Abdulkader Tayob

Representation and Ethics

The Making of the Islamic World from a Place of Exile

Abstract: I use Edward Said's metaphor of exile to identify an archive that offers an alternative discourse in the study of Islam. By drawing on Western and Muslim traditions, this archive occupies a place of exile that does more than constructing a representation of the Muslim world. Like Said's work, it continues the critique of Orientalism. In addition, it includes a deliberation on ethics that has generally eluded the dominant discourse on the making and unmaking of the Islamic World. I contrast this archive with a post-Orientalist discourse that sometimes takes a deconstructivist approach to Islam, and sometimes one that emphasizes agency. The use of agency draws attention to Muslim imbrication in the social, political, and religious fields, but fails to account for political and economic hegemonies. Such strategies side-step the continuing dominance of Western political power games in Muslim societies and states. I therefore turn to scholars in exile and propose that their interest in critique and ethics offers a different way of imagining the Islamic world. Their questions and concern offer a different perspective to 'post-Saidian' Islamic Studies.

Introduction

In his Reith Lectures, the late American-Palestinian writer Edward Said proposed that exile offers a metaphor for the intellectual to represent the Other. If Orientalism was a critique of representation, the lectures were pointing to an ethical place from which to take up the task of representation. The exile refuses to take up a home that invariably needs to be defended with ideology. For Said, exile provides a vantage point from which to represent the unequal relation of power in the social world.¹ Said distinguished the critique of the exile from the postmodernist critic, and remained hopeful for the academic and intellectual to make a difference. I use the metaphor of exile in this chapter to examine the work of intellectuals who offered an alternative set of questions to imagine the Islamic world. Drawing on Western and Muslim traditions, their work occupies

1 Said 1994.

a place of exile that does more than constructing a representation of the Muslim world. Like the work of Said, their work continued the critique of Orientalism. In addition, they include a deliberation on ethics in the study of Islam that may be seen in Said's lectures for the exiled intellectual.

The aim of this chapter is to present an outline of frameworks for the study of Islam that remain marginal to a dominant discourse. I begin with a critical reading of a recent post-Orientalist discourse on the study of Islam and Muslims, showing that this literature is aware of Said's critique of the way the Islamic world continues to be made in scholarship and public spheres. In response, it sometimes offers deconstruction and sometimes the agency of Muslim actors as alternative forms of representation. Both theoretical strategies generally downplay unequal power relations that permeate the contemporary political and economic map of the world. They particularly fail to bring into question the dominance of Western political power games, with or without the collusion of local actors. The use of agency turns attention to Muslim imbrication in the social, political, and religious fields, while political and economic hegemonies remain on the margins of analysis.

But these reflections point to another trajectory of representation that offers alternative ways of thinking about the Muslim world. In the second part of the chapter, I turn to intellectuals whose work may be seen as representations of exiles in the Saidian sense. These intellectuals challenge the representation of Islam in the key disciplines of Islamic Studies, offering ways of imagining Islam beyond the dominant frames of deconstruction and agency.

Post-Orientalist Islamic Studies

The impact of Said's thesis has been widespread in the academy and continues to be felt in publications, meetings, and presentations. I turn to two anthologies and the extensive work of Armando Salvatore, that have adopted Said's thesis on the problem of representation. They reveal a tendency to find an alternative way of representing the Muslim world, and an attraction to deconstruction. But they reveal what postcolonial scholar Mudimbe has called the hegemony of a Colonial/Western Library.² They struggle to find a vantage point beyond the dominant trends in Western scholarship in general, and its representation of the

² Mudimbe 1997.

other. Moreover, they tend to minimise global hegemonies that constitute the world and a scholarship that represents it.

In an edited volume dedicated to Bruce Lawrence, Carl Ernst and Richard Martin call their project ‘post-Orientalist’, drawing on critical insights developed in the social sciences since the publication of Said’s book. They specifically refer to new approaches in religion,³ tradition, violence, and identity. Most of the articles in the edited volume deconstruct terms and tropes used in the scholarly construction of Islam and the Muslim world. These include modern political narratives,⁴ Sufi biographies in the past and the present,⁵ modern Muslim subjects,⁶ and textual practices.⁷ This critical analysis stands side by side with Muslim contributions in the volume that address ethical dilemmas and challenges of Muslim political and religious subjects.⁸ In the study of religion, these might be dismissed as insider voices. They are included in the volume, but do not receive special comment or engagement.

In addition to critical theory, the volume addresses dichotomies created by Orientalist representations of Islam: Arabic and the Middle East in the centre, while other Muslim experiences are on the periphery; Islamic Studies set apart from Religious Studies; and an emphasis on the nation-state rather than global and regional connections.⁹ In another recent volume on the study of Islam, Buskens refers to another set of dichotomies that pervade the field: texts vs practices, classical vs modern, and centres and peripheries.¹⁰ Like the Martin and Ernst volume, this volume is also dedicated to crossing boundaries that have emerged within Western intellectual history in the study of Islam.¹¹ Both volumes recognise orientalist representations as normative dichotomies that appear to be objective and natural.

Buskens devotes a chapter that directly addresses Said’s thesis. While recognising the problem of how Islam has been represented, he tries to salvage some of the value of this colonial and 20th-century legacy. He corrects generalising assumptions made of Dutch pioneers in Islamic Studies and alludes to a Japanese Orientalism that may be compared with a Western Orientalism.

³ Asad 1986.

⁴ Ernst 2010.

⁵ Gilmartin 2010, Stewart 2010.

⁶ Ewing 2010, Martin and Barzegar 2010.

⁷ Reinhart 2010, Moosa 2010.

⁸ Safi 2010, Cornell 2010, Karim 2010; Kugle 2010.

⁹ Ernst and Martin 2010.

¹⁰ Buskens 2016a.

¹¹ Buskens and van Sandwijk 2016.

Buskens seems to tell the reader not to throw the Orientalist baby out with the bathwater. He believes that some methods may be salvaged from this tradition.¹² According to Buskens, one way of developing the study of Islam is to use culture as a more general concept rather than religion. Taking a different stance from the Martin and Ernst volume, Buskens wants to turn away from a dominant trope in popular Western discourse that represents Muslims as essentially religious.¹³

With this general view of the field in these edited volumes, I would like to look more closely at the work of Armando Salvatore who has produced a library on the challenge posed by Edward Said. He, too, readily admits the problem of representation that is hegemonic by definition.¹⁴ But Salvatore believes that the project of representing Muslims can be salvaged by finding a common thread in the history of Islam and the West. Not tempted by deconstruction to give up the representation of Islam, his work exemplifies an emphasis on Muslim agency while unfortunately downplaying the impact of colonial conquests and post-colonial struggles in this construction.

Salvatore has analysed many different ways of thinking about Orientalism and the representation of Islam. In his earliest work, he argued that the political discourse of modernity among Arab intellectuals followed a similar course set in Europe. After reviewing the emergence of a discourse on religion in Europe, Salvatore identifies a similar construction on the opposite shore of the Mediterranean Sea. "The genesis of an intellectual function and the emergence of a public sphere", he says of the Middle East during the last quarter of the 19th century was crucial to "examine the Arab-Islamic path to modernity".¹⁵ This Islamic modernity was created in the new public spheres made possible by colonial conquests. In this analysis, Salvatore does not ignore the colonial context but does not include it in his analysis of an Islamic modernity.

In his next project, Salvatore went beyond the construction of a modern Islamic discourse. While his 1997 book placed Europe in the lead, he later searched for an earlier historical vantage point from which Islam and the West may be compared with each other. This time, his conceptualisation of the public sphere does not start with the emergence of European modernity, but with the Axial-Age first identified by Karl Jaspers. This period was considered a major global change for

¹² Buskens 2016b, 253; 259.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 262.

¹⁴ Salvatore 1996.

¹⁵ Salvatore 1997, 41.

locating and explaining, in historical-comparative, sociological terms, the type of breakthrough that allowed, through the shaping of notions of transcendence, for the emergence of a type of human reflexivity conventionally identified as the passage from the narrativity of *mythos* to the rationality of *logos*.¹⁶

Recalling a 19th-century thesis of the evolution of religion, Salvatore argued that religion as transcendence placed Islam alongside the West. He uses this common ground to focus on “the rationality of *logos*” that promotes inter-subjective reflexivity. From the perspective of the Axial Age, Islam and the West were two distinctive instances of a major transformation in human social organisation and consciousness.¹⁷ In fact, Islam as a civilisation predated the later Western manifestation of the Axial Age. Through this analytical move, Salvatore re-ordered the framework for thinking about modernity, and pointed to a convergence between Islam and the West. Salvatore identified institutions and values of Islamic civilisation that were very similar to the modern West. Thus, Salvatore found in Islam civilising processes that promoted personhood, civility, religious scholars, and non-religious intellectuals.¹⁸ This framework represented Islam as a modern civilisation very similar to the West.

By shifting the focus away from the modern period, Salvatore provided a long-term perspective on the relation between religion and civilisation. By broadening the definition of religion from its construction in the modern West, as shown in his earlier work, Salvatore now offered a different perspective on the temporality of modernity. Doing so, he rejected a dominant Orientalist view that Islam was unable to modernise. He admits that his approach represents a minority tradition in the sociology of religion, but argued that it offers a corrective to an Orientalist representation that focuses only on the West.¹⁹

And yet, Salvatore’s sociological perspective is led by insights from the intellectual archive of Western modernity. The convergence between Islam and the West was always constructed in the image of the West. The choice of terms and social processes followed Weber’s thesis, fine-tuned by Weberian scholars. While Salvatore claims convergence, his analysis marked Western civilisation in the lead, with the experience of Islam following a close or parallel trajectory. In his work, one hardly finds any reference to theorisation in Muslim intellectual discourse, in the past or the present, without first finding it in Western social

¹⁶ Salvatore 2007, 51–2.

¹⁷ Salvatore 2007.

¹⁸ Salvatore 2013, Salvatore 2016, Salvatore 2009.

¹⁹ Salvatore, 2016, 1.

theory. One hardly finds any other concept worthy of note in Islamic civilisation that is not in the West.

More significantly, Salvatore side steps the power and hegemony of the new Axial civilisation represented by Western modernity. His model regularly refers to the hegemonic power of the West that has transformed the rest of the world through politics, economics, and values. But he hardly brings this hegemony and its effects on the Muslim formulation of social life from the 18th to the 21st centuries into his analysis. He is keen on showing that whilst Europe was emerging as a powerful global actor, Muslim actors were agents in their own right. Salvatore, however, ignores the military responses put up by Muslims in this period, and places emphasis on organic intellectuals who responded with modern ideas. Salvatore is consistent in rejecting Orientalist tropes of Muslims as stuck in an unchanging tradition.²⁰ But his model says little about features of Western modernity through which Islamic civilisation lost power. The critique of Orientalism as power and hegemony that creates the world in its image, as argued by Said, is downplayed until it disappears completely.

Scholars of Islam, then, have risen to the Saidian challenge of representation and its hegemony. The pitfalls of representation are now generally acknowledged, and attempts made to address its negative effects in the public sphere and in academia. In post-Saidian Islamic studies, critical theory is used to unmask representations that create regimes of knowledge, identities, and subjects. Side by side with a deconstructive stance, agency seems to provide relief to social theorists. It is readily embraced in critical theory that argues that the agency of the dominated should and cannot be ignored. Against dominant structures of power led by political, cultural, and economic hegemonies, individuals formulate resistances or alternative cultural worlds and outlooks.²¹ In post-Saidian Islamic Studies, however, this focus on agency is accompanied by under-theorising hegemony. As I have shown in Salvatore by way of example, the agency of the Muslim is elevated to such an extent that the effect of old and new hegemonies is left under-theorised. The emphasis on agency provides a rather feeble analytical response to global hegemony in the past and present.

But there is another problem posed by agency in the presence and role of insider intellectuals and academics in the representation of the Islamic World. A post-Orientalist study of Islam struggles to conceptualise the agency of insider intellectuals and academics. The latter are represented in the edited anthologies, but their work stands apart from post-Orientalist reflections that I have

²⁰ Salvatore 2016.

²¹ Power 1999, de Certeau 1984, Brubaker 1985, Fulton 1987.

identified. This problem may have deeper roots in the role of the social scientist who, according to Paul Rabinow, is said in theory “to refuse all social action, all interest in the meaning and/or stakes of social life”.²² But from an exilic perspective, this disinterest cannot be sustained. And so I turn to a different archive in the representation of Islam from that vantage point.

Islamic Studies from a place of exile

In this second part of the chapter, I want to turn to Said’s metaphor of exile from which a different representation of Islam may be identified. There are two broad lines of inquiry in this tradition. The first is a continuing critical reflection of the study of Islam as representation, exemplified in the work of Talal Asad, Mohamed Arkoun, and Shahab Ahmed. Another line of inquiry is constituted by a much larger group that extends beyond the Western academy, but I will focus on the work of Isma‘il al-Faruqi (d. 1986) and Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) to appreciate the significance of ethics that they bring to the representation of Islam. In the following, I present short vignettes of these scholars’ work with a particular emphasis on their critical reflections on representation in their respective fields, and their suggestions for an alternative framework. I will also attempt to show either an explicit connection among the various protagonists or bring out an implicit one. My purpose in this chapter is to point to an archive that is animated by these intellectuals through a different set of questions than those driven by representation, agency, and critical deconstruction.

Mohammed Arkoun, Talal Asad, and Shahab Ahmed have made critical interventions in the study of Islam in their respective fields. Asad offers a discursive approach in place of representation for anthropology, while Arkoun challenges Islamic Studies to take seriously the intellectual history of Islam and new insights from the social sciences. In his posthumously published book, Ahmed offered a tour de force that challenged representations of Islam in multiple modern disciplines.

Asad argued that the Islam discovered by scholars like Wilfred C. Smith, Clifford Geertz, and Ernest Gellner was theoretically problematic from a post-colonial perspective. In particular, Islam as a faith, symbolic system or worldview did not allow for debate and deliberation. Asad’s criticism of Gellner captures this tendency in the field: “Islamic actors do not speak, they do not

22 Rabinow 1996, 149.

think, they behave”.²³ And the academic observer identified an essence and function of Islam from this behaviour through carefully chosen *dramatis personae*. Asad’s use of theatre aptly represents the gaze that works in the service of representation. Moreover, Asad argues that these representations were created from unquestioned theoretical assumptions and political movements, first developed or identified in the West, and then applied to Muslim contexts.

As an alternative, Asad offered Islam and religion generally as discursive traditions “that connect [sic] variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges”.²⁴ Asad brings important insights of Wittgenstein, McIntyre, and Foucault to the discourse of Islam. With discourse, he offers another way of thinking of religion as disciplinary and disciplined practices. Asad’s formulation of religion as a discourse has been used extensively in the anthropology of Islam to recognise the formation of Muslim subjectivities. These subjectivities have generally focused on religious movements on the politics of the self. Whilst drawing on the later Foucault, they have rejected the dominant assumptions of subject formation rooted in European philosophy and public spheres.²⁵

There have been criticisms levelled against these studies for emphasising only the religious aspect of Muslim societies. It is argued that Muslims are also determined by class, nation, leisure, and a deep ambiguity in their devotion to religion. The ‘Asadian’ tradition in the anthropology of Islam, it is claimed, has confirmed an Orientalist trope that Muslims are essentially religious.²⁶ This critique is mainly addressed at continuing Orientalist tropes that dominate a Western public imagination of Muslims. Scholars of Islam in the West are confronted by generalisations of Islam and Muslims in often hostile Western public spheres. One of those generalisations is that Muslims are completely determined by religion. Scholars of Islam are at pains to show that not all Muslims are religious. But this corrective does not address the nature of a religious discourse and how it is used by Asadian scholars. Moreover, it has not displayed any sensitivity to how these social and political terms are translated from the experience of the centre to the periphery, as Asad cautioned in his inaugural lecture.

And yet, the Asadian tradition applied in Western anthropology has not been able to address the nature of Muslim discourse in its complexity, and its

²³ Asad 1986, 8.

²⁴ Ibid., 7.

²⁵ Mahmood 2005, Hirschkind 2006, Hirschkind 2001, Mahmood 2006, Mahmood 2001.

²⁶ Bangstad 2009, Schielke 2010.

longer spatial and temporal elaboration. And this is what Mohamed Arkoun addresses to the temporal limitation of the anthropological gaze. Arkoun has not been as extensively appreciated and debated in Western academia as Talal Asad, but he has made a significant impact in the Muslim world. Many of his books have been translated into Arabic and became part of a renewed critical interest in the heritage (*turāth*).²⁷ Arkoun appealed to scholars in Islamic Studies (*Islamwissenschaft*) not to ignore critical social science theories. He asked them to give up the positivist legacy inherited from the 19th century. Emphasising what he calls “emergent reason”²⁸ as a heuristic tool, he asked scholars to examine the epistemic regimes created in the past and the present:

Removed from a strictly theological perspective, religion is studied in its historical, sociological, and anthropological context, thereby setting the stage for a theory of religion as a socio-historic, universal phenomenon. In this perspective, Islam is but one example among others that can be studied via the social sciences as part of a global theory of knowledge.²⁹

‘Emergent reason’ is to be differentiated from scientific positivism and religious reasoning. Addressing himself to scholars of religion, Arkoun hopes that emergent reason will “cultivate the humility of the saints and sages, the generosity of the greatest witnesses of the spiritual life, and the philosophical disquiet of the most fertile thinkers”.³⁰

Arkoun’s goal of “a global theory of knowledge”³¹ points to the value of studying Islam as part of studying religions in truly comparative ways. According to Arkoun, a universal approach to the study of religions will offer a more insightful and valid study of religious experience *and* its total history. Arkoun strived to point out that this modern discipline has barely absorbed Islamic intellectual history. Even perceptive scholars like Paul Ricoeur are guilty of this neglect.³² The intellectual history of Islam, he argues, offers a set of concepts and terms that may be supplemented to the existing canon in religious studies. For example, Arkoun has gone to great lengths to suggest that terms like ‘authority’, ‘person’, ‘reform’, ‘revelation’, and ‘people’ are subject to critical analysis. Some of the terms match those encountered in the study of religions, but

²⁷ Tayob 2004.

²⁸ Arkoun 1998, 124.

²⁹ Arkoun 1995.

³⁰ Arkoun 1998, 150.

³¹ Arkoun 1995, 338.

³² Arkoun 1998, 140–41.

others point to very different modalities and questions that may supplement existing theories.³³

Against “a strictly theological perspective”, Arkoun prefers a self-reflexive secular analysis. The application of “emergent reason” includes a critique of modern secular regimes and ideologies in the West and in Muslim countries. According to Arkoun, secularism had become an ideological blindness that matches religious blindness. It, too, needs to be subjected to critical review: “from the point of view adopted in this essay, secularism, *as a source and domain of intellectual freedom* [emphasis added] to initiate a new theory and practice of authority, must also be undertaken in Western societies today”.³⁴ Arkoun suggests enlightened secular thinking against positivistic or religious intellectual regimes. His criticism is levelled at premodern and modern regimes of truth which obscure and render unthought and unthinkable key issues in society and in intellectual traditions.³⁵

Asad and Arkoun offered different reflections on how Islam has been (mis)represented. Using critical theory, they suggested that paying close attention to discourse pays attention to how religious worlds are created and to what effect. They have pointed to the pitfalls and limitations of representations driven by culture and religion that are limited to a European experience and theorisation. We can better appreciate this critical discourse by considering the widely-read book of Shahab Ahmed as part of this trajectory.³⁸ Ahmed’s book builds on this scholarly discourse that questions Orientalist representations, but one that offers an alternative.

The distinctive merit of Ahmad’s book lies in his review of the major epistemological trajectories of the representation of Islam in the academy. More specifically, he has shown how the search for an essence of Islam has pervaded modern disciplines. He begins with the classical Orientalist tradition criticised by Said, which Ahmad shows has defined Islam as law or politics.³⁹ This demarcation of a distinctive practice or disposition was locating an essence in the historical trajectory of Islam. It was a way of separating the essential from that which was extraneous and derivative. In contrast to law or politics, Sufism and philosophy were thus considered non-essential to Islam. Ahmed next turns to scholars of religion who focus on Islam’s essence around the Qur’an and Had-

³³ Arkoun 1988, Arkoun 1992, Arkoun 2002.

³⁴ Arkoun 1988, 72.

³⁵ Arkoun 2002.

³⁸ Ahmed 2017.

³⁹ Ibid., chapter 2.

ith, captured around piety or devotion.⁴⁰ Again, the essence of Islam is guided by the authors' assumptions of the religious. Ahmed follows this by a close analysis of culture in the anthropology of Islam. Here, he also finds an implicit prescription of what Islam ought to be in its essence (Chapter 4). In this review, Ahmad showed the long shadow of a major preoccupation that dominated the study of Islam. This preoccupation of finding an essence was introduced in the study of religions in the 19th and 20th century until it was displaced by a critical deconstructive turn.⁴¹ Ahmad's critical review of the study of Islam in various disciplines shows how the study of Islam was following this trajectory. Each discipline, from Orientalist philology to anthropology, looked for and found a different essence in Islam.

Following this critique, Ahmed dedicates two chapters to an alternative representation of Islam. He focuses on what Muslims between the Balkans and Bengal have done with texts as hermeneutic gestures. Drawing on a vast resource of religious texts, philosophy, mysticism, and poetry, he presents strategies of reading among Muslims that were not led by essence and function but by complexity and ambiguity. His conclusion is that Islam has been deeply engaged in a hermeneutic that thrives on ambiguity, contradiction and complexity: "[S]omething is Islamic to the extent that it is made meaningful in terms of hermeneutical engagement with Revelation to Muḥammad as one or more of Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text".⁴²

Asad, Arkoun and Ahmad represent a form of questioning that has extended the critique of Said in *Orientalism*. Working across various disciplines engaged in the study of Islam, they offer alternatives to the major concepts of religion and culture that emerged in the 19th century in the academy. They have also shown how these frameworks dominate the academy in spite of strong deconstructive trends. Asad shows the uncritical application of theory from a Western gaze, Arkoun points to a blindness to key terms in the history of Islam, while Ahmad points to a hegemonic search for essence. But they go beyond critiques by offering alternative way of representing Islam. Asad offers discursive theory to include deliberation and debate among Muslims, Arkoun points to the intellectual history of Islam for conceptual tools, while Ahmad points us to unpredictable hermeneutical practices that have dominated Muslim discourse for a long time. It is possible to discern or invent a conversation between the three proposals. Arkoun appeals to a discourse of Islam like Asad, and ex-

⁴⁰ Ahmed 2017, chapter 3.

⁴¹ Capps 1995, Murphy 2014.

⁴² Ahmed 2017, 405.

tends it into the history of Islam, but does not reject the insights to be gained from modern critical social sciences. Ahmad introduces a more complex hermeneutic to the discourse of Islam than that offered by Asad, one derived from the practices of poets, mystics, and philosophers.

There is another group of scholars that have been deeply engaged in this alternative trajectory. They are a much larger group of Muslim intellectuals in Western academies that have also been engaged with Orientalist and post-Orientalist scholarship. But in their concern for and engagement with political and social developments outside the West, they have promoted different strategies for studying Islam. Space does not permit me to outline in detail the range of scholarship that has engaged with diverse theories – from Kant to feminist ethics – that constitutes this line of inquiry. But what is clear is that the main question guiding this trajectory is not limited to representation, but moral and ethical questions that guide Muslim societies. Such work includes a representation of Islam, but its main preoccupation is an ethical dimension that one hardly finds in post-Saidian Islamic Studies.

Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi (d. 1986) and Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) lay the ground for two very different kinds of ethical frameworks for the study of Islam and the Muslim world. Al-Faruqi was professor of Islamic Studies at the Department of Religion, Temple University, while Rahman was professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Chicago. Al-Faruqi developed a framework for the study of religions rooted in ethical values. In the 1960s, when the study of religion emphasised the essence of religion as the experience of the numinous, al-Faruqi argued that this preoccupation betrayed a modern, Protestant, and Romantic bias.⁴³ In place of experience, al-Faruqi proposed that values should lead the study of religious manifestations:

[T]he civilization as such becomes both a structured whole of meanings and a whole with a meaning. Every religious datum, whether it is an expression of an idea, an attitude or feeling-state, refers to something that is the content expressed, the meaning intuited or felt, the purpose realized or violated, or the object of inaction if no action whatever has taken place other than inaction. This something is a value.⁴⁴

According to al-Faruqi, the study of religions should be focussed on values expressed in its institutions, histories and practices. Moreover, these values constituted a meta-religion which was manifested in the religious history of

⁴³ al-Faruqi 1965a, al-Faruqi 1965b.

⁴⁴ al-Faruqi 1986, 419.

humankind.⁴⁵ But he believed that not all religious manifestations produced the highest or most desirable values for human societies. Religions, as reflections of a meta-religion, should also be approached with critical evaluation. Al-Faruqi's framework was closely related to the search for natural religion that inspired the study of religions since Kant. Like Kant, he was interested in the values that informed and shaped religious life, rather than experience as its *sine qua non*, as developed by Schleiermacher and those who followed him.⁴⁶ In al-Faruqi's view, experience was fundamentally inaccessible to the scholar who could only study what was available for testing and theory-making. He chose to study values.

With this framework, al-Faruqi proposed that the world of Islam after colonialism was rediscovering the values of meta-religion that it had lost. Islam, he continued, had expressed this meta-religion in the past and had the capacity to rediscover it. He studied various trends in Islamic history as approximations or claims to meta-religion. These claims ought to be studied, but also critiqued on ethical grounds. Using values and ethics for a theory of religion, al-Faruqi proposed a distinctive representation of Islam in the modern world. It was not a world trying to catch up with modernity, or one following a different path of modernity.⁴⁷ In his view, the Muslim world was rediscovering the values of meta-religion. Critics have pointed to the bias in al-Faruqi's analysis of religions and of Islam, but they have ignored his alternative recommendation for the study of Islam and of religions.⁴⁸ They have also generally ignored the pivotal role played in his critique of religious studies before it became fashionable to do so.

Al-Faruqi debated with another scholar who has left an equally important legacy of ethics for the study of the Muslim world. Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) was forced to leave his native Pakistan when he proposed changes in Islamic law for the new post-colonial state.⁴⁹ He went on to the University of Chicago where he refined and articulated a model for the study of Islam and Muslim societies for a new generation of intellectuals. Rahman began his work in Islamic philosophy where he demonstrated how Muslim philosophical thinking had made a significant impact on theologians in spite of their opposition to Greek ideas and cate-

⁴⁵ al-Faruqi 1986.

⁴⁶ Capps 1995, Schleiermacher and Crouter 1996.

⁴⁷ al-Faruqi 1967.

⁴⁸ Tayob 2013, Ghamari-Tabrizi 2004, Ford 1993.

⁴⁹ Rahman 1976.

gories.⁵⁰ It is this contextual insight that sets him apart from al-Faruqi. Rahman saw history as “contextual ethics [which] engages transcendent revelation in order to create a new consciousness and new values for the emerging age”.⁵¹ Change and variety were undeniable in history as he had shown in Muslim theological work, but the task of the scholar was to recognise and promote some fundamental values. Rahman proposed that such a set of core values may be found in a reading of the Qur’an:⁵²

Qur’anic legislation in the field of private and public life, even the ‘five pillars’ of Islam that are held to be religion par excellence, has social justice and the building of an egalitarian community as its end.⁵³

In the history of Islam, according to Rahman, such values had often been betrayed. In the development of Islamic law, for example, a stable framework for deducing values was developed by the great jurist al-Shafi’i (d. 820) and accepted by subsequent generations. In service to stability and tradition, however, the new framework lost the central value of justice.⁵⁴

Rahman believed that the study of values in society demanded a double hermeneutical analysis. The first was an analysis of Islam exemplified through a reading of the Qur’an from which its values could be identified, while the second was an analysis of new historical conditions that demanded a response on the basis of such values. In each case, Rahman’s vision demanded a representation of a Muslim condition. But in each case, that representation was guided by ethical critique.

Rahman’s approach to the discovery and promotion of values in different contexts has inspired a large number of modern scholars addressing challenges in the sphere of gender, human rights, and economic development.⁵⁵ In particular, scholars working on human rights for marginalised groups in the Muslim world have further developed his framework as an alternative to those who claim that Islam is inherently traditional, patriarchal or unable to incorporate modern values. In each, the representation of Islam is explicitly placed against a set of desirable values. In contrast to Orientalist and post-Orientalist values of

⁵⁰ Rahman 1958.

⁵¹ Moosa 2000, 21.

⁵² Rahman 1980.

⁵³ Rahman 1982, 19.

⁵⁴ Rahman 1965.

⁵⁵ Wadud-Muhsin 1992, al-Na’im 1990, Filali-Ansary 2003.

modernity and deconstruction, these representations critically reconstruct values in the history of Islam and in the contemporary world.

Conclusion

This chapter has pursued two interlinked goals. Firstly, it has critically examined post-Saidian reflections for the study of Islam. Recognising the pervasive power of the Orientalist gaze and academic disciplinary apparatus, these reflections show a desire to escape dominant Orientalist tropes and assumptions that pervade Western societies and its academy. Secondly, this chapter has pointed to a discourse of Islamic Studies pursued by insider exiles that are often acknowledged, but hardly incorporated and appreciated into dominant reflections in the Western academy. Using two aspects of Said's oeuvre, the fact of Orientalism and the place of exile, this chapter has shown that this discourse deserves to be appreciated for a different perspective on the representation of Islam and the Muslim world.

Post-Saidian scholarship was critical of the dominant representation of Islam in the Western academy and in Western public spheres. And various attempts have been made to overcome the legacy of Orientalism. The results, though, have been mixed. The representation of Islam, regarded as a modernist project, has been replaced by deconstructive critique and the agency of Muslims. The study of Islam remains locked in an interminable battle to build and break down frameworks. Moreover, alternative representations are rooted in theories of agency that fail to take seriously the continuing hegemonies that dominate the Muslim world. And potentially insightful attempts to build alternative representations remain Western-centric. One Western model (deconstruction) replaces another (Orientalism), or the West and its political and theoretical experiences lead the academic discourse. The colonial library has not been seriously challenged.

But this chapter is not limited to critique. Its second goal has pointed to another archive that has emerged from the work of scholars in exile. Those whom I have identified have been part of the modern academy, but their work has gone beyond deconstruction. Two lines of inquiry may be identified. The first has continued the work of Said, pointing to the pervasiveness of Orientalism in the Study of Islam. It has offered important insights on overcoming Orientalism and offered constructive suggestions on doing Islamic Studies after Said. These scholars suggest discourse as a trajectory but offer different understandings and insights into what discourse means for the study of Islam. Another line of in-

quiry has introduced ethical questions in the field. This line of inquiry has focussed attention on values that constitutes the Muslim world. I have pointed to two overlapping frameworks from Al Fārūqī and Rahman. This second line of inquiry has challenged a dominant stance in the modern academy that claims an objective, outside perspective for the researcher against an insider position of commitment and belief. In this dominant view, the insider can never be as objective as the outsider. Contrary to such fears, this chapter has shown how scholarship in exile has brought important questions to the study of Islam. It has shown how disciplinary critique and ethical reflections offer alternative questions and futures.

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