have engendered social change' (209). Another example from Iran are women who, to subtly express their disagreement with the regime's compulsory veiling policy, do 'improper veiling', i.e. wearing an unconventional hijab or a tight and colourful manteaux and make-up (73). Such 'hidden transcripts', as Shadi Sadr calls it in her fascinating analysis of Iranian bloggers’ online debates on public veiling, make those in power feel increasingly uneasy (206). A third example, from Shuchi Karim’s chapter, is how non-heteronormative/non-heterosexual Bangladeshi women are able to carve out spaces for themselves because of prevailing norms of sex segregation and kinship structures that facilitate homosociability.

In my opinion, there were three omissions in the volume. As Muslim men remain a black box in studies of Islam and gender, I missed any chapters that explicitly addressed how men who do not live up to ideals of masculinity cope with the constraints of hegemonic systems of sexuality and gender. Another point that was not entirely clear to me, is how the editors define ‘agency’. It was my impression that agency was being equated with resistance, which seems a rather limited view (in light of recent work of, for example, Saba Mahmood). A third point that was rarely mentioned is, from a feminist and postcolonial perspective, how each author individually positions her –or himself vis-à-vis the topic at hand.

But these are minor complaints, because with its critical and in-depth ethnographic and historical examination of a variety of issues, the volume is a major contribution to our understanding of the intersection of gender, politics, and sexuality in Muslim contexts.

References

Wim Peumans
University of Witwatersrand


Orientalism everlastingly continues to fascinate both Westerners and Easterners. In serious academic circles, there has been progress in deconstructing all kinds of fantasies, including the Orientalist ones. However, the adventures of Orientalism inspire new and critical researchers. Cultural studies, history and sociology offer the historians of Orientalism a variety of tools to refresh the inquiry. The outcome is largely different in quality. Dietrich Jung’s book is a thorough piece of the German
tradition of *kulturgeschichte*; it draws on cultural sociology to depict the image of Islam in a global public sphere. According to the author, this image reproduces the reformed notion of religion in Protestant theology in Germany. Orientalists took it from them and exported it to Islamists. To support this claim, the author painstakingly examines the emergence of discourses on religion in nineteenth-century Germany among Protestant theologians. Then, he studies their influence on sociologists and philosophers in Germany. The author shows the nascent discipline of Islamic Studies to have close relationships with German Protestant milieus. In this respect, the most difficult task is to find balance between the macro claim (the essentialist image of Islam in a global public sphere) and the micro argument that supports the claim (evidence from biographies of Orientalists and Islamists).

The book is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, the author raises the problem of the essentialist image of Islam. He optimistically considers that the majority of the scholars in the field of Islamic studies do not sustain an essentialist conceptualization of Islam. According to him, a ‘new Orientalism’ finds echo only among the media and some Western scholars. The reader expects the second chapter to develop further this ‘new Orientalism’ and analyse its discourses. Instead, the author reviews reactions to the *Orientalism* of Edward Said. Jung methodically reiterated, contextualized and criticized Said’s main claims. In particular, the author rejects Said’s thesis of a historical continuity of Orientalism in the West since Homer. This chapter on Said overshadows the author’s own claims and arguments on Orientalism. The third chapter makes a sudden shift into social theory. Therein, the author explores the concepts of multiple modernities, globalization, world society and the global public sphere. This is roughly the theoretical framework of the study. It would have made an excellent part of the introduction or the first chapter. In the fourth chapter, the author embarks on the sociology of intellectual debates of Modern Europe. He analyses the emergence of the ideas of state, science, religion and Islam. He extensively provides biographical details of the involved scholars. This chapter is a good piece of sociology of culture. However, it contributes little to the problem of the essentialist image of Islam. The fifth chapter endorses a similar analysis of the formation of Islamic studies as a discipline. Here, the author explores Islam as a problem and the Orientalist German milieu as the household of essentialism. Finally, in the sixth chapter, hastily written and mainly based on secondary literature, the author argues that German Orientalists passed their constructions about Islam to Islamic reformists and activists.

The most evident weakness of the book is its fragmentation. Without elaboration, the author raises several problems. It would have been more accurate to develop the problem of the essentialist image of Islam as announced in the title. As a result of disintegration, the organization of chapters suffers in this book; it does not follow a linear sequence. A second shortcoming is the excess of theory. For instance, the author suggests world society as a central concept. Accordingly, he summarizes the
latest developments of this concept in social theory. However, he does not provide any specific data or analysis of discourses on world society as such in Islamist or Orientalist literature. A third flaw of the book is the exaggeration of the contribution of Germany in the formation of the modern notion of religion and the essentialist image of Islam. A claim about the role of Martin Hartmann, Carl Heinrich Becker, Snouck Hurgronje (a Dutch scholar with connections in Germany) and Ignác Goldziher (a Hungarian scholar with connections in Germany) as the four founding fathers of Islamic studies turns out to be a Germano-centric thesis. It is a fact that the German school played, and still plays, a major role in the shaping of Islamic studies. Nevertheless, this school has had less influence in the Muslim world than the Anglo-Saxon or French schools. Since Rifāʿī Rāfī al-Ṭāḥāwī (d. 1873), most Muslim intellectual leaders studied in Paris or London. Without any sense of criticism, they admired these cultures and had direct links to French and British Orientalists. Besides, France and Great Britain colonized most of the Muslim countries and controlled its official education, press and society. In this regard, the influence of L. Massignon on Muslim culture is unmatchable by any of the four Orientalists selected by the author.

That said, the author succeeds in maintaining the interest of the reader in the content. He persuasively argues that the widely accepted ‘truths’ about Islam are constructions of academic discourses. Furthermore, the author considers the problem of Islam as a universal one, far from being a Muslim exclusivity. He explores Islam within the Western intellectual history. It was pertinently shown that in modern scholarly networks, press publications or academic research, Islam was a familiar subject to Modern Europe. The emphasis he put on connections between Orientalists and Muslim reformists is informative. He shows a transmission of knowledge and opinions in both directions. Finally, the author reminds the reader of the importance of cultural sociology in de-essentializing Islam or any system of belief. Unsurprisingly, to cover the various topics of this monograph, the author had recourse to a comprehensive bibliography of 31 pages (using more than 700 books and articles).

In sum, despite its shortcomings, I highly recommend this book. The reader might discover how cultural sociology studies Orientalism and deconstructs Islam as a constructed problem. Thanks to its rich content, it would benefit both students and scholars of modern Islam.

Abdessamad Belhaj
Catholic University of Louvain