

Comment:

Digital Images and Visions of Jihad: Virtual Orientalism and the Distorted Lens of Technology

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Abstract

Since the aftermath of September 11, Western media have repeatedly lampooned and echoed the term “jihad” as a principle of the Islamic faith, arguing that this term inspires Muslims to wage wars against the west and modernity. The studies of jihad as a core belief of radical Islamic groups are numerous; the term is not a new phenomenon; it is mentioned in the Quran at least 164 times in various meanings and contexts. This piece analyzes how contemporary technology specifically search engines such as Google Images, pervades, distorts and reinvents Orientalist images of the term jihad from a western worldview. In these visual representations of jihad, we find abundant images of violence, mystery, terror, and even mockery and satire of Islam. The study focuses on the effects of these digital images to the consumers and how technology reinforces and reproduces “visual knowledge” in a transfixed level that neglects the multiple and ambiguous meanings of jihad in the Islamic context. This piece is not arguing for an authentic visual representation of the notion of jihad but is suggesting that the role of contemporary technology can be complicit in distorting and reconfiguring the meanings of sacred texts and ideas of Islam in the West.

Keywords

Islam, information and communication technology, Islam and civil society, Internet, Quran, photography, study of religion, authority, Internet studies, jihad

Introduction

If one performs a search in Google Images for the word jihad, a plethora of digital photos, images, works of art, and illustrations will appear in various disturbing depictions. These visuals range from photos of a bloody war with armed “Muslims” to satirical cartoons of a “jihadist” ready to detonate himself

for Islam. Since 9/11, there has been a massive wave of public speculations and political debates about the meaning of the controversial Islamic term jihad, and how this Islamic ideology motivates and encourages Islamic fundamentalists to challenge the West. Without really knowing what this sacred term actually means, the media portrays Islam as the “unknown-other” which is re-imagined as a great force of evil. With the creation and dissemination of digital technologies particularly image search retrievals, visual representations of jihad can be appalling; these collective images reflect traits of Orientalism. Because the term is ambiguously addressed in the Quran and other Islamic traditions, it is difficult to focus on an absolute meaning of the term without considering the various contexts used in these sources.

This piece examines the intersections of digital technology, representation and Islam; it is neither criticizing Google Images nor discouraging the use of this resource but is using Google Images as a case study to demonstrate this intersection in relations to “truth” and “power.” One of the main questions to ask is how this system of arbitrary images influences those who consume the images. What kind of effect or impact can these images have on the viewers, especially those who are not experts of the Islamic faith? Part of this piece explores exploring the origins and early notions of jihad, and focuses on theoretical frameworks of Edward Said’s critique of Orientalism. Another aspect of this piece focuses on the integration and intersections of “virtual studies” or Virtual Orientalism as proposed by Jane Iwamura and the accumulation of images through technology based on Martin Heidegger’s *The Question Concerning Technology*. By examining the integration of knowledge and power in the formation of colonial order of normalizing, marginalizing, and “enframing” Islam and its believers as the “other(s),” the piece brings into attention that these technologically-accumulated visual representations of Islam form and reveal harrowing structures of patriarchal, racial and religious hierarchies. The piece is ultimately concerned with the complicit role(s) of technology in perpetuating Islam in Orientalist stereotypes that underscore the dominant discourse of the “clash” in the digital era. The piece address how consumers will view these archived digital

images where some are “false” images stored in the memory bank of the cyber world.

Prior to 9/11, Islam had been portrayed negatively by the American medias. The term jihad was not echoed as much across the media but the faith itself was portrayed as the enemy of secular liberal democracy.¹ According to Daya Kishan Thussu, “Media images of Muslims as fanatic aggressors pervade the non-Muslim World and especially in the West ... Ordinary Muslims have become targets of this demonization when in fact Muslims have been worst suffers in most recent aggressions [prior to 9/11].”² The media and academic presses such as Samuel P. Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilization* explore the relationship of the West and the Islam by framing the conflict as a dominant discourse of global politics.³ As a result of this discourse, we find that Islam is portrayed, stereotyped, scrutinized and re-imagined as the “enemy” to the West. The public notion of Islam is not only misleading but also dangerous. To some scholars, this type of “cultural stereotyping by visual forms of media”⁴ is known as “Virtual Orientalism.” According to Jane Naomira Iwamura, “Virtual Orientalism relies heavily on new seemingly uninterrupted flow of representations and their easy access make stereotypes of Asians and Asian religions all the more obdurate ... These [visual] forms train the consumer to prefer visual representations, and the visual nature of the image leads the representation as immediacy and ontological gravity that words cannot.”⁵ Characterizing Islam as the “enemy” or the “other” distorts the perception of the principles and followers of the faith; reactions to the faith may be perceived negatively. Iwamura argues that Orientalist images in a virtual setting heavily rely on the viewer’s imagination of the “other.” These digital images that supposedly represent the word jihad are transforming the holiness of the term into a “sacred” code word used by “terrorists” who happen to appear as armed “Muslims” or “Middle Easterners,” and direct people to their 9/11 memories.⁶ While this is not the case conceptually, associating this word with these disturbing images raises Edward Said’s Orientalism. To understand the meaning(s) of the word jihad, it is important to turn to the scholarly discussions and treatments of the word in the Islamic tradition.

The Origins and Early Notions of Jihad

The revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad started approximately 610 A.D. Muslims believe that the Quran is the literal word of God revealed to the prophet in the Arabic language.⁷ Based on the Quran, Islamic scholars and traditional sources, the term translates as “striving for” since the word jihad is the gerund form of the word jahada which means to “strive or to exert oneself.” From Islamic sources, there are three significations of jihad: an internal struggle to maintain faith, the struggle to improve the Muslim society or the struggle in a holy war. It is important to note that these three distinctive meanings have been mentioned in many Islamic traditions of narratives concerning the Prophet’s sayings (also known as hadith) and in the Quran but Muslims and non-Muslims can take and have taken the word literally and out of context. In one verse in a hadith, it remains unclear at how the term is used: “The Prophet said to the martyrs of Uhud: ‘are we not their brothers? We entered Islam as they entered Islam and we did jihad as they did jihad.’”⁸ In the broadest sense, the term should be defined as a “struggle” since “there are many kinds of jihad and most have nothing to do with warfare. Jihad of the heart in Arabic is known as jihad al-qalb for example, denotes struggle against one’s own “sinful inclinations.”⁹ Even throughout the Quran there are groups of verses where the Prophet called for a war against the enemy but the word jihad is not mentioned. Richard Bonney’s work, *Jihad: From Quran to bin Laden* synthesizes these scriptural verses in addressing the ambiguity of the term and finds that some describe a spiritual struggling or striving: “four verses which use derivations from jihad and are clearly ‘warlike’ in intention or which, given the context, are open principally to a ‘warlike’ interpretation.”¹⁰ However, there are other instances in the Quran where the word is also used as an act of pacifism, but that meaning is often deemphasized.¹¹

In Islam, there are three challenges involving the act of jihad: a visible enemy, the devil and aspects one of own-self.¹² According to early Islamic sources from the seventh century, it is evident that the Prophet Muhammad commanded “jihad of the sword,” the same religious concept that is often

echoed by fundamentalists today, urging Muslims to spread the new faith in the Arabian Peninsula, and to combat against the infidels of Islam. In this meaning, jihad is viewed in two categories: greater jihad and the lesser jihad.¹³ The greater jihad signifies a struggle against one's temptation and sin while the lesser jihad focuses on waging a holy war against Allah's enemies. Today, the sacred meaning of the lesser jihad is not only constantly repeated and taken out of context by Islamic fundamentalists and the media but is also blasted as the only absolute meaning of the term that amplifies the theme of holy war or the discourse of the clash of civilizations between the West and Islam.¹⁴ There are additional examples from secondary sources that address the historical development of the term in the field of Islamic studies but from Google Image Search, these visual representations of the lesser jihad on the web are apparent; thus Islam is portrayed as a volatile and monolithic faith based on dominant interpretations and perceptions by media, personal and political biases.¹⁵

The Question Concerning Google Image Search

Created in 2001 by Google, Google Image Search, known as the most comprehensive on the web, allows users to perform a search for pictures embedded in web pages.¹⁶ Similar to Yahoo Image Search and other image retrieval engines, Google focuses on popular images that draw on references from the inputted key word without filtering or censoring the type of images produced by the algorithm of the search. Based on computational semantics, Google Image Search heavily draws from news and media pages, personal websites, and blogs, etc. The key terms used in other sites provide a list to Google that is relevant to the search term. According to the Google Guide of Google Image Search, "Google makes a guess that the words are related to the image. Google technology isn't yet to the point where it can tell what's in an image by looking at it directly."¹⁷ One of the main issues pertaining to these advance technologies is associating and referencing key words to images that may not be accurately depicted. This problem has already been noted in several studies of image retrieval systems; Google Image Search inputs metadata such as filenames and HTML texts to per-

form the search in web pages.¹⁸ One interesting note is that if one searches for the word jihad in Arabic script, the image results are quite similar.¹⁹ Referencing other Arabic websites, the jihad is portrayed again as a violent struggle. Google Image Search offers an option for users to conduct their searches using advanced or basic search; both provide same search results with the exception that advanced search option permits the usage of Boolean operators²⁰ and can also search for a specific content type image, size or format. If one searches for other polemic Arabic terms such as jahiliyya,²¹ the search results are not as controversial as jihad. For this term, there are several visual references to Sayyid Qutb, an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood who protested against Nasser’s Egyptian government, and called for a “spiritual revolution” to challenge this jahiliyya.²² In examining other image retrieval sites such as Yahoo to detect different representations, we find that they also generate similar content since they share the same algorithm in accumulating images from web pages.

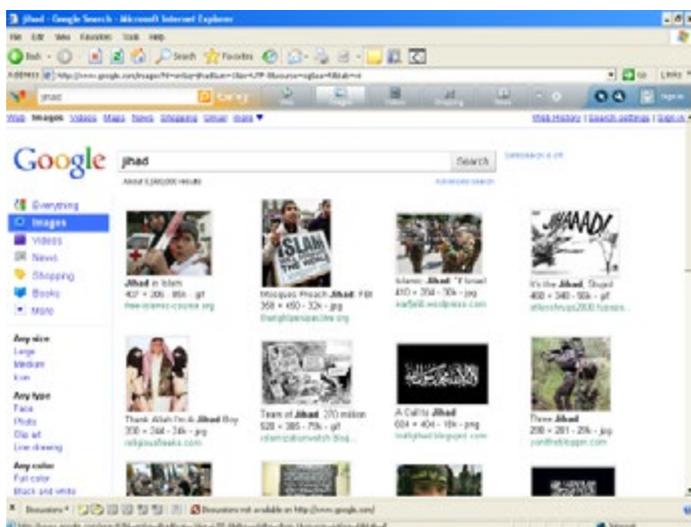


Fig. 1. Real-world use of content image retrieval using the term “Jihad.” We find real and photoshopped images of combat, protest, and satire regarding Islam. This search was conducted in 2011 (see Google Inc. 2011).

What do these images reveal about Islam and more importantly, as Barbie Zelizer, author of *About to Die*, asks, “What kind of information does one need to understand an image and how much information is necessary?”²³ In this critical work, Zelizer examines how (about-to-die) photographic depictions affect public discourse and tap into emotional senses of fear and anxiety. Zelizer writes: “Images offer implicative relays, suggestive slices of action that people need to complete by interpreting and imaging what unfolds beyond the camera’s frame.”²⁴ Returning to the concept of Virtual Orientalism, imagination can play a significant role in reframing and reinterpreting events.²⁵ These images taken out of context by Google offer a collective look of “angry” and “armed” Muslim and/or Middle Eastern men ready to commit a jihad against America.

Take for example the second image from above with a man holding a sign “Islam will dominate the world.” The image links to a blog post entitled, “10 percent of US Mosques Preach Jihad: FBI.” The article states that U.S. mosques are preaching some form of jihad or holy war based on this author’s interview. What is striking about this image is that it reinforces the illusion that the faith will dominate the world. The blog post does not offer any other substantial research support other than this image and a few claims by an author. One other interesting example is the first image on the top left with the child holding a bloody sword-like tool. The sword can also serve as a metaphor of “jihad like a sword” as described earlier. When you click on the image, it leads you to an article called “Jihad Kids – Islamic Seeds of Hate and Martyrdom” by the U.S. Veterans Dispatch. The article argues that there is a rise of Muslims and Islamic violence in the world and they have a secret agenda to take over the world. This image could be totally irrelevant and taken out of context; however, the image reinforces the notion that “Islam” is the enemy and needs to be repressed, thus echoing the hegemonic order. The other harrowing images also link to various conservative pages and amateur pages and blogs such as *History Of Jihad*, *Islamization Watch*, and *Citizen Warrior*.

Looking at these images can raise anxiety, fear and anger to the viewers who may not be familiar with the Islamic meaning of jihad but whose

memories are transfixed to the moments of 9/11: “In general, findings have demonstrated that media documentation of violence and brutality engenders feelings of fear even among individuals who have not been directly exposed to such violence and for whom it poses no immediate personal threat.”²⁶ Memory can be perceived as an agency of emotions that is entirely reliant on “patterned and identifiable forms.”²⁷ The type of memory produced by Google Search Engine, begs to question whether the historical events of September 11 can serve as what Roberta Pearson calls “commodified public memory, a subset of the hegemonic order.”²⁸ Pearson explains “the naturalized and widely accepted dominant representations temporarily halt history, establishing a set of unquestioned froze and abstracted ‘facts’ that play a crucial role in the construction of a dominant national identity.”²⁹ For this study, the discourse of commodified public memory plays an important role in addressing how internal images of Muslims as terrorists and architects of 9/11 are not only recalled, amplified and remembered as such but also illustrate how today’s Muslims as a collective group are being reassessed and identified as the combative foes. Once these images are on the web, they are digitally stored permanently: what are ramifications of having online images archived imperishably? What are the consequences of having collective “false” images stored in the memory bank of the cyber world? As false claims and ideas about Islam are being produced, reinvented and perceived as the “truth,” can digital technology play a significant role in hegemonizing, marginalizing and stereotyping “the other” just as well?³⁰ Who or why would anyone choose to upload these disturbing images to the cyber world? The answer is obvious: media bias and Islamophobia groups to construct and stabilize a hegemonic order. To those who view these arbitrary images, they may be fixed on these stereotypes. The consumers become part of the hegemonic order; their perceptions of Islam, Muslims and Middle Easterners will change and focus on their aggression. These representations reinforce the hegemonic structure but also the anger of the viewers who may have been affected by the aftermath of 9/11.

If one examines the collection carefully, one will notice that most images are taken out of context, and some are photoshopped: to illustrate the mystery

and mockery of Islam; however, violence is still present in some of these falsified images. If one ran searches of other terms such as “Islam” and the “Prophet Muhammad,” there are interesting results compared to jihad. For “Islam,” the images are less violent and contentious, at least not the first ones. The later images of Islam are questionable. These images come from media outlets and blogs such as Euronews, CNN, and Turkey Tribune. The purpose of this exercise is to show that there is a wide range of discrepancy in terms of visualizing Islam and Islamic terms. Consumers of these images who may not know anything about Islam may find it to be disturbing and enticing.

Regardless of their authenticity, all photos are subjected to manipulation: “Computer based digital imaging heightens the potential for deception in the print parathion process ... All photographers change reality somewhat by using different types of lenses or dodging and burning ... electronic manipulation is more insidious because it takes those tools and multiplies them by ten thousand.”³¹ These images are still retrieved from popular web pages that are often viewed by many Internet users. These powerful images serve as a bridge in integrating “terrorism” and “Islam,” and channeling negative emotions in viewers who may then produce their own cultural stereotypes of Muslims, Middle Easterners or anyone who resembles those similar features of a 9/11 terrorist. With the support of digital technology in framing Muslims as violent groups bent on terrorizing America, this elevates the dominant discourse of the clash as the “truth” that ultimately distorts reality and makes the public merely a victim of Virtual Orientalism.

The revolutionary work that led to the notion of Jane Iwamura’s Virtual Orientalism is Edward Said’s Orientalism. According to Said, “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Occident.’”³² Orientalism draws a binary formation that defines ‘Eastern’ cultures as one archetype that differs from the West. Said analyzes a series of 19th century historical and literary works, and asserts that the “Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker

than the West, which elided the Orient's differences with its weaknesses ... As a cultural apparatus Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgment, will-to-truth, and knowledge."³³ These images visually and mentally segregate myth from reality of Islam, and perpetuate the faith as a representation of "terrorism" based on the events of September 11.

To address the role of digital technology in perpetuating Orientalism, Heidegger's work: *The Question Concerning Technology* can be useful here. In this piece, Heidegger discusses the relationship between humans and technology, and finds that technology is a productive mechanism that can perform its duties but can also create new sets of problems for humans. Heidegger contends that "technology is therefore no mere means; technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e. of truth."³⁴ The essence of technology is "enframing" which is the formation of revealing the "truth" that exists in reality before humans can actually perceive it.³⁵ According to Heidegger, the "enframing" aspect from technology can also be self-destructive. Heidegger addresses the dangers and ethics of technology and asks, "What is technology revealing about the world?"³⁶ By placing the term jihad in the context of Heidegger's enframing discourse, we must ask, "What is the Internet (or Google Image Search) revealing about jihad or Islam? Is the internet-jihad a visual and authentic form of the seventh century Arabian ideology being appropriated in the twenty first century and echoes and normalizes the dominant discourse of the 'West versus Islam?'" By focusing on Google Image Search, we find that digital technology can be complicit in configuring and positioning sacred terms of Islam into a contentious mode, and also reformatting the Muslim identity as the "other" in order to maintain a hegemonic order. The meaning of the term is constantly echoed inaccurately and vilified by media bias and fundamentalists. Thus, the term itself is channeling the same fear and anxiety that returns to the collective memories, experiences and shocks of 9/11. The Internet is portraying jihad as an Islamic accessory for "Muslim terrorists" to promote war but the Internet is also revealing that there is a mischaracterization of Islam; only viewers who know the truth (or

understand the faith) can distinguish the “real” Islam from the “media bias type-fundamentalist” Islam.

Digitally Accumulated Images

With these multiple layers of digital images being exhibited in front of the screen, this interaction also raises the notion of accumulative orientalism mentioned by Said. But it has become more relevant today in ways perhaps was not imagined by Said. In *Orientalism*, Said examines a variety of literary and historical resources where he detects orientalism from famous writers, historians and travelers that romanticizes or imagines the Orient as the “other.” Said explains, “How modern Orientalism embodies a systematic discipline of accumulation [of human beings and territories]”³⁷ and addresses how these works collectively romanticize and re-imagine the East as the “other.” This notion of accumulative orientalism can be applied to this study that addresses how the perseverance of these images on the web replicate and harbor a form of identity and history of Islam through the word jihad alone.³⁸ The visuals are organized systematically according to (similar) key words, metadata and algorithms and produced a collective representation, which can be viewed as a “true” visual knowledge of Islam. As these “politically incorrect” images continue to surface, accumulate and saturate across the cyber world, we find that they are representing a new form of “truth” and adding a new course of “history” regarding Muslims.

The “truth” factor isolates and nationalizes one’s memory as a collective consciousness; these images may seem haphazardly arranged, but they are generating an absolute idea about Islam, and are striving to produce a new form “ideological-truth” that is visually presented, maintained and agreed and embraced by society via the Internet. According to Michel Foucault, “Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true”³⁹ Those who possess the “power”

or “knowledge” to produce these “true” claims about Islam as a “violent” religion can have enormous influence and success because they know that they hold the “truth.”⁴⁰ Since Google Image Search is revealing “Islam” negatively, this also reinforces the relationship between the Internet and power. The Internet can serve as a controlling vehicle – with these disturbing photos arranged systematically, people might perceive Islam as such; people’s perceptions of Islam are already compromised and have the capabilities extending their cultural stereotypes, biases or the Orientalist notion as the “truth” into a cyber-world. Foucault writes, “Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements.”⁴¹ Those who wish to reinforce this false image of Islam are in fact extending the dominant discourse of the “clash of civilizations.” This is a type of control that marginalizes Islam and “normalizes” the identity of the faith and believers as a collective form of disorder or terror that needs to be “colonized” or “subdued.”⁴² Islam is “put together as this re-presentation, and what is represented is not a real [faith] but a set of references, a congeries of characteristics ... or some bit of previous imagining or an amalgam of all these.”⁴³ This type of “normalization” of “Islam” can be traced to the nineteenth century thought of Orientalism in the configuration of colonial rule in the Middle East.⁴⁴ With these digital technologies and the continuation of the theme “war on terrorism” in the Middle East, a familiar form of colonial order is emerging where Muslims abroad and in the USA must be “controlled” and “ruled over” which also frames the dominant discourse of the clash as the “truth.”

Can other non-photographs also hold some “power” or “truth?” Since most of the depictions of jihad are based on wartime photos, there is also a small accumulation of photoshopped images, satirical cartoons, the Arabic calligraphy, and other representations to be seen as well. As these images are positioned with (real) photographs, we may assume that the image of Islam on the Internet can still be perceived as the “truth” if viewers have already developed a preconceived knowledge of Islam based on the events of 9/11 which can also be raised by looking at these photographs. Foucault contends “truth is linked to a circular relation with systems of power which

produces and sustains it and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it.”⁴⁵ Those who classify Muslims as terrorists may hold some form of power in influencing others to believe this hegemonic order. What needs to be discussed are ramifications of the re-imagination of Islam and its believers as the “other” or “enemy” of America in the digital world; how Virtual Orientalism reinforces the “truthfulness” of the hegemonic order of identities through the cyber world based on one key word: jihad.⁴⁶

Conclusion?

Initially this article began with an examination of visual representations of the sacred term jihad. We find that these depictions are far more disturbing than they appear to be. The imaginations behind these digital collages or exhibitions reveal a hidden Orientalist structure that underpins a hegemonic order of “enframing” Islam and Muslims as “the others,” terrorists and monsters. With the interventions of memory and imagination, 9/11, not as a historical event but as a political symbol serves as a reference point for perpetuating cultural stereotypes and ideas of Muslims as such in the West. With the creation, dissemination, and archival capabilities of digital technologies, any individual can reproduce or recreate new types of knowledge, power, history, memory, and “truths.”

In this study, the framework of Orientalism reveals the intersections and relationships of power and knowledge, truth and knowledge and power and truth. What has to be further explored is the psychological reasons behind individuals who desire to perpetuate these cultural stereotypes and standards; why do these individuals want to harm, subdue, marginalize or frame others as such? The strong desire for power, dominance and rule over the “others” are harrowing and obvious.

This article explores, analyzes and explains the ramifications of the intersection between digital technology and Islam. By positioning several fundamental social theories in this study, we find that technology can be complicit in framing and reinventing sacred texts that can ultimately

reshape the (authentic) representation(s) of the faith. However, technology alone cannot carry such a heavy burden; as cultural producers, people create and disseminate technologies, images, and imaginations; this also includes false and true claims that can influence politics and economics. Only by addressing, exploring, contesting, and understanding these social issues relating to technology, we can hope to deconstruct the existing hegemonic order that echoes the traits of Orientalism and Virtual Orientalism, and dismember the dominant discourse of the “clash” that seems to be in a perpetual state in the public mind. This study is still ongoing and the conclusion is not definitive since new theoretical questions continue to emerge in regards to the digital productions of Islam.

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Notes

¹ Thussu 1997:266. In addition, “the media to act as ‘moral entrepreneurs,’ or agents of indignation, generating anxiety and concern and ‘amplifying’ threats [from Muslims] whether real or imagined” and focuses on “Muslims” as the uncontrollable fanatics challenging the West. Bakalian 2009:150.

² Bakalian 2009.

³ Huntington's (1996:125) controversial political theory asserts that "great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural [in the post-Cold War world] and the fault lines between civilizations are becoming the central lines of conflict in global politics." In one section, Huntington frames the struggle for power and the clash between the civilizations of the "West" (Europe and America) and the Islamic World – this article will examine how digital technology can be complicit in promoting this dominant discourse through visual representations.

⁴ Iwamura 2011:7.

⁵ Iwamura 2011:7, 160. In this work, Iwamura argues, "Virtual Orientalism relies on repetitive [narratives] that masks the ideological interests and geopolitical concerns that invisibly drive its cultural imperialist enterprise. [Virtual Orientalism] relies heavily on new technologies and visual media that allow a constant stream of images" that perpetuates stereotypical ideas about the East (p.161).

⁶ In addition, "Objects or images, such as man's bushy beard, a woman's hijab, the collapse of the Twin Towers, and the explosion of a double-decker bus have also come to symbolize Islamists. Consequently, Samuel Huntington's book *The Clash of Civilizations* and President Bush's reference to the Crusades have become crystallized as emotive." See Bakalian and Bozorgmehr 2009.

⁷ Bonney 2004:21.

⁸ Bonney 2004:34.

⁹ Firestone 1999:17.

¹⁰ Bonney2004:28. These surahs include: Q.9:82, Q.9:86, Q.9:88, and Q.5:36.

¹¹ See Bonney 2004:437. Key surahs to highlight the word as an act of pacifism include: Q.21:14–15, Q.25:53–54 and Q.12:77–78.

¹² Bonney 2004.

¹³ Greater jihad in Arabic is translated as al-jihad al-akbar while lesser jihad is al-jihad al-asghar.

¹⁴ Based on various scholarly interpretations of the term, Cook (2005:42) describes the term succinctly: "In all literature concerning jihad – whether militant or internal

jihad – the fundamental idea is to disconnect oneself from the world, to die to the world, whether bodily (as in battle) or spirituality (as in the internal jihad).”

¹⁵ Devji’s *Landscapes of Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (2005:87) describes how the meaning(s) of the term transformed into a unified cohesive system: “The jihad is defined not by its various local causes, nor even by the individual biographies of its fighters, but as a series of global effects that have assumed a universality of their own beyond such particularities. Indeed the dispersed and disparate acts of jihad provide proof enough of this, dispensing as they do with the traditional orders and genealogies of Islamic authority, as well as with an old-fashioned politics tied to states and citizenship. Perhaps the most important way to which the jihad assumes its universality, however, is through the mass media.”

¹⁶ See Zipern 2001:G3.

¹⁷ Blachman and Peek 2007:3.

¹⁸ Datta.

¹⁹ Jihad in Arabic is written as “جهاد”.

²⁰ Boolean Operators consist of “AND, OR, BUT.” Using these operators may help users retrieve better search results but for this study, it is not necessary to use them.

²¹ Jahiliyya can be religiously defined as “ignorance of God’s guidance” or historically as “barbarism” referring to the primitive tribal systems in pre-Islamic Arabia. This Arabic term is illuminated in several works of Sayyid Qutb, an Islamist who visited America during the 1950s and was appalled at America’s “primitive” and questionable lifestyles. When he returned to Egypt, he called for a revolution to challenge, transform and “purify” Egypt into an Islamic state. Qutb describes “jahiliyya” as a type of spiritual ignorance that needs to be overthrown. “Qutb’s interpretation of jihad was that of a perpetual revolutionary struggle against the forces of unbelief, injustice and falsehood or in, short, jahiliyya.” See Bonney 2004:217.

²² One interesting consideration is to view these images collectively as a “jahiliyya” in two perceptions: these images describe Islam as barbaric that needs be “controlled” but on the other hand, it is also exposing public ignorance of the faith – that this is not the “true” representation of Islam but an ideologically-transfixed and imposed

vision by those who would like to perpetuate the hegemonic order of colonizing Muslims politically and economically.

²³ Zelizer 2010:6.

²⁴ Zelizer 2010:6.

²⁵ Imagination is playing a role in reframing Orientalist stereotypes but these images and stereotypes become “embodied and hence objectified in mediate form. Although their recognition still depends on our imagination, they achieve an existence all their own (Iwamura 2011:8).”

²⁶ Slone 2000:508.

²⁷ See Zelizer 1999. In addition, the memory of the attack that is constantly echoed by the media, allows “the media to act as ‘moral entrepreneurs,’ or agents of indignation, generating anxiety and concern and “amplifying” threats [from Muslims] whether real or imagined (Bakalian 2009:150).”

²⁸ See Pearson 1999:181.

²⁹ Pearson 1999:181.

³⁰ Similar to the meaning of the lesser jihad as I have discussed, “Islam” as a whole is perceived and marginalized as a monolithic faith bent on countering un-Islamic values.

³¹ Schwartz 1999:177.

³² Said 1979:2.

³³ Said 1979:204.

³⁴ Heidegger 1977:12.

³⁵ Mitchell (1991:60) summarizes the concept of “enframing” as an order of appearance or hierarchy of truth, “The world is set up before an observing subject as though it were the picture of something. Its order occurs as the subject as the relationship between observer and picture, appearing and experienced in terms of the relationship between the picture and the plan or meaning it presents. It follows that the appearance of order is at the same time an order of appearance, a hierarchy. The world appears to the observer as a relationship between picture and reality, the one present but secondary, a mere representation, the other only represented, but

prior, more original more real. This order of appearance is what might be called the hierarchy of truth.”

³⁶ Mitchell 1991:27.

³⁷ Mitchell 1991:27.

³⁸ According to Said (1979:165): “[Accumulative] Orientalism organizes itself systematically as the acquisition of Oriental material and its regulated dissemination as a form of specialized knowledge.”

³⁹ Foucault 2000:42.

⁴⁰ According to Foucault (Clark 1997:24), “Power and knowledge directly imply one another ... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”

⁴¹ Foucault 2000:43.

⁴² These images collectively illuminate and foreshadow the underlying problem of America’s political treatment of Muslims. According to Foucault (2000:42), “there is a battle for ‘truth’ or at least around truth’ – it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean the ‘the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted’ by rather the ensemble of rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true,’ it being understood also that it’s not a matter of a battle ‘on behalf’ of the truth but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays.”

⁴³ Mitchell 1991:31.

⁴⁴ “The purpose of constructing such an image and of articulating such a frame of discourse is to establish a ‘significant other’ by means of which to define Europe’s (or West’s) own self-identity, and to establish thereby Europe’s superiority and right to rule.” Clark 1997:24.

⁴⁵ See Foucault 2000:43.

⁴⁶ In addition to the Internet, media bias and anti-Islamic groups playing complicit roles in distorting the meaning of jihad and the image of Islam, there are also other cultural producers coming from books and television shows that have the authority to shape the public’s perceptions of the word and faith. See Bilici 2005:50–69.