Grafting and Mirroring:
Anti-Muslim Bias in World History Textbooks

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Each semester, I preface my World History courses’ syllabi with the following warning: *world history is vast, complicated, and contentious.*¹ Due to the need to cover an area of over 200 million square miles over the course of two million years, I rely on textbooks to fill in gaps in my expertise. There are few straightforward topics in history, and while it is important for us to learn the narrative presented in our textbooks, it is even more important to evaluate, complicate, contextualize, and—even sometimes—correct that narrative. In the United States today, this holds especially true when discussing the origins and evolution of Islam, the Middle East, and the Islamic world. In the context of a World History college classroom in the United States, students come into class both with broad gaps of knowledge and ingrained misconceptions about Islam, the Middle East, and the Islamic majority regions of the world.

Teaching Islamic history in the context of a World History class is not merely a task of providing and evaluating accurate information, it necessitates challenging ingrained assumptions and correcting inherited biases that students bring into the class with them from their previous education and life experience. Unfortunately, the
textbooks that are available to us as educators reflect and reinforce both the absences and the inaccuracies of student knowledge.

The creation of the World History course as a modified Western Civilization course, and the creation of the World History textbook as a modified Western Civilization book, signal a problematic beginning to both. While the classroom narratives are likely to be significantly different from how they were at the point of conception, the textbooks have, I will demonstrate, lagged behind. They have done so as a consequence of twin processes I refer to as “grafting” and “mirroring.” The textbook narrative, I argue, is essentially the trunk of the Western Civilization narrative with branches of World History grafted onto it. Thus, grafting reproduces issues at points of conflict that the Western Civilization narrative had with other areas of the world. In the narrative of Western Civilization, the Islamic World was, for much of its history, arguably the main competitor of the Western world. Therefore, it’s not surprising that anti-Muslim bias is prevalent at intersections where the Western Civilization narrative highlights its relationship with the Islamic World. The Crusades, the Reconquista, and the growth and expansion of the Ottoman Empire represent instances where grafting clearly reproduces the biases of the former, still largely intact, Western Civilization narrative. Meanwhile, mirroring, as a process, reflects our current societal bias onto the textbook pages. Islam and the Islamic world are frequently misunderstood and misrepresented in the contemporary United States, and textbooks are infused with echoes of these prejudices. Mirroring, then, tends to occur at places of current anti-Muslim bias, particularly around gender, sexuality, and violence. This article seeks to evaluate some of the more prevalent and damaging problems with World History textbooks available to teachers at the university level and to suggest ways of getting the maximum benefit from their pages.

For my analysis, I looked at the combined editions of the following six World History textbooks, listed by title: (1) Traditions and Encounters, (2) The Earth and Its Peoples, (3) Voyages in World History, (4) The Heritage of World Civilizations, (5) Ways of the World, and (6) Worlds Together, Worlds Apart. This article is in no way meant to endorse or condemn any of these texts, but merely to point out the ubiquity of anti-Muslim bias and to demonstrate how the texts can be improved. I have used several of these books
in the classroom myself and make no recommendation here for my fellow educators as to which to choose. Each book has significant positive aspects and each has serious shortcomings.

The cynical teacher may ask how deeply the students are reading these textbooks. Student engagement with a book is certainly one aspect of the problem, yet so is educator engagement. As no one can conceivably have expertise in all of history, educators acquire significant amounts of their information from textbooks. This analysis is meant to assist educators in identifying problems with the narrative and correcting them in the classroom. This can be done in a positive way (what we may call a “teaching moment”) in the classroom as a way to encourage and foster critical thinking. Methodologically, I approach these books using the ideas of grafting and mirroring. For grafting, this meant looking for areas of intersection between the Western Civilization narrative and the Islamic world. More specifically, these include the birth of Islam chapters, any mention of a golden age/transmitter culture, the Crusades/Reconquista, and the many stages of the long-lived Ottoman Empire. For mirroring, this meant reading the content areas that predominantly engage Islam and the Muslim world as likely instances that reflect the modern prejudices against Islam in the United States. This analysis involves identifying anachronistic statements about gender, sexuality, violence, and global terrorism, and in image content/indexing. Both mirroring and grafting are informed by Edward Said’s foundational work, *Orientalism*, particularly his discussion of the ways in which academic discourses both create and presuppose epistemological distinctions between the West and a generalized, monolithic Middle East/Islamic World.

World History textbooks were not written in a vacuum. Rather, the narrative was grafted unevenly and bears the diseases and parasites of societal prejudice. Grafting preserves the place of the Islamic world as a transmitter civilization experiencing a “Golden Age.” The Abbasid dynasty, in particular, is usually represented in the Western narrative as translating, and then nurturing, the spark of ancient Greece and Rome during the “dark ages” of Europe. That spark is then transmitted back as a flame to Europe, either during the Crusades, the Mongol conquests, or the Renaissance. The Golden Age narrative is an example of how grafting reproduces the Eurocentric model of World History that was logically the core of
Western Civilization. Adding limbs, no matter how fruitful, to the tree of knowledge, still leaves the same trunk at the center.

Furthermore, World History textbooks were written in the context of the United States’ contemporary political and cultural realms, and therefore reflect the mainstream Islamophobia of the United States. This mirroring process warps the narrative by reinforcing beliefs that people in the United States already feel certain that they know about Islam and the Muslim world. Therefore, contradictory information can exist simultaneously without any cognitive dissonance, and ideas that are clearly demonstrable inaccuracies can be perceived true because they are so deeply ingrained. In particular, these textbooks reproduce ideas of Islam as a more violent religion than others and one that is structurally hostile to women, minorities, and the LGBTQ community.

This process of grafting and mirroring allows for several types of misleading information. Every one of the textbooks I analyze contains conflicting information during their discussion of the birth of Islam. On the same page that laments the oppression of women, one book contains a paragraph that extolls the virtues of Islam for guaranteeing rights of divorce, inheritance, and property ownership to women. While history is nuanced, a student that reads one paragraph or the other will come away with contradictory conclusions. There is no discussion or acknowledgement about the textbook’s anachronistic expectations of gender equality or feminist ideals, nor the significance of change over time and the importance of context.

Perhaps the most prevalent prejudice in the textbooks is the existence of false equivalences and/or false opposites. Public discourse in the United States and throughout the Western world has questioned whether Muslims can be President of the United States and/or even full citizens of Western nations. These problems have only escalated in recent years. The textbooks frequently and very subtly imply and reinforce that Muslims are not Europeans and/or Westerners. Beyond grafting and mirroring in the texts, these problems are also evident in the way books are indexed and in the choices of images used. In my analysis section, I separate the indexing and image selections of the books because they occur outside of the work done by the books’ main authors and are engaged differently by students. However, it is worth noting here that the problems in these areas are in fact a byproduct of mirroring.
One of my goals in this article is to alert and inform educators who teach World History, are not familiar with these topics, and rely on these textbooks to fill in the gaps in their own knowledge. Instructors are the experts in the classroom, and textbooks are a significant aid for instructors of survey courses who cannot possibly have expertise in every area or era of World History or have knowledge of every historical event throughout time.

**Historical Changes to the Curriculum: From Western Civilization to World History**

World history textbooks developed in tandem with, and with a similar original sin as, the World History course. In the 1980s, for curriculum purposes and in order to be more inclusive, universities around the United States transformed their Western Civilization course offerings into World History. Western Civilization, perhaps the most ubiquitous class in the humanities before 1980, had its origins in the years immediately preceding World War I. The course grew largely out of the lectures, writings, and students of Professor James Harvey Robinson at Columbia University. According to Daniel Segal, it was the collective work of Robinson and his students that ultimately created a broad survey class organized around a single intellectual, progressive narrative thread. That particular narrative thread was Western, exclusionary, and, in its own judgment, objectively more advanced than non-Western others.9 Richard Voeltz noted that it was the immediate aftermath of World War I that saw the rise of “Contemporary Civilization,” the precursor to all Western Civilization classes.10 Gilbert Allardyce, during the debates within higher education in the late 1970s and early 1980s about what to do with the Western Civilization course, wrote a lengthy piece in *The American Historical Review* that traced the rise and spread of the Western Civilization course, particularly at elite institutions such as Harvard, The University of Chicago, and Columbia.11 Allardyce, lukewarm in his support of World History, noted that structural curriculum change was one of the causes of the end of the Western Civilization course. Curriculum shifts away from broad survey courses influenced whether or not Western Civilization would be offered at a specific institution. Furthermore, the desire to be more inclusive spurred a move away from Western Civilization
curricula. Allardyce noted that as early as 1966, Amherst College was already moving away from Western Civilization specifically to reject the Eurocentric approach to history.12

As Western Civilization’s hold on the curriculum faltered and the desire for large survey classes remained and proved resurgent, the idea of World History as its replacement gained serious traction. In the midst of this movement, and moving beyond Allardyce’s recommendations in the same journal edition, Carolyn Lougee argued that in order to move past Eurocentrism, courses must be created that “accept and even celebrate diversity, the eccentric, the outlier—the nonwhite, the nonmale, the nonelite—rather than ignoring them.”13 Morris Rossabi saw the shift as being an important one and hoped that the universities making the movement to global history would take the “survey seriously and must provide adequate rewards for instructors. With such changes, the introductory course can be saved and can serve as one of the cornerstones of the undergraduate curriculum.”14

While the creation of World Civilization courses was meant to both save the broad survey class and erase Eurocentrism, the social evolutionary theory that Segal argued was the hallmark of Western Civilization, complete with its underlying assumptions of Western progress and lack of progress by the non-Western “Other,” became codified as features of World History coursework and textbooks.15 In the process of creating the new course, publishers in many cases took already published Western Civilization texts and converted them into World History texts by adding a few chapters about other places and histories, thereby assembling a work they marketed as a “World History” text.16 Voeltz argued that this process, plus the fact that World History follows a similar, singular narrative thread and approach, reproduces much of the same narrative and emphasizes the same events as the Western Civilization approach. This generally means that, rather than a narrative of World History, the textbooks produce a narrative of the “World and the West” or the “West and the Rest.” Voeltz further noted that, while World History is intentionally inclusive and multicultural, it is nearly impossible to give adequate or equal coverage to the entire globe throughout history, and “exclusion can be invidious.”17

Voeltz’s analysis also serves as a corrective to the history of the Western Civilization course, as that history was mainly focused on
Voeltz discussed debates within the Department of History and Government at Cameron University, a mid-level regional state university under the University of Oklahoma’s Board of Regents. Voeltz noted that the main change at Cameron involved transforming their Western Civilization course series directly into a World History series, and then resurrecting the Western Civilization class to sit alongside the World History course. Similar debates occurred at the institution where I teach. At Minnesota State University, Mankato, the course catalog from Fall 1982 listed three separate courses in Western Civilization. In the catalog that spanned the following academic year of 1983-1984, these courses were replaced by three World Civilization courses with nearly identical periodization.

The History Department at Minnesota State University, Mankato spent considerable amounts of time reworking their curriculum, beginning with a wide-ranging student survey in 1977. The 493 students that participated expressed a general lack of interest in area studies (14% expressed a strong interest in Africa in the Modern World, with 46.9% expressing no interest; 15% expressed a strong interest in China and the Modern World, with 48.9% expressing no interest). Meanwhile, they expressed a strong interest in topics concerning global history (24.5% expressed a strong interest in Development of the Third World, with 28.0% expressing no interest; 38.5% expressed a strong interest in War in the Modern World, with 20.7% expressing no interest). On April 3, 1981, the curriculum committee approved a proposal by Dr. Johannes Postma to create a series of World History courses. Postma’s proposal cited his rationale for the proposed changes, stating they were “Stimulated by questions of students, discussion with fellow historians, a general observation of history curricula at other universities, and criticism leveled against our department’s general education offerings.” In his proposal, Postma suggested abolishing topics classes in world histories at the general education level, and removing Western Civilization from the curriculum altogether. Postma suggested that Western Civilization should be “subsumed by World History.” Furthermore, he proposed creating a common text for the course. There was wide-ranging support for the curriculum changes by other professors in the department, including Dr. Bill Lass, whose own curriculum proposal had the new course periodized differently, with three courses listed
as World History to 1066, from 1066-1789, and from 1789-present.
This is worth noting as an alternative path not taken in periodization,
due to the near uniformity the course eventually assumed that mirrors
the periodization of the textbooks—either the early course ending
with the rise of the Mongols or some date very close to 1492.24 These
curriculum changes mirrored the debates and reforms taking place at
other schools in that they were both structural (other survey classes
were reorganized or eliminated as well) and were seen as a way to
move to a more inclusive historical narrative.

Review of Scholarship on Anti-Muslim Bias in Textbooks

The critical scholarship relevant to World History textbooks is split
along discussions of prejudice within the books and more general
discussions of American societal anti-Muslim bias/Islamophobia.
Concerning textbooks, existing scholarship focuses predominantly
on high school textbooks within and outside the United States. A
portion of research pertaining to American textbooks was in itself
significantly reflective of anti-Muslim bias in American society
and Islamophobia. These studies, funded by known Islamophobic
institutions or appearing in known anti-Muslim publications, alleged
that Islam is treated too positively and too extensively in textbooks.
Conversely, such authors argued that this was specifically at the
expense of Christianity and Western Civilization. I am reticent
to note that these arguments exist and are entirely antithetical to
my findings, and indeed antithetical to all but the most subjective
interpretations. As such, I chose not to legitimize them by discussing
them further and I will not cite them.

As pertains to legitimate research, Susan Douglass and Ross
Dunn addressed anti-Muslim bias in the curriculum in the United
States. They noted that media and popular culture’s negative views
on Islam have been reproduced in classrooms and textbooks. They
demonstrated that in twelve years of education, an average student
would have spent what amounted to just a few weeks studying topics
concerning Islam. Lack of coverage, both in textbooks and in the
classroom, is a major sign of anti-Muslim bias, along with factual
errors and the reproduction of cultural bias. The authors noted
significant issues that arise from the way the transition occurred
for publishers from an intentionally Eurocentric narrative to the
more inclusive World History, including chronological issues, lack of meaningful connections between European and non-European coverage, and factual errors. Furthermore, the textbooks fail to contextualize Islam as an Abrahamic faith alongside Judaism and Christianity, and describe the birth of Islam occurring in a remote and harsh place removed from civilizations.25

More generally, scholarship that looks at the way high school World History textbooks present history finds that, broadly and consistently, texts are stunningly Eurocentric and present non-Europeans as relatively inferior and without agency—i.e., their history is shaped mostly, or created entirely, by European intervention. Michael Marino noted broad agreement among scholars about this Eurocentrism and quoted Segal: “the retrofitting of Western Civ texts as ‘World History’ texts involves a consistent and highly limited displacement of Western Civilization.”26 Marino further concluded that World History in textbooks principally consists of the addition of some East Asian history to the dominant Western narrative. Marino noted that in AP history textbooks, on average, 67% of the text covers Western history. Western history, Marino concluded, has a monopoly on the chronology and narrative of World History.27

Various authors discuss the general effect of American media and popular culture’s anti-Muslim bias and Islamophobia on education. The journal Counterpoints dedicated an issue to this, entitled “Teaching Against Islamophobia.” The foreword to the issue describes the full spectrum of the problem in American society: “Islam has become a target of discrimination and bigotry and has often been misconstrued in the media, vilified by news pundits, religious leaders, and politicians, and is a subject of miseducation in schools.”28 One of the goals of the issue is a shared goal of my research, which is not only to identify problems, but also to provide educators with accurate information regarding Islam and a way to move past systemic Islamophobia. Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg gave a history of the creation of Islamophobic curricula materials by right-wing activists in the United States. They saw two concepts as root causes of Islamophobia in education. First, an old narrative created over time between the Crusades and the Enlightenment that casts Islam as the “Other” and is ready to be deployed as propaganda when needed. Second—and perhaps more
pervasive—is the model of cultural conflict, best summarized by Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*. This narrative does not just suggest the possibility of conflict between supposed opposites Islam and the West, it implies that such conflict is inevitable.

In “Holy Islamophobia, Batman!”—Jehanzeb Dar’s contribution to the *Counterpoints* volume—Dar noted that these Islamophobic images and themes are not limited to textbooks or the media, but are pervasive in movies and comics, which are sources for cultural information for many high school and college-age students. Jack Shaheen’s work on representations of Arabs in film underscores how Hollywood representations of Arabs and Muslims in television and film help create and reinforce the feedback loop equation “Arab=Muslim=Terrorist,” which leads to/reinforces rampant, society-wide Islamophobia. Regarding misinformation, Abdulkader H. Sinno pointed out that misinformation was consistently spread and Islamophobia was fanned by the U.S. media, citing that 12% or more of Americans believed that President Obama attended a madrassa and is Muslim. Sinno also noted that the controversy over the Park51 mosque in New York City was created and perpetuated by the U.S. media.

**Analysis of Textbooks**

It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the popularity of specific textbooks in college classrooms. No readily available statistics from publishers exist, and using online sales rankings is complicated by the fact that students may buy earlier versions of the book or may rent the books from school stores. Likewise, in this article, I use only combined editions that intend to cover all of World History—most of these volumes can be bought in multiple volumes separated into different time frames or in concise editions, and figuring out popularity is therefore further complicated. Only one of these editions, *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, remains as a direct descendent of a Western Civilization textbook, sharing three of its five authors with the same publisher’s latest edition of *The Western Heritage*.

To begin, I analyzed each volumes’ table of contents to determine how much content each book devotes specifically to Islam, the Middle East, and the Ottoman Empire. I did this while being
mindful of what an undergraduate and/or World History educator might reasonably assume to fall under the auspices of “Islamic.” These volumes, as shown by Figure 1, display a surprising consistency in the amount of total coverage dedicated to Islam as indicated by each table of contents.

While it seems as though The Earth and Its Peoples has substantially more content on Islam, it is possible that this is merely the reflection of a better table of contents, or just different chapter names. Likewise, in the remaining five books, there is a noticeable post-Enlightenment shift away from using/analyzing religion, and a shift towards engaging history through a Eurocentric narrative. This shift may not have been reflected as clearly in the table of contents for The Earth and Its Peoples. The closeness in content should be seen as another relic of the grafting process. The points of grafting in the narrative have remained broadly similar in the location and amount of content that is added to the Western Civilization narrative.

Furthermore, I analyzed the table of contents in each book for what students would perceive as the Western Civilization narrative. This meant content that was overtly about Christianity; was completely set in Europe, the United States, and Canada; or involved a clear narrative of history being generated by the West engaging the World. While the results seem to be an encouraging downgrading of Western Civilization content from Marino’s findings of AP textbooks favoring Western history content by 67%, the amount of content dedicated to the Western Civilization
The narrative is still overly high, especially in comparison to the Islamic narrative. I divided the content into pre- and post-Enlightenment categories, as shown in Figure 2, to see if the books move to the more universalized narrative that the Enlightenment itself presents. Looking at this data, The Heritage of World Civilizations contains the most clearly Western Civilization content, likely because it is the only book that is just a generation removed from its Western Civilization parentage. Ways of the World ranks last, but I argue that, as we saw with Islamic content, the table of contents makes a large difference since most of the difference occurs in the lack of post-Enlightenment coverage and, therefore, an earlier shift to a globalized approach. It may also be that, in its table of contents, Ways of the World was more successful at removing the word “Europe” and hopefully balancing the perspective of coverage of global history and events.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Pre-Enlightenment Christianity Content</th>
<th>Post-Enlightenment Christianity Content</th>
<th>Total Content on Christianity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Heritage of World Civilizations</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voyages in World History</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Earth and Its Peoples</td>
<td>8.6%-18.4%</td>
<td>22.9%-12.2%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditions and Encounters</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worlds Together; Worlds Apart</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways of the World</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Selected World History textbooks and their approximate content presented in a Christianity narrative (including pre- and post-Enlightenment sub-totals), as indicated by each book’s table of contents. The Earth and Its Peoples contains two separate sections on the Enlightenment; the first figure in each sub-total column indicates content under the “Early Enlightenment” heading and the second figure indicates content from the remaining section.
Grafting

Grafting creates multiple issues. As previously mentioned, these issues tend to bunch around the intersections between the Western Civilization narrative and the Islamic World. Each book contains a chapter dedicated to the beginnings of Islam. While these particular chapters tend to have more of the issues related to mirroring, they frequently contain factually inaccurate or misleading information. As this information was grafted to the Western Civilization core narrative, it is included in a way that does not meet the standards of review, perhaps because it is relatively new to the total narrative.

Grafting: The Birth of Islam

*Worlds Together, Worlds Apart* has problematic language concerning the Abrahamic lineage of Islam. By not mentioning Abraham or Abrahamic faiths in the chapter, it recreates an artificial distance that would actually have been part of Western Civilization’s narrative. Likewise, the text summarizes that God spoke to Muhammad, rather than the Angel Gabriel, when it introduces the Quranic revelations.34 *Traditions and Encounters* does mention Abraham, but not in its initial discussion of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. It furthermore provides inaccurate information on the haj, which is performed as a remembrance of the life of Abraham and his son Ismail—not, as the book states (twice), the life of Muhammad.35

Both *The Earth and Its Peoples* and *Voyages in World History* contain factually questionable statements about the Prophet’s nephew, Ali, and his family. One implies that Ali was assassinated during the arbitration at the Battle of Siffin; the other that Ali’s son, Hussein, was killed making a power play for leadership of the Islamic community.36 Neither of these statements is accurate and both downplay events that are arguably more important theologically than historically. *The Heritage of World Civilizations* contains a confusing statement about early Muslim expansion mainly occurring in “Semitic” lands with similarly cultured people. This statement ignores the deep contribution of Greek and Iranian peoples to the early history of Islam. This mistake perpetuates the misconception that is common in the United States: that “Arab” and “Muslim” are synonyms. This statement, then, transforms the early expansion of
Islam from a historical event in context and turns it into a challenge presented to Western Civilization: “Assaulted from East and West and everywhere challenged in the Mediterranean, Christian Europe developed a lasting fear and suspicion of the Muslims.”

_Grafting: The “Golden Age”_

Another point of entry for Islam into the story of Western Civilization was via its role as a transmitter civilization during what is termed a “Golden Age.” This period is usually centered on the Abbasid Caliphate and their _Bayt al-Hikmah_, or “House of Wisdom.” The House of Wisdom was one of several vibrant intellectual centers within the Islamic world in the period. One of its specific contributions was that it preserved the writings of the ancient Greeks, particularly Ptolemy and Aristotle, and translated this learning into Arabic. In the Golden Age narrative, Muslims and non-Muslim scholars and scientists expounded upon this learning within the Muslim world. Its zenith was in this period under the guidance of the Abbasids—sometimes, the narrative acknowledges contributions made in Central Asia, North Africa, and Andalusia. While the addition of this broader geographic inclusion does make the narrative more inclusive, it does not remove the core problems. One of these problems with a Golden Age narrative is that it has a stated end. Therefore, this knowledge is later transmitted from the Greeks _back_ to Western Civilization—reaffirming in essence that the Greeks of Western Civilization created the knowledge, Golden Age Muslims preserved it, and then the same knowledge is, more or less, transmitted back to Western Civilization.

On the surface, the inclusion of Muslims in this intellectual history seems like praise and an acknowledgement of civilizational accomplishment. However, as stated above, problems stem from both the logical next question and the relationship this gilded period has to Western Civilization. First, in the Hesiodic sense, if a period over a thousand years ago was the Golden Age—the height of a civilization—then the rest of the next thousand years for the Islamic world has been a decline. Conversely, since the narrative of Western Civilization and history in general tends to be positivist and progressive, Western Civilization has continued to reach new heights. It is, by its own assessment, currently in its perpetual Golden Age.
Secondly, the Golden Age narrative is problematic because it occurs only within a Western European context and specifically presumes that the Muslim world is inferior to Christian Europe. The Golden Age occurs because Muslims decide to translate Greek and Roman texts into Arabic. These translations preserve the Western philosophical heritage for it to be rediscovered in the Renaissance. While the veracity of this may be accurate for Western Europe, the Muslim world’s historical narrative should not be judged in World History by its ability to contribute to the Western Civilization narrative. This merely preserves the normalization of the West and the Eurocentrism that is the trunk of the Western Civilization narrative. Likewise, this relationship is only acknowledged in the textbooks within the chapters detailing the Islamic world. When the texts discuss Western Civilization’s scholars (specifically, the sections that start with Copernicus and Galileo), Muslim contributions are not mentioned. Even though the textbooks may be trying to be more inclusive, this inclusion ends up in the sections on Islam, but has yet to occur in the sections concerning the “Scientific Revolution” that focus on the contributions of Northern and Western Europeans.

The books replicate language concerning the Golden Age and the presumed relationship of the Islamic world as a transmitted culture in their narratives. *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart, Voyages in World History,* and *Ways of the World* do not use the term, but like all of these books, they reproduce the narrative of the Islamic world as a transmitter culture for Western Civilization. *Traditions and Encounters* does not specifically use the term “Golden Age,” but describes the accumulation of knowledge in the Muslim world in this period in relationship to Western Europe, noting that certain advancements in the Muslim world were made before “European mariners made their way to all parts of the world after 1492.”

There is no clear reason why the book mentions European mariners in the section. *The Earth and Its Peoples* does specifically call this period a “Golden Age,” as does *The Heritage of World Civilizations,* which also refers to Europe, even if just to note that at the time it was a “backwater.”

It is positive that these books note the influence of the Islamic world on the overall growth of science in World History. Some books even specifically note how this transmission occurred. *The Earth and Its Peoples,* for example, notes the adoption of Nasir
al-Din Tusi’s heliocentric ideas by Nicolaus Copernicus. All of these textbooks, either in the chapters on the birth of Islam or the Umayyad/Abbasid dynasties, note this relationship of scientists within the Western Civilization narrative adopting the works of scholars from within the Muslim world. Each textbook contains a section, likely a relic of the Western Civilization narrative, highlighting the beginning of what they usually call the “Scientific Revolution.” That chapter exclusively focuses on a small section of Europe and does not feature a single non-Western or non-Northern European. The Indian scientists, the Central Asian astronomers, and the Middle Eastern scholars that thrive in the Muslim section do not exist in this chapter. They are not erased from history, but as they were never part of the Western Civilization narrative, they are not intermingled. As the example of luminaries of the “Scientific Revolution” existing only in their associated chapters demonstrates, grafting can even lead to the Western Civilization narrative creeping into the non-Western parts of the World History narrative. If a student were to read the “Scientific Revolution” chapter alone, they would imagine a great autochthonic bubbling of knowledge happening for Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton. The Golden Age narrative and its attendant issues is a perfect example of how grafting the narrative of World History onto the Eurocentric trunk of Western Civilization creates problems, reinforces Eurocentrism, and engineers pedagogical blind spots.

Grafting: The Crusades

It is not surprising that the Crusades, perhaps the most important pre-modern conflict between the West and the Muslim world, would be recorded problematically in the textbooks. It was a moment of conflict wherein Islam was clearly the “Other” in the Western Civilization narrative. Due to both similarity of coverage in the texts and in the events, the Crusades will be considered in this section alongside the expulsion of Muslims and Muslim governments from Spain and the islands of the Mediterranean. Examining the textbooks reveals two major examples of how grafting creates and leads to false equivalencies and false oppositions. These equivalencies may have been nuanced in the Western Civilization narrative, but they should be erased in the World History narrative.
The conquest of Jerusalem is one of the focal points for the creation of these false equivalences. The Crusader conquest of the city in 1099 CE and then the conquest by Ayyubid forces in 1187 CE were two very dissimilar historical events that are treated very equally in their textbook coverage. The Crusader conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 CE by the Christian forces of the First Crusade was an exceptionally bloody one. It is generally acknowledged that the Crusaders killed the entire population of the city, most likely about 70,000 people. In contrast, when Salah ud-Din Ayyub (Saladin) conquered the same city in 1187 CE, the entire population was spared. Yet, while reading about these conquests in our World History textbooks, one would think that they were equivalent events. The Earth and Its Peoples states that the Crusaders “captured” the city and that the Ayyubids “retook” it. Traditions and Encounters states that Jerusalem “falls” to the Crusaders and that Saladin “recaptures” it. Worlds Together, Worlds Apart ignores the conquests, not mentioning Jerusalem in the period other than to say that some Crusaders remained to “defend the Kingdom of Jerusalem after the First Crusade.” As neither of the conquests is mentioned by Worlds Together, Worlds Apart, the assumption is that they were similar in that they were not noteworthy. As in the other books, Voyages in World History elides the conquest by the Crusaders, and instead highlights negatives concerning Saladin Ayyub. Voyages in World History states that Saladin forbid the display of crosses on churches when he entered the city. This is certainly possible, yet the earlier destruction of the entire city’s population and its mosques and synagogues is not mentioned.

The Heritage of World Civilizations foregrounds the Crusades as a rescue mission, specifically stating that the Crusaders were coming to “rescue” the city; in fact, the text uses the term “rescue” twice. It does not mention any difference in the two conquests except to insert an apocryphal story about the Pope dropping dead when he heard that Jerusalem had been conquered by Saladin. Therefore, the only death mentioned in the lengthy conflict is one that was unrelated to any actual combat, and was supposedly caused by a Muslim. Ultimately, the book seems to lament the outcome of the Crusades, stating: “Save for a brief interlude in the thirteenth century, the holiest of cities remained thereafter in Islamic hands until the twentieth century.” Furthermore, when that sentence is juxtaposed with the book’s claim that Muslims viewed Crusaders as savages to be slain and
that the Crusader kingdoms were alone in a “sea” of Muslims, the Islamophobia of these passages becomes evident. Only *Ways of the World* discusses the extreme violence of the Crusader conquest. However, it questions the validity of the Crusaders’ own accounts, suggesting that their boastful stories were “exaggerated.” All of the textbooks fall short by treating the Crusader and Ayyubid conquests as equivalent events. These textbooks reinforce an Orientalist idea that Christianity and Christians are inherently never as violent as Islam and Muslims. While the final outcome is the same—i.e., the city being occupied by an army—the character of this conquest could not be more disparate, and that should have been mentioned in a global history context.

**Grafting: The European and Muslim Divide**

While the false equivalency created with the discussion of the conquest of Jerusalem creates an artificial distance in the narrative, the false equation of “Christian” with “European,” and “Muslim” with “non-European” is arguably more problematic. The examples of this were numerous and ubiquitous. It should be noted as well that no textbook was free from these statements. In discussing the Reconquista of Italy and Spain by Christian armies, *Traditions and Encounters* writes:

>The boundaries of Christian Europe also expanded into the Mediterranean basin. There Europeans came into conflict with Muslims, whose ancestors had conquered the major Mediterranean Islands and most of the Iberian peninsula between the eighth and tenth centuries. As their society became stronger, Europeans undertook to reconquer those territories and reintegrate them into Christian society.49

Although Muslims were living full and meaningful lives historically in Europe since the year 711 CE and continue to do so today, this summation does not consider them as Muslim Europeans, or Europeans at all. *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart* makes the same mistake as well while discussing the Reconquista of Spain. After introducing the topic of Christianity spreading into the northern reaches of Europe and an uneasy alliance between Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, the book states: “Yet the two Christendoms formed an uneasy alliance to roll back the expanding frontiers of
Islam. The result: Europeans zealously took war outside their own borders.”50 The statement here is clear; despite a long history of interaction and even centuries of living in Europe, Muslim populations are not European and do not belong to the continent.

*Voyages in World History* describes individuals in Muslim Spain translating Arabic texts into Latin for Europeans, again creating the Muslim/European dichotomy.51 In particular, the text uses “European” as an opposite of “Muslim” repeatedly in the section on Islamic science and scholarship.52 While the birth of Islam chapter in *Ways of the World* starts with an intriguing—if anachronistic—example of a “ChrisMus,” a Christian Muslim individual in modern Sierra Leone, it also reproduces the Europe/Islam dichotomy. In describing the libraries of the Muslim world, the book states that Muslim scientists were the most advanced in the world from 800-1400 CE. In particular, the book states that Muslims had libraries with collections that far exceeded those of Europe. The book neglects to mention that many of those Muslim libraries were actually in Europe, particularly in the Andalusian city of Cordoba.53

The Europe/Islam divide only becomes more marked and prevalent as the books move into their discussion of the Ottoman Empire. It is worth noting that as I proceeded with this research, I found that Muslim areas outside of the Middle East and North Africa did not have as many issues as the coverage of the states in the core Middle East and North Africa area. Therefore, coverage of the Mughals or the Muslim areas of sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Africa, or Southeast Asia tend to be less problematic, at least for the purposes of this study. They also tend to have relatively little of the book dedicated to them. That there are more issues in terms of the Ottomans is due to the grafting of the narrative, wherein the Ottoman Empire occupied a large piece of the Western Civilization narrative and for a lengthy period of time. It did so at first as a lurking and threatening villain, and then as the lumbering and disintegrating “Sick Man of Europe.”54 The Ottoman Empire straddled Europe, Africa, and Asia. Much—if arguably almost all—of its history is intertwined with the Western Civilization narrative, particularly when it was in its most expansive stage, before receding, both literally and figuratively, into the background in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The creation of false equivalencies between Ottoman/Muslim in contrast to European exists at multiples points. *The Earth and
*Peoples* shows the fissures of the Western Civilization lineage by stating that Vienna was “saved” from the Ottomans by an oncoming winter. While it may be accurate to privilege the Austrian Empire over the Ottoman Empire in the Western Civilization narrative, it does not make sense in a neutral World History course. More casually, *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart* notes that Ottoman advancement into Central Europe and Vienna was threatening to Europeans. As in the instance of the libraries, while Europeans were concerned, it is not noted that many of the Ottomans were indeed Europeans. A student, and/or instructor would likely assume that the Ottomans, despite governing a sizeable chunk of Europe, were not Europeans. *Traditions and Encounters* uses the term “European” as an antonym for “Ottoman” liberally and on multiple occasions. *Ways of the World* also does this casually and repeatedly, using “European” as an opposite for “Ottoman,” “Turk,” and “Muslim.” It highlights the conquest of Constantinople in boldface type and gives something of a soliloquy for the city’s Byzantine period. *The Heritage of World Civilizations* also uses “European” as the opposite of “Muslim” and/or “Ottoman.” It notes, twice, that European Christians in the Austrian Empire viewed Muslims as the “scourge of God.”

*The Earth and Its Peoples* recreates the Muslim/Ottoman/Turk versus European binary in several instances. Furthermore, the book adds that the Ottomans lacked the inclination to match Western Europe’s economic advances in the eighteenth century. That there was some sort of internal psychology that kept the Ottomans from advancing does not capture the global context of the time period. The book further asserts that the Ottomans did not see Europe as the enemy, without noting that this was in part because the Ottomans saw themselves as a part of Europe. It notes that travel to Europe became popular for wealthy Ottomans, although the book did not specify where—i.e., whether this was inside the Ottoman’s European territories or outside. *Voyages in World History* makes similar word choices concerning the Muslim/Ottoman and European binaries. It notes that a Frenchman who traveled to the Ottoman Empire wrote an account of the journey; by stating that the audience for the book was Europeans, the textbook certainly meant non-Ottoman Europeans. That parts of Europe are somehow not truly European is a constant refrain in all of the textbooks. Another part of *Voyages in World History* notes that European visitors were awestruck by the older
parts of Istanbul. These parts of Istanbul, which seem in the book to be distant exotic lands, are situated firmly in Europe. Finally, the text remarks that the Russian Empire straddled Europe and Asia, and while it mentions that the Ottomans did take over Southeastern Europe, it names them as being masters of “Western Asia.”

The grafting of World History onto the Western Civilization narrative leaves Muslims outside the geography of Europe, and the Ottoman Empire outside of the concept of Europe. The unintentional work done by such seemingly small miscues like inaccurate information about Islam accumulate. These micro-aggressions—for example, the use of the term “Golden Age” or the false equivalency between the two conquests of Jerusalem—accrete into a larger, insidious mass. This mass grows from the trunk of Western Civilization and gloms onto the attitude that Muslims cannot be Europeans, and that Muslim majority governments such as the Ottomans—despite being located in Europe for 600 years—are still somehow alien. What should be a panoramic view of the forest of World History is instead a landscape blocked by a stunted tree of some hybrid that is itself European, even if it denies that identity to Muslims.

Mirroring

While the twisted tree that is the narrative of World History is a product of the persistence of the Western Civilization narrative, it is also a mirror reflecting the beliefs of popular culture in the United States. Over the course of a decade, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs polled Americans on their attitude towards Islam and Muslims, prompting them to choose between two statements: (1) “Because Muslim religious, social, and political traditions are incompatible with Western ways, violent conflict between the two civilizations is inevitable”; or (2) “Because most Muslims are like people everywhere, we can find common ground and violent conflict between the civilizations is not inevitable.” In 2002, 27% chose “violent conflict” versus 66% choosing “common ground.” By 2010 and 2012, percentages shifted to 45% “violent conflict” versus 51% “common ground,” and 44% “violent conflict” versus 53% “common ground,” respectively. A 2018 Quinnipiac poll found that 49% of those surveyed approved of the “Muslim Ban”
Supreme Court case decision, with only 46% opposed, while a 2019 Gallup poll recorded 49% saying that they would have reservations or be uncomfortable voting for a qualified candidate for President solely on the basis of them being Muslim.\textsuperscript{70} While the earlier section of this article addressed factual errors that I assert were due to the grafting of narratives, similar issues arise from the reality that textbooks produced in our modern environment mirror our modern environment’s prejudices and assumptions. These assumptions, which in some ways textbooks have helped create and reinforce, are then recreated as reflections of the process in the generation of the World History narrative.

\textit{Mirroring: Gender and Sexuality}

Women and gender represent a major mirroring issue with textbooks. It should be acknowledged that the way women are included in World History textbooks reveals a major problem in itself. Women were almost entirely left out of the original Western Civilization narrative, which could be investigated by broadly applying the processes of grafting and mirroring that I have discussed. It seems likely that a thorough study of which women get included and how they are represented would uncover an enormous bias, both in the selection of women and how those women are written about. I have observed that students reading the books I assign notice that women are discussed concerning themes that our society constructs as feminine, such as marriage and family. They also realize that individual women included in the books are frequently presented as in some way abnormal, typically as either ultra-religious or exceptionally cruel.

As pertains to Islam, United States culture has multiple misconceptions about, and an obsession with, Muslim views on gender and sexuality. The selected textbooks clearly and unambiguously reflect this fascination with women and Islam. \textit{Voyages in World History}, as many of these books do, puts two paragraphs side by side in their birth of Islam section that have contradictory implications. The first paragraph to discuss women states that, from the beginning, “women often assumed a subordinate role in Islam.” Yet the next paragraph states that Islam “introduced several measures aimed at improving the status of women.”\textsuperscript{71} Worlds
Together, Worlds Apart contains a similar section of contradiction. The Earth and Its Peoples includes a section, titled “Women and Islam,” that notes that elite women practiced seclusion, but in an Orientalist elaboration, states that “A man could have sexual relations with as many slave concubines as he pleased.” An obsession with the supposed contradictory sexual licentiousness of the Islamic World and the prudish, hidden women of the Islamic world is evident here. While noting the subordination of women, the book also states that “Muslim women fared better legally under Islamic law than did Christian and Jewish women under their respective religious codes.” Ways of the World argues on a single page that women were both oppressed and freed by Islam. The Heritage of World Civilizations follows the same trend, noting both that women received guaranteed rights in the Qur’an and that the early Muslim ummah (community of believers) failed to live up to modern feminist ideals, “Yet the Qur’an does not know or prescribe the full gender equality advocated in many modern societies in the twenty-first century.” The book further states that veiling, in a modern context, has proved “problematic.” Again, this statement is in a section on the birth of Islam, not on the modern period. This persistent anachronistic vision of early Islam, wherein the religion is unchanging over time and is compared to modern Western feminist ideals, is a ubiquitous presence in these texts and, as I will later note, their images. The comparison of a historical era to modern morality is not unique to textbook coverage of early Islam, but it is a persistent feature of that textbook coverage.

In paragraphs that are literally side by side, Traditions and Encounters contains the positive sentence, “In some respects the Quran enhanced the security of women in Arabian society,” followed with the negative, “For the most part, however, the Quran—and later the sharia as well—reinforced male dominance.” Ways of the World includes an additional aspect to applying modern discussion of Islam and gender by discussing female circumcision and “honor killings” anachronistically. Immediately after discussing the twelfth-century philosopher sufi Al-Ghazali, the book launches into a discussion of tightening patriarchy in the period that included “‘honor killing’ of women by their male relatives for violating sexual taboos and, in some places, clitoridectomy (female genital cutting).” Honor killings and female circumcision are highly controversial, highly
contested, and debated topics today. It does seem odd to highlight them in this period and do so without any context. The book also included an unnecessary note—again, out of context—written by Ibn Battuta, who commented upon the nakedness of the women in Mali.  

Much of what the textbooks say about Islam and gender would be debated by modern Islamic feminists who would specifically cite surat from the Qur’an to justify gender equality. Despite the fact that Western feminism is normalized in the text, at least when it comes to Islam, it is done so, unfortunately, in a manner to exclude all other types of feminism. It also is projected back into time, as are modern Western views of sexuality, particularly the heterosexual and homosexual binary. Sexuality and sexual desire have always been varied and entirely dependent on the context of time and place. A modern Western concept of hetero/homosexual desire arises in the nineteenth century and is not a good tool with which to measure history and change over time. It is even contested in our contemporary United States society, particularly among our increasing gender fluid and gender non-binary students. Sexuality did not appear in all six of these tomes; it was only heavily featured in *The Earth and Its Peoples*. The book is as contradictory on homosexuality as it is on gender. *The Earth and Its Peoples* declares that Islam is homophobic and forbids homosexuality, yet wrote in the same paragraph that some Muslim rulers encouraged it as an ideal. As with gender, LGBTQ rights are also debated by contemporary Islamic scholars and members of the ummah, as they are currently being debated throughout all religious institutions in the United States.

Differing views on gender and LGBTQ rights—from inclusive, universalizing embraces, to exclusionary demonization—are a facet of all global faith. This can be true even within similar sects/denominations. Yet these distinctions are not noted and, instead, the books’ analyses of Islam seem to offer a standardized denomination of Wahhabi Islam or, at best, the Hanbali madhab (school) of Sunni Islam. Sunni Islam is divided into four schools of jurisprudence that consider each other as part of a whole, the most liberal being Hanafi and the most conservative being Hanbali. Wahhabi is an even more conservative version of Hanbali. These textbooks’ normalization of a singular conservative Islam would be like having all Christianity viewed through, for example, a Missouri Synod Lutheran lens. Even
though the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is part of the same Lutheran faith, the two synods’ views are very far apart on gender roles and LGTBQ rights. To expand the example to Judaism, the textbooks do not and should not view Judaism exclusively through an ultra-Orthodox or Orthodox lens and ignore all of Reform and Conservative Judaism. The monolithic treatment of Islam and the skewing of it to the conservative distorts the actual views of about one out of every five human beings in our contemporary world. This cannot be overstated. This reification of Islam as a conservative monolith is another feature of the mirroring process. The narrative of World History reduces an incredibly large and complicated religion down to a singular, conservative set of ideas, in a way that mirrors how people in the United States view Muslims. They view Muslims as possessing the same degree of devotion (plenty), in the same way (conservative), without any distinction (monolithic).

Mirroring: The Israeli-Palestinian Crisis

Representations of the Israeli-Palestinian Crisis are another example of mirroring the prejudices in our contemporary United States. While Western attitudes may be changing with the advent of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, Western media, politics, and foreign policy are generally pro-Zionist. The selected World History textbooks all address this conflict, and on this struggle they have a variety of degrees of bias. When Worlds Together, Worlds Apart introduces Zionism, it fails to define it, perhaps assuming that the students are familiar with the ideas of the movement.81 A common issue with all of these texts is the use of “Arab” to mean “Palestinian.” To students and scholars with limited knowledge about the conflict, this can be a contentious issue. A hardline Zionist narrative is that Palestinians do not exist. To paraphrase Golda Meir’s famous statement, there were no Palestinians, only Arabs. This basic erasure of Palestinian identity means that the refugees created in 1948 are not refugees, they can and should just go to some other Arab country and call it home. The Earth and Its Peoples uses the term “Arab” to refer to the Palestinians interchangeably.82 In The Earth and Its Peoples, the 700,000 Palestinian refugees that were a product of the 1948 war are described without any causation: they “became refugees.”83
This runs parallel with another hardline Zionist narrative that the Palestinians made themselves refugees by design or, more fantastically, that it was a miracle, they ran away.

Furthermore, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) appears out of nowhere to commit violence against Israel; Israel is described as being able to “blunt or absorb these attacks,” indicating, therefore, that Israeli violence is merely responding defensively to Palestinian nationalist aggression by launching “counter-strikes.” Traditions and Encounters describes Zionism very positively, calling it “vibrant.” While not a false statement, it is odd to praise one side in a conflict so clearly. Traditions and Encounters records the several conflicts that Israel has been involved in and implies that, each time, Israel was the victim of foreign aggression. Israel was arguably the aggressor in three of the five conflicts it mentions, in 1956, 1967, and 1982. The coverage in Ways of the World is sparse, but the book does use the term “Palestinian Muslim” to describe Palestinians (many of whom are Christian) and refers to Jerusalem and the West Bank as “Arab” rather than Palestinian territory. The Heritage of World Civilizations and Voyages in World History also use the terms “Arab” and “Palestinian” interchangeably. While most of the books acknowledge armed resistance by both the Zionists and the Palestinians during the British Mandate period, The Heritage of World Civilizations argues that it was Zionist immigration pressures and only Palestinian violence that led to Britain’s decision to leave post-World War II. The book quite distressingly and ahistorically states that many Muslims are anti-Semitic and that many Jews are anti-Muslim. This perpetuates the harmful stereotype that Jews and Muslims are ancient enemies, when the historical evidence suggests the opposite.

Both The Heritage of World Civilizations and Voyages in World History overwhelmingly blame Palestinians for the breakdown of the Oslo Peace Process. The Heritage of World Civilizations, despite liberal use of the term “terrorism” to describe acts committed by Palestinians, does not label hardline Zionist violence as terrorism. This includes both Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination and the 1994 Hebron massacre. It blames the end of Oslo process largely on Hamas. Voyages in World History likewise does not even reference the 1995 assassination of Rabin, or the expiration of the interim period of the deal as turning points, but instead blames the
unravelling of peace talks almost solely on Yasser Arafat.\textsuperscript{92} It’s unclear why the book chooses to do this, and it does not explain how Arafat’s actions led to the end of the peace process. This presentation reflects a hardline Zionist narrative, and one that Israeli historians such as Ilan Pappé and Avi Shlaim critique extensively.\textsuperscript{93} The complexity of the conflict is not represented in these texts. As inaccurate and disingenuous as it would be to place the blame solely on the Zionists, the \textit{Yishuv}, and/or Israel, it’s as inaccurate and disingenuous to suggest that the Palestinians bear the burden alone for this ongoing conflict. That being said, the coverage from the books was more nuanced and contextualized than I had anticipated, but could be improved further.

\textbf{Indexing and Images:}

\textit{Violence, Veiling, and the “Timelessness” of Islam}

While each book’s indexing and images certainly augment and interact with the text, this article discusses them separately from the text for two reasons. The first is that these are a student’s easiest point of entry into a book. A reader taking even a cursory flip through a book will notice the images, maps, and illustrations. That same student, should they be asked to write a paper on Islam or a topic related to it, can go immediately to the index to see where the textbook engages those topics. Secondly, the indexing and image selections are not necessarily done by the main authors of the book, but may well be a creation of the production and editorial team. Therefore, they may reflect additional and less-filtered biases than the actual verbiage.

\textit{Indexing Islam}

For the indexing, I chose to look at several words in each book, particularly the indexing of the terms “Islam” and of “terrorism.” One outcome of this was a comparison between how many entries concerned Islam and how many concerned Christianity. Each book contained significantly more entries for Islam than for Christianity. While this article does not make an argument about what the adequate amount of coverage of Islam should be, it should be noted that all of these books are similar in length, with roughly similar coverage
of Islam and significantly more coverage of Western Civilization. **Figure 3** details the amount of search terms in each index under “Islam” and “Christianity.” Interestingly, while *The Earth and Its Peoples* had the most percentage coverage of Islam in its table of contents (10.3%, as indicated in **Figure 1**), it also had the largest percentage of difference between its indexing of Christianity and Islam. If we were to make the assumption that Western Civilization and Christianity group together as part of a whole (echoing the assumptions that group non-Western with non-Christian), then narratives associated with Christianity get significantly more coverage in the book. Despite Christianity-associated narratives getting more coverage in the text, Islam gets more coverage in the index. If there is less content on Islam, why does every book have more index items for Islam?

I can offer some explanation as to the oversaturation of indexing for Islam relative to Christianity. It reflects both the normalization of Christianity in the textbooks, the fascination of the publisher with Islam, and the perception of student interest. As I have

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<th>“Christianity” Index Entries</th>
<th>Ratio of Islam : Chr.</th>
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<td><em>Ways of the World</em></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.04:1</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Traditions and Encounters</em></td>
<td>82</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.95:1</td>
</tr>
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<td><em>Worlds Together, Worlds Apart</em></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.74:1</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Voyages in World History</em></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1.15:1</td>
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**Figure 3**: Selected World History textbooks and the raw number of index entries under the terms “Islam” and “Christianity,” along with the ratio indicating the relative number of “Islam” references for every one “Christianity” reference.
argued throughout this piece, the traditional narrative of Western Civilization is the core, or trunk, of the narrative of World History. Therefore, although its content identifiably makes up one-fifth to one-third of all of these books, Christianity in particular does not stand out in a way that would call attention to it in the indexing. In a sense, it is secularized and universalized, both in the Western Civilization narrative and, then, by extension in the indexing of the global textbooks.

Indexing Women

Beyond the number of entries, the indexing of Islam proves to be problematic. First, in reference to Christianity, I looked to see how the books treated the two religions as related to gender. *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart, Traditions and Encounters*, and *The Heritage of World Civilizations* each contained two references to women in their index list on Islam; *The Earth and Its Peoples* and *Voyages in World History* only had one. This seems certainly like a reasonable inclusion—however, not a single one of these books mentioned women in their indexing of Christianity. This is yet another example of the process of mirroring that creates/recreates the narrative of Islam as having a problematic gender history and being rife with misogyny. *Ways of the World* included “women in,” “*burqa,*” and “patriarchy” under its listing for Islam, while only “women in” was included for Christianity; according to the index, patriarchy exists only in Islam.

Indexing Terrorism

Terrorism proves a troubling aspect of indexing as well. A topic that we return to in class, over and over again, is how in the United States—although we acknowledge other acts of terror—the specific label of “terrorism” is primarily applied to terror attacks committed by people claiming to be Muslims. The textbooks follow this pattern, tending to emphasize acts committed by Muslims, both in the index and in the text. *Ways of the World* has two index entries for “terrorism,” both related to Islam. Similarly, within the text itself, the only specific examples given of terrorism are those committed by Muslims, with discussion focusing on Islam. Within the text of *The
Earth and Its Peoples, there is the introduction of a well-reasoned and thoughtful general discussion of terrorism that includes groups like Catholic and Protestant extremists in Ireland. However, 83% of the total section on terrorism concerns Islam (625 total words, 521 on Islam) and the only specific events cited are acts committed by those claiming to be Muslims. There is a section specifically devoted to “Muslims and Violence” that reads like a point-counterpoint on whether Islam is an inherently more violent religion than others. This section gives equal coverage to the idea that Islam is a uniquely violent religion, reflecting a narrative with which many in the United States agree. In the index, there are six entries for “terrorism,” five of which are clearly related to Islam. Voyages in World History contains four entries, two of which are clearly related to Islam. The textual discussion similarly only cites instances of violence by Muslims.

Images of Violence

In terms of images and add-on sections, The Heritage of World Civilizations uses a manifesto by Osama Bin Laden, “Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders,” in a cut-out section. Highlighting the writings of the face of modern terror and his association with Islam reinforces further the violence that students think is a part of Islam. Ways of the World ends with a primary source section called “Contending for Islam.” Does Islam need contending for? Who is contending with whom? Clearly, the title implies that Islam is somehow a problem and is in crisis. The section contains two very violent images, one of which seems like an execution about to happen of male prisoners by female mercenaries, and the other of anti-government protesters in France. The protesters are women in burqa holding up signs that read “Shariah for France.” The images are clear—Islam is a violent religion and a fifth column. Secondly, as the books reinforce, the images imply that Muslims are not Europeans, nor do they want to be—rather, they want to take over Europe.

Images of Veiling and Clothing

The Heritage of World Civilizations contains photos of three veiled women in their early history of Islam section. The image is certainly anachronistic, but it is even more problematic for the
Anachronistic images concerning sartorial choices seem to follow Islamic history around the globe. In *Voyages in World History*, on a chapter on thirteenth-century Mali, there is an image of a headdress supposedly worn by a Malian *griot*. The image is a photograph of a rather well-worn looking hat, with a description describing it as being from the twentieth century. This section implies West Africa as an unchanging land, one where a twentieth-century hat is the same as one from 700 years earlier. The lack of change over time implied by these images is another devastating example of how the book treats Islam as, although having a historical narrative, lacking the progressive historical narrative that is the hallmark of Western Civilization.

*Images of The Crusades*

*Traditions and Encounters* has two images on facing pages concerning the Crusades; one concerns Christian-committed atrocities, one Muslim. The Christian image was created in the exact period of the Crusades and the caption reads, “The crusades involved brutal conflict and atrocities from all sides. In this twelfth-
century manuscript illustration, crusaders lob severed heads at Muslims defending a fortress.”102 The Muslim picture is from a book written two centuries after the event and says, “A fourteenth-century manuscript illustration depicts Muslims burning captured crusaders at the stake.”103 The lack of source diversity and the synchronicity are only half of the problem. According to the book, the Crusaders were only visiting revenge on their foes, whereas the Muslims just apparently enjoyed the violence; this is a clear statement of the prejudice in our modern society that only certain people can be terrorists, no matter the time period. Furthermore, when the image is examined more, the one concerning Muslims seems to be of knights jousting, showing a lack of detail and precision when it comes to coverage on Islam. Echoing this recurring theme, in *The Earth and its Peoples*, Islam and violence has its own discrete subchapter and it is indexed as such.

**Conclusion**

The evolution of the historical narrative of Western Civilization and its ultimate transformation into the trunk of World History led to the reproduction of Eurocentrism and serious issues concerning anti-Muslim bias. While the move away from the Western Civilization survey and towards the World History course was done with a sincere desire to blunt or end the Eurocentric historical narrative, for a variety of reasons, the narrative has persisted. It has especially persisted in the textbooks, and therefore in the classrooms, because the World History narrative was built on top of the Western Civilization narrative. This process of grafting additional narratives onto the core Western Civilization structure has led to several problems. These problems begin with simple, yet unnecessary errors concerning the birth of Islam. They include false equivalences that attach to history about the Crusades and to the false opposites of European/Muslim. The persistence of the idea of a Golden Age likewise suggests that the Muslim world is in continual decline. Grafting, I have shown, has reproduced the anti-Muslim bias at the intersections of the narratives of Western Civilization and the Islamic World. Mirroring is also a significant problem. These textbooks and the information they offer on Islam and gender provide a deep look at contemporary prejudices within
the United States about Islam. Furthermore, LGBTQ rights, the Israeli-Palestinian Crisis, and the overall conservative, monolithic presentation of Islam are heavily entrenched in these textbooks. They are also created by—as they recreate—the prejudices of United States culture. Indexing issues and choices of images in the books also reproduce this anti-Muslim bias. The issues of anachronistic standards for Islam provide additional problems to these textbooks. How do we then confront these issues?

An important first step in correcting this anti-Muslim bias is educating those teaching in these World History surveys who have areas of expertise apart from the Middle East and Islamic civilizations and may not be aware of the problems in the texts. Additionally, the irony is that we, as historians called upon to teach World History, have a tendency to ignore the textbook’s content on our own research areas because we don’t need to refer to them. Therefore, we lecture on the topics without realizing that the students are engaging with highly problematic texts. I want to add several words of encouragement to fellow educators and those interested in presenting a more accurate view of global cultures and contexts. The fact that these textbooks have improved in the last few decades is definite. That they continue to improve is our work—and it is rewarding work. I write with full confidence that if other scholars took a closer look at how the books treat other non-Western Civilization mainstream narrative topics, they will easily be able to detail the shortcomings about their topics of expertise. I also write with confidence that publishers will be generally interested in correcting the issues that have been discussed here.

It is important for us, as educators, to remember that context is important and that diversity of thought, opinion, and religiosity exists in all places, at all times, and in all religions. The anti-Muslim bias in these textbooks is a symptom of a larger societal intolerance and rejection of multiculturalism and diversity as an ideal. We are responsible for creating more accurate educational materials. While we, as teachers, occupy small corners of the world, thirty seats wide, we have a greater responsibility to provide our students with knowledge, empathy, and critical thinking skills so they can confront bias and be ethical global citizens. We can obviously not be expected to be experts in all fields, which is why the textbook materials need to be more accurate.
However, there are some questions worth posing: Should we try to start the narrative over? Is it possible to write a truly global history textbook that would be devoid of bias? Would it be better to provide smaller, more manageable texts? History is, after all, subjective. I don’t believe that it would be necessary, or even possible, to completely scrap the bulk of the current narrative. Uneven primary research and multiple other issues might preclude a truly unbiased World History narrative. Inclusivity and a close examination of the issues that arise from grafting and mirroring can correct a lot of the problems. I use these terms to discuss not just the process of anti-Muslim bias, but the processes that likely cause multiple aspects of bias in textbooks. If we look for the original Western Civilization narrative within the World History textbooks, that’s where the issues will be found. Once found, they can be corrected.

I had originally imagined a fix to this as being a teaching guide on bias for World History instructors. However, the more thought I give this, I have grown to believe that the most good can come the quickest by fixing the issues identified here. Removing the factual errors and the false equivalencies should not be difficult for the publishers. The removal of questionable images should not be a challenge. A careful and conscientious analysis of the mirroring prejudice I described here would also not be that time consuming. My hope is that identifying these issues and publishing this work will help these textbooks move away from bias and, ultimately, improve educational literature. One of the more important things to remember is that the narrative of Western Civilization was constructed by individuals—as was the narrative of World History. They are always in flux and identifying these problems will help the narrative change for the better.
Notes

1. I capitalize World History and Western Civilization when I am using them to refer to specific courses, and also to refer to the broad narratives they represent in curricula.


17. Voeltz, “No Longer From Pyramids to the Empire State Building,” 86.


19. It should be noted that at the time of these debates, the institution was named Mankato State University. The courses in the catalog were “European
Foundations of Western Civilization” (40-200), “Western Civilization in the 18th and 19th Century” (40-201), and “Western Civilization in the 20th Century” (40-202).

20. These were “Ancient World Civilization” (40-170) (this class went about a century further than its predecessor), “Making of the Modern World” (40-171), and “Twentieth-Century World” (40-172).

21. History Department, Collection, 1968-2007, Minnesota State University, Mankato Archives Manuscript Collection 0112, University Archives, Memorial Library, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Box 5, Folder 31.

22. History Department, Collection, 1968-2007, Minnesota State University, Mankato Archives Manuscript Collection 0112, University Archives, Memorial Library, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Box 1, Folder 44.

23. History Department, Collection, 1968-2007, Minnesota State University, Mankato Archives Manuscript Collection 0112, University Archives, Memorial Library, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Box 1, Folder 44.

24. It was actually Dr. Lass’s proposal that was approved on January 15, 1982, but the periodization changed on February 12, 1982 to reflect what Dr. Postma had proposed. Originally, World Civilization was divided into three sections, “Ancient Civilizations,” “Making of the Modern World,” and “Twentieth-Century World,” which has since been paired down to Ancient and Modern World Civilizations. Minnesota State University, Mankato does not specify to its faculty what, if any, textbook to use in teaching this course. Currently, there are four of us, all full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty, that teach the World History survey courses.


30. Jehanzeb Dar, “Holy Islamophobia, Batman! Demonization of Muslims and Arabs in Mainstream American Comic Books,” Counterpoints 346: Teaching Against Islamophobia (2010): 99-110. Dar’s article focuses on comic books and the superhero genre. Dar argued that although superheroes are meant to possess the values of truth and justice, they do so in part by creating negative portrayals of Muslims, who, as villains, express rage against Americans and Jews of all nationalities. The character of the Joker in a Batman comic from the 1980s, the author noted, was once offered the Iranian ambassadorship to the United Nations by the Ayatollah Khomeini himself. Anachronisms abound, as in the movie 300, where the Achaemenids are made to look like modern, Orientalized images of Muslims. Even portrayals meant to be positive, like the character Dust in X-Men, frequently perpetuate misunderstandings about misogyny in Islam.
37. Craig et al., *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, 314.
41. Occasionally, they do mention Aristotle.
42. Bulliet et al., *The Earth and Its Peoples*, 289.
44. Tignor et al., *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart*, 381.
46. Craig et al., *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, 392, 394.
47. Craig et al., *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, 394.
54. A student once misquoted the Czar as having said “Sick Dog of Europe.”
60. Craig et al., *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, 560-561.
63. Although, as stated earlier, maybe they were terrified of themselves.
64. Bulliet et al., *The Earth and Its Peoples*, 615.
69. The polls are the following: (1) The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Harris Interactive/CCFR Poll: American Public Opinion and US Foreign

70. Quinnipiac University Polling Institute, Quinnipiac Poll, June 2018 [survey question], 31115310.00009, Quinnipiac University Polling Institute [producer], Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor]; Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll, April 2019 [survey question], 31116365.00022, Gallup Organization [producer], Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor].


73. Bulliet et al., The Earth and Its Peoples, 262.

74. Bulliet et al., The Earth and Its Peoples, 262-264.


76. Craig et al., The Heritage of World Civilizations, 278-280.

77. Bentley, Ziegler, and Streets-Salter, Traditions and Encounters, 303.


80. Bulliet et al., The Earth and Its Peoples, 264.


82. Bulliet et al., The Earth and Its Peoples, 748, 829-830.

83. Bulliet et al., The Earth and Its Peoples, 830.

84. Bulliet et al., The Earth and Its Peoples, 830.

85. Bentley, Ziegler, and Streets-Salter, Traditions and Encounters, 892.

86. Bentley, Ziegler, and Streets-Salter, Traditions and Encounters, 893.


88. Craig et al., The Heritage of World Civilizations, 972; Hansen and Curtis, Voyages in World History, 824, 951.

89. Craig et al., The Heritage of World Civilizations, 972.

90. Craig et al., The Heritage of World Civilizations, 975.

91. Craig et al., The Heritage of World Civilizations, 975.


98. Craig et al., *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, 977-978.
100. Craig et al., *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, 280.
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