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The work presented in this volume attests to the vitality of interpretive scientific approaches to the study of Islam in the social world. The papers provide a snapshot of emerging postgraduate work, presented at the University of Cambridge Centre of Islamic Studies' fourth Annual Postgraduate Symposium in May 2017. As in the previous year's symposium, the emphasis is not on theology or comparative religion, but on understanding the wide variety of different Muslims' lived experiences in the UK and Europe, alongside an analysis of the forces affecting these lives. The papers therefore tackle a range of themes of broad interest to scholars working in various fields of social and political science.

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Muslims in the UK and Europe • IV



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APRIL 2018

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978-1-5272-2411-7



# MUSLIMS IN THE UK AND EUROPE IV



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Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge

April 2018

ISBN: 978-1-5272-2411-7

Layout and design • Shiraz Khan

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## INTRODUCTION – GOVERNANCE, AGENCY AND INTERCONNECTIONS

THIS VOLUME showcases a selection of papers presented at the University of Cambridge Centre of Islamic Studies' fourth Annual Postgraduate Conference held on 12-13 May 2017. The Centre of Islamic Studies annual conference aims to bring together work in this growing field and to provide a forum for critical reflection. Discussion at the conference benefited from the critical input of a variety of mentors, including Dr Katherine Brown, Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Birmingham, who delivered the keynote speech entitled "Imaginings and Projects: Islam in Europe, Islam of Europe, European Islam and Islamic Europe". Beyond this critical input, the finished papers included in this volume were developed with only minimal editorial intervention. Alongside the proceedings from the Centre of Islamic Studies' previous annual conferences, they aim to provide a series of snapshots which showcase the themes, quality and approaches of young and early-career scholars conducting research into Muslims and Islam in the UK and Europe. As in previous years, most of the contributions to this year's proceedings serve to de-exceptionalise the study of Islam and Muslims by focusing on broader themes relevant to research in the social sciences and humanities. The focus is less on theology or comparative religion, and more on understanding Muslims' experiences and forms of agency alongside an analysis of the social forces and historical contexts that have shaped these. While these papers could be brought into dialogue with each other in various different ways, we have chosen to identify three cross-cutting themes in this year's collection: governance, agency and interconnections.

## Governance

The first two papers in this collection, by Picard and Butt, analyse the social processes through which Islam comes to be governed in European contexts. Picard draws on the sociology of public problems to discuss how Islamic practices were constructed as public problems in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in France in January 2015. Her paper argues that these public debates became an important mode of governing Islam. She describes the way in which two city councils in the west of France in areas with limited Muslim populations managed public discussion on Islam throughout 2015-2016, establishing an Advisory Committee on laïcité (“secularism”) and coordinating a series of public meetings. She analyses these public discussions not as a deliberative response to actually existing regulatory problems, but as a mode of organising collective attention, which contributed to “create” the problem that they claimed to address. Given that these city councils already had powers to provide for Muslim places of worship and dietary needs, she observes that it was “very difficult – if not impossible – to find out which problem the advisory body and the series of talks were supposed to tackle”. Instead, the discussions anticipated hypothetical and “extraordinary” situations – a process which she argues sought to govern Islam, since it judged certain Islamic practices as either acceptable or unacceptable vis-à-vis the values of the French Republic. In this respect, these public discussions in 2015-16 functioned in a similar way to the PREVENT programme in the UK, which under the cover of a counter-terrorism agenda also served to label certain forms of Islamic orthodoxy and orthopraxy as deviant in relation to “British values”. In the French context, this process also transformed hegemonic understandings of laïcité. Whereas laïcité secularism had once indicated a procedural framework for state-religion relations, it now came

to denote substantive French values, against which the acceptability of particular forms of religious dress and sociability could be established.

Like Picard's, Butt's contribution also explores the processes through which Islam has been configured as an object of public concern and governance. Her paper offers a novel examination of a controversial aspect of counter-terrorism within a British educational setting: a questionnaire survey used by members of a London primary school to monitor children's susceptibility to radicalization. Butt's study moves deftly between three academic perspectives: a close textual analysis of the questionnaire itself, using methods drawn from linguistics; a withering socio-political critique of the statutory duty now placed on local authorities and education providers in the UK; and an ethnographic study of local actors and settings. Butt further complements her multi-disciplinary approach with an experimental research design and a sensitively-handled pilot study of primary school children and their responses to and attitudes towards the questionnaire itself. Butt's robust evidence-based approach moves us well beyond the polemical, so often the dominant characteristic of research work done in this area, shedding light on the practical manifestations of far-reaching policy initiatives and its implications for teachers, pupils and parents. Butt's conclusions lament the erosion of "two-way, honest and uninhibited discussions" between teachers and pupils caused, she argues, by local policing interventions and the obligations now placed on schools to promote ill-defined concepts such as "fundamental British values". Butt's timely research raises important questions concerning the extent to which counter-terrorism policy, and particularly the language used throughout public-facing documents, determines anti-Muslim discrimination throughout the UK's education system.

## Agency

The next two papers, by Evans and Kayikci, explore the forms of agency and choice deployed by Muslim individuals as they negotiate the effects of these forms of governance. Evans' contribution focuses on the significance of institutions – in this case, an independent Muslim school in London which is seen by parents as, among other things, a safe haven in which to cultivate Islamic learning. Evans' ethnographic study explores the reasons underpinning parents' decisions to send children to the school, described by the author as “push and pull factors”. Importantly, Evans moves beyond a one-dimensional approach to “Muslim motivations”, situating these decision-making processes within the wider contexts of migration and social mobility. Three key constructions of the school shared by parents emerge from Evans' observations and conversations: the school as a “guarded space” aiding the development of Islamic learning and practical life skills (“Islamic cultivation...coupled with economic practicalities” and “the best of both worlds”); the school as a practical alternative to the adverse conditions and poor preparation for life perceived as features inherent within “mainstream” state schools; and the school as a place of retreat for children of parents with more ideological critiques of “mainstream” education. Evans is careful not to handle terms such as “secularism” and “mainstream” uncritically and his short paper offers an interrogation of both terms as future lines of enquiry. Evan's contribution closes with the observation that parents' criticisms of British society, which focus on the negative experiences of Muslim schoolchildren within mainstream educational settings, do not always recognise the demonstrable benefits of the social diversity and educational pluralism which have, among other things, facilitated the establishment of Islamic schools in the UK.

Like Evans, Kayikci is also interested in the forms of agency

deployed by Muslim individuals as they negotiate social contexts that have come to be defined by a distinction between “Islamic” and “secular liberal”. She explores the small politics of everyday life whereby contemporary Muslim volunteers in Belgium negotiate discourses of otherness by seeking to be seen as likeable in interactions with non-Muslims. Against a background of stigmatisation and othering of Muslim populations in Belgium and across Europe, Kayikci argues that her subjects felt a burden to demonstrate to wider society in everyday life the face of “lived, normal, non-extreme Islam”. One way in which they sought to do so was through intercultural dialogue initiatives. Intercultural dialogue has been formally celebrated as a civic virtue by the European Union, and this has shaped the cultural events - known as “dialogue nights” – in which the volunteers engaged other residents of the city in cordial sociability. Kayikci draws on critical approaches to dialogue, noting that it is a discourse of conflict resolution which “emotionalises civic virtues like coexistence” while at the same time obscuring the structural and historical conditions which produced the conflict in the first place. Moreover, it tends to displace the burden of successful interactions onto migrant minorities. She describes how the women she knew tried to display an extra level of politeness in interactions with non-Muslims in a bid to win social acceptance and “likeability”. Thus, while civic virtues such as politeness were already embedded in traditional Islamic narratives, she argues that they came to be lived and understood in Belgium within the power-laden structures of secular liberalism which positioned certain Muslims as intolerant, illiberal and “other”. Yet at the same time, politeness and dialogue were also means through which the volunteers sought to overcome otherness by asserting the sameness of Islamic and secular liberal ethical demands.

## Interconnections

The final two papers in this collection, by Abdul-Hussain and Kayikci, illuminate the overlaps and convergences between apparently distinct ethical and cultural fields of discourse. Abdul-Hussain's contribution explores the way that questions about the definition of death have become central to the ethics of organ harvesting in both Shia Islam and broader bioethical fields. In the UK, the debate is particularly pertinent for Muslim populations, the majority of which originate from South Asia, and have a proportionally higher degree of need for kidney transplants. In Britain, individuals of Asian origin make up two percent of kidney donors but seventeen percent of the transplant waiting list and thus, on average, "Muslim patients...have to wait one year longer" for a transplant. Noting that the British government's organ transplantation strategy currently aims to address factors which discourage individuals from minority groups from donating, Abdul-Hussain focuses on debates among Shia jurists as to the acceptability of harvesting organs from brain-dead bodies where the heart and lungs are capable of being kept functioning by artificial means. Some leading jurists in Shia Islam have accepted the view the brain-death constitutes actual death, thus permitting organ harvesting. But others have taken a more conservative stance, arguing that where there is no certainty that death has occurred, the status quo ante – of continuing life – must be presumed. This more conservative position also often privileges the perception of common people over experts in determining what counts as death. Abdul-Hussain argues that the open-ended nature of the possibilities of medical advance undermines any notion of certainty in diagnosing the irreversible cessation of all bodily functions; and so a pragmatic working definition of death is needed. She concludes that since death is not simply a physiological condition, neither medical

experts nor common perceptions are sufficient to establish a definition; a range of theological, ethical and medical expertise is required. For all the distinctiveness of the (Shii) Islamic scholarly terminology revealed in this debate, the questions around the nature of death and around the forms of expertise needed to establish its parameters in fact share a good deal of common ground with similar debates outside of Islamic jurisprudence.

Sage also traces thematic similarities, overlaps and transfers between different traditions, although the traditions he is interested in are those of literary production rather than civic virtue (as in Kayikci's contributions) or ethical reasoning (as in Abdul-Hussain's article). His analysis explores the connections between the way Iberian Muslims in the medieval period thought about love and desire, and the later formulations of troubadours and Romantic poets in western Europe. Sage argues that the celebration of human romantic and sexual passion within the muwashshah genre of medieval Hispano-Arabic poetry, influenced the way that courtly love was treated by early troubadours such as Chretien de Troyes, who also felt free to emphasise its sensual and sexual aspects. Around the turn of the twelfth to thirteenth century, such themes were then developed in Arthurian legends, which celebrated ideals of romantic love, reinterpreting and transmitting them to later European traditions. Sage suggests that the themes of the muwashshah, as mediated by the troubadours, survive even in parts of 19th-century European Romanticism, which looked back at the late medieval period as a period of inspiration. This analysis bears comparison to both Kayikci's and Abdul-Hussain's work, since all explore – albeit in very different ways – how human sentiments and ideals work across and move between what are conceptualised as distinct genres, traditions or fields of discourse.

At the same, Sage's contribution stands out in its long historical perspective, which acknowledges both the transformations and reinterpretations that happen through time, and the complexity and interwoven nature of the factors that influence these shifts. He concludes that "'Islam' and 'Europe' were and are not necessarily in isolation from each other, nor diametrically opposed".

Taken together, the various contributions to this volume attest to the ongoing vitality of work that seeks to bring historical and social scientific perspectives to bear on Islam as a lived experience in Europe. The papers published this year, we suggest, deal with three interrelated themes. First, they attend to the social processes through which "Islam" has continually been configured as the "other" of secular liberalism. Second, they explore the ways in which Muslim individuals who confront such a world, negotiate it in creative ways that have the potential both to reproduce and to blur such lines of difference. Third, whether implicitly or explicitly, these papers ask us to critically reconsider how useful the distinction between "Islamic" and "secular liberal" is as a paradigm for our enquiries into the historical and lived experience of Islam in Europe. As these papers demonstrate, analysts of Islam in Europe often seek to understand the processes through which Islam is configured as the other to secular liberalism. Yet as analysts we are also often confronted with theoretical assumptions in which Islam has already been configured in just such a way. Some of the papers in this volume question whether such a distinction can and should be our starting point. Evans, for example, notably argues that future work should interrogate the usefulness of the "secular" as an analytic term. And Sage, by putting the focus on interconnections, and calling for an approach to Islam in Europe that rejects the assumption of "diametric opposition", advocates something

similar. These are important contributions with some social and political relevance. It remains to be seen how far these questions are taken up by symposium participants in future years.

**Dr Paul Anderson**

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# Governance

# Public Debate as an Instrument of Governance of Religion and as a Mode of Public Problem Construction. The Cases of Public Policies towards Muslims in Two French Localities

ALICE PICARD

## Abstract

*In this paper, we discuss several local cases of Islamic practices governance. We mainly draw on our analyses of two French localities although some kind of preliminary comparison with two British localities yields very interesting results. Laïcité in France is becoming the hegemonic frame through which Islam is scrutinised. We are arguing that instead of being a principle – as it used to be the case historically – it is more and more being given substantial content and meaning. At the local level, action groups are mobilising to push for such a development, while others want to stick to a liberal reading of laïcité. This normative tendency is mirrored in the UK through the Prevent programme that was broken down into local adaptations. So much so that debates exist as to whether it can be talked about governmentality. We are arguing here that the feeling experienced by Muslims to be part – or not – of the governance networks that decide upon which religious practices are acceptable and unacceptable within the local public space is key to explaining how they perceive governance policies of Islam. Islam, in this paper, is analysed as a social problem being constructed. References to the sociology of deviance are made but we do not defend a definitive stand about the fact that we are or not faced with a moral panic.*

## Introduction

This contribution draws on a first attempt to analyse our fieldwork results<sup>1</sup> in two French cities. We will here refer to them as city A and B, for confidentiality reasons. These two local authorities correspond to the first half of our research which will ultimately embrace two British localities as well (cities C and D)<sup>2</sup>. However, we will also include elements of comparison with the area of city C, located in the West of England. We are indeed looking into the local governance of Islam and Muslim practices in France and in the United-Kingdom on the basis of four case studies. There is now a broad range of research on the local governance of religious diversity<sup>3</sup> which has portrayed France not as a monolithic bloc but

as a host of varied approaches. Local studies therefore have tended to run counter to the image sometimes given of the country by pieces of work making use of “national model” theories of State-Church relations<sup>4</sup> or of philosophies of integration<sup>5,6</sup>. Their static tendency has long been highlighted<sup>7</sup>. Bowen *et al.* particularly have developed an alternative and stimulating approach which combines subnational diversity and institutional idiosyncrasies. Each institutional setting indeed has its own repertoire of practical schemas. These schemas more or less happily combine with national ideologies. Other studies conversely have highlighted similarities across national cases, despite or beyond national political cultures<sup>8</sup>. We hope to contribute to the field of research which privileges sub-national and institutional case studies and put the emphasis on the discrepancies between a so-called “national models” and the empirical evidence gathered on local grounds.

The localities we have chosen in France are both located in the West, an area which has been largely understudied so far by the studies of European Islam. This certainly can be explained by the limited scope of Muslim populations in this region compared to other urban areas such as Paris, Marseille, Lyon or Lille. However, the case of city A caught our attention when we learnt that the City Council had been one of the first in France to subsidise the building of a mosque in the early 1980s. This had stirred opposition from the local community which had brought the case before the administrative judge. Interestingly, the City Council of City A was not convicted on the grounds of a breach to the *laïque* rule<sup>9</sup>. Twenty years later, the City Council decided to grant funding to a second “Islamic cultural centre” (*Centre culturel islamique*)<sup>10</sup>. The centre opened in 2006 and three committee seats are reserved for City councillors. This seemed to justify a broader study of the relationships between the City Council and the Muslim communities. As to City B, we considered including it in our case studies as it shares a lot of features with City A (in terms of political majority and size of population<sup>11</sup>). However, it was regarded by some of our

respondents in City A as less interventionist a local authority.

The relatively limited scope of the Muslim populations in City A and City B should not deter us from carrying out a study of the governance of Islam and Muslim practices since our approach draws on the sociology of public problems. This literature considers that “to efficiently turn a social fact into a public problem, it requires being capable of convincing others – in the sense of attracting attention, proving relevancy, revealing the existence of shared values or interests – that they are concerned by the discussed phenomena”<sup>12</sup>. The toolkit of the construction of public approach has already been used by Hajjat and Mohammed with respect to Islam<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, we can now take for granted that the prominent character of a problem has less to do with its statistical features than with the actual mobilisation of a social group towards public authorities so that the latter take responsibility for tackling it. That is not to say however that we are addressing here a moral panic case<sup>14</sup>. Although such an approach could be discussed at the national level; within the boundaries of our research we cannot so far provide the evidence that would meet all the criteria set by Cohen to speak of a moral panic<sup>15</sup>. Five segments of society must react: the press, the public, agents of formal social control or law enforcement, lawmakers and politicians and actions groups. Our methodology includes the study of lawmakers and politicians as well as action groups and to some extent of agents of formal social control. However, we would not be able to provide elements of objectivation regarding the press and the public. Analytical tools and concepts such as ‘moral entrepreneurs’ and deviance<sup>16</sup> are nonetheless really relevant and this is not to say that all the theory must be ignored. We, in spite of all this, remain wary about its normative character. We are not convinced that it is necessary to state that the construction of Islam as a public problem is a process of exaggeration in order to describe it thoroughly and properly.

One of the analytical frames we can choose to retain here is cultural

politics. That is, politics in which values are highly important. We came to the conclusion that not only *laïcité* (French secularism) played as a working schema<sup>17</sup> amongst policy-makers whenever they have to justify their decisions with regard to Muslims but it has now become more than a rhetorical tool. Since the various violent acts perpetrated throughout the year 2015, *laïcité* has been turned into an *object* of public debates in the two localities we study here. Our own approach of *laïcité* is similar to Baubérot or Portier<sup>18</sup> who both consider it as the result of a process of *laïcisation* (secularisation) and also as a possible version of liberalism<sup>19</sup>.

We suggest public debate be analysed as an instrument of the governance of Islam in City A and City B for several reasons. First of all, elected officials and civil servants themselves viewed public discussions around *laïcité* as fitting into a broader framework of participative democracy. It is not about uncritically adopting respondents' perceptions. The aim is also to take into account a solid range of studies which have long pointed out the limits of this official participative and democratic rhetoric<sup>20</sup>. The two City Councils use public debates around *laïcité* with a view to showing that they act even though local authorities are granted no power over the legal definition of *laïcité*. Interestingly, public deliberation is a prime channel of the extension of "the order for a duty of neutrality not only to the State but also for the citizens" that Hennette-Vauchez and Valentin have studied as part of what they have called the *Nouvelle laïcité* (New Secularism)<sup>21</sup>. By this, they mean the marginalisation of the principle of separation to the benefit of the principle of neutrality<sup>22</sup>.

We therefore analyse public debate as involving mechanisms of selection and of confinement<sup>23</sup>. What is at stake during these debates is the definition of acceptable and unacceptable Islamic practices within the public space according to a certain interpretation of *laïcité*, itself resulting from the same debate. Referring to the notion of policy instruments<sup>24</sup> allows us to pay

more attention to local adaptations of the always evolving interpretation of *laïcité* at the national level. The comparison with our British case studies leads to apply the same kind of analysis to the Prevent programme. Participation of the public is key to deciding whether governmentality is the most appropriate analytical frame or not<sup>25</sup>.

We will first show how public debates in City A and City B can in reality be confined to a limited number of “owners” of the “problem of *laïcité*”. Then we will show how the debate contributes to the definition and emergence of this problem. We will draw on our empirical evidence gathered through semi-structured interviews with both local Muslims and elected officials as well as with members of organisations promoting *laïcité*. We will also quote from documents published prior to or as a result of public discussions.

### **From The Policy Instrument to the Techniques and Tools of Public Action: Advisory Body In City A and Series of Talks In City B**

This paper is the result of the observation we made that it might not be enough to focus on classical tools of the local governance of Islam (planning permissions, urban planning, school canteens’ menus, burial spaces, religious slaughter, faith schools, etc.). If these remain the most relevant channels through which City Councils relate to their Muslim populations, they do no longer encompass these relationships. During the first weeks of our research, we came across an Advisory Committee on *Laïcité* chaired by the Mayor of City A. Keeping in mind our comparison goal, we started off exploratory research in City B with that very same key word. Thus, we heard about a series of talks that the City of City B was sponsoring over the period of December 2015 to March 2016. Interestingly, as we said both City Councils use a participative democracy framework in order to make sense of these initiatives

but they also tie them closely to decisions triggered by the attacks of the year of 2015. *Laïcité* has now become a way to discuss Muslim practices as a potential impediment to the “*vivre-ensemble*” (community cohesion).

### *The Advisory Committee on Laïcité: A Delicate Balance between Openness and Confinement*

Though included in the electoral platform of the Mayor in 2014, the establishment of the Advisory Committee on *Laïcité* was nonetheless accelerated as a result of the events of January 2015. A first meeting was summoned as soon as 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2015. The consultative body was later approved by the full Council on 9<sup>th</sup> of March. The original goal was to produce a charter of community cohesion and to inform the decisions made by the full Council with respect to *laïcité* over the course of the municipal term. The advisory body is made up of thirty-seven members (six faith representatives, ten experts, nine community organisations and schools of thought and ten city councillors as well as two headteachers – from the public and State sector). These thirty-seven individuals were largely co-opted and invited to sit on the panel by way of a letter. Only the *Libre Pensée* (a humanist society) refused to participate in the Advisory Committee arguing that they refused to sit alongside faith representatives. The choice to restrict the panel to less than forty members is deliberate and justified in these terms:

“To be honest with you, the applications we received outnumbered the available positions. We had set a limit of thirty-five members. We knew from past experience that thirty-five was already quite hard to manage. Honestly, we could have set up a committee of fifty to sixty people. A lot of people considered they could legitimately sit on the panel. I am not being critical, it is absolutely logical. But we gave it a thought and decided we could not accept everybody’s application if we wanted the group to properly function”<sup>26</sup>

(City Councillor, City A, April 2016).

This decision is counterbalanced by a series of hearings undertaken by the secretary and facilitator of the Committee and open to any willing individual or group. In total, 150 people were heard. In the

end, instead of a charter, the Committee came up with a detailed guidance, notably with respect to the attitudes to be adopted by civil servants and community workers *vis-à-vis* religious practices relatively “alien” to them:

“The members of the Advisory Committee on *Laïcité*, but also the people who have been heard by its facilitator and secretary, did not report any particularly difficult situations. (...) However, a need for clear guidelines was manifest with respect to various issues: dress codes, the wearing of religious symbols, requests for places and times of prayer, food management, gender mixing in sporting activities, the management of council facilities leased to community organisations”<sup>27</sup>

Each of the sectors touched upon within the document then gives way to rather precise guidelines such as: “*The Advisory Committee on Laïcité prescribes not to accede to requests from service users for times and spaces for prayers, collective or individual, within community facilities*”. Islam is therefore implicitly dealt with and especially one of its five pillar, that is the prescription to pray five times a day at precise times<sup>28</sup>. The part of the report dedicated to institutional forms of Islam is written in more positive terms and officialises the already existing tools of municipal governance which have been consensual for some time. This would tend to confirm that French public authorities are more comfortable with religion in its institutional form (clergy, places of worship, etc.) than with individual and varied expressions of faith and religious belief.

It also seems to contrast with the approach adopted by City C City Council which, when they deal with Muslim communities, try not to exclude any strand through participation in a consultative body that was the local implementation of the Prevent Violent Extremism programme. As such, it is an example of local adaptation of a national policy<sup>29</sup>. However, City C also largely co-opted the members of Crossing Frontiers and invited mainly community representatives who were already known to them. Moreover, if the terms of engagement could be negotiated by Muslim communities prior to 2011<sup>30</sup>, the use of Prevent money for community cohesion projects is much more limited today, if not completely impossible

in City C as the city has not been selected as a priority area. As a consequence, funding was discontinued. Therefore, the only implementation of Prevent currently in City C is a direct emanation from the central government, i.e., WRAP (workshop to raise awareness of Prevent) trainings and the duty placed on statutory agencies to refer any individual they think is being radicalised through Channel. As one WRAP trainer pointed out:

“With WRAP, there’s no scope, there’s no flexibility at all. We have to read that script word for word. Which can sometimes sound quite robotic. And as if the time... it feels like the time is not used as well as it could be”<sup>31</sup>.

### *The Series of Talks in City B: A Publicisation in Trompe-l’œil?*

In City B, the organisation of public debates on the topic of *laïcité* was far less formal, which reflects its overall less interventionist attitude towards faith groups. Between December 2015 and March 2016, the City Council co-ordinated a series of public meetings. It was presented as the third tier of a programme of actions that included as well media-awareness raising in public schools and anti-discrimination policies. This programme was introduced by the Mayor of City B on 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2015 as a response to the attacks on the editorial staff of *Charlie Hebdo*. Contrary to the case of City A, no selection mechanisms were at play *a priori*. Nevertheless, a closer look reveals that in City B as well, a handful of groups is able to maintain its legitimacy to discuss *laïcité*. We managed to do interviews with two of them: the departmental branch of the League of Education and a cultural centre. All three interviewees strikingly insisted on the fact that they – and not the City Council – were the organisers of the series of public meetings:

“[The series of talks] is not an action of City B, right? It is a communication document produced by the City Council which has assembled all the actions carried out as part of the week of *laïcité* which took place between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2015. Then they expanded it until March 2016 if I’m not mistaken, because a lot was going on around *laïcité*. In fact, they called all the groups which were holding events and they put them in the programme. There were maybe one or two things undertaken directly by the City Council. Other than that, it was the University, the

[cultural centre], the League for Education. Community organisations did it all. It is not the City Council which organised it”<sup>32</sup>.

What the City Council did though, by including them in the programme it sponsored, was to recognise the capacity of these organisations to define and impose their own version of *laïcité*. As such, they also appeared to be the most capable of being responsible for the regulation of the visibility of religious practices within the public space and the attitude of community workers and civil servants towards them. As a consequence, some organisations engaged in training programmes aimed at raising awareness of *laïcité* among these groups.

### *The Events of the Year 2015: A Critical Moment for Laïcité?*

It is no coincidence if the advisory body or the series of talks were launched after the “*tragic events of January 2015*”<sup>33</sup>. The link between them and the attacks is clearly drawn by both City Councils:

“So the schedule was roughly April-May 2015; establishment of the advisory committees. *Charlie* events happened, as you know. At that moment, the mayor considered that a local response needed to be formulated and that the tool, that one of the tools of this local response was the creation of the advisory committee”<sup>34</sup>.

The choice of a deliberative instrument is the logical result of the framing developed and put forward by the local authorities. City A and City B pretend tackling the effects produced by the violent acts onto their populations. They identified a “need to discuss”.

It is also worth reflecting on the effects produced by the choice of public debates as a policy instrument. A policy instrument is always a carrier of social representations and meanings. In the case currently discussed, *laïcité* – and Muslim practices – thus becomes a collective problem inasmuch as anyone is deemed concerned with it. Viewed through such lenses, it is not without similarities with the new version of Prevent which, in order to counter radicalisation, aims at promoting shared ‘British values’ and makes front-line

teachers, social and cultural workers responsible for the identification of individuals at risk of radicalisation<sup>35</sup>. We had the opportunity to attend a WRAP (Workshop to raise awareness of Prevent) training and we observed that the behaviours said to be causes of concern all indeed were about withdrawal from the mainstream<sup>36</sup>.

An assumption that carries with it a strong normative power.

### A Rhetorical Problem? The Framing of Hypothetical and Exceptional Practices

#### *Islam, a Problem that Cannot be Found?*

The presence of a Muslim population (although limited in its scope) in City A and City B is not considered a problem in itself. All the more that *laïcité* as it is generally interpreted by courts allows City Councils to meet the needs of Muslims regarding places of worship for instance (through long-term leases, non-permanent provision of facilities, responsibility for repair works when they correspond to a local public interest, loan guarantee provision). Moreover, City A and City B have long offered option menus in their school canteens. It was therefore very difficult – if not impossible – to find out which problem the advisory body and the series of talks were supposed to tackle. It thus seems that public debates largely echo national preoccupations and anticipate the emergence of hypothetical and exceptional problematic situations breaking social and institutional routines. We were able to attend one of the meetings of the Advisory Committee on *Laïcité*. During this meeting, one of the councillors acknowledged that members were focusing on extraordinary situations. Nevertheless, she added that she reckoned the charter should address such cases as women being denied the right to participate in certain activities and children being forced to pray.

Similarly, the top-down logics of the British government counter-terrorism agenda has tended to impose a security-orientated

approach upon City C City Council's relationships with their Muslim communities. Prevent funding in City C was not continued after 2011<sup>37</sup> as the area was not considered a priority but there remains suspicion towards the programme amongst Muslims. This is where comparison yields interesting results. As the Prevent programme was modified, it gave less leeway to local authorities to interpret and adapt it. In a way, central government reclaimed ownership over this strand of CONTEST. It has therefore been analysed by some as a form of disciplinary government or disciplinary governance. Interestingly, this echoes analyses of French secularism as a 'project of governmentality'<sup>38</sup>. In both cases, the governmentality approach can be challenged as 'focusing on governing power at the expense of agency'<sup>39</sup>.

However, this reflection sheds new light on the French cases. What has been made clear so far is that when public debate becomes a policy instrument, the issue of who is allowed to take part in it is absolutely crucial. Indeed, participants in the conversation about Islam are ultimately members of the network of governance making decisions on the acceptability or non-acceptability of visible Muslim practices. In the end, the extent to which Muslims are allowed to be part of these governance networks is a good indicator of whether policies are deemed to resort to the governmentality toolbox or to be truly the result of a joint decision in which Muslims had a substantial say. To put it in another way, as far as Islam is concerned, the distinction between governance, government and governmentality is blurred. The phrase 'disciplinary governance'<sup>40</sup> indeed might not be an oxymoron. Even when the Mayor's cabinet consults with a wide range of stakeholders from the third sector, Muslims can feel excluded if their own diverse voices are not truly represented.

The fact that the Prevent funding in City C was discontinued and that the City Council probably lost the ownership of the policy which it had enjoyed during the first years of implementation,

certainly had an impact on the way the programme is perceived in City C. For instance, Madani who used to be involved in one of the mosques' committees tells us: "The Muslims feel it's a spying thing on them. I think that is why they lost the faith of Muslim communities on that agenda". By contrast, Ali in City D, considers the Muslims have more control over the agenda: "That's because I think we have key individuals. I know the person that's involved in Prevent here. He's a Muslim. He's someone I know and he's been quite instrumental in making sure that it does not go down the way England have gone down". Participation is thus key to the sense of ownership and ultimately to the assessment of the policies implemented as being intrusive or not.

### *A Debate Confined to the Owners of the Problem it Contributes to Create?*

Local conversations around *laïcité* strangely echo the trajectory of the headscarf affair (2003-2004) which emerged, unfolded and resulted in the vote of a prohibitionist piece of legislation even though disputes around the wearing of the *hijab* by school girls was estimated to be 150 annually at the time. Lorcerie speaks of a "political enterprise"<sup>41</sup> led by an "activist minority" which managed to be heard and listened by the Stasi Commission. Indeed, the latter mainly heard from teachers and head teachers favourable to prohibition and from almost no Muslim woman wearing the *hijab*. Public discussions as a policy instrument consist precisely in putting the problem at the centre of the debate, thus contributing to "create" it and to "perpetuate" it at the same time it pretends to take responsibility for it. Public discussion is furthermore the opportunity to reaffirm the symbolical order<sup>42</sup>, here, the republican order. As we said, part of the public debates consisted in defining which religious – and more specifically Islamic – practices were acceptable or unacceptable with regard to the "values of the Republic" which were said to be the target of radicalised young Muslims. This is comparable to a process of labelling that can

ultimately result in considering these behaviours as “deviant”<sup>43</sup> since they will be judged too alien to the norm that the social group has set for itself. Discussions therefore aim to define these behaviour norms which will have to be tolerated in the public space and the other way around. But as *laïcité* is used to set the norms of behaviour within the public space and not – as it used to – in the public sphere, it tends to endorse a substantial content, i.e., allegiance to the republican values<sup>44</sup>. The reference to the Republic is indeed ubiquitous be it in the discourses linked to the advisory body or to the series of public meetings:

“*Laïcité* – and I pay to this principle a very special attention – is a prerequisite for equality. No individual can claim specific rights on the grounds of their beliefs. No group nor one community can negotiate the *republican principles* and I think in particular of equality between women and men, which is one of our priorities for this term”<sup>45</sup>.

It is difficult to say who “owns the problem” in City A. We have already mentioned a handful of groups in City B. An umbrella organisation having *laïcité* in its title is very active outside as well as inside the Advisory Committee on *Laïcité* not as such but through various members who sit on the panel. The balance of power seems to be in favour of assertive secularists<sup>46</sup> so far but we have lately noted that this balance could be easily reverted to the benefits of passive secularists (e.g., the League of Education or the Human Rights League) who have been working with public authorities for longer and have more established networks. It could be assumed that the City Council would consider them to be more suitable to promote its vision of an inclusive secularism.

As such City A epitomises rather well the competing approaches of *laïcité* which have been at play in France for more than a century. Jean Baubérot argues seven *laïcités* can be identified<sup>47</sup>. By the time the law of 1905 was passed, four kinds of *laïcité* had already been formulated and articulated in France: an anti-religious one and a *gallican* one both pushing towards a control of religious groups by

the State and two liberal ones alternatively emphasising the individual or the collective aspect of religious practice. Three types of *laïcité* unfolded later, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first is the exception of the three departments of Alsace-Moselle where the law of 1905 and the laicisation of schools never were implemented. The second would be an “open *laïcité*”, supposedly more accommodating than the official model. The third would be an identity *laïcité* according to which the “Christian roots” cannot be overlooked. In City A, we would argue that two types of *laïcité* are competing: a liberal one and an anti-religious one. The latter being pushed for by third sector organisations linked to the National Education sector.

### Concluding Remarks

Choosing to analyse public debate as a policy instrument and as a mode of governance of Muslims practices involves paying attention to mechanisms of openness or confinement of these discussions, which then provides a good gateway to the sociology of public problems itself interested in claim-makers. The latter engage in definition struggles in order to ultimately be considered as the owners of the problem. Although our starting point was a consultative body set up by City A City Council and a series of public meetings sponsored by City B City Council, we have showed that in order to fully understand the situation and what was at stake, it was necessary to look beyond and include into the study local groups promoting either a passive or an assertive view of secularism. Whatever the stance temporarily privileged, the goal is always to decide on which Muslim practices are compatible with the republican norm and which are not. Even passive secularists now tend to accept *laïcité* as having a substantial content and not as being solely a frame regulating Church-State relations. The more *laïcité* is considered a value in itself, the more some groups will be able to use it as a basis for the definition of the mainstream norms and practices. And the more orthodox and orthoprax forms of

Islam will be regarded as unacceptable. As such, this transformation of *laïcité* seems to play the same role as the British counter-terrorism agenda.

## The BRIT Questionnaire: A Counter-Productive Tool?

SOPHIA BUTT

### Abstract

*May 2015 saw the uncovering of the European Commission funded BRIT<sup>48</sup> Project in the UK which included the government's 'radicalisation-seeking' questionnaire aimed at primary schoolchildren. Introduced under Prevent<sup>49</sup> as part of CONTEST<sup>50</sup> in the fight against terrorism, the questionnaire is based on a 2010 study conducted by two psychologists with links to the national security industry: Monica Lloyd and Christopher Dean outlined what they considered to be the common risk factors associated with extremist offenders. Their now classified report contains a pre-crime intervention model named Extremism Risk Guidance 22+ created to assess the propensity of prison inmates being radicalised towards extremism: remarkably, it was this that informed the Vulnerability Assessment Framework which in turn underpins the design of the BRIT Questionnaire. This paper presents a linguistic examination of the survey, supported by reference to the empirical results of a two-dimensional approach to analysis to establish if the BRIT Questionnaire is fit for purpose. Specifically, it employs the Bank of English<sup>51</sup> to check key syntax from the BRIT questions to uncover their corpus frequency and text-types in order to ascertain whether they are suitable for, or in any way related to children. It also shares the findings of a pilot study conducted with seven children of primary school age known to the author to determine the efficacy of the survey design.*

### Introduction

The UK government first launched CONTEST under Tony Blair's premiership in 2003. The aim of the strategy was to mitigate the risks of terrorist-related activity in or against the UK (and its overseas interests) and to ensure that effective plans were in place to address such eventualities. Post 9/11, the original focus of CONTEST was Al-Qaeda and its international affiliates, however this changed following the coordinated bombings of the London transport system on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005: these attacks signalled the emergence of a new 'home-grown' threat after it was discovered that

the four suicide bombers were British Muslims. Consequently, CONTEST underwent revisions in 2006, 2009 and 2011, resulting in modifications to both its direction and discourse: political rhetoric and media focus surrounding the policy shifted noticeably towards the need to combat radicalisation and 'Islamist' ideology.

However, what was initially established as a policy to fight international and later national terrorism, now incorporates extensive reference to problematic community cohesion and integration, with Muslims positioned as the problem. These concerns have been heightened by a series of recent terror-related offences by British nationals in the UK: the Westminster Bridge attack on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017 was reported to have been perpetrated by a Muslim convert. Soon after this incident, the Henry Jackson Society<sup>52</sup> announced that according to a study they had conducted, converts to Islam, particularly those radicalised in prisons, are four times more likely to commit a terrorist act. Two months later, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017, following a concert at the Manchester Arena, a 22-year-old Mancunian of Libyan ancestry detonated a suicide bomb ending the lives of 22 young people, including several teenagers and an eight-year-old. Less than a fortnight later, on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2017, once again, the target was London; this time, London Bridge and Market Borough where three assailants caused the deaths of eight people.

According to Far Right extremists, such acts of terror provide a justification for so-called 'revenge attacks', like the one committed during the holy month of Ramadan by the self-proclaimed Muslim hater, 47-year-old Darren Osborne<sup>53</sup>, who drove a van into 11 worshippers leaving Finsbury Park Mosque in London in the early hours of 19<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Many who do not advocate the use of violence, but do perceive there to be a direct link between Muslims and terrorism, support schemes like the BRIT Project which claims that early intervention is the key to addressing the growth in the radicalisation of British nationals in the UK or overseas. But, is targeting *primary schoolchildren* the solution?

## The CONTEST Strategy – A Brief Overview

CONTEST is divided into four main strands<sup>54</sup>: *Pursue and Prevent*, which focus on reducing threats, and *Protect* and *Prepare*, which seek to minimise vulnerabilities through effective interoperability between emergency response teams. Prevent is the largest component of the counter-terrorism strategy and is executed by devolved administrations in key sectors of the UK: specific duty guidance is issued to personnel in prisons, the NHS service, and the social care and education industry as it is thought that they are likely to have exposure to vulnerable individuals. Once the quasi-counter-terrorism agents in these sectors trigger a referral to Prevent Officers, an investigation is launched, often resulting in an arrest or detention, followed by interrogation(s). A decision is then taken to either release the suspect without charge/further action, or, to determine if s/he would benefit from a referral to *Channel*<sup>55</sup>, the government's multi-agency de-radicalisation programme.

ITV News<sup>56</sup> reported that for the period July 2015 to July 2016, more than 20 cases a day of suspected radicalisation were being referred to the government: these 7,500 referrals represented a 75% increase on the previous year. The BBC<sup>57</sup> revealed that the youngest child to be referred was only four years old. According to the Home Office<sup>58</sup>, the number of terrorism-related arrests in the UK under section 41<sup>59</sup> of the Terrorism Act 2000 and under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, is substantially higher than in other European countries. It is not clear whether these figures for UK arrests reflect a higher risk of imminent and/or thwarted attacks, or if they are the result of overzealous monitoring and aggressive surveillance of the UK's newest 'suspect community'<sup>60</sup>.

### Primary Schools Targeted by the BRIT Project

The BRIT Questionnaire was first administered to children at Buxton Primary School in the London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) in May 2015, closely followed by four other schools in the

area: the government had identified the borough as one of a priority due to its high proportion of Muslim inhabitants. According to the LBWF website<sup>61</sup>, “[a]lmost a quarter of residents (22 per cent) are Muslims (compared to 5 per cent nationally).” When a copy of the survey that was issued to children at Buxton Primary School found its way into the public domain, parents were outraged that their consent had not been sought, nor had they been informed that their children were being subjected to a form of ethnic profiling. Furthermore, the questionnaires were not anonymised.

The Head of Buxton School, Kathleen Wheeler, stated<sup>62</sup> that she had agreed to run the BRIT Project on behalf of LBWF, but, had no knowledge or sight of the questionnaire before it was administered in her school. In a letter to parents, Ms Wheeler tried to manage the situation by issuing an apology and stating that the project had been “misunderstood”<sup>63</sup> on social media platforms. However, somewhat perplexingly, she also contacted the Community Safety Programme Manager at the LBWF local government office in May 2015 to express concerns about links between the questionnaire and the Prevent Strategy, particularly the anti-Muslim sentiments that it fuelled: Ms Wheeler was categorically told that the two were totally unrelated.

In the same month, this point was reinforced by Councillor Mark Rusling, cabinet minister for young children in LBWF, when he was interviewed by John Humphrys on BBC Radio 4’s *Today* Programme<sup>64</sup>. However, an email dated 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014, obtained through a Freedom of Information request, revealed a different story. It documented a Prevent Education Officer having informed schools in LBWF that BRIT had the “*underlying aim of challenging radicalisation and divisive ideology*”<sup>65</sup>. Educationalists who opposed Prevent intervention in schools reported that the LBWF *Education Network* website, which contains information about the BRIT Project, was changed after May 2015 following complaints from teachers and parents who were concerned about

its focus on (anti)radicalisation. The website now reflects the alleged new direction of BRIT, that is: integration, identity and belonging, as can be seen in figure 1 below. Despite edits, the underlying assumptions remain that certain communities or religious groups are failing to assimilate in the host community.

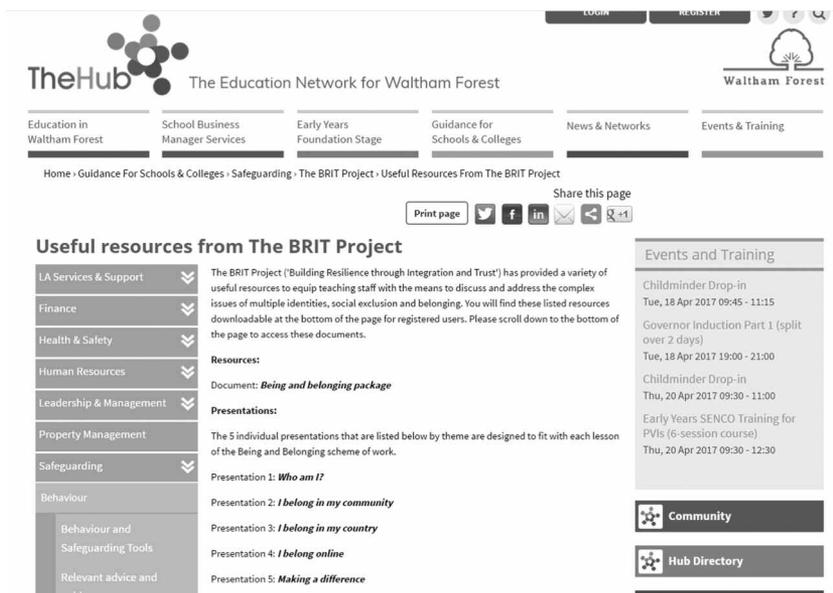


Figure 1: BRIT Project resources on LBWF website<sup>66</sup>

Only a month after the controversy at Buxton Primary and four other schools in LBWF, in June 2015, Monega Primary School in the London Borough of Newham (LBN) invited the parents of their pupils, including those as young as four years old, to attend a workshop that would help them to better understand “*how to prevent and detect radicalisation.*”<sup>67</sup> According to population statistics<sup>68</sup>, 46.5% of the inhabitants of LBN are Asian/Asian British, followed by 26.5% White. The 2011 Ofsted Report<sup>69</sup> for Monega Primary School revealed that “[its] *largest group of pupils is of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic (sic) backgrounds is above average, as is that who speak English as an additional language.*” Most notably, Muslims account for 32%

of LBN residents as the second largest group after Christians at 40%.

The letter to parents from Monega Primary School can be seen in figure 2 further below. It is not clear whether this school opted to take part in the BRIT Project: the school failed to respond to a request for this information, sent via email on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

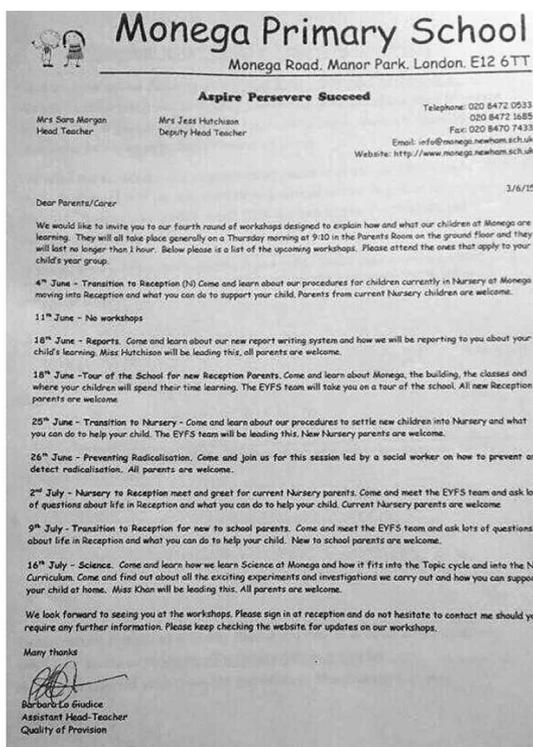


Figure 2: Monega Primary School Letter<sup>70</sup>

## The BRIT Questionnaire & the Vulnerability Assessment Framework

The BRIT Questionnaire (2015) presented in figure 3 further below is informed by the Home Office produced *Vulnerability Assessment Framework* (VAF), which is in turn premised on ERG22+ – or the pre-crime intervention model, *Extremism Risk Guidance 22+*. This model was produced by two psychologists who identified more than 22 risk factors which they claimed can be used to assess the

psychological predispositions of convicted adult criminals in prisons, including some violent offenders. Specifically, ERG22+ was designed to determine the level of susceptibility of individuals to being radicalised towards extremist ideology. The UK government deemed the model, originally created for incarcerated offenders, to be equally apposite for the early detection of the possible signs of radicalisation in primary schoolchildren.

VAF<sup>71</sup> has three dimensions: *engagement*, *intent* and *capability*. *Intent to cause harm* encompasses the following sub-categories, which also underlie the questions of the BRIT Questionnaire (2015):

- over-identification with a group or ideology
- ‘them and us’ (sic) thinking
- dehumanisation of the enemy
- attitudes that justify offending
- harmful means to an end
- harmful objectives

The overt themes that run through the questions of the BRIT Questionnaire (2015) are *trust* (questions 1 and 4); *identity* (question 2); *advice-seeking* (question 3); *personal experiences and observations* (question 5); *opinions* on race and religion, physical harm, ideological beliefs and gender equality (question 6); and *moral decision-making* (question 7).

When the themes of the above questions are mapped onto the *intent to cause harm* categories of VAF, the following can be noted: questions 1 and 4 use the concept of *trust* to determine signs of ‘them and us (sic) thinking’ in the answers ticked by the children. Question 1 asks the young respondents to quantify and identify the people who can be trusted, while question 4 prompts the pupils to differentiate between people of different races and religions, thereby suggesting that it may also be linked to the category ‘over-identification with a group or ideology.’

**SURVEY**  
Buxton School  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Normally, would you say that most people can be trusted?  
 Most people can be trusted     Some can be trusted     No one can be trusted

2. Which **three** words best describe who you are? (Tick **three** options)  
 Daughter/son     Hindu  
 Student     Artist  
 British     Athlete  
 Muslim     Young  
 Christian     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. If you needed advice, who would you talk to? (Tick as many as you want)  
 Family member     Friend  
 Teacher     Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Religious teacher or leader

4. How much do you trust people from this group?  
 Tick the box that best shows your opinion

	Trust	Not sure	Don't trust
My family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My neighborhood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of my race or religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of another race or religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Have the following things happened to you in the past week, either inside or outside of school?

	Yes
People have been mean to me	<input type="checkbox"/>
People have acted as if they are suspicious of me	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been called bad names	<input type="checkbox"/>
Someone physically hurt me	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been treated badly because of my race or religion	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have seen someone being hurt	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please turn the page over

6. Please tell us your opinion on the following statements:

	Agree	Not sure
People from a different religion are probably just as good as people from mine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People should be free to say what they like, even if it offends others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religious books are to be understood word for word	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a student was making fun of my race or religion, I would try to make them stop – even if it required hurting them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe my religion is the only correct one	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is my duty to defend my community from others that may threaten it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to question what grown-ups tell you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's never okay to use physical force to solve a problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
God has a purpose for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think most British people respect my race or religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is okay to marry someone from a different race or religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would do what a grown-up told me to do even if it seemed odd to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would mind if a family of a different race or religion moved next door	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women are just as good as men at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Please consider the following story and answer the question about Alex saw 5 people who were standing under a tree. He noticed that if going to be hurt because the tree branch was falling. He pushed a fat person in the way so that when the branch fell, it hurt only 1 person.  
 Do you think what Alex did was right or wrong?  
 Absolutely right     Maybe right     Maybe wrong     Absolutely wrong

The end

Figure 3: The Original BRIT Questionnaire (May 2015)<sup>72</sup>

Questions 2 and 3 appear to connect *self-identification* and *seeking advice* to the categories ‘over-identification with a group or ideology’ and ‘them and us (sic) thinking’ respectively. In question 2, the schoolchildren are instructed to tick three words which best describe them. However, the options are not only limited, but also seemingly arbitrary; for example, eight- to eleven-year-olds are unlikely to be able to relate to words like *athlete* and *artist*. Equally, they are presented with the word *student* rather than *pupil* whereas the latter would be more accurate given the age of the respondents. When given a choice of religious affiliation, only three options are listed, namely: *Muslim*, *Christian* and *Hindu*, rather than an alternative trio, for instance: *Jewish*, *Buddhist* or *Atheist*. It should be stated here that the children are given the option to provide a different religion by ticking ‘Other’ before entering their answer in the space provided.

Question 5 hints at a possible cause and effect relationship which may be perceived to lead to ‘attitudes that justify offending’ in VAF; for instance, *being called names* or *experiencing physical hurt* which

could in turn provoke aggression. Some of the statements that the children must respond to by ticking *Yes* or *No* appear to straddle several parts of VAF; for instance: “*I have seen someone being hurt*” might fall under ‘dehumanisation of the enemy’; ‘attitudes that justify offending’; ‘harmful means to an end’; or ‘harmful objectives’, depending on the presuppositions made by the designers of the BRIT Questionnaire and/or the interpretations of those analysing the responses. This question also asks respondents to react to the statement: “*I have been treated badly because of my race or religion.*” Following on from this, in question 6, the pupils are asked to express an opinion on “*It is my duty to defend my community from others who may threaten it*” by ticking *Agree*, *Not Sure* or *Disagree*. The two VAF categories which are likely to underpin this part of the questionnaire are ‘harmful means to an end’ and ‘harmful objectives.’

With a total of 14 statements, question 6 is the longest of the survey. The topics covered vary, though a common thread is that each one is often negatively, albeit not exclusively, associated with Islam and Muslims due to media discourse and political rhetoric. The statements from question 6 which have been selected and italicised below can be categorised under the topics shown in bold:

### **Race & religion**

- “*People from a different race or religion are probably just as good as people from mine.*”
- “*I believe my religion is the only correct one.*”
- “*I would mind if a family of a different race or religion moved next door.*”
- “*It is okay to marry someone from a different race or religion.*”
- “*I think most British people respect my race or religion.*”

## Radicalisation & extremist ideology

- “*Religious books are to be understood word for word.*”
- “*It is important to question what grown-ups tell you.*”

## Gender (in)equality

- “*Women are just as good as men at work.*”

The BRIT Questionnaire has undergone many iterations following widespread scrutiny and criticism. With little apparent regard for consistency, local governments have given schools the freedom to modify some parts of the survey in line with the community cohesion angle. A quick search on the internet revealed that some schools in LBWF had administered a *paper* version of BRIT with *seven* questions (i.e.: that shown in figure 3 above), while another school in the same borough had expanded its questionnaire to a remarkable *thirty-four* questions for an *online* version<sup>73</sup>. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, much of the lexis and syntax of the surveys is unsuitable for primary schoolchildren, as will be evidenced in subsequent sections of this paper.

The furore that engulfed the questionnaire soon after its launch led to concerns being raised by the National Union of Teachers at their annual conferences. It was repeatedly stressed that Muslim children are “*being identified as suspicious on the basis of vague criteria, such as ‘having an identity conflict’, which has no demonstrated link to terrorism.*”<sup>74</sup> In addition, more than 140 academics, including Noam Chomsky<sup>75</sup>, wrote an open letter to the UK government asking for the declassification of the 2010 report by psychologists Lloyd and Dean who created ERG22+. Local governments later recanted statements that the questionnaire was designed for use as a radicalisation-seeking tool. Instead, they declared that its purpose was to better understand identity and belonging in the community so as to develop systems to enhance social cohesion and integration. The sections that follow cast doubt over these claims.

## Pilot Study & Bank of English Analysis

In order to scientifically analyse the appropriacy, or otherwise, of the language of the BRIT Questionnaire, a two-pronged approach to the research was undertaken: firstly, key syntax was identified in each of the seven questions in the original version of the survey. This was then entered into the Bank of English (BoE) corpus<sup>76</sup> to ascertain the syntax frequency per million words in its eleven sub-corpora: this comprises over 700 million words with 29,000 written and spoken texts from the UK, USA and Australia. The aim of this exercise was to establish the number of matches found, and to determine if these included genres for children.

Secondly, a pilot study was conducted wherein the BRIT Questionnaire was administered to seven primary schoolchildren aged between eight and eleven to determine if their responses and understanding of the BRIT questions reflected the findings of the BoE analysis. These children were of South Asian descent from different socio-economic backgrounds. Four were Muslims; two were Hindu; and one an atheist. The parents of three children are accomplished professionals; two are currently doctoral researchers; and the mothers of two are housewives.

The BRIT Questionnaire used in the pilot study was identical to the 2015 version, except that it only asked for the age and gender of the respondents and not their name, thereby ensuring anonymity. The children were instructed to read the questions slowly and carefully before responding with ticks. Once they had completed the questionnaire, the pupils were encouraged to check through their answers to amend any, if necessary. Following this, the children were asked to verbally a) reveal their understanding of key lexis, and each question; and then b) explain why they had ticked specific options. At this stage of the study, a change to ticked responses was not permitted. This opportunity to discuss personal interpretations of the questionnaire is not known to be accorded to pupils who are exposed to the BRIT Project by their schools.

## Findings

The pilot study questionnaire completion time was between three to seven minutes. In two of the questions, there was the option of providing a different answer by ticking 'Other' but none of the children opted for this. Similarly, no one modified their responses upon a second reading. When the children were asked to define several loaded terms from the questionnaire which related back to the VAF themes of *intent to cause harm*, the findings were as follows:

- three children could not define *trust*, while the remaining four said it meant “*to rely on someone*”
- none of the children understood the term *race*
- *religion* was defined by the children through exemplification (e.g.: “*a Hindu*”)
- the meaning of *suspicious* was either unknown, or defined as “*not knowing someone*”; “*being spied on*”; “*being weary of something*” and “*being curious in a bad way*”
- *offend* was explained as “*being mean*”; “*not a happy thing*” and “*hurting feelings*”, or otherwise unknown
- most of the children said *duty* meant “*your job*”
- *defend* was described by one child as “*the opposite of attack*” and by another as “*the right to protect your family*”; all others said they could not define it
- none of the children understood or could provide an example of *community*
- two children attempted to define *threaten*: one said it was “*bribing*” while the other said “*if someone tries to steal stuff and you kill them*”

- one child said *physical force* was “*to physically hurt someone*”; all others said they did not know what it meant
- *British people* were defined as those who “*come from Britain*” while two children added “*...and people who believe in Christianity*”

Despite being able to *read* every word in the survey, the children in this pilot study were unable to understand its key terms or phrases, as can be noted above. The BoE analysis illustrated that the syntax in each question was either uncommon, or associated with materials and/or genres for adults. Table 1 shows the question

Q.	Question Syntax Query	Q.	Question Syntax Query
2	“...best describe who you are...”	6	“...even if it offends others...”
4	“...how much do you trust people...”	6	“...are to be understood word for word...”
4	“...people in my race or religion...”	6	“...even if it required hurting them...”
4	“...people of another race or religion”	6	“...it is my duty to defend my community...”
5	“...acted as if they are suspicious of me...”	6	“...question what grown-ups tell you...”
5	“...treated badly because of my race or religion...”	6	“...use physical force to solve a problem...”
6	“Please tell us your opinion about the following statements:”	6	“...okay to marry someone from a different...”
6	“...are probably just as good as people from mine...”	6	“...even if it seemed odd to me...”

Table 1: Question syntax query with zero matches in the BoE

syntax queries which returned *zero frequency* matches per million words in 717,865,275 words and 29,073 texts:

Some syntax frequency matches were found in the BoE corpus, however, as can be seen in table 2 below. Once again, these results were revealing. Trust, which features in question 1 and again in question 4, has six sub-groups for the children to rate in terms of *Trust*, *Not Sure* or *Don't Trust*. The children in the pilot study gave mixed responses to the sub-groups when declaring their degree of trust. The syntax query from question 1, surprisingly only yielded three matches in two text-types for adults.

Race and religion, which falls under two VAF categories as mentioned earlier, was referred to (or in some cases alluded to) in several questions; in fact, two children voluntarily stated that they thought this was the focus of the questionnaire. When the phrases “*people of my race and religion*” and “*people of another race and religion*”, both from question 4, were entered into the BoE, it returned zero frequency. The syntax query was then reduced to “*race or religion*” only, after which it generated 88 matches: when the text-types were analysed, it was observed that many of the sources were books relating to genres which would not be found in a text-type for primary schoolchildren, for instance: books on colonisation; communist isolationism; and the relationship between unemployment and right-wing politics. Similarly, when the syntax query “*suspicious of me*” from a statement in question 5 was searched in the BoE, it returned 17 matches across 16 text-types on topics that included books on the Gulf War; conspiracies; and the Bali bombings.

The statement “*God has a purpose for me*” from question 6 led to three matches to the same direct quote: this was from an interview with American wrestler, Kurt Angle, speaking to the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) after he won a tournament. If the original professed aim of the BRIT Questionnaire is borne in mind,

that is, to identify potential ‘*jihadis*’ among the young respondents, then it would be reasonable to assume that in the context of this survey, this seemingly simple declaration has negative undertones. In fact, considering that the questionnaire is derived from ERG22+, it may be argued that this statement is linked to all six sub-categories of the *intent to cause harm* dimension of VAF. Yet, “*God has a purpose for me*” could also quite innocently be responded to in the affirmative (i.e.: *Agree*) by a theist, adult or child, from any religion.

The results of syntax query matches in the BoE can be seen in table 2 below:

Q.	Question Syntax Query and Text-Types	No. of Matches	No. of Text-Types
1	“ <i>most people can be trusted</i> ” 2 x magazines; 1 x lecture	3	2
3	“ <i>if you needed advice</i> ” Guardian article	1	1
4	“ <i>race or religion</i> ” included books about: colonisation; Fat Admirers; interfaith marriages; communist isolationism; unemployment & right-wing politics; prayers for victims of racism; xenophobia in France; Fenian & Irish Republic Brotherhood	88	80
5	““ <i>suspicious of me</i> ” unknown books; books related to the Gulf War; conspiracies; Bali bombings	17	16
6	“ <i>God has a purpose for me</i> ” 3 x newspaper articles about wrestler, Kurt Angle	5	3
6	“ <i>most British people</i> ” 4 x books; 28 x newspaper articles; 1 x spoken text	36	33

Table 2: Question syntax query matches in BoE

Equally, the notion of violent extremism appears to underlie the statement, “*It is my duty to defend my community from others that may threaten it.*” In addition to these two statements of the 14 presented in question 6, further loaded prompts from this question can be seen in table 3, labelled a) to h) for ease of reference.

6. Please tell us your opinion on the following statements:	
☺ Agree   ☹ Not sure   😞 Disagree	
a)	“People from a different religion are probably just as good as people from mine”
b)	“Religious books are to be understood word for word”
c)	“I believe my religion is the only correct one”
d)	“It is important to question what grown-ups tell you”
e)	“I think most British people respect my race or religion”
f)	“It is okay to marry someone from a different race or religion”
g)	“I would mind if a family of a different race or religion moved next door”
h)	“Women are just as good as men at work”

Table 3: Nuanced statements from question 6 of BRIT Questionnaire

Most of the children in the pilot study responded with *Agree* to statement a) above, and *Disagree* to c) by reasoning that followers of every religion believe they are right; these results appear to validate the internal consistency in the design of this question area. *Disagree* was selected by all for b) as they said comprehending every word of religious texts was very difficult. Statement d) generated a completely different interpretation to its true meaning by all seven participants in the pilot study: the children simply thought it meant that if they did not understand something an adult told them, they should seek clarification. The responses for e) were mixed, and none

of the children chose *Disagree* for statement f). One child ticked *Agree* for statement g) and when asked to explain his choice, he disclosed that *he* feared being subjected to racism. All the children ‘agreed’ with h).

Question 7 (see figure 3) which presents respondents with a ‘story’ involving moral decision-making yielded mixed results. Two children justified hurting one person if this minimised the hurt caused to many, whereas the remaining five said it was wrong to harm even one person, irrespective of any altruistic intentions.

If the findings of this study are representative of the answers that would typically be given by most primary schoolchildren, the value and/or validity of responses to the BRIT Questionnaire warrants a re-examination, as does the Prevent Strategy within which it is based.

### Discussion & Concluding Comments

This paper has examined the polemical nature of the suggestively named *BRIT* Questionnaire by taking a linguistic approach to its analysis. Together with the results of the pilot study, the findings of this corpus-based empirical investigation have illustrated why so many factions have expressed concerns about this ‘radicalisation-seeking’ tool at multiple levels, including its design validity and reliability; the decision to predominantly administer it in schools with a large proportion of Muslim pupils; and, the lack of transparency surrounding its implementation – often without parental consent.

Crucially, there is no explanation from the government, plausible or otherwise, as to why the BRIT Questionnaire is premised on the risk factors identified in the pre-crime intervention model, ERG22+, which is used to assess the psychological state of convicted (and in some cases violent) adult offenders in correctional facilities. Furthermore, child psychologists and linguists would appear not

to have been consulted on the survey design or whether ERG22+ can be considered equally apposite to elicit responses from primary schoolchildren to determine if they are displaying signs of susceptibility to radical ideology.

In addition to the aforementioned, there is an absence of research data or other evidence which would prove (or even suggest) that those who may be experiencing issues with identity and belonging, are vulnerable to being radicalised towards extremist ideologies. These information gaps undermine the predictive validity of the BRIT Questionnaire.

While all local authorities and educational institutions in the UK education sector are issued with statutory duty guidance<sup>77</sup> regarding their obligations surrounding the enforcement of the Prevent Strategy and the necessity to include it in their safeguarding policies, CONTEST fails to provide staff with expert training on how to detect signs that may be indicative of a problem. Instead, it states that it is the educational establishments which ‘have due regard’ to ‘provide staff with training.’ In the absence of any formal guidance on how to interpret the duty guidance, or, in the case of the BRIT Questionnaire, expert training on how to conduct psychological assessments of primary schoolchildren, senior members of staff in each primary school where the BRIT Project is in operation must rely on personal interpretations and evaluations when training teachers on which cases need to be escalated by way of a referral to Prevent Officers. This instructional void inevitably allows illimitable subjectivity, inconsistency and heightened possibilities of misdiagnosed cases: these in turn provide an opening for excessive referrals resulting in otherwise avoidable trauma to young children and their families. As argued by Kevin Courtney, General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers:

“Prevent reinforces an ‘us’ and ‘them’ view of the world which divides communities and sows mistrust of British Muslims. It should be replaced by strategies based on dialogue, transparency and openness... We hope the Government will work not only

with the teaching profession, but also safeguarding experts and curriculum experts to design a better strategy for supporting young people to stay safe, identify risks, think critically and debate controversial issues.<sup>78</sup>

Even if it is assumed that educational staff are exercising due caution in their assessment of children, there are other considerations which impact the likely effectiveness of identifying potential radicals in primary schools. Government directives mean that schools must play a role in steering some children away from extremist ideology; but this requires a classroom environment which genuinely permits two-way, honest and uninhibited discussions. The extent to which this is happening, however, is questionable given that police officers are reported to periodically visit UK schools in areas which are highly populated by Muslims in order to advise teachers to closely monitor pupils who express opinions on certain controversial topics; for instance, Gaza or the so-called War on Terror<sup>79</sup>.

This tainting of the relationship between UK teachers and pupils goes beyond the monitoring of free expression. The hurriedly applied social integration and community cohesion angle of Prevent has culminated in ill-conceived policy-level decisions which are being cascaded to schools by both the government<sup>80</sup> and Ofsted: teaching staff are explicitly instructed to use the classroom to promote and reinforce “*Fundamental British Values*” about “*decency, tolerance, [and] respect for individual liberty.*” Ironically, this directive is predicated on bigotry as it presupposes that these universal values are unique to Britain. Hence, the government must recognise and accept that rather than facilitating social integration and trust, the BRIT Project, particularly its questionnaire, is contributing to the stigmatisation of Muslims and incitement to Islamophobia.

Agency

## Parental Engagement with a Muslim School in Super-diverse London

THOMAS EVANS

### Abstract

*In this paper, I investigate the reasons why British Muslim parents living in the south London borough of “Queensbridge” sent their children to “Zamzam Primary” – an independent Muslim school. Firstly, was the notion that ZPS was a safe space in which Muslim pupils could study their religion and practice its rituals alongside learning practical worldly knowledge that would facilitate social mobility. Secondly, were participants’ own negative experiences of attending state schools. Thirdly, a number of parents presented an ideological critique of mainstream schooling especially sexual politics and teaching.*

### Introduction

The British Muslim population is young,<sup>81</sup> growing<sup>82</sup> and identifies strongly with British values and characteristics<sup>83</sup> but is beset by disadvantage in the realms of education,<sup>84</sup> employment,<sup>85</sup> health<sup>86</sup> and housing.<sup>87</sup> British Muslims are concentrated in urban centres:<sup>88</sup> approximately one million live in London, a global city par excellence.<sup>89</sup> Whilst “the myth of return”<sup>90</sup> and transnational political engagement may hold sway over some migrant families,<sup>91</sup> including British Muslims, many transmit high aspirations and expectations to their children, especially in the field of education<sup>92</sup> which is seen as *the* route to social mobility in the host nation.<sup>93</sup>

This paper summarises one area of my doctoral thesis, an ethnographic study of a Muslim school, and the community it serves in the superdiverse south London borough of “Queensbridge.” I spent sixteen months from 2015 to 2016 studying life amidst a British Muslim community that has established itself around a mosque, setting up a school, shops and community

services. My research is predominantly based on semi-structured interviews with 36 participants including teachers, governors, administrators, support staff, parents, community members and former pupils of “Zamzam Primary School.”

### The Study Site: Zamzam Primary School

The Queensbridge community school, Zamzam Primary (ZPS), was founded in 2005 with two classes comprised of children from two families. It is now a single entry school with 82 male and female pupils enrolled in six classes (one of which is a combined year 5 and 6 class) including a reception year established in 2013 and a nursery catering to 24 pupils in 2014. No class contains more than 20 pupils, small numbers in comparison to the average key stage 1 class size of 27.4<sup>94</sup> whilst the average London primary school has 399 students registered.<sup>95</sup> Like the Queensbridge congregation, the student body hails from a range of diverse ethnic minority backgrounds with a few at an early stage of speaking English as an

<b>Proprietors:</b>	Queensbridge Islamic Centre (QIC)
<b>Board of Governors:</b>	Head of Governors, Deputy Head of Governors, Clerk, Finance Manager, governors, ZPS Head, Teacher Representative, Parent Representative.
<b>Senior Leadership Team:</b>	Head, Deputy Head and Nursery Manager.
<b>Administrative Staff:</b>	School Administrator, Canteen Manager and QIC Caretaker.
<b>Teaching Staff:</b>	Teachers, teaching assistants, PE teacher, nursery nurses and volunteers.
<b>School Community:</b>	Parent Teacher Association, parents and QIC congregation.

Figure 1: The Organisational Structure of Zamzam Primary School

additional language whilst most speak more than one language. At the time of the study, the school employed fifteen members of staff, four of whom were qualified teachers (including the Head), as well as providing volunteering opportunities for young people with aspirations to become educators, although these numbers would fluctuate throughout the study. The school itself is situated in converted commercial premises next to its proprietors: Queens-bridge Islamic Centre (QIC).

### Parental Engagement with Islamic Education

In this paper, I explore the reasons *why* participants sent their children to ZPS.

Three main themes emerged: the notion that ZPS was a “guarded space,”<sup>96</sup> an Islamic environment in which pupils could study their religion and practise its rituals, alongside learning practical worldly knowledge that would facilitate social mobility, so that children

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Age
Abu Fatima	Male	Bengali	50s
Connor	Male	White British	30s
Hamud	Male	Turkish	20s
Mahmoud	Male	Somali	30s
Marwa	Female	Portuguese/ French	40s
Sami	Male	Algerian	40s
Umm Ayan	Female	Somali	30s
Umm Neimo	Female	Somali	30s
Vanessa	Female	White British/ Turkish	20s

Figure 2: Parents Participating in Research

would eventually be able to support their families financially and assist their community. Secondly, some participants mentioned their own or their children's negative experiences of attending state schools as a reason for their disillusionment and ultimately disengagement with the state sector. Finally, a number of parents presented an ideological critique of mainstream schooling as a driver for their involvement with ZPS, with recurrent critique of sexual politics and teaching.

### 1. "The Best of Both Worlds: Academic Excellence, Spiritual Growth"

Many parents revealed that they chose to send their children to study at Zamzam Primary because they trusted the "Islamicness" of its environment and the "schoolness" of the institution. Adelhah & Sakurai's comments concerning the global madrasa system issues of trust, accountability and readying pupils for a market economy could also be applicable to Zamzam Primary as a Muslim school:

Madrasahs, which are built on confidence – confidence of families vis-a-vis an institution deemed pious and not-for-profit... are today faced with the vital need for accountability, not only in the face of government, from which they must gain recognition and whose regulations must be respected, but also vis-à-vis students, who need to be able to use their education in the job market and who become users – or rather consumers – by virtue of the fact they pay school fees.<sup>97</sup>

Parents frequently expressed their "confidence" in Zamzam Primary as a "pious and not-for-profit" institution imparting an Islamically informed education that they felt met the demands of the secular job market; accordingly, they paid for its services as "consumers."

For Abu Fatima, an Islamic environment in which pupils could acquire a good education was a motivating factor to send his daughter Fatima to Zamzam Primary:

The reason being sending early to keep them into, er, educational framework. It's not only Islam, Islam is important plus you have to give them education as well. So Islam and education: good combination, if you can send them at the right age and to understand then they have to do their Islamic duty as well as a future bread-earner for family member could be the issue so you have to prepare them both Islamically for life as well as halal earning in their lifetime if they want to do anything.

(Interview with researcher, Zamzam Primary School, November 2015)

Abu Fatima expressed a pragmatic view whereby Islamic cultivation was coupled with economic practicalities thus (knowingly or otherwise) reiterating the ZPS motto: “academic excellence and spiritual growth.” Abu Fatima interweaved the rhetoric of righteousness alongside roles and responsibilities. This appeared to be the outlook of a conservative Muslim whereby values such as sanctity (for example, “halal earning”), authority and loyalty were foregrounded.<sup>98</sup> In addition, it could also have been the speech of a first generation migrant parent seeing the education of his children not just as a route<sup>99</sup> but *the* route to social mobility.<sup>100</sup>

Umm Neimo would also identify the Islamic environment of Zamzam Primary as a causal factor for educating her daughter in the school:

The main reason is because it's Islamic school. I want my children to be in an environment where they'll be spending all day long practising their religion as well as getting educated and the second reason is because the school is, er, a small school my children will get, er, the way I believe more attention than a huge school where there will be thirty pupils in a classroom therefore my child- the chances of my child getting enough attention is very good in this school and those are the main two reasons but also the school, er, my brother came to this school.

(Interview with researcher, Zamzam Primary School, December 2015)

Umm Neimo's words demonstrate her conviction in the cause of Islamic education: Zamzam Primary was an environment conducive to religious observance. Umm Neimo attributed an agency to her children in their religious practice: they would spend “all day long practising their religion” in this environment. This could be understood as idiosyncratic and inconsequential phrasing

or that Umm Neimo's children had already imbibed the fundamentals manifesting belief through action. Regardless, she saw Zamzam Primary as a school where her children could safely acquire religious knowledge and implement it in their actions. A second factor in Umm Neimo's decision to send her children to Zamzam Primary was that it was a "small school" in which her children would receive "more attention than a huge school where there will be thirty pupils in a classroom" – a reason echoed elsewhere in my interview with Connor ("Private schools have smaller classes because they can and so that's- that's one big reason"). A final influential factor was that Umm Neimo's (considerably) younger brother had also attended Zamzam Primary. Whilst younger children gaining admission to the same school as their elder siblings might be commonplace in state schools, this occurrence might also have been indicative of the Queensbridge community's dense social network, as noted by a number of participants.

Mahmoud would also exhibit a pragmatic view of faith and state schooling. In his comments, Mahmoud echoed some of Abdur-Raheem's notions concerning the preparation and protection of children:

So in our case public schooling was a bit of a risk for us in that sense and we said we should take our children to Islamic schooling and if we cannot afford Islamic schooling we just have to do it at home. Um, it doesn't mean that if you take your child to an Islamic school the child is an angel and it doesn't mean if your child has got- goes to a Non-Islamic school, um, the child becomes, you know, the devil. That's not the case. The case is that: you have a friend who has the flu and if you hang around with that friend you would get the flu but a milder version of the flu.

(Interview with researcher, Zamzam Primary School, July 2015)

Mahmoud begins his reflections by problematising "public schooling" as "a bit of a risk" in a way that many parents would; however, this risk was not wholesale in the way that Hamud, Vanessa and especially Marwa would depict in their accounts. One might enquire if Mahmoud's peers were more ardent in their

critique on account of their own (bad) experiences as parents or as young people negotiating the mainstream system. In Mahmoud's case, home schooling was entertained as an option for educating children but he and his wife had decided upon "Islamic schooling", a pragmatic view that avoided some of the binaries expressed in the subjectivities of a number of his peers. Employing a vivid angel-devil metaphor, Mahmoud suggested that enrolling one's son or daughter in an "Islamic school" could not guarantee piety, just as attending a state school did not automatically result in corruption – in a manner that seemed to contradict his earlier comments concerning the preservation of innocence. Nevertheless, Mahmoud would imply that exposure to mainstream education was a hazard which could be mitigated against – to a degree – by attendance in a Muslim school. Probing deeper, one might infer from Mahmoud's statements that there was some overlap, either in the "forms and processes" of state schools and even faith schools, that resulted in the risk of "contamination," albeit in a "milder" dosage in a Muslim school like Zamzam Primary, such statements indexing the "sanctity" value of importance to the socially conservative.<sup>101</sup> Teaching participants in Zine's study on Muslims schools in Canada would also comment that these institutions "minimize the risks"<sup>102</sup> as opposed to providing wholesale inoculation. One could posit that Mahmoud also possessed a tempered outlook on such matters because, in essence, the school curriculum and culture of Zamzam Primary were not that dissimilar to the state system.

Whilst some informants were tempered in their assessment of Zamzam Primary and its state counterparts, one parent articulated a much more polarised world-view. Former PTA-member Marwa explains here her motivations for sending her children to Zamzam Primary:

The reason, erm, for me is quite simple to put them in an Islamic school because I wanted them to have the basis and, er, once we have the basis, when they go to a state school, then at least they know who they are and they'd be more, kind of, er, brought up to defend themselves against any, you know, issues they encounter when

they're in state schools so I thought that was a good way of, er, just building them Islamically and, er, also a way to help the community. We've always very much liked to help the community. Er, we could have chosen – as you've said – a state school, nothing to pay but I don't think you'd get the same Islamic background when you do so and we've realised that now, when Adnan goes to a state school, even if it's a primary school, the Islamic chi- the Muslims that are there, they're not as strong Islamically as he may be.

(Interview with researcher, family home, October 2015)

For Marwa, the Muslim school was a space in which Islamic character could be cultivated. However, unlike other participants, Marwa explicitly addressed the reason for this immersion in religious knowledge: to fortify Muslim children against the ideological onslaught they would inevitably encounter upon entry into an aggressively secular mainstream: those “de-Islamifying forces in public schools and society at large.”<sup>103</sup> Marwa's depiction of a siege scenario in which Islam and Muslims were under attack by malign forces, structures and individuals would feature throughout her interview; it is perhaps unsurprising that her language was defensive. One might speculate that Marwa's Islamic ethos and outlook had been shaped by her experiences as an ethnically Portuguese convert born and raised in France, a nation with a secular constitution and policy of assimilation with regards to migrants, minorities and Muslims in particular. Furthermore, such a worldview could have been edified in the Queensbridge community with its conservative (and, to a degree, politicised – as evidenced in the regularity of local and global political issues raised in the Friday sermon<sup>1</sup>) interpretation of Islam, closed structures and dense-network ties. Marwa would go on to draw comparisons between her son Adnan – a former pupil of Zamzam Primary now attending a state primary school – and his peers who had not benefitted from a similar Islamic education. Having “built up” Adnan in his “Islamic background” at ZPS, he now had an

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<sup>1</sup> One example being the imam's announcement during Friday congregational prayers on 7/7/17 that: “We don't like Trump.”

advantage over his classmates less apprised in their faith and could withstand secular indoctrination. Lastly, a final reason Marwa presented for her involvement with Zamzam Primary was a sense of personal obligation to her fellow Muslims – “to help the community.” Perhaps no better testimony to Marwa’s commitment to civic duty was the fact that she and her husband had remained with the school since its inception a decade earlier, contributing their time and assistance at PTA and governor meetings as well as charity events.

## 2. Individual Experiences of State Schools

Many parents I interviewed sought to avoid the problems they associated with state schools by sending their children to Zamzam Primary. Some participants (who had been educated in the UK) recounted their own bad experiences of the mainstream education system as a reason why they would not want their own children to attend a state school whilst one mother referred to her children’s bad experiences specifically.

We begin with Vanessa’s recounting her own experiences of attending a state school:

Vanessa: I’ve got an English mum and I did have an English dad up to a certain point ‘till I found out he wasn’t my real dad. I was brought up; basically, English and I went to an English school. I didn’t enjoy it; I hated it.

Tom: Why was that?

V: I just look at the kids and how they’re just, you know, they’re friends with, you know, the kids- their friends and they talk about each other and, erm, twist things and, you know, because I had a bad- bad experience and because I can see what it does to the children these days and the swearing, you know, the way they talk, the way they act, boyfriends, girlfriends, all then all the Christmas and Halloween stuff... I said, that’s not something I want for my child, you know. I want them to know about it but I don’t want them to practise it and I just thought sending them somewhere like that would- was just going to have a bad effect on them.

(Interview with researcher, Zamzam Primary School, November 2015)

Vanessa began her reminiscences by foregrounding identity. Of

mixed Turkish and white British ancestry, Vanessa employed the noun “English” to describe her (initial) identity, culture and lifestyle growing up in the UK without ever articulating what being and doing “English” was and is. Perhaps this was attributable to my also being “English”<sup>2</sup> and a Muslim who had found faith in adulthood. Vanessa’s time in an “English school” seemed to have left a powerful impression, and a negative one at that. Again, one might hypothesise that this negative recollection was inherent and embedded, predating an increased observance of Islam. Alternatively, Vanessa’s disdain for mainstream schooling might have become more pronounced when observed retrospectively through the lens of her newfound religious conservatism. Adopting a “processual” view of culture as “dynamic and emergent”<sup>104</sup> – less noun more verb – I hold the position that there can be no precise measure of conservatism as “culture arises from the social practises of individuals on a moment-to-moment basis” (ibid). Nevertheless, I will use Vanessa’s stance on celebrating the festivals of other religious groups coupled with her position on pre-marital sex as a barometer, in part, of her adherence to an orthodox interpretation of Islam and immersion in a religiously conservative community. The matter is obfuscated somewhat when one considers how Vanessa’s concerns with gossip and slandering alongside deceit and treachery might also be frowned upon by parents from a variety of social backgrounds irrespective of faith. Moreover, Vanessa’s grievances with coarse language and particular lifestyle choices are also not necessarily indicative of a commitment to religion. However, when the above critiques are coupled with Vanessa’s concerns about participation in cultural practices that she felt violated her understanding of Islamic doctrine, then it appears that a combination of past experience and current ideology underpin her religious conservatism.

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<sup>2</sup>I have found “English” is used in the Queensbridge and other British Muslim communities synonymously with and instead of ‘white’ as a descriptor of ethnic identity.

Abdur-Raheem would draw upon his negative experiences working in state schools as a teacher when outlining his rationale for enrolling his son in Zamzam Primary:

I've been here eight, ten years. I haven't seen- they do as told. They do. You tell them go and sit here they do it but they give you this grudge, you know, this look, this face of disgust; they give you all sorts of things, you know, and you've failed already if that's what you're looking for. The respect is not there.

(Interview with researcher, Zamzam Primary School, June 2015)

In his account, Abdur-Raheem depicted a climate wherein children were afforded excessive liberty resulting in disregard for authority – an unwitting clash between values held by liberals (freedom) and conservatives (authority, loyalty).<sup>105</sup> A moral objective of Islamic education – instilling unwavering respect for authority in children – thus appeared incongruent with the ideals of a modern secular democracy whose freedoms resulted in anti-social behaviour amongst pupils in mainstream schools, not only identified by but experienced by Vanessa. Abdur-Raheem's concern seemed to be of individual rights being prioritised over collective righteousness, thus influencing the decision to enrol his son in ZPS.

One parent would also cite the state school experience as a motivating factor in enrolling her children in Zamzam Primary; however, she would refer to her children's experiences as opposed to their own. Translating for Umm Ayan, Umm Neimo narrated why her friend enrolled her daughter and two sons in Zamzam Primary:

Umm Neimo: she said, um, because she has an experience with a state school she knows what the child will be like in state school and what the child is like in this school.

Tom: Was that because she studied in a state school?

UN: No. She said two of her children went to state school and she said the behaviours, the language they picked up from the state school she was not happy with them. There was a bad language-

T: Her children were using bad language?

UN: Yeah, they picked up from there she said.

T: Right.

UN: And these things, she said the other two come here, they haven't even got a clue what these are because they have been protected from that type of behaviour and that type of language.

(Interview with researcher, Zamzam Primary School, December 2015)

Like Vanessa, Umm Ayan expressed concerns about conduct and “bad language” – albeit without specifying, “swearing” like Vanessa. Umm Neimo (translating for Umm Ayan) would depict Zamzam Primary as a safe space, one less to do with identity and culture – as previously articulated by teaching participants – but more so on an ideological and moral level. Pupils were “protected” from immorality to the point of obliviousness; their innocence could only be tainted through immersion in the defiled setting of a state school and exposure to its “heterogeneous, foreign or inferior” elements.<sup>106</sup> Taking this discussion in isolation, one might infer that not only did Zamzam pupils conduct themselves impeccably but also they had been shielded from bad behaviour and language entirely, whereas discussions with teachers, especially the more sceptical might suggest otherwise. Regardless, it appears that for parents who also worked as educators in ZPS and possessed experience of the British education system, their first-hand familiarity with the shortcomings of state schools had contributed to their embrace of the Islamic independent sector and Zamzam Primary in particular. This outlook was also articulated by parents with no professional involvement in ZPS or Queensbridge Islamic Centre. Accordingly, the consumer had confidence in the piety of the institution<sup>107</sup> and its ability to safeguard what they saw as the innate innocence of their children.

### **3. An Ideological Critique of Mainstream Education**

Some parents would provide a general critique of the ideology and methodology of mainstream education that prompted their retreat

from the state sector into independent schooling. On this front, I begin with Hamud who provided a general critique of state schools that informed his decision:

If you're giving seven year olds sex education for example – I mean it just speaks for itself. You know, they're too young, they're – they shouldn't be taught these things. And the only reason why these things are being taught is because of social problems in democratic countries. If you make, you know, lust and desires prominent in society you're gonna be confronted – now we have to teach our children young as six or seven to know about sex, to know about, er, diseases and all of this stuff and not to say that the children here are perfect, you know, but there you don't what child is coming from what home and broken families and, you know, these sorts of things and they all bring this to school and teach their friends as they look at that and take what they can and leave what they want.

(Interview with researcher, Zamzam Primary School, June 2015)

Hamud articulated a position that appears to be somewhere between the scepticism of the “scorner” and the unquestioning devotion of the “true believer” (to borrow Peshkin’s terminology used to describe teachers of varying commitment in a Christian school).<sup>108</sup> Whilst conceding that Zamzam students were not “perfect,” he contrasted the Muslim school environment with “there.” Did Hamud refer to the state sector with an adverbial because he was talking in generalities; because his words would be implicitly understood or was the mere mention of mainstream schools by name taboo or distasteful? Deeper analysis of our discussion suggests Hamud’s critique of the mainstream was largely one of sexual politics thus indexing the liberty value foregrounded by liberals and the sanctity value of importance to social conservatives.<sup>109</sup> Hamud began his critique by outlining the issue of sex education as axiomatic before expanding upon his specific criticisms: six or seven year olds were just “too young” to learn about “these things.” Whilst initially alluding to what ‘these things’ were, Hamud would then address them more directly: “lust”, “desire”, “sex” and “diseases” in a sequential order, intended or coincidental, suggestive of emotion influencing actions and outcomes. Moreover, Hamud hinted at an undetermined agency that was responsible for the salience of sex in the mainstream and

was responsible for blowback prompting the need for sex education to offset unwanted outcomes of liberal lifestyles. Thus, in the relatively safe space of Zamzam Primary, Hamud's children could avoid pernicious influences that might be present in a less rigorously regulated mainstream school attended by children from unsavoury social backgrounds propagating lifestyles contrary to his understanding of Islam.

Sami would also address illicit relationships as being part and parcel of life in the state sector – unlike in Muslim schools – when talking about his own son's experiences:

He come to me and said, you know, Abi,<sup>3</sup> at school they're talking about girlfriends and boyfriends, it's not correct. I'm sure, I spoke to him, but I'm sure in school they told him a hundred times, okay, about this so if he didn't go to the school he will go to the nursery, he will go to the pri- for him, it is normal, at the secondary school it's normal because he saw his whole life. For five years, he saw it's normal but it's not normal at home because- but it's normal outside so it is important.

(Interview with researcher, family home, October 2015)

Having been socialised into Islamic orthodoxy, Sami's son Ishaq saw relationships outside of marriage as problematic. Moreover, Ishaq had internalised these values imparted by his parents and reinforced by his Muslim school, ZPS. However, his father felt that if Ishaq had attended a state school he would have been inducted into a lifestyle that would see this as an acceptable norm.

Like his fellow participants, Connor identified sexual politics as an issue of contention, albeit in greater detail at both an ideological and practical level:

Also other issues in terms of we're in that post '60s sexual revolution and many things that are traditional we're not taking it as given- well, not "we" but certain people or, they might be small numbers, but they might be very vocal in questioning these things and pushing past these bounds. Certain things I can agree on, racism, for example, a tradition that was somehow practised and not necessarily a good thing. Things like issues of morality and certain, erm, practices in society at least;

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<sup>3</sup> Arabic for "Daddy."

so I know that, they wouldn't be pushed here or they wouldn't be- the teacher wouldn't try to hijack his or her role and be an outlet for that, for example, so that was another thing I had here. I didn't want that kind of brainwashing, I didn't want those radical views being – well, maybe not so radical now, but – being pushed by certain groups for the past thirty, forty years. I didn't want my child having to be in such an environment.

(Interview with researcher, Zamzam Primary School, June 2015)

In the extract above, Connor appears to implicitly acknowledge the power and influence that teachers wield in their position and a responsibility that comes with it. This view seemed very much in line with the Department of Education's teaching standards and not the first time Connor had expressed an almost establishment position regarding aspects of schooling; for example, Connor would also lend credence to the verdicts of Ofsted inspectors elsewhere in our interview. Connor then cited the "60's sexual revolution" as a Rubicon moment in which traditional values – which he never explicitly articulated – were challenged and changed. Some aspects of the post 60's cultural changes would be congruent with Connor's own world-view, for example, a greater awareness of the injustices of racial bigotry – a topic of concern perhaps considering Connor was married to a British-Somali woman, their children being of mixed race heritage. However, other "practices in society" since that time proved to be problematic "pushing past these bounds" – again, without explicitly articulation of what these "radical views" were. One might wonder if Connor held such views prior to his conversion or had they developed as he became committed to his faith as a member of a faith community. Whatever the rationale behind his thinking, Connor felt certain (sexual) lifestyles would not be valorised and promoted in the safe space of Zamzam Primary.

## Conclusion

In this short paper, I have identified the push and pull factors for British Muslim parents to send their children to Zamzam Primary School in south London. Pull factors included the combination of

academic excellence and spiritual growth provided at ZSPS. Push factors included parental concerns with what they perceived to be the ideology and methodology of the British educational system. Of particular concern to parents were the freedoms (especially sexual) afforded citizens of a modern liberal democracy that might be openly addressed by practitioners and enjoyed by pupils in state schools. Participation in the rites and rituals of other faith groups was also deemed problematic and a contravention of Islamic fundamentals. By sending their children to Zamzam Primary, participants felt pupils would not be exposed to beliefs and lifestyles that contravened an Islamic ethical framework, as they understood it. Intriguingly, many parents who articulated grievances with the philosophy and practises of mainstream schooling had either been educated in or worked in the state sector and perhaps possessed first-hand knowledge of its inner workings unlike other ZPS parents, especially those whose formative years might have been spent abroad. Whilst parents offered critiques of mainstream schooling as a push factor for sending their children to Zamzam Primary School, their representation of the state sector was at times underdeveloped, focussing more on those areas that seemingly contradicted Islamic orthodoxy, as they understood it. As an aside, one might also need to interrogate what was actually meant by terms such as “secularism” and “mainstream” used in participants’ descriptions of state schools and how these concepts cannot be easily distilled into banalities, binaries and bullet points. Nevertheless, I do notice that whilst participants seemingly benefitted from the liberties on offer in a secular western democracy that enabled them to exercise their choices regarding the education of their children, they critiqued those same liberties that allowed for lifestyle choices different from their own.

## Communicating Morality – The Small Politics of Dialogue

MERVE KAYIKCI

### Abstract

*This paper interrogates how dialogue is a means of communicating Islamic morals to those construed as the non-Muslim Other. As a word dialogue does not exist in classical Islamic terminology. Discourses of 'co-existence' that are articulated among my interlocutors usually tap into the memories of the Prophet Mohammad, his companions and how they 'lived peacefully' with non-Muslims. Usually the Constitution of Medina is set as an example of this. What we see in this Constitution is the protection of life, wealth and property and the assertion of living in harmony under an authority. Yet as a concept dialogue is defined by its specific context of modern democracy in the West (James 1999). Hence, while my interlocutors absorb such narratives from the Islamic tradition, they interpret them through liberal conceptualizations. In this sense, their discernment of dialogue is constructed through the liberal secular discourses of alterity. In this paper, I examine how my interlocutors, Belgian Muslim volunteers, construct a narrative of 'sameness' by reflecting on Islamic ethical norms through a liberal vocabulary. This trajectory is grounded in constructing 'likeability', which I argue becomes a small politics of everyday life. My interlocutors try to engage in a meaningful and moral relationship with the Other, while historically they as Muslims are the Other. Thus, dialogue merges as a 'small politics of daily practices that are often submerged beneath the discursive realms of big politics' (Trundle 2014:224). The data for this research was collected by interviews and participant observation of female Muslim volunteers in Brussels and Antwerp. The fieldwork was carried out between the years 2013-2016.*

### Introduction

The European Union declared the year 2008 to be the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, and a declaration was published the same year by the Council of Europe which described the hermeneutics and methods of this phenomenon<sup>110</sup>. According to the definition developed by the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research,

Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organization with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices, to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices, to foster equality, and to enhance creative processes<sup>111</sup>.

This description offers us an arbitrary and somewhat ambiguous example of intercultural dialogue, embedded in a normative moral model that individuals or groups should be open to mutual understanding and recognition. This paper critically engages with the concept of dialogue as it interrogates how it is fashioned by the Belgian Muslim volunteers as a technique for interacting with the larger non-Muslim population. Moreover, it interrogates how dialogue transcends ‘mutual understanding’ and effectively becomes a method for communicating moral norms that are inscribed in the Islamic tradition. Talal Asad rightfully claims that Muslim conduct cannot be narrowed to the religious, however it does provide a guideline “regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice”<sup>112</sup>. I suggest that my respondents’ interactions with the non-Muslim segment of society are formulated to translate these moral norms through the liberal secular vocabulary and present them as a meaningful system of morals. Although the term dialogue suggests a sense of mutual understanding, my interlocutor’s technique is premised on the assumption that there is a conflict between these traditions, an *incomprehensibility* that must be made *comprehensible*<sup>113</sup>.

Dialogue gained popularity in the late twentieth century as an answer to social and international conflict, and a system for “recognition and appreciation of pluralism and diversity”<sup>114</sup>. More than mere communication, it insinuates *positive* communication founded on “understanding, empathy, and active listening”<sup>115</sup>, so that differences may co-exist without conflict. From this I understand that even cases where there is talk of positive communication there is an agenda of conflict and a calculated position towards that conflict. Thus, this paper attempts to critically

interrogate the conceptualization and embodiment of dialogue from several angles. First, it unpacks how the volunteers position themselves vis a vis positivity as a calculated action in cases of conflict, marginality, and domination. Second, in relation to this position it interrogates how their social presence, as Muslim women, is de-politicized and emotionally embedded through practices of dialogue. Finally, it examines how these practices become a way of communicating their moral (religious) presence by embodying the post-Enlightenment (liberal-secular) values of the larger society and rearticulating them as a common ground.

### Crafting the Scene

I conducted this research with Belgian Muslim women who devote a considerable amount of their time and effort to volunteering. I reached out to the female volunteers mainly through their associations in Brussels and Antwerp. One of the main reasons these associations were founded was to provide women a platform where they could formally come together and carry out certain philanthropic voluntary activities. These activities generally aim to raise money for educational purposes, especially to support and promote the educational progress of children of immigrant background. Activities concerning intercultural and interfaith dialogue are also a very important part of these associations. These activities are usually thematized as promoting “social cohesion and social participation” among all layers of society, even those that are deemed as socially or economically deprived. These missions, which may seem very abstract and general, actually correspond to a fact in daily life. A discourse of stigma and otherness surrounds the migrant and especially the Muslim population in Europe and in Belgium<sup>116</sup>. Unemployment and underachievement in schools is also another problem especially for the second-generation Turkish population<sup>117</sup>. There is also the lingering question of whether Muslims can indeed integrate into Europe, given their Islamic way of living and whether this lifestyle is compatible with European

norms and values<sup>118</sup>. I conducted my interviews between the years 2011-2016, during which certain capitals in Europe including Brussels were subject to attacks carried out by ‘extreme Islamist’ terrorists. These developments saw the question of Islam, Muslims and Europe reach a fever pitch. These arguments are not the subject of this paper; nevertheless, they contextualise the objectives of my interlocutors as volunteers. On that account, the associations were established to more effectively tackle these real-life challenges and discourses of stigma that surround them. In the shadow of the events mentioned above, the challenge of ‘forming bonds with others’ became a priority for my interlocutors. For them it carried a representational burden, where – in their words – the face of “lived, normal, non-extreme Islam” had to be demonstrated to the larger public. This informed their daily interactions with non-Muslims.

The volunteers’ networks are not limited to their associations. The volunteers also come together in larger numbers in informal networks, in their houses or common areas to develop new projects. They are provided with logistics for their projects from these informal networks. Once I established contacts in the associations I also entered the larger networks of women, who got together at least once a week to discuss projects and also have conversations of what they call *sohbet*. The *sohbet* meetings are places where a number of women come together to discuss a pre-determined subject from a religious book, sermon video, or other religious text. The *sohbet* sessions are seen as gatherings during which they obtain knowledge through active discussion, and explanation of the texts by a leading figure who probably has more experience with the texts than the rest of the women. The leading figure, who is also a woman may not necessarily have been through any formal religious education, but she would have more experience with the texts, and would initiate the discussions and explain their hermeneutics. Sometimes, *sohbets* are active in which everyone participates, or they may be passive and the leading figure would be the only one

to speak. A major part of my research entailed my participating in these *sohbet* meetings and observing them. All the interviews were conducted in Turkish and most of the events that I participated in were also in Turkish, which is why I believe it is important to add that I translated the data from Turkish to English.

### **Dialogue, Tolerance and the De-Politicization of the Muslim Presence**

The Muslim Belgian volunteers have several dialogue and ‘friendship’ associations in Brussels. One of these especially works as a grass-root organization, organizing friendship events, culture nights, and coffee hours. The dialogue programs are usually very easy to organize, and really address the local neighborhoods, where the volunteers have a chance to meet other residents, or locals of the city. These events are usually fun to attend for my interlocutors, and I join them in what usually turn out to be joyous events. It is different from the conferences, panels, or roundtable discussions that take place, and certainly different from the *sohbet* meetings. The cultural nights, often referred to as dialogue nights by the volunteers themselves, are meant to be fun, where people can bond over food, drinks, music and even dance as I once took part in a Scottish folkloric dance night (which included two Scotsmen in kilts playing bagpipes no less). Although dialogue implies socialization more than anything for the volunteers, it also a political term that bears its own baggage, whereby the subject assumes a position in the dialogue relationship, often formed by already existing structures of power. Thus, dialogue merges as a “small politics of daily practices that are often submerged beneath the discursive realm of big politics”<sup>119</sup>.

Of the most notably critical studies conducted on dialogue relationships between state actors and Muslim minority institutions was carried out by Schirin Amir-Moazami. Her main focus is on how governmental practices regulate the conduct and attitudes of Muslims in terms of ‘discipline’ and ‘normalization’<sup>120</sup>. In this study

Amir-Moazami asserts that dialogue becomes a pedagogical technique whereby liberal secular (gender, sexuality, citizenship) norms are conveyed to Muslims. Dialogue especially aims for these norms to be circulated by Muslims themselves, establishing a type of Muslim who is critical of their own religious traditions and thus so embody a more integrated (acceptable) presence<sup>121</sup>. Amir-Moazami's work is significant in that it inquires into how dominant (governmental and non-governmental) institutions utilize dialogue, while minorities are on the receiving end of this approach. In my observations dialogue is a technique employed by Muslims to enforce an image that embraces the rhetoric that is articulated above. Dialogue thus becomes a tactic<sup>122</sup> of fostering acceptability in the society's imagination.

My interlocutors consume the texts and sermons of Islamic teachers who are advocates of dialogue, whether it may be referred to as interfaith or intercultural dialogue. In many of these books, sermons and lessons they elaborate extensively on dialogue, compassion, understanding, and *hosgoru* (often translated as tolerance)<sup>123</sup>. Dialogue is an approach they take in interacting with those seen as *ghayri-Muslim* or the “non-Muslim other”; those who arguably do not share the same religious or cultural tradition as them and hence are furthest away from them in mutual understanding. Having listened to hours of sermons, weekly classes and read hundreds of pages of books, I never came across an occasion or statement where it is explicitly described how dialogue should unfold. There is usually the mention of the Constitution of Medina<sup>124</sup>, the gracious manner the Prophet had towards non-Muslims, and other examples from the lives of the Companions and the Prophet that ask for goodness and understanding in interacting with the *ghayri-Muslim*. There is also nostalgia toward an Ottoman legacy that taps into memories which often position the Empire as the epitome of peaceful coexistence and multiculturalism. However, these narratives do not go into the specifics and details of how this dialogue must emerge in society, today and in the West, where there

are a great number of Muslims. Tolerance is one concept that comes up nearly automatically concerning living with the non-Muslim. Dialogue and tolerance are nearly synonymous for my respondents, as they use them interchangeably during their discussions. These concepts do not only denote a *state of being* for the volunteer, but also methods of interaction that must be embodied if they are to live peacefully, and *meaningfully*. Taking this point into consideration I will also use them interchangeably and synonymously.

Dialogue and tolerance especially have been subject to critical inquiry in the social and political sciences, and Wendy Brown whose work I lean on in this regard has effectively pointed out how tolerance has come to depoliticize certain experiences of suffering<sup>125</sup>. Brown argues that while tolerance is appreciated as a universal and ‘transcendent’ value, it is often depoliticized and detached from its own historical and geographical ‘purpose, content, agents and objects’<sup>126</sup>. That being said, Brown’s argument centers on cases where this notion is purported by dominant institutions and agents, whereas my interlocutors are the minority. Thus, where the subject is Europe’s non-liberal other it becomes more interesting when we ask Brown’s questions “what sort of rationality and sociality is tolerance imagined to require and what sorts are thought to inhibit it – in other words, what anthropological presuppositions does liberal tolerance entail and circulate?” Added to this, what kind of subject position is created when the historical other embodies this concept that depoliticizes their social presence?

In Belgium, where Turks have been minorities for decades this unfolds in terms of coexistence, and social solidarity. I had the chance to take part in a cartoon event in 2014. The name of the event was ‘Art de Vivre Ensemble’ (The Art of Living Together), and it was launched to commemorate the fiftieth year of Turkish migration to Belgium. The description of the event on its website reads:

2014 marks the 50th anniversary of the bilateral agreements concluded between Belgium and a number of countries in order to fill the labor shortage in the industrial sector. On 17 February 1964, the agreements were signed with Morocco, followed by Turkey on 16 July of the same year. 1964 marked the beginning of the migration of Moroccan and Turkish workers to Belgium. Fifty years later, the Belgo-Turkish Friendship Association, wishes to commemorate this event and launches the second edition of the cartoon contest on 50 years of immigration in Belgium in collaboration with its partners Press Cartoon Belgium and European Cartoon Center. Thanks to the eloquent and humorous language of the cartoons, our will, through this competition, is to draw attention to the 50th anniversary of immigration in an original way, to help break stereotypes and prejudices, to create links between communities and to illustrate in an original way the living together and the richness of the cultural diversity<sup>127</sup>.

The initiators assert that they would like to challenge stereotypes and prejudices through humor, and indeed there were brilliantly expressed cartoons among the ones that I saw. Many local and federal politicians were present throughout the event, and quite a number of my interlocutors were busy with the preparations and execution of the event that took place in the Federal Parliament. The setting, the audience, and the message the cartoons aimed to give all seemed to address deep social and political problems and the attempt to bring these problems into consideration through the framework of dialogue, coexistence and tolerance. They do so, with the assumption that they live in a liberal society and hence can do so. It implies a very specific method of problem solving in that it naturalizes conflict, removes it from its historical context and emotionalizes civic virtues like ‘coexistence’ often glossing over the structural inequalities that lead to such conflict<sup>128</sup>.

### **Becoming the Acceptable Muslim: Embodying the Liberal Vocabulary**

Positivity is a delicate issue, wherein the individual tries to secure a social position, and platform for legible discussion<sup>129</sup>. It is up to my interlocutors to set the tone for this discussion, a carefully deliberated process which they perform dutifully. In the case of the cartoon competition, the setting of the event, its content and the aesthetics of its execution indicate how the volunteers understand

dialogue as a means to *likeability*<sup>130</sup>. Moreover, the consciousness of likeability manifests in the desire of not wanting to be seen as non-liberal. My interlocutors, as Muslim women, often reflect on how they are positioned as intolerant (by the larger society), and try to overcome that image. This struggle creates discomfort and tension in their daily experiences with non-Muslims.

Nihan, my interlocutor who is a primary school teacher, brought up this issue in how she tries to construct a relationship with her son's kindergarten teacher: "I try to be very polite with my son when I'm around his teacher. I mean it's not that I am *not* polite with him, but you know when I go to pick him up from school I'm really conscious that she is observing us so I'm extra extra polite... I ask about his day and definitely kiss him and you know..." Nihan's awareness of being watched pushes her to behave in a way that she believes is the accepted social norm, but it is not expected of *her* to perform. Trying to relate with the teacher, be accepted and become part of the school body stimulates her to embody those social norms as a performance. I suggest that it is a performance, in the sense that she already believes she does embody those norms in the first place, but it is that sense of being observed and evaluated in a sense that makes her intensify that role.

What we see here is a depiction of the *self-contained* Muslim, who deals with conflict with *good manners* rather than negative reaction<sup>131</sup>. Hence, while my interlocutors absorb narratives from the Islamic tradition, they interpret them through liberal conceptualizations. In this sense, their discernment of dialogue is constructed through the liberal secular discourse of us and them. My interlocutors try to engage in a meaningful and moral relationship with the Other, while historically they as Muslims are the Other. Richard Rorty calls such cases where tolerance (and dialogue) are embodied in practices of likeability, "an improvement of manners"<sup>132</sup>. However, when my respondents engage in such performances their aim is above *polishing manners*. They attempt

to ontologically enter the Western imaginary by reinforcing it.

Nihan is working on conflict by embodying modern behavioral codes, reinforcing discourses of etiquette, but at the same time insinuating that as a Muslim woman it is ontologically compatible with her moral epistemology to do so. Islam's otherness is taken out of context in a sense, from the structural marginality it faces as the religion of a minority population that is often depleted with stigma. Islam as a tradition that my respondents engage with in constructing their ethical self is thus translated into another tradition, as a form of propriety<sup>133</sup>.

### Conclusion

This paper critically approaches discourses and practices of dialogue. It focuses on how Muslim Belgian women develop practices that speak to the larger (non-Muslim) society, conveying to them that their religious and moral sensibilities can merge with post-Enlightenment values. This mutual transaction of values, where they embody liberal secular norms and where the 'other' accepts their presence, is dialogue itself. This negotiation illustrates how the concept comes to be articulated: as a concept dialogue is contextually determined, and applies to one specific time and place in history which is modern democracy in the West<sup>134</sup> (James 1999).

This negotiation is not without its own social and political baggage. The power structure in a dialogue-framed relationship is more complicated as the pious subject is not only in the position of the Other, but also the one who has to successfully initiate this dual relationship. Their subject position as the minority makes it their social duty to reach out and become comprehensible. This configures a multifaceted power structure in the relationship, where the volunteer is in the position of having the other understand *them* (and thus become 'acceptable' for the Other), and try to represent the virtues of living morally. Dialogue is hence a technique that is attached to these conflicting realms. Such conflict in many cases

creates a feeling of disturbance for the women, as they feel the constant gaze of social evaluation: are they liberal enough? Dialogue as such becomes a tension of walking between the lines of liberal and non-liberal.

Finally, such forms of self-fashioning cannot be reduced to conflicts and tensions. While such concepts like dialogue and tolerance are in need of critical intervention, for my interlocutors it is more than a superficial polishing of appearances. Dialogue is true endeavor, wherein they engage with their own spiritual maturity and reflect on civil virtues. It is not merely a communication with the other, but also discerning the self in relation to their society and subject position. This paper is an attempt to unpack the complexities and negotiations that make dialogue a daily tactic – a micro politic – among the larger politics of social life.

# Interconnections

## Examining the Definition of Death and its Implication for the Permissibility of Organ Donation in Contemporary Shi'ite Jurisprudence

MAHDIYAH ABDUL-HUSSAIN

### Abstract

*Medical advancements enabling doctors to maintain the cardiac function of patients who have suffered brain death by the aid of an artificial ventilator have complicated the notion of death, and, resulted in ethical dilemmas relating to the procurement of organs from brain dead patients. Utilising organs from brain dead donors who are kept breathing in order to preserve organs is preferred because they have multiple organs which are suitable for donation and are the only viable source for heart transplantation. However, it is necessary to establish that brain death corresponds with the notion of death in Islam. This paper endeavours to examine the definition of death in Shi'ite jurisprudence and its implication for the permissibility of organ donation. The lack of any precise definition in the Quran and the tradition (sunna), and, the difficulties associated with applying the secondary procedural principle of continuity has led notable Shi'ite jurists to rely on 'urf (custom) as the sole criterion for defining death. Opinion is divided as to whether death should be defined in accordance with the understanding of the laity or the specialised medic. It is contended that neither provides a satisfactory conception of death. The on-going philosophical debate concerning the redefinition of death to the cessation of higher brain function, and futuristic scientific possibilities, like cryonics, demonstrate the complications in determining the conceptual meaning of death and highlight the need for greater input from a variety of specialised fields including philosophers, bioethicists and theologians.*

### The Transplant Crisis

The majority of the UK's Muslim population originate from South Asia and are genetically predisposed to developing end stage renal failure requiring dialysis or kidney transplantation. Although a transplant is preferable, it is essential to utilise an organ that matches the relevant characteristics of the recipient to decrease the chances of the body rejecting the organ.<sup>135</sup> Whilst

suitable organs are more likely to come from those who share the same ethnicity, only 2 percent of deceased kidney donors are Asian, although they make up 17 percent of the active transplant list.<sup>136</sup> On average, Muslim patients have to wait one year longer than their Caucasian counterparts do for a transplant. The problem is exacerbated in cities like Birmingham, which are densely populated by Muslims, where it is estimated that the wait can be as long as four or five years.<sup>137</sup> Not only does this have an adverse impact on the lives of patients who require weekly dialysis, but it is also burdensome on the NHS with the average cost exceeding £30,000 per patient per annum.<sup>138</sup>

For this reason the government initiative, Taking Organ Transplantation Towards 2020 strategy, aims to increase the number of donors from minority groups and recognises the need to address factors that preclude individuals from donating.<sup>139</sup> In certain cases, the reluctance to donate organs after death relates to the problem of defining death. Medical advancements enabling doctors to maintain the cardiac function of patients who have suffered brain death by the aid of an artificial ventilator have complicated the notion of death, and resulted in ethical dilemmas relating to the procurement of organs from brain dead patients. At present, in the UK, the majority of deceased organ donations are from donors who have suffered brain-stem death but are kept breathing in order to preserve organs for transplantation. Utilising organs from these donors is preferred because they usually have multiple organs which are suitable for donation, and, they are currently the only viable source for heart transplants.<sup>140</sup> Irrespective of these utilitarian considerations, it is necessary to establish that brain death corresponds with the notion of death in Islam, since procuring organs from patients who are still alive would cause their death, thereby violating Islamic teachings.

The focus of this paper is to examine how death is defined in contemporary Shi'ite jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Given that Shia Muslims<sup>I</sup> constitute the second largest majority in Islam, with an estimated 100,000-300,000 living in the UK alone there is real potential for increasing the rate of donation.<sup>141</sup> The demand for further discussion is evident as the 2015 annual conference organised by Shia medics in the UK focused largely on the jurisprudential perspective regarding organ transplantation.<sup>142</sup> The science of jurisprudence is the science of deriving Sharia rulings (revealed law), which regulates every aspect of human conduct.<sup>143</sup>

It will be argued that the lack of any precise definition in the primary sources of the Sharia, and the difficulties associated with applying the secondary procedural principles (*al-uṣūl al-'amaliyya*) have led notable Shi'ite jurists to rely on 'urf (custom)<sup>II</sup> as the sole criterion for defining death. Although the Quran and the tradition (*sunna*) are the primary points of recourse, they speak of death as a metaphysical occurrence that cannot be empirically verified. In the absence of a clear definition it may be possible to appeal to the procedural principle of continuity (*iṣṭiṣhāb*) to ascertain the regulations (*aḥkām*) pertaining to retrieving organs from brain dead patients. The assertion is that if there is uncertainty regarding brain death being actual death then there is a presumption of the continuity of the life of the patient; thereby prohibiting the extraction of organs. However, scientific advancements and future possibilities mean that it is never possible to have certainty regarding death and therefore there is no scope for the application of the principle of continuity. Shi'ite jurists who rely on 'urf disagree over whether death should be defined in accordance with the understanding of the common person or the custom of the specialised medic. Given the complexities in the conceptual understanding of death and the

philosophical and theological issues involved, it is contended that neither is satisfactory.

### **The Changing Definition of Death**

The ad hoc Committee of the Harvard Medical School first challenged the longstanding definition of death as the cessation of the cardiopulmonary function in 1968. Whilst previously the cessation of the heart's function necessarily meant that the brain would die, medical advancements in the field made it possible to keep people with irreparable brain damage 'alive' by the traditional standard for years.<sup>144</sup> The biological functions of the body such as the beating of the heart and respiration can be artificially maintained with the aid of machinery after brain death. This raised questions about utilising valuable resources on patients with irreparable brain damage, and, the procurement of viable organs.<sup>145</sup> Following the report, there was a widespread shift in the medical understanding of death from the irreversible cessation of the heart's function to the irreversible cessation of the brain's function. Whilst medical and legal assessments are not uniform in their acceptance of the appropriate standard of brain death being either brain-stem death or whole-brain death, in the UK irreversible damage to the brain-stem suffices.<sup>146</sup> The brain-stem is responsible for spontaneous respiration and once its functions have completely stopped it gradually leads to the permanent loss of consciousness and the other 'higher brain' functions.<sup>147</sup> At this point doctors can either remove life support machinery or prepare the body to procure organs with the prior consent of the patient or the next of kin.

Realising the urgent need to increase the supply of available organs, Shi'ite jurists were the first amongst Muslim jurists to address the problem. In 1964, the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini, who was the Supreme Leader of Iran at the time,

declared that brain death was the appropriate standard for defining death based on the available medical evidence, allowing for the retrieval of organs from brain dead patients.<sup>148</sup> This eventually resulted in the enactment of the Act of Organ Transplantation and Brain Death 2000 in Iran. Hooman Movassagh's review of the religious edicts pertaining to organ donation issued by fifty two Shi'ite jurists found that although a number of influential jurists accept the medical criteria for death, the majority are still of the opinion that brain death does not constitute death.<sup>149</sup>

Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, who is based in Iraq but has a substantial following amongst Shia Muslims in the West, rejects the brain death standard and adheres to the traditional standard of cardiopulmonary cessation.<sup>150</sup> Whilst there are some jurisprudential works that explain how rulings pertaining to organ donation are derived, the issue of brain death has not been dealt with. Insights into juristic reasoning can only be gleaned from the religious edicts issued by jurists and in their responses to questions asked by the laity, which despite the controversies involved in defining death do not even specify whether they are referring to brain-stem death or whole-brain death. These sources show a reliance on *'urf*; however, the scope of *'urf* is limited and can only be utilised to define the subject matter of a religious regulation when the Sharia is silent regarding it.<sup>151</sup> Therefore, before addressing the role of *'urf*, it is necessary to establish two things: Firstly, that the Quran and tradition, which includes the speech, action and tacit approval of the Prophet and the Imams, does not provide a definition for death. Secondly, that the procedural principle of continuity cannot determine the regulation pertaining to the procurement of organs from brain dead patients.

## Death in the Quran and Tradition

Although problems regarding the notion of death are derived from modern day technological advancements, the belief that the Sharia is an all-inclusive regulatory system governing all aspects of human conduct means that the first point of reference for the purposes of defining death are the textual sources, namely the Quran and tradition. It is generally understood from Islamic teachings that death is the departure of the spirit (*ru* ) from the physical body; however, the Quran describes humanity's limited understanding of it.<sup>152</sup> "And they ask you (O Muhammad) concerning the *ruh*. Say: the *ruh* is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord. And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little."<sup>153</sup> In 1985, a bio-medical conference on human life held jointly by the Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences and the Kuwaiti foundation for advancement of Sciences concluded that the Quran does not provide a definition for death.<sup>154</sup> Whilst a number of textual sources mention the signs of death such as bodily decomposition, the whitening of the skin, the weakening of muscles, and the discharge of bodily fluids, they are indicators that death has occurred but cannot be used to ascertain the moment of death.<sup>155</sup>

### The Principle of Continuity and the need for Certainty

When a ruling of Sharia cannot be discovered using the primary sources, it is necessary to refer to secondary procedural principles in order to determine the practical stance to be adopted in that situation.<sup>156</sup> Although the procedural principles cannot disclose the actual Sharia ruling, they do provide a practical ruling. In this particular case the silence of the textual sources regarding the definition of death means that it is not possible to ascertain the Sharia ruling on the permissibility of extracting organs from brain dead patients. Here, it may be possible to appeal to the

principle of continuity; although it cannot provide the definition of death, it can be utilised to establish a ruling.

This line of argumentation was adopted by Tawfiq al-Wā'ī during the special consultation of the Academy of Islamic Jurisprudence on brain death to oppose the idea that brain death constitutes death.<sup>157</sup> Although Al-Wā'ī does not speak from the Shia tradition, the principles he utilises are established in Shi'ite legal theory and therefore highly relevant. According to the principle of continuity, if there is a doubt in a thing which was previously certain, there is a presumption of continuity and it is necessary to act in accordance with the previous certainty.<sup>158</sup> This is evidenced by the well-known tradition, 'certainty is not invalidated by doubt'.<sup>159</sup> In the case of patients who have suffered brain death there is doubt whether they are truly deceased due to the continuation of the body's biological functions. This is coupled with the previous certainty that they were alive; therefore, the presumption is of the continuation of life. "The principle is in favour of the *status quo*, until it can be proved that it should be changed."<sup>160</sup> Al-Wā'ī contends that it is impossible to have certainty regarding brain death, asking, "how can certainty [of death] occur when the body is still pulsating? And life is full of mysteries? And whatever is proved today can be contradicted tomorrow. And what is impossible today are the realities of tomorrow?"<sup>161</sup>

In response to Al-Wā'ī, the first point is that the principle of continuity only applies when there is certainty followed by doubt. For those who are convinced that irreversible damage to the brain stem is the correct criterion for death, there is no scope for the application of the procedural principle. Al-Wā'ī attempts to undermine this conviction by arguing that although unlikely at the moment it is impossible to know with certainty that brain-stem death cannot be reversed in the future. A Philadelphia-based

biotech company called Bioquark is already planning a controversial study with the hope of reviving brain dead patients by injecting them with stem cells.<sup>162</sup> However, with scientists constantly pushing boundaries, the same argument can be made about the irreversibility of the cessation of the heart's function. Scientific theories about reviving those who are considered dead, and constant technological progression make it impossible to have certainty regarding any definition of death, whether that is brain death or cardiopulmonary death.

Although, the traditional definition of death has been long-standing, determining when the cessation of cardiac activity becomes irreversible has fluctuated in accordance with progression in the medical field. For example it is now possible to resuscitate patients who have suffered cardiac arrest, and, during heart surgery the heart can be cooled down to stop it functioning for hours without being damaged.<sup>163</sup> Based on the theory that cells can be cooled down and preserved, proponents of cryonics argue that if a person is 'frozen' within minutes of cardiac arrest, in principle, with future technology there is no reason why that person cannot be revived.<sup>164</sup> According to cryonicists, death does not occur if the brain structure is preserved and the information relating to a person's identity remains intact since it could potentially be retrieved in the future.<sup>165</sup> Whilst the vast majority of scientists are sceptical about the possibility of reviving a cryopreserved person due to the practical problems experienced at present, it does highlight difficulties in defining death and determining its occurrence with certainty. Given that it is already possible to freeze embryos for years and later implant them, in the future with technological advancements it might be possible to revive those people who opt to be cryopreserved today. In the words of Al-Wā'ī, "what is impossible today are the realities of tomorrow". Thus, if brain dead patients are to be considered alive

in accordance with the principle of continuity, are the people who have been cryo-preserved also considered to be alive? Some of those people have opted to have only their heads preserved. Going further, if 'death' is potentially reversible, does this mean that there is a religious duty to cryopreserve anyone who is deemed suitable for the procedure?

The first human head transplant, planned to take place this December, is yet another example of how medical advancements undermine established notions of death. Dr Sergio Canevero has pledged to replace the head of a cadaver with the head of an already identified willing donor suffering from Werdnig-Hoffman's disease.<sup>166</sup> The procedure is highly controversial and it is doubtful whether it will be successful; however, the physician has already successfully transplanted the head of a rat onto the body of another rodent. The rat whose head had been transplanted showed signs that the brain was functioning as it could see and feel pain.<sup>167</sup> Whereas, previously a person whose head has been cut off was certainly regarded as dead, it may now actually be possible to reattach heads onto other bodies. If this procedure is successful, it would not only challenge conventional notions of death but also raise questions of identity. These examples show that although the need for certainty has been given prominence in textual sources, it is not an appropriate requirement to determine the occurrence of death. Medical advancements and future possibilities shift the boundaries of death and make it impossible to ever have certainty about the definition of death. As such, the procedural principle of continuity does not provide assistance in ascertaining the regulations relating to death. For pragmatic reasons it is still necessary to have a working definition of death, even if it is not certain. Thus, Shi'ite jurists have relied on the definition provided by the *'urf* as a basis for religious edicts pertaining to organ donation.

## The Role of ‘Urf

The word ‘*urf* has been defined as custom or habit. Al-Alama Muhammed Taqi al-Hakim describes it as something that the people are acquainted with whether it is a word, action or abstention. ‘*Urf is divided into general (*‘āmm*) and specific (*khāṣṣ*). General ‘*urf is something that the majority of people are united on despite differences in their religion or status or the era in which they live. Specific ‘urf is particular to a group of people based on characteristics such as their profession or location or the time in which they live. Although ‘urf is not considered to be an authoritative source that can be used independently to derive Sharia regulations, it can be used to define the subject matter (*mawū‘*) of a religious regulation when it is left undefined.<sup>168</sup> “Muslim scholars acknowledge that in investigating the subject matters (*mawdū‘āt*) one need not be an expert [jurist]. In fact, an ordinary believer, in some instances is even more proficient in determining the factual state of an object or situation. What matters is the practical knowledge about an issue under investigation.”<sup>169</sup> The remit of juristic authority is to derive Sharia rulings, not to define the subject matter of those rulings. For example, the extensions of the beneficiaries eligible to receive the compulsory alms (*zakaṭ*) changes in accordance with the ‘*urf. One of the categories for which compulsory alms has to be paid is ‘the cause of God’ (*sabīlillāh*), which is anything required for societal functioning. Conventionally, it meant things like schools or roads; however, in the modern day it could also include medical research funding, space exploration programmes and television channels to bring the Muslim society on par with the rest of the world.<sup>170</sup>***

In relation to post mortem organ donation the role of the jurist is to provide a ruling on its permissibility based on the definition of death, as understood by the ‘*urf. Those who refer to ‘urf differ*

over whether it is necessary to refer to the common perception of the laity or to the understanding of the medical expert. It is contended that neither can provide an appropriate understanding of death. Death is not a simple concept which can be left to the common man or the doctor to define; it has philosophical, religious, and ethical implications which require greater input from a variety of specialists from differing fields.

In response to the question whether a brain dead person is considered to be dead, Ayatollah Sistani's answer states, 'The criterion for applying the term "dead" in so far as the application of religious laws goes is the common perception of people, in the sense that they would call him "dead". And this is not proven in the situation mentioned in the question.'<sup>171</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi elucidates Ayatollah Sistani's position, explaining that the average person does not consider brain death to be equivalent to true death. Whilst the cessation of the cardiopulmonary function is easily observable, determining the cessation of brain function requires specialised machinery and expert knowledge.<sup>172</sup> Referring to the common perception of people in defining death does find some precedence in the chapters of jurisprudence pertaining to hunting and the ritual slaughter of animals.<sup>173</sup> However, the inadequacy of this was pointed out by jurists who noted that the perception of the laity who lacked proper understanding could not be the appropriate criterion for distinguishing between stable and unstable life. 'If such customary understanding were employed, anyone who had fallen into a coma or who had suffered a nonfatal stroke or heart attack could be pronounced dead.'<sup>174</sup>

The common perception is generally informed by the specialised understanding and therefore liable to change. Whereas previously a person who had suffered cardiac arrest would be considered to be dead, the average person now understands that they may be

resuscitated and therefore relies on the doctor to diagnose death. The concept of brain death however is relatively new and society has not been properly exposed to the idea with the average person only really encountering the issue if they are unfortunate enough to have a family member suffer from brain death. The lack of public awareness has led to calls to educate the community about the meaning of brain death and how it differs from other neurological disorders such as a coma or persistent vegetative state.<sup>175</sup> It is unclear why uninformed common perception which could change with enough time and education should be the criterion for determining the definition of death. A further problem with relying on common perception is that it not only varies over time but can also fluctuate in different regions.<sup>176</sup> Thus, it could be the case that in certain localities the medical understanding of death changes the common perception of death. This could lead to a scenario where the common perception of death varies from region to region. It is unclear what this would mean for those who, like Ayatollah Sistani, advocate that common perception is the sole criterion for defining death.

A number of leading jurists, including Ayatollah Mohammad Ishaq Fayyadh,<sup>177</sup> Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi,<sup>178</sup> and the Supreme Leader of Iran Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei,<sup>179</sup> have accepted the prevalent brain death criteria and allowed the procurement of organs at this point. In doing so, there has been a tendency amongst the Shi'ite jurists to defer to the judgement of medical experts to define death.<sup>180</sup> When Ayatollah Tabrizi was asked by the Ministry of Health in Iran whether death was defined as brain death or cardiopulmonary death, he responded, 'It is necessary to refer to the medical specialist in order to decide whether the first or second conforms to the definition of death.'<sup>181</sup> Similarly, Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri refers to the custom

of medical experts when defining death.<sup>182</sup> These jurists rely on the specialised convention as opposed to the common perception of the laity, judging that medical specialists are the best placed to provide an accurate understanding of death. However, the complexities of death have prevented any international consensus on the definition of death amongst the global medical community. Furthermore, even if a consensus is achievable, relying on medical expertise alone is contentious because the conceptual understanding of death transcends scientific investigation and requires a sound philosophical basis.

Juristic references to the medical *'urf* do not take into consideration the variation within the medical community. Mohammed Tabishat's work on the moral discourse surrounding organ donation in Cairo states that some physicians still adhere to the traditional standard of death contending that brain dead patients continue to demonstrate signs of life such as physical growth. In certain cases, pregnant women diagnosed as brain dead have carried the foetus to term.<sup>183</sup> Even in western countries where the brain death standard is widely accepted there are differences in its formulation as either brain-stem death or whole-brain death. In the UK, at the Conference of Royal Colleges and their Faculties in 1976, brain-stem death was accepted as the new definition of death.<sup>184</sup> As opposed to this, in the US and most European countries diagnosis of the whole-brain death is necessary.<sup>185</sup> Both formulations require the irreversible loss of the capacity for consciousness and spontaneous respiration; however, patients with preserved electrical activity or blood flow in isolated brain cells are considered to be alive in accordance with the whole-brain death approach but not the brain-stem death approach. Proponents of the whole-brain death standard argue that it is the more cautious approach since residual brain activity could mean that the individual has some

level of awareness.<sup>186</sup> This raises questions about whether the juristic endorsement of medical *'urf* means that the definition of death varies in different countries in accordance with the medical customs of that place.

Although medical specialists can inform us about the physiological states of patients in the process of dying, an appropriate understanding of death cannot be limited to scientific issues alone. The ad hoc committee of the Harvard Medical School recognised that 'more than medical problems are present. There are moral, ethical and religious issues.'<sup>187</sup> There is a distinction between determining the meaning of death and diagnosing death once its definition is known. Whilst medical specialists are most apt at devising clinical tests to diagnose whether a patient has suffered irreversible brain damage, defining death itself requires input from a greater variety of specialists including philosophers, bioethicists and theologians. The unprecedented case of Tony Bland, in which for the first time British Law Lords permitted artificial nutrition and hydration to be withdrawn from a person in persistent vegetative state whose brain stem was functioning, shifted the discourse on the value of life and the capacity for consciousness.<sup>188</sup> In the US, the President's Council on Bioethics deliberated whether death should be understood as the irreversible cessation of the higher brain function in light of the growing need for transplantable organs.<sup>189</sup> This would mean that organs could be procured whilst the brain stem, which controls breathing, heart rate and blood pressure, continues to function. The on-going debate concerning the redefinition of death to the cessation of the higher brain function or the loss of personhood demonstrates the complications in determining the conceptual meaning of death. It highlights the need for a variety of experts, including medics, to address issues such as the value of consciousness, the notion of personhood and the connection between the soul and the body and mind.<sup>190</sup>

The permissibility of procuring organs from brain dead patients depends on whether such patients are considered deceased or not in Islam. The textual sources refer to death as the departure of the spirit from the body but do not provide guidance on how to determine its occurrence. The absence of a definition in the Quran and tradition makes it possible to appeal to the secondary procedural principles in order to derive a practical ruling. According to the principle of continuity, there is a presumption that the brain dead patient is still alive because certainty cannot be undermined by doubt. However, advancements in medical technology and controversial clinical experiments such as transplanting a human head mean that it is impossible to have certain knowledge about the point of death. Thus, Shi'ite jurists have relied on *'urf* to provide a definition of death even if it is a fallible understanding subject to change. Considering the complexities in the conceptual understanding of death and the variety of issues involved, death is most appropriately defined by a range of experts including medical specialists.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Shia' is a noun referring to the second largest sect of Islam or the followers of that sect. The term 'Shi'ite' is used as an adjective (relating to Shia). Given that the majority of Shia Muslims are Shia Twelvers, this paper uses 'Shia' to refer to them.

<sup>11</sup> Although *'urf* is commonly translated as custom, it does not convey the meaning of the concept fully and therefore, the Arabic term *'urf* will be used henceforth without translation.

## Finding the Origin of Love?

GEOFFREY SAGE

### Abstract

*There have historically been numerous connections between the way that medieval Iberian Muslims conceptualized love, lust, and desire and the ways in which Western Europeans have continued to express those same concepts. Specifically, the muwashshah (a genre of strophic poetry) generated a series of paradigm shifts (with a definition borrowed from Kuhn to apply to the humanities) within Western conceptualizations.*

*The intersection of the muwashshahs with Western genres gave rise to the troubadours, whose influence on wider Western European culture worked to transform the idea of love. The legends surrounding King Arthur provide a key reflection of the continued relationship between Hispano-Arab lyric poetry and the Western epic. The values expressed within the Arthurian corpus are both derived from and in conflict with the values lauded by the muwashshah, a tension that did not resolve, but continued not just through the medieval and early modern periods, but into the English Romantic period. The muwashshah generated a paradigm shift that had lasting effects, identified in troubadour material that continued to inspire Western European audiences, as mediated through, among others, Arthurian material.*

*The paper concludes that while mostly existing as a substratum within European culture, the muwashshah has had a lasting influence upon European culture, in a subtle, not-often-recognized manner, particularly visible through the Arthurian corpus. Their expressions of love and desire provide a clear demonstration of lasting influence, as they provide the genealogy of a distinct change in the expression of emotion within European culture.*

### Introduction

The *muwashshah*, a stylized, highly structured Hispano-Arabic

poetic form dating from the early medieval period, represents a key example of the interchange between Arab/Arabic/Muslim culture and that of Europe, indicating that “Islam” and “Europe” were and are not necessarily in isolation from each other, nor diametrically opposed. Instead, this poetic form, often choosing as its subject love, lust, or desire, was absorbed into the Western European milieu by its influence upon neighboring states, and the nascent *troubadour* tradition. While the precise form of the *muwashshah* may not have been absorbed, with their strict rules regarding rhyme and metre, the themes were transferred from Arabic originals into Provençal counterparts.<sup>191</sup>

Thus, the similarities between the *muwashshah*, other Arabic poetry, and contemporary *troubadour* forms allowed for the survival of the *muwashshah* in a certain set ways and forms. The fall of the Almohads in Iberia marked the conclusion of the *muwashshah*'s strong presence within Hispano-Arabic culture, and to some extent, any direct influence of Hispano-Arabic culture upon Western Europe. It represented the beginning of a substratum of continued Arabic, Muslim influence upon medieval, Christian Europe that has continued down to the present day.

While the survival of the themes and tropes from the *muwashshah* within Western Europe is a very real, albeit subtle and indirect, situation, it is most appropriate to speak of the broader concept of connections between Hispano-Arabic and Christian, Western European poetry, rather than demarcating the situation further into direct, one-to-one influences. The situation consisted of more than a series of chance parallels, driven by basic human nature or coincidence, but the historical record allows for few specific instances of borrowing;<sup>192</sup> the traditions and examples available to us are not so direct as the clear, attributed borrowings of, for example, later *muwashshah* poets from earlier ones. Complicating the matter, European descendants of the *muwashshah* possessed not only legacies of paradigm shifts,<sup>193</sup> but the results of an entirely

different set of paradigms (and their shifts) engendered by being part of Western European, Christian culture.

The partial integration of certain artistic aspects of Hispano-Arabic culture into European culture, via the *troubadours*, demonstrates the possibility of the long-term survival of aspects of that now-minority culture within the hegemonic culture of Christian Europe. While not the only way that the culture of the Hispano-Arabic-Muslim elite passed into the Western European, Latin, Christian elite, the themes of the *troubadour*, derived from the *muwashshah*, represent one of the longest-lasting; again, much of the language of both the *troubadours* and the *muwashshah* poets sounds, once updated, in keeping with modern tropes of love and love poetry.

Though the idea of deep, rich emotion predates the adoption of *muwashshah* themes into *troubadour* poetry, it is the specific integration of those themes into a Western literary mode that has survived. While the idea that the *troubadour* (and by tracing back descent, the *muwashshah*) invented the feeling that we now identify as 'love' is an overstatement, the traditional *expression* of that feeling is derived in part from the *muwashshah*. The language of emotion and the rich descriptions of how the author (or his assumed persona) feels becomes more vivid following the acceptance of the shared themes of the *muwashshah* and *troubadour* poetry into Western European culture.

The *muwashshah*-derived and *muwashshah*-influenced aspects contribute heavily, though subtly, to the eventual makeup of a Western literary tradition, especially when an idealized understanding of love or sexuality is involved. These predecessors assist in explaining many of the particular aspects of what is part of the (Western) European subconscious understanding of love, lust, and desire (the second being sexual and the third having a romantic component beyond the physical). As a key example, the Arthurian tradition,<sup>194</sup> with its emphasis on the ideal of courtly love,

speaks directly to the tropes and themes of the *muwashshah*, though in an indirect manner derived from the permeation of the themes of the *muwashshah* into a *troubadour* context, where these themes could be diffused into popular culture and tales of heroes.<sup>195</sup>

### Arthur and the *Muwashshah*

In some ways, the various Arthurian romance cycles, especially those of Chrétien de Troyes, graft the themes of the lyric *muwashshah* onto the epic; whereas all epics rely on a series of heroic deeds, the Arthurian romances also examine the role of love (licit and illicit,<sup>196</sup> requited and unrequited) and sexuality, though in an admittedly incomplete fashion. Indeed, the term “courtly love” was originally composed to discuss the relationship between Guinevere and Lancelot: “a type of sensual love and what distinguishes it from other forms of sexual love, from mere passion... is its purpose or motive, its formal object, namely, the lover’s progress and growth in natural goodness, merit, and worth.”<sup>197</sup> In some ways, this same description might apply to a certain set of ideals seen in some *muwashshahs* that go beyond the immediately physical, whether the sex is extramarital or not. By the same token, the idea of an overpowering love, one that transcends the boundaries of acceptable behavior while remaining ‘pure’ is also seen in the *muwashshah*:

*The palpitations of my heart are excessive  
and my patience is gone.  
My love has let me go. If only I could  
let go of him!*<sup>198</sup>

Despite the fact that the physicality of this poem locates it squarely within a Hispano-Arabic context, rather than a Christian, European one, the emotions described have clear parallels to the Arthurian romances, where despite the inappropriateness of their relationship, it takes the death of Arthur to convince Lancelot and Guinevere to separate in any sort of lasting fashion, an echo of the idea that chastity is a crucial part of the courtly love ideal and to violate such

an ideal, especially between unmarried (in this case, married to others) lovers, is to deserve the eventual guilt and shame.

However, whereas the *muwashshah* can be interpreted to encourage a hedonistic acceptance of the physical, the nature of the Arthurian romances suggests an inevitable doom for straying outside the lines of propriety, even if the actual love affair between Lancelot and Guinevere represents one of the great love stories of the past thousand years. The judgmental nature of Western Christian culture again applies here; whereas adultery is, if not celebrated throughout the *muwashshah* corpus, at least tolerated as a daring topic, not a taboo;<sup>199</sup> within the various Arthurian cycles, adultery (and other sexual sins)<sup>200</sup> only leads to trouble for the protagonists; by breaking these sexual taboos, Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot bring doom upon the golden age of Camelot.<sup>201</sup>

As these comparisons illustrate, one can see clear connections between the *muwashshah* material and the eventual expression of these themes within Western culture. The results of cultural transformation, these clear discrepancies between the original material of the *muwashshah* and the subsequent Arthurian material demonstrate a *mediated* influence. However, such transformation does not negate the connections between the two versions of literature; despite their differing interpretations, the similarities are strong, and can be clearly be seen in comparison between the *muwashshah* via early *troubadour* diffusion, into ultimately the popular Arthurian cycle, especially those stories that focus on the courtly life, and not the spiritual quest to retrieve the grail. The human-yet-Romantic version of the knights found within Chrétien de Troyes' original material echo the idealized, but human lovers of the *muwashshahs*.

Despite the differences in style and approach, especially to potentially adulterous sexuality, the material themes of the *muwashshah* are echoed within both later *troubadour* material and

its derivations and descendants within Western European culture. For instance, the idea that a *muwashshah* poet might have his lusty ambitions thwarted by a watcher is echoed by the eventual discovery of Lancelot and Guinevere's adultery by the (villainous) Mordred.<sup>202</sup> Again, a prominent reused theme of the *muwashshah* is displayed here: the illicit lovers are kept apart by someone dedicated not only to ensuring their romantic separation, but also to ensuring that they cannot meet.

Arthurian material provides a clear way to trace the diffusion of *troubadour* ideals. By the end of the twelfth century CE and the first quarter of the thirteenth, the Arthurian romances had begun to develop more fully within the *troubadour* tradition, much of it from the context of the *muwashshah*-influenced Chrétien de Troyes, though crucially not totally derived from his particular interpretations. His creation of the sexual, sensual courtly love owed a debt to the *muwashshah*, but he was also a key interpretive force for those themes within a specific literary tradition.<sup>203</sup>

In many ways, most of the lasting themes found in the *muwashshah* first appeared outside a proper *troubadour* context, instead expressed within a context of further Arthurian romance,<sup>204</sup> as part of the interplay of ideals that led to the celebration of the illicit love of Lancelot and Guinevere. The idea of love as an intensely romantic, sensual, sexual relationship, acceptable within the *muwashshah* corpus, if not to Iberian society, could only find partial acceptance within Western European culture.

Representative of the European adoption of *muwashshah* themes, *troubadour* work was representative of the first, more direct descent of the *muwashshah* into a Western European context; further descendants of the *muwashshah* tradition would almost entirely be filtered through a worldview that included the general acceptance of the *troubadour* understanding of longing, lust, and love. By the end of the *troubadour* period, and into the further adoption of

Arabic tropes by Western European writers, the ideal of a romantic relationship, not to mention a sexual one, had been redefined. From that point forward, a European understanding of love (and sex) was informed by *troubadour* and post-*troubadour* interpretations of those *muwashshah*-derived *troubadour* themes. Essentially, not only did the *troubadours* provide a mediating context for the influence of the *muwashshah* but also created the new cultural context in which to *further* interpret the themes and tropes of the *muwashshah*, insofar as they continued to survive within Christian Europe.<sup>205</sup>

The spread and adoption of *troubadour* ideals helped to transform the absorbed *muwashshah*, or at least its tropes and themes, from a Hispano-Arabic phenomenon into one that could spread beyond those borders. As a result of the continued adoption of *troubadour* themes by Western society, such preservation has kept the ideals of the *muwashshah* alive to the present day, with a continued transformation of those ideals to suit the times, while never rejecting their original iteration, nor transforming them into an alien understanding.

### The Romantics and the *Muwashshah*

More recent than the medieval period, the Romantic period in the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth century CE, with its focus on looking back, also helped to preserve the *muwashshah* themes as well; by consciously imitating and promoting the style of the late medieval period and reusing its tropes, they were able to maintain the influence of the *muwashshah* past the Enlightenment. This looking back to medieval models extended to poetry, with the medieval *troubadours*, and by extension their connections to the *muwashshah*, held in high regard. Despite the clear distinction between some of the key features of the Romantics, especially English ones – such as an emphasis on “Nature,” explicitly mentioned in the credo of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood<sup>–206</sup> and

the key emphases of the *troubadours* upon courtly life and interpersonal relationships, there are clear areas of overlap, indicative of the connection exemplified by the looking-back of a sub-section of the Romantic movement.

There were certainly different strands within the Romantic movement, and as a whole, the label is nebulous, able to include a wide range of artists and authors; however, it can safely be claimed that one of the chief themes was the idealization of the past, whether medieval or pagan. As both the late medieval period, wherein the *muwashshah*'s influence was widespread thanks to the *troubadours*, and the Romantic period were both transitory periods within the history of Western culture, it is perhaps unsurprising that the past the Romantics chose to idealize included at least in part a medievalism modeled specifically on the ideals inherent within *troubadour* culture.

As the *troubadour* themes and tropes disseminated throughout Northern Europe, they combined with 'native' Christian European themes to create new interpretations; this phenomenon may be seen as a precursor to the ways in which the Romantic movement would combine the dominant culture of late eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe with these historical antecedents. Given the rejection of the modern by parts of the Romantic movement, the prominent medieval presence of the *troubadour* style led to its adoption as part of the underlying foundation of a particular subgroup of the Romantic movement, especially within England.<sup>207</sup> Again, in terms of the *muwashshah* and the survival of its themes throughout Western culture, the Romantics can be seen as having brought those themes from their *troubadour* and immediately post-*troubadour* context into a context more immediately accessible for their peers. By both reusing and popularizing medieval tropes, even if they were not immediately derived from the *muwashshah*, the Romantic movement functioned as another link in the chain of preservation and popularization.

Moreover, the Romantic period prominently featured Arthur as an inspiration, with Arthuriana underlying a good deal of the Romantic output, again especially within England and English-speaking nations, a legacy of the specific cultural factors that led to the identification of Arthur as a personification of Britain, despite the significant presence of non-*English* and non-*British* Arthuriana and material incorporated into the English tradition. The themes present within Arthur were interpreted as both an antiquated model requiring some explanation for the then-modern world, but also as possessing timeless qualities; the scholarly trend that led to the popularization of the phrase “courtly love” for the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere sits within this context. The relationships celebrated within the Romantic world may or may not meet a strict definition of courtly love, in that they are not necessarily set in an aristocratic setting, but overall, they represent “a type of sensual love...distinguish[ed]... from other forms of sexual love, from mere passion...Its purpose or motive, its formal object... [can be seen to be] the lover’s progress and growth in natural goodness, merit, and worth.”<sup>208</sup>

Romantic recontextualization of love and the relationships between men and women, again especially within Arthurian themes in England, has definite parallels in the original adoption of *muwashshah* themes by early *troubadours*. In the recasting of the idea of love by Romantics, especially poets, however, they did not look to the original *muwashshah* themes, but to the specific expressions thereof already adopted by *troubadours*; instead of looking to original material, they adapted an already adapted version for reinterpretation and re-promulgation.

This series of recombinations, transformations and reinterpretations appears to lead to a sort of circular paradox; without the *muwashshah* themes as reinterpreted by the *troubadours*, the Romantic movement would have had a dearth of material to mine for influences, but without the Romantic movement, the

*muwashshah* themes would not necessarily have maintained their lasting influence nor their grip upon the modern Western imagination. However, this paradox is resolvable. As the Romantics looked not to an original, but to an already existing transformation, they could demonstrate themselves to be looking back to a Western context; by the end of the *troubadour* period, the paradigms that had kept the *muwashshah* material as foreign had partially broken down, at least to the extent that the *muwashshah* themes could now be seen as paradigms within a Western European context.

Ultimately, much of the recombining, transformation, and reinterpretation that allowed for the survival of the *muwashshah* themes was aided by the Romantic adoption of those *troubadour* themes originally derived from Hispano-Arabic material. At the same time, it was not the presence of fresh *muwashshah* material nor immediate ties between the incoming Arabic-language material and Europe that led to the re-popularization of those themes. Instead, it was the recurring influence of the *troubadour* interpretations that led to first the maintenance of *muwashshah*-derived themes and then to their recasting within a fresh interpretation of their descendants.

### Conclusion

The formative *troubadour* culture was not fully bound by the pre-existing suppositions of their culture, nor were their descendants required to maintain a strict adherence to either pre-*troubadour* or *troubadour* principles. As discussed previously, the *troubadour* culture changed perceptions of what was an appropriate topic for both artistic literature and for entertainment; nevertheless, it did not change accepted views on sexual propriety, but rather situated the ideals of the *muwashshah* within a distinct culture, one with a pre-existing, distinct understanding of sexual politics, both within society and between individuals. Their much later (partial) descendants, the Romantics, especially as they were situated in

societies with conservative sexual politics, echoed these sentiments; their looking back was able to easily adopt aspects of the conservatism present within the medieval period, while at the same time exploring the tensions present within the medieval material. Having been influenced not just directly by troubadour predecessors, but by centuries of post-*troubadour* expansion upon *troubadour* (and by extension, *muwashshah*-derived) material, their particular set of paradigms evidenced both continuity and shifts from those of the *troubadours*.

The literary trends analyzed herein demonstrate an affinity for the derived themes. The influence of the *muwashshah* upon the *troubadours* laid the foundation for the themes and motifs of those Hispano-Arabic genres to become constituent elements of Christian, Western European literature. The recasting of the *troubadours'* modifications of those themes within a post-*troubadour* environment allowed for the survival of those elements, both within literature and as part of a popular appeal. For example, the original stories that underlay the reinterpretations of Chrétien de Troyes and others survived and were presented in a modified fashion throughout the post-*troubadour* period. The Romantic appeal to the past and partial subconscious acceptance of the *troubadour* values and paradigms allowed for a fusion of both the original recasting by the *troubadours* and the post-*troubadour* material, which, rather than eradicating the *muwashshah* themes, spoke to their persistence and prevalence within Western European literature.

The survival of the *muwashshah* within European literature is a study in connection. While the poems themselves were not incorporated into a Western, European, Christian context, their themes and motifs are traceable through the development of post-*muwashshah* European literature. Therefore, then, the legacies of the *muwashshah* reflect the disparate way in which the *muwashshah* was incorporated into a foreign culture, first as a direct, albeit

unusual influence, but after that, only in the form of normalized, refashioned variants on the original theme.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> This paper owes much to fruitful discussions with Julia Martinez Ariño who kindly agreed to share her own analysis with us, Julia Martinez Ariño, “Grupos religiosos y gobierno local en interacción: un estudio de caso en Francia”, *Sociedad y religión* 46 (2016): 201-23.
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- <sup>8</sup> Claire de Galember, “La gestion publique de l’islam en France et en Allemagne.”, *Revue internationale et stratégique* 52 (4) (2005): 67-78.
- <sup>9</sup> The law of 9 December 1905 normally strictly forbids local and national authorities to subsidise religions.
- <sup>10</sup> It can be noted that the designation is carefully chosen in order to avoid putting too much emphasis on the religious character of the place, and instead enhancing its cultural purpose.
- <sup>11</sup> Around 200.000 people lived in City A in 2014 and approximately 300.000 in City B the same year (source: <https://www.insee.fr/>). City A City Council has been led by a socialist majority ever since the 1970s and City B City Council ever since the 1980s.
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- <sup>13</sup> Abdellali Hajjat et Marwan Mohammed, *Islamophobie : comment les élites françaises fabriquent le « problème musulman »* (La Découverte, 2013).
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- <sup>15</sup> Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (Oxford, UK:Blackwell, 1994), 23.

- <sup>16</sup> Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York : London: Free Press ; Collier-Macmillan, 1963).
- <sup>17</sup> John R Bowen, “Working schemas and normative models in French governance of Islam”.
- <sup>18</sup> Jean Baubérot, *Les sept laïcités françaises : le modèle français de laïcité n'existe pas* (Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2015); Philippe Portier, *L'État et les religions en France : une sociologie historique de la laïcité* (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016); Jean Baubérot, *Histoire de la laïcité en France.*, 5th ed., (Presses universitaires de France, 2010).
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- <sup>23</sup> Claude Gilbert and Emmanuel Henry, “La Définition Des Problèmes Publics : Entre Publicité et Discretion”, *Revue Française de Sociologie* 53 (1) (2012): 35-59.
- <sup>24</sup> Charlotte Halpern, Pierre Lascoumes, and Patrick Le Galès, ed., *L'instrumentation de l'action publique : controverses, résistances, effets* (Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2014); Pierre Lascoumes and Patrick Le Galès, ed., *Gouverner par les instruments* (Presses de Sciences Po, 2005).
- <sup>25</sup> Therese O'Toole et al., “Governing through Prevent? Regulation and contested practice in State-Mulim engagement”, *Sociology* 50 (1) (2016): 160-77.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview with a City Councillor, City A, April 2016
- <sup>27</sup> Document published by the Council of City A in septembre 2016. We will not provide a detailed reference in this paper, for confidentiality reasons.
- <sup>28</sup> Other instances could be picked up which all suggest that Islam is at the heart of the report (burial spaces, pork-free meals in school canteens, face veiling at weddings, wearing of the headscarf by mothers during school outings, prayer at the workplace, fasting, gender mixing in sporting activities...)
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- <sup>30</sup> O'Toole et al., “Governing through Prevent? Regulation and contested practice in State-Mulim engagement”.
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- <sup>32</sup> Asma, City B, June 2016.
- <sup>33</sup> Document of the City B Council. Again, references are not given in full detail for confidentiality reasons.
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- <sup>35</sup> Arun Kundnani, “Spooked! How Not to Prevent Violent Extremism” (Institute of Race Relations, October 2009), <http://www.irr.org.uk/app/uploads/2016/12/spooked.pdf>, (accessed 15 April 2017).
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- <sup>37</sup> Interview with Kamila, City C, January 2017.

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- <sup>39</sup> O'Toole *et al.*, "Governing through Prevent? Regulation and contested practice in State-Mulim engagement", 166.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.
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- <sup>44</sup> Hennette-Vauchez, "Séparation, garantie, neutralité... les multiples grammaires de la laïcité".
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- <sup>48</sup> *Building Resilience through Integration & Trust*
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- <sup>104</sup> Block, *Multilingual Identities in a Global City*: 22.
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- <sup>113</sup> This notion taps into Habermas's conception of communicative action, where he argues that for an utterance to be meaningful it needs to be based on "acceptability conditions". He conveys that "we understand a speech act when we know the kinds of reasons that a speaker could provide in order to convince a hearer that he is entitled in the given circumstances to claim validity for his utterance – in short, when we know what makes it acceptable". Hence, my respondents' aim with dialogue is to make their moral norms understandable to liberal secular by formulating their epistemology through modern vocabulary and rationalities. This is not a one way process however, as that rationality also shapes their own subject position. See, Jurgen Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, trans. B. Fultner (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 232.
- <sup>114</sup> Stanley Deetz and Jennifer Simpson, "Organizational Dialogue Open Formation and the Demand of "Otherness," in *Dialogue: Theorizing Difference in Communication Studies*, eds. Rob Anderson, Leslie A. Baxter, and Kenneth Cissna (London: Sage, 2004), 141.
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- <sup>119</sup> Catherine Trundle, "The Transformation of Compassion and the Ethics of Interaction within Charity Practices," in *Differentiating Development: Beyond an Anthropology of Critique*, eds. Soumhya Venkatesan and Thomas Yarrow (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 224; Casper Bruun Jensen and Brit Ross Winthereik, "Recursive Partnership in Global Development Aid," in *Differentiating Development: Beyond an Anthropology of Critique*, eds. Soumhya Venkatesan and Thomas Yarrow (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 84-102.
- <sup>120</sup> Amir-Moazami draws on the Foucauldian concept of governmentality (See, Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France*, (New York: Picador Publishing, 2009), in framing her analytical approach. According to this perspective governmentality is concerned with 'technologies of power.' Dialogue in this context has emerged as a tool of regulating Muslims with rhetoric of 'integration and cohesion.' See, Schirin Amir-Moazami, "Dialogue as a Governmental Technique: Managing Gendered Islam in Germany." *Feminist Review* 98(1):9-27, 11.
- <sup>121</sup> This is also an indirect but very relevant addressing of the 'good' Muslim, 'bad' Muslim dichotomy (see, Mahmood Mamdani, "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism." *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 766-775). Aiming to tackle traditional gender and sexuality norms and other 'fundamental,' 'extreme,' and 'violent,' teachings of Muslims – be it through pedagogical techniques of dialogue – implies that there is a group of Muslims bound to these orthodoxies and others who have successfully integrated into liberal teachings (Schirin Amir-Moazami, "Dialogue as a Governmental Technique: Managing Gendered Islam in Germany." *Feminist Review* 98(1):9-27, 11).

- <sup>122</sup> I use the concept tactic here drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau. Tactics are different from strategies, in that the latter is produced by institutions and structures of power and the latter is a way of being/surviving developed by the subordinated who are within those structures of power. See, Michel de Certeau, *The Practices of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).
- <sup>123</sup> *Hosgoru* is often translated as into English as tolerance, a translation I personally do not favor. *Hosgoru* has more the meaning of seeing the good in people and events, rather than actually tolerating them a term which has its own social and political baggage.
- <sup>124</sup> The Constitution of Medina is an agreement that was made by the Prophet Mohammad on behalf of the Muslim emigrants to Medina, with the non-Muslim clans that included the polytheists and Jews. This is an important agreement as it included articles on Muslim relations with non-Muslims (especially Jews), and the phenomenon of living together under one agreement. See Awad Halabi, "Constitution of Medina." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* [http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/article/opr/t236/e1003?\\_hi=0&\\_pos=1](http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/article/opr/t236/e1003?_hi=0&_pos=1), accessed 2016.
- <sup>125</sup> She conveys that tolerance has become a term that denotes 'civic peace' in the twenty first century, however it is also a way of racialization and reproduction of supremacy without actual violence or coercion. It became a buzzword in societies that were becoming more and more multicultural due to immigration, and these populations were in the process of claiming rights and recognition. But the problem with tolerance, explains Brown, is that it does not have a unified meaning and it is unpacked differently in different contexts. The danger lies in essentializing tolerance as a liberal tradition within the West as different from other non-liberal nation states. Thus, her argument is that we should recognize the social and political effect on tolerance and analytically scrutinize how it operates in situations of conflict, normativity, and 'stratification and difference'. See, Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age Of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 2-4.
- <sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>127</sup> Due to ethical reasons I cannot disclose the name of the association that organized the event. The invitation was sent to me personally.
- <sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, Brown.
- <sup>129</sup> Thus dialogue is a way of voicing a demand for recognition, in a public entity that is highly exclusionary. See, Schirin Amir-Moazami, "Muslim Challenges to the Secular Consensus: A German Case Study." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 13(3):267-286. Even in the early discussions on the public sphere religion was scene as an 'irrationality,' an 'absolutist and authoritarian' tradition and thus excluded from the modern public sphere. See, Maeve Cooke, *Re-Presenting the Good Society* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2006). The positivity that dialogue plays into is an attempt to free religion from this image and acclaim a public place.
- <sup>130</sup> Paul Gorski identifies a paradox in dialogue when it comes to the issue of likeability. Dialogue is constructed as a mutual engagement that is meant to be carried out in equality, for both voices to be heard. According to Gorski however, the voice of the dominant is *al-ready* heard, in exceeding proportion by the minority, hence it is them who are trying to reach the dominant. This becomes a problem when the minority may be voicing a 'truth' that may not appeal to the dominant, thus resulting in a 'loss of likeability'. The notion of framing a concerned voice in such an aesthetic and 'acceptable' form of dialogue is a way of dealing with this loss of likeability and indeed hindering it to a certain extent. See Paul Gorski, "Good Intentions are not enough: A Decolonizing Intercultural Education." *Intercultural Education* 19(6) 515-525, 523.

- <sup>131</sup> Here I find useful Norbert Elias' *The Civilizing Process*, which provides an elaborate explanation on how the notion of civility and proper conduct evolved in Europe. In this work he develops on 'domestic pacification' in Western Europe as a way of creating social balance. The *civilized self image* emerged as "one of the most important structural characteristics of more highly developed societies, and a chief factor molding civilized conduct". Quintessentially, social actors recognized that they needed to be in more recognition of the "fears, needs, and aspirations of others if they are to succeed in reducing their own insecurities, in promoting their interests, and in realizing their hopes". Although Elias' observations pertain to a certain period of history between certain classes, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, I can trace a similar link between how my interlocutors try to share power within that exact paradigm of passivity. In this sense dialogue exerts that image of the 'civilized self' as an anti-thesis to the fears associated with the Muslim image. The behavioral conducts that come out from this discourse are designed exactly to 'reduce their own insecurities' by recognizing the 'fears' of others. While Elias adds that in most cases this process does not truly eliminate the enmity, my observations indicate that the volunteers carry out dialogue with the desire to initiate true positive social change and genuine emotional transformation. See, Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Project: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Blackwell Publishing, 2000 [1994]).
- <sup>132</sup> Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- <sup>133</sup> Michel de Certeau uses this word in a specific term to convey how the dwellers of a neighborhood adjust to certain behaviors that are recognizable to the other. In this sense the body is a canvas that conforms to these unwritten but nevertheless articulated rules. Rather than completely embodying 'neighborhood norms' my central argument is that my interlocutors re-articulate their ethical codes in reflection with those neighborhood norms as a specific way of resolving conflictual encounters. Ibid., de Certeau.
- <sup>134</sup> See Michael Rabinder James "Critical Intercultural Dialogue," *Polity* 31.4(1999), 587-607.
- <sup>135</sup> Guruch Randhawa, "The Impending Kidney Transplant Crisis For The Asian Population In The UK," *Public Health* 112 (1998): 265.
- <sup>136</sup> NHS, "Statistics about Organ Donation, BAME Organ Donation and Transplant," NHS Blood and Transplant, <<https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/supporting-my-decision/statistics-about-organ-donation/>> (accessed 1 March 2017).
- <sup>137</sup> John McManus, "Hospitals urge Muslims to Donate Organs," BBC News, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33155326>> (accessed 1 March 2017).
- <sup>138</sup> Kidney Patient UK, "Transplantation Cost Effectiveness," Kidney Patient UK, February 2010, <<http://www.kidney.org.uk/archives/news-archive-2/campaigns-transplantation-trans-cost-effect/>> (accessed 1 March 2017).
- <sup>139</sup> NHS, "Taking Organ Transplantation to 2020: a UK Strategy, NHS Blood and Transplant, <[http://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/to2020/resources/nhsbt\\_organ\\_donor\\_strategy\\_long.pdf](http://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/to2020/resources/nhsbt_organ_donor_strategy_long.pdf)> (accessed 1 August 2017).
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- <sup>141</sup> Pew Research Center, "Mapping the Global Muslim Population," 7 October 2009, <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/> (accessed 7 August 2017).
- <sup>142</sup> Imamia Medics International (UK), 'IMI-UK Annual Conference 2015' 6 September 2015 <<http://imamiamedics.org.uk/news/imi-uk-annual-conference-2015/>> (accessed 1 August 2016).

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- <sup>144</sup> “A Definition of Irreversible Coma. Report Of The Ad Hoc Committee Of The Harvard Medical School To Examine The Definition Of Brain Death”, *JAMA: The Journal Of The American Medical Association* 205, no. 6 (1968): 337-340.
- <sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, 337.
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- <sup>147</sup> ‘A Code of Practice for the Diagnosis and Confirmation of Death’, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, (London, 2008).
- <sup>148</sup> H. Salahi et al., “Religious Sanctions Regarding Cadaveric Organ Transplantation In Iran”, *Transplantation Proceedings* 30, no. 3 (1998): 769.
- <sup>149</sup> Hooman Movassagh, “Human Organ Donations Under the ‘Iranian Model’: A Rewarding Scheme for U.S. Regulatory Reform?” *Indiana Health Law Review* Vol. 13:1 (2016): 96.
- <sup>150</sup> Ayatullah Sayyid Ali al-Hussaini as-Sistani, *A code of Practice for Muslims in the West*, (Imam Ali Foundation, 2012) Question 360.
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- <sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, 324.
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- 172 Shabbir M. H. Alibhai and Michael Gordon "The permissibility of organ donation, End-of-life care, and Autopsy in Shiite Islam: A Case Study" in Jonathan E Brockopp and Thomas Eich, *Muslim Medical Ethics* (University of South Carolina Press 2008), 173.
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- 190 Sachedina, *Islamic Biomedical Ethics*, 164.
- 191 Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 31.
- 192 William IX of Aquitaine represents one of the few potential direct borrowings. See Press, Alan R., *Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1971).
- 193 The conceptualization of paradigm shifts, as originated by Thomas Kuhn, translates from the philosophy of science to the specific study of history examined here, as a distinct and

identifiable change from one method of thinking to another, whether immediate and disruptive (such as is possible in the case of the influence of the *muwashshah* on the troubadour culture) or gradual and ultimately reflective of extant culture. Kuhn, Thomas S, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

- <sup>194</sup> Different Arthurian traditions spell the principal characters' names differently. Here, I will be using the most common modern English variants, rather than using the individual variants used by specific authors.
- <sup>195</sup> While there are "Saracen" knights at Arthur's court (Sir Palamedes being the most prominent), there is no record of them bringing their culture with them, only their exploits, and they typically convert to Christianity at the end. Sylvia Huot, "Others and alterity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, ed. Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 247-249.
- <sup>196</sup> Licit here is taken to mean sexual activity within marriage, illicit to mean sexual activity of *any sort* outside the confines of a marriage or recognized concubinage. Elizabeth Abbott, *Mistresses: A History of the Other Woman*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011), 4-5.
- <sup>197</sup> Alexander J. Denomy, "Courtly Love and Courtliness," *Speculum* 28 1 (1953), 44.
- <sup>198</sup> Possibly Ibn Baq or al-A m al-Tu l , no. 22, in *Andalusian Lyrical Poetry*, trans. Linda Fish Compton (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 32.
- <sup>199</sup> Otto Zwartjes, *Love Songs from al-Andalus*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1997), 188-218, especially 190.
- <sup>200</sup> Joseph J. Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 113-115.
- <sup>201</sup> However, despite the ultimate consequences within the Arthurian corpus, the presentation within Chrétien de Troyes is not one of "overt condemnation [of] an adulterous affair that would be unacceptable under both feudal law and Christian moral teaching," but rather one presented with sympathy towards the partners in an illicit relationship. *Ibid*, 114-115.
- <sup>202</sup> Zwartjes, *Love Songs from al-Andalus*, 190.
- <sup>203</sup> Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, 13-46 details the background to Chrétien de Troyes and his subsequent influence upon the tradition.
- <sup>204</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 39-41.
- <sup>205</sup> Denomy's analysis of the themes of courtly love as the *troubadour* poets presented them can be set against Zwartjes' analysis of the *kharja* themes as presented in to further inform this comparison. Denomy, "Courtly Love and Courtliness," *passim*; Zwartjes, *Love Songs from al-Andalus*, 188-218.
- <sup>206</sup> David Latham, "Haunted Texts: The Invention of Pre-Raphaelite Studies," in *Haunted Texts: Studies in Pre-Raphaelitism*, ed. David Latham (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 12.
- <sup>207</sup> In some ways, one can distinguish between two particular, partially overlapping, strands of the Romantic movement; the emphasis upon Nature as exemplified by Wordsworth (1779 to 1850) and Coleridge's (1772 to 1834) *Lyrical Ballads*, first published in 1798, with a second edition including a presentation of principles appearing in 1800 and a third edition with an expansion of those principles in 1802, and that emphasis on a sometimes-mythical past, exemplified by Byron's "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," published between 1812 and 1818. The credo of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood combines both.
- <sup>208</sup> Denomy, "Courtly Love and Courtliness," 44.