

## Hegemony And Discourse In John Updike's *Terrorist*

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paper presented to AISA & Multimedia University of Kenya  
11<sup>th</sup> International Interdisciplinary Conference Proceedings.

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### Abstract

This paper examines the concepts of hegemony and discourse in John Updike's *Terrorist*. It argues that power and knowledge which underpins these concepts, manifests in complex and multiple ways in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The paper interrogates the portrayal of hegemony and discourse in *Terrorist* from the prism of postcolonial framework. Drawing from the Orientalism strand, as espoused by Edward Said, the paper explores how hegemony and discourse are facilitative and enabling factors of domination, subservience, marginalization and exploitation of subjects. This study reveals that, in terrorism fictionanalyzed, the dominant entities rely on hegemony and discourse to secure the consent of the exploited in the commission and perpetuation of terrorist acts. Further, there are two entities involved in terrorism: those who recruit the perpetrators and those who perpetrate the actual act. Within a postcolonial framework, the former are the dominant and powerful, reminiscent of the colonizer, while the later are the exploited and manipulated, synonymous with the colonized. As such, with reference to an exploitative discourse, the recruiter(s) are able to establish a consensual or hegemonic relationship with the perpetrators. The discourse they propound successfully convinces the perpetrators, that the terrorist acts they propose to commit would serve their interests. Thus, the paper holds that, the relationship between the recruiters and perpetrators of terrorism is based on power relations; it mirrors the relationship of the colonizer and the colonized. Further, creation of subjectivity is an essential element of colonial discourse which the recruiting agent as analyzed in Updike's *Terrorist* depends on in order to actualize their schemes.

**Keywords:** Discourse, hegemony, subjectivity, mimicry, domination

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Date of Submission: 20-11-2021

Date of Acceptance: 05-12-2021

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Hegemony and discourse are two critical concepts at the heart of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. He formulates his body of work on the foundation of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony and the French theorist, Michel Foucault's idea of discourse (Jansen, 2008; Walkerdine, 2017). The fundamental premise of hegemony, as elaborated by Gramsci, entails the control of one social class (dominant) against another (dominated) on the basis of the former's consent (Im, 1991; Herrmann, 2017). Discourse as used by Foucault and adopted by Said, deals with the notions of power, knowledge and hegemony (Jansen, 2008). According to Moosavinia et al. (2019), Foucault "defines discourse as a system of statements by which a dominant group in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledges, disciplines and values upon the dominated groups" (p.183). Discourse then is intimately connected to power and knowledge (Powers, 2015; Zhao, 2017). As a constituent of power and therefore an aspect of the dominant, discourse determines the creation and distribution of the perceived truth. Such truth can function as an element of oppression enacted by the dominant against the dominated. Discourse, "is interwoven with power and knowledge to constitute the oppression of those 'others' in our society, serving to marginalize, silence and oppress them" (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2014, p. 25). In *Terrorist*, hegemony and discourse constitute alternative avenues of authority, guidance and superiority of the West against the East. The concepts form the basis upon which the Occident or the West claims the centre. Updike's *Terrorist* fictionalizes the trauma of a young adult, Ahmad Ashmawy, who struggles to reconcile himself to conflicting loyalties that involve the compulsion to commit a terrorist act against a personal intuition of self-preservation. His teacher, Sheikh Rashid, who also acts as a surrogate father, sets out to

impart a radical ideology on Ahmad, but the student develops sufficient doubt on this discourse that ultimately leads to the mission's failure. The relationship between Shaikh Rashid, the teacher, and his student Ahmad mirrors power relations of hegemony and discourse which form the centrepiece of the present analysis.

## **1.2 Consensual Manipulation**

By their very nature, hegemony and discourse entails aspects of manipulation. Subjects are exposed to certain manipulated realities which function to compel their cooperation in the erroneous understanding that their interests are served. In *Terrorist*, the relationship between Ahmad and Shaikh Rashid reflects discourse and hegemony at play within a postcolonial framework. Ahmad who is raised by a single mother after his father flees the demanding capitalist life of America, is presented as a pawn in a grand scheme that is birthed and nurtured by the Sheikh. The scheme involves preparation of Ahmad for the eventual perpetuation of a terrorist act in Lincoln Tunnel. At 18 years, Ahmad is a dedicated Muslim. It is the absence of his father that influences him to join Islam. This is after "he had heard about it in the chatter of his black classmates concerning their mosques, their preachers who "didn't take none of the man's shit"" (p. 99). It is here that Ahmad encounters Shaikh Rashid, his "teacher at the mosque" (p.99) as well as his "surrogate father" (p.13).

The fact that Ahmad begins his Qur'anic lessons at "age eleven" (p.42) comments on his inferiority in relation to Shaikh Rashid who was "much older than Ahmad" (p.7). Equally important, is the fact that, for Ahmad, "...the mosque took him in as a child of eleven; it let him be born again." (p.99). The idea of being born again suggests a transformation in the character and being of an individual. In this sense, the act implies a transition.

The transition of Ahmad is predicated on the religious discourse that is imparted on him by Shaikh Rashid in which, "for seven years Ahmad has been coming twice a week, for an hour and a half, to learn the Qur'an" (p.101). Since in religious parlance the act of being born again entails notions of change (Piper, 2009), it is necessary to affirm that, the tutelage of Shaikh Rashid is what necessitates Ahmad's transformation. Thus, as Letseka and Pitsoe (2014) note that discourse "generally means written or spoken communication" (p.24), the transformation of Ahmad is effected by the religious discourse through the Qur'anic learning propounded by Shaikh Rashid.

This transformation constitutes one aspect of Shaikh Rashid's control, influence and manipulation of Ahmad. It is evidence to the domination of the self against marginalization of the other. It's a transition that is attained through the discourse created and perpetuated by Shaikh Rashid. In describing Ahmad as 'transformed' the necessity of the Shaikh's discourse which performs the function of a bridge is underlined. His position of power in relation to Ahmad symbolizes the West vs the East binary in which the former controlled and dominated the latter through a discourse that stressed its superiority.

In coloniality, discourse sought to 'transform' the thoughts of the colonized into accepting the superiority of the West (Said, 1978). Commenting on power and knowledge in Foucault's discourse, Azani (2014) opines, "Discourse can be seen as a way of looking at the world through the view that has been altered by power and knowledge" (p.428). In relation to *Terrorist*, Ahmad's transformation is based on the knowledge imparted on him by Shaikh Rashid, which as Azani claims, has altered his world view. The cultural discourse developed by the perceived colonizers altered the mental images of their subjects' selves. El Aidi and Yechouti (2017) contends that Said analyzed Orientalism as a "hegemonic discourse" through which the West was able to control the Orient. Further, the scholars observe, "Said follows Gramsci in arguing that it is through culture and ideology that the Western powers promote certain ways of thinking which legitimizes their invasion of the Orient" (El Aidi & Yechouti, 2017, p.1).

Described as "slight and slim as a dagger, with a dangerous slyness about him..." (p.145), the Shaikh Rashid possess unparalleled authority over his student. The fact of being a teacher and a father affirms that. The image of 'a father' and 'a teacher' evokes connotations of power and knowledge. It reflects a skewed relationship between Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad which sets the stage for the control and domination of the latter by the former. Masculinity (Shaikh as a father) and knowledge (Shaikh as a teacher) constitute the very epitome of unchallengeable and unassailable Western authority. These are the core concepts at the centre of the Western hegemonic control and manipulation of the East.

Therefore, viewed from this narrow lens, the Shaikh is an embodiment of Western hegemony. By virtue of being ascribed the image of a father and a teacher, this character assumes the capacity to "represent, to dominate and define" (Said, 1978). The nature of his power is a contrast to his student, Ahmad, who is naïve and innocent. Shaikh Rashid is responsible for transforming Ahmad through the discourse which he expounds.

The superiority of Shaikh Rashid speaks of the power of the West in contrast to the powerlessness of the colonized. The imbalanced power structure inherent in the split image of teacher/student as represented by Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad reflects the West vs East divide. In colonialism, the colonized subjects were considered as ignorant and needful of civilizing knowledge of the colonizer. They were passive objects to the colonial discourse which was imparted by colonialists who assumed a dominant role in the relationship.

Similarly, Shaikh Rashid is a teacher at the mosque hence the giver of knowledge, which as shown in the foregoing, is synonymous with power. It is this power that the Shaikh leverages on to manipulate and compel Ahmad into acts of terrorism.

In the mosque, the relationship between Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad illustrates an interplay of knowledge, power and discourse. In his intention to use Ahmad in a terrorist mission, the Shaikh informs him, "It would involve a *shahīd* whose love of God is unqualified, and who impatiently thirsts for the glory of Paradise. Are you such a one, Ahmad?" (p.234). This proposal is advanced after many years of Ahmad's exposure to Shaikh Rashid teachings. As noted in the foregoing, the period is seven years of Ahmad's Qur'anic learning under Shaikh Rashid. The import of this is that, the Shaikh needed to prepare his student. He needed to convince him that eventually, when called upon for this action, it would be for his interest. This then becomes religious indoctrination and brainwashing for the purposes of Ahmad being used in a terrorist mission. The long period of time taken to prepare him mirrors the notion that Orientalist discourse was used to set the ground for the eventual colonization (Said, 1978).

As the case of Ahmad's religious indoctrination affirms, discourse is important in achieving a hegemonic relationship between the West and the colonized. Moosavinia *et al.* (2019) explain how "Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule...colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism" (p.184). Before Ahmad is informed that he has a role to play in the terrorist mission, he is exposed to many years of religious learning under Shaikh Rashid. His training is part of preparatory ground. This mirrors back to the colonial rule which was preceded by mainly missionary work. Ahmad's religious training therefore represents the Orientalists missionary work that laid the ground for the eventual colonization.

In the missionary phase, the colonized subjects were supposedly transformed from primitive and backward cultures to civilized Christian subjects. Their transition in the hands of the missionaries marked a cultural transformation. It also meant, their acceptance of the West as superior which by implication reasserted their inferiority. Similarly, for Ahmad, it is after his religious training that Shaikh Rashid proposes to use him as a tool in a terrorist violence. Ahmad's consent to Shaikh Rashid's plot is easier because he is trained to think that the Shaikh acts in his best interests. He is like a missionary trained convert who welcomes the occupation and exploitation of the West whom he believes are out to rescue him from darkness and primitivity. Assenting to the control and domination of a superior entity demonstrates the success of the former's discourse. It also affirms the superiority of the controlling entity, who in the colonial discourse, refers to the West.

Im (1991) holds that, "consent can be obtained through a process of massive indoctrination or ideological predominance over the subordinate classes" and "endless production of false consciousness or ideological mystification" (p.124). According to this scholar, false consciousness is a Marxist concept which explained how the ruling class maintained their control by falsely persuading the proletariat that colonization served their interests. This case is similar to Ahmad who Shaikh Rashid has convinced that the proposed terrorist act would serve his interests, for among other things, he would be rewarded.

The theology of rewards for terrorism violence is part of the "endless false consciousness" which Shaikh Rashid has brainwashed and indoctrinated Ahmad with. It is a discourse that speaks of violence as "...our war for God" (p.234) and being a holy cause, "...God never deserts those who wage war on his behalf". (p.271). Rather, he rewards them. As such, "...Only the unbelievers fear death absolutely" (p.185). But true believers in mold of Ahmad, are unafraid of death through violence because "They know that Paradise awaits the righteous" (p.174).

The case of Ahmad and Shaikh Rashid demonstrates how discourse is central in securing hegemony which facilitates the success of Orientalism or colonization. It is through discourse that Ahmad is fed the knowledge about the rewards of committing terrorism violence. This knowledge convinces him, without force, that his participation in the plotted terrorist mission is in his best interest. It is important to emphasize that the Shaikh has an interest in the proposed terrorist mission. Its success depends on persuading Ahmad to participate it. Similarly, the West has an interest in its general domination of the East. The success of their quest in this mission also largely lies with cooperation of the colonized groups. The relationship between Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad points out how a dominant group can leverage on its superiority to create a conducive environment for furtherance of its mission. Hegemony and discourse play a role in the creation of such an environment. This partly explains the success of the West in their quest to dominate other parts of the world. A promise of rewards, the notion that willingly submitting to a dominant entity is in the interest of the dominated, is the centrepiece of the West's domination of the East.

The narrative of rewards in the relationship between the dominating and the dominated is key in Shaikh Rashid's success towards convincing Ahmad to be part of a terrorist mission. One particular form of reward that Ahmad and many like him, the would-be terrorists, are promised, is the reward of virgins in heaven. Because of this presumed reward, Ahmad's teacher, Shaikh Rashid informs him, "There are many others eager for a glorious name and the assurance of eternal bliss. The Jihad is overwhelmed by volunteers even in this homeland of evil and irreligion" (p.237). Mr. Jack Levy, Ahmad's guidance and counselling teacher at Central High,

appears to mock Ahmad regarding this reward, saying, "tell me about the virgins. The seventy-two virgins who will minister to you on the other side" (p.304). Mr. Levy's line of inquiry mirrors Joryleen's, Ahmad's classmate, who earlier had also sought Ahmad's input in relation to the supposed paradisaical feminine bliss, when she says, "what about all them virgins on other side? What happens to purity when those young-men martyrs get there, all full of spunk?" (p.70-71).

Evidently, Joryleen and Mr. Levy are ridiculing this supposed holy bliss to be partaken in Paradise by those who commit acts of violence while on earth. They see this as a reflection of irrationality, a quality associated with the East or the colonized communities. Once again, Ahmad is reaffirming the inferiority of those he represents: the East. He comes across as gullible and intellectually fragile. His weakness in character serves to enhance the strength and power of his teacher, who in a narrow sense, represents the West.

However, the knowledge that Ahmad has been imbibed with is what compels him to embrace the supposition of virgins as rewards for his intended violence. It is the knowledge/discourse that secured his hegemonic subordination to Shaikh Rashid. He willingly consents to Shaikh's control and manipulation. Since power and knowledge are related, Letseka and Pitsoe (2014) opine that through discourse, knowledge and power, the ruled end up with "casual acceptance of the reality with which they are presented" (p.24). The reality which Ahmad has been presented suggests his labour of violence translates to a heavenly reward. Hutcheon (1991) contends that, discourse is a strategy for domination and not an apparatus of force. Ahmad Mulloy's consent to the commission of the plotted violence is not coerced but is inbuilt into discourse that Shaikh Rashid has subjected to him since his childhood. This is now part of his identity.

There are parallels between the notions of reward for terrorism violence and the nature of hegemonic relationship between the West and the colonized. The supposed reward for terrorism violence which secures the consent of Ahmad in the text under study is synonymous with the supposed benefits the colonized people are promised by their cooperation. Since hegemony is premised on the consent of the ruled (Im, 1991; Herrmann, 2017), it is necessary to examine the nature of this consent as is the case with Ahmad in *Terrorist*.

As hypothesized from the foregoing, the notion of reward is central in securing consent. Through reward, the consenting party believes its interests are served. According to Said, discourse enables the hegemony of Occidents over the Orientals because it persuades them that colonization of the West is good for them (Said, 1978). The supposed benefit of West's domination becomes the central basis upon which a hegemonic control is developed. In other colonized regions like Africa, colonization was justified on the perceived benefits of civilization of Africans from their backward cultures (Ngugi, 1986). These cases demonstrate that Orientalism and colonization depends on some form of promise, normally a misrepresentation and manipulation, to actualize their cause.

The case of Ahmad in *Terrorist* being promised rewards in the aftermath of committing a terrorist act mirrors the colonial condition where hegemonic control is secured on the strength of presumed benefits for the colonized. Lull (1995) states, "Hegemony implies a willing agreement by people to be governed by principles, rules, and laws they believe operate in their best interests, even though in actual practise, they may not" (p.34). Barbero (as cited in Lull, 1995), similarly notes, "one class exercises hegemony to the extent that the dominating class has interests which the subaltern class recognizes as being in some degree their interests too" (p.35). As it is evident in these illustrations, the colonized can be lulled by a colonist discourse, to believe they benefit from it. It is the belief that the colonial condition is benefiting to the colonized that convinces them to consent to an imperial enterprise (Said, 1978).

If hegemony is based on consent as analyzed above, then it must proceed through manipulation. The promises and rewards presumed to accrue to the ruled are misrepresentations designed to create a false consciousness among the colonized so as to guarantee continued cooperation and acceptance of their colonized condition. The thematic portrayal of manipulation and exploitation in *Terrorist*, therefore serve to highlight the nature of consent inherent in a hegemonic relationship between the West and the East.

In the era of active imperialism, the colonial enterprise was largely conducted on the basis of manipulation. Dirar (2007) argues, in colonialism, the "colonial administration devised a successful policy of social and political manipulation revolving around ethnicity, religion and social stratification" (p. 258). This means, the conduct of the West imperialism is overly reliant on manipulation and exploitation as a strategy to compel the consent of the colonized. As Dirar contends, the manipulation of the colonial system is all encompassing in its quest to exert a hegemonic power. It straddles religion, ethnicity and other societal elements. Also, the system is exploitative even as it creates a façade of voluntary cooperation of the colonized (Stoddart, 2007).

In *Orientalism*, Said was of the view that "The subaltern people were so manipulated that it did not even occur to them to question the dominant system of rule which came to be seen as normal" (El Aidi & Yechouti, 2017). Having been subjected to a prolonged state of manipulation and exploitation, El Aidi and Yechouti suggest, the Orientals orient themselves to their condition which they begin to accept as desirable and natural.

In *Terrorist*, Ahmad is manipulated into accepting a role which ultimately serves the interest of Shaikh Rashid. Since the power relations between Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad is skewed in the direction of the Shaikh, the student is deliberately molded into a persona, character and vessel that advances a hidden agenda for the Shaikh. The agenda entails manipulating Ahmad to commit a terrorist act which serves unstated interest of the Shaikh. Yet at all times, Ahmad is convinced that his actions are beneficial to himself.

When he forfeits further formal education, Ahmad informs Mr. Jack Levy that that was the decision of his teacher at the mosque, the Shaikh. Pressed for a reason, he reports, "He (Shaikh Rashid) said the college track exposed me to corrupting influences—bad philosophy and bad literature. Western culture is Godless" (p.38). In this case, Ahmad is shown to be a vessel that is controlled and manipulated by the Shaikh. A consequential decision such as one involving his schooling is determined by his teacher at the Mosque. Initially, Jack had felt, "the boy (Ahmad) speaks with a pained stateliness; he is imitating some adult he knows, a smooth and formal talker" (p.34). As the student reveals later, the person he is imitating is Shaikh Rashid, his teacher at the mosque and also a symbol of the colonizer or Orientalist.

In his mimicry of Shaikh Rashid, Ahmad reveals the underlying operations of the colonial discourse he is immersed in. This desire to project to himself the attributes of his exploiter and manipulator demonstrate the complementarity of mimicry and hegemony in the colonial discourse. In postcolonialism, mimicry refers a practise among the colonized people in which they mimic or copy such attributes as language, customs, attitudes and beliefs of the colonizer (Kumar, 2011; Singh, 2009). For Fanon, mimicry is a negative attribute for it results from the inferiority complex of the colonized having been exposed to a dehumanizing colonial discourse which damaged their mental states (Mondal, 2014). However, for Bhabha, mimicry can perform a subversive role against the colonial discourse for in imitating the colonizer, the falsity of their authority is exposed (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1998).

In relation to Ahmad in *Terrorist*, his deference to and mimicry of Shaikh Rashid testifies to the magnitude of his subservience to his master. Viera (2018) asserts, "Postcolonial subjects are motivated by an unconscious and anxiety-driven desire to imitate their former colonial masters" (p.151). For Ahmad then, he is completely imprisoned to the discourse propounded by Shaikh Rashid. This explains why, even though conscious of being manipulated, he still cannot muster the confidence to rescue himself from the condition. So, when the Shaikh presents him with the opportunity to call out his manipulation and exploitation, Ahmad hesitates,

"If there is any uncertainty in your heart, dear boy, speak it now, without penalty. It will be as if this conversation has never taken place. I (Shaikh) ask from you only silence, a silence in which someone with more courage and faith may carry out the mission." The boy knows he is being manipulated, yet accedes to the manipulation, since it draws from him a sacred potential. "No, the mission is mine, though I feel shrunk to the size of a worm within it." (p.237)

Satisfied, later, the Shaikh remarks, "...excellent, you don't feel manipulated by your elders?" (p.270). To this, Ahmad responds, "Of course not. I feel wisely guided by them" (p.270).

Ahmad's situation indicates how in a hegemonic relationship between the West and the colonized, it is difficult for the colonized to perceive their condition and work to extricate themselves from it. In a way, they are enslaved to a reality which is created by a dominating colonizing entity. Stoddart (2007) observes, "hegemonic power works to convince individuals and social classes to subscribe to the social values and norms of an inherently exploitative system (which) relies on voluntarism and participation" (p.201). Therefore, even as he discerns the exploitation of Shaikh Rashid Ahmad is entrapped. His mother, Teresa Mulloy, observes,

"Ahmad often returns disturbed from one of their sessions," she says. "I don't think the man—I've met him, but just barely— shows enough conviction to satisfy Ahmad. I know my son is eighteen and shouldn't be so naïve, but he still expects adults to be absolutely sincere and sure of things. Even supernatural things" (p.88).

Here, Teresa Mulloy touches on the deceit of Shaikh Rashid who enlists Ahmad as an ally in terrorist mission that serves his unstated interests. The Shaikh's hesitancy in relation to Teresa's stated 'supernatural things' point to the unreliability of the reward narrative which he relies on to secure the consent and participation of Ahmad. But more significantly, the deceit serves to expose how the colonizers are deceptive in the supposed rewards of their colonial enterprise. The notion that colonialism is beneficial to the colonized people as perpetuated in the colonial discourse, is shown through Ahmad and Shaikh Rashid to be deception and manipulation designed to extract a hegemonic control of the colonized people. But from the perspective of the West, it demonstrates the success of the Western domination of the East through methods which are less exertive and costly. In a way, the success of discourse and hegemony illuminates the superiority and the power of the Occident or the West.

In the text under study, another character who also advances the theme of exploitation manifested through discourse and hegemony is Joryleen Grant in her relationship with Tylenol Jones. Joryleen liaison with Tylenol, serves to reveal how hegemonic control, which as shown in the foregoing discussion, is intertwined with domination and power. Of Joryleen, Ahmad thinks, "...he arouses curiosity in her. She wants to get close

to smell him better, even though She already has a boyfriend, a notorious “bad” one. Women are animals easily led; Ahmad has been warned by Shaikh Rashid” (p.10). Joryleen’s relationship with her ‘bad’ boyfriend exhibits aspects of exploitation tied to hegemony.

Tylenol Jones, for that, is an exploitative and dominant partner in his relationship with Joryleen. He was named thus after “His mother, having delivered a ten-pound infant, saw the name in a television commercial for painkiller and liked the sound of it” (p.15). In this sense, Tylenol by his dominant nature, is a symbol of the Orientalist colonizer. His association to television commercial and painkiller establishes this symbolism.

Television commercials promote-though typically exaggerate-positive aspects of a product so as to enhance consumption. They are at the heart of commercialism and capitalism which are the defining features of the West. As for the painkillers, the drugs are thought to induce brief reprieve from discomfort without addressing the substance of the problem. So, in this sense, painkiller may lull one into a false sense of normalcy without tackling the core root of the problem. This is a key tenet of colonialism and hegemony. It sought to convince the colonized that the enterprise would result to enhancement of their overall being, yet underneath, it created protracted and enduring issues of indigenous cultural annulment and debauchery.

It is significant that, both Ahmad and Joryleen-representatives of the marginalized-are victims of Tylenol’s aggression, another aspect of the powerful West. Ahmad thinks Tylenol “is just a robot of meat, a body too full of its juices and reflexes to have a brain” (p.17). This thinking points to his contempt of the dominant West whom he considers exploitative. In his union with Joryleen, Tylenol exploits and uses her as a sex worker in order to raise money. But just like Ahmad, Joryleen is represented as incapable of perceiving her exploited condition. The boyfriend refuses to get a job for his own money because:

He thinks too big for any job. He has plans to be a big man some day and meanwhile asks me (Joryleen Grant) to put a little bread on the table. He doesn’t ax me to work the street, just oblige the somebody now and then, usually some white man. When we’re fixed up and settled down, he’s gone to treat me like a queen, he says (p.219)

As indicated from the foregoing, hegemony depends on some form of reward or promise. That the consent of the exploited in a colonial condition is securable on the presumption of his benefits. In Joryleen’s case, she consents to her exploitation based on the promise that once her boyfriend is stable, he would treat her as ‘queen.’ It is this promise that convinces her to withstand mistreatment and violent relationship in the hands of her boyfriend. Joryleen informs Ahmad, that if she does not go through with sex arrangements her boyfriend occasionally arranges, and which are supposed to generate money for him, then he would “beat the shit out of me...” (p.220). However, she overlooks all these and sticks in the abusive relationship since in her opinion, to be treated like a queen in the future, overrides her inconveniences of the present. This is apparent when Ahmad ironically attempts to wriggle her away from Tylenol, telling her, “...” suppose I told you to get away from Tylenol?” “That is not so easy. He’s, my man.” Ahmad tries to understand. “We seek to attachment, however unfortunate” (p.227).

Despite their apparent incongruence, the friendship and closeness between Ahmad and Joryleen disclose the manipulative nature of hegemonic relationships. The two are victims of different discourses but confront a similar fate. When questioned to name the individual who should be compensated as a result of his terrorist act, Ahmad settles on Joryleen, because the compensation, “might help her to achieve freedom” (p.235). Ahmad’s sense of freedom relates to Joryleen’s liberation from the clutches of Tylenol exploitation. For Ahmad, this freedom is also symbolic of the deliverance of the dominated subjects from clutches of the dominant West. Joryleen’s freedom is synonymous with the eventual enlightenment and illumination of the colonized subject. It entails the realization of the dark reality of colonization ushered in through a false consciousness of hegemony. This freedom directly corresponds to the motto of their school, Central High, which both Ahmad and Joryleen went, namely, “Knowledge is Freedom” (p.200). Thus, to grant freedom, as Ahmad intends for Joryleen, presupposes a gain of knowledge, which as expounded, in Foucauldian discourse, also means power.

### **1.3 SUBJECTIVITY**

Subjectivity as it relates to the character of Ahmad in *Terrorist*, is a relevant theme in postcolonialism. In the West vs East symbolic relationship between Ahmad and Shaikh Rashid, the notion of subjectivity arises as a postcolonial term which describes aspects of subject and subjectification. Werbner and Werbner (2002) understand postcolonial subjectivity as “a matter of subjugation...determined by discourses” (p.3). From this perspective, a colonized entity is subject to a dominant discourse which is responsible for subjugating it. This explains Ahmad’s subjugation to the authority of the Shaikh expressed in the religious teachings which situate him as a student and therefore minor and inferior, both literally and conceptually. The scholars further evince, “marginalization, dispossession and exploitation form the grounds of subjectivities” (Werbner & Werbner,

2002, p.4). Marginalization is the primary condition of Ahmad given his diminished and disempowered status in this relationship.

The marginality of Ahmad through the dominant discourse propounded by Shaikh Rashid is founded on his subjectivity. It relies on the assumed superiority of the Shaikh who represents the West. Viera (2018) notes that subjectivity in a postcolonial condition is “dominated by the cultural values and identity markers associated with Western coloniality, in which the colonized people were perceived as inferior and in need of permanent tutelage” (p.144). In the text, Ahmad is tutored by the Shaikh from a young age, and in the process influencing his identity and subjectivity. In this sense, his subjectivity is a mirror image of his superior tutor who has sought to mold his student according to radical ideology that culminates in the perpetuation of a terrorist attack.

Sheikh Rashid leans on a radical ideology to promote particular discourse which ultimately secures the consent of Ahmad to participate in a terrorist mission without coercion. Ideology, which for Marx, belonged to the superstructure constituted a non-coercive measure to extract hegemony of the ruled (Im, 1991). Pihlaja and Musolff (2018) state that power relations are part of ideologies which then are “established and renegotiated in and through discourse” (p.381). The scholars define ideology as “a set of evaluative beliefs and attitudes regarding socially relevant topics, including language itself, which is constructed in the process of discourse” (Pihlaja & Musolff, 2018, p.382). For Powers (2015), ideology has to do with how people imagine they relate to their real life. She asserts “ideology is an unacknowledged value system operating in a systematic manner” (p.19).

Ideology and subjectivity are complementary concepts at the heart of colonial discourse that laced with exploitation and marginalization. Treacher (2005) asserts that “subjectivity is shaped by postcolonial relations and ideologies” (p.49). This is evident as Ahmad is shaped according to an ideology of the Shaikh. The end product is not whom he is, but rather, a representation of the discourses he is exposed to. Burney (2012) asserts that “in colonial discourse, the subjectivity of the colonized is revealed in the gaze of the imperial other” (p.192).

Explaining how the identity of the colonized is molded in the image of the West, Bick (2015) observes “in the constitution of colonial subjectivity, the colonized culture becomes absorbed by the dominant culture and re organized into language of the hegemony” (p.8). When analyzed from this perspective, Ahmad is seen as advancing the cause of the colonizer in his desire to perpetuate terrorism violence. From the age of eleven, Ahmad has been going “to the mosque for his “biweekly Qur’anic lessons” (p.97) conducted by Shaikh Rashid. The mosque is a place of learning and knowledge. But it is the nature of the knowledge in this setting that becomes of interest for as expounded, knowledge in Foucauldian discourse, cannot be innocent, rather, it is intertwined with power. Foucault, Zhao (2017) claims, “explores ways in which power and knowledge are connected in the production of subjectivity and identity in terms of discourse” (p.375).

Ahmad’s later embrace of radicalism and extremism, as a consequent of his transformation, mirrors the theology of his master. This represents a concrete realization of his subjectification within the analysis of subjectivity. Cowles (2007) argues, “the colonial subject is a ‘subject’ in the sense that the people of a kingdom are subjects of the king; the colonized are subjects of the colonizing power” (p.29). The relations in the Mosque between Ahmad and the Shaikh reveal that the former is a subject of the latter within Cowles’ postulation. His subjectivity constitutes what Vieira, in the analysis of Lacanian notion of ‘mirror image’ describes as “identification with an idealized image of a superior other” (Viera, 2018, p.150). In this manner, Ahmad is not who he is; rather, he is what others (Shaikh Rashid) want him to be. Commenting on this scenario, Treacher (2005) contends, “colonized subjects are precisely that-subjects to the desires and needs of others” (p.44). As Ahmad reveal, the colonized are what they are through hegemony established by the colonial discourse.

## II. CONCLUSION

John Updike’s *Terrorist* depicts multiple relationships which reveal power imbalances among various characters. From a postcolonial reading of the text, this study establishes that the relationship between Shaikh Rashid and Ahmad Ashmawy is characterized by manipulation and exploitation. As a symbol of the colonized, Ahmad is portrayed as a victim of a superior ideology propounded by his teacher, Shaikh Rashid. The Shaikh, a symbol of the dominant West, is shown as leveraging on a manipulated discourse designed to secure the consent and cooperation of his student. This reveals that, in coloniality, the oppressed are typically presented with a distorted reality in order to compel their consent to the authority and domination of the colonizer. The authority of the West is further manifested in the construction of the colonial subjectivity which further relies on ideology. The subjectivity of the ruled as seen in both Ahmad and Joryleen Grant in *Terrorist* is created through dissemination of false consciousness and indoctrination.

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Mr. Atony Barasa Mabonga, et. al. "Hegemony And Discourse In John Updike's Terrorist." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 26(12), 2021, pp. 22-29.