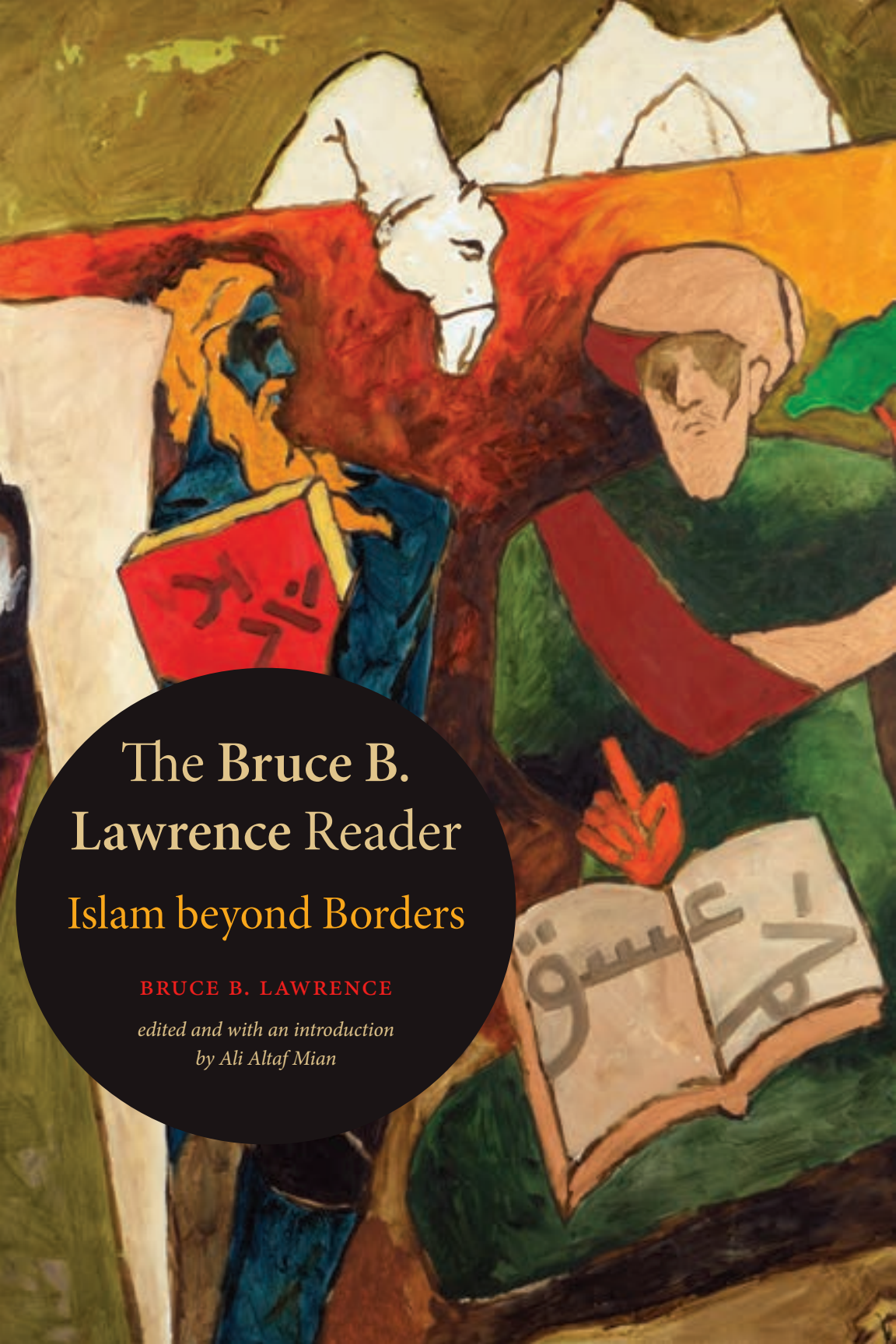

The Bruce B. Lawrence Reader

Islam beyond Borders

BRUCE B. LAWRENCE

edited and with an introduction
by Ali Altaf Mian

THE

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PREFACE

Bruce B. Lawrence

I never imagined that my life would unfold as an academic, much less one focused on the Islamic world. I did major in Near Eastern studies, along with History, when I was an undergraduate at Princeton. I was convinced that I would become a foreign service officer, after first serving a term in the US Navy as a junior officer. The Navy stint inspired me to think about religion, not least because President Kennedy was assassinated while I was serving in DC. I anticipated a gloomy period in world history better served by meditation than mediation. Three years at the Episcopal Divinity School launched me as an Episcopal priest but also made me interested in the life of the mind beyond the boundaries of the church. I was admitted to Yale as a Ph.D. student, intent on exploring Abrahamic roots for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Hinduism, however, displaced Judaism on my agenda, as I became fascinated with the Vedas and ancient Indian thought. I had not yet finished my Yale Ph.D., relating Islamic thought to Indian subjects, when I was hired at Duke. A first job became a lifetime career. I never left Duke, though I did travel to many parts of Muslim Asia during forty years on the Duke faculty. Especially formative were two years I spent in India as a visiting scholar at Aligarh Muslim University. I felt a great affinity for Sufism, not least for medieval Indian exemplars related to a South Asian order, the Chishtiyya. Alas, international catastrophes redefined my academic labor. First, the Iranian Revolution in 1979 shifted me to thinking comparatively about extremist religion, or fundamentalism, across the Abrahamic spectrum, and then the 2001 attacks on the United States compelled me to revisit Islam at its roots, in the Qur'an as scripture, in order to find the different threads of belief that could produce both Sufism and terrorism.

In all these labors I have been assisted by a companion who exceeds me in her zest for travel and her passion for writing. miriam cooke has accompanied me on research/teaching forays that stretch from North Africa to Southeast

Asia, from Morocco to Indonesia, and many other places in between. She has also read nearly everything I have written since 1980, improving the argument as well as the accessibility of all my literary output as a scholar of Islam.

I have also had the benefit of extraordinary colleagues, both at Duke and elsewhere. Carl Ernst heads the list, having been my collaborator, co-teacher, and catalyst since the early 1990s, when he moved from Pomona College to the University of North Carolina. We co-wrote a book on Chishti Sufism that is among the selections in this volume, and we also co-edited a series of monographs, "Islamic Civilization and Muslim Networks," for the University of North Carolina Press. I should also mention the late Richard C. Martin, from Emory, who helped on numerous publication ventures, including the volume coedited with Carl Ernst that marked my retirement from Duke, *Rethinking Islamic Studies: From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism.* Among numerous others are two former Duke colleagues, Vincent Cornell (now at Emory) and Ebrahim Moosa (now at Notre Dame). I learned from them about different forays of scholarship and also the beauty of collaboration.

Of equal benefit to me have been loyalty and inspiration from many former students. I esteem them all, from Michael Browder, my first doctoral student, to Brett Wilson, my last, but the one who has done me a singular service is Ali Altaf Mian. Ali entered the Ph.D. program in Islamic studies at the very end of my career at Duke. I had the pleasure of knowing him in several classes, though I was not on his Ph.D. committee. Ali Mian did me the extraordinary favor of registering all my writings in a list that he produced for me toward the end of his course work at Duke. Like most academics, I have a curriculum vitae, one that I updated annually, sometimes semi-annually, in order to demonstrate my level of scholarly production. Ali's list went beyond a seriatim record, however. He also thought of categories into which different essays, articles, and book chapters might be slotted, and that produced a thematic template of my scholarship, one that I had never conceived or had even imagined as possible.

What you have before you is the outcome of Ali Mian's diligent labor, from the sketch of an overview to the arrangement of selections within parts, each with an introduction that makes all the chapters register as a coherent whole. Moreover, he has made sense of my scholarship in the broadest possible forum. Above all, I have striven to produce, as he writes in the introduction, "scholarship that crosses territorial and disciplinary boundaries to account for Islam's difference and multiplicity. Such scholarship is relevant in today's world, for it bridges barriers between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, between local and global concerns, between popular and scholarly networks." Ali Mian's hope

is also mine: "To stage an argument for the political purchase and analytical value of compassionate, engaged scholarship on Islam and Muslims." May the outcome of this volume be the success of this argument, not least among those who have yet to experience the full challenges of the twenty-first century. May it motivate today's students to become tomorrow's citizens, prisoners of hope striving for a global comity enhanced by Muslims, enriched by Islam!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bruce B. Lawrence

I could never have undertaken this project without the insight, generosity, and patience of Ali Mian. While a Duke graduate student, he grasped my ideas through several assignments, pursued other publications not assigned, and then at a point back in 2013, over seven years ago, proposed that he would like to assemble a Bruce Lawrence Reader. He excelled in everything, from big ideas to small tasks, monitoring the process as though it were his own first monograph. He enlisted numerous students at Seattle University to help him as typists, and we met both in Seattle and Durham on more than one occasion to review progress, and correct mistakes, together. Though I cannot repay it, I must acknowledge my deep gratitude to him.

In addition, Miriam Angress, also a former student, responded to the project with imagination and diligence in her role as a Duke University Press editor, and as we ploughed through several versions, Miriam also sought outside readers, all anonymous but all generous, who gave their time and perceptive feedback.

Also attuned to the project and reading it with the eye of a generalist who sees mistakes small and large was Dr. James Cross, father of yet another Duke student, Jonathan Cross. Finally, Professor Scott Kugle, who studied at Duke some two decades ago, helped trace sources and gave valuable suggestions. Another colleague, the late Professor Richard C. Martin, offered suggestions that helped shape the final version into a better book. My closest family members were also vigilant: my daughters, Rachel and Anna Lawrence, both read parts of the whole and offered their vision of what it could and should be. Further, my wife and soul mate, Professor miriam cooke, did what no one else could do: she urged me forward even when it seemed there were too many hurdles, and too big a challenge, to assemble all the parts of this book you are now about to read. I am in miriam's debt for many of the individual pieces, including the introduction to a book that we co-edited, but even more for the devotion and

support that make a distant dream now a near reality. Finally, backstage but still invaluable are the publishers of all that appears in these pages: I thank numerous presses and journals for giving Ali Mian permission to reprint my work here.

To all these sundry and varied folks, I give deep and heartfelt thanks while also relieving them of any responsibility for errors or oversights or shortfalls in what has resulted; those failings belong to me and are solely mine to bear.

INTRODUCTION

Ali Altaf Mian

Connectivity, Compassion, and Critique

Motivating this volume is the belief that scholarship should bridge cultures even as it must elaborate their differences. The historian of religion Bruce B. Lawrence models such an approach in his scholarship on Islam and Muslims. I have learned many valuable lessons from Lawrence, who was my teacher at Duke University and with whom I have had the privilege of staying in close intellectual contact over the last decade. But what he has taught me most of all is that scholarship can and should play an important role in realizing intercultural connectivity even as scholars seek to elucidate and analyze cross-cultural differences. At face value, this statement might strike you as another platitude that aspiring pluralists throw around. Yet, consider the idea that connectivity is one of the cornerstones of imaginative scholarship. It takes empathetic imagination to study convergences but also divergences between subject and object, self and other, past and present, local and global, and other figurations of knowledge, subjectivity, temporality, and spatiality. To the imaginative humanist and social scientist belongs the restless task of finding commonalities and connections between seemingly disparate traditions and societies.[1] Lawrence's contributions to the field of religious studies, particularly his engagement with Islam and Muslims, model this productive mode of inquiry.

The scholarship collected in this volume crosses territorial and disciplinary boundaries to account for Islam's heterogeneity. Lawrence bridges divides between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, local and global concerns, and popular and scholarly networks. The dual tasks of identifying cross-cultural connections and then analyzing the ideas, actors, and institutions that forge such connections carry an invaluable ethical and political purchase. Historical inquiry, informed by both critique and compassion, enables us to "move beyond stereotypes—to inter-

rogate their hard edges, to unravel their seamless classificatory logic, and to make all groups part of a common future that has a shared past as well as a contested present."[2] Lawrence's interpretive labor militates against the dividing and divisive forces of intercultural conflict, often linked to territorial nationalism.

Lawrence's approach is particularly relevant in our current political context, in which Muslims are dubbed an external threat to the prosperity of the so-called West and Euro-Christian culture. Lawrence's writings on Islam are instructive, for they elaborate Muslim diversity but also demonstrate the connectivity of global Islam and what Muslims share with others in terms of their civilizational ideals and religious aspirations. Lawrence places Islam in the frame of global history but also translates the diverse ways in which Muslims hear, speak, contemplate, and feel the idea of God.

For the student of religion, it is insistently important to analyze *when* notions of God or gods are deployed, by *whom* to *what* objectives, *where* such deployments go beyond historical precedent, and *how* they might participate in projects of justice but also those of injustice and violence. The critical yet compassionate style of inquiry that Lawrence models so nimbly gives a certain ethical-political inflection to the rigor and range of his textual, historical, and cultural studies. He draws on this approach to analyze the key global events that have shaped the image of Islam and Muslims in the West during the last five decades. Let me mention two key events: the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. These were seismic events not just for Muslims in Western Europe and North America but also for Islamic thought and culture in Muslim-majority contexts. Lawrence's deft analyses of religious fundamentalism and violence as well as his sociohistorical analysis of Asian, especially Asian Muslim, immigrants to the United States document a scholarly response to public perceptions of Islam and Muslims after 1979. His writings on Sufism, Allah and the Qur'an, in addition to those on Muslim citizenship, have aimed to educate the general public both at home and abroad, in Europe, Africa, and Asia as well as in America, in the aftermath of 9/11.

What Is *The Bruce B. Lawrence Reader*?

The Bruce B. Lawrence Reader: Islam beyond Borders assembles twenty-four essays that I have organized into six thematic parts. Each piece should be seen as a reflection of Lawrence's emergent thinking at a particular time within the evolution of his scholarship. Lawrence and I have revised each piece to reflect

the broader arc of his contribution to the study of religion, particularly Islam, and for clarity of argumentation, convenience of accessibility, and consistency of style. This reader also includes a 2018 interview that alludes to some key moments of Lawrence's career, especially his time spent at the Aligarh Muslim University in the company of the late Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. The interview also introduces readers to Lawrence's most recent monograph, *The Koran in English*, and highlights his appreciation for *American Qur'an*, a creative rendition of the Muslim scripture by the American artist Sandow Birk.[3] The interview is followed by a passionate afterword from Yasmin Saikia, a cosmopolitan scholar of Islam in her own right and one of Lawrence's close friends. Saikia identifies the significance of the South Asian Sufi tradition for Lawrence, especially the legacy of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya' (d. 1325), a Delhi saint whose key teachings Lawrence made available to English readers with the 1992 publication of *Morals for the Heart*.[4] One can find bibliographic information about Lawrence's books and articles on Indo-Muslim Sufism as well as the other recurrent themes of his scholarship in "Bruce B. Lawrence's Writings." He has also penned scores of insightful book reviews that I had to exclude from this list for the sake of brevity. In the notes, I have from time to time suggested further readings that might aid curious readers and diligent students.

Many of the essays revised for this volume treat singular problematics in the study of Islam and are thus a ready resource in the classroom setting. Some essays take up a broad view of Islamic history (such as those on Islam in world history and Muslim engagement with violence and injustice). Others pertain to specific personages and texts (such as those sampled in part II and those on the Qur'an). In this way, readers are able to observe the enduring features of Muslim thought and Islamicate civilization. One of Lawrence's key analytical tendencies is the use of historical and contemporary case studies that enable us to grasp a general ideal by studying a specific embodiment or experience. Here, Lawrence delicately balances the accent on enduring values and attention to local, lived realities. In his own words, "There may be an abstract canvas of Islam or Islamism vs. the West or modernity, but what matters, both practically and analytically, are the local, the immediate, and the contingent aspects of each polity and society that determine its modus vivendi within the current world order."[5] Above all, the excerpts collected here model the methodological necessity of tethering empathetic description to critical reflection.

Let me briefly address the volume's structure, with a side glance at Lawrence's educational background, before discussing a couple of key terms in his oeuvre and then presenting synopses of the book's six parts. The parts are organized

neither chronologically nor in terms of the various regions of the so-called Muslim world. Rather, each part models a particular methodological approach to the study of religion. The volume invites readers to engage with Islam and Muslims while also reflecting on and then critically thinking about the analytical purchase of six methodologies: theorizing, revaluing, translating, deconstructing, networking, and reflecting. To read the book from cover to cover will yield readers several dividends, not the least of which is an enhanced understanding of the various interpretive tools that Lawrence has deployed and invites others to deploy.

The volume speaks to the concerns and commitments of three groups of readers. First, it seeks to meet the pedagogical needs of college instructors who might find its essays evocative for teaching undergraduate students about Islam and Muslims. Instructors will find the emphasis on critical methodologies, instead of historical chronology or geographic regions, to be catalytic for meta-analytical discussion and debate in the classroom. Second, the volume offers insights to aid journalists and observers of global affairs, since it collects Lawrence's writings on fundamentalism, religious violence and modern Islam, and the challenges and promises of cosmopolitanism and religious pluralism. Here again, I hope that the volume's emphasis on six critical methodologies will encourage readers to become attentive toward frames of representation while also avoiding outdated rubrics such as tradition versus modernity when talking about Islam and Muslims. Third, this volume aims to reach the general English-speaking readership. Above all, it seeks to make a positive contribution in realizing religious pluralism and cross-cultural dialogue. Lawrence is able to communicate his insights to multiple sets of readers because of his own broadscale training—at once researching Muslims and teaching about Islam—in diverse settings.

Lawrence was trained "to interpret religion through a historical, which is always also a comparative, lens."[6] He studied Arabic and Islamic philosophy at Princeton University (1958–1962) and the history of religions (with a concentration in Hinduism and Islam) at Yale University (1967–1972). Between 1962 and 1967, he undertook a two-year stateside stint in the U.S. Navy and completed a master's degree from the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In Princeton, New Haven, and Cambridge, his key teachers included James Kritzeck (1930–1986), Franz Rosenthal (1914–2003), Willard G. Oxtoby (1933–2003), and Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916–2000). He also credits Annemarie Schimmel (1922–2003) with stoking his interest in South Asian Sufism as well as miriam cooke for influencing his turn to art and aesthetics. While he neither

met nor studied with the renowned American global historian Marshall G. S. Hodgson (1922–1968), Hodgson's approach to Islamic history most profoundly shapes Lawrence's.

Lawrence has been acutely aware of the demands of historical scholarship and source criticism as well as their provenance and the interpretative strategies required for reading critically across various genres. Yet like Hodgson, Lawrence has aspired to theorize historical data and to scan empirical details for big-picture lessons. These lessons underscore historical continuity and change but also offer insights into the sociocultural, political, economic, ethical, and metaphysical ideas and institutions that make lives livable or unlivable, cities prosper or decimate, and civilizations endure or wane. Lawrence has theorized Islam in both historical and metahistorical terms, seeing it as at once a civilizational and cosmopolitan force. At the outset, therefore, it is important to specify how he approaches "civilization" and "cosmopolitanism."

Civilization and Cosmopolitanism

Lawrence defines civilization as "the broadest, most capacious envelope of cultural traits related—directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly—to geographical location and temporal shifts. In a thumbnail definition, civilization equals culture writ large over space and time. Space predominates."[7] Lawrence's use of civilization corresponds neither to the idea that civilization implies the repression of our basic instincts for the sake of social order nor to the notion that the world is divided into neat cultural blocs. Lawrence uses this term in a historical-critical sense, building on the pioneering vision of Hodgson. The latter emphasized contingency and contestation and demanded self-reflexivity on the part of the inquirer when defining civilization. What mattered most in these definitions was that civilization "must not be hypostatized, as if it had a life independent of its human carriers."[8] Like Hodgson, Lawrence also accentuates Islam's human carriers, many of whom we shall meet in the course of the following pages. Both historians study metaphysical and moral as well as poetic and political ideas not in the abstract but rather situated in and tethered to human practices as well as social institutions.

Lawrence also approaches "cosmopolitanism" in a broad and creative arc. Cosmopolitanism, in his view, provides "a trans-territorial and trans-temporal ethos" with deep roots in the formation and reception of Islam as an ethical and aesthetic sensibility.[9] This sensibility is captured best by the Arabic word *adab*,

which applies to both beautiful conduct and didactic literature. *Adab* (cultural and behavioral refinement) permeated the networks of "trade, language, Sufism, and scholarship" in which Muslims interacted with strangers at home and abroad.[10] *Adab* allowed Muslims to appreciate and to appropriate the major cultural traditions of the Mediterranean and the Nile-to-Oxus region. Muslim cosmopolitanism features a world-affirming attitude and engenders a social ideal that includes three elements: an affirmation of life, an appreciation of literature, and an openness to change. While it is first and foremost an ethico-aesthetic orientation, "cosmopolitanism, to survive, needs institutional structures, an expanded public space, without which local tastes, restrictive norms, and punitive codes can, and will, prevail."[11]

For Lawrence, cosmopolitanism is more than a modus vivendi; it is also a modus operandi. This creative use of cosmopolitanism as an analytical lens has allowed him to advance the study of Islam beyond both orientalism and social science. Lawrence lives and works on the cusp of major events that have led Islam, for better or worse, to be linked with *jihad*. Western popular media and mainstream Euro-American pundits have redefined scholarship on Islam, accenting the idea of violence as integral to the ideological and institutional, familial and political, manifestations of all religion, but especially Islam. The relationship between violence and Islam crisscrosses the modern academy: it has become an important object of critical inquiry in religious and historical studies as well as in other disciplines such as political science and sociology. Lawrence tackles the uncritical linkage of violence with Islam in *Shattering the Myth: Islam beyond Violence* (1998). The introduction to that monograph opens part I.

Part I: Theorizing Islam in World History

The broader stage on which Islam is a set of aspirations and Muslims a set of actors is world history. Yet neither Islam nor world history should be understood as self-contained concepts; they refer to complex, often contested, meanings that reflect both cultural heterogeneity and the location of the inquirer using these terms. To theorize Islam in world history thus entails a capacious working definition of both terms. It also depends on critical analysis, content knowledge, and compassionate imagination. As Lawrence reminds us, "The early, middle, and modern periods [of Islam] require separate skills and caveats for their successful analysis. The most difficult period to analyze is the one closest in time, the modern."[12] Perhaps the most popular image of modern Islam is one that is

framed by violence. Lawrence observes that the violence perpetrated by Muslims in the name of Islam is ultimately connected to the violence of European colonialism and other global forces of modernity. Yet one must be critical of the term "violence" itself; too often, pundits and preachers reduce violence to force—an exertion of physical force that maims or destroys bodies and buildings, among other things. In *Shattering the Myth*, Lawrence draws attention to other forms of violence, such as structural violence (the foreclosure of opportunities in everyday life to people who reside at the margins of social privilege). Sometimes, scholarly representation reproduces structural violence. A case in point is when scholars consult only male sources or analyze only masculine perspectives. *Shattering the Myth* critiques the violence of representational exclusion by foregrounding the figure of the Muslim woman. Connecting several forms of violence, whether physical, structural, or representational, it also connects the hurt and injury caused by Muslim actors to the dispossession and displacement that Muslims themselves have experienced in global discourses as well as in modern political and socioeconomic processes. In the opening text of this volume, Lawrence probes the intricate embeddedness of political Islam in the global circuits of violence.

Shattering the Myth can also serve as an introductory text to Islam for undergraduate students, journalists, and general readers. The intensification of violence on multiple sides, Muslim and non-Muslim, especially after the tragic events of 9/11, has only increased the need for such texts. In my view, the key pedagogical purchase of using *Shattering the Myth* is its capacity to locate Islam in mainstream cultural and political frames and then to move through these frames in order to problematize popular but unproductive clichés about Muslims and their heterogeneous religious traditions. In effect, violence is provincialized within specific structural and political etiologies, and Islam itself emerges as a civilizational praxis.

In defining Islam, Lawrence explores the implications of two different, yet connected, ideas: Islam as "religion" and Islam as "ideology." In the twentieth century, the religious elements of Islam have been deployed to serve modern ideologies such as ethnonationalism and Western exceptionalism. While addressing his methodology in *Shattering the Myth*, Lawrence writes, "I seek patterns that interconnect numerous Muslim histories, whether local, national, or regional, and also link them collectively to global forces." Thus he connects the idea of Muslim violence not just to various "Islamic" histories but also to multiple global forces, such as nationalism, capitalism, and the rapid movement of ideas and opinions facilitated by the internet.

Why is it important for us to analyze these interconnections between global powers and local Muslim narratives and networks? We live in an increasingly connected world, especially since the advent of the internet and social media. Therefore, the tasks of description and analysis fall on the shoulders of both insiders and outsiders. In this regard, Lawrence passionately states, "I reject the judgment that none but the persons invoked can talk about themselves." In other words, Lawrence rejects the "delusionary escapism" and "cultural relativism" that have been attractive to so many contemporary intellectuals. For him, the arenas of discourse on a particular idea, ritual, institution, or network are open for critical observation. They require careful judgment from both insiders and outsiders, especially because of the "interlocking character of late capitalist culture and social movements."

Yet, what also matter profoundly are one's social location and one's speaking position.[13] Hodgson was prescient in emphasizing this dimly lit mirror:

> Not only the scholars' cultural environment at large but their explicit precommitments, which brought the greater of the scholars to their inquiry in the first place, have determined the categories with which they have undertaken their studies. Only by a conscious and well-examined understanding of the limits of these precommitments and of what is possible within and beyond them can we hope to take advantage of our immediate humanness to reach any direct appreciation of major cultural traditions we do not share—and perhaps even of traditions we do share.[14]

Lawrence acknowledges his location when he writes, "I approach this task [of studying Islam] conscious that I am limited as well as enabled by who I am. I am male. I am Anglo. I am upper middle class. European in ancestry, I was born in America. Raised non-Muslim, I remain non-Muslim." Realizing these "ascriptive limits," Lawrence also reflects on his own connectedness to Islam and Muslims: "Yet after studying both the Arabic language and Middle Eastern history from an early age, I remain deeply attracted to Islam as a life force: it animates many Muslims with whom I have lived and worked and whom I count among my closest friends." Here, we see connectivity working at two levels: Lawrence connects disparate traditions and histories in his scholarship but he also connects to Muslims themselves. Note the affective touch or affinity he attributes to the latter sense of connectivity. This affective attachment enhances and enriches his analytical endeavor, rendering it humanistic in the fullest sense. Lawrence thus declares in no uncertain terms, "I choose to be both an intellectual and an unabashed humanist. Despite the many assaults on the humanities from within

and beyond the academy, I remain not only a humanist but also a late modern humanist." The mirror shines brightest when its light is directed inward.

To pursue the question of violence in Islam from Lawrence's humanist perspective gives it a certain depth that allows him to engage with various storytellers and their narratives, be they Muslim activists and intellectuals or non-Muslim media pundits or policy makers. His empathetic mode of inquiry enables him to make a strong case for the continued relevance of humanistic inquiry and intercultural modes of scholarly engagement. His authorial presence is thus marked by two profiles—that of a historian who uses critical methodologies to describe and analyze the association of Islam with violence, and that of a compassionate translator who acknowledges the civilizational aspirations of his Muslim interlocutors.

Let me reiterate that it is not one or the other but the dual combination of critique and compassion that time and again defines Lawrence's engagement with Islam, even more so with Muslims. He is therefore able to demonstrate how contemporary Muslims have inherited many ideas, practices, and social institutions that might serve as resources for bridging cultures and forging connections with others. This idea is explored most fruitfully in "Islam in Afro-Eurasia: A Bridge Civilization" (2010). Following Hodgson, Lawrence theorizes Islam as a cosmopolitan civilizational force that can draw on various local resources such as cultural and behavioral refinement (*adab*), respect for individual privacy, urban coexistence, and hospitality as well as trust. In other words, the underlying analytical ambition of part I involves the two-pronged methodology of empathetic imagination and critical scrutiny. Both analytical postures come together to historicize the violence associated with Islam and Muslims as well as to point constructively to the resources that persist among Muslims to cope with the forces of injustice and violence, whether global, local, or both (see especially "Muslim Cosmopolitanism" [2012]).

Part II: Revaluing Muslim Comparativists

Part II identifies critique and compassion as integral components of the scholarly efforts of past Muslim intellectuals. To that end, it revisits and revalues four Muslim comparativists who linked their discursive activity to multiple bodies of knowledge. As a methodological protocol, to revalue one's object of study implies not only a committed rediscovery but also a reorientation of recognition beyond mere texts or contexts. What Lawrence revalues and recognizes about

Biruni, Shahrastani, Ibn Khaldun, and Sayyid Ahmad Khan is their quest for lessons of metaphysical and moral import within the immanent structures and processes of their worlds. In one way or another, these four scholars themselves valued comparison and turned to non-Muslim others in order to better understand Muslim selves.

Lawrence conducts "metastudies" of Biruni, Shahrastani, Ibn Khaldun, and Sayyid Ahmad Khan by first situating them in their contexts and then appreciating what they might have to offer to the contemporary reader. These scholars crossed discursive and territorial borders, applying to their datasets the most rigorous forms of analytical tools available. By revisiting their legacies, Lawrence models for the modern-day student of history, especially the history of religions, lines of critical inquiry that are afforded by Muslim cosmopolitanism, evidenced across millennia but also in the scholarly legacies of some of its best exemplars.

In terms of fame, no medieval Muslim scholar surpasses Ibn Sina (also known as Avicenna), yet it is to Biruni's legacy that Lawrence turns first. Biruni, in his view, models for us a productive skepticism: "Biruni surpassed Ibn Sina both in the breadth and catholicity of his skeptical erudition in the fields of history and chronology, mathematics, astronomy, geography, pharmacology, mineralogy, history of religions, and Indology." Biruni challenged Aristotle's cosmology, whereas Ibn Sina accepted many Aristotelian assumptions as axiomatic. For Biruni, the student of the cosmos must "view the evidence with as much openness to observation as his instruments and his knowledge permit." Crucial for Lawrence, "It is not a matter of philosophical certainty but of experimental openness that is at stake." From Biruni we learn the importance of subjecting all that we take for granted to continuous scrutiny. The student of knowledge must cultivate the capacity for sustained observation, "relentless logic, and repeated experimentation," all qualities that find their consummate expression in Biruni's works.

Precision and probability, epistemological postures but also material properties, play an important role in discovering cures and antidotes for bodies marred by disease and disability. In this regard, Biruni's precise analysis and epistemological openness paid off. At once scientifically rigorous, lexically encompassing, and socially useful, his text on medicine and herbal treatments, *Kitab al-Saydanah*, yielded durative results. Biruni modeled analytical skills that not only serve the scientist as he or she interrogates the cosmos or classifies flora and fauna but that also are useful when the humanist catalogs cultural phenomena. Biruni demonstrated the utility of scientific methodology in the field of humanistic inquiry in his magisterial work, *India*. The work is a testimony to

Biruni's scholarly empathy for the religious other and also his ability to travel between disciplinary methodologies. At the outset, as an Indologist, Biruni teaches us that scholars must cultivate a certain "liking" for, but not necessarily an identification with, the subjects they study. The scholar might not "like" the doctrinal or ritualistic content preached or practiced by the religious other, but he nonetheless cultivates a "liking" because only genuine and compassionate encounters with others can lead someone to see things from another's perspective. This self-awareness requires acquiring the needed facility in languages and sustained exposure to those whose lives and traditions we study. Thus Biruni not only "communicated but also evaluated" Hindu doctrines and rituals. The other major medieval Muslim scholar to write extensively about Indic religion was Shahrastani. In chapter 6, Lawrence analyzes Shahrastani's views on the Hindu tradition, particularly on idol worship, in a broadly comparative and intensely philological study. This 1973 article signals what became his enduring commitment to critical inquiry at once comparative and cross-cultural. Interested readers are encouraged to consult Lawrence's 1976 monograph on Shahrastani.[15]

Lawrence then turns to another major comparativist, Ibn Khaldun, who is credited with bridging the gap between social science and the empirical-based study of Muhammad's discourse and Islamic jurisprudence. Excerpted here is Lawrence's probing introduction to Franz Rosenthal's translation of Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*. Rosenthal, who was a leading Orientalist and Lawrence's doctoral supervisor at Yale, visited Duke University for a conference on Ibn Khaldun organized by miriam cooke in May 1982. The proceedings of that conference were edited by Lawrence and published as *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology* (1984). What Lawrence appreciates most about Ibn Khaldun is his interstitial logic: "While there are others who contributed to both Islamicate civilization and Muslim cosmopolitanism, Ibn Khaldun stands out for his interstitial logic, his rigorous pursuit of in-between-ness, the messiness of flux and change, for dynastic, regional, and global history."[16]

The legacy of Ibn Khaldun highlights the importance of place: his Mediterranean location proved vital for the types of connections between social and moral processes that he was able to observe and theorize. As a scholar of Muslim jurisprudence with a penchant for history, Ibn Khaldun studied the effects of urbanity on individual and social life. He keenly observed the ideological and institutional practices that agglutinated peoples and cultures. Key among such practices was poetic composition. Tapping into the power of words, their multiple resonances and registers, poetry drives home, into the hearts of people, the values they come to call their own. As we know, poetry was one of the key

features of Muhammad's tribal society, and in emphasizing poetry's capacity to forge connections between humans, Ibn Khaldun was hinting at the powers of group solidarity, or what he called *ʿasabiyya*.

Ibn Khaldun developed his concept of communal formation in the *Muqaddimah*, a thick tome that served as the "introduction" to the science of history for his historiographical text, *Kitab al-ʿibar* (Book of lessons, or, history). Lawrence's introduction to an abridgment of Franz Rosenthal's translation of the *Muqaddimah* identifies Ibn Khaldun's key interpretive principle—that he reads historical processes through a theoretical lens refined by jurisprudential theory and Hadith criticism, two sciences that were wedded to questions of language and reliability. Consider the implications of linguistic analysis for Ibn Khaldun. The jurist-historian from the Maghreb argued that ordinary language contains the traces of shared opinions and conventions but also the potential for creating further connections and resonances. His originality lies in a double-fold interpretive move. First, he connects the two secondary sources of Islamic legal norms—consensus and analogy—to the formation of *ʿasabiyya*. Second, he applies the distinction, itself borrowed from Hadith criticism, between *khabar* (event) and *hadith* (tradition) to his historical analysis. The first interpretive move allows Ibn Khaldun to trace the success of urban polities, particularly in the fields of culture and economy, to pre-urbanite tribal formations. The second interpretive move enables him to subject historical reports and sources (*akhbar*) to the standards used to verify the probity of prophetic traditions (*ahadith*). While this move bolsters the authority of Tradition (*hadith*), it also creates a place within religious thought for historical knowledge derived from Event (*khabar*). Lawrence also explores Ibn Khaldun's steeped position within his own Muslim worldview. He was neither a defender of reason against revelation nor aloof from the mystical dimensions of Islam, that is, Sufi feelings, ideas, practices, and institutions.

The mystical dimensions of Islam, however, cannot be reduced to heterodoxy or "popular religion." They are connected at the deepest levels to jurisprudence and theology. Too often it is presumed that the reformist visionaries of modern Islam, such as the late nineteenth-century Indian educationist and social reformer Sayyid Ahmad Khan, espoused rationality without feeling. In chapter 8, Lawrence paints a different picture of this modern Muslim luminary and restores mystical ideas and rituals to their proper place in Sayyid Ahmad's life and thought.

The essay on Sayyid Ahmad Khan moves beyond description of its subject; we encounter Khan as an illustration of the predicaments of Islam and

Muslims in colonial India, especially after the decisive transition from Mughal to British sovereignty in the late 1850s. Lawrence demonstrates three main trends in the formative intellectual career of this key Indo-Muslim figure. First, mystical ideas and practices are privatized. Khan's Sufism, therefore, resonates with that of the reformist theologians. Second, he participates in the linkage of "the West" to Christianity. The study of Christianity, many modern Muslims believe, is essential if one is to acquire a sense of how the West works. Third, Khan encouraged and aided his British interlocutors to deepen their understanding of Islam and Muslims. These three trends in turn indicate that colonial secularity had already achieved some of its desired results by the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet, Khan's legacy demonstrates the constructive role played by dialogue and scholarship in navigating the imbalances of power between the colonized and the colonizer.

Lastly, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's sympathetic engagement with Sufi ideas and practices shows us the importance of Sufism even for reformist scholars (who sometimes claimed that Sufism is largely to blame for the "decline" of Islamic civilization). A large segment of Lawrence's work over the last forty years has analyzed Sufism, specifically in a conceptual idiom accessible to his readers, a topic he addresses in part III by analyzing the craft as well as the politics of translation.

Part III: Translating Institutional Sufism

In chapter 9, the first essay of this part, Lawrence draws attention to the intricacies of craft and concept involved in translating Indo-Persian Sufi poetics into American English. Translation connects the receptor and the host languages, and in this capacity the translator becomes a conduit of connections between linguistic idioms and regimes of intelligibility. Moreover, "the temporal symmetry of the languages must inform the translator's labor." The translator listens to the echoes of semantic difference through an inner ear and renders a poem from one language to another by means of "authorial imagination." Translation simultaneously honors differences of expression and connects them to similarities of meaning between languages.

Once readers have a good sense of the thematic and formal aspects of Indo-Muslim poetry and the translational dimensions structuring the study of the relevant sources, they are better equipped to appreciate the textual and social

universe of the Chishtis, South Asia's largest Sufi network. Lawrence's pioneering scholarship on the Chishtis dates back to the mid-1970s. It is his dedication to their legacy that marks chapter 10, which is the introduction to *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (coauthored with Carl W. Ernst in 2002). Who are the Chishtis? The most obvious answer is a Sufi order or fellowship rooted in South Asia but now present in diasporic sites from London to Kuala Lumpur. However, the very idea of the Sufi order needs to be problematized, especially because its formalized definition in the academy is marred by judgments about authenticity and the decline of Islam. The question Lawrence and Ernst address most directly is the following: how might we describe and analyze the Chishti order so as to throw light on the general character of Sufi orders without erasing the particular features of the Chishtis or reifying a "universalist" picture of Sufi orders? A part of the answer to this question lies in tweaking our methodological approach to Sufism itself, as Lawrence and Ernst state: "We need to enlarge the concept of Sufism to include wider social and institutional contexts. Unlike the individualistic notion of originality found in romantic modernism, Sufism is a vast cumulative tradition. It rests upon multiple contributions to a common resource both contested and deployed over generations." This methodological move is key, for it encourages readers to defamiliarize themselves with what they know about religious authority and authorship, mystical experience and "oceanic feelings," and instead to explore the relationship between politics, social constructionism, and spiritual ideas, rituals, and spaces.

Instead of relying on worn-out temporal categories, such as ancient, medieval, and modern, Lawrence and Ernst propose an alternative, five-part diachronic development of Chishti saintly culture (inclusive of masters and disciples, Sufi lodges and spiritual exercises, manuscripts and manuals, and networks of patronage and transmission). Their temporal schema is important because it is derived from critical engagement with the relevant historical sources. This five-part diachronic framework enables the authors to expose the Chishti order's internal dynamism, allowing readers to appreciate the various ways in which Sufi personages and institutions are products of their political and sociocultural contexts even as they attempt to exceed these contexts.

The introduction to *Sufi Martyrs of Love* further examines colonial Chishtis, postcolonial formations, and recent developments in the South Asian diaspora, and it also analyzes reformist as well as progressive trends among modern Chishtis. As a microhistory of institutional Sufism, it anticipates the next selection,

"Sufism and Neo-Sufism," which presents a macro-history across time and space. Written for *The New Cambridge History of Islam* (2010), this essay surveys the development of modern (colonial and postcolonial) Sufi thought and practice in three contexts: Africa, Asia, and America. We learn of the persistence of major Sufi commitments, such as belief in the living presence of the Prophet Muhammad and the availability of his intercession—his mediating function in procuring divine favor—to all believers but especially to Sufi saints and masters. At the same time, Lawrence situates modern Sufis within "the material context of Euro-American modernity," with its forms of thought and patterns of practice that privilege secular disenchantment. Also integral to modernity are the oppositional forces that railed against the modern. A case in point is the Wahhabi movement: it reacts against the modern world but also retains something of modernity in its literalism and surface superficiality.

"Sufism and Neo-Sufism" is broadly diachronic: it furnishes readers with an overview of its subject matter that spans three different centuries and continents. The reader encounters the anticolonial profile of Sufi institutions in nineteenth-century Africa, surveys how Sufi actors overcame challenges of fundamentalist critique and official scrutiny from postcolonial states in twentieth-century Asia, and then discovers the new forms of music and meditation introduced into institutional Sufism (hence, neo-Sufism) in twenty-first-century America. The trajectory of Sufism in these diverse contexts reveals its lasting potential as both an individual and collective resource: to provide purpose and pleasure to aspiring spiritual seekers but also to embody symbol and spirit for emergent political movements.

Chapter 12, "Allah Remembered," is excerpted from Lawrence's *Who Is Allah?* This essay surveys the affective landscape of what is perhaps the most characteristic ritual of Sufi devotion: *dhikr/zikr* or "remembrance of God." As Lawrence explains, remembrance "requires an intense, dedicated practice of introspection." To chant God's most familiar name, Allah, or one or more of God's 99 Epithets (such as *al-Rahman* and *al-Rahim*), involves invocation and projection. Sufis pursue *zikr* with the acknowledgment that Who they are trying to access, the object of their contemplative longing and constant yearning, is not the essence but rather the idea of the Divine. Allah remains the elusive Beloved, the One always to be sought but never attained or contained by the seeker.

Toward the end of *Who Is Allah?* Lawrence studies another appropriation of the Divine, that espoused by Islamist extremists, including some who perpetrate violence in the name of Allah. Lawrence first examined the question of religious

extremism and fundamentalism in his early monograph, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age*, which is discussed in part IV.

Part IV: Deconstructing Religious Modernity

To use the term "religious modernity" is already an act of deconstruction. Not long ago modernity was seen as ushering in the end of religion—and the demise of enchanted subjectivity—and the beginning of secularity and the birth of disenchantment. Lawrence refuses this binarized view of tradition and modernity when he writes, "The major problem is dyadic logic: reasoning bracketed by, and limited to, sets of two that are not complementary but competitive, not providing an exit from, but a burrowing into, perpetual conflict."[17] Lawrence is thus able to analyze terms such as fundamentalism without reinforcing binaries such as tradition vs. modernity. This section's first selection, the introduction to *Defenders of God*, follows the lead of Hodgson, to whom the book is dedicated. It locates Islam within larger trajectories of world history. It deconstructs fundamentalism, not just in its Islamic face but as it appears across religious traditions in the modern world, through multiple interpretive strategies (an assemblage that might be seen as akin to deconstruction). First, Lawrence lays bare how fundamentalists deploy the discourse of the minority and majority to their advantage. Second, he exposes how the fundamentalist mode of engaging the other is neither constructive nor dialogical but contrarian and monological, suppressing rather than engaging differences. Third, fundamentalists appeal to ideas of religious purity and an exclusive right to govern states by a mixture of scriptural literalism and cultic charisma. Both a message and a messenger are required to deliver slippery shibboleths. Fourth, fundamentalists use many conventional religious terms but invest them with narrow meanings (a case in point would be the meaning of "creation" in Bible Belt Christianity in post-1945 United States). Finally, he argues that "fundamentalism has historical antecedents, but no ideological precursors." Here, Lawrence draws on another historian, Marc Bloch, who distinguished between ancestry and explanation; while earlier movements internal to religious traditions might have participated in the above tactics of interpretation and communal organization, they did not do so to propagate an antimodern ideology. The history of fundamentalism is incomplete without reference to its ideology, and so in the conclusion of this essay, Lawrence gives the reader an opportunity to observe "fundamentalism" from a different perspective: he discusses the threefold connective tissue of twentieth-century

fundamentalism, consisting of (1) the hegemony of modernization, (2) the grip of authoritarian secularity, and (3) the regime of positivism.

The problems that fundamentalist interpretations impose on personal law are especially visible in postcolonial Muslim-majority contexts and in those national contexts where the sizable Muslim minority retains a modicum of legal sovereignty, such as in India. "The Shah Bano Case," excerpted here from *On Violence: A Reader* (coedited with Aisha Karim in 2007), argues two points: (1) "women bear an uneven burden" of representation, for they carry the weight of cultural norms that perpetually implicate them in uneven relations with men, and (2) in the field of personal law, modern judicial institutions further enact communalist divisions along gender lines even as they claim to redress violence. The implementation of classical Islamic law, therefore, does not always deliver justice, especially when nation-states place the interpretation of classical jurisprudence in the hands of traditionalists and Islamists.

Lawrence approaches Islamism, sometimes known as political Islam, as a subset of religious fundamentalism. No modern figure better captured the idealistic aspirations for world domination among a minority contingent of Muslims than Osama bin Laden, whom Lawrence often recalls through the acronym OBL. In 2005 Lawrence published a translation of OBL's texts that put on display the latter's scripturalist modes of reasoning. In the introduction to *Messages to the World*, Lawrence analyzes OBL's various profiles: the legendary freedom fighter, the eloquent rhetorician, and the international threat. Lawrence contextualizes OBL's "comprehensive case for individual *jihad* against the West." OBL's message reaches some Muslim ears as ultimate truth because of his deployment of "literary gifts," at once fiery polemics and fierce argumentation. Moreover, OBL shifted rhetorical registers, even if not the message, when speaking to various audiences. The two main sources of OBL's charismatic appeal among radical Islamists were his telegenic image as a hero in some Muslim circles and his "powerful lyricism," which *Messages to the World* documents. Lawrence provides a succinct summary of the implications of OBL's lyrical prowess:

> In place of the social, there is a hypertrophy of the sacrificial. Bin Laden's messages rarely hold out radiant visions of final triumph. His emphasis falls far more on the glories of martyrdom than the spoils of victory. Rewards belong essentially to the hereafter. This is a creed of great purity and intensity, capable of inspiring its followers with a degree of passion and principled conviction that no secular movement in the Arab world has ever matched. At the same time, it is obviously also a narrow and self-limiting one: it can

> have little appeal for the great mass of believers, who need more than scriptural dictates, poetic transports, or binary prescription to chart their everyday lives, whether as individuals or as collective members of a community, local or national. Above all, there is no rush to restore a Caliphate today. Bin Laden seems at some level to recognize the futility of a quest for restitution. He sets no positive political horizon for his struggle. Instead, he vows that *jihad* will continue until "we meet God and get His blessing!"

From this statement, we might understand how OBL projected his message to the world and to multiple audiences. We can see points of convergence and divergence between this message and contemporary iterations of violent Islamism, such as the Taliban, al-Qaʿida, and ISIS.

Chapter 16, the final essay of this part, is an ideal pedagogical tool for this book's multiple groups of readers, since it offers a wide-ranging historical and critical assessment of *jihad*. In "Muslim Engagement with Injustice and Violence" (2013), Lawrence approaches Islam not as a bloodless text with rigid directives but as a living tradition in which the question of war and peace has evolved over the centuries; it continues to evolve today. The essay features a diachronic survey of when and why Muslims resorted to force, whether aggressive or defensive.

While this essay begins with Muhammad, it also underscores the constraints of seventh-century tribal Arabia, where Muhammad used *jihad* for the sake of survival and for defending his nascent community. It was only later that *jihad* evolved into broad-scale militancy for his successors and their constituents. In early Islam, *jihad* as defensive warfare quickly became a procedural protocol for the expansion of the burgeoning Islamic empire. The next phase of *jihad* involved its valorization as holy war; however, the very idea of "holy war" was common between Islamdom and Christendom. In the context of the Crusades, fidelity to faith and invocation of scripture largely supported violent xenophobia and justified the use of force to expunge the religious other. The wars between the Crusaders and their Muslim counterparts in the Middle Ages had a decisive effect on the denotation and deployment of *jihad*. The fourteenth century provides a crucial temporal marker in the history of *jihad*, for it was in the early decades of that century, as is clear from the writings of the Damascene jurist-theologian Ibn Taymiyya, when *jihad* was formally linked to notions of religious purity and protection.

In the following centuries, when power and prestige returned to Muslims in the form of the so-called gunpowder empires (the Ottomans, the Safavids,

and the Mughals), violence became an exercise of state sovereignty. Violence was embedded in societal processes and bureaucratic structures, and in this context, as Lawrence notes, "there was never a question of eliminating violence but rather justifying its use for higher ends." Living as subjects in the gunpowder empires, Muslims largely participated in *jihad* movements against each other; *jihad*, in other words, became a legitimate, though always contested, means of transforming society and displacing sovereigns.

It is this evolved valence of *jihad* that defined its deployments throughout the long nineteenth century. Muslim militants invoked *jihad* to fight European colonizers in multiple contexts, from North India to western Africa. Yet, the level of violence unleashed by colonial powers against Muslims far exceeded the violence espoused by reactionary Islamic militants. At the structural level, colonial powers enacted violence in Muslim-majority contexts, fueling communalist tensions among Muslims and non-Muslims and at the same time igniting sectarian fires in intra-Muslim circles. Even contexts that were never fully colonized, such as Arabia and Iran, "still experienced the effects of colonial economic penetration into the eastern Mediterranean and Indian Ocean, and the structures that arose after independence reflect this influence, above all in the spheres of politics and law." Some noncolonized Muslims still wedded Islam to nationalism. That coupling later proved fatal for Muslim polities, as it fueled Islamists' rhetoric and violence against their own governments, the heads of which were, and continue to be, viewed as puppets controlled by Euro-America. Yet, if some Muslims have engaged with *jihad* as holy war once again in recent times, they remain a distinct minority; countless others call for reform and dialogical encounters with the other; they also advocate progressive social change and civic engagement, as well as deep renewal of traditional sources from within, and they do so as citizens of late twentieth-century and now twenty-first-century nation-states.

Part V: Networking Muslim Citizenship

This part's essays address precisely the question of Muslim citizenship and accentuate the idea and practice of agency. Here, too, Lawrence builds on Hodgson, analyzing how Muslims inhabit modernity. Modernity is "not limited to the West; it depends on the agency, the creative choices, and the equally creative responses of multiple players in different parts of the *oikumene* from the early sixteenth to the late twentieth century."[18] How Muslims experience and

embody citizenship in Muslim-majority contexts differs markedly from their counterparts who do not enjoy majority status but instead live as minorities (in the Americas, Europe, East Asia, India, and also sub-Saharan Africa). In fact, the majority-minority binary restructures citizenship in the modern world: Muslim minorities, like other minority groups, face questions of representation and rights, integration and acculturation, as well as inclusion and exclusion. While Asia includes many subsets—west, east, central, south, and southeast—it is especially South Asians whom Lawrence considers in his analysis of the category of Asian American as a largely late-twentieth-century development in the history of American immigration and citizenship. Here he emphasizes Asian Americans' agency and their polyvalent identities: the experiences of Asian Americans are shaped by similar political realities but also diversified according to religion, class status, and mode of creative adaptation.

If South Asian Muslims embody polyvalent Islam, so too do other Muslims whose background and circumstances are local not global, indigenous not immigrant. The emphasis on polyvalence appears in chapter 18 in the form of an illustration from African American Islam. Lawrence shows how Imam W. D. Mohammed's ideas about racial justice and scriptural guidance are seen in America as an aspiration and a reality. Mohammed believed that blackness, Muslimness, and Americanness ought to be viewed not as contradictory but as complementary orientations of identification and belonging. Lawrence also connects scriptural commentary to Mohammed's reformist efforts. The latter transformed the Nation of Islam by broadening the idea and practice of communal formation "to create a new community." For this remarkable leader, "one must be liberated from one's instinctive identity and merged into another, networked identity." It is the centrality of a networked Islam that received its most extensive elaboration in *Muslim Networks from Hajj to Hip Hop*, a collection of essays that Lawrence coedited with miriam cooke in 2005.

Chapter 19 is the introduction from that collection. The essay explores the idea of "network" in multiple ways. To be "networked entails making a choice to be connected across recognized boundaries." Muslim networks span time and space, connecting people across territorial and cultural borders. A networked approach to Islam carries the methodological advantage of connecting social scientists to humanists in order to reveal the "radical heterogeneity of Muslim cultural, linguistic, and political exchanges." At the same time, with networks "one must see common issues that face all humankind; one must examine underlying economic patterns and shifting political priorities."[19] To understand the resourcefulness of networking as an analytical strategy, consider the example

of the fourteenth-century Muslim scholar Ibn Battuta. He straddled intercontinental conceptual and commercial exchanges, connecting the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. To view Ibn Battuta from the vantage of "networking" implies identifying the extant circles of trade and ideas, shared gestures and modes of intelligibility, that made it possible for Ibn Battuta to forge his own intercultural connections. Yet even those Muslim authors and actors who spent their entire lives in a single locality invoke other networks. Much of traditional Islamic scholarship is a chain of transmissions and is organized according to intellectual genealogies. Moreover, rituals such as the annual pilgrimage (hajj) not only serve Muslims' spiritual needs but also feed into commercial and geopolitical networks. In this way, "network" remains a vital analytic to describe and theorize about Islam and Muslims.

No network of new media and nascent connectivity is more powerful than the internet. It paradoxically enacts connectedness and sharpens divisions among people located in diverse geographical and ideological locales. Chapter 20, the final essay of this part, discusses a positive use of the internet. Still another chapter from *The Qur'an: A Biography* (2006), it depicts how AIDS victims sought divine help online vis-à-vis a prayer website managed by an Indonesian Sufi healer. The essay introduces readers to the varied "inventory of Qur'anic invocations in use today throughout the Muslim world." This example illustrates how the internet connects people in times of afflictions and ordeals, bringing online matters of practical religion, spiritual mediation, and divine dispensation, often through the Qur'an. In the last fifteen years or so, Lawrence has made numerous contributions to Qur'anic studies and has begun to extensively study the meanings that Muslims and others attach to Allah.

Part VI: Reflecting the Divine Other in Words and Images

The last part demonstrates how Lawrence engages with artistic as well as discursive representations of the divine in a mode of analysis that is more reflective than descriptive. Chapter 21 is about "rhymed prose" (*sajʿ*), a literary feature that the Qur'an retains but adapts from pre-Qur'anic Arabic poetry. Where earlier we read about Lawrence's assessment of the challenges of translating Indo-Persian into American English, here we encounter a deep engagement with rendering the Arabo-Islamic scripture into ordinary English. The crucial lesson that Lawrence emphasizes is the inescapable importance of form: form determines content, and translation should reflect this mutual interaction of one with the

other. In the context of the Qur'an, he encourages readers to appreciate the synchronicity between its formal features, such as rhymed prose, and the moral-metaphysical vision it expresses by deploying this form.

Chapter 22 is the epilogue to *The Qur'an: A Biography*. It covers in lyrical attention the Qur'an's continued appeal and resonance in Muslim life, and why the student of religion must approach this text not only as an object of critical study but also with compassionate appreciation. What makes the Qur'an a potent set of references and affects is its "openness to multiple, often contested, views of its meanings." This scriptural openness becomes all the more evident when the Qur'an travels beyond its immediate linguistic "home" and finds new expressions in other languages through translation.

Lawrence presses us not only to engage with written sources or the spoken word—discursive traditions and their performance in cultural and political contexts—but also to encounter and to analyze the visual word, the word displayed in works of art, ranging from architectural to figural forms. Elsewhere he investigates the Dome of the Rock and the Taj Mahal, two buildings that "embody" scriptural and spiritual themes (see *The Qur'an: A Biography*).

Chapter 23 is a sustained reading of the artworks of the famed Indian artist M. F. Husain. Crucial to Lawrence's methodology is the flexibility of movement between analytical description of and engagement with his sources, in their own worlds and in the pursuit of furthering their projects. This is certainly the case with Husain; his prolific and varied artworks reflect what Lawrence calls "metaphysical secularism." While this phrase might strike one as oxymoronic, Lawrence's analysis of Husain's oeuvre encourages the reader to cultivate a nuanced understanding of how art differs from what first meets the eye. For Lawrence, Husain masterfully plays with oppositions that appear but also disappear. Through art, Husain "critiques the state of the world in which he is at play; he does not shrink from noting betrayal, highlighting controversy, and using patronage as protection against enemies." If transcendental themes from the history of religious traditions, Christian and Hindu as well as Muslim traditions, find a place on Husain's canvases, so too do the themes of secularism, democracy, pluralism, and exile. Husain insists that we engage the aesthetics of Muslim cosmopolitanism. He embodied an Islam that crossed borders, urging Muslims to find connections with humanity writ large and not just with their coreligionists. For Husain, art, like religion, was a holistic instrument of expressing truth and realizing justice.

Chapter 24 is Lawrence's bracing conclusion to his 2015 manifesto, *Who Is Allah?* I find it apt to conclude my own selective survey of Lawrence's rich

oeuvre with this piece because it emphasizes a methodological posture he also emphasizes time and again: epistemological humility in religious studies. While a significant part of religion centers on the idea of a transcendental reality that resists description and analysis, students of religion still need to analyze the meanings that religious actors and sources attribute to divine ineffability. Yet this analysis neither should stop us from being skeptical of the invocations of the Absolute One or the Transcendental Many nor should permit dismissing creative engagements with the ineffable. Above all, engagement with the divine—that unknown source of creative life and death—cannot be the business of the "chosen" few. Instead, it is, and will always be, an open field of play, where the One or the Many beyond human imagination must structure the affective scope and the epistemological depth of imagination itself. In this way, *Who Is Allah?* resists closure—either epistemic or literary, either creedal or performative—and Lawrence encourages us, his readers, to do the same.

Notes

1 For an exposition of the methodological usefulness of relationality and connectivity, see Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 1–2. I thank Richard C. Martin (1938–2019), Bruce B. Lawrence, miriam cooke, and Cyrus Ali Zargar for their helpful comments on this introduction.

2 Bruce B. Lawrence, "Conjuring with Islam II," *Journal of American History* 89 (2002): 487.

3 Lawrence's *The Koran in English* was published as part of Princeton University Press's Lives of Great Religious Books series, which aims to make the reception history of key religious texts accessible to a general readership. See Bruce B. Lawrence, *The Koran in English: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

4 Bruce B. Lawrence, *Nizam ad-din Awliya: Morals for the Heart* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992).

5 Bruce B. Lawrence, "Afterword: Competing Genealogies of Muslim Cosmopolitanism," in *Rethinking Islamic Studies: From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 306.

6 Lawrence, "Conjuring with Islam II," 486.

7 Bruce B. Lawrence, "Islam in Afro-Eurasia: A Bridge Civilization," in *Civilizations in World Politics: Plural and Pluralist Perspectives*, edited by Peter J. Katzenstein (London: Routledge, 2010), 157–75.

8 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:34. As Edmund Burke III and Robert J. Mankin explain, "Civilizations for Hodgson were not autonomous, culturally defined, and changeless spaces. Rather, they had had historically complex and often conflicting relationships internally as well as with their neighbors" (*Islam and World History: The Ventures of Marshall Hodgson*, ed. Edmund Burke III and Robert J. Mankin [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018]), 2.

9 See "Muslim Cosmopolitanism" in this volume.

10 See introduction to *Muslim Networks* in this volume.

11 Lawrence, "Afterword," 319.

12 Lawrence, "Conjuring with Islam II," 491.

13 Lawrence has repeatedly emphasized "the location, the background, and the training of the interpreter" ("Conjuring with Islam II," 486) with reference to the meanings we attach to historical events and processes.

14 Hodgson, *Venture of Islam,* 1:28.

15 Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shahrastani on the Indian Religions*, foreword by Franz Rosenthal (The Hague: Mouton, 1976).

16 Bruce B. Lawrence, review of Syed Farid Alatas's *Ibn Khaldun* and *Applying Ibn Khaldun: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology*, *Middle East Journal* 69, no. 2 (2015): 319.

17 Lawrence, "Afterword," 305.

18 Lawrence, "Conjuring with Islam II," 491.

19 Lawrence, "Conjuring with Islam II," 492.