

# Wikipedia, Karen Armstrong, and Me

by Hugh Fitzgerald



**Wikipedia now has 55 million separate articles.** It would be churlish to complain about them all. Some of them are very good, in fact; for example, the entry on the Russian playwright Alexander Griboyedov, whose *Woe From Wit* I studied, line by line, in Moscow, with a teacher at Patrice Lumumba University (I believe I am the only American to have studied with a faculty member at Lumumba U.). So is the one on Minkowski Space, which I have neither the time nor the space to discuss here, but you get my drift. Wikipedia does itself proud on that entry. It's also got a good entry on Otto Loewi, on whose lap I sat, aged five, on the porch of the Dining Hall then attached to the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. In history, I've enjoyed the entries – not too taxing – on Jean-Baptiste Kléber, Riccoldo di Monte di Croce, *Quaestiones quaedam philosophicae*, and the Standing Stones of Callanish. As for music, I have derived both profit

and pleasure – and subsequent YouTube happiness – from the articles on Fats Waller, Andy Razaf, Al Bowlly, Annette Hanshaw, Ray Ventura, Rina Ketty, Vittorio de Sica, and Charles Trenet.

But then there are the entries that try men's souls, are not up to snuff, leave something to be desired. Many of them have to do with Islam, Jihad, the Middle East, the Arab war on Israel, Muslim terrorism. Take a look, for example, at the Wikipedia entry on Mahmoud Abbas. It's very long, but it manages to mention only the title of Abbas' dissertation – and otherwise passes over in silence Abbas' long history of Holocaust denial, which is a major, and most unattractive part, of his biography. The entry mentions the accusations about his corruption, but not the full size – \$400 million – of the fortune he has amassed with his two son Yasser and Tareq. It quotes all of his conciliatory remarks made for a Western audience, but practically nothing of his much harsher rhetoric, for Arab and Muslim audiences, directed at denouncing the Jewish state. Abbas practices "war is deceit" – but you wouldn't guess it from what is up at Wikipedia.

As for Jihad Watch, it is described at Wikipedia "as an anti-Muslim conspiracy website." I have been reading Jihad Watch, since its inception, and I don't remember ever seeing the writers for the site wallowing in, or even dipping a toe in, any conspiracy theories. Here's Wikipedia's hatchet job on the site:

*Jihad Watch has widely been described as an anti-Muslim conspiracy blog. Jihad Watch has been criticized for its portrayal of Islam as a totalitarian political doctrine. Jihad Watch has been described by the Southern Poverty Law Center and Anti-Defamation League as trafficking in Islamophobic conspiracy theories. Guardian writer Brian Whitaker described Jihad Watch as a "notoriously Islamophobic website", while other critics such as Dinesh D'Souza, Karen Armstrong, and Cathy Young, pointed to what they see as*

*“deliberate mischaracterizations” of Islam and Muslims by Spencer as inherently violent and therefore prone to terrorism. Spencer has denied such criticism, and has said that the term “Islamophobe” is “a tool used by Islamic apologists to silence criticism.” The website is labelled “unreliable” by NewsGuard as of October 2019.*

Where has Spencer described all Muslims as “inherently violent? The texts – Qur’an, Hadith – of Islam certainly attempt to inculcate violence, but many Muslims, he constantly reminds his readers, choose not to follow the command to wage violent Jihad. He has never preached hatred of Muslims. Wikipedia is simply repeating what the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Karen Armstrong, and a host of other Defenders of the Faith – without the least evidence – charged Spencer with, hoping few will bother to consult the site and judge for themselves.

And what is “NewsGuard” that we should take the epithet it affixes to Jihad Watch – “unreliable” – to heart? It’s a generally leftwing site, that sits in judgment on other sites. It can be counted on to disapprove of those who are critical of Islam, no matter how fact-based –that is, based on the texts and teachings of Islam, and on the 1,400 history of Islamic conquest and subjugation of non-Muslims – their criticism may be. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*

The visitor to Wikipedia would not know that every one of the critics referred to, or quoted, in the entry for Jihad Watch has been the object of previous criticism at Jihad Watch itself, and the calumny heaped on the site, by the critics cited by Wikipedia, is prompted not by carefully considered, disinterested analysis of what Spencer writes, but by the desire to undermine Jihad Watch, as payback for that criticism. A little Internet searching will offer examples of what has appeared at Jihad Watch about those critics – the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Anti-Defamation League,

Dinesh D'Souza, Karen Armstrong, and Cathy Young. And one has to ask – where are all those who have praised both Jihad Watch and Spencer? The single bit of praise allowed comes from the London-based Arab journalist Abdel Bari Atwan, who says that “most of the effective surveillance work tracking jihadi sites is being done not by the FBI or MI6, but by private groups. The best-known and most successful of those are [Internet] Haganah ... SITE [Institute] ... and Jihad Watch.” And that’s the extent of the praise JW receives at Wikipedia.

Why did Wikpedia leave out all mention of those who have offered praise for Jihad Watch and Spencer, including the world-famous apostates Ibn Warraq and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the pioneering scholar of dhimmitude, Bat Ye’or, the celebrated Italian left-wing journalist Oriana Fallaci, and so many more? You can find their necessarily abridged testimonies [Jihad Watch](#).