islamic art praises the Almighty as the only creator and great creator of man and everything on earth instead of praising man and man’s imitation of the creator (God).

One can see that the form of writing is associated with religion especially in the Islamic tradition in the quotation below, where the Prophet is quoted about the significance of the scholar’s ink:

In the little room where the ink was made, another text was to be read on the wall. It was the saying of the Prophet which asserts the absolute contrast between the wisdom of Islam and the cult of suffering and death peculiar to Christianity:

*There is more truth in the ink of scholars than  
in the blood of martyrs (177).<sup>438</sup>*

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<sup>438</sup> Ibid., 177.

Thus, the Islamic form of representation is not only a form of art but is similar to reading religious texts because the artist is engaged in an artistic written and drawn form of speech with God. It is not similar to images where this Western form of art is depicted as a way for man to praise himself and his ability to create something. In a way the Western artist's image challenges God, as though God is not the only creator of beauty.

In Algerian culture there is a belief that images contain evil presence, which the character Idris and the Goldsmith describe as a possession of an evil force. Therefore, even if the image serves a purpose such as historical documentation of a place, it will still be seen as something bad. An example is of the picture of Idris's uncle Mogadam, wearing the French medal of the Croix de Guerre (49).<sup>439</sup> In the novel it seems as though the picture captures a part of the person's soul and that brings bad luck. The photo brings bad luck because it can take part of the person's identity. Thus, calligraphy is a counterforce to the image where the act of writing connects the person in a spiritual relation with God and the person's self. Unlike the image, the written word does not directly express personality or change the person's image. An example is found in the quotation below where Idris discusses his thoughts about images and the Goldsmith explains that his quest to find his image will also make him find parts of his identity along the journey:

'So you left home to go and find your photo?'[...] It's probably better to say: to go and be with my photo.' [...] Your photo is in France, and it attracts you like [a] magnet [...] 'Not only in France. [...] in Beni-Abbes, in Bechar and in Oran.' 'You find bits of it along your way and you stick it together? [...] the bits I've found aren't at all like me. [...] He showed him his passport, opened at the page with the bearded man. The goldsmith looked at him with worried air. 'You could get into trouble. Maybe you ought to grow a beard. [...] I hardly have one. [...] it isn't up to me to look like my photo. It's my photo that ought to look like me [...] But your experience already proves that it's the other way round. An image is possessed of a force of evil. It isn't the faithful, devoted servant [...] It takes on all the appearances of a servant, [...] but [...] it's crafty, lying and imperious. Out of the depths of its evil nature it does all it can to reduce you to slavery. That too is in religion' (89).

The bits of himself that Idris finds in his journey to retrieve his image are the places he visits along his journey, which are also Western representations of his culture. The camera produces an image that is supposed to represent reality, but the example of the passport photo shows that the image is not a true representation. The camera captures a certain time of reality, a still image of the present, the now and not the changing future. For Idris, the image does not change the same way the Creator (God) allows you to grow and change. So, for him it is not a true

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<sup>439</sup> Tournier, p.49.

representation of his changing image in real life. Here one can see the advantage of narrative over the image. Goldsmith's reaction to Idris's image, is that an actual image can get him into trouble because he no longer has a beard. This shows that part of his identity, which is captured in the image, does not represent his current image. The 'evil nature' of the image in the quotation refers to the false representation of the image. Unlike the written word, it shows that one's image changes. There is a saying in Arab culture where it is believed that the camera is a representation of 'the eye of the devil.' The power of the camera's eye is represented through a European woman, and this not only captures Idris's attention but his curiosity. Idris is an Arab man and for a woman to capture his image seems to show that she has taken away a part of his masculinity. The *European gaze* victimises and objectifies the *Orient* and Idris acknowledges that by the end of the novel. Photography makes Idris feel like someone has stolen a part of him and this makes Idris travel to Paris to recover his lost image. In a way, Idris's image taken by a European woman becomes a reflection of the self that is documented.

The image has the power to change one's appearance or produce an immortal icon (صوره مخلده) is portrayed in the digressive story 'The Kings Portrait'.<sup>440</sup> The palace artist, Ahmed Ben Salem, teaches Khair-ed-Din how to read the representations of images of kings to reveal their true nature:

'The king reigns, and the king governs. And these functions are very different, diametrically opposed, even. For the king who governs has to do battle, day after day, hour after hour, against poverty, violence, lies, treachery, rapacity. Now in theory he is the stronger, but in practice he is confronted by formidable adversaries, and if he is to conquer them he is forced to turn their own unjust arms against them—violence, lies, treachery. And he, and even his crown, is besmirched by them (36-37).<sup>441</sup>

The quotation above shows the narrative description of two different kings. The first is of Khair-ed-Din whose image is not as polished as Moulay Hassan because he is a king who fights his own battles. Moulay Hassan is represented as a king who enjoys the glory of being a king without ruling his kingdom. In the quotation below, the narrative description is similar to the defeated Moulay Hassan who is surrounded by the luxuries of his kingdom:

Whereas the king who reigns shines like the sun, and like the sun he spreads light and warmth around him. The king who governs is seconded by a cohort of hideous torturers who are called the means. The king who reigns is surrounded by a bevy of beautiful young women, white and perfumed, who are called the ends. [...] Must it be added that I paint the king who reigns, and not the king who governs?' (37)

<sup>440</sup> Tournier, p.30-43. The story of 'The King's Portrait'.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., pp.36-37.

The quotation above is an ironic critique of the representation of authority in art and in the Islamic world because the image is depicting a false reality of the real person. The story of Khair ed Din represents a reality other than the depicted form in the picture. Khair ed Din is a barbaric king of a tribe whose image in the portrait is depicted as a European King. Khair ed Din wanted his image to be similar to Moulay Hassan the former king whom he defeated. Ahmed Ben Salem acknowledges that the images he creates as an artist can change the reality of the representation of a model in the eyes of others. According to Ahmed Ben Salem, images are stronger than words because of the image he painted of Moulay Hassan. In reality, Moulay Hassan is a weak king, but Ahmed Ben Salem believes painting images can change reality because, for an artist, images are stronger than words. Ahmed Ben Salem shows how an artist can create a portrait that distorts reality and creates a new identity for the model:

When he came in he was pale, discouraged, nauseated by the vile deeds of his profession. He looked at his portraits, the ones you caused to be destroyed. In their light, he cleansed himself of all the defilement of power. I could see him swelling anew with his kingly pride. He regained confidence in himself. I did not need to utter a single word of comfort. He smiled at me, and when he left he was restored to equanimity' (37).

Ahmed Ben Salem explains to Khair-ed-Din how Moulay Hassan was weak but his portrait changed the way he perceived himself in the eyes of others. The model whose image is drawn glances at the image and sees a better version of himself. The representation of the model is not a realistic depiction of the model's reality but of what he/she wants to be asserted in reality. Artists can also create images from memory, but a person's memory does not represent reality. An artist's memory represents an idea of a person in the mind of the painter (38).<sup>442</sup> In the quotation above one can see that there are many ways or techniques to painting, which means that not all portraits are a representation of reality or truth. This is portrayed in the story of 'The King's Portrait' how the artist can conceal reality by manipulating the colours in the portrait. Images are represented as a way of distorting reality and truth by giving the viewer an idea of him/herself other than that in real life. Ahmed Ben Salem explains that there are two forms of representation in art; one is of reality and the other is an idea of it. Each form of representation has a different language or expression through images. The image in this story is related to the violation of the subjectivity of the *Other* because Moulay Hassan seems to be a depiction of a European king, while Khair ed-Din is a representation of an Arab tribal king (Hafsid dynasty). Khair ed-Din's transition to the palace can be seen as similar to Idris' transition to a Western city. One reason behind the Arab cultural superstitions that images are bad is that the owner

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<sup>442</sup> Tournier, p.38.

must hold on to the image. The loss or destruction of the image might mean the loss and destruction of the person as seen with Khair El-Din and Moulay Hassan.

The story of the portrait of Khair-ed-Din exemplifies how images can be a misrepresentation of reality. Khair-ed-Din invaded the kingdom of Moulay Hassan of the Hafsid dynasty and defeated him with great humiliation. The reason Khair-ed-Din hates images derives from the previous Sultan's images that are hung on all the palace walls as a glorified and strong image of a king (31).<sup>443</sup> The description of the image of the glorious king does not reflect the reality of the king's defeat and humiliation:

But now the defeated sultan was here, on the four walls of this vast room; not, however, with bent back, hung head, and feet still convulsed after his precipitate flight. On the contrary, he was seen ensconced on a rearing horse, or surrounded by his dignitaries flinging their cloaks on to the ground for him to walk over, or perched on a tower dominating the city, or even in his harem, surrounded by his favourites swooning with love (31).

The images of Moulay Hassan in his palace will be an everlasting image of a glorious king and historically he will be remembered as a great strong king. The problem with the Sultan's image is that its representation cannot be changed to show his defeat by Khair-ed-Din. Therefore, it is not truthful to the present situation, which Khair-ed-Din finds himself in as a king. For this reason, Khair-ed-Din views the portraits as a deception of truth and acknowledges the power of images that distorts reality: 'And now, thanks to this devil of a painter, the conquered man was still on his walls, triumphant, royal, ablaze with all his glory' (32). The destruction of Moulay Hassan's portrait broke the power of the image because after that incident he was able to take back his kingdom, while Khair-ed-Din cursed himself by changing his own image. The narrator describes that not only images have power but also the palace. The palace which Khair-ed-Din's took as his own has the power to transfer one's image to suit the place he/she inhabits (32). Khair ed-Din believed that in order for him to be a real king he had to change his appearance to look exactly like the portrait of the previous King Moulay Hassan. However, a real king's achievements are not only depicted in portraits; they are written down in history books.

The reason behind Khair ed-Din's hatred of images is because they had to be a true representation of reality. Khair ed-Din could not have his image painted because he did not like his appearance. He grew up thinking that he was cursed because of his red hair and white freckled skin. In the Qur'anic school Khair-ed-Din was bullied by his masters and friends

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid, p.31.

because of his hair colour. In the Sahara tradition it is believed that red haired children are cursed because of a curse placed on their mothers at the point of conception. The colour red is a representation of shame and the impurity of the child which extends to his 'milky' freckled skin tone (33).<sup>444</sup> Khair-ed-Din's rejection of images comes from his own insecurity of his red hair to the extent that animals with red fur were not mentioned in front of him (34). However, when Khair-ed-Din became king, he could not stop looking at his image in the mirror (34). Khair-ed-Din discovers the power and importance of images but worries about having the palace artist Ahmed Ben Salem painting his cursed red hair:

'In first place, I have to paint the portraits of the high dignitaries of the court. I also have to reproduce the architectural beauties and splendours of the palace, so that throughout space and time, no one shall remain in ignorance of them.' Khair-ed-Din nodded. That was just what he expected of the artist. 'But tell me: suppose the high dignitary you are portraying were to be afflicted with a physical blemish, a wart, a broken nose, a menacing look or a blind eye, or something of the sort. Would you reproduce this deformity exactly, or would you try to conceal it?' 'Seigneur. I am a portraitist, not a courtier. I paint the truth. My honour is called fidelity.' [...] 'I still do not understand,' he said, 'how you can faithfully reproduce a face that has been rendered ugly and ridiculous by a deformity, without at the same time revealing and proclaiming its ugliness and ridiculousness. Do you really claim that you never attenuate the deformities of your models?' (35)

Khair-ed-Din had overcome his hatred for portraits when the artist Ahmed Ben Salem was able to conceal his cursed image. Ahmed Ben Salem's job as an artist is to stay true to the representation of reality; Any deformities a king has would be seen as a royal deformity (35). The deformity would then become something anyone would be proud to have (35). The artist in the novel is represented as a creator who cleanses impurities. Portraits are created for people who are important and not intended for any common person (36). The artist's brush is set in comparison to the calligrapher's reed, the former is not true to its representation and the latter is God's tool that can only represent truth. In *The Golden Droplet* images have the power to change a person's identity to that reflected in the portrait.

Idri's uncle Mogadem believes one has to hold on to an image to stop it from being evil (49). Mogadem explains that the reason why their friend Mustapha did not get bad luck from his photo is that he pinned it to a wall to avoid the old superstitious beliefs (49). Cultural superstitions in the novel show how Arab cultures have certain ideas or cultural beliefs about images and actions that may have unrealistic effects. An example, is of bathing one's foot with water before traveling and capturing a hound to protect against the evil eye (54).<sup>445</sup> Idris's

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<sup>444</sup> Tournier, p.33.

<sup>445</sup> Tournier, p.54.

mother applies these cultural superstitions before he travels on his quest to retrieve his photograph in Paris:

His mother had made him put his naked foot down in the doorway of their house, where she had bathed it with a little water. ‘So that your foot remembers this doorway, and brings you back to it,’ she has said. And now he had gone, He was walking along the track going north-east, the one that led to Beni-Abbes. But he had still not finished with Tabelbala. Just as he was leaving the oasis he was joined by Orta, his neighbours’ Saluki. It was a noble, thoroughbred animal. It had had its paws branded to protect it from the evil eye (54).

The reason why Idris loses his mind at the end of the novel is because of his cultural superstitious beliefs about images. The hound and the act of washing one’s foot before travel become a symbol and an image that are not true. These cultural practices do not protect Idris against anything he faces during his quest to find his picture. Idris ends up branded as an Algerian mannequin for a shop in Paris and becomes the face of ‘The Palm Grove’ Saharan desert drink. These stereotypical images take a part of his identity away and turns him into an artistic product for Western commercialised goods. This is portrayed at the end of the novel when Idris looks at his golden droplet through the glass window of a jewellery shop, selling exotic goods.

### **The Commodification of the Saharan Image Under French Power**

In *Mythologies*<sup>446</sup> (2018), Roland Barthes uses Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory of semiology where he describes the signified as the concept and the signifier as ‘the acoustic image’ (251). The relationship between the ‘concept and image is the sign (the word, for instance), which is a concrete entity.’ (251). Barthes finds a similar pattern in myth in relation to ‘the signifier, the signified, and the sign’ (251). The emphasis of the language of myth lies in the way language is filtered to show ‘only a sum of signs, a global sign, the final term of a first semiological chain’ (252). There are two semiological systems in myth: a linguistic system and the language object, which are the modes of representation (253). For Barthes these two semiological systems are linked to one another. Myth relies on language to build itself and this Barthes names the metalanguage because it is considered a second language that is spoken about first (253). Barthes gives the example of the Latin sentence ‘because my name is Lion’, which he finds ambiguous because it contains a double meaning (253). The first meaning is its obvious statement and the second is ‘to signify something else’ (253). Therefore, words and

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<sup>446</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.251.

their meanings give different signs and the signifier represents different signs (254). In order to produce myth, the sign is used as a signifier and a new meaning is produced.

However, for Barthes the production of this new meaning is not random. For Barthes modern day myths are created with specific intentions; that it to perpetuate certain societal ideologies in politics and in the media. Barthes makes this clearer in his second example of a Black soldier. On the cover of Paris-Match magazine a black soldier is wearing the French military uniform and posing with a military salute (254).<sup>447</sup> The black soldier's image gives an immediate meaning that one receives from the picture. However, Barthes writes that the photo signifies a deeper meaning whether one naïvely sees it or not. The photograph represents France as a great Empire that does not discriminate and depicts a French representation of French Africans serving their country (254). Barthes describes the image as containing a "greater semiological system" (254):

I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (a black soldier is giving the French salute); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier" (254).

The signifier represents the obvious meaning of a French soldier saluting. The signified represents two things, 'Frenchness and militariness' (254). Barthes describes this as a double representation where the presence of the signified is found in the signifier (254). Barthes writes, in myth the signifier gives meaning, which he labels as the form (254). The signified is not ambiguous and so Barthes retains the term concept (254). The third term Barthes explains is a connected to the signified and the signifier:

The third term is the correlation of the first two: in the linguistic system, it is the sign; but it is not possible to use this word again without ambiguity, since in myth the signifier is already formed by the signs of the language. I shall call the third term of the myth the signification. [...] since myth has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something, and it imposes it on us (255).

Barthes states that myth is not a symbol and that the Black soldier is not a symbol of French Empire but is an '*indisputable* image' (257). The Black soldier has presence and is transparent, which makes the image 'the accomplice of a concept' that once fulfilled becomes artificial (247). The concept is described as 'a chain of causes and effects, motives and intentions' and is situation oriented (257). So, the concept recreates or rather rewrites history through myth (247). The example of the Black soldier saluting as form gives a shallow meaning that is 'isolated' and 'impoverished' (257). Therefore, the concept of French imperialism is related to

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<sup>447</sup> Ibid., p.254.

the world as a whole and to the representation of the history of France, ‘to its colonial adventures [and] to its present difficulties’ (257). Barthes asks how myth can be received and he answers that there can be three readings of myth. The first is to focus ‘on an empty signifier’ and ‘let the concept fill the form of the myth without ambiguity’ (257). This simplifies the system where the ‘the signification becomes literal again: the Negro who salutes is an example of French imperialism, he is a symbol for it’ (257). This type of focusing is the producer of myths for journalists as they start with a concept ‘and seek a form for it’ (257). The second type of reading is to ‘focus on a full signifier’ where one can distinguish both meaning and form (257).<sup>448</sup> The full signifier creates a distortion on the meaning and form, which can be undone by the signification of myth (257). Here one can see that the black saluting soldier is ‘the alibi of French imperialism.’ (257) Barthes finds that this focusing is the work of the mythologist who ‘deciphers the myth’ and ‘understands a distortion.’ (257). The third type of reading focuses on the ‘mythical signifier’ that is made of meaning and form, which is ‘an ambiguous signification’ (257). Barthes writes, here one becomes the ‘reader of myths’ where the saluting Black soldier is not a symbol but ‘the very presence of French imperialism’ (257).

Barthes finds that the first two types of focusing, destroy myth because they are static and analytical (257). The first two kinds of focusing make ‘intentions obvious [...] the former is cynical, the latter demystifying’ (257). He then describes the third type of focusing as dynamic because ‘it consumes the myth according to the very ends built into its structure’ (257). The third type of focusing allows the reader to live ‘the myth as a story at once true and unreal’ (257). Therefore, Barthes’ myth does not reveal truth it creates an ideology that distorts reality. The function of myth is to create a concept and to give it a new meaning that is relevant for the creator of the myth. This relates to *The Golden Droplet* in which the representation of an imposed image is similar to Barthes notion of a constructed myth. A similar representation to the black soldier saluting is the picture of Idris’s uncle wearing the French medal, Croix de Guerre. In *The Golden Droplet* there is a depiction of a fantasied image of the desert. The *Sahara* is described as the Orient paradise in an advertisement, which is specifically targeted for the Occident viewer. Barthes’ *Mythologies*, exposes the role of myth where he refers to the function of myth as ‘to distort, not to make disappear’ (300). For Barthes, the sign or image imposes a distorted meaning that contributes to the myth created by the image (300). Hence, exposing the image through the written word can create a new way of looking at cultural

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<sup>448</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.257.

representation. Barthes's theoretical work is relevant to the commercialisation of *the Other* under the Western language in *The Golden Droplet*. An example of this is of the poster depiction of the Sahara Oasis, which makes it seem like the perfect spot for a Christmas holiday: 'take your car and spend your xmas holidays in the paradise of a Saharan Oasis'(95).<sup>449</sup> The description of the image of the poster is a 'dream image' however Idris cannot see himself in this European made image of the Sahara:

Dumbfounded, Idris looked at the proffered image of a Saharan Oasis. A clump of palm trees and extravagant flowers surrounded a kidney-shaped swimming pool. Blonde girls in exiguous bikinis were smirking around the turquoise water, drinking from tall glasses out of angled straws. Two tame gazelles were inclining their elegant heads over a huge basket filled with oranges, grapefruit and pineapples. A Saharan Oasis? Wasn't Tabelbala a Saharan oasis? And wasn't he, Idris, the pure product of that oasis? He couldn't recognize himself in that dream image. But had he recognized himself in Salah Brahim's photo of a donkey, and hadn't an unknown man even insinuated himself into his passport? (96)

The moment Idris sees this advertisement he does not recognise that this is the same image of Tabelbala that is described as an oasis paradise. The poster projects a mystical image of the Sahara as the images described by Barthes' is a cultural mechanism and demystification of the image of Tabelbala.

Another example is that of Zett Zobeida's golden droplet that Idris wears, which was a Saharan dancer's pendant. The jewel that was 'twisting around on a leather thong—a golden droplet' (28).<sup>450</sup> The golden droplet is a representation of the identity of the exotic Sahara and of the character Idris. When Idris loses the droplet to a prostitute in Marseilles, he eventually finds it as a display item in a luxury jewellery shop. The droplet's identity changes in the same way Idris becomes commercialised as a Western commodity and product. The golden droplet is a golden bauble and is described as a pendant that contains no 'other meaning than itself' (28). The droplet becomes a representation of an expensive and exotic Saharan jewel. It is also referred to as a 'pure sign' and an 'absolute form' of the Sahara (28). The droplet loses its sense of purity the same way the belly dancer and Idris lost their sense of purity. The loss of the droplet is also a loss of Idris's freedom in Marseille, where he is no longer a free man. It becomes a representation of the *Other/the Orient's* freedom that gets lost, stolen, sold and then put on display by the end of the novel. Idris loses his sanity when he sees his Saharan pendant, a representation of his identity, put on display and not being able to regain it. Zett Zobeida's

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<sup>449</sup> Tournier, p.95.

<sup>450</sup> Tournier, p.28.

dance scene reflects the purity of the life in the desert and attracts Idris to her golden droplet that is seen as not only a sign but a type of image:

Zett Zobeida's dance had now become the ballet of a hundred sonorous jewels on this immobile, veiled statue. Hands of Fatma and crescent moons, gazelles' hooves and mother-of-pearl shells, coral necklaces and amber bracelets, amulets, stars, and pomegranate-shaped gems performed their dance in a great clinking confabulation. But Idris's gaze was particularly attracted by a jewel twisting around on a leather thong—a golden droplet of admirable shape and brilliance. [...] Unlike the crystal pendants that imitate the sky, the earth, the animals of the desert and the fish of the sea, the golden bauble had no other meaning than itself. It was pure sign, absolute form. (28)

Zett Zobeida's dance is described as a ballet that represents different aspects of Islamic and Arab culture such as the hand of Fatma and a crescent moon. The golden droplet hanging from Zett Zobeida's thong sets the comparison between other crystal pendants and that of her golden droplet. The golden droplet represents the desert, the golden sand and 'a world without images, the antithesis of, and perhaps the antidote to, the platinized woman with the camera' (29). The golden droplet is a different type of image, it is a symbol that represents the changing meaning of an image when it becomes the belonging of a certain person. The pendant becomes an image that sets a up comparison between Islamic and Western symbols:

[...] the golden bubble. .Every gold-smith knows it. It's a Roman, or even Etruscan, emblem that still exists in some Saharan tribes. Freeborn Roman children wore this golden droplet [...] as proof of their condition.[...] 'The goldsmith's trade isn't only a craft, it's also a traditional culture. I could tell you about *fibulae*, *peltae*, Solomon's seals, Hand of Fatma' [...] (92).

The representation of the golden droplet is set against that of the Roman pendant instead of other Islamic cultural pendants. The golden droplet was owned by a Saharan dancer and yet it is interpreted using a Western understanding of what the pendant should represent. The goldsmith explains to Idris that smiths no longer work with gold but with silver. Goldsmiths do not know the special technique it takes to work with gold; they believe gold brings bad luck (94).<sup>451</sup> For them, silver is pure and 'straightforward, honest. Gold is much too precious, it excites greed and provokes theft, violence, crime' (94). The reason behind the goldsmith's warning is that Idris is going to an unknown place (Paris): 'It's a symbol of freedom, but its metal has become disastrous' (94).

Another example of the commercialisation of *the Other* is by the sham artist Mustapha. Idris meets Mustapha, an artist who thinks he can recreate the Sahara and its inhabitants. The artist creates a Sahara using a background image of a Saharan scene in his studio. The artist

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<sup>451</sup> Tournier, p.94.

explains that the reason for being photographed behind an image instead of the real outdoor Sahara is purely artistic:

‘Every thing is transcended by its representation in an image. Transcended, yes, that’s what it is. The Sahara represented on this cloth is the Sahara idealized, and at the same time possessed, by the artist.’ The lady had been listening to him, entranced. ‘The gentleman is right, Emile. When he photographs us in this décor, he idealizes us. It’s as if we were soaring over the dunes.’ [...] But the man remained unconvinced. ‘Right. But since the real Sahara is there, I still don’t see why we have to get ourselves photographed in a studio in front of a phoney painted Sahara.’ Mustapha knew how to be conciliating. ‘Dear Monsieur, it is always possible to photograph you walking in the sand and stones with your wife. That is called amateur photography, tourist photography. What *I* do, however, is professional work. I am a creator. I re-create the Sahara in my studio, and at the same time I re-create *you*’ (75).

The prohibition on the creation of the work of art is illustrated by Mustapha who takes on the role to the creator (God). Mustapha pretends to be a real artist and when asked about using coloured photograph, he believes colours are for amateurs (76). Mustapha’s coloured décor is a source of inspiration, which he believes helps him produce pictures in black and white (75). Mustapha is portrayed as not only a sham artist but one who takes on the role of ‘Western artist’ but clearly does not know anything about art (76). The character of Mustapha can be seen as a parody of Western art because the word inspiration has no meaning for him. He believes inspiration can come from the coloured décor, the clients, and the camera (76). The backcloth of the skyline of Paris is different to that of the Sahara, there are images of the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, Notre Dame and the Moulin Rouge where Paris is described and represented as the city of light (77). The Sahara is shown as a place that is black and white, lifeless unlike the city.

‘Oh, if it comes to that, you’ll find plenty of women and photos in Paris! Ah, if I was your age! Paris, the City of Light! The City of Light! The City of Images! Women and images by the million! Of course you’ll find yours, that goes without saying. What’s less obvious, though, is whether it’ll make you any happier!’ [...] And with a mysterious air, he unrolled the backcloth he had chosen. It was Paris by night, a somewhat freakish panorama since it managed to bring together the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and the Moulin Rouge, with the Seine and Notre Dame for good measure. [...] ‘Look! You’re in Paris, the City of Light, Lucky you! How do you like yourself?’ (77)<sup>452</sup>

In the quotation above the image becomes a way of stealing someone’s identity and becomes a way to adopt a *European identity*. Here one can see how the constructed image plays part in changing one’s identity through the comparison of the European city and the Saharan desert.

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<sup>452</sup> Tournier, p.77.

The description of the Saharan desert through European language makes it seem like a city that creates a person through verbal description and images. Idris's immigration to Europe and his exposure to European lifestyle takes away part of his identity and he starts to lose himself. Idris's innocence is taken away from him when his image is moulded into a mannequin. The process of creating Idris's mannequin is described as a type of cultural rape. Idris's image, his mannequin copy becomes a display for windows. Idris's mannequin becomes similar to the golden droplet and the objects in the museum. Idris becomes a commodity of modern society. The image of the Arab becomes a form of commodity fetishism, an item for display. The French artist recreates Idris's image as a subject (Sahara) and not as a real person. The artist himself shows Idris that he is an object that can be constructed in whatever way the artist wants to present him. The French artist refers to himself as a creator who has the ability to recreate the Sahara and Idris in his simple studio.

Sartre's concept of *the gaze* or *the look* in *Being and Nothingness*<sup>453</sup>, is a dominative form controlled by the person looking at the other as an object (560). The other who is perceived feels the gaze of the person looking and feels objectified. Sartre explains this form of gaze as 'being-for-others:'

Being-for-others (*être-pour-autrui*). The third ekstasis (q.v.) of the For-itself. There arises here a new dimension of being in which my Self exists outside as an object for others. The For-others involves a perpetual conflict as each For-itself seeks to recover its own Being by directly or indirectly making an object out of the other (1298).<sup>454</sup>

Being-for-others is a negative type of gaze and is described as a form of domination because it causes alienation to the person who is being perceived. For Sartre the gaze becomes a way for one to become aware of themselves through another person's gaze. The person who is looking becomes superior and the recognition of this gaze produces a sense of wanting to free oneself from that gaze by reversing the gaze. The person's gaze is a mediator between 'myself and me' and causes shame to the person being perceived: 'I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other' (453). The image that is cast back to the person who is objectified becomes his/her source of shame. The source of the shame is the image which becomes a type 'of passing judgment' (453). Sartre's concept of the gaze is similar to the capturing of images in Tournier's *The Golden Droplet* because it reflects back what the other sees. The gaze of the other reveals a type of identity or in Sartre's term 'a new type of being' (454). For Sartre, the person being perceived is in need of the other 'to realize fully all the structures of' his/her being (455).

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<sup>453</sup> Sartre, p. 560.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., p.1298.

Everyone we see becomes an object because of the way they are revealed to us and of our perception of them (473). This is like the way Idris becomes an object like the golden pendant, a colonial object that is the object of a gaze and captured by the camera, a still image that will be perceived for others to see.

The gaze or *the look* is a source of domination that turns the object into an image similar to the colonial gaze that objectifies certain cultures. The object becomes an image that one creates through the gaze:

“Being-seen-by-the-Other” is the truth of “seeing-the-Other.” [...] He is that object in the world which determines an internal flow of the universe, an internal hemorrhage. He is the subject who is revealed to me in that flight of myself toward objectivation” (527-528).<sup>455</sup>

The look in this sense is a reflection and a reference to oneself (528). The gaze of the other is how one knows oneself through the other’s gaze which produces emotions such as shame or pride (528). Sartre’s notion of the gaze becomes a mirror that reflects other people’s perception of a person as an object. One is not able to recognise oneself because ‘I simply am it,’ I simply exist but through another’s gaze (558). This produces a type of image that is imposed on oneself through the other’s gaze: ‘I am no longer master of the situation. Or more exactly, I remain master of it; but it has one real dimension by which it escapes me, by which unforeseen reversals cause it to be otherwise than it appears for me’ (558). The gaze becomes a forced change of one’s reality and situation because the other’s imposed look and imposed image is forced on the person who is being looked at. Tournier’s treatment of this type of gaze creates a critique of the *Western gaze* and Western analysis of other cultures.

For Sartre, the gaze is a source of measuring one’s power because it gives one the ability to turn people into objects (560). The gaze creates an imposed image that is a type of enslavement. One cannot simply act against it because the freedom one thinks he/she has is not their own but a ‘condition of [one’s] being’: ‘In so far as I am the object of values which come to qualify me without my being able to act on this qualification or even to know it, I am enslaved’ (563). Sartre’s notion of the gaze is negative and is destructive because it transforms the person who is being looked at into an *object* who is no longer a *subject* of consciousness (567). The act of the look itself makes one realise he is an object who is enslaved by the other’s freedom of the gaze that is not reciprocal (571). The last scene in *The Golden Droplet* where the character Idris looks at his droplet causes him to go mad. Idris’s reflection through the display glass that got shattered might have caused him to go mad by his own gaze of himself

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<sup>455</sup> Sartre p.527-528.

or his gaze of the droplet that represents him. This is similar to the notion of shame produced by the gaze:

I am ashamed of myself before the Other, we said. The phenomenological reduction must result in removing from consideration the object of shame in order better to make shame itself stand out in its absolute subjectivity. But the Other is not the object of the shame; the object is my act or my situation in the world. They alone can be strictly “reduced.” The Other is not even an objective condition of my shame. Yet he is as the very-being of it. (574)

The imposed image changes the person and causes a type of alienation that is objectified by the gaze. Sartre’s idea of representing ‘man-as-object’ or as an imposed image is reflected in Idris’s commodification as a Saharan man (590). The main character Idris is a 16-year-old Algerian boy who struggles for his freedom from the colonial gaze of a European woman. The dominant image that is imposed causes a conflict and becomes a source of entrapment by the person who looks at the image. This turns the gaze into an image through the camera is a source of domination and turns the person into an object in a negative sense. In *The Golden Droplet* the freedom of expression through calligraphy breaks this dominative element of the image and the colonial gaze. Calligraphy, unlike the image, brings things back to perspective as seen with the image of Sultan Omar and the blonde queen.

An example of the colonial gaze is of the Palm Grove advertisement. The Palm Grove advertisement is aimed to sell a drink, which markets the image of the Saharan Oasis as a luxury holiday drink (134).<sup>456</sup> The director Mage wants Idris to star in his advertisement, which he refers to as a short film (134). Mage chose Idris because his image fits the role of the typical Saharan man drinking Palm Grove. The advertisement shows the importance of advertisements in creating a stereotypical image of a European fantasy on the big screen (134).<sup>457</sup> This is similar to the way Hollywood portrays certain images in a stereotypical way and excludes certain genders, races, and ethnicities from acting roles or directorial positions. The shooting of the Palm Grove commercial reveals the director’s intentions for the advertisement:

The clapper ran in front of the camera with his board, shouting: ‘Palm Grove, 1, take 14!’ In a papier-mâché Sahara, two ‘explorers’ appeared, dressed in khaki and wearing tropical helmets, dragging themselves along, groaning. A skeletal camel followed them. One of the explorers collapsed. His companion propped him up. He groaned: ‘A drink! A drink!’ The other asked him: ‘A drink? What do you want to drink?’ The first explorer suddenly sat up, his face radiant, and pointed to the horizon: ‘Palm Grove!’ ‘Palm Grove?’ ‘But of course—a palm grove. We’re saved!’ ‘Cut!’ shouted Mage. ‘That’s not it at all. You must realize that unless you put more conviction into it, it isn’t

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<sup>456</sup> Tournier, p.134.

<sup>457</sup> Tournier, p.134.

funny. You've got to make people laugh—sure. But because of your conviction! That's the whole secret of a good commercial.' (134)

The commercial is shot in a created Sahara in a studio and the only real Saharan elements are Idris and the camel who are treated as prop objects in the commercial. The director keeps cutting the shooting telling the actors to make it real: 'If you don't believe in it, you won't sell it. That's the ABC of publicity, Publicity is honesty!'" (135). The publicity of the palm grove product is an apparent paradox because commercials are known to be deceitful in relation to the image which is supposed to represent reality and truth. The novel depicts the truth by exposing the falsity of the image. The commercial produces an illusion of the immediacy of the photograph and an illusion of the truth which is in fact not real. However, the product the director is commercialising to sell he himself hates the taste of it and prefers to drink beer than the 'muck' that is Palm Grove (135). The director even tries to make the camel drink Palm Grove in the commercial and tells Idris to make the camel drink it from a straw (135). The director understands the importance of commercials and how they have the power to influence people because he refers to commercials as 'the cream of the cinema. From all points of views: technical, artistic, psychological'" (135). Another example of this is Idris's image, which becomes recreated as a mannequin for selling clothes for African and Maghrebi (Moroccan) clients (158). Idris's image becomes an imposed and constructed image similar to Sartre's notion of the gaze. The mannequin is another type of image that is photocopied several times to attract Moroccan clients to an Algerian image. The use of the word dummy for a mannequin is negative and the process of creating the mannequin in the novel is a form of abuse of the person. The *Western gaze* here reinforces the negative form of the image and how it can be undone by the written word that analyses the gaze and turns it around.

One can see that in *The Golden Droplet* European realism acts as a critique of Western representation of Islamic tradition and culture. In the novel, the Western representation of the image and its critique is achieved through calligraphy. The Islamic form of art is not only a type of imagery, but a religious and spiritual form of art. Calligraphy is represented as a way to break the constructed image that is imposed by the *Western gaze*. The written word is seen as something unchangeable that is a true representation of reality. The word unlike the image is unchangeable and its meaning cannot be changed to represent something other than its immediate meaning. The written novel and the narrator's written words are an example of how calligraphy as a form of descriptive writing, can be a critique of Western art and the representation of the *Other*. The image is an objectification of the domination of the *Western gaze* and once interpreted the gaze can only be broken or the person freed through calligraphy.

Cultural symbols and signs are treated in the same manner as images. The translation of Algerian cultural symbols becomes a critique of the West and its tendency to reduce another culture's symbols to Western terms. Signs like images are perceptible to changes in their meaning and representation as with the golden droplet. So, signs like images can cause damage when they are mistranslated such as Barthes' black soldier. In the novel the Croix de Guerre medal becomes an imposed image. Therefore, images are not a truthful representation of reality because they can be deceitful and force a meaning other than what it is supposed to represent.

## Conclusion

In *The Golden Droplet* images are a representation of modernity, while calligraphy is the representation of traditionalism, in which truth is represented through the language of the Qur'an which is the language of God. Calligraphy is shown to be a true representation of reality by writing about images using imagery. The written word is shown to be truthful because it is analogous to the Islamic idea of the language of God and God's chosen way to communicate with Prophets and man. The representation of calligraphy in the novel is in a religious form as a Holy word that is set against the devil's work that is art. The written word frees the viewer because it is the representation of truth. The tourists' gaze is similar to the act of looking at the image. The narrator's act of writing and the author's writing of a novel breaks the false representation of Algerian culture that is presented in the novel. One can see through the narrator's written critique that Idris's cultural items are displayed as images that were misrepresented by the French Algerian museum. Images are portrayed as something that can easily be manipulated to conceal reality or truth as shown by the portrait of Khair El- Din, Sultan Omar and the blonde queen. In Tournier's novel the Islamic form of writing (calligraphy) is represented to show truth and the distortion of the Western form of representation. I have argued that calligraphy frees the viewer from the gaze of the image and its distortion of truth. Tournier's *The Golden Droplet* gives a positive connotation to calligraphy, unlike the negative sense that Derrida attaches to writing. In many sections of the novel the concept of the image commercialised is shown to contain a dominative aspect as in the colonial gaze, which enforces an imposed image. Tournier's novel is a critique of the other's gaze, *Western gaze* and the Western interpretation of other cultures. In Tournier's novel one can see how the image contains a negative form of representation that can easily distort the truth of what it represents. In *The Golden Droplet* the *Western representation* of the image conveys a negative sense. Michel Tournier's realist narrative shows that calligraphy can act as

a critique of the image and brings the person back to religion as we have seen with the characters Idris and Riad. In *Cultural and Imperialism*, Said argues that Engels has referred to colonial accounts to describe natives, but Tournier, as we have seen through my research, has done his own work on Algerians and Algerian culture (203). Tournier does not echo colonial or imperial doctrine but simply gives an account of his own research on Algerians and Algerian immigrants in France before writing *The Golden Droplet*. *The Golden Droplet* is a European piece of literature that vindicates an Islamic cultural truth through its representation of calligraphy as a true form of representation of truth. The way in which the person goes back to religion is through the act of learning calligraphy or learning how to decipher the images.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to highlight the difference between the creative and destructive critique of Islam in both European and Islamic novels. I have questioned the distinction between the categories of *European* and *Islamic* in relation to the ideas of realism and magical realism in my dissertation. The scholarship on the novels I consider have not shown that the representation and critique of orthodox Islam is possible using *Western* cultural symbols rather than *Islamic* ones as a vehicle of critique. I have shown that a critique of Islamic tradition is possible through both literary modes through what Talal Asad understands as a modern Western way of transmuting religion and through the *modern* but faithful Muslim questioning of religious tradition referred to by Mona Siddiqui. I have shown that one way of overcoming the problem of prejudgment and the prohibition of representation is through a modern Western transmuting of religion through literature. This is demonstrated in Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red*. I investigated the reasons why the representation of Islam does not work in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* that have not been addressed by Paul Weller's *A Mirror For Our Times – 'The Rushdie Affair' and the Future of Multiculturalism*, Roger Y. Clark's *Stranger Gods: Salman Rushdie's Other Worlds*, and Ursula Kluwick's *Exploring Magical Realism in Salman Rushdie's Fiction*. These scholars have shown how Rushdie distorts some of his sources in the Islamic tradition, but they do not offer reasons why the novel cannot be read as a magical realist novel. The scholarship on *The Satanic Verses* as a failed magical realist novel is limited as most of it is concerned with the novel's alleged blasphemy, political subversion and offensive representations. My chapter on *The Satanic Verses* has examined the spectrum that exists between magical realism and realism and the reasons why the novel cannot be read as a magical realist novel. I have demonstrated that the novel is not a work of magical realism because it does not meet the criteria of a magical realist novel. The previous scholarship has not demonstrated that magical realism is not rightly applied in the novel. Kluwick does not investigate the magical occurrences the novel depicts, which are presented as a series of dreams within dreams that does not apply to this literary mode. Kluwick's focus is on Rushdie's own style of realism. However, as I have shown, the use of dreams in the novel negates the logic of everyday life. I have also shown that Rushdie's use of this technique causes the novel to be read as fiction rather than as a magical realist fiction because the narrator and characters do not accept these magical occurrences as part of a *real* world and therefore the reader does not accept them as well. Clark and Weller explore the media's attention the novel received after its publication and its impact on the Muslim

community as many others have. I have addressed Talal Asad's concept of the possibility of transmuting religion into literature and shown how *The Satanic Verses* does not portray a modern approach in relation to Islam. The novel cannot be read as both a modern Western approach to Islam and a secular approach to religion through literature. Islam is compatible with modernity and can be understood within our modern era through the pious inquiry of faith. Islam, unlike its misrepresentation in *The Satanic Verses*, can accommodate modernity.

John Mullan in *How Novels Work* takes up the concept of *ekphrasis* (an oral description of a work of art) but does not investigate the way *ekphrasis* can enable a creative critique of orthodox Islam, nor why art is prohibited in the Islamic tradition. Mullan examines *ekphrasis* as a device used in Greek poetry and shows how it helps solve the murder case depicted in the novel but does not consider it as a technique of magical realism. Mullan does not fully explore what he calls the 'strange codes of Western and Eastern forms of representation' (253). Mullan does not address the Islamic prohibitions on art but compares different artistic styles. In *My Name Is Red* I have explored the concept of *ekphrasis* in relation to Islam by showing how *ekphrasis* can help to overcome the prohibition of representation and critique of Islam because it is voiced through a description of animate and inanimate objects. I demonstrate that Talal Asad's idea of the possibility of transmuting religion into literature is realized in this novel through the technique of *ekphrasis*. In my analysis of this novel, I have shown how it is possible to address Islamic questions in a modern manner in relation to the West. I have shown how Western and non-Western readers can question parts of the Qur'anic text in a way that is both culturally and theologically sensitive and relatable to the modern world. Gloria Fisk and John Mullan do not address the reasons behind the prohibition of representing God, the Prophet Muhammad or anything considered sacred in *My Name Is Red*. I have extended my analysis in philosophical terms. I have shown this through an analysis of Plato's metaphor of the cave in relation to orthodox Islam and how this might relate in our modern era to an enlightened way of thinking of Islam.

Yousef Al-Mohaimed's *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* shows how literature can be relevant to Cultural Studies. I have demonstrated that some cultural practices are not part of orthodox Islam even when they are practiced in an Islamic region. Certain practices which are meaningful in one culture can be mistranslated by adherents of another, and the novel shows how this mistranslation occurs in relation to Islam. I have shown how Western symbols or labels are translated out of their original cultural context through the example of Egyptian actress whose screen name differs from the characters' played by the actress. I have demonstrated this in the novel with the example of Van Gogh, where there is a

misunderstanding of cultural translation between the East and West depicted by the characters. The novel shows how the *Islamic novel* can be part of a critique of cultural practices that violate modern ethical standards and criticises the normalization of non-sacred acts such as the rape of the character Tawfiq on the ship carrying pilgrims to Mecca.

Michel Tournier's *The Golden Droplet* is a *European* realist novel that thematizes the Islamic prohibition of images and validates an Islamic mode of representation. Susan Petit's *Michel Tournier's Metaphysical Fictions* does not explore the Islamic side of the representation of the image and the advantages of calligraphy over the image. Michael Worton's *Michel Tournier* considers Tournier's work as a whole. Worton investigates the purity of the sign through calligraphy and the need of Tournier's character Idris to retrieve his image in order to find peace. However, Worton does not consider the possibility that Idris's journey is not just to find inner peace by retrieving the image; but that it is provoked by a desire to prevent the imposition of the Western gaze on the *Orient*. The work of Petit and Worton does not address the subject of Islam in relation to the image or the sign. The scholarship on the novel does not show that calligraphy, as *descriptive* writing rather than the traditional Islamic use of calligraphy as *beautiful* writing, can act as a critique of the West. Petit's analysis touches on the surface of Western cultural appropriation and the imposed image of the Sahara through photography and art. This is shown through an analysis of the critique of Western appropriation of Algerian culture and the imposed image of the Sahara that is mediated using media advertisements within the novel. Cultural appropriation in the novel enforces an imposed image that creates a false and corrupt translation of Algerian culture. This validates the Islamic prohibition on images through the critique of the Western image and the Western gaze. However, Petit does not explore what makes the sign pure unlike the image which forces a false image or a fantasized image such as the Palm Grove Saharan advertisement. The scholarship on calligraphy in the novel is limited. The scholarship does not show that calligraphy in the novel is analogous to the Holy Qur'an as God's word and therefore a form of writing which may be considered as *truthful* in an Islamic context.

This thesis has shown that a persuasive modern literary interpretation of Islam is possible in relation to the West. I have demonstrated how *The Satanic Verses* cannot be read as a magical realist novel without emphasizing the perceived *blasphemy* of the novel as most Islamic scholars have done. In my discussion of Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red*, Yousuf al-Mohaimed's *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* and Michel Tournier's *The Golden Droplet*, I have demonstrated how the use of Western cultural symbols can interpret orthodox Islam without portraying an *Oriental* effect in its representation. I have also shown how cultural translation

through literature can be a more powerful source of insight for cultural studies than the anthropological interpretation of cultures, especially in relation to the Islamic world.

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