Preface

In the present study, an effort has been made to explore both pre and post-9/11 fiction in the context of the representation of political Islam in fictional tradition, predominantly during the last three decades since the establishment of the theocratic Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979. It includes writers like John Hoyer Updike (1932-2009), Orhan Pamuk (1952-), Hanif Kureishi (1954-), and Khaled Hosseini (1965-). These novelists have been selected for two major reasons. Firstly, they have treated radical Islamists in their selected works, which had a major impact on the postmodern British and American literary scenes either a little before or after the 9/11 incident. Secondly, their works possess qualities and show artistic and ideological tendencies. These authors from different countries have shown keen interest in exploring the relationship between various aspects of Islam and literature which has not been explored fully till now. They have tried to fictionalize the life of Muslims in their selected works which will be discussed in this perspective. These writers have tried to deal with issues of Islamic identity and political control through the appropriation of a certain kind of interpretation of Islam. Some of the important basic concepts of Islam that Updike, Pamuk, Kureishi and Hosseini have dealt within their works are—“faith, “salaah”, “pardha”, “jihad”, “suicide”, “shahīd”, “Jannah”/“Paradise”, “houris”, “infidel”, “kafir”, and “hellfire”. They have also focussed on certain aspects which are forbidden in Islam like that of accumulation of wealth, adultery, drugs, homosexuality, licentious relationships and wine drinking. A study of the Qur’ān was of great help in explaining these concepts, in the fictional works under discussion.

The argument of this study is based on two most important aspects that is representation of political Islam in their fiction, and the relationship between political Islam as depicted in the current literary tradition and leading ideologies. As a sound
theoretical perspective is needed to understand their works I have studied some contemporary theorists particularly Louis Althusser, Terry Eagleton and Edward Said in explaining representation of political Islam in the fictional works under discussion. To better understand the ideology of political Islam as well as the application of the theories of the said theorists, I have introduced a short introductory chapter outlining their development. There is a chapter on each novelist. In each chapter, though, I have focussed on one novel dealing with the representation of political Islam, I have also fairly comprehensively touched other works of the novelists which take up the subject of political Islam. Thus Updike’s “Varieties of Religious Experience”, Kureishi’s My Beautiful Laundrette and “My Son the Fanatic” and Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns are adequately covered in this study. In the concluding chapter I consolidate the main arguments presented in the preceding chapters and reiterate my point regarding the fact that the particular fictional works of Updike, Kureishi, Pamuk, and Hosseini as discussed above are of a postmodern bent that successfully represent political Islam.

I have consulted the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition) for documentation.

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— Md. Sahidul Islam