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Review essay

## Making South Africa's Muslims creatively visible

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South Africa's Muslims have generally been well represented in different sectors of the society over the years. Since the arrival of the forefathers such as Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari (d.1699) at the Cape, Muslims viewed themselves an integral part of the soil. During both the colonial and apartheid areas, however, they—as a religious minority—were depicted and portrayed by the creative artists such as painters, photographers and writers rather negatively. Gabeba Baderoon's book *Regarding Muslims* is a critical study that highlights how Muslim representations moved from the margins to the centre and from the picturesque to the menacing. This review essay reflects on the contents of this invaluable and informative text. **Keywords:** Gabeba Baderoon, *Regarding Muslims* (2014), representation of Muslims, South African Muslims.

### Regarding Muslims: From Slavery to Post-Apartheid.

Gabeba Baderoon. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2014. 224 pp. ISBN: 978-1 86814-769-4.

### Introduction

During the past two decades, scholars have demonstrated a fair amount of interest in the developments that have taken place within the South African Muslim community (Haron). Whilst some, e.g. Achmat Davids (d. 1998), approached the study of this community from a purely historical dimension, others, such as Sindre Bangstad, scrutinized the community's developments using socio-anthropological approaches to acquire a better understanding of its socio-historical, cultural and political transformation; these approaches undoubtedly provided a fair understanding of this community. Fresh studies have, however, emerged of late and these have offered fresh insight into this community's paradoxical nature and its changing behaviour patterns during the periods of colonialism (i.e. pre-1948 period), apartheid (c.1948–94) and post-apartheid (i.e. the democratic era, c.1994–2014).

Among the most recent studies is Gabeba Baderoon's book *Regarding Muslims: From Slavery to Post-Apartheid* which is here under review. Baderoon may be regarded as one of the handful of (Muslim female) scholars that have made remarkable contributions to Southern Africa studies in general and Southern African Islamic

studies in particular (see Haron). Besides being a notable award winning poet and a noteworthy academic, Baderoon is among a coterie of scholars that have turned away from adopting a pure historicist approach. Having honed her skills in the arena of English literature, she brought to the fore dimensions of this community that have hitherto been unexplored. Consequently Baderoon's research outputs have undoubtedly prised open new avenues in appreciating this community's status as a religious minority; one that forms part of—using Rev. Desmond Tutu phrase—South Africa's "rainbow nation". Baderoon thus embarked upon an interesting and informative investigation that illustrated how fiction and non-fiction writers described (i.e. invisible and hypervisible), portrayed (i.e. liminal and powerful) and analysed (i.e. exceptional and peripheral) this religious community.

Perhaps it is best at this juncture to provide an overview of Baderoon's text and in the process address some of the specifics that are of interest to this reviewer as well as to the reader. Baderoon intentionally—and appropriately so—employed chapter five's main title, "Regarding Muslims", as her publication's title; the reason that one could detect was the fact that the book was and is about Muslims as a religious minority within the South African context; and for the text's subtitle, namely *From [the period of] Slavery to Post-Apartheid [up until 2010]* she purposely set for herself a fairly broad time-frame. Within this historical period—spanning about five centuries—she skilfully selected somewhat paradoxical aspects that clearly captured South African Muslim life from the time they were slaves up until the time they experienced along with every other South Africa democracy.

So apart from having provided a fairly expansive acknowledgment (ix–xiv) in which Baderoon listed the names of individuals who have in different ways influenced her thinking and her writing, her text was accompanied by a very supportive "Foreword" (xv–xix); one that is written by Rustum Kozain, a respected Western Cape poet, essayist & blogger. Kozain happens to be Baderoon's former classmate when they were doing the BA English literature Honours course at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Baderoon who divides her manuscript into six chapters, produces what may be described as a readable—an enjoyable if one may add—text. The text contained an informative introduction (1–26) and that ended with an insightful conclusion (153–60). At the beginning of each chapter, she judiciously inserted an apposite catchphrase or quote that offers a window into what she discoursed about in each of the fairly evenly balanced chapters.

### **The beginnings in South Africa according to the introductory chapter**

Like many other texts in this inter-disciplinary genre, Baderoon noticeably mentioned that she intended to use the literary method in order to closely look at how the Muslim community's South African identity had been constructed and indeed

imagined in the works of creative writers as well as non-fiction authors. In the first few pages of the introduction that she sub-titled "Beginnings in South Africa", she returned to the late 1990s and reflected critically upon a period during which People against Gangsterism and Drugs (i.e. PAGAD)—the main focus of chapter five—operated as a (predominantly Muslim) vigilante group (see 5–6). She used PAGAD's story to visibly illustrate how it inadvertently constructed an image of (itself and) the community—from which most of its members hail—as being "masked and militant". And she then appropriately juxtaposed PAGAD's narrative with that of the 1886 Muslim "cemetery riots" in which the Cape "Malays" were portrayed as "fanatical" and "insurrectionary".

Now the argument that Baderoon put forward was that whilst these were significant events that in effect reflected the underlying unresolved social matters, they somehow clouded and obscured other issues that were equally—and if not more—important. These introductory observations and analyses opened the path for her to essentially investigate and explore "the paradox of Islam—perhaps more accurately of Muslims—in South Africa"; absurdities indeed are the hallmarks of every community for they bring to the fore and underline the different dimensions—negatives and positives—of the community. She contended that since Muslims are "disproportionately visible and strangely overlooked" she chose to construct the term "ambiguous visibility"—the main phrase in the title for her first chapter (27); a term that acted as a theoretical tool or principle that appears throughout the text.

With this constructed theoretical frame in mind, she carefully and ambitiously traced "the formation of a distinctly South African discourse around Muslims from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries" with the idea of showing that during the colonial era both "Islam and slavery" were critical ingredients in the establishment of ideas about race and sexuality—two issues that she turned to in chapters three and four respectively—in South Africa. In addition to having employed the mentioned phrase as a frame, she also made reference to Edward Said's—the author of *Orientalism*—distinction between "beginnings" and "origins" since she embarked upon a study that stressed the "beginnings" rather than the Muslim community's "origins". Hence, the use of the qualifier "primal" that was used as a matter of interest in the draft text's title (i.e. primal figures) in order to unquestionably specify that the "primal scene" that she looked at is South African slavery; a social condition that captured a "traumatic beginning" of the Muslim community and a (Muslim) narrative that she revisited to write afresh "into a new beginning for South Africa".

Putting these specific theoretical concepts out of the way, she went on to discuss in brief "slavery and Islam in South Africa" by drawing upon the works of well-known slave historians such as Nigel Worden and Wayne Dooling; she then spent a few pages in describing "How Islam arrived in South Africa". In this section she systematically and rationally unpacked the events that dealt with slavery and Islam

between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and she innovatively extracted and pieced together her readings of the historical texts that were produced by, among others, Vivian Bickford-Smith, Robert Ross, Robert Shell and Shamil Jeppie. Thereafter she turned to “a history of intimacy” by “theorizing the legacy of slavery in South African culture” and thus benefitting richly from Sarah Nuttal and Cheryl-Ann Michael’s theoretical reflections regarding the twin concepts of “intimacies and connectivities” (1999); concepts that they, in turn, extracted from Robert Shell’s notable *Children of Bondage* (1994). The latter, she pointed out, is a work that compellingly argued “the impact of enslaved people on contemporary culture”; a dimension that, she averred, has been under-researched.

As she progressed in setting out her ideas in a fairly coherent and systematic manner, she decided to ‘have “a belated conversation about slavery” in order to highlight the fact that despite the “radical history” tradition that was established at the University of Cape Town by an array of South African historians, South African scholarship on slavery—and by implication South African Islam since “Islam” and ‘slavery” are closely connected at the Cape—has by and large lagged behind the USA by almost three decades; the reason for this may be attributed, she asserted, to the apartheid system. She confidently expressed—and correctly so—that if and when one views the social history of Muslims through different lenses (and employing fresh archival, archaeological and historical tools) then one comes across a radically revised reading; one that will offer a new insight into the country’s (social) history. Unlike the recent past, this new and fresh reading will render it acutely “visible”.

Taking this remark into account, she stated that one of the text’s major aim is “to offer a historically informed and complex view of Islam, neither picturesque nor redemptive, and through it, a fuller understanding of the making of contemporary South Africa” (24). Earlier in the introduction (21) Baderoon reminded the reader that the neglect of the study of slavery in the Indian ocean region is because of the trivialization of the picturesque mode’s effects and it was one that ensured that the Cape’s inhumane system was viewed as benignly mild compared to systems elsewhere. She, however, argued that her book intended to convince the reader of “the necessity of reading (the conditions of) slavery differently” (21). She felt strongly that the social scientists” neglected in not adequately investigating slavery and that they have thus done “a grave injustice to critical part of the country’s history and (this) has had a serious effect of rendering indigenous and enslaved people’s experiences during colonial period unimportant and invisible” (21).

Being a literary scholar, Baderoon underscored the confluence between literature and history since both fields creatively engage in the interpretation of (oral and written) texts. To support her argument, she for example made reference to Rayda Jacobs’ *The Slave Book* (1998) that derived its ideas from the South African historian, Robert Shell’s scholarship on slavery. She further aptly opined that scholars of literature and literary

studies have the capacity to contribute in a substantial manner to the debates and discourses regarding slavery. Though she acknowledged that “inventions of literature” may distort history, she hastened to emphasize that literary scholars have shown through their creative publications how elements of the past have been made attractive and brought to a larger receptive audience.

After commenting critically on the interconnections between these two disciplines, she visited the “texts and archives” that consist of letters, diaries, pamphlets and a host of other material that may help, through its language and power, uncover—using Karen Barber’s phrase—the “hidden histories” (2006). She thus concerned herself in a part of this text with the visual representations of Muslims as they appeared in, among others, the nineteenth and twentieth century popular and fiction writing and paintings; she did so in order to illustrate how Muslims were “imagined and (they) constructed their own sense of community”. In order to get a sense of how she intended to approach this, she informed the reader where to go and “how to read invisible texts” such as burial sites. Midway in the introductory chapter, she interrogated “Islam and race” by asking the proverbial but problematic question: “Who is Muslim in South Africa” before she went on to evaluate in some detail “Islam as racial instability”. In essence, she saw her text—and rightly so—as a “revisionist project” that offered a complex and an uneven view of South Africa’s Muslims; a perspective that is neither picturesque nor redemptive. This project, she asserted, should not be viewed as an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and anti-apartheid project but one that offered a comprehensive insight into contemporary South Africa. That said, now one can move to the various chapters.

### **Beyond the beginnings and into the text**

In the first chapter Baderoon took the reader on a special excursion that informed him/her about the “Ambiguous Visibility” displayed by “Islam” (and by implication “Muslims”) and how it contributed towards “the Making of a South African Landscape”. She began the chapter by etymologically interrogating the heavily-loaded racist concept “kaffir”; one that is scrupulously connected with the beginnings of Muslims in South Africa’s racial and sexual scheme. And she related it to another controversial concept, namely “native” (29–34). She, however, followed this up by offering a critical reading of colonial-era landscape writings by scholars such as David Bunn and Jessica Dubow; writings that, she noted, did not take into consideration the enormous visual archive of the Cape “Malays” in colonial letters, travel writing and paintings; in many of the paintings, for example, the Cape “Malay” slaves have been portrayed as submissive and it was the way they were depicted in the paintings that caught Baderoon’s prying eye. Prior to commenting on George Angus’ *The Kaffirs Illustrated* (1849), she drew upon J. M. Coetzee’s *White Writing* (1988) to reflect critically

upon selected paintings. And she also turned her attention to Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) that she studied more closely in chapter four; nonetheless, in the last-mentioned text, Coetzee made reference to a character called 'Soraya.' The latter came across as a distinctive and picturesque Muslim figure and one that manifested "a deep awareness of the legacy of colonial discourses of sexuality"; a theme that she revisited later in the text. She underlined the fact that in this chapter she poignantly illustrated the "ambiguous visibility" of the picturesque Muslim character; a figure that has the potential and ability to unsettle and be a subversive force (as she showed later in the text).

Baderoon inspected among other significant exhibits; she scrutinised painter Angus' *The Kaffirs Illustrated* and she assessed visual artist Bernie Searle's *Untitled* photograph that appeared in the 1999 *Colour Me* series. For Baderoon both the painting and the photograph demonstrated the portrayal of Muslims "in the *making* of a South African landscape"—her emphasis—whilst the former illustrated how Muslims were represented during the early colonial periods, the latter demonstrated how this was depicted during the contemporary period. Her assessment of the colonial paintings, however, revealed that in those that sketched the panoramas of Cape Town, the Cape "Malay" slaves were "typically placed close to the outer edges of the painting" and she concluded that these paintings performed "a serious ideological labor" (41–2). She remarked that though the artists consciously portrayed these slaves as marginal and oblique figures in the vast panoramas, Cape Town—as an important developing port-city—could not have been envisaged without their presence. She thus expanded upon the idea of "the oblique and the centre" by "placing Muslims in the landscape" as she analyzed the painting and the photograph.

After this revealing analyses of a selection of fiction writings, romanticised paintings, and striking photographs in which she excellently explored Muslim presence in the broad South African landscape, she zoomed in on specific cultural communal practices in the second chapter; she investigated the "Kitchen Language" by evaluating the "Muslims and the(ir) Culture of Food". She captivatingly analyzed the extant literature—"an archive of subsumed meanings"—about food since colonial times to the present day. She introduced her chapter by explicitly addressing "Unequal Intimacies: The Ayah in the kitchen"; one in which the "Malay" slave has been depicted as a friendly cook in the master's kitchen and one that to some extent hid and repressed knowledge of the brutal conditions within which slaves generally lived. In this chapter, she proved to what extent the Cape kitchen may be viewed "as a site charged with intimacy, power, knowledges and invisible ideological contest that has had profound cultural effects". Consequently, she undertook a "reading of food differently: the spectacular and the invisible" and argued that the "food (court)" aside from language is an arena where the contest between slave-owner and enslaved was extremely intimate, perilously personal and terrifyingly transformative.

Indeed these enslaved cooks, who were viewed as seemingly powerless figures, played a vital role in radically and profoundly changing the South African cuisine of the powerful (white) slave-masters; in effect, these slave cooks subverted the (white colonial) culture to such a degree that when one closely checks and traces the history of the food dishes then one picks up the imprints of the slave cooks. This is quite evident when one reads Rayda Jacobs' *The Slave Book* that Baderoon used to demonstrate the fundamental contribution slaves made to the South African cuisine. She, however, glossed over a few important "representations of Islam in cookbooks"; among the selection of publications that she looked at were Hilda Gerber's *Traditional Cookery of the Cape Malays* (1957) and Betsie Rood's *Maleier kookkuns* (1977) prior to browsing through "cookbooks by Muslim authors: food, gender and magic". One of the significant contributions was of course Zuleikha Mayet's highly-popular (revised) *Indian Delights* (1961) and another was Faldela Williams' *The Cape Malay Cookbook* (1988). She, moreover, extracted a few comments from Cass Abrahams' *Cass Abrahams Cooks Cape Malay* (2000) in order to highlight the shortcomings of Gerber and Rood's publications but at the same time used the opportunity to underscore the cuisine's Africanness as mentioned in the publication's sub-title. After an insightful review and treatment of cookbooks, she mentioned that when one glances at the food (industry) one should not forget that it "signals dissonant meanings" as illustrated in Jacobs' *The Slave Book* and that one cannot ignore the fact that it "carries the memory of enslavement".

From the enclosed space of the kitchen Baderoon shifted to a very different site; one that, according to her, "observes neither national boundaries nor temporal boundaries, combining public history with private and autobiographical narratives, and remaking South Africa's geography temporality". For Baderoon the image of the ocean informs the reader about religious communities and traditions; in this instance about Cape Muslims and Islam.

In this chapter she captivantly used the sea as a metaphor for experiences that go beyond conventional categories and one that included the meeting of the two Oceans at the Cape in "memories of slavery". She fittingly titled the third chapter "The Sea inside Us", and she did so by drawing "Parallel journeys in the African oceans". In this chapter she conveniently drew upon images of the African (Indian and Atlantic) oceans that intimately related to two human rituals, namely "conversion" and "pilgrimage". She returned to the works of visual artists such as Berni Searle and turned to literary scholars such as Isabel Hofmeyr to give tangible reasons why the sea was employed in their visual and non-visual studies. For example she extracted from Hofmeyr's published article titled "The Black Atlantic meets the Indian Ocean ..." in order to undergird her argument that the descendants of slaves and serfs carved out a new home for themselves at the Cape where the Atlantic and Indian oceans converged.

So when considering this new home, it is a locale where conversion takes place and a setting from which individuals depart to perform their pilgrimage using the ocean as the pathway. With this in mind, she first reviewed Yvette Christianse's *Castway* (1999) and subsequently her *Imprehendehora* (2009); two poetry collections that reflected upon aspects of, among others, memories, history, intimacy, slavery, belonging and homecoming. She then honed in on "mapping the ocean" by narrating about "pilgrimage as sacred geography and temporality". In this section, she discussed representations of the Indian Ocean via a few South African stories about pilgrimage and one of these is Hedley Churchward's *From Drury Lane to Mecca* (1931); a text that was based upon interviews and that was prepared by Eric Rosenthal. Churchward, who had embraced Islam many decades before his publication appeared, gave an account of his travels using the Indian Ocean route to Mecca. In the process of narrating the tales about the ocean as liminal spaces and about pilgrimages as part of a series of untold stories, she helped to uncover deep-seated memories and personal histories that contribute successfully towards the broader South African picture. In this regard she, to some extent, benefitted from Hoosein Ebrahim's *The Cape's Hajj Tradition* (2009) that gave an account of the pilgrims' travels. And she could also have drawn upon Adiel Davids' *The Imam and the Diary (1904–1928)* (2013) that tells a fascinating tale of the Imam's diary that captured the events that took place in and beyond Simonstown; for example the Imam's diary made reference to the 'seedies' (i.e. East African indentured sailors) who remained in Simonstown and married local Christian ladies who entered into Islam.

Shifting away from the sea, Baderoon persuasively tagged the reader along to view the fourth chapter titled the 'sexual Geographies of the Cape: Slavery, Race and Sexual Violence'. Herein she courageously tackled issues that were and that are still regarded as social taboos in predominantly religious circles; it is an issue that remains topical across all ethnic and racial divides one that deals with the representations of slavery, race and sexuality. She closely examined these forms of representation by making use of the creative writings of Christianse and Coetzee. She specifically engaged in "examining the slave-sexuality nexus through Sara Baartman" and thereafter she considered "bringing slavery and sexuality into view" when she analyzed Berni Serle's 1999 series of art work titled *Colour Me*; a work that used spices to not only enrich the presentation but to engage the gazer/viewer and also remind him/her about the cruel history associated with—in this case "spice"—trade.

Thereafter Baderoon moved away from realistic art representations to literary forms that touched upon sexual violence. She once again went back to Christianse who penned *Reclaiming the P... Word* (2006). This was a play that was evaluated by Mary Hames in her "Reclaiming the Letter P... Word: A Reflection ..." that Baderoon quoted but forgot to include in the bibliography. And Baderoon also looked at Christianse's acclaimed *Unconfessed* (2007), which is also not listed in the bibliography

(179). Baderoon, however, offered a detailed analysis of *Unconfessed* and after that tackled Christiaan's earlier dramatic text that was staged by her students at the University of the Western Cape.

Now as regards the last mentioned text, one would like to invert or rather slightly twig the text "reclaiming the P... word" by associating the "p" with the male species; in other words instead of giving the meaning *poes* (Eng: cunt) why not construe it to mean—using the Afrikaans word *piel* (Eng: prick or cock); this inversion or twiggling helps to give it a different perspective and one that falls squarely within the domain of homosexuality; an act that has been regarded taboo according to Muslim theology. In the light of this observation, Baderoon could have briefly discussed Zackie Achmat's "My childhood..." (1994) and Muhsin Hendricks' *Islamic Texts: A Source for Acceptance of Queer Individuals into Mainstream Muslim Society* (2010). If she had done so she could have connected the view within the broader debate that involves the (Muslim) gay and lesbian communities. Though she did not address this issue specifically in this chapter it would have enriched her discussion on 'sexuality at the Cape' and it would have neatly tied in with the issues that (marginal) Muslims are debating. That aside, the purpose of Baderoon's analyses was to show the paucity of discussions about both slavery and sexuality as captured in theatre/fiction writing and visual art. Whilst Baderoon's arguments were logically sound, the question that one would like to pose to the author is: how and where does Islam/Muslim—which the text's overall theme—fit into the discussion? The texts analysed did not clearly convey the connection despite her valuable coverage of pertinent issues such as 'sexuality' and nor was there a smooth transition from this chapter to the next.

In the fifth chapter, she revisited PAGAD; a vigilante organization that she quoted in the first few paragraphs in her well-argued introduction and an organization that was given a great deal of attention by many other scholars in the social sciences. So instead of continuing with a discussion regarding slavery and sexuality, she moved the spotlight to PAGAD's acts that were deemed "acts of criminality" by the Cape authorities. As a result of PAGAD's deeds against gangs and drug lords, their masked and militant images dominated the newspaper headlines during the final years of the 1990s. She demonstrated through an examination of media coverage (i.e. *Cape Times* and *Cape Argus*) from the fifth to the twelfth August 1996 how it imposed itself onto the Cape landscape "and (sought out [to]) [the] Challenge of the Local (authorities)." And she showed how the PAGAD narrative disrupted the picturesque perspective of the Cape Muslim community and she evaluated to what extent its stories influenced South Africa's representation of Muslims and Islam. She brought into the discussion "the rhetoric of the veil" since many of PAGAD's adherents wore masks during their marches to drug lord dens/homes. She also dealt with the "journalists'" reflections on the PAGAD stories" as well as with "post-PAGAD (period): the persistence of idioms". The organization's questionable activities, which attracted world-wide attention since

it coincided with the awful 1998 US Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania respectively and since it preceded the dreadful 9/11 event by a few years, were naturally closely monitored by local security authorities and subsequently by international security structures such as the Central Intelligence Agency that classified it as a “terrorist” organization. Whilst the chapter made an important input to the debate on the issue of security, the chapter’s specific contribution was in media studies; in other words, Baderoon’s chapter tangibly illustrated how the media mediated the organization’s activities such as its series of marches and its public meetings.

After offering an enlightening portrait of PAGAD that has remained active to date, Baderoon undertook a cultural shift and carted the reader in the sixth chapter to another arena where “The Trees Sway North-North-East” and in the course charted out “Post-Apartheid Visions of Islam”. She lifted ideas for this chapter from memoirs, fiction works, drama texts and poetry writings in order to “re-imagine Islam (and Muslims) in the post-apartheid period”. She began by discussing “new creative imaginings in Islam”. She referred to, among others, Zubeida Jaffer’s *Our Generation* (2003), Ishtiyaq Shukri’s *The Silent Minaret* (2005), Imraan Coovadia’s *Green-Eyed Thieves* (2006), Nadia Davids’ *At Your Feet* (2006) Zinaid Meeran’s *Saracens at the Gate* (2009), and Shaida Kazie Ali’s *Not a Fairytale* (2010).

She spent a few paragraphs discussing Ali, Davids and Coovadia’s works before turning her focus to Rustum Kozain’s poetry and the Egyptian born naturalized South African Ismail Joubert aka Tatamkhulu Afrika’s *Mr. Chameleon: An Autobiography* (2005) subtitled in this text “A long journeying to Africanness.” The latter text, which she assessed in some detail, did not reveal other aspects of this “chameleon’s life”; during the 1960s when he was leading the Cape based (international) Al-Jihad organization that had branches or connections in the Comoros and elsewhere, it was rumoured that he was a security branch agent or an *agent provocateur* as noted by Stobie in her “Shedding Skins” (152). No where does he make mention of this or counter it in his biography. Ardent followers argue that no one could bring hard evidence that find him guilty of this act. In any case, the point that is being made is that Tatamkhulu Afrika wrote a sanitized text and now that he is no more, it is difficult to verify some facts; and one cannot in any way fault Baderoon’s analysis of this charming character who was explored by Stobie’s “Shedding Skins” and “Mother, Missus, Mate...”. At the end of Baderoon’s analysis and absorbing discussion about these works, she addressed “new visions of Islam;” a theme that one would like her to have expanded upon and explored in some detail.

She finally reviewed her revisionist project by concluding and stressing the pivotal influences that both slavery and Islam have had on South African culture. She firmly argued that when assessing the status of South Africa’s Muslims as a religious minority one cannot ignore the fact that they are quite visible and this remained a useful lesson for other Muslim communities during this era of globalization. She underlined the

point that this work of hers “takes place in the existing conversations of in African studies, feminist studies, studies in slavery and race, religious studies, Islamic studies, Indian Ocean studies, Literary studies, and cultural studies.” Well on this note one cannot quibble with the author because she succeeded to crisscross each of these areas and so this text is indeed a tangible outcome of interdisciplinary studies.

### **Baderoon’s scholarship: a round up**

The review essay provided a rather detailed summary of Baderoon’s introduction and synopsis of each chapter. In rounding up this essay the reviewer affirms that Baderoon adopted a fairly simple but argumentative style; with this elegant and explicit technique she managed to demonstrate that she was *au fait* not only with the extant theoretical tools and frames in literature but that she was also well-acquainted with the issues that have been neglected and matters that have to be addressed. Unlike other authors such as Achmat Davids who wrote *Mosques of the Bo-Kaap* (1980) and UCT’s Abdulkader Tayob who penned *Islam in South Africa* (1998) from a historical angle, she completely departed from their approaches by relying on creative pieces (i.e. literature and art) as another key and important set of sources in writing the South African Muslim community’s social history afresh and effectively contributing towards the twin fields of history and literature. Baderoon has undoubtedly produced a fascinating and interesting project that has enriched our insights into and understanding of this community.

One should however bear in mind the fact that Baderoon prepared this text for a somewhat mixed interdisciplinary academic audience; so in order to achieve this objective she outlined the text’s objectives quite plainly and unequivocally. As she shifted from the one chapter to the other, she kept her assorted audience in sight and thus argued her case fairly logically and flowingly. She thus not only successfully attracted the interest of those who specialized in literature and history but she seemed to have had a knack of drawing the attention of individuals who hailed from diverse backgrounds and from across the social sciences and the humanities divide. So in this reviewer’s opinion, Baderoon managed to generally put forward her arguments fairly confidently; and she presented her arguments in a reasonably sound and sustained manner.

As already indicated, Baderoon is an emerging scholar that has already made her academic mark in both the humanities and social sciences; apart from being an award-winning poet, she has also made interesting academic contributions by her outputs in mainly peer-reviewed journals. In fact, some of the chapters that are included in this text have been based upon her published articles and she was therefore in a fairly good position to randomly cull her information from the peer-reviewed journals in which her articles appeared. Having revised and weaved these articles into a coherent

academic text, she by and large produced a readable, scholarly text that the academic circles will find pleasing to read and digest. On the whole, Baderoon's text is an informative, instructive and captivating one; it is a text that should not only be included in the critical study of creative writing but also in other related social science courses since the text constructed a (social) history from a list of unconventional and non-traditional sources.

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