

**From Split to Wholeness: A socio-cultural
Psychoanalytic Reading of pearl Abraham's
American Taliban and Eyad Harfoush's *The
Collapse of Babel Tower***

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Abstract

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the image of the other in the two novels: *American Taliban* and *The Collapse of Babel Tower*. This analysis tackles internalization and stereotyping as two aspects of the Collective Consciousness affecting the image of the other. In addition, it investigates how the internalization of the cultural wound has resulted over the years in stereotypes and deformed images every culture casts on the other, shaping a collective consciousness of mutual discord and misunderstanding. Furthermore, this paper investigates the inner splits inside both Western and Eastern cultures as well as scrutinize the wound every culture instills in the other's psyche producing a cultural complex. That is because the present researcher presumes that being unconscious of our inner splits as well as being unable to transcend our cultural wounds is the main reason behind today's hatred, stereotypes, ambiguity intolerance and terroristic image every culture holds for the other. Also, this paper manifests how developing a conscious self-awareness would transcendently narrow the gap between 'what man is and what he represents' which in turn paves the way for a more mutual understanding and appreciation.

Introduction

Little comparative literature has been written about the image of the other both Arabs and the West have developed versus each other in the aftermath of 9/11. However, Arabs and Muslims have been the subject of literary works that touch upon this growing Arab/West dichotomy. In the same context, the West has been the subject of Arab literary works in the East as well. Pearl Abraham's novel *American Taliban* and Eyad Harfoush's novel *The Collapse of Babel Tower* are two good examples of such works. Both selected novels show the writers' empathy and aspiration for self-realization and shared understanding as a breakout of this mutual 'other' misinterpretation. This shared attitude is manifest in the writers' presentation of the main characters as open-minded and willing to set out in the journey of understanding (of both self and other).

Despite the fact that the two writers almost deal with the same subject, i.e. the image of the other, they draw two contrasting images of each other. On the one hand, Abraham depicts many of her Arab characters in a negative manner and exposes them as a threat to American adolescents and young adults. This imagined threat inflicted by 'other Arabs/Muslims', somehow, is misinterpreted as 'terrorism of Islam'. On the other hand, Harfoush presents a positive picture of the Western characters, differentiating between American people and their political regimes that may show enmity toward the Arab world in general and the Muslim community in particular. Therefore, the present researcher argues that Abraham and Harfoush

offer two contrasting pictures of the other (the Western other in Harfoush's novel, and the Muslim other in Abraham's). Both novels deal with such aspects of the Collective Conscious, internalization and stereotyping from different perspectives. While both novels are culturally and historically oriented, Abraham's is rather more politically immersed. Harfoush focuses on aspects such as openness, ambiguity tolerance and self-awareness (represented in Aly's character) to disperse illusion and create a sense of connection, harmony and understanding among the cultural figures he depicts in his novel. Abraham, on the other hand, presents a false sense of identity (represented in John's character) that creates a gap or a rupture among the cultural groups she depicts in her novel.

Interestingly enough, both writers, Abraham and Harfoush, depict the other through the eyes of the self. For example, when one day Marry asks Aly about his opinion of the Arab campaign on Egypt, “is it fath, invation, or occupation?” (*Collapse* 95). His answer shows his awareness of how every culture interprets the other through its own perspective:

The three of them. It was Fath to the Arab Muslims, because Egypt's submission to them was a shift in their emerging Khilafah. It was a barbarian invasion to the

Romans who saw Bedouins taking over parts of their sacred empire. And it was occupation to the Copts whose nation had been handed down form one occupier to another. (95)

This refined answer manifests Aly's developed awareness and his ability to tolerate ambiguity and to put his feet on the other's shoes. Harfoush presents the Eastern Muslim hero Aly Elemam as a more open and sophisticated man whose father used to call him Socrates and has been depicted throughout the novel as a truth seeker. This openness was manifest in his image of Marry as: a beautiful, shrewd and aware lady, whose beauty is part of nature; true and expansive, "shining to compensate the setting of the sun" (*Collapse* 75). Her beauty in his eyes is part of her awareness and her awareness part of her beauty. Being self-aware, Aly's "aesthetic taste has been ever connected with his intellectual taste; so, he always sees beauty in women in terms of awareness and awareness in terms of beauty." (75)

On the other hand, Abraham depicts John the hero of her novel as a young American guy who lives his life as his parents would like him to do. John, in this respect, is depicted as less sophisticated, less self-aware, and less keen on his self-identity. He follows the path drawn for him. Barbara, his mother in the novel, the researcher presumes, somehow symbolizes the cultural mainstream

in the West which imposes a pre-defined image of the self. Barbara, apparently, affords John a sense of freedom and individuality.

However, John is imprisoned within the confines of his mother's imposed image of him; "she lived in his head and without wheels, there'd be no escape" (*Taliban* 33). What John's parents looked for in him was "originality and intellectuality and a lifestyle shaped by the liberal humanist ideas in which, as Barbara liked to point out, he had been immersed from the instant of his inception (22). So, despite the assumed open and free world John lives in, he is truly repressed into a certain defined image. That is, "his world is wide open, or so it seems, he can take from it what he wants and needs, or so it seems" (20).

Lacking a real sense of identity, John's vision of himself is a reflection of Barbara's own stereotyped vision of him. The most frequently repeated words on John's tongue and in his mind are that he wants to "know" and "become", yet what he wants to know and what he wants to become is not clear for him "He knows what he does not want, but not the inverse" (*Taliban* 20). He tries to fulfill his parents' aspiration of him; being a perfect, sophisticated, complete and all-knowing man, yet how such aspiration is fulfilled and measured is not known. Though the means and ways of achieving such desire is never discussed, John gets the impression that the measurement of such accomplishment would have to come from the media, since what Barbara seeks from her son is "the kind

of hallowed celebrity a sophisticated parent could take pride in, meaning her son would do something highly remarkable, perhaps even original, but definitely not embarrassing" (*Taliban* 22). Lacking self-awareness, John's image of the "other" reflects his own deformed image, derived from the Collective Consciousness. Seeing Noor the Muslim American girl, he "nodded without taking his eyes off Noor, off her thin face, her prominent nose, and her wide dark eyes. Her skin, desert Bedouin eyes, with the depths of sand and caves. He was thinking like book, in clichés, and he was ashamed of it, but he couldn't help himself." (*Taliban* 64)

In *American Taliban*, It is apparent that John undergoes a tremendous split between what 'he really is and what he represents'. This split is very evident in his thoughts and attitudes throughout the whole novel. He suffers from the inner contradictions of his own culture represented in his mother, Barbara. In the novel, Barbara's character is a reflection of the Western culture inner split between spirituality and materialism, which in turn is the first glimpse of John's inner complexes. Barbara, as many scientifically-minded people in the West, relinquishes her religious inclinations for the fear of unrestrained subjectivism. So, she presents herself as a secular skeptic and a rationalist psychotherapist. Despite being skeptical as well as giving their son the free will in choosing his religious direction without any imposed ideas or authority, John's parents did have him baptized, "we did it for you, Barbara said ... so that you

wouldn't grow up feeling unprotected in some way" (*Taliban* 21). Barbara may have broken away from Christianity, but deeply inside she has not rejected it. Notwithstanding the announced skeptical tune of Barbara throughout the first part of the novel, she is sentimental by nature. Accordingly, she deeply holds the inner split in the Western psyche between spirituality and secularism, and this is manifest too in her son John. This is because it is far beyond any individual to totally get rid of his religious trace. Just as Jung declares it, any religious viewpoints always frame the vital psychosomatic attitude and its definite preconceptions, even in those who have relinquished, or never heard of their own religion. From here comes the Western cultural inner split, since "in spite of everything, the West is thoroughly Christian as far as its psychology is concerned. (Jung, *Memories* 657)

Representing the mainstream American scientific mindset, Barbara compensates the loss of the spiritual world that is, as Jung puts it, "pulsed with our blood and breathed with our breath", with an enthusiasm for datum, mountains of datum, above and beyond any sole individual's capacity to comprehend (*Psychology & Religion* 653). Accordingly, she wants her son to be "a Whitmanian all-embrace. He would be all-knowing, omnivorous, omniscient, omnificent; what Barbara would call an omnium-gatherum" (*Taliban* 43). Those scientifically-minded people, as Jung calls them, hope that such accumulation of facts will create a sophisticated, perfect whole,

but this is untrue since no mortal mind can probably encompass the titanic amount of this "mass-produced knowledge" (*Memories* 653).

In the novel, Abraham depicts the struggle between the secular and the spiritual within the American communities. Moved by everyday events, *American Taliban* depicts the intellectual and spiritual quest of John Jude, an eighteen years old surfer with an inclination for Tao, Rumi and Walt Whitman. As John becomes attracted to Islam, he leaves his family, girlfriend as well as his secular life behind, and journeys to New York, Pakistan and finally Afghanistan in pursuit of full spiritual immersion. Despite John's quest for total spiritual immersion, his journey turns to be a total submersion to his inferiority complex present in total sexual immersion instead. This is evident in his submission to homosexuality and his constant intense yearning for a love affair with any Muslim girl. Thus, his spiritual quest turned to be of a daydream.

To encapsulate, Schiller's analysis of the influence of Christianity on the Athenian culture mentioned in the first chapter is applicable to the Christian impact on the Western psyche as a whole. Considering Jung's views of the dynamicity of the culture as a "closed organic system", where through its exchanges, "both cultures and individuals are transformed", it appears that like the Athenian culture, the impact of Christianity on the individual culture creates a collective culture and a corresponding wound (Wojtkowski 1209).

This transformation between the culture and the individuals and its corresponding wound, Jung believes, takes place through the internalization process:

Psychologically it meant that the external form of society in classical civilization was transferred into the subject, so that a condition was produced within the individual which in the ancient world had been external, namely a dominating, privileged function which was developed and differentiated at the expense of an inferior majority. (*Types* 108)

Thus, the Western individual culture has progressively become a collective culture in which each individual becomes more civilized and Christianly oriented. As the old Western culture depended on primitive, sexual and slavery élans, the new collective culture then has raised upon an inferior function within the individuals.

Accordingly, the suppression of the primitive and sexual drives is the natural, tacit mechanism characterizing the internalization of the Christian culture. This repression generates a 'cultural shadow' within the Western-Christian psyche. Such a cultural shadow is very prominent in john's psyche. Despite the show up search for spirituality, every step toward it entangles him more into his inferiority function; the repression of the sexual energies.

Still there are primitive, barbarian actions of the Occident that took place after Christianity and even under its name (like the Crusades and the modern barbarity of Colonialization) which have resulted in another kind of repression with its entailed split. Deeply mindful of its "almost limitless subjectivity and of its infantile-archaic tendency to heedless projection and illusion", numerous scientifically-minded societies have even abandoned their "religious and philosophical leanings for fear of uncontrolled subjectivism" (Jung, *Memories* 653). That is, the modern scientifically-minded occidental, especially Americans, reject their religion for the sake of objectivity, and as a mean of compensation, they form intensive enthusiasm for facts. Such intense yearning for intellectuality have relied on the suppression of the new inferiority function; sentimentalism. This other turn intensifies the inner split between "what man is and what he represents" (Jung, *Types* 74). This is evident in the above mentioned example of Barbara's split where she performs as a secular psychotherapist with unconscious inferior sentiment at the same time. The gap between man and his real self creates a collective wound inside the Western psyche represented in John's archetypes.

Such a conflict between what 'man is and what he represents', creates a shadow archetype inside John's psyche. This is quite evident in how he describes and thinks of his mother. Symbolizing American culture, John's mother does not only represent the pre-imposed image

of the self, but she is also the carrier of John's anima archetype. This is since "every mother and every beloved is forced to become the carrier and embodiment of this omnipresent and ageless image, which corresponds to the deepest reality in a man" (Jung, *Memories* 239). This is very apparent in the projections he throws on her. These projections are manifestations of his collective wound and the intense tension between the opposites inherent in his culture.

On a spiritual level, Barbara and John are symbols of this ever bleeding cultural wound of the West; the duality complex between secularism and spirituality. While John introduces himself as a spiritual seeker, he gives many hints of his mother's secular and skeptical attitudes. For example, John highlights Barbara's worriedness about his care for the Old and New testaments, the Qur'an and even his interest in prophecy. To the contrary, Barbara ends up being more sentimental than her son pretends to be, while he still lingers deep in his unconscious barbarity and primitiveness. This is clear in the end of the novel, when John turned to be a probable terrorist, while Abraham shifts the focus on his mother's sentimentalism.

The imperialist complex of "civilization" versus "barbarism" deeply rooted in John's psyche is manifest in his depiction of Barbara as "Barbaric Barbarella". As mentioned above, the new secular and non-religious Westerners, like Barbara, are fundamentally relying on

their old religious dogma, imperialism and inherent complexes of superiority. This is obviously clear in John's image about his anima figure, Barbara, that

if someone broke a leg Barbaric Barbarella
would have broken two legs, and perhaps an
arm as well, and if the Washington Post had
written about a friend or friend of a friend,
then the Washington post had also interviewed
Barbara multiple times and had also misquoted
her, or quoted her out of context, she know
exactly how it all worked, nothing was new to
her, she couldn't be surprised or impressed by
anything (*Taliban 4*)

These lines are indicative of the superiority, self-righteousness and civilization versus barbarism tension between the complexes that reside deep in the occidental psyche, what John describes as the "self-important" and self-absorbed" Barbara (4). This inner split and tension is manifest in John's image of himself. John is splintered, torn between his perception of himself as a mainstream American (Barbara's civilized and knowledgeable son) and his urge to be more and know more about himself. This splintered state of mind is also projected on the other as shown in his dialogues with Noor and other characters he comes across in his journey of discovery.

On the other hand, the East is so afflicted by inner splits and their entailed collective wounds, too. These splits and their underlying wounds widen the gap between ‘what man is and what he represents’. The biggest major split in the Islamic culture, and in the Eastern culture as a whole, is the split between its Sunni and Shia sectors. It is well noted, too, that the Islamic conquests and the subsequent crusading wars did not only engrave a wound inside the Western psyche toward the East, but they caused an ever bleeding wound inside the Eastern psyche as well.

Such a cultural wound is traced in the two novels, *American Taliban* and *The Collapse of Babel Tower*. For example, in *American Taliban*, Jalal, a Muslim friend of John's, whom he met in Afghanistan, once told him that for hundreds of years, Muslims have suffered a lot from the Westerners. First, the French occupied Egypt. Next, the British took it from the French. Afterwards, the Italians invaded Libya. Then the French and English divided India: “As a Westerner ... you are as wet with colonial guilt as you stand here slick with soap” (184). These words denote the ever bleeding Amfortas wound in the Eastern psyche induced by the Western history of predominance. Furthermore, the frequent occurrence of the word "Jihad" and "Martyrdom" in *American Taliban* further clarifies the culture shadow Westerners/Americans cast on the Arab/Muslim other. Both words are the most popular when the East is mentioned. "Jihad" brings forth the first memories of Islamic

conquests and subsequent crusading wars. Moreover, "martyrdom" is attached in the western culture's psyche with Muslim's fanatic and self-suicidal tendencies: In a speech given to the American public in the aftermath of September 11, one of the American converters, who joins Taliban, speaks of his motive for participating in the bombing. He uses the word shahid/martyr as a natural impetus for a just cause:

[Yes] it's the goal of every Muslim to be shahid ... every single one of us, without any exaggeration, every single one of us was one hundred percent sure that we would all be shahid ... all be martyred (*Taliban* 225).

In *The Collapse of Babel Tower*, in one of Aly Eleman's dialogues with Marry, he uses the name of "Rumsfeld", the former United States Secretary of Defense who played a prominent role in the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan during 2001 war on terror, to express his condemnation of hypocrite conspirators among some sheikhs (religious men) (165). Rumsfeld, in the psyche of the modern Arabs, represents Iraq invasion, the bleeding wound of Arab Muslims in the recent decade. Attaching Rumsfeld's name to those conspirators (even if they were Arabs) has a twofold impact. On the one hand, it signifies the cultural shadow the Arab Muslims developed versus the Westerners as conspirators who twist facts for the sake of their interest. On the other hand, it sheds light on the split

in the Eastern/Muslim psyche that drives them to the same tendencies they condemn in the other (the West).

The split in the Muslim psyche is evident in Harfoush's depiction of the mainstream Muslims who confuse history with religion. They try, by all means, to prove the scientific miracle of the Holy Qur'an by twisting historical facts, as well as meanings of Quranic verses, in order to prove that Islam is the ultimate, one and only religion, proving "what does not need any proof" as Aly puts it (*Collapse* 131). This unconscious attempt to gain superiority over the 'other' and control over their followers is the same exact tendency they condemn in the western 'other', which is a clear manifestation of their cultural split. Harfoush provides a good example of this split when he depicts one of the International Scientific Conferences Aly attends. In this conference, Dr. Salman Al Oquiby, an Islamic History professor in one of the Khaligitti universities, confuses the religious creed with history and folklore just to prove his presuppositions. He presumes that Noah's ark has been set out from Kufa and settled down on Mount Ararat, also known as Tandoorik, in Turkey that Al Oquiby insists on naming Mount Judi according to the Qur'anic verse in Surat Hud. Al Oquiby insists on his assumptions despite all scientific evidences that prove it to be a natural formation resembling a ship's bottom and that all of the ballast stones founded near this location are of a recent origin.

The Amfortas 'cultural' wound is triggered by the internal split inside each collective culture's psyche. That is why the present researcher presumes that the cultural wound is represented differently in each of the major characters in both novels. Aly, from *The Collapse of Babel Tower*, and John, from *American Taliban*, suffer from an "Amfortas' wound" with different intensities and different levels of awareness. That is, the psyche of the two characters is burdened by the specific dualities and complexes akin to each culture.

Aly is deeply anguished by the complex of his Islamic culture. This anguish starts taking form early on through his inquisitive nature. Aly is ever passionate about knowing the core behind everything presented to him. His passion reaches epic proportions in the study of Islamic History and Philosophy: "Neither the school, nor the mosque could satisfy his inquiries around some Islamic doctrines as well as some disturbing Islamic historical events" (*Collapse* 31). The lingering enquiries inside him urge him to find the answers himself through self-study and research. At a very early age, he asks his sheikh one of the major questions about Qur'an:

Which comes first: Rote learning or reflection? Many Qur'anic verses call for reflection rather than learning by heart, but what happens is the opposite! People are more concerned with rote learning and they hardly

pay any attention to meanings beyond the words... so why do I have to memorize verses before I understand them? (32)

His sheikh's answer to that question is rather a traditional one that never satisfies Aly. The discussion fills the sheikh with awe at his little boy's strong debating skill and fine logic to the extent that he is surprised how such a "noble descendent", coming from a conservative religious family, shows such a "debating ailment" (32). Thus, this inquisitive nature, which is a natural, legitimate human right, is considered forbidden for the sheikh. That is, it is not preferable, according to some Muslims, to ask many questions about certain Islamic issues; some issues should just be taken for granted. Accordingly, the sheikh tells Aly: "if your father had followed my advice and sent you to an Azhary educational institution instead of a secular one, you would have been different now" (32). The words of his sheikh represent the first accusation of secularism issued against Aly. This episode, so to speak, is one of his early unconscious confrontations with his own culture complexes.

As a Muslim, Aly experiences a split of his own psyche which is partially represented in his dreams. *The Collapse of Babel Tower* begins with Aly finding himself in a dream in the 7th century. He finds himself standing in the desert among a great number of dead bodies. Aly distinguishes the battle from the corpses' appearance "most of them or may be all of them share two distinctive

characteristics, shaving heads and shaggy beards" (*Collapse14*). So, he immediately thinks them to be Al Khwarij. It is not a long time until Aly sees a knight, whom he later recognizes as Ali Ibn Abi Talib, contemplating the battle field in grief. To the present researcher, this is a compelling proof of Aly's split. It seems that what Aly lives through his entire life from childhood till his 40s conjures a deep complex inside his psyche. Some experiences earlier in his life, like the conversation with his Sheikh, unconsciously lighten his awareness of his own cultural wound as a Muslim. This confrontation with his internal split is the impetus for his constant pursuit of healing – what Jung calls ‘the transcendent function’.

Aly's split is further evident in his conflict with the near other. This complex is manifest in his exhausting confrontation with Ziyad, his sister's husband. Ziyad is a famous heart surgeon and a parliament member. He took hold of this parliament seat through his allegiance to the Muslim Brotherhood. Ziyad as a representative of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is a recent representation of the split inside the Muslim community, symbolizes the inner split that happened inside the Islamic Ummah after the death of prophet Muhammad and contemporaneous with Ali Ibn Abi Talieb's reign. That is, the first Fitna inside the Islamic body happened after killing Uthman Ibn Affan, the third of the Rashidun Caliphate of Muslims. This Fitna was the beginning of civil wars between Muslims and thus represents the first split inside the Islamic culture.

Aly's most important confrontation with Ziyad happens when the latter files a complaint in Parliament against Aly's book "Alnahrwan Awlan". Aly's book is deemed by the Muslim Brotherhood, represented by Ziyad, a prejudiced attack against the history of Islam. It draws, as claimed, upon Shi'a sources that are considered a distortion and misrepresentation of Islam. It is also considered a call for secularism. In his complaint Ziyad denounces the anti-khwarij speculation and the calls for confronting fanaticism, which may result in social disruption: "his call for fighting fanaticism as 'every Muslim's duty' is threat to social peace and national unity ... either we adopt his secular thought or we become Khwarij [as he proclaims] and should, therefore, be fought by Muslims" (*Collapse* 152). This confirms the split in the Muslims' psyche. This split is incarnated in Aly's first dreams about the Fitna times and Abi Talib's fights against Al Khwarij in Alnahrawan battle. Moreover, as the name of his book implies, Alnahrawan becomes a symbol of the confrontation between two versions of Islam (moderate and extremist). The split that began in the early times of Islam resulted in the division of Muslims into Sunni and Shi'a, a split that is present until now.

Ali Ibn Abi Talib is also rooted in the psyche of Aly's character. He symbolizes Aly himself in many ways. For one thing, Aly, the protagonist, assimilates Abi Talib's way of life "the hardest but the truest one". He incorporates his idealism in a turbulent world full of

contradictions, splits and misunderstandings. Abi Talib is the most controversial figure in the Muslims' history. Muslims have not been divided upon any figure as they did with Abi Talib. Aly, on his part, adopts ideologies and lines of thinking that arouse much controversy in the Muslim society. Aly also resembles Abi Tanlib in his fight against Islamic extremists, represented in Al khwarij; those who incite Fitna; a sectarian strife, and discord among Muslims. In the same way, Aly's writings take such stances in the face of those who prompt and plant the seeds of disagreement, which is manifest in his book *Alnahrawan First*.

Although often referred to as the cause of conflict between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, Abi Talib is also a figure for uniting Muslims together. He, Ali Sallabi contends, had a "unique vision for reforming and uniting the Ummah"(48). His dedication and determination to implement this vision against odds is very much similar to Aly Al Emam's. Both had an outstanding intellectual ability to pave the way to reconciliation and unity. Thus, as both Aly Al Emam and Ali Abi Talib symbolize the split in the Muslim psyche they equally symbolize the aspiration for unity and wholeness. Just as Abi Talib hopes to bring unity among Muslims through his fight against Al Khwarij in Alnahrawan battle, so does Aly in his fight against all extremists, khawarij of this era, through his rebellious writings and illuminating words. When, for example, Marry asks Aly

about the reason for Abi Talib's retreat after Prophet Muhammad's death, he answers:

He is probably writing his interpretation of the sum of Prophet Muhammad's doctrines. This interpretation, I believe, would help bring about the optimal reconciliation among the different, conflicting, Islamic affiliations and ideologies. (*Collapse* 88)

Aly's answer, thus, represents the potential of connecting what Jung calls "sub-personalities into which our psyches have been split" into the "original wholeness which has been injured or wounded." (Haule 97)

On the other hand, John, in *American Taliban*, represents the split in the Western culture's psyche. Although he is quite identified with his mother, Barbara, John develops a counter intention of liberating from her image of and dreams for him. Being a symbol of western culture herself, Barbara provided him with contradictions early on in his life. Contrary to the promise of freedom she always boasted about, Barbara imposed her own constraints on her son, John. What Barbara expects from her son is a kind of "hallowed celebrity a sophisticated parent could take pride in" (*Taliban* 22). This is an indication of the split of complexes inside the Western culture, American culture in particular. This split of complexes echoes on Jung's argument that "an indefinite number of complexes

operate autonomously below the surface of everyone's consciousness.
(Haule 97)

Although John is hardly aware of the split inside him, he occasionally displays aspects of that split in his monologues. John talks to himself describing his mother as "Barbaric Barbarella", which indicates the democratic-barbarian duality characterizing his Western culture (*Taliban* 4). John's self-talk that exposes what would otherwise remain concealed is explained in Jung's *Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* where he contends that:

our conscious intentions and actions are often frustrated by unconscious processes whose very existence is a continual surprise to us. We make slips of the tongue and slips in writing and unconsciously do things that betray our most closely guarded secrets – which are sometimes unknown even to ourselves. (296)

The impetus that drives Aly to set out on his journey for self-realization is the same that urges John to break out of the mundane into new realms of discovery. Both Aly and John aims for self-realization. John wants to know and become; "[h]e emerged with a prayer on his lips, an invitation to his soul. He would become as he would become" (*Taliban* 11). On the other hand, Aly is passionate about "knowing the veracity behind everything he encounters", even his own religious creeds and its different interpretations (*Collapse* 31). Yet, the two characters' interpretation of their experiences

differs as they differently identify with their cultural heritage. That is, both experience their internal cultural splits with two different ways. One is conscious of his inner split and willing to suffer the pain of facing his own shadow, while the other is unaware of his inner split and therefore throws his shadow archetypes on the other.

On the one hand, John's image of the other is a stereotyped image of the self. The intuitive and sexual energies totally shape his 'other'. His hero is the explorer Sir Richard Burton, whom the present researcher presumes to be his shadow archetype. Throughout the whole novel, he is only absorbed in sexuality and sensual pleasures. Even, like Burton, his journey toward total spiritual submersion was dipped into mere material submersion. John unconsciously neglects his cultural shadow and projects it to the other. Those projections happen unconsciously, since John is unaware of his shadow. Sometimes it is present in his thoughts, but he cannot catch it consciously. This is apparent in his willingness to be free of it. For instance, when he starts learning Arabic, he feels that it is the beginning of his life. Finally, he would be "fully free of the prison of childhood, of well-meaning Barbara and her version of adult life" (*Taliban* 69). Yet, he is unable to consciously contact with his evil side. John shows no tendency to identify his shadow and spot his projections. Thus, as Jung believes, the projection factor has a free hand; since it is the unconscious that makes all projections. Jung maintains that "the more projections are thrust in between the subject

and the environment, the harder it is for the ego to see through its illusions" (*Memories* 147). Accordingly, John projects his European shadow on the Islamic other.

It is well noted too that the barbaric part of John's nature is the reason for his inclination to follow the extremist Islamic sector in Afghanistan instead of really being enchanted to the social-oriented Islam, represented in Noor. Thus, John was unable to assimilate his shadow and comprehend his personal unconscious. As a result, he is unable to recognize his anima archetype.

One of the most astonishing threats in the novel *American Taliban*, is that John not only casts his shadow on the Islamic other, but also sympathizes with its radical part, the Isis. As Abraham puts it, "he has an unreasonable attraction for the underdog"; a foreshadow for his unreasonable attraction for the fundamentalist Islamic sectors in Afghanistan (*Taliban* 31). This is a reflection of his unsolved inner complexities and undefined identity. The present researcher thinks it is his irrational unconscious compensation for his own cultural constant barbarity toward the East, Islam in particular. The continuous destabilization for dozens of countries and funding and arming various jarring parties, including ISIS, creates an open wound of guilt. For John, his unconscious compensation for such feelings makes him follow the Eastern, Islamic wound as a penance for his cultural guilt.

Aly, on the other hand, accepts his inferiorities, his shadow, as his own. This is manifest in his dreams and his interpretation of them. For instance, his first dreams highlight his deep inner shadow, the first split in the Islamic psyche between Sunni and Shia. Aly knows that his dreams are nothing except his subconscious manifestations. Thus, unlike John, he is consciously aware of his splits and complexes. This self-awareness is reflected in a clear, true image of the other embodied in Marry.

Like in Parzifal, the cultural wound healing cannot be fulfilled without acceptance of the other. Unlike John, Aly is capable of reaching such a stage. In his last dream, Aly sees Marry tightly holding an egg of light. His interpretation for this dream is that it is his baby moving inside her. For him, it is the Magdolian way for the old, long conflict between the East and the West. So, it is like Jesus coming from the death to enlighten the world and to put an end for the eternal conflict between all humans on earth, the East and the West in particular. Thus, his dream means connection, and the coming birth is a new birth of wholeness.

Conclusion

To conclude, people from different cultures have unique expectations and views of both the self and the other. Since culture determines people's expectations and perceptions toward themselves and the other, the cultural wound of every group of individuals

makes them disoriented and confused. Holding this wound as a part of the human essence hinders the real perception of the self and the other as a result. This ends up with a distorted image of the other and many contentions consequently. Since humans grow up within different culture roots, their cultures play a crucial role in shaping their and guiding their views and ways of thinking. For this reason cultures as their families, are very strong and there is an extreme amount of value placed on the opinions of its traditions and ways of thinking, especially the elderly generation, who hold the old wounds deep inside and transforming them to us unconsciously, because of their life experience! Therefore, instead of trusting in the new other, individuals in a certain culture rely more on the background and opinions of their own groups who they believe would be better qualified.

Just as people are different, no wound is the same as another.

The severity of the cultural wound can range from mild to moderate to severe and can affect many areas of people's life including their perception, awareness, and their interactions with the other.

Depending on the severity, the cultural wound can last a lifetime or may heal over a relatively short period. The above debate shows examples of how cultural wound can and will impact the perception of its followers. Thence, this study explores the splits with the "cultural wound" of each culture toward itself and the other.

Furthermore, it takes a deep look at the image of the other that arises

according to this wound and thus is internalized in each culture's collective consciousness.

According to the above debate, the healing of the culture wound happens through the shadow assimilation, which would never happen without an adequate "self-knowledge" and "self-criticism". A journey of self-knowing, then, is needed to be able to recognize the shadow and, thereby, enter the realm of discovering oneself. This self-knowledge, according to Jung, requires "much painstaking work extending over a long period" (Jung, *Memories* 233). That is, since the shadow is a moral deficiency, it requires a painstaking hard work. For Jung, assimilating the shadow is the first step of the individuation process that leads to a better understanding of the self. This self-understanding, the present researcher contends, promotes a better understanding and acceptance of the other as well. As Jung puts it, "knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darkneses of other people" (Jung, *Letters* 237). Thus, both Aly and John differently assimilate their collective wounds and differently interpret their cultural and historical heritage. The difference between them in their reaction to their deeply rooted wounds stems from their different stages of awareness, the present researcher presumes. Consequently, their image of the other is a mere reflection of their self-image.

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