

John Updike. Terrorist.

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Reviewed by Amien Kacou.

Note: This book review takes a research article format, which is a nontraditional approach; it offers a thesis, based on an extended, footnoted philosophical study.

Introduction

John Updike's 2006 novel *Terrorist* depicts the emergence of an elusive "homegrown" terrorist plot brewing in an imaginary, decaying post-industrial city, ironically named New Prospect, somewhere in New Jersey[1]—thus almost literally in the shadow of 9/11 in both time and place (except this time targeting the Lincoln Tunnel during rush hour),[2] as if some key facet of that event had been somehow overlooked.

The elliptical plot focuses primarily on the experience of a very lonely but extremely devout eighteen-year old Muslim-American named Ahmad; but it also orbits around the relationships between other characters, all of whom are related to Ahmad within a few degrees of separation—from his immediate social environment all the way to the Secretary of Homeland Security (who seems extremely bewildered by the motives of Islamist terrorists and feels tragically-impotent in the thankless job of facing the shadowy nuisance they present).

While some reviewers have criticized the plot and character structure of this novel for being too reliant on "unbelievable coincidence"[3] (an opinion I share to some extent—especially when it comes to Updike's execution of the denouement), I think the narrative loop which binds all the characters together could be interpreted usefully (irrespective of the author's specific intent) as a reflection of how the experience of (and the responsibility for) terrorism cannot be captured by the perspective of either perpetrators or victims alone (exclusively), but instead distributes itself, like a spectrum of different wavelengths, across both groups, as well as bystanders.

My related thesis is that Updike suggests, first of all (intentionally or not), that what we overlooked about 9/11 is that there may be an intimate bond of meaning (or meaninglessness), perhaps even an uncomfortable empathy, between Islamist terrorists and their American victims or enemies: and the feeling they share is a feeling of dissatisfaction with the meaningless promises of secular modernity and materialism (symbolized quite notably by the setting itself—the decaying post-industrial city of New Prospect).

What is even more important: I think Updike also suggests, second of all, that a key, universal philosophical lesson emerges from the difference in how this novel's main characters cope with their feelings of modern meaninglessness.

That lesson is a lesson about "evil" (especially this "new kind of evil," as President Bush described the Jihadi terrorist threat a few days after 9/11);[4] it is that we should resist the essentialist illusion (or the temptation to think) that we can ever pin down (or control or prevent)

all evil “once and for all”—and that we should gracefully or at least ironically accept the anxiety of having to engage with it in what I would describe as a Sisyphean *Jihad*.

In fact, resisting the temptation to deny the tragically elusive nature of terrorism might be a necessary step in coping with it intelligently—as opposed to allowing ourselves to remain, like the Secretary of Homeland Security in this story, impotently bewildered by it, thereby running the risk of either overreacting or becoming blind to our (past, present or future) share of responsibility in (facing) it.

In order to show how that lesson emerges from the text, I divide my analysis in two steps (a long one and a short one). First, I present Ahmad, whose mission it is to bring the plot to completion with his ultimate act of self-sacrifice, as a product of his psychological predispositions, family background and larger social environment—without denying his crucial part of responsibility, especially when he decides (a little bit unbelievably) not to go forward with his plan for “martyrdom.” Second, I present Jack Levy, his school guidance counselor, who helps disrupt the plot, as Ahmad’s Sisyphean alter ego.

Completing the Plot: Ahmad as Ultimate Actor

Ahmad’s experience is shaped first and foremost by the longing and somewhat shameful shadow of his unknown Egyptian father, Omar, whose absence Ahmad compensates for by imagining him at length, and by protecting that imagination from the recurring theme of his cowardice—he who supposedly “fled” the challenge of life in the United States and abandoned his family when Ahmad was still an infant. (In reality—perhaps not so coincidentally—many scholars have identified an abstract form of humiliation at the ideological core of Jihadi suicide terrorism.)[5] In any case, Ahmad acts upon those dreams of his father by strengthening his hopelessly-tenuous link to Omar’s supposed identity. First, he commits very intensely to Islam—which, considering that there is no evidence that Omar was ever an observant Muslim, perhaps hints at Ahmad’s predisposition toward stereotypes (that is: his need to reduce not just others but himself to categorical biases). Second, Ahmad also seriously contemplates changing his last name from his mother’s (Mulloy) to his father’s (Ashmawy)—which perhaps further shows his longing, not just for his father but symbolically, for separateness (as if adopting his imagined father’s identity and separating from the larger society could somehow be more authentic).

Ironically, Ahmad may well have inherited or learned this countercultural disposition from his Irish-American mother, Terry, who, besides being a loving and laudably hard-working single mother, really fits a set of stereotypes (even caricatures) of what a modern “liberal” woman is supposed to be. She is a sexually-liberated would-be artist with a self-indulgently countercultural perspective; she has a correspondingly shallow attraction to (or “naïve” tolerance for) other cultures, as in the apparent exoticism that attracted her to Ahmad’s father in the first place[6] (or as in her apparent tolerance for Ahmad’s developing an intolerant worldview); and, most importantly, she subscribes to a philosophy of education according to which her son is better off left alone to realize his own “potential,” without square parental influences (a potential pretext for abdicating the responsibility of guiding her child).

The problem is that, by her own account, her son Ahmad seemed early in life just the kind of child who actually craved a parent's intimate guidance, or a foundation he could trust, instead of some abstractly defined freedom. As she recalls, for example, he was an obedient infant, far too easily led. (Perhaps interestingly, recent but very limited studies of Palestinian would-be "martyrs" have in fact suggested that they tend to display "intermediate" ego strength—meaning that they may have a tendency to lack a certain kind of self-drive.)[7]

No wonder, then, that, once he becomes a teenager, Ahmad is quick to go out into the world in search of what he fantasizes his father's guidance might have been like. And there in the world, at a small local cultural center, he finds Shaikh Rashid, an Islamic religious counselor who, in a sense, had been waiting for him all along.

Ahmad reveres (though—perhaps paradoxically—he also slightly distrusts) the subtly aging, vaguely awkward Yemeni cleric, who, without any paternal affection, closely nurtures his student's ideology for several years (all the while concealing his vague contempt for the boy's Americanness), only ultimately to prepare him for recruitment in a terrorist plot engineered by his associate, Charlie Chehab—a very conversant but sometimes offensively-cynical Lebanese-American big brother figure who sleekly gains Ahmad's trust by "teaching him the ropes" on his new truck-driving job after high school. (We later learn, a bit unbelievably, that Charlie worked for CIA counterintelligence—notwithstanding that the CIA has officially no mandate to operate on U.S. soil).

In any case, Shaikh Rashid's authority seems to emerge directly from the absence and shortcomings of Ahmad's parents: that is, by introducing Ahmad to Islam, he controls the channel through which Ahmad compensates (with pride) for his father's absence (and cowardice)—as well as for his mother's lack of involvement in his life (or lack of focus, discipline and ultimate commitment in her own).

Shaikh Rashid's Islam is not the ordinary, community-centered Islam, which Ahmad derides at one point as a "lazy matter of ethnic identity." It is an intolerant ideology that teaches Ahmad that modernity and secularism are evil; that non-Muslims are devils who must burn in hell and be destroyed without pity; and that good Muslims must reject deep social attachments and prepare instead—*eagerly*—for the ultimate purity of paradise.

To understand the impact of that indoctrination on Ahmad, it is crucial to reflect upon the meaning of that old, recurring concept of "evil," which, remarkably, both President Bush and Shaikh Rashid seemed equally eager to evoke (albeit inversely).

Updike was well-aware of its elusiveness; he knew that evil could be defined in *essentially* different ways—say, as excess (as opposed to moderation), perhaps as expressed in some Freudian destruction instinct (or in a will to nothingness), or as "not to know." [8]

Before him, Lance Morrow had tried similarly to make sense of how evil could be both elusive and brutal, by defining it as "Bad elevated to the status of the inexplicable," and by pointing out its tendency to display a "perverse logic" (that is, a self-fulfilling prophecy) of either demonization or, more basically, dehumanization by abstraction (that is, the tendency to reduce people to abstract categories, hindering empathy to the point of caricature). [9] His point could perhaps be read ironically: evil as excessive categorizing which cannot be sufficiently

categorized in turn. But, more to the point, this account of the perverse logic of evil should perhaps evoke what Arthur Miller—discussing the infamous Salem Witch trials—described as a “breathtaking circularity.”[10]

Also, Irving Howe likened the inadequacy of language in the face of evil to the impossibility of making up for losses that can only be mourned (or, as lawyers might put it, the rationale for injunctive relief); nonetheless, he insisted that such inadequacy should not be cause for stopping to think about evil—and thus leave to complete silence (or worse: indifference) the “holy dread” (another Freudian term) that it triggers.[11]

This notion of dread is also central to Fred Alford’s understanding of “evil acts” as attempts to evacuate dread through (that is, or by inflicting it upon) others. In particular, he theorizes that a basic, inchoate dread of “nothingness” may cause paranoia, which in turn may cause an urge for relief through violence.[12] In the alternative, Alford suggests that the experience can be managed (though not quite eliminated) by rechanneling it into a concrete realm for fantasies (such as a field of art).[13] At the same time, it seems self-destructive evil may quickly follow once the boundary between fantasy and reality collapses.

Roy Baumeister provides an even more comprehensive theory in which he identifies four root causes of evil: material gain (less relevant here); threatened egotism (a short-sighted and excessive need for self-confidence); idealism (a need for utopia), and—more rarely—sadistic pleasure (a combination of empathy with antipathy without guilt—also less relevant here).[14] All these causes may contribute to one another, but the combination of egotism with idealism seems uniquely resilient—as both of these factors are better endowed with what, according to Baumeister, most facilitates evil acts: that is, the kind of categorical biases (or systematic thinking) that enable a “myth of pure evil” to emerge—a myth according to which, for instance, perpetrators do harm for its own sake, and victims are purely innocent.[15]

In sum, this myth of pure evil (which may entail a corresponding myth of pure good), once applied, easily acquires a “breathtaking circularity” as it imposes a “pure,” ultimate order of categories to end the terrifyingly elusive (or paranoid) experience of the dread of nothingness.

Not surprisingly, religion is a fertile ground for that myth. In fact, it is interesting to note that, as Ahmad often repeats, Islam (even in its mainstream) seems to have a particular sensitivity to what Howe (borrowing from T.S. Eliot) called the “natural sin of language”[16] (broadly construed to include words and images)—that is, its representational imperfection, especially in depicting God, or even the prophet Muhammad (as the Danish cartoon controversy may have demonstrated in real life).[17]

This might help explain why, as Baumeister observes, the usual effect of religiosity is to make wars more brutal, not less.[18] However, arguably, the combination of literalized metaphor and breathtaking circularity is more a defining trait of ideologies (and especially of religious ideologies) than it is necessarily of religions—and there is a difference. This is the case not just because, as Ahmad puts it, religions can be experienced lazily as matters of ethnic identity but also, because, as Charles Kimball insists, theology can remain moderate without relinquishing its interest in “ultimate” goals and values.[19]

To highlight the distinction, Kimball identifies five major interrelated “warning signs of human corruption of religion.”[20] These include first and foremost a tendency toward absolute truth claims, which amounts to a lack of interpretational relativism—or to a rigid literalisation of metaphors when speaking of a God who is supposed to be ineffable, or to a confusion of the missionary impulse with a duty to impose a point of view (instead of a duty to bear witness), or to a failure to perceive religious truth as an ongoing process. The warning signs also include blind obedience, the desire to establish an “ideal” time (or utopia), the belief that certain ends can justify any means, and the penchant for declarations of holy war.[21]

The overlaps between Kimball, Baumeister and the other thinkers mentioned above should be clear—especially with respect to the observation that idealism, or ideology, entails absolute truth claims in the service of a utopia which must be defended at all costs.

Now: there is no doubt that Ahmad’s extreme Islamic indoctrination displays most of these warning signs. But I think it is important, not just to identify their manifestations but also, to trace them back (again) to the interplay between the character’s psychology, his background and his environment.

Ahmad’s psychological disposition toward (perhaps his need for) obedience and stereotypes, combined with his mother’s indifference to that need (or her virtual absence from his life), increased his longing for his father (hence his desire to simulate that father’s guidance through Islam). This in turn made him more vulnerable (as a child) to the perverse ideological influence of Shaikh Rashid (as if by a form of “opportunistic infection”).

As the interplay between these factors escalates, Ahmad becomes trapped in a circular mindset forcing him to constantly balance between, on the one hand, deep social paranoia (as he imagines himself surrounded by devils) and, on the other hand, deep loneliness, except for the intimate company of his ineffable God (whose presence is mostly soothing but sometimes exhilarating and potentially annihilating).

“Hell is other people,” said Jean-Paul Sartre. Ahmad’s theologically-framed paranoia is expressed at both the beginning and the end of the novel: he fears or resents the “devils” (that is: the impure unbelievers) who are trying to “take away” his God. These devils include, notably: his school peers (boys, who seek vain material power, and girls—temptresses—who flaunt their carnal assets), the adults at his school (who perform their ambivalent duty with a disgusting inauthenticity), and, above all, the U.S. government (represented here by the not-so-distant character of the Secretary of Homeland Security.)

And yet, while Ahmad fears or resents the “devils,” what he loves in Islam is still not its community (the *Ummah*); it is rather his near intimacy with the purity of God. It is through that unique (perhaps imagined) relationship that he can find pleasure (or relief, rather) in his ideology—like so many would-be “martyrs” who are reported to display “joy and elation” shortly before their act.[22] This is also how he can truly become angry at his own occasional sense of ambivalence.

However, quite beyond other people, it is Ahmad’s fear of—or his disgust with—materialism that animates him. His anti-modern, anti-secular mindset culminates in a metaphysical antipathy:

no longer merely disillusioned with the local promise of urban decay, Ahmad now contemplates the universal promise of cosmic decay—the deterministic corruption of entropic time.

And he interprets these demonic and metaphysical abstractions quite literally (as he does the Qur'an—well beyond even his mentor's own inclinations). Their weight accumulates steadily over time until it reaches a pinnacle, just as he becomes ready to step into adulthood. At that point, he has become what we could describe as a nihilistic idealist. (In fact, the description of suicide terrorists as nihilists has been explored by several authors).[23] He deeply wishes he could reject once and for all the imperfections of the secular world. (Unsurprisingly, this is the mirror image of the nihilistic materialists he thinks he sees all around him.) This acquired disposition means (to *very* roughly synthesize Friedrich Nietzsche's notions of passive and active nihilism)[24] that Ahmad can either or both desire to vanish or affirm his existence (to others) in an ultimate act—to paraphrase Kimball: an absolute or unconditional act of war and justice against the devils, for which he desires the immediate reward of paradise (his utopia). And he decides to make the ultimate statement of ideological devotion by committing to violent *Jihad*—his shortcut to paradise. At this point, Ahmad finally surpasses his mentor Shaikh Rashid, the “mad scientist” who, in the end, stands in awe and terror of his Frankenstein— before abandoning him (although apparently not completely without guilt, surprisingly) to his mission (which, it turns out, has already been compromised).

I assume that Updike himself would not be ambivalent or relativistic when it comes to this level of religious nihilism—if only because, for instance, contrary to the ancestral approach to religion that he seems elsewhere to praise (an approach that accepts only “Fate's blows” as “shortcuts to a blissful afterlife”),[25] Ahmad's approach tries to take an absolute and definitive step toward controlling Fate.

But clearly (from a religious and philosophical perspective, although perhaps not from a political one),[26] Ahmad's decision displays what I find to be the common fallacy of theologically-inspired suicide terrorism: it is the pretense that an ineffable God could somehow be spoken for “once and for all.” This is obviously illogical and arrogant (and, surely, arrogance is anything but an expression of faith).

Nevertheless, fortunately, Ahmad is not completely blind to these inherent contradictions; he does not buy completely into Shaikh Rashid's ideology. After all, it was his desire for intimate social guidance (not metaphysics) that drove him to Islam in the first place. And, thus, fortunately, that desire leaves him vulnerable to experiences of pity, guilt, respect and even love for “devils” such as his mother, Terry (whom he still, intermittently, calls an immoral, trashy whore), and, especially, Joryleen, his African-American high school crush (for whom he is nonetheless slow to recognize the nature of his feelings). Joryleen, unlike him, is “popular;” and yet she goes out of her way to take interest in lonely Ahmad, and even seems to challenge his ideological commitments, in their substance as well as their general appeal. (Ironically, out of love for another character, she *does* become a “whore”—a prostitute.)

Most important of all: Ahmad remains vulnerable to the positive influence of Jack Levy—his visibly aging, defensively-cynical, secular Jewish school counselor, who (besides Shaikh Rashid's incompetence) becomes crucial in disrupting the plot.

Disrupting the Plot: Jack Levy as Alter Ego

Jack Levy is the second main character in this novel—the second point of focus of its elliptical plot, bringing with him into play a second set of characters, whose relationships allow the plot to deviate from where Ahmad’s circular ideology could have taken it. In particular, Jack seems to help break Charlie Chehab’s scheme by (at first negligently, then deliberately) leaking crucial information about his student to his sister-in-law, Hermione (who—unbelievable coincidence again—happens to work as an assistant to the Secretary of Homeland Security).

Nonetheless, Jack’s heroism does not emerge from the fact that he tips off the authorities about Ahmad so much as it does from *both* the personal relationship he persists in building with the would-be terrorist in spite of everything else *and* the alternative philosophical model he represents.

Regarding the latter in particular, as mentioned in the introduction above, Jack is in a certain sense Ahmad’s alter ego. Both characters share many “metaphysical frustrations”[27]—frustrations with the inauthenticity of the American education system, or with the nihilistic materialism of modern American life, or even with the “absurdity” of secular life in general. More fundamentally still, they share a basic sense that people “stink”—except that, tellingly, Ahmad’s comes from ideology, and Jack’s comes from decades of experience.

However, crucially, they cope with their frustrations very differently. For example, when Ahmad contemplates formally changing his last name from his mother’s Mulloy to his father’s Ashmawy, Jack instead changes his first name informally from Jacob to Jack (as if embracing his society’s inauthenticity were preferable to trying to eliminate it).

More generally, Jack, being a somewhat cynical atheist, makes a point of embracing life not as a religious or ideological tool, or even as a gift, but rather as a Sisyphean burden—“Sisyphean” as in Sisyphus, the Greek mythological hero reintroduced by Albert Camus to depict life as an indefinite, pointless rock-rolling, which must be accepted out of pride or revolt. Except that, in Jack’s case, we find more irony than ordinary pride (in contrast with Ahmad’s apparent quest to compensate for the shame he feels for his father). And, I think, it is really in this kind of Sisyphean or quasi-Sisyphean irony, this indefinite struggle with meaning in the modern world, that Updike presents us with an alternative to the temptations of ideologies.

Jack is deeply flawed in many ways: he struggles with mixed feelings of kindness, pity and antipathy for his obese, TV-obsessed wife (who seems to be yet another representation of materialistic excess); and he goes so far as to have an affair with Ahmad’s mother, Terry. And yet, somehow, it is in this willingness to continue that internal struggle that he demonstrates the most authentic form of commitment or faith. That faith reflects perseverance, not final sacrifice; it is full of uncertainty and anxiety, not conviction and bliss. It allows Jack to persevere (despite his initial lame attempts at paternal guidance for Ahmad) in dissuading the boy from his destructive path—and therein lies the second ground of his heroism.

Jack is successful not so much by trying to take ultimate control of his fate but rather by tying his fate to Ahmad’s—by literally stalking Ahmad all the way to his truck bomb and beyond. His success is temporary and uncertain. In the end, he offers no permanent solution to Ahmad, to terrorism, or to the elusive problem of evil. But, by accepting yet limiting his own impurities, he

becomes capable of displaying pure heroism—whereas Ahmad almost commits “evil” by mistaking purity for heroism. And this is the philosophical lesson I think we can draw from *Terrorist*.

Conclusion

In the end, even though, with Jack Levy next to him in his truck bomb, Ahmad chooses not to go forward with his plan, it remains unclear whether he still presents a threat, or is instead ready to begin abandoning his intolerant ideology. But, ultimately, this indecision seems consistent with the larger theme of the elusiveness of the terrorist threat—and of the concept of “evil” in general. If the key lesson that emerges from this novel is that, in order to be “good,” people should not need to commit ultimate acts of ideological commitment, a related lesson might be that we should give up the pretense that we could ever exactly pin down the potential threat. Or, more broadly, if we are more likely to do evil when we fail to temper our urge for absolute truth claims, then it is crucial that we adopt an ongoing, indefinite (that is, Sisyphean) engagement with thoughts of good and evil.

Therefore, philosophically-speaking at least, the “evil” in the suicide terrorist’s ultimate act needs not be reduced to its horrible consequences because it is already present in its purist, extremist ideological premises. In fact, as theists, Islamist terrorists should feel unease at the striking resemblance that their ultimate shortcut to paradise bears to one of the poet Charles Baudelaire’s most transgressive lines—when, in his *The Flowers of Evil*, he asks rhetorically: “what does an eternity of damnation matter to someone who has found in one second the infinity of pleasure?”[28] Likewise, we could ask rhetorically what difference there really is between Baudelaire’s hedonistic extremism and Ahmad’s more ideological (or supposedly theological) extremism: his desire to reach the infinite joy of heaven in one single act.

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Notes

[1] Charles McGrath, “In ‘Terrorist,’ a Cautious Novelist Takes on a New Fear,” *New York Times*, 31 March 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/31/books/31updi.html> (accessed 10 March 2012).

[2] In fact, as a target, the Lincoln Tunnel is quite comparable with the World Trade Center towers: a quick Google search reveals that it carries 120,000 vehicles per day (that is, 5,000 per hour).

[3] Michiko Kakutani, “John Updike’s ‘Terrorist’ Imagines a Homegrown Threat to Homeland Security,” *New York Times*, 6 June 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/06/books/06kaku.html> (accessed 10 March 2012).

[4] Todd S. Purdum, “After the Attacks: the White House; Bush Warns of a Wrathful, Shadowy and Inventive War,” *New York Times*, 17 September 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/17/us/after-attacks-white-house-bush-warns-wrathful-shadowy-inventive-war.html> (accessed 10 March 2012).

- [5] Assad Moghadam, "Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and the Globalization of Martyrdom: A Critique of Dying to Win," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006): 722; see also Dominique Moisi, *The Geopolitics of Emotion: How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation and Hope are Reshaping the World*. New York, NY: Double Day, 2009.
- [6] Considering how much Updike makes of his characters' ethnic identities and stereotypes, it is tempting to identify in the failed mixed marriage of Ahmad's parents the origin of his longing for purity.
- [7] Ariel Merari, Ilan Diamant, Arie Bibi, Yoav Broshi and Giora Zakin, "Personality Characteristics of 'Self Martyrs'/'Suicide Bombers' and Organizers of Suicide Attacks," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22 (2010): 93.
- [8] John Updike, "Elusive Evil: An Idea Whose Time Keeps Coming," *The New Yorker*, July 22, 1996.
- [9] Lance Morrow, "Evil," *Time*, June 10, 1991.
- [10] Arthur Miller, "Why I wrote 'The Crucible: An Artist's Answer to Politics," *The New Yorker*, October 21, 1996.
- [11] Irving Howe, "Writing and the Holocaust," *The New Republic*, October 27, 1996.
- [12] C. Fred Alford, "A Psychoanalytic Study of Evil," *American Imago* 56, no.1 (1999): 27-52.
- [13] Ibid.
- [14] Roy Baumeister, *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty*. New York, NY: Freeman & Company, 1999, 375-378.
- [15] Ibid., 185.
- [16] Howe, "Writing and the Holocaust."
- [17] Patricia Cohen, "Danish Cartoon Controversy," *New York Times*, 12 August 2009, http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/d/danish_cartoon_controversy/index.html (accessed 10 March 2012).
- [18] Roy Baumeister, op. cit., 174.
- [19] Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2002, 42.
- [20] Ibid., 6.
- [21] Ibid., 48, 65, 68, 71, 104, 126, 156.
- [22] See Ariel Glucklich, *Dying for Heaven: Holy Pleasure and Suicide Bombers — Why the Best Qualities of Religion Are Also Its Most Dangerous*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2009, 16-17.
- [23] See, e.g., Paul Berman, *Terror and liberalism*. New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003.
- [24] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, 17-18.
- [25] John Updike, "Elusive Evil."
- [26] Again: this study explores the philosophical rationale for suicide terrorism, *not* its political or strategic rationale. For the latter, see, e.g., Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. New York, N.Y.: Random House, 2005; Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*. Baltimore, M.D.: Johns Hopkins University press, 2008.
- [27] Ibid.
- [28] Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*. New York, NY: New Directions, 1970, 12.
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