CHAPTER IV

STEREOTYPING THE ARAB

The treatment of the Arab occupies a pivotal place in all the novels of Uris in which the Jewish state is a material entity. In these works, the Arab is an absolute incongruence with the other members of the civilized world. The masterly engagement in which the Arab is invariably projected as at variance with the Jew on all known planes of human existence—religious, ethnic, ideological, intellectual, emotional, political, material and rational—is all too obvious. The Arab/Muslim finds his place as the “other” and “inferior” to the Jew and, by extension, to all communities of the civilized world. It may be possible for us to find a process of standardisation in the above novels in which the Arab is made into a stereotype. The characterisation of the Arab performs the crucial political function of investing the Jewish state with its distinctive identity and ethos. The present chapter is earmarked for exploring the various techniques that conjure up the vision of the Arab stereotype.

“The subtlest and most pervasive of all influences,” states Walter Lippmann, “are those which create and maintain the repertory of stereotypes. We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those perceptions… govern deeply the whole process of perception” (qtd. in “Media Coverage” 160). Elaborating on Lippmann’s observations, Joseph Boskin defines a stereotype as a standardized mental picture representing an oversimplified opinion that is staggeringly tenacious in its hold over rational thinking (see “Media Coverage”160). As Joe L. Kincheloe notes, in the Western tradition of writing about, researching, and representing Islam, Europeans have consistently positioned Muslims as the irrational, fanatic, sexually
enticing and despotic others (1). For many Islam has been reduced to three ideas: backwardness, terrorism, and polygamy. Arab Muslims have been subjected to misrepresentations of their culture and religion by mass media and books. While formal education in the form of school textbooks has created many of the misconceptions about Arabs that abound in the West, many more misconceptions come from the informal education provided by the media and popular culture, such as movies, television, radio, novels, newspapers, comic books, and advertisements. The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, and dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab/ Muslim prevalent in the West for long and reaffirmed in the context of the struggle between the Arabs and Israeli Zionism, appears very strongly in Uris’ Middle Eastern novels. The formulas and stereotypes put forward by Uris in such novels as The Haj and Exodus present a xenophobically reductive view of the Arabs and Islam in general. It may be possible to find in these reductionist representations, the American/Jewish appropriation of the Orientalist narrative practice of the “othering” of the Oriental, as well as a strategic move in positioning the Jew on the same footing with the Occident. The present chapter is an attempt to explore the various ways in which this “othering” is effected with the explicit objective of inferiorising the Arab, and in the process validating the Jewish claims of mastery over a Greater Israel as envisaged by the Jewish interpreters of The Bible.

We may now move on to an examination of the various narrative strategies employed by Leon Uris in inferiorising the Arab in novels such as Exodus and The Haj where questions relating to the Arab - Israeli conflict occupy a central place. The author’s anti-Arab bias which stands out quite sharply in his picturisation of the Palestinian Arab, is drawn through the viewpoint of a diverse range of characters—Jewish, American and British—in Exodus. On the other hand, in The Haj, the author reduces the Arab to a series of repulsive and denunciatory stereotypes by engaging
Palestinian Arab narrators themselves as his mouthpieces. However, according to Peter Fuller, the perspective is merely a means for Uris “to get under the Arabs’ skins and sharpen the point of his warning about the Islamic world’s tensions and imperatives” (7).

The failure of the Palestinian Arabs to cultivate their land, and the efforts made by the Jews to “make the desert bloom” appear as a recurring theme in both the novels. This point has been elaborately dealt with in the previous chapter. Uris here draws a sharp contrast between an advanced incoming population of Jews performing miracles of construction on the land, and a backward, essentially repellant population of uncivilized Arab natives who had left the land to rot. Arab village life is here characterized as primitive and listless. This stereotypical presentation is made explicit in the author’s very first description of an Arab village in his Exodus. Presented through the view point of Jossi Rabinsky, Abu Yesha is given the feel of a nauseating village which was “as it must have been a thousand years before,” a place full dirt streets and squalid one-room huts made of mud, half of which were in a state of near collapse and which held a dozen or more people as well as pigs, chickens, mules and goats, and permeated by the overwhelming stench of camel and donkey excrement and engulfed by swarms of giant flies (213). Kitty Fremont the American nurse on her arrival in the Arab village is also seen to draw a contrast between the pathetic “dirty little Arab children” and “the robust youngsters of Gan Dafna,” the Jewish Youth Village: “How futile their lives seemed in contrast to the spirit of the Youth Aliyah village. There seemed to be no laughter or songs or games or purpose among the Arab children. It was a static existence—a new generation born on an eternal caravan in an endless desert” (Exodus 348). The image of listless men sitting or lying around on the floor of the dilapidated shack which served as a coffee house, playing back-gammon or smoking hashish, serves to validate the author’s point that
“life moved in slow motion” in the Palestinian Arab’s world. Uris’ sketch of the Arab village of Tabah in *The Haj*, presented through the perspective of Ishmael moves along similar lines: “My earliest memories of Tabah were its smells…. Mostly I remembered the smells of dung. Any child of three can tell the difference between the dung of donkeys, horses, cows, goats, sheep and dogs, all of which littered the streets, paths and fields and only disappeared during the winter rains.” It is noted here too that Arab villages like Tabah with their houses made of mud brick and built along the same lines had retained the same look that they had thousands of years ago (114). This standard Orientalist image of Arab streets flooded by beggars and peddlers, cripples, women with fly-encrusted babies, shoe-shine boys etc, taking advantage of the influx of European tourists naïve to the “devious” ways of the Arab-Oriental may also be seen in other popular novels like Ken Follet’s *Key to Rebecca* (42).

Uris also projects a fundamental difference between ‘the modern Western mind’ and ‘the Arab mind’ which according to the author does not change over the ages. The image of a static, retrogressive Oriental/Arab world is best exemplified in the author’s sketch of the kingdom of Yemen and its ruler—a typical “Oriental despot.” According to Uris, “The world moved on and progressed. Time stood still in Yemen. It remained as primitive as the jungle and as remote and inaccessible as Nepal or Outer Mongolia…. Illiteracy was nearly a hundred percent. Backward, forsaken, wild and uncharted, some of its boundaries were never defined.” The author also presents compelling and convincing depictions of the primitiveness of the Arab Islamic world by parading the lack of facilities that are characteristic of civilized life. He notes that there were no hospitals, schools, newspapers, printing presses, radio, telephone or highway in this land of deserts and vicious mountains linked only by the paths of camel caravans (*Exodus* 562). There is also a marked
incompatibility between the matrices of political behaviour in the contemporary civilized world, and those of the Arab Muslims as depicted in Uris’ works. Uris paints the portrait of the Imam of Yemen, as an absolute ruler controlling the life of every subject. The picture of the Imam of Yemen that emerges from the following account is that of the typical Oriental despot in Orientalist discourse:

He answered to no cabinet. He provided no civil or social services. He held power by dexterously balancing tribal strength, being continually occupied in crushing one tribe or aiding another among the hot desert feuds and the raging jealousies…. He kept hundreds of slaves. He sat in cross-legged pompousness and dispensed justice according to his whim, ordering the noses of prostitutes cut off and the hands of thieves amputated. He scorned civilization and did all in his power to keep it from penetrating his kingdom. (Exodus 562)

Images of Arab sloth and decadence are also painted in profuse vividness in The Haj through Ishmael’s account of the village men sitting around the café, repeating stories of great courage in battle or greater prowess in bed: “Repetition in tales and poetry, repetition in the shapes of our houses, repetition in the music over the radio, repetition in everything was our life” (124). While tracing the history of Jewish migration to Palestine from the nineteenth century to the days following the formation of the state of Israel, Uris draws a vivid contrast between an enterprising civilized Jewish community and a static, retrogressive Oriental Arab. This is very well drawn in the author’s account of the painstaking labour undertaken by the Jews in the creation of agricultural settlements out of eroded fields and swampland. Jewish energy and enterprise are here contrasted with the “slow way of life and lethargy” of Arab village life.
The contrast is brought to sharp focus in the author’s picturisation of young Ishmael’s responses on entering a Jewish kibbutz for the first time:

I saw for the first time so many things I had never seen before…
I had never seen a green lawn.
I had never seen flowers that did not grow wild.
I had never seen streets without donkey or goat shit on them…
I had never seen a real playground with all kinds of balls for the children and all kinds of things like swings and sliding boards and sandboxes….
I had never seen a library with hundreds of books just for children.
I had never seen toys…
I had never seen a toilet.
I had never seen a medical clinic…
I had never seen electric lights, except in the distance, out on the highway or lights from the kibbutz….
I had never seen a painting made by a human hand. (Haj 110)

The Arab’s lack of initiative and industry is attributed partly to his Islamic belief which supposedly encourages a fatalistic acceptance of one’s earthly lot, as a submission to God’s will. This is very well made explicit in the author’s interpretation of kaif expressed through the words of a die-hard Muslim, Haj Ibrahim himself: “Kaif… is a word of profound significance to us. It means do nothing, say nothing, think nothing. We deceive ourselves by saying that kaif is the perfect form of patience, but in truth kaif is a philosophy of deliberate idleness, of being half-awake without leaving the world of private fantasy” (Haj 388). The image of a fatalistic Muslim community who believe that they have no control over their own
lives and destinies, that illness, death, drought, pestilence or any natural disasters are to be accepted as the will of Allah, is highlighted throughout the novel. Ishmael’s observation that men and women in Palestinian Arab society were locked into lifelong roles from which there was no chance of change or escape, and Haj Ibrahim’s explanation that only through blind acceptance could one expect to get through life without going mad, underscore the author’s attempt to foreground this image (see Haj 122).

However, along with professions of the need to make all decisions according to Sunna and live by tradition, the Haj himself is later made to voice doubts about the feasibility of accepting everything in life as fate and Allah’s will as he finds his people betrayed by powerful leaders of the Arab world plotting to divide Palestine among themselves: “We learn we must submit. That is what The Koran tells us. Submit! Submit! But the men we submit to never carry out the Prophet’s will, only their own” (Haj 83).

To Uris, Zionism represents progress and modernity while Islam and the Arabs represent a twentieth century version of the alien spirit of Oriental sloth and backwardness. In Uris’ fiction Arab society is represented in almost completely negative and generally passive terms. The basic difference between Jewish and Arab values, as demonstrated in The Haj, lies in the value placed on self-determination. Uris’ picturisation of the thoroughly dismal conditions in the Palestinian refugee camp of Aqbat Jabar in Jericho, the lack of desire on the part of the refugees to do anything towards improving their situation, the lack of organization and planning, all serve to stress the point that the Palestinians were incapable of saving themselves. The following statement made by Ishmael drives home the point:

We had artisans among us. We had woodworkers, copper workers, shoemakers, cloth weavers. We had a few teachers and merchants. Yet we did nothing. We did not plant a tree….  We
did not open a school. We did not police ourselves. We did not seek land to farm. We made no attempt to create industry. We did not even collect and remove our own garbage.

We rotted and complained. We blamed the Jews. We became overpowered with self-pity. We waited for a guilty world, which we thought owed us everything, to come and save us, for we were incapable of saving ourselves. (Haj 330)

The same picture is reinforced through the words of Clovis Bakshir, the Mayor of Nablus, in his conversation with Haj Ibrahim. Bakshir’s comment that long-range planning has never been an Arab strongpoint is illustrated, as the Mayor is made to echo the Zionist version of the Palestinian refugee crisis. It is stated that the Arab leaders who had called for the evacuation of the Palestinian villagers to make way for the invading armies had done so without making any arrangement whatsoever for their safety and shelter. Bakshir goes further to state thus: “…we have no Arab government in Palestine. The entire Arab world is not a union of nations but a collection of tribes” (Haj 263).

Using Clovis Bakshir as his mouthpiece, Uris also puts forth several instances to substantiate his argument that the Arab people do not know how to participate in a community. According to the Mayor, his neighbourhood is just “a collection of walled houses” where people throw their garbage over the wall, and without paying taxes, complain that the government has made no arrangements for the removal of garbage (Haj 263). That the Arabs have no sense of neighbourhood is a point that Uris touches on in his Jerusalem Song of Songs as well—the pronouncements being more authenticated on account of the book’s claims towards taking the reader through the history of Jerusalem—“from Masada to the explosive saga of recent years.” Here Uris observes that none of the Arab countries operates the social state as it is practiced in the West. The
contrast is drawn effectively as Uris quotes the words of the tour guide on the municipal minibus taking the author himself, as well as several American reporters around, on their sight-seeing tour of Jerusalem: “We pay high taxes and in return we expect high quality civic services. The Arab has traditionally paid little or no taxes and receives few social benefits from the state.” It is also added that such facilities as quality education and medicine, paved streets, proper street lighting, and police service without bribery are new to the Arabs. Readers are told about the absence of playgrounds or any other form of public communal life other than the mosque or coffee house (329-30).

Uris’ commentary on the inability of the Arabs to govern themselves is authenticated through the use of history as well. Using Palestinian Arab characters as Charles Maan and Clovis Bakshir as his mouthpieces Uris provides a list of the various powers that have governed Palestine, from the Romans down to the British and the Jews. Further, the report of the murder of the Jordanian King is followed by a detailed account of the numerous assassinations, murder attempts and coups throughout the Arab world during their “fledgling experiences with self-government” (see Haj 377, 450). Gideon Asch’s comments to Haj Ibrahim on the failure of the Palestinian refugees to organize a united rebel front against the Arab states conspiring to keep them in a state of perpetual exile, also foregrounds the same message: “…no revolution has ever come from the Arab people, only coups, holy wars, and assassinations. Why, in the name of God, is it that you can only exist under a military boot and fanatical holy men?” (Haj 423). Arab history is here represented as a series of political turmoils, killings, and continuous feuds. The same point is put across by the author in his words to Peter Fuller on the danger posed by a “decadent, bloody, unchanging, fatalistic” Arab/Islamic society: “you don’t find any desire to change themselves politically, and do things that are
better for themselves. It all works within a very decadent system that is based on the rule of the military, the church, the aristocracy and the priesthood” (7). The premise here is that since the Arabs are incapable of self-government, they had better be kept that way for their own good.

Uris drives home the point that the Palestinians have always allowed others to rule them, never taking the initiative in governing themselves—that all their decisions had been made for them by powers outside, including the decision that turned them into a people begging the world for pity (Haj 378). Uris further goes to justify the Jewish acquisition of Arab lands as he portrays the Palestinian masses as inferior beings without independent will or opinion, manipulated by a hopelessly decadent, small but powerful feudal class of Palestinian overlords in the days of Ottoman rule, and rulers of the neighbouring Arab states in the days following Israel’s declaration of statehood.

The point is further underlined as the author vilifies several leaders of the Arab world termed “degenerate, corrupt and inefficient.” When Uris insists in his foreword to The Haj that many of the events in The Haj are a matter of history and public record, his portrait of “the Arab Other” gains greater credibility. Thus Haj Amin al-Husseini the Mufti of Jerusalem is termed “a vicious creature,” and as “the most vile, underhand schemer in a part of the world known for vile, underhand schemers” (see Jerusalem 260, Exodus 253). Uris relates how the Mufti successfully instigated riots against defenceless Jews after circulating faked pictures showing Jews at the Wailing Wall preparing to ‘desecrate’ the Arab holy place of the Dome of the Rock (Exodus 262). Fawzi al-Kaukji, defined as “a Lebanese adventurer of the cutthroat variety,” receives no better treatment in the novels of Uris. Readers are told how Kaukji, and the Mufti’s gangs, consisting mainly of “thieves, dope runners, white slavers and the like,” had the entire country terrorized in the 1920s. Images of the Arab elite’s
extravagance and decadence are put across as the author brings in stories of Arab princelings in Europe who were “eating up even more than million dollars a day,” and of a Saudi Arabian prince who had “bribed his way into the Sorbonne and had purchased a forty-room villa on the outskirts of Paris” (Haj 409). While drawing a sketch of Fawzi Kabir, outlining his role in managing the affairs of young princes abroad, Uris brings in details about the extravagant, degenerate lifestyles followed by the young heirs of the royal family. It is stated that Kabir controlled their funds, covered their gambling debts, their fifty-thousand-dollar hotel bills, their purchases of jewellery and cars, and “their pursuit of European flesh,” and also kept their excesses out of the papers, thereby saving the royal family from numerous potential humiliations (Haj 403).

The inferiorization of the Arab is elevated to its utmost height by making the actions of the Palestinian Arab vouch for the failure of a well thought out developmental project like the Jericho Plan designed by the UNRWA towards improving the conditions of the refugees. Uris explains in detail how the project was doomed by tribal jealousies, corruption, unwillingness to work, pilfering of supplies and so on. The Arab’s opposition to modernity and liberal values is made to stand out in sharp contrast to Jewish / Western values. At the very outset of the venture readers find Haj Ibrahim advising the UN administrator Per Olsen to “go slowly because life here at the bottom of the world is slow” and that the Arab “cannot absorb too much from the outside that is different” (462). “Work was considered to be the worst curse in the world” (Haj 122). These words voiced by Ishmael in his description of life in the Palestinian village of Tabah in the year 1944 are reiterated in the context of the refugee crisis. It is noted that when UNRWA sent out a call for several hundred construction jobs, only a third of them were filled by the refugees, which forced the authorities to go for outside contractors and labour. The same is
said to be the case when road building and farm jobs became open. Through Ishmael’s narrative we are told how in the Arab world “when five men do the work of one, four justify themselves through obstruction.” Cruel games played by an army of rubber stamp wielders hold up permits and inspections, and people with no expertise make a farce of trying to figure out complicated installations. The fedayeen gangs organize the theft of materials and also scheme to set up a clandestine factory to make arms and munitions. Priests demand large outright bribes, threatening to impede work by delivering sermons against the plan from their pulpits. Uris notes that “although the heartbeats of life were provided by the UNRWA it was deeply resented.” Thus when the beautification plan to plant trees and gardens, and build playgrounds and install streetlights is under way, they are all ripped up by angry mobs. The Jericho Project is declared officially dead by the administrator himself following violent demonstrations directed towards UNRWA headquarters. The rioters set fire to a clinic because an emergency shipment of vaccine had been accepted from Israel to stem an outbreak of cholera. The picture of wasted efforts—of a grand project doomed to failure even before being fully launched—stands out vividly in the following observation: “A few stakes in a rocky field denoted the outlines of the great experimental farm that never yielded a crop. A few decaying concrete foundations with poking fingers of steel rods were what was left of factories that never produced a single bolt of cloth” (Haj 467). The author once again demonstrates that the Arabs are “a people living in hate, despair and darkness,” as the Haj is made to draw the following conclusion regarding the failure of the Jericho Project: “It required teamwork. Teamwork requires trust. There is no trust among us. We pride ourselves on our potency. In truth we are impotent” (Haj 467). The picture of the Arab Oriental that emerges here is determinedly derogatory and denunciatory. Uris’ Arab demonstrates an incapacity for disciplined action
and patient pursuance of collective endeavours. They show lack of co-
ordination and harmony in organization and function. Nor do they reveal
any ability for co-operation. Any collective action for common benefit is
alien to them.

Jewish efforts in reclaiming the wilderness and carving out self-
sufficient settlements in the midst of enemy territory, and dismantling their
refugee camps to build towns as quickly as possible, all portrayed as the
result of hard work and ingenuity are made to stand out against “Arab
lethargy and lack of dignity” (Haj 330), and their “failure to advance
culturally, economically, and socially from the Dark Ages” (Exodus 458).
The contrast gets sharply etched in the reader’s mind through the words of
Nuri Mudhil, a Palestinian archaeologist, to Ishmael: “The Jews are not
bleating to the world to make charity cases of their brothers…. They are
moving thousands into decent homes and giving them useful work. They
are clearing land to be farmed. The lives of those Jews who fled Arab
countries destitute will be different than yours” (Haj 505). Ever so many
enumerations of Jewish enterprise and ingenuity may be seen throughout
the length and breadth of the two novels. For instance, in Exodus Uris
traces the history of Zionist settlement in Palestine and relates how the
various Jewish kibbutzim achieved self-sufficiency in food, established
their own dairy, reared poultry and cattle, made their own cloth, furniture,
tools and so on, and defended their hard-won territory through selfless
labour and sacrifice (343). The point is made quite explicitly through the
words of Ari Ben Canaan underlining the kibbutznik’s selfless service in
building the nation: “a kibbutznik does not have very much of his own.
Everything, including his life, belongs to something else” (Exodus 507).
Uris notes how the immigrants to the newly created state of Israel went out
to attack the wastes and the desert with the same fervour that the early
pioneers had shown in rolling back the swamps, to forge cities and towns,
industries, airlines, highways, and what not (*Exodus* 571-73). The author brings greater credence to images of Jewish enterprise and Arab decadence as he makes references to the UNSCOP teams’ inspection of Palestine—of the delegates’ being impressed with the Yishuv’s “proud record of land reclamations, rehabilitation for the homeless, the progress of the kibbutzim and factories and the cities they had built,” and the contrast noted between the Jewish and Arab communities.

Uris also draws a crucial distinction between the Arabs and Jews highlighting the absence of love and fellow feeling among the former, setting it against the close bonding among the latter. The author makes it a point to state repeatedly that very little help came to the Palestinian refugees from the Arab world—that they were treated like lepers by their own brethren. The Arab-Jew contrast in this regard stands out most sharply in the author’s picturisation of their respective responses to their refugee crises. Uris here notes that the Palestinian refugees continue to languish in “such pestholes as Aqbat Jabar” even though the Arabs have resources enough in the form of oil money, rich lands, and vast empty territories in the Gulf lands, to dissolve their refugee problem (*Haj* 505). On the other hand, the Jews in Palestine—both before and after the UN Partition Vote—are seen to be making every effort at rehabilitating their refugees from Europe, from the Arab world, as well as from every other part of the globe. Along with detailed sketches of “the miracles of redemption” that were taking place all over Israel since the formation of the state, the author also speaks about the ugly temporary shack towns made of corrugated tin—built to absorb the flood of refugees—which disappeared in a matter of a few years, as people were resettled in decent housing in the towns or *moshavim* and *kibbutzim*. The Arab-Jew contrast is brought into sharp focus as Uris draws a vivid sketch of the dispirited Palestinian Arab refugees “whose illusions had been shattered by the lies of their leaders.”
Uris notes that had there been any love for these people on the part of the Arab leaders and the Arab people, they would not have permitted this condition to continue. The following observations hammer home the point quite effectively:

In the Gaza Strip, the Egyptians locked them in…. There was no concerted attempt to relocate these people, to find work for them, to educate them, to do much but let them sit, stew, rot and build maniacal fantasies… Their Arab brethren were content to let these people live off the scrapings of the world community, on handouts from the United Nations, with their own oil-rich states contributing virtually nothing to their welfare. The lack of dignity and concern for human life was disgusting. (Jerusalem 302)

It may be noted here that Uris mentions practically nothing about the Islamic doctrine of obligatory alms—zakat—or the numerous humanitarian agencies functioning in the Arab world. Jordan and Egypt, for instance, are the sites of a rich variety of voluntary organizations, new and old, indigenous and international. Jonathan Benthall in his analysis of organized charity in the Arab-Islamic world points out that government institutions in Jordan began to grow during the 1930’s, and that by 1948 with the influx of refugees from Israel, new concepts of social work, and a minimum standard of subsistence for all refugees, irrespective of ethnic origin, began to be introduced. Benthall also notes that very little publicity is given in the West regarding the twenty eight National Red Crescent Societies or the innumerable voluntary agencies functioning in the Arab-Islamic world (see Benthall 152-56). In the works of Uris, however, organized charity is made out to be a speciality of the Judaeo-Christian West, and the Palestinian-Arab made the object of this charity.

Uris’ Arab lacks the skill of logical reasoning, makes no distinction between reality and fantasy, and is marked by an easily inflamed brain. In
short he is shown as being synonymous with everything degraded, cowardly, and irrational. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the author’s depiction of the Palestinian guerrilla organizations, named the Avenging Leopards, Liberating Sharks, Desert Wolves, and the Black May Gang. Uris’ account of the origin and functioning of the Avenging Leopards in the refugee camps goes thus: “Running sewers and uncollected hills of rotting garbage breed voluminous flies and mosquitoes, and the stink from them is deafening. When you add that to total idleness and the constant prodding of bent and fanciful old men pretending to instil a pride and courage they never really owned, you have the birth of the Avenging Leopards.” According to the author their displays of courage were restricted to “oaths of revenge filled with ogreish promises of dismemberment and skull crushing, and hot pokers in the eyes of the Jews,” and to testing each other’s courage with stick jousts, jumping from high ledges, biting off the heads of live chickens and snakes, and strangling cats bare-handed (The Haj 369-70). The fedayeen are here drawn as cowardly gangsters who “ride around in open trucks before going out on a raid and shoot up all their ammunition into the air to prop up their courage, but throw down their guns and flee by the time they get to the Israeli border.” A thoroughly negative image of the Palestinian guerrilla is put across to the reader as Uris makes Ishmael lash out against the fedayeen: “Who are these fedayeen who are trying to lead us? What do they know of government? What do they know of freedom? What do they know of reason, of truth? They steal from widows and cripples. They run the black market. They deal in hashish. So they wrap up their gangsters in a flag of revolution, and this is supposed to make them noble?” (Haj 477). However, in Jerusalem Song of Songs, the author’s tirade is levelled directly at the PLO itself, in a chapter significantly enough entitled ‘The Assassins.’ Tracing a history of the Assassins, a Muslim sect who operated between
the eleventh and thirteen centuries throughout the Fertile Crescent, Uris comments that the assassins were not a unique or passing oddity, but represented a mainstream of behaviour that has continued unabated in Arab society, and adds that the “PLO created by the Arab governments for the assassination of the state of Israel, has proved a worthy successor to the ancient Assassins” (317-18). In his blatant diatribe against the PLO, Uris defines the organization as a gang of killers who have “terrified and bullied the world by bloodletting on city streets, highjackings, kidnappings and mail bombings…and carry on innumerable underworld operations such as the hashish trade” (320). In The Haj, Uris voices his tirade through the fictional insider Ishmael to decry the fedayeen while in Jerusalem Song of Songs the author places himself on the high pedestal of an impartial but conscientious historian to condemn in unequivocal terms the actions of the PLO. Taken together the Palestinian resistance movements are made to appear as obnoxious and loathsome in sweep.

What we have in Uris’ fiction is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Palestinian/Arab. The Arab/ Palestinian is here presented as one who cannot discern between fantasy and reality, who abhors compromise, always blames others for his predicament, and in the end gives vent to his frustrations in pointless acts of bloodlust. Palestinians are here portrayed either as refugees or as extremists hell-bent on destroying the “Zionist entity.” The entrenched cultural attitude towards Palestinians deriving from age-old Western prejudices about Islam, the Arabs and the ‘Orient,’ on which Zionist views of the Palestinians has been based, finds a ready echo in the writings of Uris.

Arabs are also invested with some strikingly abhorrent traits. They are depicted as primitive, superstitious, treacherous, disorganized, deceitful, bestial and lecherous. The inherent Arab superstition is shown to have contributed to their failure in their various encounters with the Jews in
the battlefield. Uris points out how their superstition and unnatural fear of the dark helped the Jews defend their quarter of Safed in spite of possessing only limited resources and men. The Palmach night patrols are said to have kept the Arab population in panic by merely shooting off fire crackers (Exodus 509). Uris also explains how the Jews successfully defended Gan Dafna against Arab attack by setting off a string of fire crackers and recorded sounds of bomb explosions (504). Yet another instance that exemplifies the ‘Arab gullibility’ may be found in The Haj. Readers are told how the story of a curse being placed by Allah on the Allenby Bridge that the first man to cross would be struck blind and that the vultures would feed on him, immediately takes effect. This enables Haj Ibrahim to prevent his men from crossing the Allenby Bridge to Jordan on hearing rumours about Jewish attack (see Haj 512-13).

Commenting on the Arab penchant for exaggeration, Uris notes that truth and fiction intermingled within the Arab mind so that to the Arab, fantasy and reality were often one and the same—part of the reason for this being attributed to the Arabic language itself, which according to Uris is characterized by general vagueness of thought and exaggeration. This is how Uris puts it: “Fantasy was perpetuated with a language known for its overkill of exaggeration and verbal flights of imagination. The Arab describing the most simple scene can twist it into wild complexity” (Jerusalem 175). Uris draws a crucial link between the hostile atmosphere of the desert, the Islamic religion, “the fanciful Arab mind,” and the Arabic language itself (175). The exaggerated value heaped upon Arabic as a language in Orientalist scholarship permits the Zionist/Orientalist to make the language equivalent to mind, society, history and nature (see Orientalism 320-21).

Uris brings in several illustrations to highlight the braggadocio nature and the penchant for exaggeration supposedly inherent in the Arab,
during Ishmael’s narration about his childhood days in Tabah, where life was mainly centred round the village café. Ishmael recalls stories regarding the “exploits” of Salim, the sheikh of one of the smaller clans whose ‘fighting prowess’ had become legendary in the villages around the Valley of Ayalon. The most graphic among the sheikh’s accounts included the description of a hand-to-hand fight during which he had supposedly “hacked his way through a wall of British flesh to get to a machine gun nest and grenade it to oblivion,” when in reality he had never been anything more than an orderly to a Turkish Colonel and “had never gotten within fifty miles of a battle front.” Uris also adds that a knife scar from a brawl over a belly dancer had been ‘converted’ into a wound caused by a bullet that had grazed his flesh, and was backed up by a medal for valour that had been picked up at an Istanbul bazaar (31). The same effect is created as the author describes the exaggerated reports of the Arab villagers who, though thoroughly humiliated in their assault on Shemesh kibbutz, make claims of killing their opponents, cutting out their tongues and of “teaching them (the Jews) a lesson they’ll never forget” (Haj 33-34).

The same point is brought into focus in Uris’ account of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1956, dealt with in detail in both Exodus and The Haj. Arab attempts to cover up their military disasters, brought about due to cowardice and ineptness in the battlefield, to ‘convert’ humiliating defeats into wholesome victories, are all authenticated while being clothed in the garb of history. For instance, in The Haj readers are told about Arab attempts to explain the defeat of Kaukji’s forces at Mishmar ha Emek as having been brought about by British assistance provided to the Jews in secret. Significantly, these accounts are given in the form of a Communique dated April 14, 1948, supposedly issued by F. Kaukji, Field Marshal, Arab Army of Liberation. Stories circulated in the Arab world through the Arab propaganda machinery, about victories against the Jews
at several fronts even as they faced successive defeats, are very well authenticated as historical characters as Gamal Abdul Nasser, Kaukji and Abdul Kadar Husseini are brought into the picture. Uris’ account of the Yom Kippur war in *Jerusalem Song of Songs* gives details about the role of the Egyptian President Anwar-al-Sadat. The author notes how Sadat was able to convert his “modest initial success into a fantasy of monumental victory”. Significantly, as Uris discusses the role of Sadat in the Yom Kippur war and the post war negotiations, the point that “Machismo in battle is all-important to an Arab male” is reiterated (316).

The various narrative modes employed by the author for reiterating the strength of Jewish identity and fellow-feeling have been brought out elsewhere in the present study. One can as well take snapshots of the same for drawing the contrast between the Jews and the Arabs. Of all the inherent weaknesses discerned in the Arabs, it is their lack of unity, organisational skills and planning that has been most highlighted. In his description of the various encounters between Israel and the Arab states in the 1948 war in such places as the Negev, Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Corridor, the Huleh Valley and the Galilee, Sharon and Tel Aviv, Uris highlights the same. The following extract from *Exodus* serves as an illustration: “The Arabs revealed that they had a ‘master plan’ for throwing the Jews into the sea. If a master plan existed there was no master commander, for each Arab country had its own idea of who should run the armies and each Arab country had its own idea of who should rule Palestine afterward.” Uris notes that Baghdad and Cairo both claimed leadership of the Arab world and of a ‘greater Arab state,’ while Saudi Arabia claimed leadership as the country which held the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina. The author also comments on Jordanian and Syrian aspirations to Palestine as part of the Mandate. The account of Arab
preparations for the war concludes on the following sarcastic note: “And so—the ‘united’ Arabs attacked” (520).

Accounts of back-stabbing among the Arab leaders right from the days of the Arab Revolt are made more authentic as Uris brings in historical figures like Haj Amin el Husseini the Mufti of Jerusalem, and Kawukji, the first military commander of the Arab Revolt, into the picture. Uris notes that the Arab revolt stirred up under the leadership of the Mufti in 1936 to halt Jewish immigration and dislodge Jewish settlements left many defenceless old Orthodox Jews in the holy cities dead. However, the author adds that although the rebellion was supposedly directed against the Jews and the British, its major objective was to kill off all the mufti’s political opponents (Exodus 274). Uris also states that as the revolt ended its second year Haj Amin’s gangs went on a murder binge which resulted in eight thousand Palestinian Arabs killing one another (Haj 80). However Cheryl A. Rubenberg explains how the British authorities successfully crushed the armed insurrection of the Palestinian Arabs using brutal and oppressive measures. These included the imposition of harsh emergency regulations and practices, including closure of newspapers, search-and-seizure operations without warrant, mass arrests and incarceration, deportation of political, trade union and resistance leaders, widespread curfews and other forms of collective punishment (The Palestinians 5). But in Uris’ version of history the Palestinian revolt of 1936-39 ended not when it was crushed by the British but when the Palestinian Arabs turned against each other.

In Jerusalem Song of Songs which stakes claims of historicity, Uris dismisses Arab nationalism in Palestine as nothing more than a manifestation of personal ambition, and a reaction to Zionism. Uris highlights the point that “there has never been a successful Arab government based on democratic principles,” whereas Zionism has always...
been “democracy in its purest form, the only one ever introduced successfully into that part of the world” (256). It is stated that within the Supreme Muslim Council, Haj Amin and the other leading Arab families had become bogged down in personal feuds and power plays during the Arab Revolt of 1936-39, with the result that the Council had little effect on the well-being of the Arab population. Their only goals, according to Uris, were the assumption of autocratic power, and their only base of unity, an all-consuming hatred of the Jews (261-62). Uris also describes how “tribal vengeance” manifested itself as the Arabs faced defeat in their war against the Jewish state. The assassination of Clovis Bakshir the Mayor of Nablus by a Mufti gunman for his support of the Jordanian king, and King Abdullah’s retaliatory murder of half a dozen pro-Mufti muktars, and internment of Mufti sympathizers throughout the West Bank are here cited (Haj 312). Uris also notes that as everyone’s grand scheme to destroy the Jews collapsed, the sordid stories of one secret deal after another began to emerge, the chief of them being the Saudis’ plot to assassinate the Jordanian king. The Saudis are here alleged to have paid off the Egyptians, Iraqis and Syrians to lure a reluctant King Abdullah into the war, have the Arab Legion grab up the West Bank, then assassinate King Abdullah, dissolve his kingdom, and split it up among themselves. Uris also talks about Abdullah’s deal with Kaukji, which is supposed to have included plans of proclaiming the latter governor of the West Bank, to rule the area on his behalf, in return for the latter’s elimination of the Mufti’s men. Jordanian machinations for the consolidation of the West Bank are authenticated as they are ‘revealed’ to the reader in the form of a letter supposedly sent by King Abdullah to David Ben Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel, seeking the latter’s help against the Egyptians. The following ‘request’ serves to show up the Arabs as a house divided, and the leadership as a pack of scheming back-stabbers even going to the extent of
seeking the aid of a sworn enemy against fellow Arabs, for the fulfilment of personal interests:

I implore you to complete your conquest of the Gaza Strip to eliminate a mutual enemy and think in terms of granting us future control. It would ensure my annexation of the West Bank and both of us the greatest chance for co-existence. Give the Gaza Strip to the devil! But for God’s sake, do not let the Egyptians have it. (Haj 316)

Uris also brings into focus an Egyptian sponsored plot carried out in collaboration with the Mufti, whereby the Gaza Strip, even while remaining the centre of an “All Palestine Government” under the Mufti’s control, would in reality be Egyptian-administered military territory. Uris’ account of the “tribal vengeance” among the Arab states closes on the following note: “inside Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, the bloodletting, jailings, and killings between ministers and generals was under way over the loss of the war. Regimes tottered everywhere” (Haj 312-13). These accounts may be seen as an instance of how history has been effectively employed to “prove” the Arab’s incapacity at self-governance and still further to picture an entire people and their leadership as treacherous war-mongers.

In The Haj where Uris’ indictment of the Arab is more pronounced, a thoroughly negative image of the various Arab armies and militias is placed before the reader. Soldiers of the Army of the Jihad under the leadership of Abdul Kadar Husseini and of the Army of Liberation under Kaukji are described as coffee house fighters with little self-esteem, no real training and less stomach for the bitterness of bayonet combat. Through the musings of Ibrahim the reader learns that “It was beyond comprehension that they could operate with a unified command” since “Abdul Kadar and Kaukji loathed one another,” that “it was beyond doubt that each of them had made side deals with Abdullah, the Egyptians and the Syrians,” and
that with so many Arab armies and militias in Palestine, it was quite logical
that if the Jews were defeated it would only lead to an even bloodier mess
of Arab fighting Arab. Ibrahim also comments on the ‘futility’ of Arab
conferences which produced nothing but “time-tested anarchy.” In a
comparative analysis of the Arab and Jewish fighting forces, Haj Ibrahim is
seen to express his appreciation for the latter’s tremendous “organizational
capacities, their commanders, and their unity of purpose.” The essential
difference between the two forces is summed up thus: “The Jews also had
reality in their planning instead of fantasy and the support of the Yishuv in
place of intertribal disarray” (Haj 172). Uris also observes that King
Abdullah’s objective in sending his army into Palestine during the 1948
war, was not to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state but to make
himself the master of the Arab part of Palestine—that there was no love
lost between Abdullah and the other Arab rulers who resented his
expansionist ambitions and suspected him of being in cahoots with the
enemy. Each of the Arab states, according to Uris, was moved by dynastic
or national interests, which were hidden behind the façade of securing
Palestine for the Palestinians. Thus the author effectively shows up the
Arabs as a divided lot of war-mongers whose only point of agreement was
hatred of the Jew.

Ever so many instances of Arab deceit and treachery painted by the
author in the novels serve to drive home Uris’ message that the real
betrayal of the Palestinian Arab comes not from the Jew but from fellow
Arabs themselves. For instance, in The Haj readers are told about the
Effendi Kabir’s sale of the Tabah water rights to the Jews, and of his
collaboration with the Mufti of Jerusalem to force Ibrahim and his people
to evacuate Tabah and give the control of the village to Ibrahim’s brother
and rival, Farouk. Images of legendary Arab hospitality are challenged as
the author relates how the dispossessed refugees were greeted by locked
doors in the Arab cities, and looted of whatever valuables they had managed to salvage. At Nablus Ibrahim is forced to conclude that the Arab penchant for brotherhood and hospitality is fine “as long as our vines are full and there is peace. When there is fear among our people they slam the doors of mercy in our faces” (271). Further, Ibrahim is shown as being forced to seek the help of his Jewish friend, Gideon Asch while in Nablus when Kaukji’s soldiers close in on him. The treachery of the Arab leaders is seen to reach its zenith during the Zurich Conference on Palestinian Unity. Here Haj Ibrahim is seen as being forced to stand alone for Palestinian autonomy as his enemies manage to isolate him from his allies.

Uris places a stamp of authenticity on the charge of Arab betrayal by bringing in historical figures and events to point to Arab designs on Palestinian territory. The author notes that “Back-stabbing among Arab leaders had followed historical lines” (Jerusalem song of Songs 280). The point is elaborated as Uris presents an outline of the power struggles in the Middle East in the context of the UN Partition Vote. Uris begins with a reference to the ambitions of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Fawzi el Kaukji, and dwells in detail on the “insane ambitions” of King Abdullah who envisioned hopes of expanding his country by taking Palestine for himself. According to Uris, King Abdullah of Jordan in providing refuge to the Palestinian refugees was trying to inflate his population artificially and use the refugees to lay claims on land that did not belong to him. The author adds further that Syria and Egypt were not without ambitions to snatch up pieces of Palestine, Syria wanting Haifa, and Egypt the Negev and Gaza Strip (280). Deliberations at the Zurich Conference in the autumn of 1950 are related to show up the Arab leadership as “a pack of ravished jackals,” not in the least motivated to liberate Palestine for the Palestinian Arabs, but in it for personal ambition. The point is put across by Uris using Haj Ibrahim himself as his mouthpiece: “Because he knew the Arab
mentality, Ibrahim was distressed. No Arab nation would go to war for fellow Arabs without a reward” (160). The following extract from The Haj on the proceedings of the Zurich Conference serves to drive home Uris’ argument that “the warlords of Cairo, Damascus and Amman” had absolutely no concern for the Palestinians (161).

…Egypt demands the Southern Negev Desert for security reasons. Jordan objects.

… Syria demands the Western Galilee as an integral part of its Ottoman history. Lebanon objects.

…Jordan demands that its annexation of the West Bank be ratified. Everyone objects.

…Lebanon demands the annexation of the Eastern Galilee. Syria objects.

…. Words hiss out like dueling rapiers. Moods of rage and disgust bounce off the lofty heights of the committee rooms … There are rational conclusions to be drawn, but they disappear into echo chambers. The Egyptian hears things one way. The Syrian hears the same words another way. The Iraqis do not hear. (411)

In the sections where historical data is blended into the fictional narrative, Uris provides an account of the ‘hate feuds’ among the Arabs right from the days of the British Mandate, and relates how the British successfully employed the policy of “divide and rule” while their “Arab puppets were kept happy with the latest automobiles and with well-stocked harems.” Jewish claims towards a Greater Israel are legitimized as the author describes the circumstances leading to the creation of Iraq and Trans-Jordan—two countries carved out of the Palestine Mandate by the British without authorization from the League of Nations (see Exodus 252).
The point is further pursued in *Jerusalem Song of Songs* where Uris claims that “77 percent of the Palestine Mandate was removed from the map by political surgery in the establishment of a phony kingdom rigged up to serve British imperial interests,” and that only 17 percent of the original mandate eventually went to the creation of the State of Israel (256). Uris’ statements that “before 1921 there was no such thing as a Jordanian people or nation,” that “they were all Palestinians,” and that “The Jordanians were an invention of the British Colonial Office,” have to be viewed in the context of a wide range of events including Israel’s annexation in 1967 of the West Bank, which had remained under Jordanian control since the first Arab-Israeli war. Hashemite claims to Palestine are delegitimized as the author asserts that as Hashemites from the Arabian Peninsula, both Abdullah and Faisal, rulers of Jordan and Iraq respectively, were strangers in the lands they ruled under British direction (*Haj* 29).

The Arabs are dismissed as scheming back-stabbers, as a people incapable of love and trust—violence and deceit being part of their intrinsic nature. Images of Arab deceit, treachery, and lack of trust are placed before the reader at the very outset of *The Haj*. Readers are told how the *mukhtar* Ibrahim is cheated of the money due to him as rent, by his own brother Farouk, and son Kamal. Also, his devoted son Ishmael even while dutifully reporting the theft to his father, is seen to hold back enough information to skim money for his mother off the rents. Ishmael’s conclusions on the “basic canon of Arab life,” though made in the specific first-person voice, illustrate a characteristic Orientalist-reductionist tendency to equate the Arab with treachery and a proclivity to violence: “So before I was nine I had learned the basic canon of Arab life. It was me against my brother; me and my brother against our father; my family against my cousins and the clan; the clan against the tribe; and the tribe against the world. And all of us against the infidel” (14). The same point is further underscored in
Ishmael’s response on being betrayed by his best friend Izzat about his secret visits to Shemesh Kibbutz: “Never trust anyone, especially your best friend. I didn’t trust my brothers… I didn’t even trust my mother” (Haj 112). The Arab’s basic failure to trust is ‘demonstrated’ by the author through references—made by Arab insiders themselves—to manipulations carried out by Arab leaders at Zurich appearing before the International Arbitration Commission. The following observations serve to drive home the message: “No delegation here is ready to make a commitment in front of any other delegation. The Syrians do not trust the Egyptians. The Lebanese only trust money. No one trusts Jordan…. Everyone is suspicious of everyone, and even now each is manoeuvring against the other” (Haj 408).

Fighting within the family, the clan and the tribe is said to be the bane of Arab life (Haj 121). “The power of the dagger in Arab life” is demonstrated at the very outset through Ibrahim’s “selection” as the mukhtar of Tabah superseding his elder brother Farouk, and suppressing his adversaries from other clans. Sweeping generalizations on Arab decadence appear throughout the narrative. The author’s remarks that most Arab villages had at least two or three of their members serving a sentence, generally for stealing, smuggling or knifing (Haj 23)—that “Arab fighting Arab was an established way of life, hundreds and hundreds of years old” (Haj 82) may be cited as instances of such generalizations which serve to project the image of the Arab as being given to violent and degenerate tendencies.

Uris effectively brings out the complexities associated with the tribal and clannish differences in the Middle East as instances to throw up the vision of inter-regional and intra-regional disunity and antagonism. But the Arab is nevertheless a real entity. The ways in which Uris explains the nature of the unity of this entity demonstrates the author’s masterly narrative skills. To Uris, the Arab, Muslim and the Palestinian are not
entities conceivable from the vantage point of modern political rationality. Rather the only recognizable thread of unity that binds the above entities is the negative, reactionary and retrogressive ethos of anti-Zionism. Some of the crucial illustrations employed by the author are discerned below.

The Palestinian refugees, according to the author, were mere pawns manipulated by the Arab leaders in their hate campaign against the Jewish State—that the “bright rally flag of the Arab world was simply the total destruction of the Jews.” The point is made quite explicitly as the author makes a reference to the words of the Syrian Prime Minister who is said to have stated that it would be better for all the Palestinian refugees to be exterminated than to agree to give up one inch of land, and that the death of a half-million Palestinians would create enough martyrs to keep hatred of the Jew boiling for a thousand years (Haj 352). Among the various other instances brought out by the author for highlighting the anti-Jewish stance of the Arabs, a few more are given elsewhere in the chapter.

Images of Arab intrigue and rivalry, as well as the “obsession to destroy Israel,” are highlighted in the author’s account of the events leading to the Sinai war of 1956 and Colonel Nasser’s role as “aggressor” in the same. To Uris, the Palestinians are a people who fester in refugee camps which are the breeding grounds of terrorism, and are used as a political football by the Arab states. This is very well stated through the words of Ishmael who feels that Nasser would do nothing to better the conditions of the Palestinian refugees: “If he (Nasser) won and we returned to our homes, we would only be exchanging Jordanian tyranny for Egyptian tyranny. He was only using us.” Uris also speaks about Nasser’s attempts to undermine Jordan by promoting refugee riots in the West Bank and then forcing Jordan into a military alliance under his command. The author also notes that Nasser was “heavily bankrolled by the Saudis who
were the mortal enemies of the Hashemites and who were as interested in Jordan’s demise as they were in the defeat of the Zionists” (Haj 508).

Graphic images of Arab bestiality are foregrounded through such episodes as the gruesome murder of Charles Maan, a Palestinian Christian leader, and political enemy of the Jordanian King Abdullah. The murder, according to Uris, is carried out with the sole intent of keeping the Christian refugees in the camps along with the Muslims in order to prove a unity of hatred—to keep them deliberately caged in festering camps to breed hatred of the Jews, and thus foil Vatican’s plans to resettle the Christian Arab refugees. Uris’ account of the murder goes thus: “His body was found in a garbage dump near Ramallah a few days later. The assassins had shoved a three-inch pipe far up his rectum, placed several small diseased rats into the pipe, and forced them up into Maan’s intestines. His legs were tightly bound so the rats could not be disgorged” (Haj 448).

The brutal killing of Jamil, son of Haj Ibrahim, as a means of dissuading the leader from pressing claims for the refugees’ return to their villages, goes further in underlining Uris’ point that none of the Arab states had stood for Palestinian autonomy or for the welfare of the refugees, but were merely interested in annexing Palestinian territory to their own. It also serves to highlight the savagery of Arab vengeance. Uris lists the various instruments of torture employed by Colonel Farid Zyyad of the Jordanian Police. Uris notes that apart from knocking out the teeth of the victim and other crude ways of beating, Colonel Zyyad had perfected other special forms of inflicting pain. For instance, the victim would be tied on a table, covered with a wet cloth, and pressed by a hot iron from foot to chest. Uris notes that the more persistent of the rebels would be wrapped in heavy blankets, tied up and laid out in the midday sun. When one passed out from heat prostration, he would be revived long enough to gain sufficient
strength to be wrapped up once more. The image of the Arab as prone to savagery and violence is put across to the reader as these forms of punishment are attributed to be exclusive creations of the desert and the desert’s heat.

Of all descriptions in the novels, of Arab ways of punishment, what stands out is the author’s account of the ghastly torture and murder of Jamil. Uris describes how the young boy was placed into a large burlap bag with six cats thrown in with him and the bag sewn shut. The details go thus: “When Farid Zyyad beat on the bag with a stick, the cats went berserk. He beat and beat until Jamil’s screams were no longer heard. The cats had eventually clawed through to the bone. Face, eyes, sexual parts had been ripped away. All that was left was a blood-soaked mass of flesh so torn it was unrecognizable” (Haj 435).

The point that Uris puts across is that humanity and sympathy are not endowments of the “despotic, savage Oriental-Arab mentality,” but are attributes of the “enlightened Occidental-Jew.” Arab intransigence and the rigidity of Islamic culture are made to stand out against Jewish humanitarianism. This is best exemplified in the scene where Ibrahim refuses to accept the help of a Jewish doctor to save his dying baby, but instead prefers to let it die. On the other hand Gideon Asch the Jew who responds to Ibrahim’s unrelenting attitude with genuinely righteous rage is seen to be pleading for the life of the child. Gideon’s humanitarianism is revealed in yet another scene where he helps Ibrahim and his family escape from Arab enemies who are intent on destroying him. Further, the efforts made by the Jews towards civilizing the ‘primitive’ Arabs, as stated in the works under consideration, also serve to project the image of the Jews as a people endowed with humanitarian concerns. The same effect is created in Uris’ version of the Palestinian refugee crisis as well, where the author depicts the Arab armies as having forced the former to leave their
homeland, “imposed upon them a political and ideological blockade and threw them into prisons similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live in Eastern Europe,” while the “new state of Israel welcomed over a half million Jews from the Arab world” (*Jerusalem* 297).

Uris purports to uncover “the inner workings of the Arab mind” which according to the author is aberrant from the Western / Jewish point of view, but for the Arabs is normal. Uris’ portrayal of Kammal the *mukhtar* of Abu-Yesha is invested with the potential to demonstrate this point. Even as the author presents Kammal as an enlightened Arab enjoying a close dependant relationship with the Jews, readers are told that despite his enlightenment and its consequent elevated status, he was “heart and soul an Arab,” that he never spoke of his three wives, for the servitude of woman was traditional, that he was a great man to bicker when bartering, and that although he had compassion for his people, he could not comprehend any means of rule that was not absolute. Uris goes on to say that on occasion Kammal even consulted his Jewish friend Jossi in some “typical double-dealing scheme which seemed perfectly legitimate to the Arab” (*Exodus* 227).

Uris repeatedly stresses the point that nothing resembling a democracy has existed, or ever will exist in the Arab world (see for instance *Jerusalem* 318). The author’s efforts to delegitimize PLO claims for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on these grounds are made quite obvious in the following diatribe which significantly enough appears in a book staking claims of historicity:

When the PLO tells us of forming a ‘secular democratic state’ in the West Bank they speak hogwash. They don’t and never will have the slightest notion of how a democracy operates. Allowing these people to form and operate a cancer state shows a world ready to use ostrich tactics of pretending not to see and
hoping it will all go away. The moment such a state comes into existence, the Middle East, the West and the world will be in serious danger. (*Jerusalem* 322)

The Palestinian/Arab—his faith and culture, are seen as a source of threat, being associated with violence, fundamentalism, terrorism, corruption, treachery, and what not. The threat posed by a fundamentalist Islamic world unable to live at peace with the rest of the world and with each other, is graphically drawn by the author in the concluding pages of *The Haj*. Uris’ indictment of Arab society voiced through the Palestinian archaeologist Nuri Mudhil also includes ‘predictions’ about the Islamic world’s self-destruction:

> We Arabs are the worst. We can’t live with the world, and even more terrible, we can’t live with each other. In the end it will not be Arab against Jew but Arab against Arab. One day our oil will be gone, along with our ability to blackmail….We who tried to humiliate the Jews will find ourselves humiliated as the scum of the earth. (506)

The myriad attempts at dehumanizing and demonizing the Arab, of reducing an entire people to a series of ugly stereotypes justifies Edward Said’s analysis of *The Haj* as an example of “gutter racism” (see *Politics of Dispossession* 98). That Uris had an objective in mind as he wrote *The Haj* is made clear by the author himself—the objective being to warn the West and Western democracies that they could not keep their heads in the sand about this situation any longer, “that we have an enraged bull of a billion people on our planet and tilted the wrong way they could open the second road to Armageddon.” The enraged bull that “pose(s) a threat as great as a nuclear holocaust to this planet,” according to Uris, is Muslim society (see Uris interview qtd in Fuller 7).
Israel, on the other hand, is characterized as a bastion of Western civilization, hewn out of the Islamic wilderness—as a brave, gallant, and young state that provides a model of courage and tenacity. Its people are praised for their sacrifice, mettle, industriousness, dedication, determination and spirit. Uris here depicts Israel as a state that has achieved substantial progress despite its precarious existence in the midst of hostile Arab hordes. Such views reflect the general United States media view that whereas Arab/Muslim “terrorists” are fully capable of acts of deliberate violence against innocents, Israel which is like the enlightened West is not.

In Uris’ fiction Israel is seen to share with the United States a similarity of outlook and a dedication to the same kind of ideals, aims and objectives. Thus Israel is presented as a “Western” state in a sea of feudal Oriental entities, and as a perpetrator of the Judeo-Christian heritage. Both Israel and the United states are perceived as sharing the concept of individual freedom and the right of all individuals to live in peace. Israel is seen as a free, open, and democratic society—a showplace of democracy—pursuing peace. The Arabs and Islam, on the other hand, are defined negatively as that with which Israel and the West are radically at odds.

The “othering” of the Oriental Arab and the positioning of the Jew on the same footing with the Occident is made possible as Uris brings in David Ben Gurion himself to outline “Israel’s special mission, unique in the world”: “We represent the interests of the Western democracies…even the British who threaten us with arms, and the Americans who threaten us with economic blackmail. Eventually…they will come to realize that without Israel their own existence is in danger” (322). Uris also makes possible the perception of a Jew-Christian bond by highlighting the Biblical/Christian connection with the Holy Land, and also puts across the point that Israel fits into the historical-religious collective memory of the West. Readers are told about Kitty Fremont’s visit to the ruins of the
synagogue of Capernaum where “Jesus walked and taught and healed,” “the church which marked the place of the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fishes,” and “the Mount of Beatitudes where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount” as well as the birthplace of Mary Magdalene. Uris also notes that in the Bab el Wad, Kitty whose religious training had been in “matter-of-fact Midwestern Protestantism,” experienced “the magic pull of Jerusalem,” and adds that “none could pass through the Judean hills for the first time and escape the haunting power of the City of David.” The same point is further stressed as Uris goes on to describe her reactions on driving higher into the Judean hills: “She was with The Bible now, and for the first time, in these silent and weird hills, came the realization of what it was to be in the Holy Land” (323). The author here traces the course of Kitty’s journey through the various spots associated with the life of Jesus Christ to arrive at the conclusion that one “feel(s) very close to Jesus here”— “that it is impossible to be a Christian without being a Jew in spirit” (Exodus 475).

Considering the fact that Uris is mainly addressing what he calls “the great American public” (see Uris interview in Sharon and Downey), such observations serve to create the consciousness of a profound bond between the Christians of the United States and the Jews of Israel. Bernard Reich, in his analysis of the evolution and dynamics of the relationship between the United States and Israel, notes that American-Jewish supporters of Israel, and Israel itself, have long realized the need for Christian support if Israel is to flourish, and that the US religious heritage, overwhelmingly Christian, has helped to secure a religious interest in, and link to the land and people of Israel. The basis for the strong pro-Israeli perspective within the US Christian community, according to Reich, lies in their approach to The Bible. According to their interpretation of The Bible, “it is essential that the Jews be regathered in the Holy Land before Christ
will come again” (Mouly qtd in Reich 205). Given this perspective, Israel’s establishment provided “proof” that biblical prophecies were being fulfilled. Reich further notes that US political leaders including Presidents Wilson, Truman and Lyndon Johnson have identified such a component in their decision making. Johnson’s address before the B’nai B’rith in September 1968 offers sufficient proof for the same: “Most, if not all of you, have very deep ties with the land and with the people of Israel, as I do, for my Christian faith sprang from yours. The Bible stories are woven into my childhood memories as the gallant struggle of modern Jews to be free of persecution is also woven into our souls” (qtd in Reich 206).

Uris’ efforts towards fostering the consciousness of a Jew-Christian bond is best demonstrated in Jerusalem Song Of Songs where the author strives to maintain that the traditional story of the crucifixion of Christ is “a deliberate concoction to take the onus for Jesus’ death off the Romans at a time when Christianity was trying to win converts in Rome” (156). Uris also points out that Jesus’ entire band was Jewish, that virtually all the original Christian literature was written by Jews, and that The New Testament is Jewish in flavour, in content and in authorship. Uris’ comments on the later attempts at the de-Judification of Christianity and the “attempt to depict Jesus as someone other than a Jew” go thus:

He [Jesus] was born, lived and died as a pious Jew and was given distance from his own people in order to allow Christianity to thrive. It is infinitely clear that Jesus had no hand in all of this. He would have been revolted by any notion that a religion created in his name would abandon the Torah, nor would he have sanctioned any religion without the Torah as its most sacred doctrine. He would have been appalled that his people were used as sacrificial lambs to promote a religion in his name. Jesus would have denounced it from every synagogue.
in the Galilee and in the courts of the Temple and he would have done so as a Jewish rabbi. (*Jerusalem* 159)

Such observations which serve to implant the consciousness of a common Judeo-Christian tradition and bond are voiced in Uris’ fictional works as well. For instance, in *Exodus*, Karen Clement while voicing thoughts of Jewish chosenness, is made to comment on the Old Testament foundations of this belief. That Uris aims to strike at the very root of Western anti-Semitism, and make readers subscribe to views of a Jew-Christian bond is made amply clear in the following statement: “Almost everything that Jesus taught, all His ideas, had been set down before in the Old Testament… If Jesus were to return to the earth she was certain He would go to a synagogue rather than a church. Why could people worship Jesus and hate His people?” (77).

In each of the instances pointed out above, what the author endeavours to do is not just to establish that there are points of intersection between Judaism and Christianity. Rather he effectively recounts the sequential ordering of the events associated with the origin and progress of Christianity in such a way that it appears as though the edifice of Christianity cannot be on its own without its solid Jewish foundation. This would by extension mean that the former has existence only in the context of the latter.

As part of his project of dehumanizing the Arab, Uris brings in statements attributed to historical characters to highlight the Arab’s total incompatibility with the principles and values which govern the affairs of the modern state systems and human affairs in general which necessarily are made manifest through the vibrant expression of an independent press, freedom for public opinion, equal respect for all mankind and so on. For instance Prince Ali Rahman of Saudi Arabia, in the course of machinations towards forging a united Arab front totally opposed to negotiations with
the Jews, is seen to voice such sentiments. The Prince’s response towards the three rebel delegates representing the West Bank refugees at the Zurich Conference typifies that of the “Oriental despot” figured in Orientalist discourse. The message is effectively put across through the following statements attributed to Prince Ali Rahman: “Why can’t we assassinate these refugee dogs?” Again, on being told that the assassination of the refugees would create a bad image for them in the press, the Prince is shown to be totally uncomprehending of the system: “I do not understand what kind of idiotic press it is that is not operated by a royal family or the government” (Haj 404). Statements attributed to Prince Ali Rahman in The Haj, regarding the prospects of bribing Ralph Bunche, the chairman of the International Arbitration Commission, which go even to the extent of referring to the respected UN official as “the nigger slave,” throw light on Uris’ attempts towards demonizing the Arab (see Haj 406).

The art of subterfuge, according to Uris, is highly developed in Arab life. The Arab society that emerges in Uris’ writings is one characterized by suspicion and distrust, where the need for vengeance overrides everything. Readers are given the impression that in Arab society, strife not peace was the normal state of affairs. Images of Arab intrigue and rivalry are put across quite effectively as Uris dwells in detail upon instances of Arab back-stabbing, viciousness, and machinations against fellow Arabs. When historical characters are made to mingle with the fictitious, and are themselves made use of for the condemnation of Arab society, Uris’ pronouncements gain greater authority. For instance, in The Haj, Uris presents Prince Ali Rahman, grandson of Ibn Saud, conspiring with Fawzi Kabir a thorough degenerate for the murder of the Jordanian King Abdullah. Here we find Kabir outlining his plans for the assassination, beginning with the contact made with a “key Jordanian minister who knows the king’s movements in advance.” Accordingly, the deed was to be
carried out by employing either a member of the Moslem Brotherhood from Egypt or one of the Mufti’s assassins, firing a machine pistol from a crowd at close range (409).

Uris echoes the typical Orientalist point of view as he draws the attention of the reader to “the cruel realities that had gone into forming the Arab character” (*Exodus* 228). Tracing the history of the Arab people and the rise of Islam among the “wild semi-civilized Bedouin tribes in the desert,” Uris draws a crucial link between the “Arab character” and the harshness of desert life. Uris notes that the Arabs had exhausted themselves in ten decades of fighting which included the Holy Wars of the Crusaders and the Mongolian invasions, followed by the Ottoman occupation. It is stated that as their once mighty cities were decimated and a dry rot fell on the flowering oases, the Arabs turned more and more against themselves and blood feuds pitted brother against brother. Without water the Arab world disintegrated into filth, unspeakable disease, illiteracy and poverty. The *fellaheen* who lived in abysmal filth and the Bedouin whose survival was a day to day miracle turned to Moslem fanaticism as the one means of alleviating their misery. Uris observes that there was little song or laughter or joy in Arab life, which was a constant struggle to survive. The harshness of punishment in the Arab world, cruelty and lack of compassion for fellow-beings, and mistrust of outsiders are all traced to the desert atmosphere: “In this atmosphere cunning, treachery, murder, feuds and jealousies became a way of life. The cruel realities that had gone into forming the Arab character puzzled outsiders” (*Exodus* 228). Uris’ treatise concludes thus: “Greed and lust, hatred and cunning, shrewdness and violence, friendliness and warmth were all part of that fantastic brew that made the Arab character such an enormous mystery to an outsider” (229).

The Arab’s apparent aberrations from normalcy, the oddities of Islamic belief, the medieval attributes of its punishment, the intrinsic
disposition to fatalism inherent within Arab culture, and Islam’s association with violence and fundamentalism are all “catalogued” by Uris in *The Haj* and *Exodus*, as well as in his work of non-fiction, *Jerusalem Song of Songs*. Uris defines Islam as the most authoritarian of all the major religious philosophies and as a complete way of life that governs every aspect of daily existence. The following observations in *Jerusalem Song of Songs* hammer home the point:

No corner of life is too small to escape its rules, no relationship too remote to be exempt from its edicts. Islam teaches its followers not to think for themselves but to live by the decisions of others… it is a form of mental sterilization, for it tells man not to aspire or hope but to accept. It is a tranquilizer, a defence for a lot of hot, hopeless, unhappy, struggling people, and it thrives where human helplessness is paramount and progress is stagnant. (176)

Uris also observes that “the Moslem mind” has largely remained puzzled by the complexities and skills of the Western world and that the “rigid Moslem environment” gave little room for a man to expand his mind. The “rigidity” of Islam is further underscored through the following statement: “Islam told him everything: when to pray, when to sleep, eat, have intercourse, dispense justice, how to govern, how to behave in every aspect of business life, of social life, in fact it held tight rein over every facet and value of life.” The “otherness” of Islam is once again reiterated as Uris states that the process of democratization set forth in Europe by the nineteenth century, with its emphasis on man’s individual freedom and his individual right to action was totally opposed to the Muslim experience. Muslim xenophobia is ‘explained’ as the result of his frustration on being unable to absorb the ‘benefits’ of the West into his own culture (*Jerusalem* 230).
Throughout Uris’ writings one may find the tendency towards reducing Islam to a handful of rules, stereotypes, and generalizations. The deliberately created association between Islam, and such negative attitudes as fundamentalism, violence, primitivism, fatalism and so on, serve to ‘show’ the Muslim’s inferiority with reference to the Jews and the Western world. Uris portrays the whole of Islam as basically outside the known, familiar, acceptable world inhabited by the “enlightened West,” and as engaged in a perpetual war against modernity. In this context we may look into Bernard Lewis’ observations on Islam which run parallel to Uris’ statements. Islam, says Lewis, “is not merely a system of belief and worship, a compartment of life, so to speak… it is rather the whole of life” (qtd in Covering Islam xxxi). Commenting on this, Edward Said notes that such a statement demonstrates not only bias, but also a ludicrous misunderstanding of how human life actually operates. According to Said, “Lewis’ methods suggest that all Muslims—all one billion of them—have read, absorbed, and totally accepted ‘the rules’ he refers to that govern ‘civil, criminal, and what we call constitutional law,’ and then slavishly follow those precepts in every significant action of their daily lives” (Covering Islam 31). Islam, in the works of Uris, is depicted as a homogenous, essentialized, a-historical entity. Like Lewis, Uris simply cannot deal with the diversity of Muslim life because it is closed to him as something foreign, radically different, and ‘Other’. These negative, cliché-ridden representations clearly echo the nineteenth century Orientalist view of Islam as a danger to Christianity and modern liberal values.

The Orientalist image of the Arabs as venal lechers is highlighted in the novels of Uris. Images of the Arab elite’s extravagance and debauchery are put across in Uris’ description of the entertainment arranged by the degenerate Effendi Kabir at Damascus in a scene which Uris equates with scenes which one finds in the Arabian Nights. Walls covered with large
embroidered cloth and interspersed with mirrors, deep plush carpeting, pillars and low tables, “handsomely muscled young servants and a pair of guards uniformed like old Turkish Janisseries,” and gyrating belly dancers create the effect. The author’s account of the orgies of debauchery staged at the Effendi’s boathouse at Zurich serves to underscore the point further. The following statement from The Haj serves to project the image of the Arab elite as an oversexed, sadistic, degenerate lecher.

The whores of Munich were drawn magnetically to the Arabs. Not only did Islam’s high and mighty potentates require servicing, but the Arabs generally travelled with enormous entourages, so there was enough business to filter down to the most lowly servant. Cash up front, no bargaining. The whores and their pimps earned their fees, for they were often treated crudely and always with an undertone of savagery. (401)

Revolting pictures of Arab debauchery and treachery may also be seen in the author’s description of the rape of Haj Ibrahim’s wives and daughter-in-law by Iraqi soldiers from Kaukji’s militia (see Haj 231). The stereotypical image of the Arabs as extremely wealthy sex maniacs, and as nurturing a paranoid hatred of the Jew is a standard portrayal in several works of popular fiction including Harold Robbins’ The Pirate.

Palestinian opposition to Zionist settlement and Israeli appropriation of Arab lands, are in Uris’ writings, simplistically explained away in terms of the deep and deadly psychoses that grips the Arab mind, which leads them to an irrational hatred of the Jew. The message is put across by the author using the historical figure Orde Wingate, the British trainer of the Hagannah, as his mouthpiece. Uris here indulges in a scathing diatribe against the Arab, his culture and the Islamic religion:
They don’t know how to really love. But hate! Oh God, can they hate! And they have a deep, deep, deep resentment because you have jolted them from their delusions of grandeur and shown them for what they are—a decadent, savage people controlled by a religion that has stripped them of all human ambition…You are dealing with a mad society and you’d better learn how to control it. (Haj 74)

Yet another striking instance of the author’s indictment of Arab society may be seen in Gideon Asch’s exasperated words to Haj Ibrahim on his refusal to negotiate with the Jews or accept help from them: “What kind of perverse society, religion, culture… what kind of human being… is it that can generate such volcanic hatred… that knows only hatred, that breeds only hatred, that exists for hatred?” (Haj 424). The Arab’s fanatic hatred of the Jew is also brought out in the incident where Ibrahim refuses to allow the only available doctor, a Jew from Shemesh *kibbutz*, to minister to his dying baby and even screams obscenities at the doctor, and at his friend Gideon Asch.

Sheikh Taji, a Bedouin chief and one of the Palestinian refugee leaders, voices the Arab determination to wage eternal war with the Jews:

Revenge is sacred and hatred is noble…We will not return to our land just because the Jews are willing to take us back. No, that will not lure us. We will not return because they will give us schools and hospitals. We will never submit to such obvious crude briberies. We will only return so we can work silently for the moment of vengeance. (Haj 384)

Similar sentiments voiced by the thoroughly degenerate Effendi Kabir to Prince Ali Rahman of the Saudi royal family in the course of their machinations at Zurich to defeat demands of Palestinian autonomy, project
the image of Arab treachery as well as their intransigence towards the Jewish state. Kabir outlines the basic principles of the Arab states at the Zurich Conference thus: “No peace with the Jews. No negotiations with the Jews. No recognition of the Jews. No return of the refugees to the Zionist entity. No resettlement of the refugees in Arab lands” (405).

Through Ishmael’s narrative of school life Uris characterizes Islam as a religion built on hate and fanaticism. Uris notes how Koranic slurs against Jews were employed by teachers in Arab schools to incite hostility towards the Jews, and presents statements attributed to the Prophet Mohammed to establish that these have been pivotal in fostering a paranoic hatred of the Jew. This is well elucidated through the young boy’s recapitulation of the lectures delivered by the village school master Mr Salmi, mostly focused on The Koran and its supposedly anti-Jewish propaganda:

The Koran is filled with dozens of Mohammed’s sermons about Jewish treachery. Mr Salmi always ended the school day with a reading from part of a particular surah from the Koran berating the Jews…. From the very beginning, Mr Salmi said, ‘the Jews lied when they said they discovered the Law and wrote The Bible’…. “Surah 3, verses 114 to 116, warns the true believers, that is, us Moslems, against befriending Jews because they are disloyal and how Jews are happy when evil befalls the true believer. We all liked the way Islam declared eternal war on the nonbelievers and we all hoped to be alive when we won the war over them. (Haj 107-8)

However, Ishmael is also seen to recall that although Mr Salmi’s lectures were mainly in the form of tirades against the Jews, “about what the Zionists had done to destroy Palestine and why we (the Arabs) must hate them,” Mr Salmi actually went to Shemesh kibbutz one day every
week to teach lessons in Arabic to the Jews, laughed and joked with them and accepted gifts from them as well. Uris throws light on the hypocrisy of the Arab elite as the young Ishmael recalls how his teacher appeared to be very friendly with the Jews of Shemesh, returned after his weekly lessons at the kibbutz with “a market basket filled with vegetables, fruits, eggs, and an occasional chicken” and how “the very next day in Ramle he would go into a rage about his hatred of the Jews” (Haj 111). It is also noted that members of the Egyptian Moslem Brotherhood infiltrated the West Bank refugee camps thinly disguised as Palestinian refugees. Commenting on the hate literature that was part of the school curricula, Ishmael is seen to observe that the Moslem Brotherhood teachers in the camps made his old school master Salmi seem like mild stuff by comparison. The following illustrations serve to ‘demonstrate’ the uncompromising attitude of the Arabs with regard to the recognition of the Jewish State: “Our history and geography lessons had no maps showing Israel. The only mention of the word ‘Israel’ always carried a slander with it. We were taught that Canaan was an Arab land before Joshua stole it from the Arab people. For four thousand years Palestine had been stolen land.” According to the author, Arab propaganda also included representation of the Jews as “advance agents of (British) imperialism,” and condemnation of the Jews as being responsible for the destruction of Palestine as part of their wanton pact with the devil” (Haj 455). Accounts of Arab anti-Jewish propaganda are taken to ridiculous proportions by the author as may well be seen in the following statements regarding the curricula in the Arab school for refugee children in Jericho: “In the maths class the younger grades were taught addition and subtraction: ‘If you had ten dead Zionists and killed six more, how many dead Zionists would you have altogether?’ Multiplying and dividing dead Zionists became more intricate as the grade level increased” (455). It is also noted that every classroom had pieces of art depicting
bloodthirsty hook-nosed Jews maiming and killing Arab children, of Zionist airplanes attacking helpless refugee camps, and glorious fedayeen goring Jews with bayonets or standing atop a mound of Jewish skulls in Tel Aviv. The author discusses in detail how Arab children were indoctrinated in “The Five Great Themes”—

(i) that Jews are the enemies of God and humanity.

(ii) that they have been evil throughout history and that their Bible is a counterfeit work falsifying God’s message

(iii) that they do not constitute a legitimate nation.

(iv) that the State of Israel has to be destroyed since it is the culmination of the historical and cultural depravity of the Jews and because it is a total contradiction to Allah’s ‘abode of Islam’.

(v) that Islam is superior and that its grandeur guarantees its ultimate triumph over all religions and peoples. (Haj 457)

The acceptance of such perverted perceptions are traced to several factors: the hypocrisy and double standards practiced by the Arab elite, religious prejudice and the wilful refusal to accept facts, the common man’s lack of awareness of the facts, and the misinformation provided by the Arab propaganda machinery. Such depictions, though exaggerated, of Arab animosity also serve to create a fear in the minds of the readers about the “threat” posed by the Arabs to a “vulnerable” Israel. This litany of hatred runs throughout The Haj, which Uris claims is a “very well documented and truthful book” (see Fuller 7). Uris claims an authenticity for his statements on the Arab/Islamic world on account of his having gone to the following Arab sources for his research:

I spoke to a PLO man, I have read a very good cross-section of anti-Zionist propaganda that’s been put out by the
PLO, I read every Arab author who’s published in English and sold in America—so along with my interviews and consultations with some of the leading Arabists in the world, I really felt that I was able to solve some of the riddles of the Arab mind. (see Uris interview in Fuller 7)

In *Jerusalem Song of Songs*, Uris speaks in detail about “the litany of malevolence [that] spewed forth from Arab capitals without abatement,” following the Sinai Campaign of 1956, with every means at their command being used to berate Israel (302). The author also points out that members of the ‘Moslem’ nations refused to sit at a banquet table with Jews or shake hands with them in public or compete with them on the sports field—that “singling out the Jew as an international leper became the high blood sport of the Arab nations” (*Jerusalem* 303). Uris projects the image of Israel as the victim of wanton Arab hostility and aggression, as atrocities against the Jewish state are listed:

Israel’s ships were kept from innocent passage through the Suez Canal and the Strait of Tiran. Her products and businesses were boycotted. Nations trading with Israel were blackmailed. The Arabs stopped at nothing, even attempting to poison her orange crop.

Israel’s citizens were shot down in the fields and such military targets as schools were captured and innocent young hostages killed. (*Jerusalem* 303)

According to the author, these were not “incidental isolated incidents,” but part of the policy of Arab governments to “sponsor murder gangs” (*Jerusalem* 303). Further, the ‘threat’ posed by Egypt to the very existence of Israel is illustrated through Ishmael’s narration dated Monday, October 29, 1956. The list of Egyptian offensives against Israel serves to
project images of Arab intrigue as well as Israeli vulnerability. According to Uris, Nasser encouraged Syria to attempt to cut off Israel’s source of water at the Jordan River headwaters, stopped all ships destined for Israel from using the Suez Canal, closed the Strait of Tiran to all Israeli shipping, to and from Eilat, thus denying Israel a route to the Orient, armed and trained the Palestinian *fedayeen* and was responsible for launching three thousand *fedayeen* raids into Israel on missions of murder and terror. The long account of Egyptian atrocities closes on the following note: “Flaunting international law and promising daily to exterminate the Jews, Nasser moved his legions, bulging with Soviet weaponry, through the demilitarized zones of the Sinai.” Here Uris elaborates the various initiatives of a proud and self-confident Egyptian leader which according to the author were intended for deliberately wiping out a tiny Jewish state hardly strong enough to defend itself. On the other hand Israeli aggression is very much played down as the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war of 1956 is explained thus: “On October 29, Israel struck first” (*Haj* 509). A simple sentence such as the one quoted above is therefore used for explaining the Israeli offensive as a pre-emptive action for self-defence and existence. Uris also observes that the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the West Bank became staging grounds for “these cowardly cutthroats to destroy, maim and butcher unarmed people” and that when they returned to their bases, they were welcomed as heroes and liberators (302-3). Palestinian resistance to Israeli aggression is thus both dehumanized and rendered illegitimate in the works of Uris. As pointed out in the previous chapter, these images of Arab aggression serve to validate Israel’s occupation of the aforesaid territories in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1956, as well as the Six Day War of 1967, under the pretext of protecting their border settlements.
In the works of Uris, the Arabs and Islam are seen as synonymous with everything degraded, fearsome, irrational, and brutal. Islam is here associated with despotism and criminal aggression. According to the author, the danger lies in “Islamic psychology,” which cannot integrate itself into a world of efficiency, progress and peace. The danger, according to Uris, stems from the totalitarian conception of the world, the passion for murder deeply rooted in their blood, from the lack of logic, the easily inflamed brains, the braggadocio nature, and above all, the blasphemous disregard for all that is sacred to the civilized world. The inalterable otherness and alien character of the Arab/Muslim is driven home in Uris’ indictment of the Arab and Islam, voiced through the British and Jewish outsiders earlier, and valourized most effectively in the concluding pages of *The Haj* by the Arab insider. Nuri Mudhil is here seen to blame Islam for the “hatred and eventual madness” that consumes all Arabs:

We do not have leave to love one another and we have long lost the ability…. Hate is our overpowering legacy and we have regenerated ourselves by hatred from decade to decade, generation to generation, century to century. The return of the Jews has unleashed that hatred, exploding wildly, aimlessly, into a massive force of self-destruction. In ten, twenty, thirty years the world of Islam will begin to consume itself in madness. We cannot live with ourselves…. We cannot live with or accommodate the outside world…. We never have. (522)

Thus the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict over Palestine, as Uris presents it, is not a question of borders, but a question of Muslim psychology. Uris’ Arab is utterly despicable in his character, culture and religion, and is held solely responsible for the many problems that have emerged in the wake of the creation of the state of Israel. Through sweeping generalizations Uris dismisses the Arab as unworthy, be it the
Bedouin or the city Arab or the fellah. Totally negating the contributions of
the Islamic civilization, Uris states categorically in his Jerusalem Song of
Songs that the Arab world has contributed almost nothing in the way of
advancement for the human race for a thousand years. According to the
author, “lack of industry coupled with a reactionary religion has made this
a sterile part of the world which would scarcely be heard from except for
its oil reserves.” To illustrate the point that “work is not an Arab ethic,”
Uris gives a sketch of the Bedouin around whom the Arab ideal is
centred—“the man who sleeps beneath the stars and epitomizes the free
spirit,” in whose lifestyle “it is far more heroic… to steal from one’s
neighbour,” and “to raid and to avenge family honor than to bend one’s
back in toil” (318). In Uris’ writings Islam is held responsible for the
Arab’s “lack of initiative” and the “inability to get out of the mire of the
past.” The following statement drawn by way of conclusion serves to
highlight the “threat” posed by an Islamic world enraged against modernity
and addicted to gratuitous violence. Uris here conjures up images of a
monolithic horde of dangerous, evil and violent Arab/Muslims plotting to
destroy a “liberal, democratic West.”

Technology confounds them and, unable to cope with a
modern society, they sink deeper into Islamic fundamentalism
which tells them to live in the past and hate the people who are
bringing the future into their part of the world. Islam as
practiced for the internal peace of the Moslem is almost a
billion strong. The Arabs are certainly entitled to live by their
own values and standards and practice their own religion. The
problem has come when they have left their own borders to live
among the rest of the world’s people. (Jerusalem 318-19)

Uris portrays the Arabs as looters who lacked any ability to
construct. For instance, in Exodus, the author comments that the Arabs
were experts in building on other people’s civilizations—that they had built their towns on ruins, and that they had constructed only one wholly new city in all of Palestine in a thousand years. It is also added that some of the magnificent Roman statuary and columns had been dragged off with Caesarea and could be found in Arab homes throughout the Samarian and Sharon districts. The “Arab renown for building atop ruins” is further illustrated by the author through the example of the Arab quarters of Safed built on the remains of medieval buildings and converted into contemporary housing. The Mosque of the Daughters of Jacob built on the ruins of a Hungarian Crusader Convent is cited as the most beautiful example of this architectural tradition.

It is significant that as Uris creates, reinforces and maintains the distorted Western image of the Arab/Muslim, the author deliberately sidelines the fact that Islam created a brilliant civilization in different parts of the world for more than a thousand years, that Islamic culture at its height was far superior to that of Western Europe, and that many of its contributions were vital to the European Renaissance. Scholars have noted that it was the inclusive approach and love of learning encouraged by Islam that made possible the Islamic world’s remarkable contributions to several fields of knowledge, and that it was the great intellectual, cultural, scientific, and artistic achievements of the Islamic civilization that became the building blocks for much of the world’s culture (see for instance Abukhattala 156).

Even as the various self-destructive forces of Arab and Islamic culture are enumerated, Uris makes it a point to bring out a sharp contrast between the Arab’s fatalistic acceptance of the harsh conditions of his life, and Jewish efforts to transform even the ghettos and refugee camps into places of culture and learning. For instance, in Mila 18, Uris provides a glimpse of the cultural life organized by the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto. A
full Ghetto Symphony Orchestra, theatre, schools for both primary education and religious training and art are here seen to flourish despite below-starvation rations, disease, filth, and the terror of Nazi brutality. The same type of organization is seen in the Jewish refugee camp at Caraolos where the inmates and the *Mossad Aliyah Bet* volunteers run the camps with precious few resources, teach children, distribute food, treat the sick and wounded, and strive to lift the morale of the inmates. The point is further illustrated through the example of the Jews of Ein Gev *kibbutz* who even while being forced to live underground due to Syrian shelling in the course of the Arab-Israeli war, continue to keep up their schools, their symphony orchestra practice, and even their newspaper. Uris also presents the Jews as the most prodigious explorers of the past. The Jews’ “insatiable devotion to their roots” is demonstrated as the author states that many *kibbutzim* had their own museums where antiquities discovered from various sites were preserved (*Haj* 338, 348).

Among the numerous denunciatory depictions of the Arabs that are employed to characterise the Arabs, those about their treatment of women occupies great significance in the light of the emphasis laid on gender equality in human affairs today. Among the several “self-destructive” forces of Arab culture, which according to Uris contributes to its backwardness, is its attitude towards women. Uris brings in innumerable instances which “demonstrate” the appalling situation of women in Arab society. For instance, the author draws the case of Haj Ibrahim to generalise on the Arab male’s attitude towards women and marriage, in the initial pages of *The Haj*, as the middle-aged *mukhtar* is seen threatening to abandon his first wife Hagar when she ‘fails’ to produce a male child. Later, even after she bears four sons, he sends her away and marries a sixteen-year-old Bedouin girl Ramiza. The author’s account of the hard bargaining that takes place between Ibrahim and the girl’s father Sheikh
Walid Aziz over the bride money underlines the author’s statement that in Arab society women “have been reduced to the lowest form of human life on the planet.” Uris notes that the selling of daughters was a lucrative source of income for the old Sheikh who himself had two living wives and an unknown number of concubines and who “replaced” a deceased wife with a younger woman of child-bearing age (*Haj* 88-90). Ramiza’s account of the traumatic experience of clitoridectomy, the excruciating pain and sickness that young Arab girls were forced to endure for months following the gruesome exercise, recounted with all its graphically chilling details serves to hammer home Uris’ point further. The brutality of Ibrahim’s assault on his young bride on their wedding night, demonstrations of the bride’s virginity and the husband’s ‘potency’ through the display of the bloody nightgown on the morning after the wedding, all emphasize the author’s point regarding the total disregard for a woman’s well-being in Arab society and the excessive value men place upon their sexual prowess. The same argument is further highlighted as Uris explains, through the narrative voice of Ishmael, the reasons behind Hagar’s reinstatement in Ibrahim’s household as Ramiza proved to be inept and clumsy in running the kitchen and performing her duties: “Haj Ibrahim said that one does not throw out the old cow until the new one starts producing milk. He wanted his comforts and meals properly administered. Therefore, my mother was allowed to remain” (*Haj* 102). The point that women are regarded as mere commodities in Arab society, to be bought or sold to cater to the whims of the men who ‘own’ her—be it her father or her husband—is put across in the following observation:

Haj Ibrahim wondered aloud from time to time if the old Sheikh Walid Azziz had duped him in *selling* him Ramiza. (emphasis added)… The old sheik had no way of knowing if Ramiza was clever or stupid. He had so many daughters he
scarcely knew all their names and the only criteria by which they were judged were their appearance, obedience, the preservation of their virginity, and the bride price they would bring. (129)

Uris notes that Arab women seldom left the perimeter of their houses and were destined to go from birth to death with no permission to have pleasure. In his description of life in the caves of Qumran, of Haj Ibrahim and his family, Uris brings in several illustrations which serve to throw light on the more insidious aspects of the ‘Muslim treatment of women’. For instance, when Ishmael suggests to his father that his sister Nada should be assigned the duty to guard the cave at night, being better able than some of the male members of the family to perform this task, Ibrahim not only refuses but also orders Ishmael to stop teaching Nada to read. Restrictions placed on women are invariably portrayed as being sanctioned by Sunna or tradition (see Haj 297, 304). Uris puts across graphic images of the plight of Muslim women, of the sharp contrast in the position of Muslim men and women, as Nada is made to lash out to Ishmael against the inhuman treatment meted out to her:

I have never been allowed to draw a free breath in my entire life. My mind, my voice, my desires have always been locked inside a prison cell… I am not permitted to argue. I cannot disobey even when I am right… I can only do and say what other people allow me….. Oh my beloved brother, I have seen the wonderful bounce to your step as you ran off through our fields in Tabah… How wonderful to be able to read and not be afraid of being slapped for it. I watched you go to Ramle to school every day by yourself…. I remember the times you and your brothers went into the movie house in Lydda and I curled myself into a corner and cried….. I remember you riding off on el-Buraq,
sitting behind Father, holding on to him, and galloping to the winds. I remember…. I remember. (Haj 479-80)

Ibrahim’s/Islam’s rigid adherence to tradition, the refusal to take into account a daughter’s intelligence and independent spirit, are brought out as Ibrahim is shown warning his son that women are to be kept subservient to men, that Nada’s happiness is something to be defined by her father, and later by her husband. The same point is stressed in Nada’s complaint that she has been moulded into a lump that is not supposed to have feelings, that her emotions have been controlled and enslaved from childhood, that even her body is not her own, but is to belong to her husband once “sold” into marriage. Nada’s refusal to “be kept in a cage” and her determination not to “die like Hagar, Ramiza and Fatima, as receptacles” is made evident in her open defiance of her tyrannical father. Ibrahim’s furious reaction on Nada’s refusal to marry the man of her father’s choice—on his learning about her defiant expression of independence through several sexual affairs, drives home Uris’ point further. Readers are given the gory details of Nada’s murder at the hands of her own father—of the young girl’s body found the next morning after her outburst against her father, in a gutter of Jericho with the neck broken, throat slashed, and hair crudely hacked off, and the body finally being strewn about in a hundred places in a disposal pit by the river (Haj 518).

Uris’ portraiture of the “liberated” city Arab woman also moves along the same lines. This is made evident in the author’s sketch of Madame Othman—wife of the Syrian diplomat Hamdi Othman—“educated in France, dressed in elegant French wardrobe and striking to behold.” However, Uris points out that “if one peeled back the layer of Western veneer, Madame Othman was an Arab woman with an Arab husband.” Uris notes that although she did not have to work she was not allowed to participate in much beyond social functions, her life being
centred on endless prattle at the city’s one wretched country club. That Madame Othman was “an Arab Woman with an Arab husband” is demonstrated through the following observation: “She was never permitted outside their stifling world of kept, painted birds, partying in lavish birdhouses that were really cages by another name. When the automatic handshake and smile were not required, she was a sad, dull lady, locked into a life of uselessness” (Haj 493-94).

The innumerable restrictions placed on women—both the Bedouin woman as well as the city woman—in Arab/Muslim society, are listed by the author in his Jerusalem Song of Songs as well, the pronouncements being more authenticated this time, as they are clothed in the garb of history.

A mask of tragedy is universally worn by Moslem women. They have been reduced to the lowest form of human life on the planet. The Bedouin woman was undoubtedly sold by her parents to a prospective husband for a number of goats when she was a teenager…she labors from sunup to sunset, scarcely able to give even primitive care to her enormous family. She has never laughed since childhood…. After her day of laboring in an olive grove, her husband rides home on the donkey after spending his time sitting in the shade. She walks behind him. (192)

About the city woman, Uris states that although she was saved from “the ultimate Islamic debasement by not having to wear a veil over her face,” her eyes would mirror the agony of Arab womanhood (Jerusalem 192. The several bans placed on her include dancing, singing, visits to the theatre or restaurant, or even travel to the next city unless accompanied by a male relative, or sitting at the same table with her husband, his male relations or friends even though she cooks and serves all the meals for
them. The author’s observations on the plight of women in Arab society concludes thus: “She is and will remain a birth-to-death prisoner of the home, a slave to her husband, chattel of her family, her husband’s family and a society from which no one can escape to find human dignity and happiness”(193). Thus in Uris’ representation, Islam is a primitive and oppressive religion which humiliates women, forbids girls to attend school or learn to read and write, and altogether treats them as inferior beings with no independent will or voice. The image of the Arab woman as a docile beast of burden and of the Arab male as demonstrating scant respect for a woman’s well-being, figures in other popular narratives of the time. For instance Ken Follet’s account of the callous indifference displayed by an Egyptian crowd to the brutal assault on the female protagonist Elene by the Arab villain goes thus: “They were all staring at her. None of them would help her, for she was not just an Egyptian, she was an Egyptian woman, and women, like camels, had to be beaten from time to time” (439).

The image of Islam and the Arabs that Uris presents before the reader is a totally distorted one, with not one positive value being mentioned. Uris indulges in oversimplified generalizations about the Arabs and the Islamic religion and culture without taking into account the diversity of the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the various Islamic countries, reflected in the broad range of Muslim viewpoints. As Ibrahim Abukhattalah notes, “as with Christianity and Judaism, there is no single way Islam is observed. There are Muslims in virtually every country on the globe, and their interpretations of the Qur’an are as varied as the cultures in which they live, often influenced by their histories and political and cultural environments”(161-2). Uris however attributes a homogeneity and timelessness to Arab/ Islamic culture. Uris’ portrait of the Arab/Muslim, with its factual errors, questionable assertions, and omissions serves to create certain fundamental misconceptions about Islam
as a religion, culture and civilization, and further perpetuates the Western image of the Arab-Muslim as the threatening cultural “other”.

The inferiorisation of the Arab/Muslim/Oriental dates back to the period of Arab–Christian tensions of the Middle Ages—the immediate effect of which externalised in the form of the Crusades. This continued throughout the period of European colonialist expansion through the academic initiative often termed as ‘Orientalism’. This further advanced into a new phase with multiple strands but still complied with the traditional Orientalist dogmas. (see Orientalism 284). Since World War II, and more noticeably after each of the Arab-Israeli wars, the Arab-Muslim has become a figure in American popular culture. As Edward Said observes, if the Arab occupies space enough for attention today, it is as a negative value. He is seen as the disrupter of Israel’s and the West’s existence, or as a surmountable obstacle to Israel’s creation in 1948. Any history that the Arab has is part of the Orientalist tradition and later the Zionist tradition, which perceived Palestine as an empty desert waiting to burst into bloom, and its Arab inhabitants as inconsequential nomads possessing no real claim on the land and therefore no cultural or national reality—the very embodiment of incompetence and easy defeat. However after the 1973 Yom Kippur War the Arab appeared as something more menacing, several factors contributing to this change in perception (see Orientalism 284 - 85).

Since the early seventies, Western and especially American responses to the Islamic world have been troubled and problematic. In his attempt to identify the situation out of which such responses have come up, Edward Said notes that among the causes of this perception has been the acutely felt shortage of energy supply, with its focus on Arab and Persian Gulf oil, OPEC, and the dislocating effects on Western societies of inflation and dramatically expensive fuel bills. In addition, the Iranian
revolution and the hostage crisis furnished alarming evidence of what has come to be called “the return of Islam.” (*Covering Islam 1*). Thus the Arab is now conceived of as a shadow that dogs the Jew and whatever traditional, latent mistrust a Westerner feels towards the Oriental has come to be placed on the Oriental Arab. On the other hand, as Edward Said notes, “the Jew of pre-Nazi Europe has bifurcated: what we have now is a Jewish hero, constructed out of a reconstructed cult of the adventurer-pioneer-Orientalist..., and his creeping mysteriously fearsome shadow, the Arab-Oriental.” Said goes on to observe that isolated from everything except the past created for him by Orientalist polemic, the Arab is chained to a destiny that fixes him and dooms him to a series of reactions, periodically chastised as “Israel’s terrible swift sword” (*Orientalism 286*).

On the other hand, the United States and Israel have been linked in a special relationship that is closer than that between the United States and most of its allies—a relationship that existed prior to the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948 and which has continued in the form of unstinted support for the security of Israel in the Middle East. It has been defined as “a multifaceted relationship that is at one and the same time strategic, military, political and moral in character” (see Reich Preface).

Cheryl A Rubenberg points out that political culture in the United States has been deeply affected by commercial films and television movies in which Arabs are portrayed in an extremely negative one-dimensional fashion, and by “best-selling books such as Leon Uris’ *The Haj*, a historically inaccurate and deeply racist portrayal of the Palestinians.” Rubenberg also notes that protests from the Arab-American community to the publisher of *The Haj* and to major book distributors concerning its racist nature proved unavailing (*Israel and American National Interest*). That *The Haj* was published by a major Publishing house as Doubleday, that it remained on the bestseller list for many weeks, was selected by
Literary Guilds across the U.S. and serialized in *Cosmopolitan* magazine and reprinted by Bantam in 1985 (see Manganaro 11) indicate the dominance of the Zionist ideology in the United States and the power of the Israeli lobby. Uris’ novel has served to drive home the image of Islam as a fanatical religion founded on hatred and repression, and to displace on to the Arabs and Muslims a theory of gratuitous violence and cultural inferiority. The Arab-Israeli conflict, in all of Uris’ works, is played out in accordance with the author’s ideological agenda—that is to perpetuate American support for Israel, to legitimise Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and the denial of Palestinian human rights through the process of dehumanization.

Like the European scholar writing about the Orient, Uris the Jewish-American writer’s statements on the Arabs and Islam have proceeded from a general position of dominance and confrontation as well as cultural antipathy. However such efforts by pro-Israeli individuals become significant in the larger picture of American support for Israel and the development and perpetuation of ideas that have become “common wisdom” with regard to the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the US-Israeli relationship. Negative images of the Arabs and Islam, positive images of Israel and the Jews, have tended to reinforce existing perspectives and proclivities, is reflected in public opinion, and have even been instrumental in Israel’s efforts to retain U.S. Congressional support despite American disapproval of Israel’s incursion into Lebanon and the massacre of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shattila. As Jack G Shaheen observes, the Arab stereotypical image, magnified and given credence around the clock through television programmes, motion pictures, novels, news reports, and even comic books, is so pervasive that it threatens to engulf public opinion and ultimately influence American foreign policy in the Middle East (161).