Arabs who kill are mentally ill; nothing to do with religion ?

by Theodore Dalymple

I was in France when a friend told me that a woman had been stabbed to death in Russell Square and five other people injured. He challenged me to guess the origins of the perpetrator. A little later, I looked at a report of the incident on the website of the *Guardian* newspaper. There was no mention in the article of the origin of the perpetrator, a Somalian of Norwegian nationality. Even the next day, the article devoted to the subject mentioned it only *sotto voce*, as it were, halfway through the article, which until then was mostly about how excellent a woman the victim had been.

Why the reticence, one might ask? Would there have been the same reticence had the perpetrator been, say, a shaven-headed, tattooed lout belonging to an English nationalist party? One rather suspects not.

The police have so far not found any evidence that the perpetrator had a link to any terrorist organisation, though one at least of the latter rejoiced on its website in the murder. I am perfectly prepared to believe that the crime was not terrorism: after all, such horrible incidents occurred before terrorism so preoccupied us, and will continue to occur after terrorism has ceased. The young man was said to have had 'mental health *issues*,' a loose phrase that encompasses everything from losing one's temper to smoking cannabis – which, incidentally, might well have played an part in the events. Another possible contributor might have been the Somali national drug of abuse, khat, which might have caused a kind of madness.

I was impressed once again by the police’s ability to find just the wrong word to describe a high-profile crime. They did not think that this crime was linked to terrorism; rather, they said, they thought it was just a ‘random’ attack.

It seems to have escaped their notice that one tactic of terrorism is to attack at random, a random attack sowing terror in a population much more effectively than an attack on a target chosen for understandable, even if reprehensible, reasons.

As for the delicacy of the *Guardian* in the matter of the culprit’s origins, it could hardly be because it imagined that its readers would go out and lynch Somalis wherever they found them. Rather, it was a manifestation of what Freudians call reaction-formation, that is to say a response to its own deep-seated, and therefore much feared, racism, another manifestation of which is its obsession with race and racial politics.